CRITICAL THINKING AND COMPOSITION: RESEARCHED ARGUMENTS ANALYSIS



Binh Vo and Julie Hoefling
Gavilan College

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About the Authors and Editors

Authors and Editors

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Anna Mills currently serves as the English Discipline Lead for the Academic Senate of the California Community Colleges OER Initiative. She has taught English at City College of San Francisco since 2005 and has specialized in teaching Argumentative Writing and Critical Thinking since 2008. She earned a master's degree from Bennington College in Writing and Literature with a focus on nonfiction writing. She has published a collection of book reviews, "Anna Mills on Nature Writing," and her essays have appeared in *The Writer's Chronicle, The Sun*, *Salmagundi*, *Cimarron Review*, *Isotope: A Journal of Literary Nature and Science Writing*, *North Dakota Quarterly*, *Under the Sun*, *Banyan Review*, and various anthologies. She interned as a technical writer at Sun Microsystems and spent two years as a writer and web developer for the nonprofit CompuMentor, where she helped launch the portal TechSoup.org. Recently, she has taken to tweeting at @EnglishOER.

Dylan Altman



Dylan Altman is a husband, father, writer, educator, filmmaker, and wearer of "many hats." He is an adjunct professor at Los Angeles Valley College, Oxnard College, and his Alma Mater CSUN. He believes in the transformative power of narrative and language.

Ryan Hitch

 Ryan Hitch currently works as an Instructional Specialist in the Distance Education department at Chaffey College. Prior to that, he worked as an English instructor at Saddleback College and several other community colleges in Southern California. He earned a bachelor's degree in Psychology from CSUF before graduating from Chapman University's dual degree program with a master's degree in English and a master of Fine Arts degree in Creative Writing.

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Darya Myers teaches English at Long Beach Community College and is co-coordinator of the Puente Program there.

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Edward Mahoney teaches English at College of the Desert, Azusa Pacific University, and Pepperdine University. He earned his MA in English from Cal Poly Pomona and an MDiv from Regent College. He is currently researching expressions of communal trauma in literature.

Allison Murray

 Allison Murray teaches English at Long Beach City College, where she's been a full-time faculty for twenty years. She has specialized in Argument, Fundamentals of Comp, and Mythology, and is currently at work on a Mythology OER textbook. She has served as the college's OER coordinator, where she oversaw over $1.4 million dollars in student savings through faculty adoptions and creations of OER. She has also served as the English Discipline Lead for the OERI, an OER reviewer for RFP 2, as well as the FDRG Lead for English for the C-ID. She is also a certified Les Mills BODYPUMP, CORE, and Spin instructor, and has run seven marathons.

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Kathleen Nelson teaches English at Palomar College and Miramar College in San Diego County, California. She earned her bachelor's degree in English Literature at California State University San Marcos, her master's degree in English Literature at San Diego State University, and her master's degree in Library and Information Science from San Jose State University. Kathleen has an interest in open educational resources, basic skills, and online teaching. She enjoys the beautiful California weather for walks, watching British mysteries on TV, and creating cards and quilts in her off-time.

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Natalie Peterkin teaches English at East Los Angeles College and several other community colleges in Southern California. She earned her bachelor's degree in English Literature from UCLA before getting a master's degree in English Literature from Cal Poly Pomona. Natalie is also a creative writer and lead editor of Cal Poly Pomona's liberal arts journal, *Pomona Valley Review*.

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Tina Osborne has taught English at Cabrillo Community College since 2003 and has taught writing at the University of California Santa Cruz since 2020. She also taught English as a Second Language and various technology classes from 1998 to 2008 at several adult schools, and served as ESL and Technology Coordinator for many years at the Santa Cruz Adult School. Tina has been teaching online for several years and completed the Certificate in Online Teaching and Design through the Online Network of Educators in 2020. Tina co-published the books *Out and About in the World of Computers* and *Out and About in the World of Technology,* and she wrote several chapters for the book, *Fostering Habits of Mind in Today's Students: A New Approach to Developmental Education*.

Sarah Sullivan



Sarah has the great honor and joy of being a professor of English at Mission College in Santa Clara, CA, where she also serves as Professional Learning Co-coordinator. Sarah has engaged in teaching and learning with the wonderful Mission College students through metacognitive reading, composition and critical thinking courses since 2010. Sarah has also served as a Northern California Learning Network Coordinator for CA Community College Success Network 3CSN since 2018. Before moving to the Bay area, Sarah taught for seven years in her beloved home state of Massachusetts. Sarah earned a Masters in Language and Literacy from Simmons College in Boston, MA and a Bachelors of Arts in English from Colgate University in Hamilton, New York. Sarah is passionate about equity pedagogy and professional learning, and she believes that all educators have a responsibility to engage in life-long scholarship in teaching and learning. Along with an amazing team of equity-minded leaders, including students, Sarah has engaged in deep equity and transformation work, and she has developed a Equity Pedagogy Community of Praxis for colleagues to engage in peer to peer learning, self-reflection and curricular redesign in order to create transformative teaching. Sarah lives joyfully, with her little house tiger, Fiona and neighborhood puma, McLovin, deep in the redwood forest of the beautiful Santa Cruz Mountains! You can reach her at sarah.sullivan@missioncollege.edu.

Cynthia Spence



Cynthia Spence is a tenured full-time English Associate Professor at Imperial Valley College and an adjunct English Professor at College of the Desert. Her academic interest is focused on community college intervention strategies and acceleration. Dr. Spence completed her Doctorate in Educational Leadership at CSUSB and she currently serves as a fellow for the Ed.D program. Her dissertation examined the role of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation focusing on Self-

Determination Theory in relation to Summer Bridge Students and community college retention and persistence rates. Dr. Spence served as IVC's OER coordinator and is currently helping IVC implement AB705 requirements, expand their embedded tutor program, and is directing IVC's co-requisite transfer English option for incoming students. Other areas of expertise are English literature, English composition and rhetoric, education reading and language arts, second language acquisition, and e-Learning.

Alexander Sterling

Alex Sterling has been teaching composition and critical thinking at Los Medanos College since 2005. Alex has a BA in philosophy from Macalester College, an MA in philosophy from Purdue University, and an MA in English from Cal State East Bay. Alex has been married to Julianne since 1999, and they have two sons: Jasper is at the University of Oregon and Adlai is at Albany High School. Alex loves rock music and leads a band called Desoto Reds.

Saramanda Swigart



Saramanda Swigart is thrilled to be writing fiction (almost) full time after years of writing ad copy and corporate literature. She has lived and worked in Italy, New York, San Francisco, and Dubai. She has a Masters from Columbia University, with a supplementary degree in literary translation. Her short work, essays, and poetry have appeared in *Oxford Magazine, Superstition Review, The Alembic, Fogged Clarity, Ghost Town, The Saranac Review,* and *Euphony* to name a few. She has been teaching literature, creative writing, argumentative writing and critical thinking at City College of San Francisco since 2014.

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Why an OER textbook?

OER are defined as “teaching, learning, and research resources that reside in the public domain or have been released under an intellectual property license that permits their free use and re-purposing by others.” (Hewlett Foundation). As a tutor in the English Lab, I often long for a writing resource that I can direct students to immediately. My hope is that by making this textbook free, I am removing one barrier to the difficult and exciting process of coming into their own as writers. I also feel that by making my writing available under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial license, I am joining a movement toward a more collaborative and empowered culture around teaching and textbooks. I am excited to be able to adapt excerpts of others' work and to know that some of my work may, in turn, be reshaped by others.

Acknowledgments

- Thanks to the Academic Senate of the California Community Colleges OER Initiative for generously funding this project not once but three times.
- Thanks to Shagun Kaur, Communications Studies instructor at De Anza College and Project Facilitator for the ASCCC OER Initiative, for offering support and encouragement throughout the process. She also provided much specific guidance on licensing, accessibility, and OER platforms.
- Thanks to Delmar Larsen for introducing me to the Libretexts platform, inspiring me, and responding to my questions so readily.
- Thanks to my untiring mother, poet and writing teacher Beth Mills, for so many hours of editing and encouraging notes.
- Thanks to my father, George Mills, logician and lover of precision, for his sentence editing and corrections to the logic.
- Thanks also to my friend and former student Maria Chow for her enthusiasm, marketing suggestions, and editing help.
- Thanks to Monica Bosson and the whole English 1C Level Group at City College for their support of the project and their willingness to share materials and teaching techniques.
- Thanks to Maggie Frankel, City College of San Francisco librarian and OER liaison, for introducing me to the field of OER and encouraging me to develop the grant proposal.

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> Adapted from "Common Response Phrases" by Anna Mills in *How Arguments Work: A Guide to Writing and Analyzing Texts in College*, sponsored by ASCCC OERI and licensed CC BY-NC 4.0.

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Praise for How Arguments Work

Praise from Teachers

- “I've been using your text for almost a year now, and I think it's fantastic. It works perfectly for our Comp 2 class.”
  – Susan Stafinbil, Arapahoe Community College
- "The chapters on argument are well-developed and easy for a student to follow. Rather than simply defining “rhetorical situation” or “logos/pathos/ethos,” the writer does a nice job of explaining them in student-friendly, relevant language and illustrates how to use them as well as how to recognize when they are misused. This allows students to better understand and apply the knowledge as they evaluate arguments and learn how to construct their own." -- Jean Mittelstaedt, Chemeketa Community College
- ◦ The textbook has many assets for the 100-level composition course, specifically those focused on argument evaluation and development. The language is approachable, the breadth is comprehensive, and the depth is appropriate. The Teacher's Guide at the end offers excellent resources, including quizzes, assignments, course maps, and lesson plans. In the model of *They Say/ I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing* by Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, the textbook leans heavily on teaching students how to read, analyze, and use the common phrases of academic writing. Having taught with *They Say/I Say*, this textbook develops many more concepts than Graff and Birkenstein, making it possible to use as the single text in the composition class... The chapters provide an introductory understanding of a wide range of composition content including argument, academic research, the writing process, and writing conventions.
  ◦ The content is accurate, unbiased, and error-free...
  ◦ The textbook provides a variety of examples of claims on relevant topics today...
  ◦ The brief introductions to evidence and logical fallacies are the right fit for 100-level composition students who are new to the rhetorical terminology. The definitions and examples are explained in simple terms. The overview of the research process, source evaluation, and MLA format is also simple and straightforward.
  ◦ The textbook is organized with clear scaffolding and building of concepts."
  – Liz Onufer, College of Eastern Idaho
- “The text is written in lucid, accessible prose, and provides adequate context for any jargon/technical terminology used...The topics in the text are presented in a logical, clear fashion...Content is up-to-date, but not in a way that will quickly make the text obsolete within a short period of time...I have found that the *How Arguments Work* text covers most everything under the sun. For sure, this OER text is a blessing. I can pull information to use not only in my argumentative and research writing courses, but in both my composition and business writing courses!”
  – Tim Marmack, University of Hawaii Maui College

- “Given a choice, I would adopt this text in a heartbeat for any first or second-year composition course focused on teaching the principles of writing and responding to writing across the disciplines. I already envision using material from this resource to supplement content for students in the Comp 1 and Comp 2 courses I regularly teach.”
  – Vicki Towne, University of the People

- “My students are responding so powerfully to the book! This is a powerful addition to the composition class, particularly as a means of equity pedagogy - developing critical thinking, argumentation and writing for students who have often been left out of the academic conversation.”
  – Sarah Sullivan, Mission College (a *How Arguments Work* contributor)

- “Anna Mills' *How Argument Works* is a comprehensive and equitable guide to everything your students should know to do well in first-year writing courses. It's informative and useful without being excessively wordy, it's dynamic, and it teaches students the moves that matter in writing (definitely finding some inspiration in *They Say/I Say* while also striking out on its own). What makes this an especially valuable resource are the Canvas tools and supplemental information that comes with it. Helpful for students AND teachers.”
  – Ryan Hitch, Norco College (a *How Arguments Work* contributor)

Praise from Students

- “I felt like I learned and improved a lot more than I ever did, all the class reading helped me. Class reading should be something that will also help future students. You shouldn't change anything! “

- “It was all beneficial and all part of a larger whole, so I don't think anything should be removed and I'm not sure if anything should be added. Reading it did help me.”
- “The most useful thing for me is the fact that you added some single phrase examples after every specific explanation on how to identify reasons, claims, thesis and other stuff.”
- “I found the sectioning and subsections to be very useful and organized and easier to reference.”
- “The important thing I learned... is being able to summarize and read materials closely. I would struggle to write before but now I can write more comfortably. “
- “I will always remember about the slow thinking process that you mentioned in earlier chapters. It is actually a super helpful tip as I have a tendency to speak before thinking properly.”
- “I think your structure... is put together very well and it’s straight to the point where you’re trying to do. “
- “I have always been a bad student, but this class very much encouraged me to do my best and to put in hard work. I think the class is well done and well designed.”
- “I think I learned a lot. I felt hopeless before this course. “
- “I enjoyed all of it.”

Note: This student feedback was collected anonymously in Anna Mills' composition course at City College of San Francisco in Spring 2022. Respondents indicated that they were willing for the feedback to be shared.

Please Share Your Feedback!

- We welcome any feedback through email at info@howargumentswork.org
- We invite students to submit to the Fall 2022 How Arguments Work Student Contribution Contest.
- Anyone is invited to make margin notes as they read using the Hypothesis annotation pane. The annotation software, Hypothesis, is built into LibreTexts, and creating an account is free. This LibreTexts Hypothesis guide walks you through the process of annotating with screenshots.
- We invite teachers to fill out the surveys we have created.
- Please leave your reviews of *How Arguments Work* on its Open Textbook Library, OER Commons, and Merlot pages.

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Gavilan College

Critical Thinking and Composition: Researched Arguments Analysis

Binh Vo and Julie Hoefling

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1: INTRODUCTION

Learning Outcomes

- Recognize ourselves as participants in a larger academic conversation.
- Explain how learning to write will help us academically, professionally, and personally.
- See reading and writing as tools for careful critical thinking.



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1.1: Why Study Argument?

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1.1: Why Study Argument?

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (8 min, 9 sec):

When I was starting college, friends and relatives told me "college teaches you to think." I found this idea both puzzling and exciting. It was puzzling of course, because everyone thinks all the time. What was it exactly that we needed to learn? It was exciting because it suggested there was a whole other level of skill at thinking. It implied that college was about training the mind, not just about specific areas of expertise. Learning to think would change me and how I approached everything.



Image by Hans Braxmeier on Pixabay under the Pixabay License.

I imagined that this challenge to my thinking habits would come from the class readings and discussions. What I didn't know was that the process of writing, the process of developing my own arguments, would challenge me even more and become the core practice that stretched my thinking. I use the term "argument" here broadly to mean a presentation of ideas that usually includes reasons to support those ideas.

Most of us are probably familiar with the practical reasons to study writing in college. It's worth getting good at because we're going to do it a lot. No matter our major, as we get into higher-level classes we will need to do more writing, whether that looks like lab reports, explanations of mathematical methods, or essays in psychology, political science, literature, or economics.

We probably recognize, too, that writing skills will help us succeed in a career. To get a job, we'll have to write cover letters, resumes, and emails. On the job, we'll have to explain things to colleagues in writing. Nurses and doctors write notes on patient care; software engineers comment on the structure of their programs, managers write plans and evaluations. In all these settings, a professional style of Standard English will boost credibility. We will benefit from the ability to switch to this more formal type of language from any dialect we speak within our family and community.

But why does academia make writing so central? And why do so many professions depend on it? What makes writing so valuable? I would argue that academia and the professions need writing because it is our best tool for sharpening our thinking. It helps us slow down and clarify our ideas. Humans are not innately great at this. Many psychologists have argued that people tend to make decisions quickly and base them heavily on emotion. In his book *Thinking, Fast and Slow,* Daniel Kahneman describes the human tendency toward quick reactions and snap judgments with the deeper consideration we need for complex topics (we'll talk more about fast and slow thinking and human biases in the next section).



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Perhaps the highest goal of academia is to advance our understanding as humans. We can think of academia as a conversation of many voices that speak to each other across time and place, through the medium of writing. It's a good thing that each argument becomes part of this larger conversation because slow thinking is hard. It takes mental sweat. It takes time. We need each other's help and input. Reading, writing, and revising help us get clearer about our own ideas and those of others. These processes demand effort from every student and scholar, no matter how skilled and experienced they are. And the effort pays off.



Sometimes we need to dive deep to reach the bottom and think slow to arrive at an insight.
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The slow thinking skills that college cultivates also help us as professionals in fields beyond the academy. Reading, writing, and revising allow us to think carefully about each workplace decision, considering multiple factors and perspectives. They enable us to communicate and explain our decisions to colleagues and respond to their questions and critiques.

But slow thinking is not just for academic work and professional life. I believe I was right to get excited when I heard "college teaches thinking," because the slow thinking we practice as readers and writers is transformative for our personal lives. Slow thinking is a tool for soul searching. High-stakes life questions involve so many complex considerations that they demand extended thought. What major and career should I pursue? How much should I work while in school? These questions require

research into the options, and a careful weighing of our values and interests, economic pressures, and family demands, as well as our dreams and desires. Even if we end up going with an intuition or first impulse, such decisions are worth confirming with slower thinking. As Stuart Greene and April Lidinsky put it in *From Inquiry to Academic Writing*, "[L]earning to consider information carefully and critically, and to weigh competing points of view before making our own judgments--gives us power over our own lives" (11).

Argument can help us gain power in society as well. Jeanne Fahnestock and Marie Secor, authors of *A Rhetoric of Argument,* go so far as to see it as a tool "to equalize the unequal distribution of power that exists in every institution and situation" (8). Those of us who don't start out with power can try to build it by arguing well about the issues that matter to us and our communities. Argument doesn't always work, but it's always part of successful attempts to change things. The habits of mind we learn as readers and writers can also help us develop political opinions in the first place. Our participation in democracy, whether that means voting or any kind of political activity, local or national, requires myriad decisions on very complex issues. Which drugs should be legal? How should we address climate change? How should we ensure public safety? How much money should the government take from citizens, and how should it spend that money? How do we move toward a more just society? These big questions involve countless smaller ones that require ongoing debate and consideration.

Slow thinking doesn't come easily, even for supposed experts. As writers and thinkers, we will all feel at times that we are struggling in the dark. In writing this introduction, I have had to remind myself several times: "Just keep writing; it will eventually come together;" "The ideas are always foggy at first;" "Give yourself permission to write a shitty first draft;" "Remember, a bad first draft!" and other mantras. I remind myself of the many times I have been through this and the "aha" moments that came along the way. I remind myself that when I keep working, I eventually make it through the short-term frustration and gain increased clarity.

Even though slow thinking never gets easy, it does get easier. There are specific moves we can learn that will help a great deal. We pick up these moves unconsciously from other writers as we read. But we can also learn them directly. This textbook points out the common moves writers make as they develop arguments. It shows how to recognize these moves as we read and how to make similar moves as we write.



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Written by Anna Mills, with discussion of fast and slow thinking were adapted by Anna Mills from "Thinking Fast and Slow" by Alex Sterling, included in "Critical Thinking for the 21st Century" on Canvas Commons, licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.

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1.2: A Closer Look at Fast and Slow Thinking

Look at this picture, and notice your first reaction. Do you have an emotional reaction, good or bad? What is your opinion right off the bat? Going with your gut, what do you think? Notice I am asking you about two things: (1) your emotional reaction and (2) your first thought.

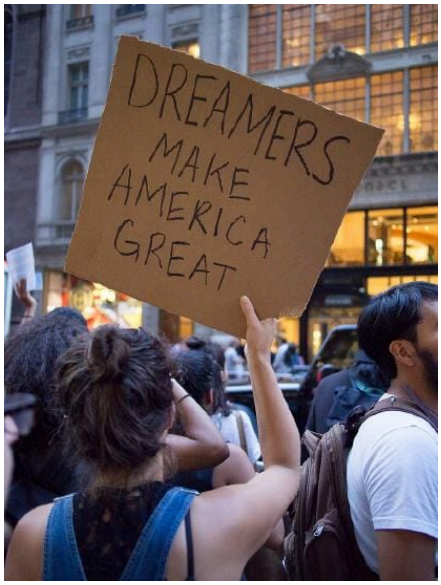


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If you are a Dreamer yourself or if you have DACA protection or you were brought to the U.S. as an undocumented immigrant as a child, you probably agree (your first thought) and your emotional reaction might be something like, “Yeah!” Even if you are not a Dreamer, you may have a similar positive reaction. If you haven't thought too much about Dreamers before or are unfamiliar with the issues surrounding them, you might be tempted to still respond positively because of the positive word "Dreamer" and the appeal to America's greatness. Or, if you lean to the right politically and are familiar with right-wing rhetoric on immigration, you may have the opposite reaction: you disagree with the protester and react negatively, something like, “this is BS!”

This instant reaction, your gut feeling and first thought, we will call “fast thinking.” In his book, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, Daniel Kahneman presents evidence from psychology about how the human mind works. Your quick reaction to the photo is what Kahneman calls fast thinking, which is quick, automatic, and little effort is involved. Other examples of fast thinking: looking up when you hear a loud noise, saying “fine” when someone says “how are you,” or finishing 2 + 2 = ___. In contrast, slow thinking takes time and effort. When you tell someone your phone number, park a car in a small spot, figure out 24 x 17 = _____, or write an essay for English, you must do slow thinking. As a human being, we do both fast and slow thinking every day. In this chapter, we will analyze the photo to explore the ways that people think fast and slow and to see how academic slow thinking approaches might lead to better understanding of the issues raised in the photo.

Fast thinking and emotion

“I have a bad feeling about this.” - Han Solo

Let’s start with the idea of emotion and fast thinking. In the U.S., illegal immigration is an emotional issue, and psychologists have found that people often make decisions based on their emotions. In *The Righteous Mind*, Jonathan Haidt argues that people make moral decisions, make up their minds about right and wrong, very fast and largely based on gut feelings. People decide “immediately and emotionally,” and reasoning is “merely the servant of the passions.” Looking at the photo of the protester with a sign saying, “Dreamers make America great,” we will decide what we think fast and based largely on emotion. We don’t immediately do slow thinking; we don’t say “I have no opinion; I need to see if there is evidence proving that Dreamers are good for America; show me the stats.” Instead, we decide in an instant based on our feelings.

In a way, this is a bad thing: we shouldn't be so quick to jump to conclusions, and we should examine the evidence! However, psychologists have also found that people *need* their emotions to think clearly. Antonio Damasio and others discovered that people who have lost their ability to feel emotion—based on a brain tumor or injury to the brain—also lose their ability to make rational decisions, and so end up making messes of their lives, losing their jobs and wrecking their marriages. Evidence has been piling up that feelings and reason are linked. We may do bad thinking when we allow emotions to cloud our thinking, but we also need emotions to think clearly. Think again about your emotional reaction to the photo, and then ask: are my feelings making me irrational, or are they helping me find the truth?

Fast thinking and bias

Even when we are not having an obvious emotional reaction, fast thinking can lead to errors because of bias more generally. We may be the smartest creatures on Earth, but have numerous cognitive biases; that is, there are errors in reasoning that are common to all people. For example, we suffer from *confirmation bias*: we tend to look for evidence that confirms what we already believe, and have trouble dealing with anything that goes against what we already believe. Look at the photo again. If you already believed that Dreamers are good young people going to college and they should be allowed to stay in the U.S., then based on confirmation bias, your fast thinking will tell you that the protester is right. On the opposing side, if you think illegal immigration is a bad thing and Dreamers should be deported, or if you like Trump's slogan, "Make America great again," then your fast thinking will be different: your confirmation bias will kick in and the photo will confirm all the negative thoughts you have about immigrants and liberals.

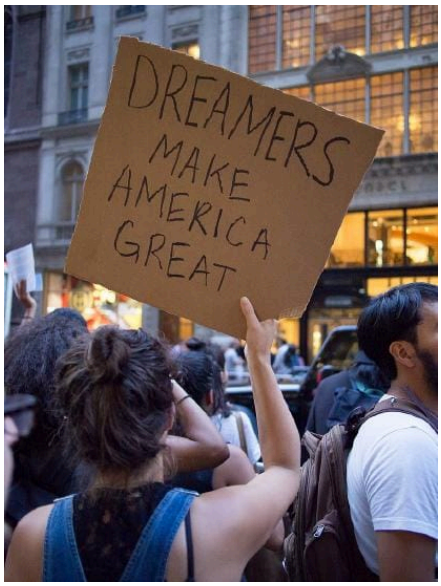


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Another bias we all carry around is called *availability bias*: we tend to decide what we think based on the examples, evidence, or experiences we can easily call up in our minds, and based on information we have been exposed to recently. I will use myself as an example here. I am a California community college professor, and I have been teaching in California since the 1990s. That means I have had countless Dreamers in my classes, I have known thousands of students who are immigrants or whose parents are immigrants, and most of the immigrants I meet are college students. I can easily call to mind many examples of young people, some of whom are immigrants or Dreamers, who are going to college and contributing to society in the most positive ways, so based on my availability bias, the evidence easily available to me will lead me to agree with the protester in the photo.

Google "cognitive bias" and you will find there are dozens of different kinds of bias. In this sense of the word "bias," we are all biased because we are human. When we do fast thinking, we may be on the right track, or we may be in error due to cognitive bias. Daniel Kahneman and others have shown that bias is very powerful. Even when presented with evidence showing they are wrong, confirmation bias is so strong that you often get the "backfire effect": people will dig in their heels and believe even more strongly when they are given evidence that contradicts their beliefs. We can overcome our biases, we can do slow thinking and examine the evidence and logic, but our brains are hardwired to have bias.

Fast thinking and the "post-truth era"

The information environment of the 2020s encourages fast thinking. Once many people read newspapers daily. Now, many of us get daily news and information from social media sources such as TikTok, YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram. As we scroll social media or the web, images like the photo of the protester appear constantly and in such a large quantity that most of us are exposed to hundreds of images, posts, videos, or tweets every day. In this information environment, *fast thinking rules*: we look for a second, we read a headline without reading the whole article, we decide to click like or not, we decide to share with friends or not—all based on fast thinking, emotion, and our biases.

Certainly, technology can help us be well-informed, but there are dangers. Unlike traditional media, where there are reporters who majored in journalism, editors, and fact-checkers, *anyone* can post in social media or on the internet, and often an unreliable source looks just like a reliable one—so how do we know what is true? Moreover, social media, web search engines, and YouTube have algorithms that give you more of what you've already looked at, so you may end up in a filter bubble, or echo chamber: only information and ideas you already agree with (remember confirmation bias?) will appear in your feed. Sometimes social media will suggest new things that are more outrageous or extreme, and studies have found that social media posts are far more likely to go viral if they *appeal to emotion*.

In fact, studies of misinformation in the 2016 election season showed that falsehoods spread faster and farther than true stories. American politics has become angrier and more divided, and the "outrage" style of political opinion—lots of name-calling, wild exaggerations of the views of opponents, and appeals to emotion--has grown in recent decades. On top of all that, we have a problem of trust: more and more Americans do not trust traditional sources of information such as newspapers, government research agencies, network TV, colleges and universities, and even science itself.

The result? There is a lot of BS out there. Misinformation is such a problem that "fake news" is now an ordinary word in the U.S.A., and many have argued that we are now in the era of "post-truth." In the post-truth era, facts don't matter, and people make up their minds based on emotion, biases, and political loyalty. (For a good summary, see the book, *Post-Truth*, by Lee McIntyre.) According to Eric Oliver of the University of Chicago, over half of Americans subscribe to at least one conspiracy theory. About 10% of Americans still believe that vaccines cause autism even though this claim has been thoroughly debunked. Some Americans read and share articles from fake news websites as if they were real. For example, look up *America's Last Line of Defense;* this website declares itself to be satire, completely made-up stories, but so many people were sharing these stories that Factcheck.org felt the need to debunk stories from this site 24 times. Magazines such as *The Atlantic* publish stories such as "Stop Trusting Viral Videos." If you Google "misinformation about coronavirus," you will find many websites devoted to combatting myths and disinformation about Covid 19. And climate change? There is no controversy among scientists, but a significant portion of Americans still believe the problem does not exist or that the science is uncertain. Speaking of established science, surveys show that a large proportion of Americans don't believe in evolution—again, there is no disagreement here among scientists. Distrust of science is so strong that Sara and Jack Gorman wrote a whole book about science denial called *Denying to the Grave: Why We Ignore the Facts That Will Save Us*.

Possibly the most dramatic post-truth event of our lifetimes happened in the wake of the 2020 U.S. presidential election. Joe Biden won the election with 306 electoral votes to Trump's 232, and Biden won the popular vote by 7 million votes. Voter turnout was high and it was not a close election (even Republican Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell admitted this). However, Trump claimed with no evidence that the election was stolen. Spurred on by Trump's falsehoods, supporters stormed the Unites States Capitol on January 6, 2021, resulting in five deaths and 140 injuries. And as of April 2021, a poll by *Forbes* showed that 60% of Republicans still believed Trump's lie that the election was somehow rigged. In some cases, the spread of a lie may be dangerous to democracy itself. According to Timothy Snyder, professor of history at Yale University and author of *On Tyranny*, "To abandon facts is to abandon freedom. If nothing is true, then no one can criticize power, because there is no basis upon which to do so."

When American media users in 2020 saw the photo of the protester with a sign about Dreamers, it was in this sort of information environment. Fast, emotion, and bias are always there, but on top of all that people don't even agree on the most basic facts, like who won an election.

Thinking fast and slow—in college

To summarize so far: looking at the photo of the protester, people will form an opinion immediately based on fast thinking and emotion, and under the influence of cognitive bias. We need fast thinking to get through the day—emotions, gut instincts, reflexes, intuitions serve us well most of the time—but we need to develop slow thinking too. Let's go back to our photo of the Dreamer protester and do some slow thinking. Of course, it's good to notice your fast thinking–your feelings and gut reactions and snap

judgments–when looking at this picture. But then it's time to slow down, think it through, do some research.

Often this begins with defining key terms and clarifying what exactly is being said. The word "Dreamer" can be found in any online dictionary, and is usually defined as follows: undocumented immigrant, came to the U.S. as a child, qualifies for the DREAM Act. The DREAM Act was first proposed in 2001 but has never been passed by Congress. The act would grant Dreamers legal residency and possibly a path to citizenship if they met a list of qualifications (including "good moral character").

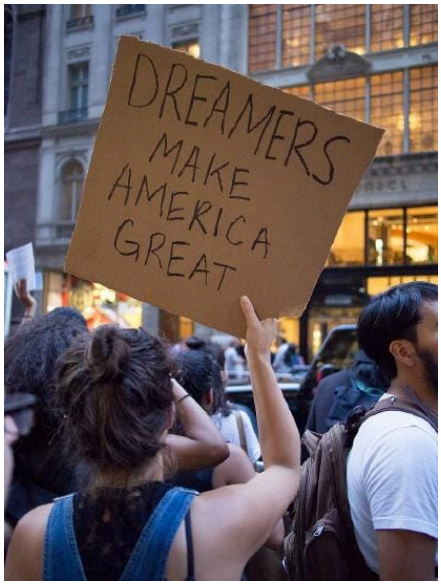


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Back to the picture: a young woman is holding a sign saying that "Dreamers make America great." Slow thinking: what does that mean? Is this an argument that Dreamers contribute to the economy? That they bring cultural contributions? That they benefit the USA overall? That the way America treats Dreamers should show greatness of heart? We don't know. Maybe we should consider context. The protesters were in the streets because Trump was going to rescind DACA, a move by Obama that gave temporary legal residency (but not a path to citizenship) to some Dreamers. So maybe the exact words of the sign aren't the point; maybe the real claim being made is something like: "Trump, you are wrong to rescind DACA!"

Beyond interpreting the photo, your next slow-thinking move would likely be research, but what research you do would depend on your purpose. As a college student writing a paper or doing a project, this could mean many different things. You could gather evidence about people who were brought to the U.S. as undocumented immigrants when they were children: how many are there? Where did they come from? How long have they been here? What percent attend college? What kind of jobs do they have? What would happen to them if they were deported?

You could also research DACA itself–what its provisions are, how long it's been in place, how DACA status is different from having a green card, and more. In addition to gathering facts, slow thinking might mean examining ethical questions such as this one: do undocumented people who arrived as children have a moral right to stay and become legal residents or citizens?

Given your feelings and biases, some information may confirm your fast thinking, but research can also disappoint. Let's say your fast thinking about the photo was "Yes!" You are a college student, your undocumented friend just transferred to UC Berkeley from your community college honors program, and you generally think Dreamers truly are a positive influence on America. But then in your research you find that only a small minority of DACA recipients attend and graduate from college. Here's what you found from a 2017 study by the Migration Policy Institute: "While DACA recipients are almost as likely as U.S. adults in the same age group (15-32) to be enrolled in college (18 percent versus 20 percent), they are far less likely to have completed college (4 percent versus 18 percent)." Well! What does that show? Do Dreamers have trouble completing college because they lack financial resources or aid? Or because they get deported before they can finish? Because of internalized prejudice? Or for some other reason? How do they do in comparison to non-immigrants whose parents have the same level of education and economic resources? Is college completion a good measure of contribution to society? How should this statistic influence our opinion of Dreamers and their contribution to America?

Slow thinking is partly this: realize that it's complicated, get confused, spend some time thinking about the information and what it means. And by the time you've done all the slow thinking for a college research paper, you've changed: your gut reaction isn't

all there is, you have a head full of facts and ideas. You may still have a strong opinion, but you might add, “It’s complicated.” You have a lot more to share in conversation about the Dreamers in America, and many more questions to continue exploring.

Attributions

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1.3: What This Book Offers

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (3 min, 20 sec):

This book is meant as a practical guide to college writing. It starts with understanding and describing others' arguments, then moves on to assessing those arguments' strengths and weaknesses and articulating our own points in response. These steps will help with most typical college writing assignments that occur across multiple disciplines:

- Summaries describe the ideas in an argument we have read.
- Assessments offer a judgment on how strong the argument is.
- Response papers make recommendations in response to the strengths or weaknesses of the argument.
- Research-based arguments describe and assess multiple sources in order to arrive at a new perspective.

This book follows that sequence. Chapter 2 describes how to figure out the logical structure of an argument, Chapter 3 explains how to summarize it, and Chapter 4 explores how to test the strength of the argument and make a judgment about it. Chapter 5 suggests ways to offer something new in response. Chapter 6 describes how to find and examine multiple sources on a topic, and Chapter 7 shows how research can lead us to develop an argument of our own.

My how-to approach is inspired by Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein's popular text *They Say I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*. They write, "What makes writers masters of their trade is...their mastery of an inventory of basic moves that they probably picked up by reading a wide range of other accomplished writers." Like them, I offer many phrases students can use to build original critical responses to texts. I have extended their approach to give more guidance on which phrases to use for which argumentative purposes. Graff and Birkenstein question the usefulness of learning "logical principles of argument" such as "syllogisms, warrants, fallacies, or the differences between inductive and deductive reasoning." However, I argue that we can study the specifics of how to make better arguments without getting bogged down in rhetorical terminology. We can frame many logical principles in terms of practical templates. For example, this book does not ask students to memorize the term "post hoc ergo propter hoc fallacy," but it does teach us to question the assumption that an earlier event causes a later event.

As part of preparing students to enter the academic conversation, this book aims to teach how to recognize and use methods of persuasion that go beyond logic. I consider that persuasion happens in the context of an imagined relationship between writer and reader. Chapter 8 looks at how arguments move us, and Chapter 9 explores how they establish trust and a sense of connection. Chapter 10, which presents the argument analysis essay, discusses how we can give a picture of an argument as a whole, finding connections between its appeals to emotion and trust and its logical structure. Finally, Chapter 11 considers techniques for shaping individual sentences to make our arguments clearer and more powerful.

In the spirit of writing as a conversation, please consider adding your thoughts by writing comments on the textbook in the Student Feedback or Instructor Feedback Hypothesis groups. We want to keep improving the book and making it more useful.



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2: READING TO FIGURE OUT THE ARGUMENT

Learning Outcomes

- Identify the main claims of a text as well as the reasons that support those claims.
- Identify any limits, counterarguments, or rebuttals mentioned in an argument.
- Draw a visual map of the claims, reasons, limits, counterarguments, and rebuttals.

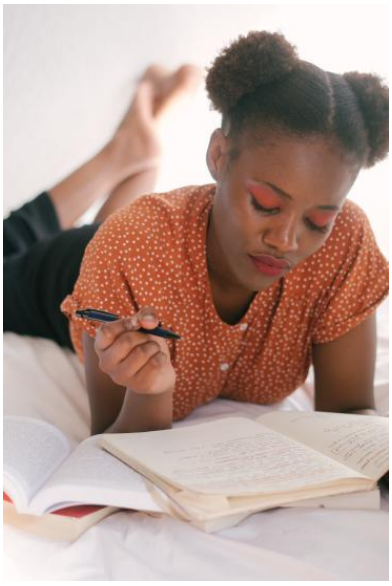


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2.1: Overview- Reading to Write

2.2: Types of Claims to Look out for

2.3: Making Notes on the Writer's Claims

2.4: Deciding Which Is the Main Claim

2.5: Finding the Reasons

2.6: Finding the Counterarguments

2.7: Finding the Responses to the Counterarguments

2.8: Finding the Limits on the Argument

2.9: Common Argument Phrases

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2.1: Overview- Reading to Write

Media Alternative

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YouTube Video

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View this YouTube Video online

In almost every college class, we are asked to read someone else's writing, explain what that person is arguing, and point out the strengths and weaknesses of their argument. This chapter offers tools for figuring out the structure of an argument and describing it. In later chapters, we will talk about responding to arguments and analyzing how arguments play on emotion and gain the audience's trust.

So when you are just trying to get the barebones ideas about something you have read straight, how do you go about it? An argument is a swarming cluster of words. How do you get to the heart of it?

In this chapter we look at how to take notes not just on the meaning of each part of the argument but also on its relation to the other parts. Then we use these notes to draw a visual map of an argument. In the map we see the argument's momentum as the reason points us toward the claim. We see how each element implies, supports, limits, or contradicts other elements. Thus, we begin to imagine where the argument is vulnerable and how it might be modified.

In Chapter 3, we'll discuss how to use this logical map to write a summary, and in Chapter 4, we'll see how to follow up the summary with our own opinions.



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2.2: Types of Claims to Look out for

Media Alternative

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As we make notes on what a writer is claiming at each point, it is worth distinguishing what kind of claim they are making.

Claims of Policy

The most familiar kind of argument demands action. It is easy to see when the writer is asking readers to do something. Here are a few phrases that signal a claim of policy, a claim that is pushing readers to do something:

- We should _____.
- We ought to _____.
- We must _____.
- Let's _____.
- The best course is _____.
- The solution is to _____.
- The next step should be _____.
- We should consider _____.
- Further research should be done to determine _____.

Here are a few sample claims of policy:

- Landlords should not be allowed to raise the rent more than 2% per year.
- The federal government should require a background check before allowing anyone to buy a gun.
- Social media accounts should not be censored in any way.

A claim of policy can also look like a direct command, such as "So if you are an American citizen, don't let anything stop you from voting."

Note that not all claims of policy give details or specifics about what should be done or how. Sometimes an author is only trying to build momentum and point us in a certain direction. For example, "Schools must find a way to make bathrooms more private for everyone, not just transgender people."

Claims of policy don't have to be about dramatic actions. Even discussion, research, and writing are kinds of action. For example, "Americans need to learn more about other wealthy nations' health care systems in order to see how much better things could be in America."



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Claims of Fact

Arguments do not always point toward action. Sometimes writers want us to share their vision of reality on a particular subject. They may want to paint a picture of how something happened, describe a trend, or convince us that something is bad or good.

In some cases, the writer may want to share a particular vision of what something is like, what effects something has, how something is changing, or of how something unfolded in the past. The argument might define a phenomenon, a trend, or a period of history.

Often these claims are simply presented as fact, and an uncritical reader may not see them as arguments at all. However, very often claims of fact are more controversial than they seem. For example, consider the claim, “Caffeine boosts performance.” Does it really? How much? How do we know? Performance at what kind of task? For everyone? Doesn’t it also have downsides? A writer could spend a book convincing us that caffeine really boosts performance and explaining exactly what they mean by those three words.

Some phrases writers might use to introduce a claim of fact include the following:

- Research suggests that _____.
- The data indicate that _____.
- _____is increasing or decreasing.
- There is a trend toward _____.
- _____causes _____
- _____leads to _____.

Often a claim of fact will be the basis for other claims about what we should do that look more like what we associate with the word “argument.” However, many pieces of writing in websites, magazines, office settings, and academic settings don’t try to move people toward action. They aim primarily at getting readers to agree with their view of what is fact. For example, it took many years of argument, research, and public messaging before most people accepted the claim that “Smoking causes cancer.”

Here are a few arguable sample claims of fact:

- It is easier to grow up biracial in Hawaii than in any other part of the United States.
- Raising the minimum wage will force many small businesses to lay off workers.
- Fires in the western United States have gotten worse primarily because of climate change.
- Antidepressants provide the most benefit when combined with talk therapy.

Claims of Value

In other cases, the writer is not just trying to convince us that something is a certain way or causes something, but is trying to say how good or bad that thing is. They are rating it, trying to get us to share her assessment of its value. Think of a movie or book review or an Amazon or Yelp review. Even a “like” on Facebook or a thumbs up on a text message is a claim of value.

Claims of value are fairly easy to identify. Some phrases that indicate a claim of value include the following:

- _____is terrible/disappointing/underwhelming.
- _____is mediocre/average/decent/acceptable.
- We should celebrate _____.
- _____is great, wonderful, fantastic, impressive, makes a substantial contribution to _____.

A claim of value can also make a comparison. It might assert that something is better than, worse than, or equal to something else. Some phrases that signal a comparative claim of value include these:

- _____is the best _____.
- _____is the worst _____.
- _____is better than _____.
- _____is worse than _____.
- _____is just as good as _____.
- _____is just as bad as _____

The following are examples of claims of value:

- The Bay Area is the best place to start a biotech career.
- Forest fires are becoming the worst threat to public health in California.
- Human rights are more important than border security.
- Experimenting with drag is the best way I’ve found to explore my feelings about masculinity and femininity.
- It was so rude when that lady asked you what race you are.

Note that the above arguments all include claims of fact but go beyond observing to praise or criticize what they are observing.

Practice Exercise 2.2.1

Interactive Content

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Practice Exercise 2.2.2

On a social media site like Facebook or Twitter or on your favorite news site, find an example of one of each kind of claim.

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2.3: Making Notes on the Writer's Claims

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (6 min, 35 sec):

A first step toward summarizing and responding to an argument is to first make margin notes on the claims. Let's take the following argument as an example:

Sample Argument: "Wouldn't We All Cross the Border?"

All the disagreement over immigration policy I have been hearing about in the news lately reminds me that while I believe in the rule of law, I feel profoundly uncomfortable with the idea of keeping people out who are desperate to come in. Is illegal immigration actually wrong? Is it unethical to cross a border without permission?

I don't have a clear vision yet of what the right border policy would be, and I admit that completely open borders would put our security at risk. But surely there are ways to regulate the border without criminalizing people who are driven by need and good intentions.

If I were raising children in an impoverished third-world community plagued by violence, and if I had a chance to get my family to the U.S., I would take it. I would try to cross a border illegally so my children would get enough to eat and would have a more stable childhood and a chance at a better education and a better career. What parent would sit on their hands and tell themself, "I want to give my child a better life, but oh well. If I don't have the papers, I guess it would be wrong"?

If most of us, under desperate circumstances, would cross the border without permission and feel no moral qualms about doing so, then we must recognize this crossing as an ethical, reasonable act. If it is ethical and reasonable, then how can either a wall or a detention center be on the side of justice? We must find a policy that treats migrants as we would want to be treated--with empathy, respect, and offers of help.

We can often paraphrase the claims more readily on a second read when we are already familiar with the content. Some need the physicality of taking notes by hand in the margins of a book or a printout.



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Some take notes by creating comments in Word or Google Docs. Others use online annotation systems like Hypothes.is. Another

way is to copy the text into a table in a word processing program and write notes in a second column, as we have done below:

Sample Margin Notes on an Argument's Claims

Section of the text	Notes on the claims
Wouldn't We All Cross the Border?	Implies a claim of fact: we would all cross the border (under what circumstances?)
All the disagreement over immigration policy I have been hearing about in the news lately reminds me that while I believe in the rule of law, I feel profoundly uncomfortable with the idea of keeping people out who are desperate to come in. Is illegal immigration actually wrong? Is it unethical to cross a border without permission?	Suggests a claim of value: It might not be wrong to cross illegally. But also suggests another claim of value: that "the rule of law" is right. Is this a contradiction?
I don't have a clear vision yet of what the right border policy would be, and I admit that completely open borders would put our security at risk. But surely there are ways to regulate the border without criminalizing people who are driven by need and good intentions.	Claim of policy about the border--we shouldn't criminalize people who have legitimate reasons to cross. Admits there are security risks in "open borders." Looking for some kind of middle ground that keeps us safe but doesn't criminalize migrants.
If I were raising children in an impoverished third-world community plagued by violence, and if I had a chance to get my family to the U.S., I would take it. I would try to cross a border illegally so my children would get enough to eat and would have a more stable childhood and a chance at a better education and a better career. What parent would sit on their hands and tell themself, "I want to give my child a better life, but oh well. If I don't have the papers, I guess it would be wrong"?	Claim of fact: the author would consider it right to cross illegally to benefit their children. That is, if their whole family didn't have enough money, a safe place to live, or access to a good education. They imply another claim of fact: that any parent would do the same and feel okay about it.

Section of the text	Notes on the claims
If most of us, under desperate circumstances, would cross the border without permission and feel no moral qualms about doing so, then we must recognize this crossing as an ethical, reasonable act. If it is ethical and reasonable, then how can either a wall or a detention center be on the side of justice? We must find a policy that treats migrants as we would want to be treated--with empathy, respect, and offers of help.	Starts with the same claim of fact as in the title and the previous paragraph: most people would cross the border illegally. Adds the idea that we wouldn't feel it was wrong. The implication is that if all these people would feel it is right, then it really is "ethical and reasonable." "We must recognize" implies a claim of policy--that people should talk about illegal crossings publicly in a different way than we do now. Claim of policy: Border walls and detention centers are not right. Ends with three policy recommendations for how to treat migrants: empathy, respect, and help.

Notice that attempting to summarize each claim can actually take more space than the original text itself if we are summarizing in detail and trying to be very precise about what the text claims and implies. Of course, we won't want to or need to do this in such detail for every paragraph of every reading we are assigned to write about. We can resort to it when the argument gets harder to follow or when it's especially important to be precise.

Practice Exercise 2.3.1

Make notes in your own words on the claims of fact, value, and policy you find in an argument you are reading for class or one of our suggested readings. Make a table with two columns and paste the argument into the first column. In the second column, summarize the points the author makes as in the example above. If you like, you can make a copy of this Google Docs notes template.

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2.4: Deciding Which Is the Main Claim

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (4 min):

Now that we have this list of claims in the margin of the text, we know some of the things that the author wants us to believe. How do we sort them and put them in relation to each other? In this case, we found claims of policy, fact, and value, some of which were repeated in different parts of the argument. Which claim is the main point? How do other claims support this one?



Which direction is the author taking the argument?
Photo by Brendan Church on Unsplash under the Unsplash License.

We can try asking ourselves the following questions to see if we already have a sense of what the argument's goal is.

- What does the writer want us to believe?
- What does the writer most want to convince us of?
- Where is the writer going with this?
- If the writer had to make their point in just one sentence, what would they say?

A good first place to look for the focus, of course, is the title. Often the title will declare the main claim outright. Here, the title question "Wouldn't We All Cross the Border?" implies the answer “Yes.” We can look for the same idea in the text and check whether it seems to be the main one. The third paragraph describes why the author would cross the border and then generalizes to claim that others would do the same. At the start of the last paragraph, the writer declares that “ ...most of us, under desperate circumstances, would cross the border without permission and feel no moral qualms about doing so.” Note that this is a claim of fact about what people would do and how they would feel about it.

But is this the main claim? When we review the other sections, we find several other claims of policy. Introductions set expectations, and here, the first paragraph alludes to public debates on immigration policy. It suggests that it may not be right to stop people from coming into America, and it may not be wrong to cross the border, even illegally. These early references to what is right suggest that the argument aims to do more than describe how people might feel under different circumstances. The argument is going to weigh in on what border policy should be. The second paragraph confirms this sense as it builds up to the still vague sentence, “ Surely there are ways to regulate the border without criminalizing people who are driven by need and good intentions.”

In the last paragraph, we learn what these ways might involve. Three different claims of policy emerge:

1. “... We must recognize this crossing as an ethical, reasonable act.”
2. "How can either a wall or a detention center be on the side of justice?" (The implication, of course, is that they cannot be.)
3. “ We must find a policy that treats migrants as we would want to be treated--with empathy, respect, and offers of help.”

Which of these final claims is the overall focus? Arguments sometimes emphasize their main point in the very last sentence, in part to make it memorable. However, the end of the argument can also be a place for the author to go a little beyond their main point and suggest issues for further thought. The phrase "empathy, respect, and offers of help" sounds important, but we should note that the rest of the argument isn’t about how to help migrants. However, the idea that we should respond more positively to migrants has recurred throughout. The idea that migrants are not in the wrong--that they are not criminals--is clearly key, and so is the idea that we should change border policy accordingly.

Here is one way, then, to combine those last two ideas into a summary of the overall claim of the argument:

Claim: Border policy should not criminalize undocumented immigrants.

Practice Exercise 2.4.1

Choose an argument you are reading for class or one of our suggested readings, read it closely, and then try to summarize the main claim in your own words. If you are unsure, return to making notes on the writer's claims and then reflect on the questions above.

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2.5: Finding the Reasons

Media Alternative

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Once we know what the main point of the reading is, we can ask ourselves what reasons the author gives. We can go through our annotations to look at the other claims and see how some may be used as reasons for the main claim or as reasons for one of the reasons.

We can write the claims in a map and use the arrows to show which claim works as a reason supporting which other claim. Each claim moves our mind from one idea to the next in the direction the writer wants it to go. The claim farthest to the right, the one that the others point toward, is the main point. Such maps might take a few different forms, such as these:

Reason → Claim

Reason A → Reason B → Claim

Reason A → Claim
Reason B ↗

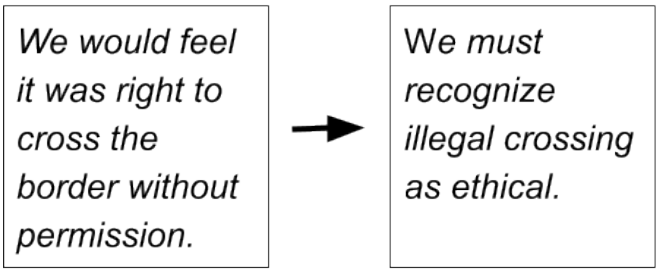
How can we tell where to put each claim on the map and where to point the arrows? It can help to remember that particular words and phrases in academic and professional writing basically act as arrows. They signal that one idea is supposed to lead to another. Here are some such phrases:

- Because_____, _____.
- Because of this, _____.
- If_____, then _____.
- Since_____, _____.
- For this reason,_____.
- We can conclude_____.
- Therefore, _____.
- So_____.
- Consequently, _____.
- As a result, _____.
- Hence_____.
- Thus_____.
- It follows that _____.

For example, in the above argument, “If_____, then _____.” connects two claims in the following sentence:

“If most of us, under desperate circumstances, would cross the border without permission and feel no moral qualms about doing so, then we must recognize this crossing as an ethical, reasonable act.”

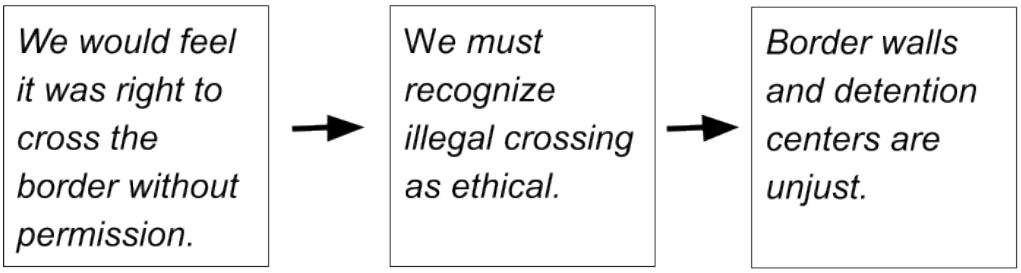
We could write a short version of the first half of the sentence, put it in a box, and point it toward a short version of the second half:



"Claim and Reason Argument Map" by Anna Mills is licensed CC BY-NC 4.0.
See the accessible text description of this one-reason map.

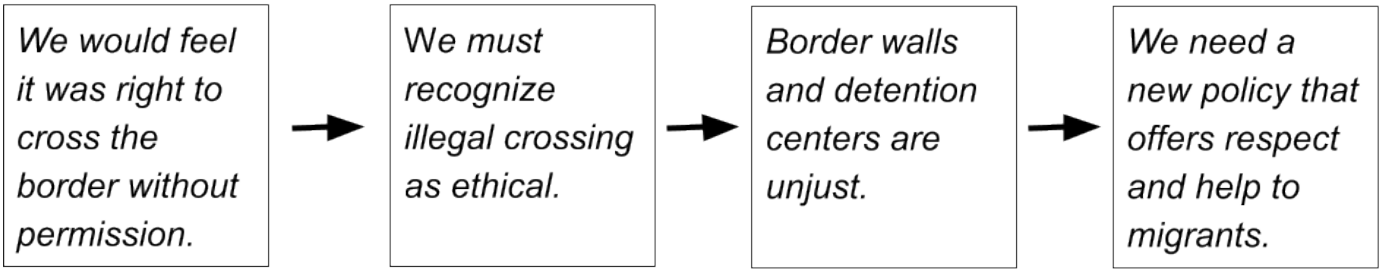
The following sentence sets up another If_____, then _____ statement: " If it is ethical and reasonable, then how can either a wall or a detention center be on the side of justice?"

We could add this on thus:



"Two Reasons Argument Map" by Anna Mills is licensed CC BY-NC 4.0.
See the accessible text description of this two-reason map.

If border walls and detention centers are unjust, there must be a need for an alternate approach. The next sentence claims, "We must find a policy that treats migrants as we would want to be treated--with empathy, respect, and offers of help." We can offer a short version of this sentence as the final implication.



"Three Reasons Argument Map" by Anna Mills is licensed CC BY-NC 4.0.
See the accessible text description of this three-reason map.

Practice Exercise 2.5.1

1. Choose an argument you are reading for class or one of our suggested readings. You may want to focus on a short excerpt of one or more paragraphs.
2. Read your text closely and identify any reasons given to support the main claim and any reasons for those reasons.
3. Then map out the author's reasons as in the examples above. Describe each reason in your own words. You can handwrite your map or copy this Google Drawings template and insert the reasons. Later, you will add other elements of the argument to the map.

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2.6: Finding the Counterarguments

Media Alternative

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Very often, as we read an argument we will find not just what the author thinks and believes, but the author's description of other people's opposing arguments as well. An argument is part of an ongoing broader conversation about the subject, and the writer can remind us of what they are responding to. So as we read we can look for and mark these counterarguments.

In a complex text it can be easy to miss that a particular point is actually not one that the writer agrees with--they may be bringing it up in order to shoot it down. We can look out for particular phrases that are often used in academic writing to signal that the writer is switching sides temporarily and describing an idea that goes against the argument.



In chess, it's easy to tell which piece is on which side, but in a text we need other clues.
Image by Агзам Гайсин from Pixabay under the Pixabay License.

Very often the way the author will both signal to us that they are introducing the counterargument and signal their attitude toward it. They will convey the degree to which they disagree and the respect or contempt they feel for this opposing view.

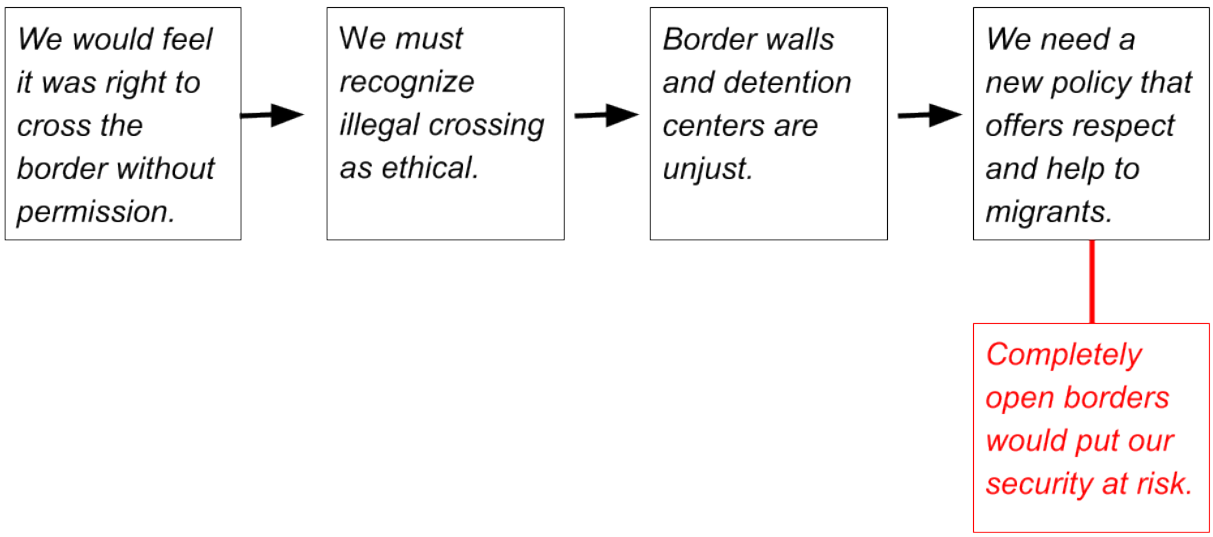
Common Phrases That Introduce Counterarguments

Attitude to the Counterargument	Phrases
Negative **The writer thinks the counterargument is completely wrong.**	• It is a popular misconception that_____. • Some have fallen for the idea that_____. • Many people mistakenly believe that_____.

Attitude to the Counterargument	Phrases
Neutral **The writer is about to describe a counterargument without giving their opinion yet.**	• Many people think _____. • Some, on the other hand, will argue that _____. • Some might disagree, claiming that _____. • Of course, many have claimed that _____. • Some will take issue with _____, arguing that _____. • Some will object that _____. • Some will dispute the idea that _____, claiming that _____. • One criticism of this way of thinking is that _____. Note that these neutral examples don't tell us whether the writer thinks the counterargument has any validity. Usually, the writer will want to follow them with a sentence that does reveal their opinion.
Positive **The writer sees some merit in the counterargument. They agree with it even though it hurts their argument. This is called concession.**	• It is true that _____. • I do concede_____. • We should grant that_____. • We must admit that_____. • I acknowledge that _____. • X has a point that _____. • Admittedly, _____. • Of course, _____. • To be sure, _____. • There may be something to the idea that _____.

In the border argument example, the writer never directly mentions other writers who disagree. Instead, they signal with the phrase "I admit" that they are going to summarize a valid point which goes against their own main argument: "I admit that completely open borders would put our security at risk."

We could add this to our map as follows, with the counterargument in red to show it goes against the rest of the argument:



"Argument Map with Counterargument" by Anna Mills is licensed CC BY-NC 4.0.
See the accessible text description of the argument map with counterargument.

Practice Exercise 2.6.1

1. Choose an argument you are reading for class or one of our suggested readings. You may want to focus on a short excerpt of one or more paragraphs.
2. Read your text closely and identify any counterarguments it mentions. What is the writer's attitude to each counterargument?
3. Describe each counterargument in your own words and add it to your argument map. You can handwrite your map or copy this Google Drawings template.

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2.7: Finding the Responses to the Counterarguments

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (4 min, 16 sec):

After a writer summarizes another perspective, they will signal that they are switching back to their own perspective. If they have not already given a hint about their attitude to the other side, they will have to make their response clear now. Do they see the counterargument as completely wrong-headed, or as having some merit?

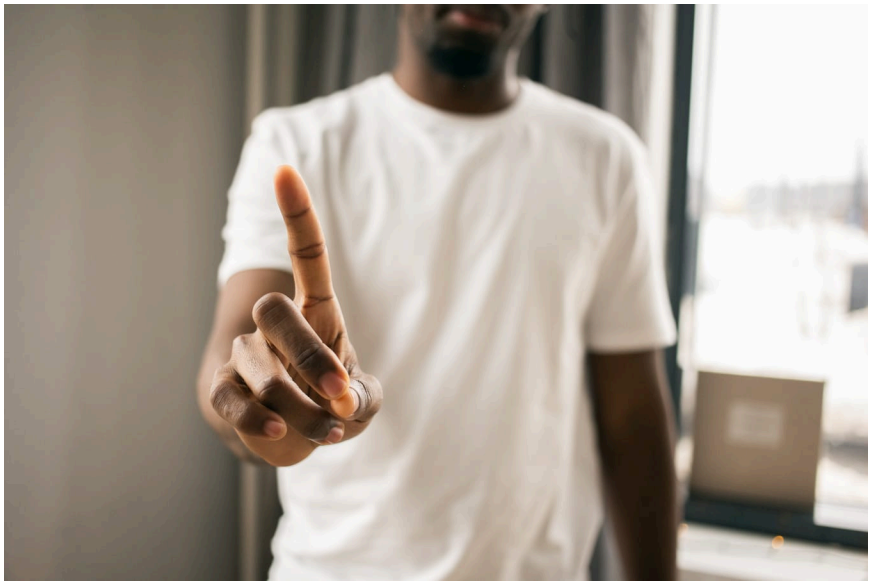


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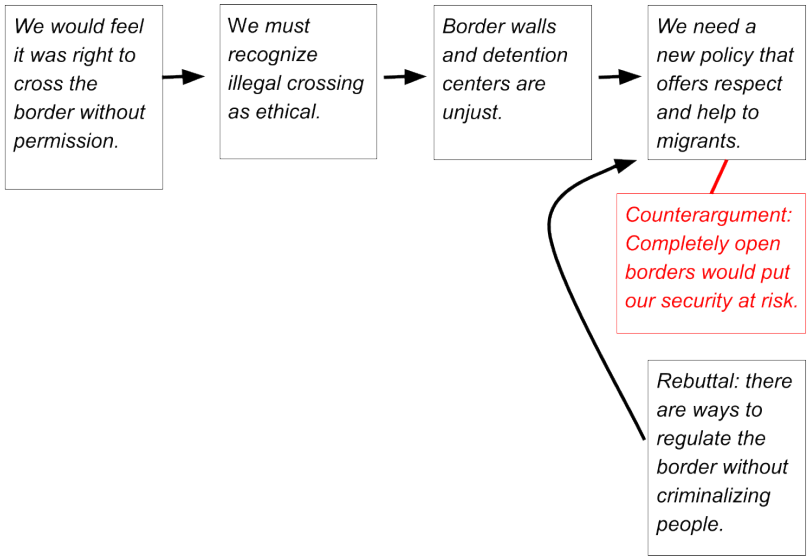
If the writer completely disagrees with the counterargument, they will follow up their description of it by pointing out its flaws. This direct rebuttal will bring the readers back to the writer's side. If they have just conceded a point, they will now emphasize the reason why their own argument still holds. The more the writer has credited the counterargument, the more they will need to explain why readers shouldn't accept it, at least not completely. Below are some phrases which can point toward the problem or limitation of the counterargument.

Common Phrases for Responding to Counterarguments

Attitude to the Counterargument	Phrases
If the writer considers the counterargument totally wrong	• This idea misses the fact that _____. • I disagree because _____. • This depends on the assumption that _____ which is incorrect because _____. • This argument overlooks _____. • This argument contradicts itself _____. • This is mistaken because _____.

Attitude to the Counterargument	Phrases
If the writer partly agrees with the counterargument	• It is true that _____, but_____. • I do concede_____, and yet_____. • We should grant that_____, but we must still acknowledge that _____. • We can admit that_____ and still believe that _____.. • I acknowledge that _____, and yet we should nevertheless recognize that _____. • Critics have a point that _____; however it is more important that we focus on _____. • Admittedly, _____. However, _____. • Of course, _____, but I still insist that_____.. • To be sure, _____; but _____. • There may be something to the idea that _____, and yet _____.

In the border argument example, the writer concedes that the counterargument does have merit: "I admit that completely open borders would put our security at risk." Immediately, the writer responds, "But surely there are ways to regulate the border without criminalizing people who are driven by need and good intentions." The word “but” signals the transition from concession back to the writer's own side. In the map, we can put the rebuttal below the counterargument and use the arrow to show it supporting the main claim.



"Argument Map with Counterargument and Rebuttal" by Anna Mills is licensed CC BY-NC 4.0.
See the accessible text description of the argument map with counterargument and rebuttal.

Practice Exercise 2.7.1

1. Choose an argument you are reading for class or one of our suggested readings. You may want to focus on a short excerpt of one or more paragraphs.
2. Read your text closely and identify any counterarguments it mentions. What is the writer's attitude to each counterargument?
3. Decide what your attitude to this counterargument is. Choose a phrase from the above table to introduce the counterargument.

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2.8: Finding the Limits on the Argument

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (7 min, 29 sec):

If we are getting ready to summarize and respond to an argument, we need to notice exactly how the writer has qualified or limited what they are saying.

Often if a counterargument has some merit, a writer may respond acknowledging that, taking a step back and limiting what they are claiming. They might make an exception for a particular case where they realize their initial claim wouldn't hold. Or they might clarify that their claim only applies to a particular group or situation.



Just as we might limit a tomato harvest to ripe tomatoes, we might want to limit an argument to certain cases and not others.
Photo by Roon Z on Pexels under the Pexels License.

Faced with a powerful counterargument, a writer might also admit a certain degree of uncertainty about their claim as a whole. They might consider the argument worth putting forward for consideration even if they are not sure it is right.

Common Phrases Used to Limit Arguments

Kinds of limitations on arguments	Phrases
Expressing less than perfect certainty	• Perhaps, _____. • It is worth considering the idea that _____. • _____ may_____. • _____might_____. • _____could possibly_____. • Probably, _____. • Very likely, _____. • Almost certainly,_____.
Limiting what the argument is claiming or restricting the scope of the argument	• Few _____. • In a few cases, _____. • Some_____. • Many_____. • Most_____. • The vast majority of _____. • Almost all_____. • _____ unless_____. • If it is not the case that_____, then _____. • _____, except in the case that _____. • We can exclude cases where _____.

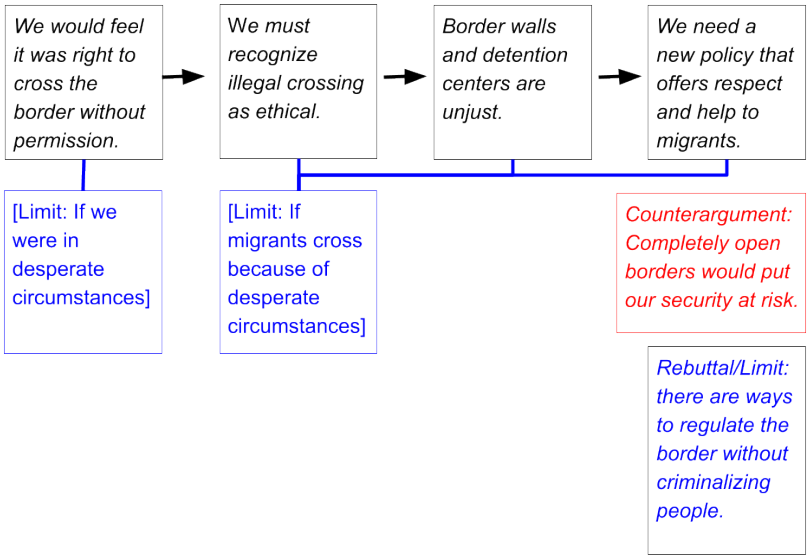
When we read arguments, we can watch for these limitations and add them to our argument map. In the case of the border argument, limitations are found throughout. We have highlighted them and commented on them below.

Sample Notes on an Argument's Limits

Argument	Notes
Title: Wouldn't We All Cross the Border?	Not limited at all--a universal "all"

Argument	Notes
All the disagreement over immigration policy I have been hearing about in the news lately reminds me that while I believe in the rule of law, I feel profoundly uncomfortable with the idea of keeping people out who are desperate to come in. Is illegal immigration actually wrong? Is it unethical to cross a border without permission?	Limits the group of immigrants we are talking about to those who are desperate. This is an argument about refugees of one kind or another, not about people who just feel they would be happier or more successful in the U.S. So maybe the author would still consider it fine to criminalize those who cross illegally because they prefer to live in the U.S. if they are not currently in dire straits.
I don't have a clear vision yet of what the right border policy would be, and I admit that completely open borders would put our security at risk. But surely there are ways to regulate the border without criminalizing people who are driven by need and good intentions.	Clarifies that some "regulation" of borders is okay. Their argument does not condemn all efforts to establish rules and consequences at the border. Again, this clarifies that this only applies to migrants with a compelling reason to cross.
If I were raising children in an impoverished third-world community plagued by violence, and if I had a chance to get my family to the U.S., I would take it. I would try to cross a border illegally so my children would get enough to eat and would have a more stable childhood and a chance at a better education and a better career. What parent would sit on their hands and tell themself, "I want to give my child a better life, but oh well. If I don't have the papers, I guess it would be wrong"?	Outlines a specific circumstance that would justify crossing illegally, implying that other circumstances might not justify it.
If most of us, under desperate circumstances, would cross the border without permission and feel no moral qualms about doing so, then we must recognize this crossing as an ethical, reasonable act. If it is ethical and reasonable, then how can either a wall or a detention center be on the side of justice? We must find a policy that treats migrants as we would want to be treated--with empathy, respect, and offers of help.	Repeats the limitation to migrants who are desperate. Note: The final sentences don't mention any limitation on which migrants we are talking about.

The main limitation, then, can be entered into the argument map in blue and in brackets thus:



"Argument Map with Limits" by Anna Mills is licensed CC BY-NC 4.0.
See the accessible text description of the argument map with limits.

Now that we have analyzed the parts of the argument and their relations to each other, we are ready for the next step demanded by most college writing assignments. Chapter 3 will discuss how to write a clear and precise summary of an argument.

Practice Exercise 2.8.1

Interactive Content

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

View this Interactive Content online

Practice Exercise 2.8.2

1. Choose an argument you are reading for class or one of our suggested readings. You may want to focus on a short excerpt of one or more paragraphs.
2. Read your text closely and identify any limits it puts on any of its claims.
3. Describe each limit in your own words and add it to your argument map. You can handwrite your map or copy this Google Drawings template.

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2.9: Common Argument Phrases

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (6 min, 13 sec):

Here are all of the common phrases discussed in Chapter 2 for introducing different elements of an argument. The section headings link to more information.

Claims

Claims of policy

- We should _____.
- We ought to _____.
- We must _____.
- Let's _____.
- The best course is _____.
- The solution is to _____.
- The next step should be _____.
- We should consider _____.
- Further research should be done to determine _____.

Claims of fact

- Research suggests that _____.
- The data indicate that _____.
- _____is increasing or decreasing.
- There is a trend toward _____.
- _____causes _____
- _____leads to _____.

Claims of value

- _____is terrible/disappointing/underwhelming.
- _____is mediocre/average/decent/acceptable.
- We should celebrate _____.
- _____is great/wonderful/fantastic/impressive.

Comparative claims of value

- _____is the best _____.
- _____is the worst _____.
- _____is better than _____.
- _____is worse than _____.
- _____is just as good as _____.
- _____is just as bad as _____

Reasons

- Because_____, _____.
- Because of this, _____.
- If_____, then _____.
- Since_____, _____.
- For this reason,_____.
- We can conclude_____.
- Therefore, _____.
- So_____.
- Consequently, _____.
- As a result, _____.
- Hence_____.
- Thus_____.
- It follows that _____.

Counterarguments

Mistaken counterarguments

- It is a popular misconception that_____.
- Some have fallen for the idea that_____.
- Many people mistakenly believe that_____.

Neutrally described counterarguments

- Many people think _____.
- Some, on the other hand, will argue that _____.
- Some might disagree, claiming that _____.
- Of course, many have claimed that _____.
- Some will take issue with _____, arguing that _____.
- Some will object that _____.
- Some will dispute the idea that _____, claiming that _____.
- One criticism of this way of thinking is that _____.

Counterarguments that have merit

- It is true that _____.
- I do concede_____.
- We should grant that_____.
- We must admit that_____.
- I acknowledge that _____.
- X has a point that _____.
- Admittedly, _____.
- Of course, _____.
- To be sure, _____.
- There may be something to the idea that _____.

Rebuttal to a counterargument

- This idea misses the fact that _____.
- I disagree because _____.
- This depends on the assumption that _____ which is incorrect because _____.
- This argument overlooks _____.
- This argument contradicts itself _____.

- This is mistaken because _____.

Concession to a counterargument

- It is true that _____, but_____.
- I do concede_____, and yet_____.
- We should grant that_____, but we must still acknowledge that _____.
- We can admit that_____ and still believe that _____..
- I acknowledge that _____, and yet we should nevertheless recognize that _____.
- Critics have a point that _____; however it is more important that we focus on _____.
- Admittedly, _____. However, _____.
- Of course, _____, but I still insist that_____..
- To be sure, _____; but _____.
- There may be something to the idea that _____, and yet _____.

Limits

Less than perfect certainty

- Perhaps, _____.
- It is worth considering the idea that _____.
- _____ may_____.
- _____might_____.
- _____could possibly_____.
- Probably, _____.
- Very likely, _____.
- Almost certainly,_____.

Narrowing the scope of the argument

- Few _____.
- Some_____.
- Many_____.
- Most_____.
- The vast majority of _____.
- Almost all_____.
- _____ unless_____.
- If it is not the case that_____, then _____.
- _____, except in the case that _____.
- We can exclude cases where _____.

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3: WRITING A SUMMARY OF ANOTHER WRITER'S ARGUMENT

Learning Outcomes

- Write a thorough summary of an author's text that includes that text's main claim, reasons, counterarguments, and limits.
- Choose phrases precisely to show the role of each point summarized within the larger argument.
- Identify key similarities and differences between two arguments.
- Write an essay summarizing and comparing two arguments that highlights what we can learn from their key similarities and differences.



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3.1: What Is a Summary?

3.2: Introducing the Argument and the Main Claim

3.3: Describing the Reasoning

3.4: Describing How the Author Treats Counterarguments

3.5: Describing How the Author Limits the Claim

3.6: Putting the Summary Together

3.7: Writing a Short Summary of a Long Argument

3.8: Sample Summaries

3.8.1: Sample Summary- "Spread Feminism, Not Germs"

3.8.2: Sample Summary- "Typography and Identity"

3.9: Comparing and Contrasting Arguments

3.10: A Sample Compare-and-Contrast Essay

3.10.1: Annotated Compare-and-Contrast Essay

3.11: Common Summary Phrases

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3.1: What Is a Summary?

Media Alternative

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In Chapter 2: Reading to Figure out the Argument, we discussed strategies for understanding the reading by identifying the claims presented and mapping how they work together. Chapter 3 will focus on how to use this understanding to describe the argument in our own words. Such a description is called a summary, and it forms part of most college writing assignments. In some cases, the summary will be the entire essay. We may be given a page or word count range, which might be as short as a paragraph or as long as several pages. More frequently, the summary will be the starting point; a summary in the introduction or in the first page or two will serve to launch a discussion of our own opinion. In either case, we can use the summary strategies in this chapter to create a coherent chunk of writing that will give the reader a clear picture of the text we are analyzing.

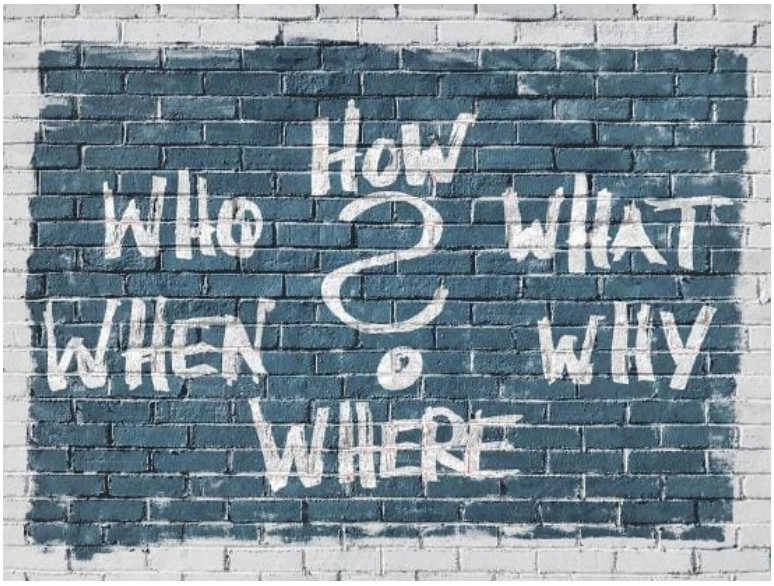


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If we have read a text and identified its claims and reasons along with any counterarguments and limits, we are in an excellent position to write a summary. If we have notes on the argument structure or an argument map, those can guide us as we write. Our notes or map will probably help us choose what to leave out and what to emphasize. They will point to the role each claim plays in the overall argument. In the summary, instead of annotations, colors, arrows, and labels like “claim” and “reason,” we will use strategic phrases to show how the parts fit together.

As we choose words to paraphrase a writer’s points, we will want to reread the text to see how strongly the writer suggests something or what attitude they take toward a counterargument. Thus the process of writing a summary helps us get even clearer about the writer’s intentions and implications than we would in making notes or mapping out the argument. Ultimately, summarizing will prepare us to comment, critique and respond more effectively, as we will see in Chapter 4, "Assessing the Strength of an Argument."

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3.2: Introducing the Argument and the Main Claim

Media Alternative

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Introducing the Argument

Almost immediately, the reader of any summary will need some basic information about the argument summarized. We can name title and author in an introductory phrase. If the publication date and the publication name seem important, we can work those in too. For example, a summary could introduce the basic data on the sample border argument with the phrase "In her 2019 article “Wouldn’t We All Cross the Border?”, Anna Mills..." and follow it with a description of the topic, purpose, or main claim. Some options for introductory phrases include the following:

- In an article for _____, writer _____...
- The account of _____ in the piece _____ by _____...
- Writing in the journal _____, the scholar _____ ...

Next, probably right after the introductory phrase, the reader will want to know the main point of that argument. To introduce the main claim, we’ll need a well-chosen verb to describe the author’s intention, her purpose in writing. The most general possible verb to describe a main claim would be “says,” as in “In her 2019 article “Wouldn’t We All Cross the Border?”, Anna Mills says... ” But that would tell us so little about what Anna Mills is trying to do. Readers will be bored and will learn nothing from “says.” If we choose a more dramatic and precise verb like “calls for,” “criticizes,” “describes,” “argues,” or “questions,” then readers will feel the dynamism and momentum of both the argument and the summary. We can convey a lot about the structure of the argument, its degree of conviction or moderation, its tone and attitude by the word or phrase we choose to introduce each claim. As we choose those phrases, we will also be pushing ourselves to get an even clearer picture of the argument than we did by mapping it.



Just as a person might gesture toward a central feature of a landscape, a summary points readers toward the main claim of a text.
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Describing Claims of Fact

If the argument's main purpose is to describe reality in some way, we will want to let readers know if it is controversial or not. Is the writer defending their idea against obvious objections or counterarguments, or are they aiming to inform us about something we may not be aware of?

Phrases to introduce controversial claims of fact

- They argue that _____.
- She maintains that _____.
- He contends that _____.
- They assert that _____.
- She holds that _____.
- He insists that _____.
- She thinks_____.
- They believe that_____.

Phrases to introduce widely accepted claims of fact

- He informs us of _____.
- She describes_____.
- They note that _____.
- He observes that _____.
- She explains that _____.
- The writer points out the way in which_____.

Describing Claims of Value

If the argument's main purpose is to convince us that something is bad or good or of mixed value, we can signal that evaluation to the reader right off the bat. How dramatic is the claim about its praise or critique? We can ask ourselves how many stars the argument is giving the thing it evaluates. A five-star rating "celebrates" or "applauds" its subject while a four-star rating might be said to "endorse it with some reservations."

Phrases to describe a positive claim of value

- They praise_____.
- He celebrates_____.
- She applauds the notion that_____.
- They endorse_____.
- He admires_____.
- She finds value in_____.
- They rave about_____.

Phrases to describe a negative claim of value

- The author criticizes_____.
- She deplores_____.
- He finds fault in_____.
- They regret that_____.
- They complain that_____.
- The authors are disappointed in_____.

Phrases to describe a mixed claim of value

- The author gives a mixed review of_____.
- She sees strengths and weaknesses in_____.
- They endorse_____ with some reservations.
- He praises_____ while finding some fault in _____
- The authors have mixed feelings about_____. On the one hand, they are impressed by_____, but on the other hand, they find much to be desired in_____.

Describing Claims of Policy

If, as in the case of our sample argument, the author wants to push for some kind of action, then we can signal to the reader how sure the writer seems of the recommendation and how much urgency they feel. Since the border argument uses words like “must” and “justice” in its final paragraph, we will want to convey that sense of moral conviction if we can, with a verb like “urges.” Here is one possible first sentence of a summary of that argument:

> In her 2019 article “Wouldn’t We All Cross the Border?”, Anna Mills urges us to seek a new border policy that helps desperate migrants rather than criminalizing them.

If we think there should be even more sense of urgency, we might choose the verb “demands.” “Demands” would make Mills seem more insistent, possibly pushy. Is she that insistent? We will want to glance back at the original, probably many times, to double-check that our word choice fits.

If the border argument ended with a more restrained tone, as if to convey politeness and humility or even uncertainty, we might summarize it with a sentence like the following:

> In her 2019 article 'Wouldn’t We All Cross the Border?', Anna Mills asks us to consider how we can change border policy to help desperate undocumented migrants rather than criminalizing them.

Phrases to describe a strongly felt claim of policy

- They advocate for_____.
- She recommends_____.
- They encourage_____to _____.
- The writers urge_____.
- The author is promoting_____.
- He calls for_____.
- She demands_____.

Phrases to describe a more tentative claim of policy

- He suggests_____.
- The researchers explore the possibility of_____.
- They hope that_____can take action to_____.
- She shows why we should give more thought to developing a plan to_____.
- The writer asks us to consider_____.

Elaborating on the Main Claim

Depending on the length of the summary we are writing, we may add in additional sentences to further clarify the argument’s main claim. In the border argument example, the summary we have thus far focuses on the idea of helping migrants, but the argument itself has another, related dimension which focuses on the attitudes we should take toward migrants. If we are asked to write only a very short summary, we might leave the explanation of the main claim as it is. If we have a little more leeway, we might add to it to reflect this nuance thus:

> In her 2019 article “Wouldn’t We All Cross the Border?”, Anna Mills urges us to seek a new border policy that helps

desperate undocumented migrants rather than criminalizing them. She calls for a shift away from blame toward respect and empathy, questioning the very idea that crossing illegally is wrong.

Of course, the border argument is short, and we have given an even briefer summary of it. College courses will also ask us to summarize longer, multi-part arguments or even a whole book. In that case, we will need to summarize each sub-section of the argument as its own claim.

Practice Exercise 3.2.1

For each claim below, decide whether it is a claim of fact, value, or policy. Write a paraphrase of each claim and introduce it with a phrase that helps us see the writer's purpose.

- Students should embrace coffee to help them study.
- Coffee is the most powerful, safe substance available to jumpstart the mind.
- Coffee's effect is universal.
- For those of us who believe in the life of the mind, enhancing our brains' abilities is ultimately worth the occasional discomfort associated with coffee.

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3.3: Describing the Reasoning

Media Alternative

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Once we have introduced the argument we will summarize and described its main claim, we will need to show how it supports this claim. How does the writer point us in the direction they want us to go? Whereas we used an arrow in the argument map to show momentum from reason to claim, we can use a phrase to signal which idea serves as a reason for which claim.

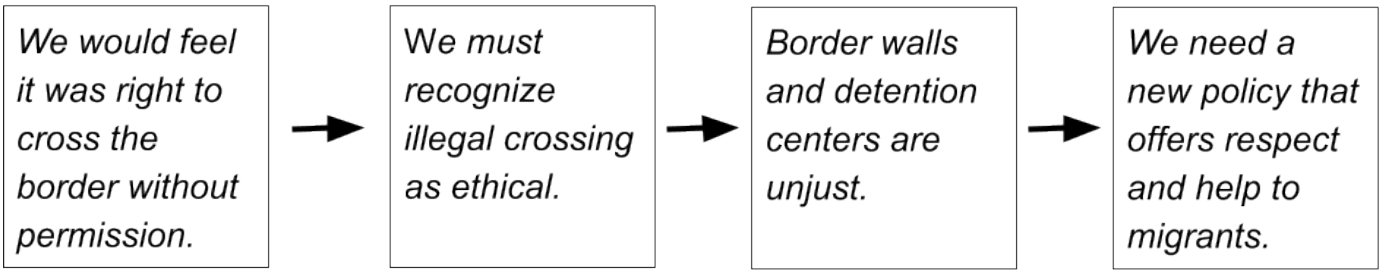


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Phrases for Introducing Reasons

- She reasons that _____.
- He explains this by_____.
- The author justifies this with_____.
- To support this perspective, the author points out that_____.
- The writer bases this claim on the idea that_____.
- They argue that_____ implies that _____ because_____.
- She argues that if _____, then _____.
- He claims that _____ necessarily means that_____ .
- She substantiates this idea by_____.
- He supports this idea by_____.
- The writer gives evidence in the form of_____.
- They back this up with_____.
- She demonstrates this by_____.
- He proves attempts to prove this by _____.
- They cite studies of _____.
- On the basis of _____, she concludes that _____.

Our border argument map shows a chain of three reasons leading to the main claim, so our summary can describe that chain.



Sample summary

In her 2019 article “Wouldn’t We All Cross the Border?”, Anna Mills urges us to seek a new border policy that helps desperate undocumented migrants rather than criminalizing them. She calls for a shift toward respect and empathy, questioning the very idea that crossing illegally is wrong. She argues that any parent in a desperate position would consider it right to cross for their child’s sake; therefore, no person should condemn that action in another. Since we cannot justify our current walls and detention centers, we must get rid of them.

Practice Exercise 3.3.1

For each pair of claims and reasons below, write a paraphrase of the reason and introduce it with one of the phrases from the chapter or another phrase that serves a similar purpose.

Here's an example. Take the following claim and reason pair: “The right of free speech does not apply to speech that endangers public health. Therefore, Twitter should not allow tweets that promote medical claims that have been proven wrong.”

A description of the reason might read as follows: "The writer bases this recommendation on the idea that we do not have a free-speech right to spread ideas that harm other people’s health."

1. "Coffee jumpstarts the mind. Therefore, students should embrace coffee to help them study."
2. "Students should avoid coffee. Relying on willpower alone to study reinforces important values like responsibility and self-reliance."
3. "Students should drink black tea rather than coffee because tea has fewer side effects."

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3.4: Describing How the Author Treats Counterarguments

Media Alternative

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If the argument we are summarizing mentions a counterargument, a summary will need to describe how the author handles it. A phrase introducing the author's treatment of the counterargument can signal whether the writer sees some merit in the counterargument or rejects it entirely. In either case, we will almost always want to follow up by describing the author's response. If the writer sees merit in the objection, we need to explain why they still maintain their position. On the other hand, if the author dismisses the counterargument, we need to show how they justify this dismissal.



If a writer rejects a counterargument entirely, we can point that out when we summarize. Photo by Anete Lusina on Pexels under the Pexels License.

Phrases to Introduce a Writer's Handling of a Counterargument

If the Author Sees Some Merit in the Counterargument

- The writer acknowledges that _____, but still insists that _____.
- They concede that _____; however they consider that _____.
- He grants the idea that _____, yet still maintains that _____.
- She admits that _____, but she points out that_____.
- The author sees merit in the idea that _____, but cannot accept_____.
- Even though he sympathizes with those who believe _____, the author emphasizes that _____.

If the Author Rejects the Counterargument Entirely

- She refutes this claim by arguing that _____.
- However, he questions the very idea that _____, observing that _____.
- She disagrees with the claim that _____ because _____.
- They challenge the idea that _____ by arguing that _____.
- He rejects the argument that_____, claiming that _____.

- She defends her position against those who claim _____ by explaining that _____.

In the case of the sample border argument, we might summarize the treatment of the counterargument thus:

> Mills acknowledges that opening the borders completely would compromise security, but she believes that we can “regulate” our borders without blocking or imprisoning migrants.

Note the choice here to quote the one word “regulate” instead of paraphrasing or using the word without quotation marks. The quotation marks draw attention to the author's original word choice and suggest there may be a problem or question about this word choice. In this case, the summary might observe that the writer does not specify what kind of regulation she means.

Practice Exercise 3.4.1

Below are two sample paragraphs in which an author describes a counterargument. For each description, decide whether the author sees some merit in the counterargument or not (see 2.6). Choose a phrase from the suggestions above to help you summarize the author’s handling of the counterargument.

1. Not everyone agrees with my celebration of coffee. Some object that ingesting substances to help us study leads to addiction. They worry that even a boost to mental functioning will ultimately hurt us because it encourages us to try to fix our mind with substances any time we feel out of sorts. This argument, however, is nothing short of paranoid. It would result in some ridiculous conclusions. By its logic, we should not drink water when we’re thirsty because we will become addicted.
2. Many feel that black tea is a better choice than coffee, arguing that it can improve performance just as well with fewer side effects. This depends on the individual, though. While black tea is worth considering, remember that it can also have side effects, and for many, it simply will not give enough of a boost to the brain.

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3.5: Describing How the Author Limits the Claim

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (1 min, 56 sec):

In the course of describing the author's claims, reasons, and counterarguments, chances are we will already have mentioned some limits or clarified which kinds of cases an author is referring to. It is worth checking, however, to make sure we haven't left out any key limitations the author has identified.



An argument may focus on particular cases and exclude others, as a frame can direct our attention to one part of a view.
Photo by pine watt on Unsplash under the Unsplash License.

Phrases to Describe the Way a Writer Limits an Argument

- He qualifies his position by_____.
- She limits her claim by_____.
- They clarify that this only holds if _____.
- The author restricts their claim to cases where_____.
- He makes an exception for_____.

In the case of the border argument, the writer responds to the counterargument about security by clarifying that she does not advocate completely open borders. The sample summary already refers to this when it describes her desire to "regulate" those borders. In addition, when the summary paraphrases her claims and reasons, it uses the phrases "desperate" and "in a desperate position" to show how she limits the focus to migrants who are fleeing an awful situation.

Practice Exercise 3.5.1

Below are some sample claims that mention limits. Choose one of the phrases above or create another one with a similar purpose to help you summarize each claim and limit.

1. Students should embrace coffee to enhance mental functioning unless they are in the minority of people who experience severe side effects of coffee like anxiety, insomnia, tremors, acid reflux, or a compulsion to drink more and more.

2. Students shouldn't hesitate to enjoy coffee as long as they keep exercising and sleeping well enough to maintain their mental and physical health.

3. In moderation, coffee can be part of a healthy lifestyle.

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3.6: Putting the Summary Together

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (5 min, 13 sec):

How can we turn the descriptions of the claims, reasons, counterarguments, and limitations into a cohesive paragraph, page, or essay that we can turn in as our summary? The good news is that by introducing each part of the argument to show how it relates to the others, we have already provided many of the transitions we need. We can generate a first draft of the summary by simply putting them all together in order.

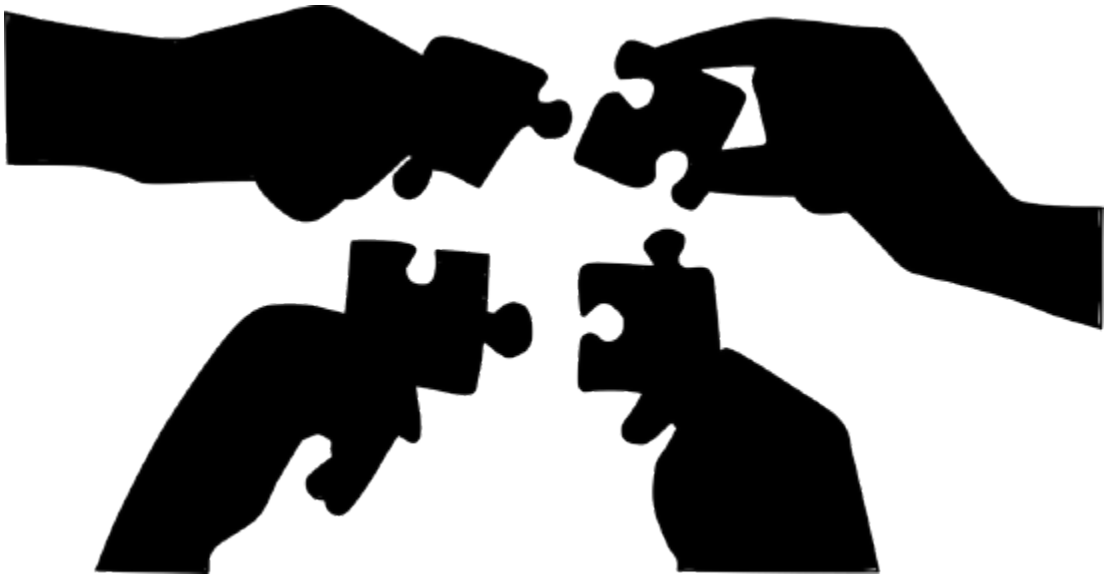


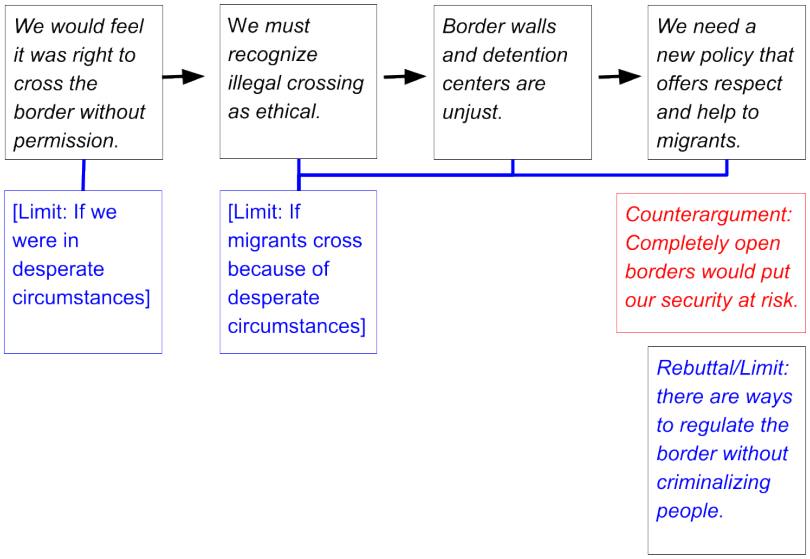
Image by Mohamed Hassan on Pixabay under the Pixabay License.

Here is an example of a summary draft that describes the border argument:

Sample Summary

In her 2019 article "Wouldn't We All Cross the Border?", Anna Mills urges readers to seek a new border policy that helps desperate undocumented migrants rather than criminalizing them. She calls for a shift toward respect and empathy, questioning the very idea that crossing illegally is wrong. Mills argues that any parent in a desperate position would consider it right to cross for their child's sake; therefore, no person should condemn that action in another. Since we cannot justify our current walls and detention centers, we must get rid of them. She acknowledges that opening the borders completely would compromise security, but believes that we can still "regulate" our borders without blocking or imprisoning migrants.

Next, we can review our border argument map to make sure that we have covered the main parts of the argument.



"Argument Map with Limits" by Anna Mills is licensed CC BY-NC 4.0.
See the accessible text description of the argument map with limits.

If we are writing a longer summary of an extended argument, our map and our knowledge of the role of each part of the text will help us organize the essay into paragraphs and transition between them. For example, in a three-page summary of a twenty-five-page essay, we might spend a full paragraph on the author's description of a counterargument and yet another paragraph on the author's rebuttal to this counterargument. To open this paragraph, we could refer to our earlier list of templates for describing a response to a counterargument.

Practice Exercise 3.6.1

Summarize the argument below in a few sentences that introduce each element of the argument and its role. If you completed the exercises for the earlier sections in this chapter, you may use some of those answers to those to help you put together this paragraph.

Coffee is a blessing to students. What better way is there to jumpstart the mind and help us engage with our studies? The benefits of coffee are well known, and yet some hold back from it unnecessarily. Some feel that black tea is a better choice, arguing that it can still boost mental performance with fewer side effects. This depends on the individual. While black tea is worth considering, remember that it still comes with side effects, and for many, it simply will not give enough of a boost to the brain. For those of us who believe in the life of the mind, enhancing our brains' abilities is ultimately of more value than avoiding the occasional minor discomfort. Of course, a few people who experience severe side effects like anxiety, insomnia, or tremors should avoid coffee. For most, though, we can drink coffee in moderation and still feel healthy, as long as we exercise and sleep well. Some object to coffee because they believe that ingesting any substance to help us study leads to addiction. They worry that even a boost to mental functioning will ultimately hurt us because it encourages us to try to fix our mind with substances any time we feel out of sorts. This argument, however, is nothing short of paranoid. It would result in some ridiculous conclusions. By its logic, if we drink water when we're thirsty, we will end up addicted. If you haven't given coffee a fair try under the right circumstances, don't deprive yourself out of fear. Chances are you can do better work and enjoy it more with a moderate coffee habit. Why let life's "Aha" moments pass you by?

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3.7: Writing a Short Summary of a Long Argument

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (6 min, 27 sec):

Thus far we have given examples of summaries that are close in length to the original argument. Very often in college and professional life, though, we will need to summarize a multi-page argument in just a sentence, a paragraph, or a page. How do we cover the most important ideas of the argument in just a few words? How do we decide what to leave out of the summary?



Writing a short summary of a long argument could be likened to choosing only the most important groceries to fit into a minature shopping cart.
Image by HOerwin56 from Pixabay under the Pixabay License.

If we have already sorted out which ideas are the supporting examples and statistics and which are the main claim and reasons, that knowledge can guide us. The summary can allude to the supporting evidence rather than describing its details. It can leave out the specifics of any anecdotes, testimonials, or statistics.

For example, let's imagine we want to summarize an article that encourages people to buy the digital cryptocurrency BitCoin. The article might describe a number of different kinds of products people can buy with BitCoin and tell stories of individuals who used BitCoin for different purposes or invested in BitCoin and made a profit. Depending on how long our summary is supposed to be, we can represent those parts of the argument in more or less detail. If we need to summarize the article in a sentence, we might simply refer to all of this supporting evidence with a couple of words like "variety" and "profit."

Example 3.7.1

Sample one-sentence summary: "Go BitCoin" by Tracy Kim encourages the general public to buy BitCoin by showing us the variety of things we can buy with it and the profit to be made."

If we have a bit more space, we might keep the same single-sentence overview but also throw in a few examples of the kinds of specifics mentioned in the article.

Example 3.7.2

Sample slightly longer summary: "Go BitCoin" by Tracy Kim encourages the general public to buy BitCoin by showing us the variety of things we can buy with it and the profit to be made. First, Kim describes how we would go about paying for a range of products, from a Tesla to a sofa. Second, she gives statistics on BitCoin's rate of return and tells the stories of three young people who invested modest amounts in BitCoin and saw their money as much as triple within a year.

Notice how, in the above example, the summary alludes to three stories that have something in common but gives a detail that only applies to one of them. The summary writer chose the most memorable example of profit to include. If we have space to write a full paragraph, we could include more detail on the process of buying with bitcoin, on the investment statistics alluded to, and on the stories of investors.

Example 3.7.3

Sample paragraph-long summary: "Go BitCoin" by Tracy Kim encourages the general public to buy the cryptocurrency BitCoin by showing us the variety of things we can buy with it and the profit to be made. First, Kim describes how we would go about paying for a range of products, from a Tesla to a sofa. She shows how more and more vendors are accepting BitCoin directly, but for the moment some of the largest ones, like Amazon, require buyers to use a third-party app to convert their BitCoin. Second, she gives statistics on BitCoin's rate of return. BitCoin has gone through boom and bust cycles, but most recently its value increased 252% between July 2020 and July 2021. Finally, she tells the stories of three young people who invested modest amounts in BitCoin and saw their money as much as triple within a year. Kim shows how ordinary people can see more options open up in their lives through these investments. One teenager, Vijay Mather, was able to cover four years of college tuition by investing his earnings from working at Trader Joe's.

The original argument would include many more details, including how Vijay Mather got interested in BitCoin and exactly how much he made on his investment. It probably also includes the names of the other two young people it profiles and more about their experiences. However, the summary writer has picked out what those experiences have in common--the fact that the profits allowed them to consider new options in their lives. The writer has focused on Tracy Kim's purpose in presenting those examples: to raise readers' awareness of the possibilities.

Exercise 3.7.1

Read the two paragraphs below.

1. Summarize them in just one sentence.
2. Summarize them in two to three sentences, including a few more specifics.

The Black/white binary is the predominant racial binary system at play in the American context. We can see that this Black/white binary exists and is socially constructed if we consider the case of the 19th Century Irish immigrant. When they first arrived, Irish immigrants were “blackened” in the popular press and the white, Anglo-Saxon imagination (Roediger 1991). Cartoon depictions of Irish immigrants gave them dark skin and exaggerated facial features like big lips and pronounced brows. They were depicted and thought to be lazy, ignorant, and alcoholic nonwhite “others” for decades.

Over time, Irish immigrants and their children and grandchildren assimilated into the category of “white” by strategically distancing themselves from Black Americans and other non-whites in labor disputes and participating in white supremacist racial practices and ideologies. In this way, the Irish in America became white. A similar process took place for Italian-Americans, and, later, Jewish American immigrants from multiple European countries after the Second World War. Similar to Irish Americans, both groups became white after first being seen as non-white. These cases show how socially constructed race is and how this labeling process still operates today. For instance, are Asian-Americans, considered the “model minority,” the next group to be integrated into the white category, or will they continue to be regarded as foreign threats? Only time will tell.

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3.8: SAMPLE SUMMARIES

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (59 sec):

1. In "Spread Feminism, Not Germs," student Gizem Gur summarizes the *Atlantic Magazine* article "The Coronavirus Is a Disaster for Feminism." Annotations point out the structure of the summary and the strategies Gur uses.
   - Sample summary "Spread Feminism, Not Germs" in PDF with margin notes
   - Sample summary "Spread Feminism, Not Germs" accessible version with notes in parentheses

2. In "Typography and Identity," Saramanda Swigart summarizes the *New York Times* article "A Debate Over Identity and Race Asks, Are African-Americans 'Black' or 'black'?" Annotations point out the structure of the summary and the strategies Swigart uses.
   - Sample summary "Typography and Identity" in PDF with margin notes
   - Sample summary "Typography and Identity" accessible version with notes in parentheses

3.8.1: Sample Summary- "Spread Feminism, Not Germs"

3.8.2: Sample Summary- "Typography and Identity"

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3.8.1: Sample Summary- "Spread Feminism, Not Germs"

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (5 min, 34 sec):

Format note: This version is accessible to screen reader users. Refer to these tips for reading our annotated sample arguments with a screen reader. For a more traditional visual format, see the PDF version of "Spread Feminism, Not Germs."

Gizem Gur

Eng 1A

Anna Mills

Spread Feminism, Not Germs

COVID-19 is not the first outbreak in history and probably won't be the last one. (Note: The opening statement provides the essay's overall context: the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.) However, its effects will be long-lasting. While the pandemic has affected everyone's lives in every aspect, its impacts on women are even more severe. (Note: The followup statement introduces the essay's particular focus: the impact of the pandemic on women.) Helen Lewis, the author of the *Atlantic Magazine* article "The Coronavirus Is a Disaster for Feminism," explains why the pandemic threatens feminism. (Note: Early on, the summary names the author, title, and magazine that published the argument summarized.) Lewis starts her article with a complaint by saying "enough already" because, in terms of housework especially for child care, there has been an inequality since the past. This inequality has become even more explicit with the coronavirus outbreak. Women have to shoulder not only more housework but also childcare more than ever due to school closures. The pandemic started as a public health crisis and brought along an economic one. Lewis argues that the crisis affects women more than men because women are more likely to assume housework and childcare responsibilities while men are expected to work and "bring home the bacon." (Note: The author provides a thesis at the end of the introduction with a clear overview of the main claim of the argument summarized.)

Lewis supports her claim by pointing out that during the pandemic, the gender pay gap pushes women to take on caregiving while men continue to work outside the home. (Note: The phrase "supports her claim" shows us that this paragraph will describe one of Lewis' reasons.) She writes, "all this looking after—this unpaid caring labor—will fall more heavily on women" because households depend more on men's pay. To support this idea, she includes provocative questions from Clare Wenham, an assistant professor of global health policy at the London School of Economics: "Who is paid less? Who has the flexibility?" (Note: The author supports the summary with short quotes from the argument where the wording is important.) The questions express Wenham's frustration. Lewis implies that this existing structure is based upon the gender pay gap, the reality that women make less money. She believes that couples do not have many options: it is a kind of survival rule that whoever earns less should stay at home.

Lewis blames the influence of old-fashioned ideas about gender roles for compounding the effects of the pay gap during the pandemic. Dual-earner parents must find a way to meet children's needs during the shelter-in-place. Lewis observes that women often are the ones who take on the role of stay-at-home parent. (Note: This paragraph shows how another reason, gender role expectations, combines with the economic reason to support the main claim.) She humorously notes, "Dual-income couples might suddenly be living like their grandparents, one homemaker, and one breadwinner." Lewis sees this as a kind of embarrassing regression. The gender dynamic has slid back two generations, showing that cultural beliefs about the role of the mother haven't changed as much as we might think. (Note: The use of the word "embarrassing" suggests that Lewis is not just observing but making a claim of value. The summary reflects Lewis' attitude as well as her ideas.) Lewis acknowledges that some families do try to split childcare equally, but she emphasizes that these are in the minority.

Lewis sees implications for her claim beyond the current pandemic. (Note: The end of the summary notes how Lewis extends her argument by claiming that other pandemics will have similar gendered effects.) She draws a parallel to the effect on women of the Ebola health crisis which occurred in West Africa in the time period of 2014-2016. According to Lewis, during this outbreak, many African girls lost their chance at an education; moreover, many women died during childbirth because of a lack of medical care. (Note: Lewis supports this with a historical example of another pandemic that disproportionately hurt women.) Mentioning

this proves that not only coronavirus but also other outbreaks can be a disaster for feminism. Pandemics, in other words, pile yet another problem on women who always face an uphill battle against patriarchal structures. (Note: The concluding sentence reinforces the extended version of Lewis' main point in a memorable, dramatic way.)

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3.8.2: Sample Summary- "Typography and Identity"

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (6 min, 16 sec):

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Essay Z

English 1C

Prof. Saramanda Swigart

Typography and Identity

John Eligon's *New York Times* article, “A Debate Over Identity and Race Asks, Are African-Americans ‘Black’ or ‘black’?” outlines the ongoing conversation among journalists and academics regarding conventions for writing about race—specifically, whether or not to capitalize the “b” in “black” when referring to African-Americans (itself a term that is going out of style). (Note: The opening sentence introduces the text this essay will respond to and gives a brief summary of the text's content.) Eligon argues that, while it might seem like a minor typographical issue, this small difference speaks to the question of how we think about race in the United States. Are words like “black” or “white” mere adjectives, descriptors of skin color? Or are they proper nouns, indicative of group or ethnic identity? Eligon observes that until recently, with the prominence of the Black Lives Matter movement, many journalistic and scholarly publications tended to use a lowercase “black,” while Black media outlets typically capitalized “Black.” He suggests that the balance is now tipping in favor of "Black," but given past changes, usage will probably change again as the rich discussion about naming, identity, and power continues. (Note: The thesis statement includes two related ideas explored by Eligon: the current trend toward using "Black" and the value of the ongoing discussion that leads to changing terms.)

Eligon points to a range of evidence that "Black" is becoming the norm, including a recent change by "hundreds of news organizations" including the Associated Press. This comes in the wake of the George Floyd killing, but it also follows a longtime Black press tradition exemplified by newspapers like *The New York Amsterdam News*. Eligon cites several prominent academics who are also starting to capitalize Black. However, he also quotes prominent naysayers and describes a variety of counterarguments, like the idea that capitalization gives too much dignity to a category that was made up to oppress people. (Note: Summary of a counterargument.) Capitalizing Black raises another tricky question: Shouldn't White be likewise capitalized? Eligon points out that the groups most enthusiastic to capitalize White seem to be white supremacists, and news organizations want to avoid this association. (Note: The choice of "points out" signals that everyone would agree that mostly white supremacist groups capitalize White.)

Eligon's brief history of the debate over racial labels, from “Negro” and “colored” to “African-American” and “person of color,” gives the question of to-capitalize-or-not-to-capitalize a broader context, investing what might seem like a minor quibble for editors with the greater weight of racial identity and its evolution over time. (Note: This paragraph shifts focus from present to past trends and debates.) He outlines similar disagreements over word-choice and racial labels by scholars and activists like Fannie Barrier Williams and W.E.B. Du Bois surrounding now-antiquated terms like “Negro” and “colored.” These leaders debated whether labels with negative connotations should be replaced, or embraced and given a new, positive connotation. (Note: This paragraph summarizes the historical examples Eligon gives. Phrases like "He cites" point out that certain ideas are being used to support a claim.) Eligon observes that today's "black" was once used as a pejorative but was promoted by the Black Power movement starting in the late sixties, much as the word "Negro" was reclaimed as a positive word. (Note: Summary of a historical trend that parallels today's trend.) However, the Reverend Jesse Jackson also had some success in calling for a more neutral term, "African American," in the late eighties. He thought it more appropriate to emphasize a shared ethnic heritage over color. (Note: Summary of a historical countertrend based on a counterargument to the idea of reclaiming negative terms.) Eligon suggests that this argument continues to appeal to some today, but that such terms have been found to be inadequate given the diversity of ethnic heritage. “African-American” and the more generalized “people/person of color” do not give accurate or specific enough information. (Note: Describes a response to the counterargument, a justification of today's trend toward Black.)

Ultimately, Eligon points to personal intuition as an aid to individuals in the Black community grappling with these questions. He describes the experience of sociologist Crystal M. Fleming, whose use of lowercase “black” transformed to capitalized “Black” over the course of her career and years of research. Her transition from black to Black is, she says, as much a matter of personal choice as a reasoned conclusion—suggesting that it will be up to Black journalists and academics to determine the conventions of the future. (Note: This last sentence of this summary paragraph focuses on Eligon's conclusion, his implied argument about what should guide the choice of terms.

Works Cited

(Note: The Works Cited page uses MLA documentation style appropriate for an English class.)

Eligon, John. “A Debate Over Identity and Race Asks, Are African-Americans ‘Black’ or ‘black’?” *The New York Times,* 26 Jun 2020. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/26/us/black-african-american-style-debate.html?action=click&module=Top%20Stories&pgtype=Homepage

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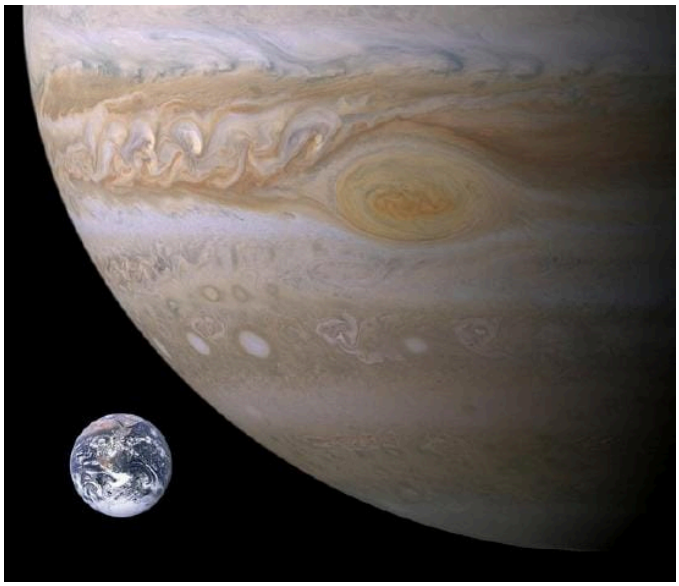
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3.9: Comparing and Contrasting Arguments

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (9 min, 35 sec):

So far we've learned how to summarize a single argument, but there are, of course, many arguments on any given topic, and in college and beyond we are often asked to compare and contrast more than one source. In this case we need to provide summaries of two (or more) related but distinct arguments; let's call them A and B here. We might find common ground between two unlike authors, tease out the subtle differences between two seemingly similar authors, or point out the opposing assumptions underlying competing claims. Ultimately, we'll be asked to go beyond summarizing the two to explore the implications of their similarity and/or difference. What can the comparison teach us? What insight do we gain by juxtaposing A and B?



Comparing Jupiter to Earth might give perspective on Earth's size and atmosphere.
Image by WikiImages from Pixabay under the Pixabay License.

Establishing a topic in common

To frame the compare-and-contrast essay, it helps to describe a common context, something happening in the world, that both texts respond to. What unites these arguments: A theme, a current or historical event, a theoretical lens? Let's say we want to compare and contrast the essay we have already discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, Anna Mills' "Wouldn't We All Cross the Border?" with a new argument about borders, "The Weight of the World" by Saramanda Swigart:

"The Weight of the World" by Saramanda Swigart

While illegal immigrants crossing the border to the United States may come from desperate circumstances, it is unjust, impractical, and unrealistic for one nation to solve the problems of so many non-citizens.

Illegal immigration challenges the rule of law. If laws can be broken simply because lawbreakers had good intentions, this suggests that obeying the law is merely optional—that the law is something to be obeyed only when it is convenient to do so. It is understandable that plenty of people who break the law do so with good intentions, but enforcement of the law cannot be reduced to investigations of intentions—it must ultimately spring from concrete actions.

> The truth is that illegal immigration presents a security risk. Because illegal immigrants are not tracked by any immigration agency and thus remain largely anonymous, it is impossible to verify which immigrants come in search of a new life and plan to abide by the laws of their host country and which do not. A porous border may allow for waves of well-meaning immigrants and their families to seek new lives in a new country, but no country should be blamed for wanting to secure its borders or its territory.
>
> An influx of immigration also strains a nation's resources. Understandably, in many cases, immigrants seeking shelter in the United States have left desperate circumstances and arrive seeking support. In a perfect world, this would not be a problem; however, because a nation's resources are finite, this means that the financial and material burden of taking care of incoming immigrants falls on their host county. In small, manageable numbers this isn't a problem (this is what legal immigration is for) but one can see how a nation tasked with taking care of immigrants from around the world would be burdened beyond its resources if it must solve the whole world's humanitarian problems.
>
> Ultimately, we shouldn't increase our tolerance of illegal border crossings. In order to address the plight of immigrants, maintain national security, and manage internal resources, all policy changes should involve balancing the needs of non-citizens with the needs of citizens before carefully and thoughtfully expanding legal immigration.

In a paper comparing Mills' and Swigart's theses, we need to frame the problem central to both arguments; the implications of illegal immigrants crossing the U.S.-Mexico border, a controversial issue of some urgency today. Consider the following sentences, which place both articles in the cultural context within which they are written:

"In recent years illegal immigration into the United States at the U.S.-Mexico border has become a divisive political topic, resulting in a widening partisan divide as to whose priorities we should privilege: the immigrants' or the nation's. Are we global citizens or American citizens first?"

Identifying areas of agreement and disagreement

Now, what points do the two articles make? Are there any overlapping claims? Are these two authors in complete disagreement or do you see areas in which they share values and/or concede points to one another? We can start by brainstorming the ways A is similar to B and the ways they differ. As you'll recall, Mills' essay appeals to empathy, suggesting that we would become border-crossers ourselves in the right circumstances. She argues for a reevaluation of immigration policies and practices with an increased emphasis on compassion for immigrant families. Swigart's essay, on the other hand, asks us to make pragmatic assessments about national security and resource allocation, placing national interests before concern for immigrants' wellbeing. Swigart emphasizes the necessity for a nation to secure its borders and enforce its laws.



Photo by George Milton on Pexels under the Pexels License.

How to organize a compare-and-contrast essay

In the introduction, we will want to identify what topic the two arguments have in common and offer a thesis statement that explains the relationship between A and B. The strategies below may help. In the next section, we will look at a complete sample essay that compares Mills' and Swigart's arguments.

Forming the thesis

In the case of compare-and-contrast essays, the thesis can summarize the essential differences or surprising similarities between the texts.

Example 3.9.1

Thesis: Though Mills and Swigart agree on the urgency as well as the root causes of our border crisis, they disagree on whether the solution should prioritize American citizens' or refugees' needs.

Text-by-text organization

Then we'll need to select a way to organize the compare and contrast essay. Here are two basic ways to organize the body of a compare and contrast essay: text by text and point by point. If we think that B extends A, or if A is a lens through which to see B, we might decide to use a text-by-text scheme. That means we'll summarize the claims, reasons, and warrants of A followed by the claims, reasons, warrants of B. For instance, if Mills' essay were outlining the need for immigration reform, and essay B were outlining policy to create such immigration reform, we could quickly summarize Mills' ideas in a body paragraph before moving on to B's proposals in their own body paragraph.

Point-by-point organization

If A and B approach a series of similar issues from different standpoints, a point-by-point scheme can highlight their different approaches. That means we'll break the argument into the different topics that both essays address. In the immigration example, we might include a paragraph about the two "sides" of the debate; a paragraph devoted to whether it is ethical to break the law in desperate circumstances; a paragraph devoted to issues of national security; and a paragraph that compares the proposed solutions.

Topic sentences

In all essays, each new point needs to refer back to some part of the thesis. Each topic sentence should refer to one of the points of comparison that was already mentioned in the thesis. The sample phrases below may be useful as we emphasize particular similarities or differences.

Phrases for compare and contrast essays

Common phrases that indicate similarity and difference can help to clarify how each point about A relates to another point about B. See Section 12.3: Showing How a New Idea Fits in for more on this.

Phrases that highlight a similarity

- Just as A does, B believes that_____.
- Both A and B see _____ as an important issue.
- We have seen how A maintains that _____. Similarly, B _____.
- A argues that_____. Likewise, B _____.

- A and B agree on the idea that _____.

Phrases that highlight a difference

- A focuses on_____; however B is more interested in_____.
- A's claim is that_____. Conversely, B maintains that _____.
- Whereas A argues that_____, B_____.
- While A emphasizes_____, B_____.
- Unlike A, B believes that_____.
- Rather than _____ like A, B_____,
- Whereas A argues that _____, B maintains _____.

Juxtaposing a similarity with a difference

We can also describe a similarity and a difference in close proximity. Here are some sample sentences that do that:

- Both A and B assert that _____, but they differ in their approach to _____.
- While A condemns the weaknesses of _____, B praises its strengths.
- A outlines the problem of _____ in the abstract while B proposes solutions to the problem.
- Though A and B agree on the root cause of _____, they differ on its solution.

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3.10: A SAMPLE COMPARE-AND-CONTRAST ESSAY

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (34 sec):

The essay "Contested Territory" compares and contrasts two arguments on immigration: "Wouldn't We All Cross the Border" by Anna Mills and "The Weight of the World" by Saramanda Swigart. Annotations point out how the author structures the comparison.

- Sample compare-and-contrast essay "Contested Territory" in PDF version with margin notes
- Sample compare-and-contrast essay "Contested Territory" accessible version with notes in parentheses

3.10.1: Annotated Compare-and-Contrast Essay

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3.10.1: Annotated Compare-and-Contrast Essay

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (7 min, 36 sec):

Format note: This version is accessible to screen reader users. Refer to these tips for reading our annotated sample arguments with a screen reader. For a more traditional visual format, see the PDF version of "Contested Territory" with notes in the margins.

Sample Essay X

English 1C

Prof. Saramanda Swigart

Contested Territory

In recent years, illegal immigration into the United States at the U.S.-Mexico border has become a divisive political topic, resulting in a widening partisan divide as to whose priorities we should privilege: the immigrants' or the nation's. (Note: The author establishes a frame of reference in the first sentence, referencing the cultural context surrounding illegal immigration.) Are we global citizens or American citizens first? Anna Mills' "Wouldn't We All Cross the Border?" and Saramanda Swigart's "The Weight of the World" offer opposing views on this controversial issue. (Note: Here are our grounds for comparison, wherein the author briefly summarizes the two stances on immigration.)While Mills considers us global citizens, arguing for compassion toward suffering in our reevaluation of immigration policies and practices, Swigart believes we must be American citizens first, pointing out the necessity for a nation to secure its borders and enforce its laws. (Note: Essay thesis)

As an advocate of compassion, Mills questions the ethics of enforcing immigration laws and argues for empathy with illegal immigrants because, given the same circumstances, many or most of us would make the same choice to cross a border illegally if it meant a chance for a better life for ourselves or our families. (Note: Topic sentence resupplies language from the thesis and signals what will be discussed first.) The author puts herself, and by extension the reader, in an illegal immigrant's position: "If I were raising children in an impoverished third-world community plagued by violence, and if I had a chance to get my family to the U.S., I would take it" (Mills). (Note: Essay supports the summary with quotations selected from the text.) This argument for empathy relies on pathos, appealing to readers' own emotional desires for their families' well-being. However, Mills' argument links pathos to pragmatism as Mills draws the logical conclusion that, if, given the same circumstances, "many or most of us would make the same choice, we cannot condemn those who choose to immigrate illegally" (Mills). Her argument evokes the Golden Rule; to turn our backs on obvious suffering is to turn our backs on ourselves, and is thus immoral by definition.

While the essay argues for empathy, it limits the scope of its argument from offering a comprehensive vision of what a new or improved immigration policy would consist of, as Mills acknowledges "I don't have a clear vision yet of what the right border policy would be, and I admit that completely open borders would put our security at risk." (Note: Discussion of the acknowledged limits on Mills' argument sets the stage for Swigart's counterargument.)She anticipates the potential counterargument and shares her own concerns for the law and national security, and concludes that any immigration policy must be based on humanitarian values and priorities: "We must find a policy that treats migrants as we would want to be treated—with empathy, respect, and offers of help" (Mills). Thus she is not advocating open borders without regulation. Rather, she asks that policy take the plight of the immigrants into account, calling on us to treat everyone as though they are citizens of the world, having inherently the same rights to dignity and safety as U.S. citizens do. (Note: This essay is organized text-by-text, though it could easily have been organized point-by-point.)

In contrast, Swigart emphasizes not compassion, but the rule of law and the primacy of national security. (Note: "In contrast" is a transitional phrase that signals a divergent point of view.)Instead of invoking pathos by emphasizing the personal, Swigart emphasizes impersonal and abstract concerns like respect for the law, the priority of secure borders, and the need to consider finite resources. The first point, concerning the rule of law, argues that "If laws can be broken simply because lawbreakers had good intentions, this suggests that obeying the law is merely optional" (Swigart) and concludes that routine circumvention of

law without penalty would undermine rule of law more broadly. The second point is similar but applied to concerns for national security. Although the author acknowledges the sympathetic situation of immigrant families, she argues that “no country should be blamed for wanting to secure its borders or its territory” (Swigart). These first two arguments are presented as self-evident arguments or truisms—essentially, violation of the law undermines the law, and a porous border undermines national security.

Swigart's third argument is perhaps more complicated, as she argues that one nation should not be obligated to shoulder the burden of solving other nations' humanitarian or economic crises. (Note: The writer examines one of Swigart's points in more detail, just as they examined Mills' points.)“Because a nation's resources are finite,” Swigart argues, “the financial and material burden of taking care of incoming immigrants falls on their host county.” She goes on to cast doubt upon the notion that a single nation can and should solve the whole world's humanitarian problems. Here Swigart highlights the extreme implications of the argument she disagrees with in order to convince readers of its absurdity.

While both authors make compelling points, there are many assumptions they both make that are left unexamined. For instance, Mills’ essay assumes that there are no alternatives to allowing immigrants with good intentions into the country. For instance, the United States could invest or intervene in countries whose populations are suffering, improving their material conditions and thereby eliminating the need to immigrate. Likewise, Swigart fails to acknowledge that the United States is in fact the *cause* of some of the world’s problems and thus has a responsibility toward the lives it has disrupted; or that studies show the admittance of immigrants, rather than over-taxing the nation’s resources actually improves the nation’s economy. Both points of view might benefit from a deeper examination of their assumptions. (Note: Here the writer moves beyond summarizing and comparing the arguments to assessing their validity. This analysis might be the basis of a response essay.)

More importantly, the two approaches to immigration might not be in such dramatic conflict as the authors would have us believe. A policy that expands legal immigration to families in desperate need, for instance, while still cracking down on illegal immigration could potentially satisfy both sides of the argument. This is the problem with many partisan issues today. While we spill ink proving the other wrong, we miss opportunities to find common ground on which to build. (Note: In the conclusion, the comparison between the two essays leads to a proposal for a way to satisfy the demands of both.)

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3.11: Common Summary Phrases

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (7 min, 24 sec):

Here are all of the common phrases discussed in Chapter 3 for summarizing different elements of an argument and comparing two arguments. The section headings link to more information.

Introducing the argument

- In an article for _____, writer _____ discusses _____.
- The recent account of _____ by _____ focuses on _____.
- Writing in the journal _____, the scholar _____ argues that _____.

Claims

Controversial claims of fact

- They argue that _____.
- She maintains that _____.
- He contends that _____.
- They assert that _____.
- She holds that _____.
- He insists that _____.
- She thinks_____.
- They believe that_____.

Widely accepted claims of fact

- He informs us of _____.
- She describes_____.
- They note that _____.
- He observes that _____.
- She explains that _____.
- The writer points out the way in which_____.

Positive claims of value

- They praise_____.
- He celebrates_____.
- She applauds the notion that_____.
- They endorse_____.
- He admires_____.
- She finds value in_____.
- They rave about_____.

Negative claims of value

- The author criticizes_____.

- She deplores_____.
- He finds fault in_____.
- They regret that_____.
- They complain that_____.
- The authors are disappointed in_____.

Mixed claims of value

- The author gives a mixed review of_____.
- She sees strengths and weaknesses in_____.
- They endorse_____ with some reservations.
- He praises_____ while finding some fault in _____
- The authors have mixed feelings about_____. On the one hand, they are impressed by_____, but on the other hand, they find much to be desired in_____.

Strongly felt claims of policy

- They advocate for_____.
- She recommends_____.
- They encourage_____to _____.
- The writers urge_____.
- The author is promoting_____.
- He calls for_____.
- She demands_____.

Tentative claims of policy

- He suggests_____.
- The researchers explore the possibility of_____.
- They hope that_____can take action to_____.
- She shows why we should give more thought to developing a plan to_____.
- The writer asks us to consider_____.

Reasons

- She reasons that _____.
- He explains this by_____.
- The author justifies this with_____.
- To support this perspective, the author points out that_____.
- The writer bases this claim on the idea that_____.
- They argue that_____ implies that _____ because_____.
- She argues that if _____, then _____.
- He claims that _____ necessarily means that_____ .
- She substantiates this idea by_____.
- He supports this idea by_____.
- The writer gives evidence in the form of_____.
- They back this up with_____.
- She demonstrates this by_____.
- He proves attempts to prove this by _____.
- They cite studies of _____.
- On the basis of _____, she concludes that _____.

Counterarguments

Concession to a counterargument

- The writer acknowledges that _____, but still insists that _____.
- They concede that _____; however they consider that _____.
- He grants the idea that _____, yet still maintains that _____.
- She admits that _____, but she points out that_____.
- The author sees merit in the idea that _____, but cannot accept_____.
- Even though he sympathizes with those who believe _____, the author emphasizes that _____.

Rejection of a counterargument

- She refutes this claim by arguing that _____.
- However, he questions the very idea that _____, observing that _____.
- She disagrees with the claim that _____ because _____.
- They challenge the idea that _____ by arguing that _____.
- He rejects the argument that_____, claiming that _____.
- She defends her position against those who claim _____ by explaining that _____.

Limits

- He qualifies his position by_____.
- She limits her claim by_____.
- They clarify that this only holds if _____.
- The author restricts their claim to cases where_____.
- He makes an exception for_____.

Comparing two arguments

Similarities

- Just as A does, B believes that_____.
- Both A and B see _____ as an important issue.
- We have seen how A maintains that _____. Similarly, B _____.
- A argues that_____. Likewise, B _____.
- A and B agree on the idea that _____.

Differences

- A focuses on_____; however, B is more interested in_____.
- A's claim is that_____. Conversely, B maintains that _____.
- Whereas A argues that_____, B_____.
- While A emphasizes_____, B_____.
- Unlike A, B believes that_____.
- Rather than _____ like A, B_____,
- Whereas A argues that _____, B maintains _____.

Similarities and differences together

- While A condemns the weaknesses of _____, B praises its strengths.
- A outlines the problem of _____ in the abstract while B proposes solutions to the problem.
- Though A and B agree on the root cause of _____, they differ on its solution.

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4: ASSESSING THE STRENGTH OF AN ARGUMENT (LOGOS)

Learning Outcomes

- Check arguments for common problems such as exceptions, faulty evidence, invalid assumptions, and inadequate treatment of counterarguments.
- Identify insights in an argument that can contribute to future discussions on the topic.
- Write a complete assessment of an argument's strengths and weaknesses with a thesis that points to the most crucial ones.
- Use precise and varied phrases to highlight the argument's flaws and insights.

4.1: Use a Summary to Launch an Opinion

4.2: Check If the Meaning Is Clear

4.3: Look for Exceptions

4.4: Decide How Strong the Evidence Is

4.5: Check the Argument's Assumptions

4.6: Check How Well the Argument Addresses Counterarguments

4.7: Reflect on an Argument's Strengths

4.8: Come up with an Overall Assessment

4.9: Fallacies List

4.10: Common Assessment Phrases

4.11: Sample Assessment Essays

4.11.1: Sample Assessment- "Spread Feminism, Not Germs"

4.11.2: Sample Assessment- "Typography and Identity"



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4.1: Use a Summary to Launch an Opinion

Media Alternative

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In Chapters 2 and 3, we have analyzed and summarized arguments but restrained ourselves from offering our own opinions. When reading through an argument, we naturally ask ourselves whether we agree or disagree as we go. We may be writing exclamation marks or expressions of outrage in the margins, or we may be feeling uneasy because we are not sure yet what we think. Either way, we are probably impatient to find our own voice. When do we get to weigh in? Once our readers understand the original text and trust that we understand it, they are in our hands, ready to listen to our assessment. Our critique will be clearer since we have spent time thinking about the foundations of the argument and the author's purpose and meaning. The work we have done puts us in the best position to add something of our own to the conversation.



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Most college essay assignments do ask us to critically evaluate arguments, not just summarize them. To give a taste of what these kinds of assignments look like and how common they are, let's turn to courses at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, a highly regarded university specializing in engineering, science, mathematics, and technology. We might not expect MIT to emphasize writing skills, but the assignments in its publicly available "Open Courseware" frequently ask students to critically evaluate arguments. Here are four examples:

1. A prompt from the MIT course "American History Since 1865," taught by professor Caley Horan, reads as follows:

   > The historian Eric Foner argues that Reconstruction should be understood as an "unfinished revolution." In what ways, if any, were the American Civil War and the Reconstruction period that followed revolutionary, and for whom? What was left "unfinished" by Reconstruction? Essays should present an original argument that responds to the above prompt. This argument should be unique (of your own making) and should reflect careful and serious engagement with course materials.

2. In the economics course "The Challenge of World Poverty" at MIT, students are asked to write an essay on the following topic:

> Despite being quite poor, China currently has a savings rate that is much higher than most other countries in the world. An article by Shang-Jin Wei in VoxEU proposes one interesting reason why Chinese households tend to save so much. Do you find the article's evidence plausible? What other factors may explain why initially poor East Asian countries have saved at very high rates over the past sixty years?

3. A third prompt comes from the MIT course “Globalization: the Good, the Bad, and the In-Between”:

> In his introduction to The Ornament of the World, Harold Bloom says: “...Our current multiculturalism, the blight of our universities and of our media, is a parody of the culture of Cordoba and Granada in their lost prime." What does Bloom mean? Is multiculturalism today different from the tolerance exhibited by the societies of Al-Andalus? Do you agree with him? Argue either for or against Bloom's position.

4. Finally, an experimental biology class demands the following:

> Write a brief critique (2-3 pp.) of Arbuckle, Melissa R., et al. "Development of Autoantibodies before the Clinical Onset of Systemic Lupus Erythematosus" from The New England Journal of Medicine, focusing on the illustrations.

All four of these essay prompts direct the student to focus deeply on one argument and explain it. Then the student must express an original critical response. This is in some ways similar to a movie review: a reviewer has to give some picture of what the movie is like before praising or panning it. We might not think of history, economics, and biology courses as all calling on one skill, but the student who has practice summarizing arguments and critiquing them can likely do well on all of the above assignments.

So how do we get started? In this chapter, we will discuss how to return to the structure of the argument map to search for any faults. We will look at problems with the clarity of the claims, the solidity of the reasons, and the validity of the assumptions. In the next chapter, we will talk about the options for making recommendations in response to any problems we find.

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4.2: Check If the Meaning Is Clear

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (10 min, 58 sec):

Overview

Sometimes we can identify the point a writer is trying to make, but major questions still remain about what the writer means. A critique can point out the **ambiguity**--the many possible meanings of some part of the argument. Often arguments are ambiguous because they use words or phrases that have multiple definitions. For example, “We should all support reproductive justice.” There isn’t one widely accepted definition of reproductive justice. Even if readers are aware that the phrase refers to options different groups of women have around pregnancy, they may be wondering if it means access to abortion across racial and economic groups or access to birth control or sex education or some combination of all of those. Are supporters of reproductive justice always pro-choice? What is it exactly that the argument is asking us to support?

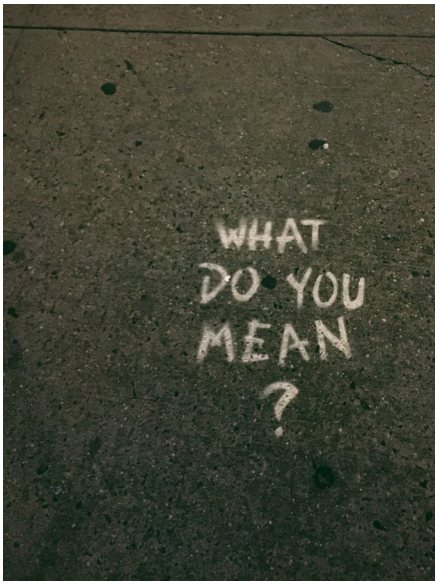
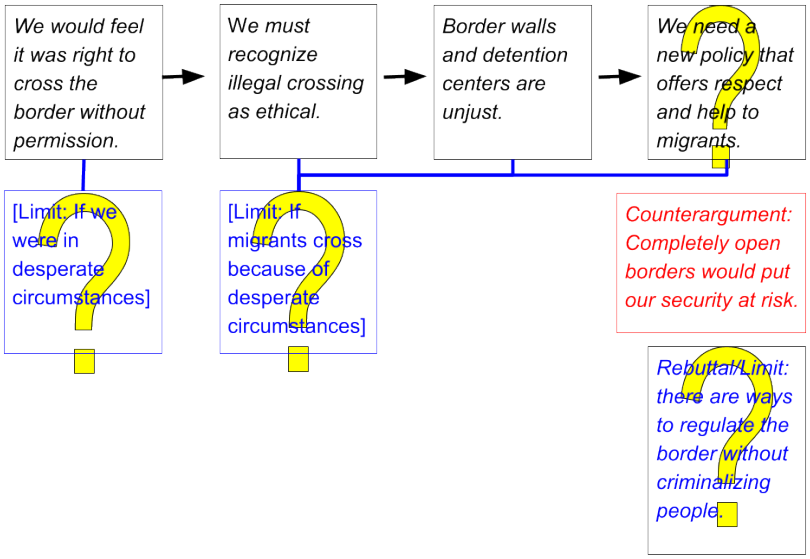


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Let’s look at the elements of the border argument we have studied and ask ourselves if any of the statements need to be clarified. Below, question marks indicate statements that are in some way ambiguous.



In our assessment, we can describe any areas of ambiguity by adding questions to our summary of the argument. Let's look at some sample writing about the ambiguities marked with question marks in the map above.

- When the author limits her claim to migrants in "desperate circumstances," what does she mean? She describes this in different words in different places, calling the migrants people "who are driven by need and good intentions" and giving the example of a parent "raising children in an impoverished third-world community plagued by violence." But we might find it important to ask where she draws the line between desperation and discontent. Does she want to check first to see how desperate migrants are? Would she consider it appropriate to put an immigrant in a detention center for trying to cross illegally if they were wealthy and safe in their country of origin?
- What does she mean by "help"? The word makes us think of humanitarian relief: handouts of food, shelter, and medical care. How much material assistance is she talking about and how much money does she think the United States should spend on this? Doesn't the current system provide some material assistance, in part through the detention centers? More fundamentally, does "help" mean that she wants us to let migrants in? Would she still consider it "help" to assist them to settle in another country or to improve their life in their country of origin? How would either of those versions of "help" work? We might imply that she should specify her meaning. Or we might suggest that she left the concept of "help" ambiguous because there is no good answer to these questions: there is no satisfactory way to offer people a better life where they came from, and we cannot endlessly support them at the border.
- What does she mean by "regulate"? The word sounds reassuring, but it implies some control and yet she is talking about not keeping people out. If you can't turn people away, what kind of control or safety guarantee can you have? Does she just mean inspecting them for arms and drugs? Or does she mean some kind of extensive background check? But in that case, wouldn't we need detention centers while we waited for the result?

Phrases for pointing out what is not clear

We do not need any special vocabulary to point out ambiguity, but sometimes seeing typical phrases can help jumpstart our thinking. Here are some approaches:

Ask a question

- What exactly does she mean by _____?

Describe the author's actions and shortcomings

- He seems to imply that _____, but leaves ambiguous whether or not that means_____.
- They fail to clarify what exactly _____ refers to.
- He does not define what he means by _____.
- She explores _____, but fails to articulate a clear message.

Refer to the argument's failure to clarify

- This leaves open the question of _____.
- The argument never specifies whether _____ or _____.

Refer to readers' probable confusion

- Readers will wonder if they mean_____ or _____.
- Readers may be confused by the shifting meaning of the term "_____."
- Many will interpret _____ to mean _____, but some might also take it to mean _____.

How much of a problem is the lack of clarity?

Since our goal in an assessment is to decide how effective we think the argument will be at getting its point across, any charge of vagueness implies some failure to communicate that point. This becomes a critique. But is it a minor flaw in the argument, or does it mean that the whole argument has no validity? The seriousness of the critique depends on how central the lack of clarity is to what the writer is trying to claim in the argument and whether there is an obvious way to clarify the argument or not.

Sometimes we can make an educated guess as to what the author meant based on clues we find in the rest of the argument. We can describe what the most likely meaning is but still note why readers might reasonably have another interpretation. Sometimes it isn't possible to figure out what the author means. In our assessment, we just have to put our finger on what isn't clear.

The lack of clarity may not be a serious flaw if we can make a reasonable guess as to what the author intends based on the rest of the argument. We can simply point out such a case:

- The writer does not specify whether _____ or _____, but we can infer that _____ because _____.

It also may not be too serious if it is a side point rather than a central point that needs to be clarified. In that case, we might want to think about how one clarification or another might affect our assessment. We can specify in our assessment that we support the argument if it means what we think it means but not if it means something else.

However, sometimes the vagueness covers a fatal flaw in the argument, a difficulty, contradiction, or gap that cannot be explained away. One particular kind of ambiguity that undermines the argument is when the writer uses a word in two different ways while acting as if it only has one meaning. A change in a word's meaning, whether intentional or not, can lead to an unjustified conclusion. This is called **equivocation**.

For example, consider the following paraphrase of an example found on fallacyfiles.org:

"No medical professional should be allowed to intentionally harm a human. What is a fetus if not human? How, then, can anyone dispute that abortion is wrong and should be illegal?"

There may or may not be legitimate reasons to oppose legal abortion. However, the above argument does not hold up because it depends on a sleight of hand, a shift from the idea of a human, meaning a human being, to the adjective "human," which can apply to anything with human cells and DNA, including hair and toenails. We can tell that the above argument is faulty if we substitute "fetus" for "hair" to construct a similar argument:

"No medical professional should be allowed to intentionally harm a human. Surely our hair and fingernails are human, not animal. Therefore cutting hair and nails should be illegal."

The question any argument about abortion needs to resolve, of course, is whether a fetus can be considered a human being, not whether a fetus has human cells. So this ambiguity of meaning means that the reason and the claim are not talking about the same thing. The reason doesn't really lead to the claim.

In our assessment, we need to indicate how much of a problem the vagueness is for the overall validity of the argument.

- This ambiguity undermines the author's claim that _____.
- Without knowing _____, we cannot conclude that the author is right that _____.

Practice Exercise 4.2.1

In a few sentences, give your opinion on an issue related to current events. Make a short argument with a claim and at least one reason. Then, exchange arguments with a classmate. Read your classmate's argument and write down at least one clarifying question. Can you imagine a way in which two readers could get different ideas about what they mean based on what they wrote? Is there a term they are using that could mean more than one thing?

Here are some ideas for phrasing such direct requests for clarification:

- You seem to imply that _____, but I wasn't sure whether or not that means_____.
- Can you clarify what you're referring to when you say _____?
- Could you define the term _____? Some might think of _____, while others could imagine you mean _____.
- I'm interested in the way you explore the issue of _____, but I wasn't sure I understood what you wanted to argue in the end. Did you mean _____?
- I wondered if you meant_____ or _____.

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4.3: Look for Exceptions

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (7 min, 8 sec):

Why are generalizations important to arguments?

In order to make a point that is worth making, we may need facts or evidence, but we will also need ways to connect those specifics to bigger points or other related specifics. A generalization tells us that something is true for a group of cases that have something in common.

Find the generalizations and question them

We can check an argument by looking for possible exceptions to any **generalization** it makes. If we see a general statement, we should ask ourselves whether it is always true or whether we can identify any case that doesn't fit the pattern. If there is an exception that the argument hasn't accounted for, that may point us to a weak spot that we should mention in our assessment. Often, a particular claim or reason may sound plausible, but we need to slow down and ask if it is true in all cases. For example, take the following argument:

> The First Amendment guarantees the right of free speech to all Americans. Therefore, teachers have the right to express themselves freely in the classroom.

But is the general statement always true? Does the First Amendment really guarantee absolute freedom to say whatever we want in any situation? U.S. courts have recognized many exceptions to this freedom. For example, doctors are not allowed to discuss confidential patient information without permission. No one is allowed to call for immediate acts of violence. Teachers may not tell students to go out and shoot the president. "Hate speech" is also prohibited: a teacher does not have the right to spout racial slurs. Another exception that applies to this case is not so widely known: the First Amendment does not apply when a person is working for an employer. Unless there is a local law protecting employee speech, an employer can tell workers what they are and are not allowed to say on the job.

The original argument does not mention any of these exceptions. By pointing this out, we can show that the argument as expressed is invalid. If it isn't always true that the First Amendment guarantees freedom of speech, then we cannot necessarily conclude that teachers in classrooms are guaranteed freedom of speech.

Exceptions are not always so damaging to an argument. For example, let's take the following argument:

> Across the country, we have seen so many cases of teachers openly expressing their political beliefs in the classroom. This country's teachers behave as if their First Amendment rights extend to the workplace, but indoctrinating students is an abuse of power.

We can surely think of teachers who do not express political beliefs in the classroom. An assessment could critique this argument for not acknowledging that. However, there may well still be enough examples of teachers expressing political beliefs to claim that there is a trend. The entire argument is not invalidated just because there are counterexamples. As we saw in Section 2.8: Finding the Limits on the Argument, many arguments limit their claims to acknowledge exceptions. The claim in the example above would need to be limited, perhaps by revising the central claim to "many of this country's teachers" in front of "teachers." Of course, the validity would still depend on whether there really are so many such cases.



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Phrases for pointing out exceptions

Here are some sample ways to critique an argument for ignoring a plausible exception:

- The argument is based on the idea that _____, but this is not entirely true because _____.
- The reason given is that _____, but the author has not considered the possibility that, in fact, _____.
- The author does not acknowledge that _____ might be the case.

Common ways that arguments that leave out exceptions

We can look for exceptions with any argument, but there are some patterns worth learning about so we can spot them quickly.

Arguments that start with generalizations (deductive arguments)

Arguments that start with a generalization and apply it to a specific case or cases are known as **deductive** arguments. If it turns out the generalization is not true, then it certainly won't apply to specific cases. For example, the argument given above about teachers' right to free speech starts with a general statement about a right of all Americans to free speech and applies it to a specific group (teachers) in a specific setting (the classroom). Once we identified exceptions to the general right to free speech, we could no longer be sure that teachers in classrooms have that right, at least not based on the generalization about free speech.

Arguments that start with examples (inductive arguments)

An argument that uses examples to make a general claim is called an **inductive argument**. If it turns out that the general claim has exceptions, we may be able to limit it to account for those, as we saw above. There we observed that changing the claim from "this country's teachers" to "many of this country's teachers" would account for the exceptions, teachers who did not fit the generalization.

False dilemmas

Sometimes an argument asserts that there are only two or three options, when in fact there may be others. This is often called a **false dilemma** or **false choice** fallacy. If the writer is arguing for something that obviously has downsides, they may present it

as the lesser of two evils. However, we should always ask whether those two are really the only options. For example, consider the following argument:

> Americans are faced with a choice: either we open our borders or we turn our backs on the needs of desperate people. Clearly, the only ethical course is to open our borders.

There are other ways to try to help desperate people. As a country, we give billions in direct aid and security assistance to struggling countries every year and could conceivably give more to the countries migrants are escaping. Other possible options would be to establish refugee camps at the border, or to allow people to enter the U.S. temporarily but not permanently. These options may or may not be good ones, but the point is that the way this argument has presented the choice as an either/or is misleading.

Here is a sample way to point out a false dilemma:

- The argument presents only two possibilities,_____ and _____, when in fact it could be the case that _____

Loaded questions

Sometimes a false dilemma is implied when an argument asks a question with an obvious answer, a question phrased in such a way that it pushes us to agree with the author without examining the real range of possibilities. This **loaded question** implies that there are only two options, one of them very bad. As an example, we can reframe the statement from the false dilemma example as a question and answer:

> Can we justify turning our backs on the needs of desperate people? There is no justification for such selfishness. The time has come to open our borders.

The argument would be more transparent and less manipulative if it tried to prove that other ways of helping desperate people, such as direct aid in people's countries of origin, would not do enough.

We can critique a loaded question with a sentence like this:

The question _____ assumes that _____, when, in fact, it could be that_____.

Exercise 4.3.1

Consider the following argument: "Technology is so much a part of all aspects of our lives now that we cannot do without it."

- What exceptions could you point out to either the claim, "We cannot do without it," or the reason, "Technology is so much a part of all aspects of our lives now"?
- Use one of the phrases from this section or a phrase of your own to critique the argument.
- Would the argument be valid if it just narrowed its focus? Or does the exception reveal a fundamental problem with the argument?

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4.4: Decide How Strong the Evidence Is

Media Alternative

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Is there enough evidence?

An argument may not have obvious exceptions, but we should still ask whether it gives enough evidence to convince us of the claim. The reason is the foundation of the argument: is the foundation secure? In some cases we may suspect that some part of the reason is not true, and in others we may simply want to note that little or no evidence has been offered. For example, the border argument we have examined makes two claims without any evidence: “Completely open borders would put our security at risk” and “There are ways to regulate the border without criminalizing people."

The evidence may lack substance (circular reasoning)

Sometimes a reason given is not really a reason at all, just a repetition of the claim itself in different words. In effect, the writer asks us to believe an idea because of that very same idea. This is called **circular reasoning** or "begging the question."

For example, consider the following argument:

> Anyone born in the United States has a right to citizenship because citizenship rights here depend on birth, not ethnicity or family history of immigration.

The idea that “anyone born in the United States has a right to citizenship” and the idea that “citizenship rights here depend on birth” are really one and the same. We still need a reason to accept this focus on birth as the determining factor.

Circular reasoning is often not deliberate. In reaching to explain the reason for a deeply held belief, a writer may end up summarizing that belief again in a different way. Other times the writer may knowingly perform this sleight of hand, hoping the reader will not notice. In either case, the argument lacks substantive support.

We can critique circular reasoning with phrases like the following:

- The argument presents _____ as a reason to believe _____, but this supposed reason is just a rewording of the claim.
- The writer provides no real justification for the idea that _____; to convince us they just repeat that idea with different phrasing.

The evidence may not be representative (hasty generalization)

Most academic arguments explore evidence in the form of specific examples, facts, statistics, testimonials, or anecdotes in order to arrive at a general conclusion. This is called **inductive reasoning**.

If an argument gives evidence, we need to know if the evidence is enough. A few examples may not be representative of a general pattern. If the argument makes a sweeping generalization based on one or two anecdotes or solely on the writer's own experience, it can be considered a **hasty generalization.**

How do we decide when the evidence is enough? The science of statistics addresses this question in very specific, technical ways that are worth learning but beyond the scope of this book. Often, however, an intuitive assessment will be enough. We all probably already guard against this fallacy when we search online for products that have been reviewed many times. Clearly one five-star review could be a fluke, but 2,000 reviews averaging 4 1/2 stars is a more reliable indicator.

People who deny that global warming is a genuine phenomenon often commit this fallacy. In February of 2015, the weather was unusually cold in Washington, DC. Senator James Inhofe of Oklahoma famously took to the Senate floor wielding a snowball. "In case we have forgotten, because we keep hearing that 2014 has been the warmest year on record, I ask the chair, 'You know what this is?' It's a snowball, from outside here. So it's very, very cold out. Very unseasonable."

Senator Inhofe commits the hasty generalization fallacy. He's trying to establish a general conclusion—that 2014 wasn't the warmest year on record, or that global warming isn't really happening. But the evidence he presents is insufficient to support such a claim. His evidence is an unseasonable coldness in a single place on the planet, on a single day. We can't derive from that one example any conclusions about what's happening, temperature-wise, on the entire planet, over a long period of time. The claim that the earth is warming is not a claim that everywhere, at every time, it will always be warmer than it was. The claim is that, on average, across the globe, temperatures are rising. Cold snaps can happen even if temperatures are rising.

A particularly damaging example of the hasty generalization fallacy is the development of negative **stereotypes**. Stereotypes are general claims about religious or racial groups, ethnicities and nationalities. Even if we do have evidence that a certain trait is more common among people of one ethnicity, we still cannot assume that a particular individual of that ethnicity will have the trait.

A specific form of hasty generalization is when an author will point to a lack of evidence as a sign that no evidence is out there. This fallacy is often called **appeal to ignorance** because the arguer is citing their own lack of knowledge as the basis for their argument**.**

For example, consider the following: "No one I know has heard about any anti-Asian violence lately; therefore, reports of such violence are exaggerated." The speaker and their acquaintances may simply not have come in contact with the people who have experienced such incidents of violence.

Absence of evidence can sometimes tell us something useful. It may be a reason to doubt the conclusion even if it doesn't disprove it. During the 2016 presidential campaign, reporter David Fahrenthold took to Twitter to announce that despite having "spent weeks looking for proof that [Donald Trump] really does give millions of his own [money] to charity…" he could only find one donation, to the NYC Police Athletic League. Trump has claimed to have given millions of dollars to charities over the years. Does this reporter's failure to find evidence of such giving prove that Trump's claims about his charitable donations are false? No. To draw such a conclusion relying only on this reporter's testimony would be to commit the fallacy.

However, the failure to uncover evidence of charitable giving does provide some reason to suspect Trump's claims may be false. How much of a reason depends on the reporter's methods and credibility, among other things. In fact, Fahrenthold subsequently performed and documented in the *Washington Post* on 9/12/16 a rather exhaustive unsuccessful search for evidence of charitable giving, providing strong support for the conclusion that Trump didn't give as he'd claimed.

Is the evidence trustworthy?

If the writer has offered evidence, we should ask ourselves whether it is credible. Can it be verified? The validity depends on the source. Is the evidence from trustworthy sources? For example, if the argument cites a statistic from the Pew Research Center, we need to know whether that institution is credible. Is it biased? Does it try to promote a particular product or ideology? Do experts in the field review its studies? If we are not familiar with the source, we can look it up online and include this information in our assessment. We will discuss assessing the credibility of sources much more in Chapter 6: The Research Process and also in Chapter 9: How Arguments Establish Trust and Connection (Ethos).

Is there enough variety in the evidence?

There are different kinds of evidence and each kind has its limitations as far as what it can show. Thus, arguments are often most convincing when they provide a variety of kinds of evidence. For example, an anecdote might give a sense of how difficult an immigrant's situation in their country of origin may be, but a statistic on how common that difficulty is will be needed to show that the anecdote is typical of many others' experiences as well. In your assessment, you may want to note the limitations of the evidence offered and point out another kind of evidence that would complement it. Are there enough statistics, anecdotes, or testimonials? Is there enough variety in the kinds of evidence? There isn't a set formula for what's needed; the question is whether the readers should be convinced that any claim that makes up part of the argument is valid.

Types of evidence and their limitations

Facts

Facts are statements that can be independently verified. For example, an argument might state that “According to the Pew Research Center, the United States has more immigrants than any other country.” We could theoretically check whether the Pew Research Center issued this statement and also check whether it is true based on the census of each country as well as other population estimates.

Statistics

Statistics are numbers that are used to describe a pattern. They often represent information about a large number of cases of a given phenomenon, so they may be more convincing because they are more likely to represent a general trend than one or two cases might be. If the statistics are accurate and relevant, they can provide strong support. For example, an argument might cite evidence that according to the Pew Research Center, “immigrants today account for 13.6% of the U.S. population.” Statistics have an air of authority because they quantify things, making them and the claim they support sound indisputable. For this reason, writers can be tempted to overuse them or to throw them in where they don’t really add to the logic of the argument. A famous book called *How to Lie with Statistics* by Darrell Huff goes over all the ways in which statistics can be used to mislead readers about the strength of a claim. We need to examine closely what a given statistic actually shows and exactly how it connects to the claim at stake in the argument. This will usually involve checking the assumptions made to link the statistic to the claim, as we will see in Section 4.5: Check the Argument’s Assumptions.

Expert testimonials

Testimonial evidence can be convincing if it is collected from relevant authorities. Whether or not a testimonial is convincing depends not just on how well regarded the expert is but on how relevant their expertise is to the topic at hand. Who would be an expert source of a testimonial for an argument based on immigration? A social scientist? A philosopher? An immigration lawyer? We would want to question the testimony of a celebrity who has no special knowledge of immigration. In addition, we want to know if the expert’s perspective is representative of the opinion of others in the field. Is the person an extremist? Do they have a stake in promoting a particular product or position?

Statements from experts or organizations that represent a field of knowledge can be especially helpful in laying the foundation for a **deductive** argument, where we need a credible general principle as the foundation for a conclusion about a specific case. This can be especially helpful if we are looking to make a prediction about a future trend or the outcome of an experiment. We will need to cite experts to substantiate the general principle. But the question arises whether the experts really speak for the field and whether others have alternate expert interpretations of the pattern or draw other generalizations from the body of evidence.

For example, take the following general claim supported by expert testimony:

As psychiatrist Dr. Robert Spitzer of Columbia University told *The Washington Post* in 2001 that his study showed that, "some people can change from gay to straight, and we ought to acknowledge that." It’s not impossible to convert to heterosexuality.

However, an inquiry into Dr. Robert Spitzer will show that his 2001 study was widely criticized by other psychiatrists and that he himself recanted the study and apologized for it in the journal of the American Psychiatric Association in 2012, writing, “I … apologize to any gay person who wasted time and energy undergoing some form of reparative therapy because they believed that I had proven that reparative therapy works with some ‘highly motivated’ individuals.” An assessment could note that at the very least the argument should have mentioned this later apology when it quoted Spitzer.

Anecdotes

Anecdotes can illustrate a point with a story that makes it come to life. They are more compelling if they are based on first-hand accounts. Often these stories appeal strongly to readers' emotions, and we will discuss in much more depth how to analyze and evaluate these appeals in Chapter 8: How Arguments Appeal to Emotion. We should examine any story closely to see how opinions and assumptions may be woven into the storytelling. In our assessment, we may want to point out any possible bias or limitation of the person who provides the anecdote.

If anecdotes or specific examples are used to establish a general pattern, we can ask how the argument convinces us that these are typical. Sometimes statistics can help to establish this **typicality**.

Does the evidence really support the claim?

The argument may have offered some facts as evidence, and we may be ready to accept them as facts, but do they prove what the argument wants them to prove? Sound evidence can be used in misleading ways. As we'll see in Section 4.5: Check the Argument's Assumptions, a reason depends on assumptions to prove a claim. If the assumptions are wrong, then the reason does not really prove the claim. This type of fallacy, or logical problem, can be called a **non sequitur**.

Is the claim too broad or too definite given the evidence?

Sometimes an argument makes a broad claim based on narrow evidence. In our assessment, we can comment on any mismatch between the scope of the claim and the scope of the evidence offered. We might suggest that the argument should limit its claim with a particular phrase such as with "few," "many," "most," "some," or "in a few cases."

Sometimes an argument makes a bold, absolute claim, but the evidence really only justifies a more tentative conclusion. We can point out in our assessment that the argument lacks the appropriate qualifying words like "possibly," "maybe," "probably," "almost certainly," or "in all likelihood."

See Section 2.8: Finding the Limits on the Argument for more ways to limit the scope or degree of certainty.

Phrases for assessing an argument's evidence

Praising evidence

- She convincingly supports this claim by _____.
- They give many examples of _____ to support the idea that _____.
- His evidence of _____ ranges from anecdotes to large-scale academic studies to expert testimonials.
- X refers to credible academic studies of _____ to bolster their argument that _____.
- X refers to a number of credible experts to establish that, in general, _____.

Critiquing evidence

- X asserts that _____ but does not offer any evidence.
- The argument builds on the premise that _____, but fails to support that premise.
- X offers scant evidence for the claim that _____.
- The argument gives an example to support the claim that _____, but gives no evidence that this example is typical.
- _____ is not enough to show that _____.
- The essay offers only _____ as evidence when it should also point to _____ and _____.
- X's claim that _____ is too broad given that they only give evidence related to _____.
- The evidence does not warrant such a definite conclusion about _____.
- X has been a bit hasty to declare that_____. So far, the scanty data on _____ only warrant cautious speculation.

Exercise 4.4.1

Choose an argument you have recently read for class, or select one from Section 15.1: Suggested Short Readings. Make a list of the pieces of evidence the argument presents and decide whether each piece is a fact, statistic, testimony, or anecdote. Is a credible source given for each?

Answer available at the end of this section.

Attributions

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Answers

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4.5: Check the Argument's Assumptions

Media Alternative

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Why assumptions matter

One of the most powerful techniques for testing whether an argument is valid is to find out what assumptions it makes and check those assumptions. Noticing and questioning assumptions is a core slow thinking practice in college. Beyond that, questioning assumptions may be one of the most powerful mental habits a human can learn.

In his bestseller *The Four Agreements: A Practical Guide to Personal Freedom*, Don Miguel Ruiz advises, "Don't make assumptions." But we do make assumptions; every belief, every argument depends on them. Perhaps Ruiz's advice is a shorthand way to ask us to learn to recognize our assumptions so we can decide when to set them aside.

Questioning assumptions is a habit we may find empowering, freeing, and useful in any area of life. Novelist Isaac Asimov put it another way: "Your assumptions are your windows on the world. Scrub them off every once in a while, or the light won't come in." Discovering a hidden assumption can be a revelation; it suggests the possibility that things might work another way. There may be other angles to consider.

Questioning assumptions can be a way to speak back to authority. Those in power often make assumptions based on their privilege, assumptions that help them stay in power. They may rationalize their decisions by justifying them with better-sounding reasons. The white defenders of slavery made a thousand such arguments. Abraham Lincoln responded, "Whenever I hear anyone arguing for slavery, I feel a strong impulse to see it tried on him personally." Questioning the assumptions of such arguments can help expose their immorality and challenge the power structure.

Questioning the assumptions of the dominant culture can help anyone less privileged feel personally empowered. Bob Marley famously sang "Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery. // None but ourselves can free our minds."

Questioning assumptions about other people makes it possible to set aside stereotypes and connect authentically. Michelle Obama, in her book *Becoming*, calls on us to "fear less, to make fewer wrong assumptions, to let go of the biases and stereotypes that unnecessarily divide us."

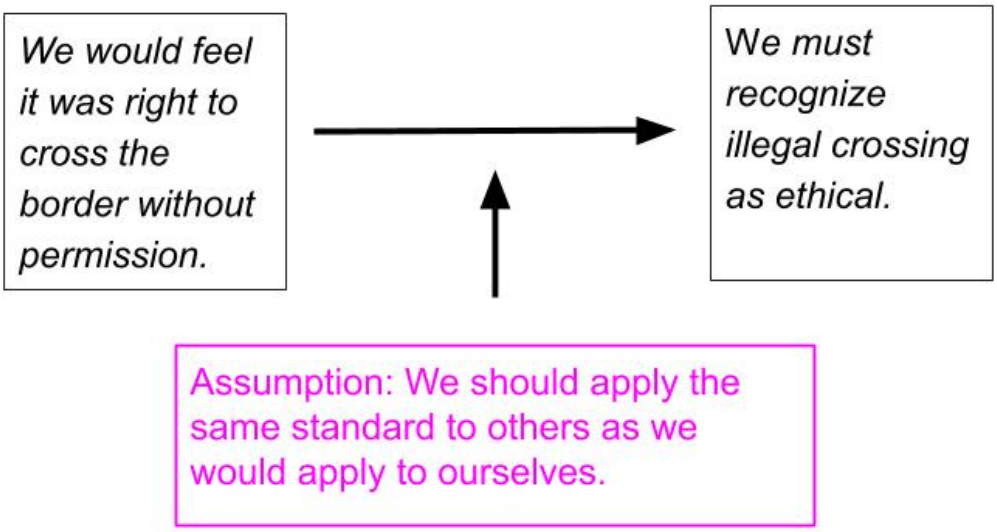
On a practical level, questioning assumptions can also help us problem-solve. There may be a way around a difficulty if we realize how our assumptions have limited our view. By first recognizing and then changing our assumptions, we can, to use a common phrase, "think outside the box."



Image by Arek Socha from Pixabay under the Pixabay License.

What assumptions does the argument make?

Most arguments don't mention their assumptions, so summaries don't typically mention them either. However, when we assess an argument or write a critical analysis, we need to know whether the argument has a strong foundation. The reason might seem to prove the claim, but that leap from one to the other depends on assumptions. The writer may not even be aware of these ideas, but they are still necessary to the argument. Philosopher Stephen E. Toulmin popularized the process of finding the assumptions that link the reason to the claim. He called these **warrants**, and he found it useful to write them into an argument map such as the one below (see Chapter 2: Reading to Figure out the Argument for more on argument mapping).



"Argument Map with Assumption" by Anna Mills is licensed CC BY-NC 4.0.
See the accessible text description of the argument map with assumption.

In the map, the assumption goes underneath with the arrow pointing up because the assumption supports or props up the whole argument. Note that this assumption is similar to the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

Arguments depend on more than one assumption. The above example also depends on the assumption that "People currently need permission to cross the border legally." We know that under current policy, governments decide whether or not to allow people in. However, it is probably not useful to identify assumptions that are easily verified and not controversial. In fact, we do

not need to find every underlying assumption in order to assess an argument; we only need to know which are questionable.

So if we are reading an argument, how do we identify the assumptions it makes? In a few cases writers will point out their assumptions with phrases like the following:

- I will assume here _____.
- This rests on the assumption that _____.
- Of course, this depends on _____.
- As we know, _____.
- This argument rests upon the idea that _____.
- The underlying principle here is that _____.

More commonly, though, writers do not state assumptions, sometimes because they seem obvious and sometimes because drawing attention to the assumptions might draw attention to a weakness in the argument. We will need to identify these assumptions on our own.

The basic method is to ask ourselves what the reason needs to support the claim. What other idea is necessary for us to make the leap from reason to claim? What underlying idea does that leap depend on?

In the border example above, most people would probably agree that we should apply the same standards to ourselves as we do to others. The border argument also depends on the assumption that "People currently need permission to cross the border legally." Both of those assumptions are uncontroversial, so why do we need to talk about them? In fact, we do not need to find every possible underlying assumption in order to assess an argument. We need to focus on assumptions that might not be true or that might not be universally accepted.

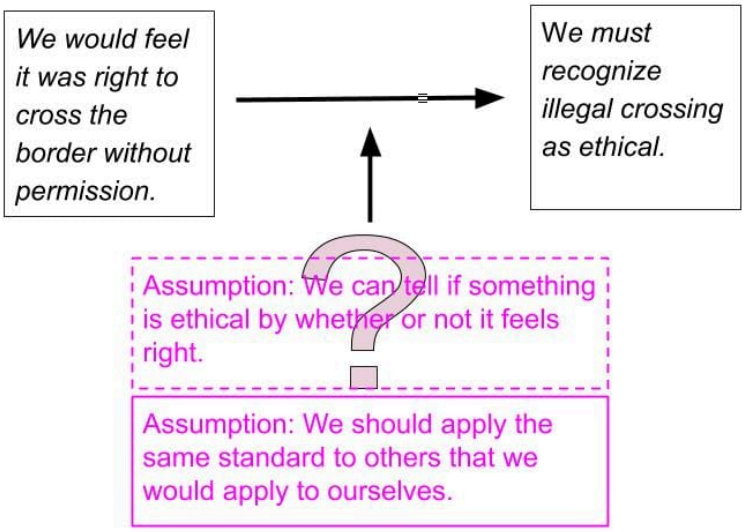
One way to uncover problematic assumptions is to brainstorm cases where the reason wouldn't necessarily lead to the claim. We can put the reason and the claim into the following question:

> Just because [reason] does that necessarily mean that [claim]?

If we can think of a case in which the reason doesn't lead to the claim, then there must be a problematic assumption. We can try to find this assumption by filling in the "scenario" blank below with a case in which the reason was true but the claim was not. This technique is sometimes called a **scenario test**:

> Just because [reason] that doesn't mean [claim] because it could be that...[scenario].

For example, in the case of the border argument, we could write, "Just because we would feel it was right to cross the border without permission doesn't necessarily mean that we must recognize illegal crossing as ethical because it could be that..." I am tempted to complete this with the idea that "our personal feelings are not always the best guide to ethics." Or I could complete it with a more specific case: "It might be that crossing without permission isn't really right even though some people might feel it is." This helps us to identify another assumption--that we can tell if something is ethical by whether or not it feels right.



"Questionable Assumption Argument Map" by Anna Mills is licensed CC BY-NC 4.0.
See the accessible text description of the questionable assumption map.



Like a house, an argument needs a solid foundation.
Photo by Cindy Tang on Unsplash under the Unsplash License.

Are the assumptions valid?

Look for exceptions to the assumptions

If we want to test an assumption, we can look to cases unrelated to our argument that might prove it wrong. We can probably think of a person who sincerely believes they are doing right, while we are sure their action is unethical. A suicide bomber may believe they are doing God's will by killing people. We can use such a counterexample to help us argue that the assumption in question is not universally true and thus the reason does not necessarily imply the claim.

Look for evidence for the assumptions

In the rare case that an argument lists its assumptions and explains why they are justified, we can check whether we find these justifications convincing. More often, though, the author will not have stated the assumptions or provided evidence to support

them. Our critique is a place to call for evidence of any key assumption we have uncovered. We don't have to make a final pronouncement on whether the assumption is true or not; we may not have formed an opinion on that yet. We may be inclined to doubt it or to believe it, but either way, we should point out when the assumption needs support. (Philosopher Stephen Toulmin called support for an assumption "**backing**" so you may see that term used in other rhetoric textbooks).

For example, the argument below relies on the idea that chronic stress is bad for health:

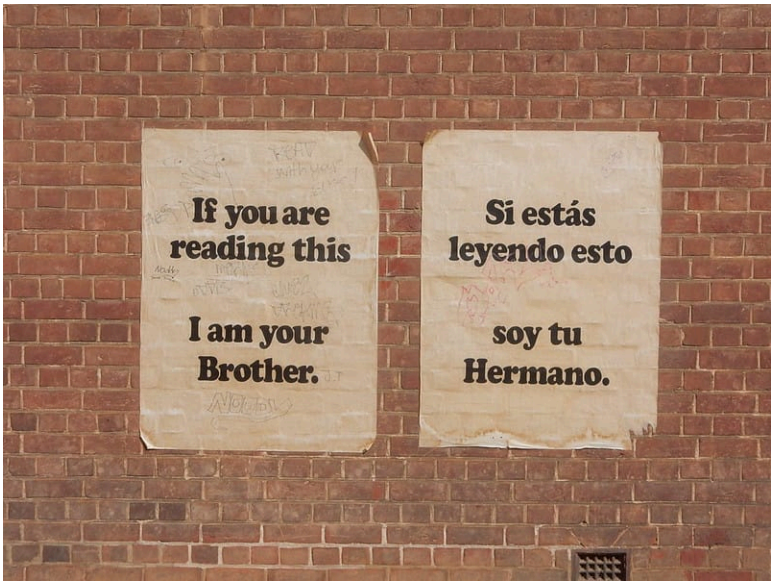
> **Reason**: According to Penn Medicine News, "exposure to weight bias and stigma . . . can lead to a physiological stress response such as increased inflammation and cortisol levels."
>
> **Claim**: Fat-shaming may be one cause of the health problems associated with being fat.
>
> **Assumption**: Chronic stress leads to health problems.

We can check if this assumption is valid by consulting a range of reputable medical journals, and we will find many statements and studies that back it up. For example, the popular and well-regarded site MayoClinic.org includes an article with the title, "Chronic stress puts your health at risk" and lists effects from heart disease to memory impairment.

Common problems with assumptions

Assuming a logical connection where there isn't one

Sometimes an argument leaps from a reason to a claim that is not really related. This problem is known generally as a **non sequitur**, which is Latin for "It does not follow." The scenario test will turn up cases like this. Again, we ask ourselves *Just because [reason] does that necessarily mean that [claim]?*



"Non Sequitur" by mikecogh on Flickr is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

When we use the phrase "non sequitur" in conversation, we usually mean that a statement seems random or out of place. However, in argument non sequiturs often sound convincing and not random at all. On closer examination we see that logically speaking, the reason does not necessarily make the claim true. For example, let's take the assertion that "Overseas Filipino workers (O.F.W.s) are not citizens in the countries where they work, so they have no legal rights." Just because workers are not citizens does not mean that they have no legal rights. People can have legal rights without being citizens although the law may treat citizens and non-citizens differently in some cases.

One special case where a logical connection is missing is known as a red herring fallacy or a fallacy of distraction. We commit the red herring fallacy if we attempt to distract the audience from the main thread of an argument, taking things off in a different direction. The diversion is often subtle, with the detour starting on a topic closely related to the original—but gradually wandering

off into unrelated territory. The tactic is often, but not always, intentional: if the arguer is not comfortable arguing about a particular topic on the merits, they change the subject to an issue about which they feel more confident and pretend to have won the original argument.



"Red Herring" by Laurel Russwurm on Flickr is licensed under CC0.

The red herring fallacy gets its name from the actual fish. When herring are smoked, they turn red and are quite pungent. Stinky things can be used to distract hunting dogs, who of course follow the trail of their quarry by scent; if you pass over that trail with a stinky fish and run off in a different direction, the hound may be distracted and follow the wrong trail.

An argument like the following is a good example of the red herring fallacy:

> Our staff sanitize every classroom surface multiple times throughout the day. Therefore, our school is a leader in stopping the spread of Covid 19.

During the Covid 19 pandemic, many people and institutions have focused on what Atlantic writer Derek Thompson called “hygiene theater”--the tendency to showcase practices like sanitizing surfaces beyond their actual protective value. This continued even after scientists had known for some time that airborne transmission was much more common than transmission through surfaces. The focus on surface hygiene diverted attention away from mask-wearing and ventilation systems, which were more statistically effective in preventing transmission.

Assuming two things are comparable

False analogy

Many arguments rely on a similarity between two things, usually referred to as an analogy, to conclude that if something is true for one, it will be true for the other. But things that are similar will also have differences, and so for any such argument we need to ask whether there are any differences significant enough to change the outcome. Are the two things really similar enough to justify the conclusion? If not, we have what is often called a **false analogy** fallacy.

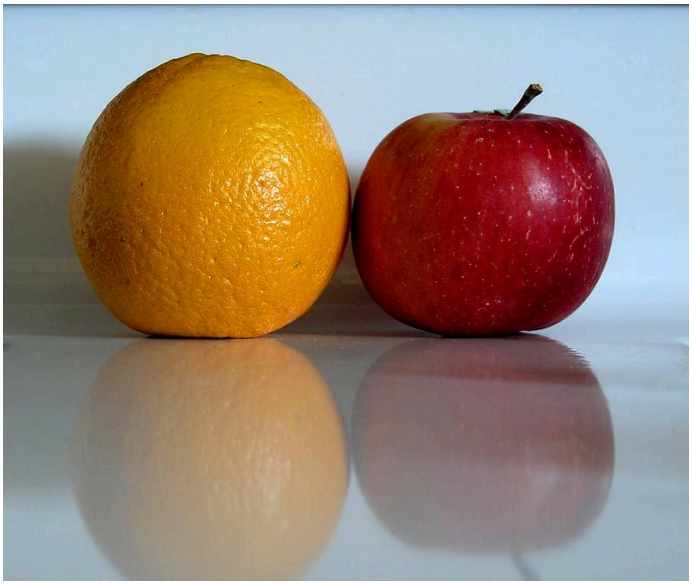
For example, consider the following argument:

> People have a First Amendment right to express opinions by donating money to political candidates, so corporations should also have that right.

This is a summary of the decision the Supreme Court came to in the landmark 2010 decision Citizens United vs. FEC. It depends on an analogy between corporations and people, an idea called "corporate personhood" in legal terms. Chief Justice Roberts argued, essentially, that the First Amendment applies to groups of people, such as corporations, as well as to individuals. Now, is this a fallacy? In a dissenting opinion, Justice Stevens argued that the Constitution was intended to apply to "We, the People," not corporate entities. He listed the key differences that led him to conclude that:

> In the context of election to public office, the distinction between corporate and human speakers is significant. Although they make enormous contributions to our society, corporations are not actually members of it. They cannot vote or run for office. Because they may be managed and controlled by nonresidents, their interests may conflict in fundamental respects with the interests of eligible voters. The financial resources, legal structure, and instrumental orientation of corporations raise legitimate concerns about their role in the electoral process. Our lawmakers have a compelling constitutional basis, if not also a democratic duty, to take measures designed to guard against the potentially deleterious effects of corporate spending in local and national races.

As we can see, Justice Stevens thought that this was a case of false analogy, but Chief Justice Roberts disagreed. Introducing the fallacy label here does not resolve the debate, but it may help to clarify where the disagreement lies.



Are apples and oranges too different to compare? "Like apples and oranges" by Sarah Braun on Flickr is licensed under CC BY NC SA 2.0.

Slippery slope

One type of invalid comparison comes in arguments that make a dramatic prediction that if one thing happens, other more dramatic things will inevitably follow. It depends on the idea that the first event is comparable to the other, more dramatic events. A **slippery slope** argument claims a disastrous cascade effect will take place if we take certain action. It presents a chain of events leading to disaster as if it is unstoppable or highly probable. But how slippery is the slope really? How likely is the disaster? Are there factors that could stop the chain reaction?

For example, take the following argument:

> If we allow people to self-identify their gender regardless of their biology, they will expect to be able to self-identify their race and then their age and species. Next thing we know, the law will demand we pretend a person is a gorilla!

There is a certain appealing momentum to these arguments: we imagine a boulder rolling down a hill. But will one thing really lead to another? Just because we can imagine that one thing might lead to another does not mean that it inevitably will. Many transgender people already legally claim a gender identity different from the one they were assigned at birth. However, very few people believe themselves to be a different age than their chronological age or a species other than human. There is no movement to push for legal recognition of self-identified age or species.



If it falls, this boulder will not roll far; the slope is not slippery. Photo by Prashant Kumar on Pixahive, licensed under CC0.

Fallacious slippery slope arguments have long been deployed to resist social change. Those opposed to the abolition of slavery warned of economic collapse and social chaos. Those who opposed women's suffrage asserted that it would lead to the dissolution of the family, rampant sexual promiscuity, and social anarchy. Of course, none of these dire predictions came true; the slopes weren't slippery.

We can critique a slippery slope argument with phrases like the following:

- The argument claims that _____ will inevitably lead to _____, but this is far from certain.
- They assume that _____ will set off a chain reaction leading to _____; however this is unlikely because _____.

(We can also think of the slippery slope arguments as committing the fallacy of false analogy. We saw above that one argument against letting people identify their own gender depended on a comparison between gender identity and other forms of identity such as species and age, but most would argue that key differences between these categories would lead to different legal treatment. The differences would stop the slide down the slope. Faulty arguments can often legitimately be classed under different fallacy labels.)

Assuming that one thing causes another

Arguments often claim casually that an earlier event caused a later event. To be sound, such arguments need quite a bit of support. They need to show that there is a likely way in which the first event *could* cause the second. They need to ask if something else could have caused the second event. Could a third factor have caused both events? Maybe the first event contributed to the second, but other factors did as well. Or maybe there is no link between the two events at all.

Assuming that a first event caused a second without further justification is a fallacy variously referred to as false cause, doubtful cause, *post hoc ergo propter hoc*, *post hoc*, *post hoc* reasoning, or with the catchphrase "correlation is not causation." Once we look for it, we see it everywhere, including on the news and in reputable academic settings.

One example lies in the way we evaluate the performance of presidents of the United States. Everything that happens during or immediately after their administrations tends to be pinned on them. But presidents aren't all-powerful; they don't cause everything that happens during their presidencies. Similar claims on behalf of state governors are even more absurd. At the 2016 Republican National Convention, Governors Scott Walker and Mike Pence—of Wisconsin and Indiana, respectively—both pointed to record-high employment in their states as vindication of their conservative policies. But some other states were also experiencing record-high employment at the time: California, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New York, Washington. Yes, they were all controlled by Democrats. Maybe there's a separate cause for those strong jobs numbers in differently governed states? Possibly it has something to do with the improving economy and health of the job market in the country as a whole.

Proving that one thing caused another can be tricky. We talk more about various strategies for showing causation in Section 7.5: Causal Arguments.

Phrases for critiquing assumptions

Once we have identified an assumption that we want to question, we can introduce the assumption and explain its weakness with it with phrases like the following:

- _____relies on the idea that _____; however, _____.
- The argument assumes that _____ without providing evidence.
- _____takes for granted that _____, but we may wonder whether this is a justified assumption because_____.
- _____depends on the assumption that_____. Is this always the case? Some might say that _____.
- _____ depends on a belief in _____, which may not be shared by all readers because _____.
- The underlying idea here is that _____; however we must ask ourselves whether _____.
- The implicit assumption is that _____ but some may question whether, in fact, _____.

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4.6: Check How Well the Argument Addresses Counterarguments

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (5 min, 48 sec):

Did they overlook a counterargument?

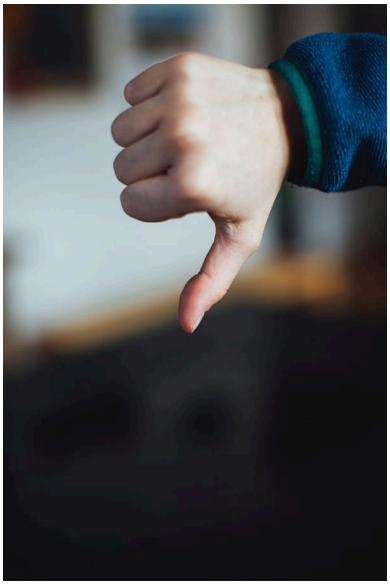
We may have already uncovered counterarguments that were left out when we looked for exceptions to the argument and faulty assumptions. Still, it's worth asking ourselves if there's any other objection the argument should have addressed. We can mention any compelling or popular counterargument in our critique.

Here are three ways to brainstorm counterarguments:

1. **Try out the phrases often used to introduce counterarguments**
   Scan the common phrases used to introduce counterarguments listed in Section 2.6: Finding the Counterarguments. Does a particular phrase suggest any counterarguments that could apply in the case of the argument you are assessing?

2. **Imagine a lively, informal conversation on the topic**
   This can help get our minds going. Instead of the more formal phrase "This way of thinking is completely wrong," why not consider the argument we're assessing and then try out the phrase, "What, are you crazy? You think _____? But haven't you considered_____?"

3. **Take a different perspective**
   Ask ourselves if there is any particular group of people or school of thought likely to object to the argument. What would they say? For example, if we are assessing an argument by a Democratic politician, we can ask ourselves what a Republican might say in response. Or, if we are assessing an argument promoting capitalism, we can ask ourselves what a socialist counterargument might be.



Who would disagree with the argument and why? Photo by Markus Spiske from Pexels, under the Pexels License.

Is the description of the counterargument fair and accurate?

If an argument describes counterarguments, we have to wonder whether it gets them right. Often, a writer may be tempted to summarize the other side in a distorted way, to exaggerate the counterargument in order to make it easier to disprove. This goes by the name of the **straw man fallacy**. For example, consider these two exaggerated descriptions of political parties' positions:

- Democrats want completely open borders.
- Republicans want to kick all immigrants out of America.

This fallacy involves the misrepresentation of an opponent's viewpoint—an exaggeration or distortion of it that renders it indefensible, something nobody in their right mind would agree with. You make your opponent out to be an extremist, then declare that you don't agree with their made-up position. Thus, you merely *appear* to defeat your opponent: your real opponent doesn't hold the crazy view you imputed to them; instead, you've defeated a distorted version of them, one of your own making, one that is easily dispatched. Instead of taking on the real person, you construct one out of straw, thrash it, and pretend to have achieved victory. It works if your audience doesn't realize what you've done, if they believe that your opponent really holds the crazy view.

If an argument constructs and defeats a straw man, it is really only defeating a made up debate. But this distraction only works if the audience believes the straw man is the real thing. We can detect the distortion by checking the description of the other side against what the other side has actually commonly argued.



A straw man, like an exaggerated version of an argument, is easy to knock down. Photo by Skitterphoto from Pexels, licensed CC0.

Is the rebuttal convincing?

We should remember to ask the same critical questions about the author's response to counterarguments as we do about the main argument itself. Counterarguments and rebuttals are often left to stand on their own. As we assess the argument, we should test these as well to see if they might be incorrect or might need additional support. Is there a better way to disprove the counterargument?



Does the argument offer a credible perspective on any likely objections? Image by Mariana Anatoneag from Pixabay under the Pixabay License.

Phrases for assessing the handling of counterarguments

Praise for the handling of counterarguments

- The author effectively counters the common view that _____ by arguing that, in fact, _____.
- The writer acknowledges that _____ but explains that this is because _____.
- The argument responds to the _____ critique of their position by noting that _____.

Critique of the handling of counterarguments

- The argument fails to mention the opposing view that _____.
- The author attempts to respond to critics by claiming that _____, but this response is not convincing because _____.

Exercise 4.6.1

Pick an argument on a controversial topic. You might choose something you have recently read for class or an editorial from a major news outlet. Identify at least one possible counterargument that the article does not mention.

Exercise 4.6.2

Pick an argument that mentions a counterargument and use the phrases in this section or phrases of your own to answer these questions:

1. Is the description of the counterargument fair and accurate?
2. Is the rebuttal convincing?

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4.7: Reflect on an Argument's Strengths

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (7 min, 11 sec):

Why look for strengths if the argument is flawed?

Often in assessing an argument we focus first on the negative as we test the argument for flaws. If we do not uncover any weaknesses as we review the argument's logical structure, use of evidence, and handling of counterarguments, then we can naturally describe those as strengths.

However, even if we do find weaknesses, it's important to recognize any contributions as well. Doing so will show readers that our assessment is fair-minded. An assessment can be precise about what holds up to scrutiny and what doesn't. Even if the argument is fatally flawed, it may still contain some valuable insight or move the conversation forward in another way. We might conclude that an argument is not valid, but still see ways in which this argument can help us get closer to the truth on a particular topic. At the very least, if we see nothing redeeming in the article itself, we can pull a lesson or an insight out of our own experience of assessing it.

The following sections outline some ways we can point to strengths in an argument.



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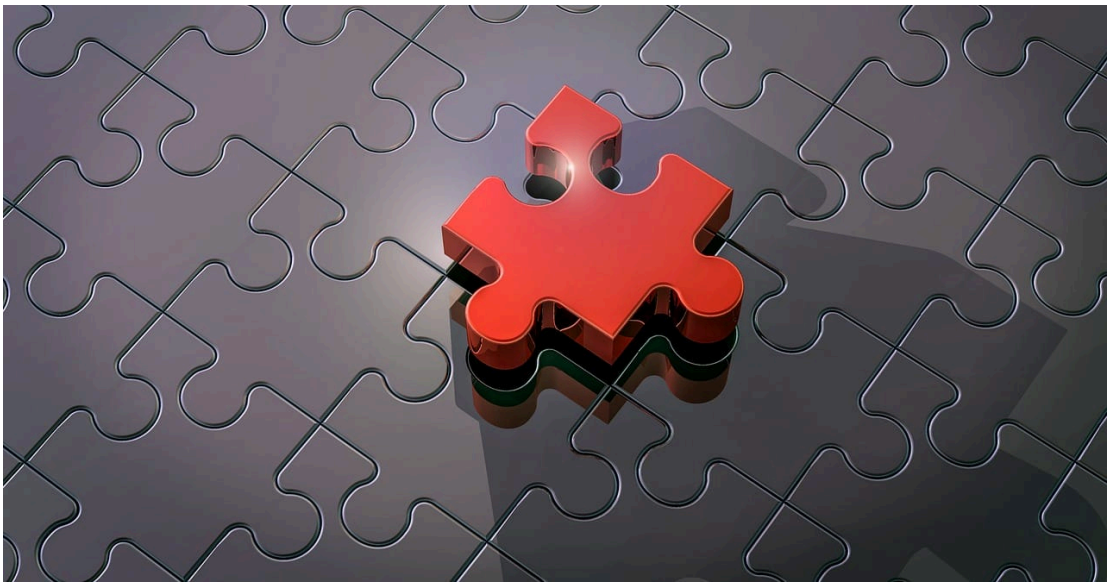
Praise part of the argument

After we zero in on the weakness, we can highlight whatever parts of the argument proved to be sound. If we are assessing an argument that is developed over the course of one or more pages, there will be many related claims and reasons. The reasoning in one section might be valid even if the next point has us wincing or wanting to rant.

Often, **inductive** arguments might present evidence that is suggestive, intriguing or compelling even if it does not leave us completely convinced of the conclusions the authors draw. For example, an assessment of an argument about UFOs might conclude, "Although X's speculation that UFOs have abducted people seems unjustified given the scant data, their factual recounting of the details of two credible sightings of UFOs does convince us that they are probably real."

Here are some sample phrases for praising a subsection of an argument:

- Although the argument does not succeed in proving that _____, it does help us understand _____.
- Though the evidence X presents does not prove _____, it does provide rich material for further discussion.
- X's conclusion that _____ doesn't seem fully justified, but the evidence does show that _____.
- X makes an important point when they note that _____.
- X's insight into _____ sheds new light on _____.
- X clearly outlines the problem of _____, even though their solution leaves much to be desired.
- This piece does clarify the nature of _____ even though it does not _____.



We may find value in a piece of the argument if not the whole. Image by PIRO4D from Pixabay under the Pixabay License.

Praise the argument for bringing attention to an issue

Sometimes we see value not in the content of the argument but in the focus it brings to a topic. Perhaps the argument shows why something is urgent or relevant. For example, let's imagine we want to assess a proposal for a law that stops mentally ill people from buying guns. It might say, "This proposal draws attention to the terrifying consequences of the lack of social support for people with mental illness. Yet the decision to focus gun control legislation on this population only stigmatizes it further."

We can praise an argument for drawing attention to something with phrases like these:

- X brings much-needed attention to the issue of _____, which is helpful because_____.
- The essay drives home the need for more focus on _____.
- This piece highlights the urgent situation of _____.

Praise the argument for framing an issue in a useful way

Sometimes an argument's value lies in its particular approach to an issue. We may not agree with all of the reasoning but may feel that the argument frames its topic in a useful way. A fresh way to think about something could lead to other insights in other arguments.

For example, here is an assessment of a book about nurse practitioners that focuses on *how* an argument approaches its subject:

In her book *More than Medicine: Nurse Practitioners and the Problems They Solve for Patients, Health Care Organizations, and the State*, sociologist LaTonya Trotter argues that nurse practitioners often help patients with problems that are not medical at all. Her great contribution to the study of this profession is to frame nurse practitioners not as substitute doctors but as first responders to the crisis of poverty.

We can praise the framing of an argument with phrases like the following:

- X's discussion of _____ provides a new way to think about _____.
- The argument's biggest contribution lies in its framing of _____ as _____.

Praise it for raising an important question

Sometimes an argument points toward something worth considering even if it doesn't convince us completely. It may raise an important question for further discussion or study. For example, let's take this sentence from an assessment of a book about America's mental health crisis: "Sheila Chin asks a crucial question: how can doctors and therapists collaborate to learn more about the links between physical and mental health?"

Here are some ways to praise an argument for pointing out a question:

- X's focus on _____ helps clarify an important question for further exploration: _____?
- The argument points toward the need for further study of _____ to determine _____.
- X's analysis reveals the gaps in our understanding of _____.



By raising a question, an argument can help move a conversation forward. Image by PublicDomainPictures from Pixabay under the Pixabay License.

Praise it for clarifying a position

Even if we find the reasoning flawed, we may want to give the argument some credit for articulating that reasoning. Laying out the reasons and evidence for a claim at least facilitates critical thinking about the topic. It may lay bare the underpinnings of a common belief and enable more substantive discussion of that belief.

For example, let's take this excerpt from a review of a Heritage Foundation article by Ryan T. Anderson entitled, "Transgender Ideology Is Riddled With Contradictions. Here Are the Big Ones":

Anderson's attack on transgender identity does clearly represent the reasoning of those who object to recognizing transgender identity. Thus, it provides opportunities for transgender activitsts to clarify their own positions and correct common misconceptions.

We can praise an argument for clarity with phrases like the following:

- This piece clearly articulates the case that _____.
- The argument lays bare the assumptions on which the whole case for _____ is based.
- X has clarified the reasoning that underpins the common opinion that _____.

Exercise 4.7.1

Pick an argument you disagree with. It might be one you have recently read for class or an argument you commonly hear in everyday life. Describe a strength you can genuinely appreciate in it. How does this flawed argument help to move the conversation on the topic forward?

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4.8: Come up with an Overall Assessment

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (10 min, 52 sec):

Decide what's important

It can be empowering to learn to identify problems in arguments; we may start to see flaws everywhere in the arguments we encounter in everyday life, as well as in college or in professional settings. Finding a problem, however, does not necessarily mean the argument is completely invalid. In the process of summarizing and then questioning all the aspects of an argument, we will probably identify many strengths and/or flaws. These form the starting point for an overall assessment.

Think of the parallel to a Yelp or Amazon review of a product. We might appreciate some aspects of the product and have frustrations with others, but we need to decide how many stars to give it and we need to have a short caption for our whole review. Then in the text of the review, we can explain why we rated the product the way we did in more detail, exploring the particular strengths and weaknesses.



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Even though we don't give stars when we write a paper assessing the strength of an argument, readers will still want an overall sense of how strong or weak we find the argument to be. How serious are any flaws? To write an essay assessing the argument, we have to decide what to emphasize in our thesis statement or topic sentence. Neither of these needs to mention everything we found when assessing the argument; it can focus on one or two highlights.

Sometimes we come away from an argument with a very clear sense of what the most important strengths or weaknesses are. Other times, as we are practicing slow thinking and doing a thorough job of considering the argument from many angles, we will need some strategies to figure out what to emphasize.

Sort the strengths and weaknesses into categories

One place to start is to make a list of the strengths and weaknesses of the argument that emerged as we checked the argument for clarity, evidence, assumptions, exceptions, and counterarguments. Let's take the example of an assessment of Swigart's border argument, "The Weight of the World" which we summarized in Section 3.9: Comparing and Contrasting Arguments. Let's say that we have applied all the assessment strategies described earlier in this chapter and come up with the following list of strengths and weaknesses.

Sample list of strengths and weaknesses

- Swigart relies on the idea that all Americans consider themselves American first, human second; however, many Americans believe the opposite and maintain that alleviating human suffering is their first moral duty.
- Swigart writes, “An influx of immigration… strains a nation's resources.” This ignores the fact that immigrants bring in at least as much as they take in the form of labor. Entire sectors of industry rely on the labor of immigrants.
- Swigart asserts that illegal immigration endangers national security, but she fails to support the claim, while ignoring evidence that illegal immigrants are less likely to commit crimes than American citizens.
- Swigart gives a distorted version of the argument for supporting refugees when she writes, “It is unjust, impractical, and unrealistic for one nation to solve the problems of so many non-citizens.” No one is arguing that we have to solve all the problems of people who immigrate. Also, the focus in this sentence on the problems of non-citizens distracts us from the fact that immigrants actually solve some problems for American citizens.
- Swigart sees only two extreme options for managing the border, an open border or a closed one, when in fact there are other strategies for maintaining security.
- Swigart assumes that breaking the law is by definition unethical, but she has not considered Martin Luther King Jr.’s contention that, in fact, we are obligated to disobey ordinances that are morally wrong.

Strategies for organizing the list

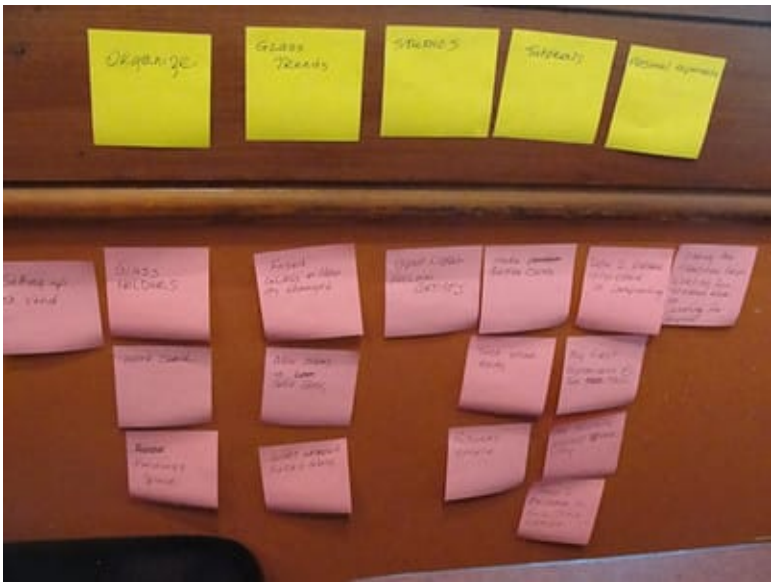


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As we read the list of strengths and weaknesses, we can try these techniques to help us come up with a much shorter overview:

- Try putting the strengths and weaknesses in order from most important to least important. This may help us decide what to highlight in our thesis.
- Look for something that one or more of the strengths and/or weaknesses have in common. Can we group some of them together? Is there a larger category they fall into? If we can combine two or more under one category, then we only need to mention that category in the thesis rather than listing the individual points.

In the case of the assessment of Swigart’s “The Weight of the World,” we may notice that the first and last points are about ethics and morality. The rest of them critique the evidence Swigart offers about practical considerations of cost and benefit for American citizens.

If the moral critique seems most important to us, we could focus on it in our thesis thus:

> Thesis: Swigart's argument on immigration policy is fatally flawed because it does not consider any moral basis for our behavior toward people who are trying to enter the United States. It offers only national self-interest as a motivating factor.

On the other hand, if the practical issue of costs and benefits seems more important, we might come up with a thesis statement like this:

> Thesis: Ultimately, Swigart's argument fails to convince because it is based on faulty evidence that immigration is bad for American citizens. She ignores the ways immigration benefits American citizens economically and results in lower crime rates.

Phrases for overall assessments

In our overall assessment, we want to make it clear to what extent we agree, disagree, or partially agree with an argument. Here are a few phrases we can use:

Positive assessments

- X offers an important contribution to our understanding of _____ by showing that _____.
- With sound reasoning and evidence, X presents a convincing case for _____.
- All in all, X makes a compelling argument that _____.

Mixed positive and negative assessments

- While X makes an important point about _____, they fail to explain _____.
- Although the argument _____ has some merit, we should question_____.
- X makes a plausible case for _____, but they don't give enough evidence to convince us fully that _____.
- X makes some valid observations on _____, but their conclusion that _____ is wrong because _____.

Negative assessments

- X completely fails to convince us of _____, largely because _____.
- The fatal flaw in X's argument is that _____.
- The problem with X's whole approach is that it ignores something crucial: _____.



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Organizing the assessment essay

Once we have the overview or thesis of our assessment, we will need to decide how and in what order to explain the details. In most cases, an assessment starts with a summary of the argument. We don't assume our readers have also read the argument we are talking about.

If our overall assessment has more than one part, we might consider dedicating a paragraph or more to each part with explanation and support. Strengths and weaknesses from our original list might each be explored in a whole paragraph of an assessment essay. In a shorter assessment, we might spend a sentence or two explaining each point before moving on to the next. For an example of a paragraph-long assessment, see the final paragraph of the Sample Assessment: "Typography and Identity."

Sample assessment essay outline

Let's take one of the sample theses assessing Swigart's "The Weight of the World" and look at one way to organize an essay based on it.

Thesis: Ultimately, Swigart's argument fails to convince because it is based on faulty evidence that immigration is bad for America. She ignores the ways in which immigration benefits American citizens and results in lower crime rates.

- **Paragraph 1:** Summarize and critique Swigart's evidence that undocumented immigrants pose a security risk.
- **Paragraph 2:** Summarize and critique Swigart's evidence that needy immigrants would disproportionately use expensive social services.
- **Paragraph 3:** Point out the need to factor in the labor and tax contributions of immigrants when assessing the financial picture.

The next step: making our own recommendation

Given the strengths and weaknesses we've uncovered, we probably have our own ideas to add about how to build on the writer's points, fix the argument, or offer a different way to look at the issue. There are many ways to follow up on your critique, as we will see in the next chapter on making recommendations in response to an argument.

Exercise 4.8.1

Imagine that you have made the following list of strengths and weaknesses of the argument "Wouldn't We All Cross the Border?" that we looked at in Chapters 2 and 3. Come up with at least two groups of points that have something in common. For each group, write a possible thesis statement that combines the points and emphasizes their importance.

- Mills assumes that we should base our moral standards on our feelings, but she does not justify or defend this idea.
- Mills does not explain how it could be possible to ensure security without stopping people who don't have permission from crossing the border.
- Mills' argument depends on finding a way to distinguish between people who genuinely have no other option but to escape their countries of origin and those who simply prefer to live in the U.S.
- Mills does not consider that our personal concern for our families can lead to unethical actions. For example, some people use their influence in unfair ways to do favors for family members.
- Mills mentions a counterargument about security but does not go into any detail about how serious the threats are.
- Mills assumes that an impoverished family would be making a good decision by immigrating to the U.S., when in fact such a decision would involve many dangers and costs.
- Mills assumes that the only way the U.S. could help desperate people in other countries would be by allowing them to immigrate.

- Mills provides no researched, real-life examples of desperate undocumented immigrants and their reasons for immigrating.
- Mills reminds us of something fundamental: our immigration policy should follow the Golden Rule: we must treat others as we would want to be treated.

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4.9: Fallacies List

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (1 min, 19 sec):

In this chapter we have discussed logical problems according to categories, but we can also list the traditional terms for these fallacies or illegitimate argumentative strategies. Here each fallacy term links to the section about the logical problem it represents.

- Equivocation
- False dilemma or false choice
- Loaded question
- Circular reasoning or begging the question
- Hasty generalization
- Appeal to ignorance
- Non sequitur
- Red herring
- False analogy
- Slippery slope
- Doubtful cause or false cause or *post hoc ergo propter hoc*
- Straw man
- Euphemism
- Bandwagon or appeal to popularity
- Ad hominem
- Abusive attacks
- Guilt by association
- Circumstantial attacks
- Tu quoque
- Poisoning the well

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4.10: Common Assessment Phrases

Media Alternative

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Here are the common phrases discussed in Chapter 4 for writing an assessment of the quality of an argument. Each heading links to the relevant section of the text.

Clarity

Lack of clarity

- What exactly does X mean by _____?
- He seems to imply that _____, but leaves ambiguous whether or not that means_____.
- They fail to clarify what exactly _____ refers to.
- He does not define what he means by _____.
- She explores _____, but fails to articulate a clear message.
- X leaves open the question of _____.
- The argument never specifies whether _____ or _____.
- Readers will wonder if they mean_____ or _____.
- Readers may be confused by the shifting meaning of the term "_____."
- Many will interpret _____ to mean _____, but some might also take it to mean _____.

Praise for clarity

- This piece clearly articulates the case that _____.
- The argument lays bare the assumptions on which the whole case for _____ is based.
- X has clarified the reasoning that underpins the common opinion that _____.

Exceptions

- The argument is based on the idea that _____, but this is not entirely true because _____.
- The reason given is that _____, but the author has not considered the possibility that, in fact, _____.
- The author does not acknowledge that _____ might be the case.
- The argument presents only two possibilities,_____ and _____, when in fact it could be the case that _____
- The question _____ assumes that _____, when, in fact, it could be that_____.

Evidence

Praise

- She convincingly supports this claim by _____.
- They give many examples of _____ to support the idea that _____.
- His evidence of _____ ranges from anecdotes to large-scale academic studies to expert testimonials.
- X refers to credible academic studies of _____ to bolster their argument that _____.
- X refers to a number of credible experts to establish that, in general, _____.

Critique

- X asserts that _____ but does not offer any evidence.
- The argument builds on the premise that _____, but fails to support that premise.
- X offers scant evidence for the claim that _____.
- The argument gives an example to support the claim that _____, but gives no evidence that this example is typical.
- _____ is not enough to show that _____.
- The essay offers only _____ as evidence when it should also point to _____ and _____.
- The argument presents _____ as a reason to believe _____, but this supposed reason is just a rewording of the claim.
- The writer provides no real justification for the idea that _____; to convince us they just repeat that idea with different phrasing.

Assumptions

Critique

- The argument claims that _____ will inevitably lead to _____, but this is far from certain.
- They assume that _____ will set off a chain reaction leading to _____; however this is unlikely because _____.
- _____relies on the idea that _____; however, _____.
- The argument assumes that _____ without providing evidence.
- _____takes for granted that _____, but we may wonder whether this is a justified assumption because_____.
- _____depends on the assumption that_____. Is this always the case? Some might say that _____.
- _____ depends on a belief in _____, which may not be shared by all readers because _____.
- The underlying idea here is that _____; however we must ask ourselves whether _____.
- The implicit assumption is that _____ but some may question whether, in fact, _____.

Praise

- X is correct in their assumption that _____ because _____.
- X rightly assumes that _____.

Counterarguments

Praise

- The author effectively counters the common view that _____ by arguing that, in fact, _____.
- The writer acknowledges that _____ but explains that this is because _____.
- The argument responds to the _____ critique of their position by noting that _____.

Critique

- The argument fails to mention the opposing view that _____.
- The author attempts to respond to critics by claiming that _____, but this response is not convincing because _____.

Strengths

Praise a subsection

- Although the argument does not succeed in proving that _____, it does help us understand _____.

- Though the evidence X presents does not prove _____, it does provide rich material for further discussion.
- X's conclusion that _____ doesn't seem fully justified, but the evidence does show that _____.
- X makes an important point when they note that _____.
- X's insight into _____ sheds new light on _____.
- X clearly outlines the problem of _____, even though their solution leaves much to be desired.
- This piece does clarify the nature of _____ even though it does not _____.

Praise for bringing attention

- X brings much-needed attention to the issue of _____, which is helpful because_____.
- The essay drives home the need for more focus on _____.
- This piece highlights the urgent situation of _____.

Praise the framing

- X's discussion of _____ provides a new way to think about _____.
- The argument's biggest contribution lies in its framing of _____ as _____.

Praise for raising a question

- X's focus on _____ helps clarify an important question for further exploration: _____?
- The argument points toward the need for further study of _____ to determine _____.
- X's analysis reveals the gaps in our understanding of _____.

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4.11: SAMPLE ASSESSMENT ESSAYS

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (1 min):

1. In "Spread Feminism, Not Germs," student Gizem Gur summarizes and assesses the *Atlantic Magazine* article "The Coronavirus Is a Disaster for Feminism." Annotations point out how Gur structures the summary and assessment.
    - Sample assessment "Spread Feminism, Not Germs" in PDF with margin notes
    - Sample assessment "Spread Feminism, Not Germs" accessible version with notes in parentheses
2. In "Typography and Identity," Saramanda Swigart summarizes and assesses the *New York Times* article “A Debate Over Identity and Race Asks, Are African-Americans ‘Black’ or ‘black’?” Annotations point out how Swigart structures the summary and assessment.
    - Sample assessment "Typography and Identity" in PDF with margin notes
    - Sample assessment "Typography and Identity" accessible version with notes in parentheses

4.11.1: Sample Assessment- "Spread Feminism, Not Germs"

4.11.2: Sample Assessment- "Typography and Identity"

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4.11.1: Sample Assessment- "Spread Feminism, Not Germs"

Media Alternative

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Format note: This version is accessible to screen reader users. Refer to these tips for reading our annotated sample arguments with a screen reader. For a more traditional visual format, see the PDF version of "Spread Feminism, Not Germs."

Gizem Gur

Eng 1A

Anna Mills

Final Summary and Response Essay

Spread Feminism, Not Germs

COVID-19 is not the first outbreak in history and probably won't be the last one. (Note: The opening statement provides the essay's overall context: the effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic.) However, its effects will be long-lasting. (Note: The follow-up statement introduces the essay's particular focus: the impact of the Pandemic on women.) While the Pandemic has affected everyone's lives in every aspect, its impacts on women are even more severe. Helen Lewis, the author of "The Coronavirus Is a Disaster for Feminism" explains why feminism cannot survive during the Pandemic. (Note: An outside text is introduced that the essay will engage with.) Lewis starts her article with a complaint by saying "enough already" because, in terms of housework especially for child care, there has been an inequality since the past. This inequality has become even more explicit with the coronavirus outbreak. Women have to shoulder not only more housework but also childcare more than ever due to school closures. The Pandemic started as a public health crisis and brought along an economic one. Women are mainly affected by this crisis more than men because women are more likely to take housework and childcare responsibilities while men are expected to work and "bring home the bacon." (Note: The author provides a clear thesis statement to close the opening (introduction) paragraph).)

Each gender has a different role in society. While men are usually seen as breadwinners, women mostly spend their time at home and do housework. (Note: The first supporting argument: the unpaid labor of women under traditional gender roles.) Women also are the primary caregivers both children and elders. As Lewis mentions, the "looking after" duty is on women's shoulders. Then she adds " all this looking after—this unpaid caring labor—will fall more heavily on women because of the existing structure of the workforce," and she includes a provocative question from Clare Wenham, an assistant professor of global health policy at the London School of Economics: "Who is paid less? Who has the flexibility?" The author intentionally uses this quote to express her frustration. At the same time, she implies that this existing structure is based upon the gender pay gap. (Note: The author supports her argument with evidence from the text, and provides analysis to tie that evidence to her argument.) We all are familiar with the reality that "women's income is less than men's" so this fact goes a long way towards explaining why women mainly stay at home and take caregiving responsibilities. It is a kind of survival rule that whoever earns less should stay at home. In this case, it seems like couples do not have many options.

One of the most challenging aspects of the Pandemic for dual-income parents is the school and daycare closures. (Note: Whereas the first support focused on gender roles, the second paragraph focuses on the particular challenges for parents during the Covid-19 epidemic.) These dual-earner parents should find a way to split children's needs during the shelter-in-place. If they do not balance paid work and child care, both sides will feel the consequences. To emphasize these consequences, Lewis humorously says "Dual-income couples might suddenly be living like their grandparents, one homemaker, and one breadwinner." (Note: Drawing on evidence from the text, this passage shows how gender roles relate to the challenges of Covid-19 for working parents and families.) Instead of splitting the housework, women take the role of "homemaker" so the author implies here that this regresses gender dynamics two generations backward. It obviously demonstrates that nothing much has changed over time and the mentality remains. While many couples are trying to find a middle way, others think that women have to suck it up and sacrifice their jobs.

In reference to school closures, Lewis brings up the Ebola health crisis which occurred in West Africa in the time period of 2014-2016. (Note: The following paragraph cites a historical precedent for the Covid-19 outbreak as a basis for comparison.) According to Lewis, during this outbreak, many African girls lost their chance at education; moreover, many women died during childbirth because of a lack of medical care. Mentioning these elaborations proves once again that not only coronavirus but also many other outbreaks have caused a disaster for feminism. Pandemics, in other words, pile yet another problem on women who always face an uphill battle against patriarchal structures. (Note: This passage ties this observation about the Ebola outbreak in West Africa to a greater observation about Pandemics and gender roles overall.)

I started reading her article with a feeling of frustration. While the main topic of the article is feminism, Lewis gives a couple of male examples from the past, such as William Shakespeare and Isaac Newton. (Note: The author makes a personal note here, marking an emotional connection and reaction to the text.) She seems at times to attribute their success to their masculinity. They both lived in times of plague, demonstrating that despite all our progress, the human species is still grappling with the same issues. According to Lewis, neither Newton nor Shakespeare had to worry about childcare or housework. Even though her comparison seemed odd to me, she managed to surprise me that in over 300 years many gender inequities remain the same. This is actually very tragic. It is hard to acknowledge that women are still facing gender inequality in almost every area even 300 years after the time of these great English thinkers. (Note: The author cites historical precedent again: this passage argues that the relationship between plagues and gender roles has not changed much in centuries.) Assuming housework is the natural place of women without asking women if they want to do it is asking for too big a sacrifice. Since couples have the option to split the housework and childcare, why should only women have to shoulder most of the burden? This is a question that I might never be able to answer, even if I search my whole life. It is unacceptable that there is pressure on women to conform to gender roles, such as cultural settings and expectations. (Note: The author uses a rhetorical question to segue into a new supporting argument.) Women should not have to sacrifice their leisure time completing unpaid work. I agree with Lewis when she mentions the “second shift” situation. When we consider women’s first shift as their paid work, the second shift represents the time that they spend working in the home. In this case, there is apparently no shift for leisure time. Lewis also supports this by saying “Across the world, women—including those with jobs—do more housework and have less leisure time than their male partners.” Additionally, it seems like economic recovery is going to be long-lasting because of the Coronavirus. As a solution, if men and women have equal housework responsibilities, women may spend more of their time completing paid work. (Note: The author makes a call to action near the end of the essay.) In this way, they can contribute to the economy while they are socializing. Especially after the Pandemic is over, we will need a greater workforce, so hopefully, both men and women can equally participate in the economy. (Note: Much like the first sentence of the essay, the last sentence speaks to a greater, big-picture context: the need for equality in a post-pandemic world.)

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4.11.2: Sample Assessment- "Typography and Identity"

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (7 min, 45 sec):

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Sample Essay Z

English 1C

Prof. Saramanda Swigart

Typography and Identity

John Eligon's *New York Times* article, “A Debate Over Identity and Race Asks, Are African-Americans ‘Black’ or ‘black’?” outlines the ongoing conversation among journalists and academics regarding conventions for writing about race—specifically, whether or not to capitalize the “b” in “black” when referring to African-Americans (itself a term that is going out of style). (Note: The opening sentence introduces the text this essay will respond to and gives a brief summary of the text's content.) Eligon argues that, while it might seem like a minor typographical issue, this small difference speaks to the question of how we think about race in the United States. Are words like “black” or “white” mere adjectives, descriptors of skin color? Or are they proper nouns, indicative of group or ethnic identity? Eligon observes that until recently, with the prominence of the Black Lives Matter movement, many journalistic and scholarly publications tended to use a lowercase “black,” while Black media outlets typically capitalized “Black.” He suggests that the balance is now tipping in favor of "Black," but given past changes, usage will probably change again as the rich discussion about naming, identity, and power continues. (Note: The thesis statement includes two related ideas explored by Eligon: the current trend toward using "Black" and the value of the ongoing discussion that leads to changing terms.)

Eligon points to a range of evidence that "Black" is becoming the norm, including a recent change by "hundreds of news organizations" including the Associated Press. This comes in the wake of the George Floyd killing, but it also follows a longtime Black press tradition exemplified by newspapers like *The New York Amsterdam News*. Eligon cites several prominent academics who are also starting to capitalize Black. However, he also quotes prominent naysayers and describes a variety of counterarguments, like the idea that capitalization gives too much dignity to a category that was made up to oppress people. (Note: Summary of a counterargument.) Capitalizing Black raises another tricky question: Shouldn't White be likewise capitalized? Eligon points out that the groups most enthusiastic to capitalize White seem to be white supremacists, and news organizations want to avoid this association. (Note: The choice of "points out" signals that everyone would agree that mostly white supremacist groups capitalize White.)

Eligon's brief history of the debate over racial labels, from “Negro” and “colored” to “African-American” and “person of color,” gives the question of to-capitalize-or-not-to-capitalize a broader context, investing what might seem like a minor quibble for editors with the greater weight of racial identity and its evolution over time. (Note: This paragraph shifts focus from present to past trends and debates.) He outlines similar disagreements over word-choice and racial labels by scholars and activists like Fannie Barrier Williams and W.E.B. Du Bois surrounding now-antiquated terms like “Negro” and “colored.” These leaders debated whether labels with negative connotations should be replaced, or embraced and given a new, positive connotation. (Note: This paragraph summarizes the historical examples Eligon gives. Phrases like "He cites" point out that certain ideas are being used to support a claim.) Eligon observes that today's "black" was once used as a pejorative but was promoted by the Black Power movement starting in the late sixties, much as the word "Negro" was reclaimed as a positive word. (Note: Summary of a historical trend that parallels today's trend.) However, the Reverend Jesse Jackson also had some success in calling for a more neutral term, "African American," in the late eighties. He thought it more appropriate to emphasize a shared ethnic heritage over color. (Note: Summary of a historical countertrend based on a counterargument to the idea of reclaiming negative terms.) Eligon suggests that this argument continues to appeal to some today, but that such terms have been found to be inadequate given the diversity of ethnic heritage. “African-American” and the more generalized “people/person of color” do not give accurate or specific enough information. (Note: Describes a response to the counterargument, a justification of today's trend toward Black.)

Ultimately, Eligon points to personal intuition as an aid to individuals in the Black community grappling with these questions. He describes the experience of sociologist Crystal M. Fleming, whose use of lowercase “black” transformed to capitalized “Black” over the course of her career and years of research. Her transition from black to Black is, she says, as much a matter of personal choice as a reasoned conclusion—suggesting that it will be up to Black journalists and academics to determine the conventions of the future. (Note: This last sentence of this summary paragraph focuses on Eligon's conclusion, his implied argument about what should guide the choice of terms.)

Eligon's statistical and anecdotal survey of current usage of Black and black covers enough ground to convince us of the trend in favor of capitalization. (Note: This sentence indicates the shift from summary to a positive assessment of the argument's effectiveness.) But the value of Eligon's article lies in the attention it brings both to the convention and the discussion as a way for the Black community to wrestle with history and define itself. By presenting a variety of past and present opinions from Black leaders, Eligon gives a sense of the richness and relevance of this ongoing debate. (Note: this part of the assessment emphasizes not just what is effective at convincing readers, but what is most valuable about the argument.) His focus at the end on the opinion of one Black scholar, Crystal Fleming, offers an appealing intuitive approach to these decisions about naming. This idea is more hinted at than developed, leaving us to wonder how many other leaders share Fleming's approach and whether this approach might lead to chaos, as each writer might choose a different way to refer to racial identity. (Note: This last sentence offers a gentle critique of the limits of Eligon's evidence on this last point and the existence of possible counterarguments that are not addressed.) Still, Eligon's ending leaves us hopeful about the positive outcome of continuing the discussion: perhaps decisions about naming can help the Black community find self-definition in the face of historical injustice.

Works Cited

(Note: Works Cited page uses MLA documentation style appropriate for an English class)

Eligon, John. “A Debate Over Identity and Race Asks, Are African-Americans ‘Black’ or ‘black’?” The New York Times, 26 Jun 2020. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/26/u...gtype=Homepage

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5: RESPONDING TO AN ARGUMENT

Learning Outcomes

- Distinguish between assessing the strength of an argument and offering an original idea
- Generate relevant and original responses to others' arguments
- Demonstrate the ability to suggest an exception to an argument
- Demonstrate the ability to extend an argument with an original point
- Demonstrate the ability to suggest an alternative argument.



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5.1: The Beauty of Response Writing

5.2: "Maybe. We need to know_____"- Call for More Information

5.3: "Yes, if..."- Suggest a way to limit the argument

5.4: "Yes, and..."- Suggest a way to add to the argument

5.5: "Instead, I would argue _____"- Suggest a change to the argument

5.6: Common Response Phrases

5.7: Sample Response Essays

5.7.1: Annotated Sample Response Essay- "Spread Feminism, Not Germs"

5.7.2: Annotated Sample Response Essay- "Typography and Identity"

5.8: Brainstorming Tool for Response Writing

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5.1: The Beauty of Response Writing

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (2 min, 42 sec):

A chance to express ourselves

Our voices matter. Much of this book thus far has focused on how to summarize and evaluate other people's arguments, but those are only first steps. Other people's arguments help us develop our own. Writing summaries and assessments can inspire us to come up with our own original points. Academic writing gives us the chance to join a worldwide conversation about what is true on every subject under the sun.

To many, academic writing seems elitist. In the past, it certainly was controlled by the people in power in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, and wealth. It amplified the voices of the elites. But many historically marginalized people today seek to use academic writing for their own empowerment.

Just as there are many ways to respond when a friend tells us something, there are many ways to respond in writing to a written argument. We don't have to have all the answers; there are many ways to contribute without being experts. In this chapter, we lay out various options for response. By making these moves, we can help move the larger discussion toward greater insight.



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Uses in college, work, and life

Many college writing assignments call for responses that go beyond agreeing or disagreeing with an argument. The response can be a place to bring in opinion and personal experience as they relate to the argument. Even if an assessment assignment doesn't specifically ask for a recommendation, it often makes sense to add one to a conclusion. Whether we agreed or disagreed with the argument, pointing toward a next step for the larger conversation on the issue can give the essay a sense of momentum and purpose.

The response moves described in this chapter are not just for academic writing. They can also help us respond to classmates' work in live discussions or online comments on other people's posts. They're key in professional settings too; we often need to respond to an argument such as a proposal, a memo, or a case study and show that we have something to add. Social media

platforms like Twitter, Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, etc all encourage responses; we read a post and then add our own comment as we react, reply, share, or retweet. Of course email, texting, messageboards, forums, blogs and some news media also invite original commentary. Practicing academic response writing, then, can enrich our repertoire of responses in everyday life.



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5.2: “Maybe. We need to know_____”- Call for More Information

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (2 min, 58 sec):

If we are uncertain about the argument we are responding to, we can still add to the conversation by pinpointing what makes us uncertain. What is it we need to know in order to form our opinion of the argument? Does the writer need to clarify what they mean? Or do we need more information that could come out of research or new studies?

Call for clarification

If one of the problems is vagueness or ambiguity, we probably want to call for greater clarity. We can suggest that the writer specify what they mean by a particular word or phrase. Or we may want to ask that they explain a murky point further.

We can call for clarification with phrases like the following:

- X should specify whether they mean _____ or _____.
- X should explain what they mean by _____.
- X should elaborate on the concept of _____.



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Call for additional support or study

The process of analyzing the argument will often lead us to see what it is that we do not know. It may expose areas of uncertainty or contradiction that are intriguing. If we have called into question a reason or an assumption, we may want to recommend further research or support. Perhaps we are not ready to accept something without more evidence. In that case, we might describe the kind of study or investigative journalism that could uncover a reason.

If we have thought of exceptions, then maybe the reason needs more support to show that the exceptions are not common. For example, we might suggest that the writer should present some statistical evidence, like a survey, to show what the norm is,

rather than just a few examples. The following sample sentence summarizes and assesses an argument and then moves on to recommend additional support:

> While Swigart is right that porous borders pose a security risk and that illegal immigration challenges the rule of law, her argument would have been strengthened if she had added statistics linking gang violence to human trafficking across the U.S.-Mexico border.

We can call for support and research with phrases like the following:

- Further research on _____ could show us _____.
- A study of _____ might show whether _____.
- Is it really the case that _____? We need more information about _____.
- An investigation of _____ could help us determine the role of _____ in _____.

Exercise 5.2.1

Choose an argument about immigration that you think needs further development, such as "The Weight of the World" by Saramanda Swigart, "Wouldn't We All Cross the Border" by Anna Mills, or another of your choosing. Write down a call for clarification, additional support, or further study. Consider using a phrase suggested in this section.

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5.3: “Yes, if...”- Suggest a way to limit the argument

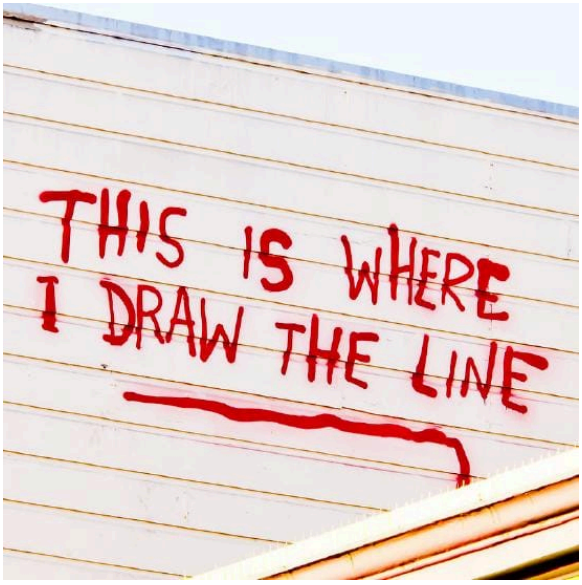
Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (1 min, 28 sec):

Maybe, in our assessment of the argument, we found exceptions to it or a whole set of circumstances under which it doesn’t hold up. We can advance the conversation by qualifying or limiting the original argument. One way to do so is to state that the argument only applies in a certain set of cases. Another way is to acknowledge one or more individual exceptions to it. Limiting an argument often helps to defend it against a counterargument.

Here are a few phrases for suggesting limits:

- We should recognize that this pattern is limited to cases where _____.
- The argument holds true in situations where _____.
- It is important to note that this claim only applies to _____.
- _____ is a notable exception because _____.
- We should note that this claim is certainly not true of _____.



"This Is Where I Draw the Line" by Thomas Hawk on Flickr is licensed CC BY NC 2.0.

Exercise 5.3.1

How would you suggest limiting each of the following arguments? Can you point out an exception? Does the claim only apply under specific circumstances?

- People are more comfortable with video meetings now than they were before the pandemic.
- Education should be free.
- Love is a force for good.
- People should not share videos of others without permission.

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5.4: “Yes, and...”- Suggest a way to add to the argument

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (4 min, 32 sec):

Sometimes we forget that agreement doesn’t have to be the end of a conversation. The process of assessing an argument starts us thinking about all the issues it brings up, and primes us to add our own two cents.

Suggest further implications

We can suggest a new idea that takes the argument we assessed a step further. Can we draw an additional conclusion? Maybe we think the argument's claim should lead us to action. Maybe we think that the claim could be expanded to include other cases or situations.

Here are a few ways to introduce a further implication of an argument that we agree with:

- The idea that _____ could apply to _____ as well.
- Beyond _____, X’s argument has implications for _____.
- This argument shows how important it is that we take action on _____.
- If we accept the idea that _____, as we should, then the time has come to _____.
- Given X’s points, shouldn’t we consider _____?



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Give a new reason

Sometimes we may agree with an argument’s claim, but for a different reason. In that case, we can make an original contribution just by pointing out the alternate reason. In other cases, we might just want to add one or more reasons to the list already covered by the argument. Maybe we are aware of evidence from another reading or from our own experience, or maybe we see a whole different line of reasoning which also leads us to the same conclusion.

For example, we noted in Section 4.4 that in the argument below, the reason was the same as the claim, so the claim had no support at all (a fallacy called circular reasoning).

> Anyone born in the United States has a right to citizenship because citizenship here depends on birth, not ethnicity or family history of immigration.

As a response to that argument, we could suggest a better reason for the same claim:

> Anyone born in the United States has a right to citizenship because the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution guarantees birthright citizenship.

Here are a few phrases to introduce alternate or additional reasons for a claim:

- Better evidence for _____ lies in _____.
- Another reason why _____ is that _____.
- The fact that _____ provides further support for X's claim.
- My own experience has also shown that _____ , which leads me to agree with X.
- I have seen firsthand how _____.
- In addition to the evidence X gives, it is also worth considering that _____.



"I love you because" by Scarlet O. on Flickr is licensed CC BY-NC-SA 2.0.

Explain why the argument matters

We can offer our own explanation for why the argument matters. This might be a point from another reading we've done, an abstract idea, a personal experience, or an anecdote of someone we know. Often, explaining why the argument matters will involve appealing to emotion or trust, which we will look at in-depth in Chapters 8 and 9.

Here are some phrases for underscoring the importance of an argument:

- X's claim is important because _____.
- This is especially concerning because _____.
- We should take note of this since _____.



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Suggest a way to spread the word

If we found the argument both valid and important, we are probably motivated to spread the word. Who needs to know about this argument, and what would be the best way to share it with them? For example, if we agree with another author that drone deliveries would pose a significant threat to privacy, we might then encourage readers to write to their Congressional representatives and post on social media about this threat.

The following phrases suggest ways to spread the word:

- We could help spread awareness of _____ by _____.
- The idea that _____ should be taught in _____ classes.
- We should all talk to those we know about _____.



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Exercise 5.4.1

Choose an argument about immigration that you mostly agree with, such as "The Weight of the World" by Saramanda Swigart, "Wouldn't We All Cross the Border" by Anna Mills, or another of your choosing. Find a way to add your own point to it by explaining why it matters, giving a new reason, suggesting further implications, or suggesting a way to spread the word. Consider using a phrase from this section.

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5.5: “Instead, I would argue _____”- Suggest a change to the argument

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (4 min, 16 sec):

If we can’t agree with the argument’s main claim, we probably have some ideas of our own on the subject. For example, let’s say a student, let’s call her Anoush, has just read an article that celebrates the fashion industry’s inclusion of multiple ethnicities and body types. Let’s say Anoush is not impressed with the fashion industry’s efforts. She has critiqued the article, but she knows that her readers may not be satisfied if she stops there. If the article was wrong, then what would a better article on the topic look like?

We don’t always have to have a fully formed or researched argument to put our own ideas into a college essay. If our main task is to summarize and assess with just a little response, this part can be tentative and not fully developed. The idea is to point the reader in a new direction. We may want to qualify or limit our suggestion with words like “perhaps,” “it may be that,” or “The idea that _____ is worth considering…”

Suggest an alternate claim that addresses the same issue

If we just analyzed an argument we found to be weak, we may already have an opposing argument or an alternate argument in mind. If readers are convinced that the first argument is without merit, they will be looking for a replacement. Our critique puts us in a good position to present an alternate vision.

In the example above, the student Anoush could give her take on where the fashion industry is right now in terms of inclusion. She might argue that the industry needs to represent a greater range of ethnicities and sizes and make sure that diverse models are shown as regular people, not as exotic.

The following phrases introduce alternate claims:

- Instead of _____, I would argue that _____.
- A more accurate claim would be _____.
- In actuality, _____.
- The idea that _____ better accounts for the evidence.
- We can find a better explanation of _____ in _____.
- As we have seen, it is not true that _____. Rather, _____.



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Suggest a different way to frame the issue

Even if we are not ready with an alternate argument, we may at least have some recommendations for a better way to approach the topic. We can suggest a particular angle or lens. For example, we might suggest that in order to understand the scarcity of Black, Latino, and Asian CEOs of Fortune 500 companies, we should stop focusing so narrowly on CEOS and should look at the demographics of management positions more generally since CEOs are almost always promoted from other leadership positions.

Here are some phrases for reframing an issue:

- Instead of focusing on _____, we should look at the question in the light of _____.
- A better way to frame the issue of _____ would be in terms of _____.
- To better understand _____, we should first ask ourselves _____.



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Exercise 5.5.1

Interactive Content

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Exercise 5.5.2

Choose an argument about immigration that you find problematic, such as "The Weight of the World" by Saramanda Swigart, "Wouldn't We All Cross the Border" by Anna Mills, or another of your choosing. Suggest an alternate claim or an alternate way to frame the issue. Consider using a phrase suggested in this section.

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- 5.5: "Instead, I would argue _____"- Suggest a change to the argument by Anna Mills is licensed CC BY-NC 4.0.

5.6: Common Response Phrases

Here are all of the common phrases discussed in Chapter 5: Responding to an Argument. Each heading links to the relevant section of the text.

Call for clarification

- X should specify whether they mean _____ or _____.
- X should explain what they mean by _____.
- X should elaborate on the concept of _____.

Call for support and research

- Further research on _____ could show us _____.
- A study of _____ might show whether _____.
- Is it really the case that _____? We need more information about _____.
- An investigation of _____ could help us determine the role of _____ in _____.

Suggest a limit to the claim

- We should recognize that this pattern is limited to cases where _____.
- The argument holds true in situations where _____.
- It is important to note that this claim only applies to _____.
- _____ is a notable exception because _____.
- We should note that this claim is certainly not true of _____.

Point to further implications

- The idea that _____ could apply to _____ as well.
- Beyond _____, X's argument has implications for _____.
- This argument shows how important it is that we take action on _____.
- If we accept the idea that _____, as we should, then the time has come to _____.
- Given X's points, shouldn't we consider _____?

Introduce alternative or additional reasons

- Better evidence for _____ lies in _____.
- Another reason why _____ is that _____.
- The fact that _____ provides further support for X's claim.
- My own experience has also shown that _____ , which leads me to agree with X.
- I have seen firsthand how _____.
- In addition to the evidence X gives, it is also worth considering that _____.

Underscore the importance of an argument

- X's claim is important because _____.
- This is especially concerning because _____.
- We should take note of this since _____.

Suggest ways to spread the word

- We could help spread awareness of _____ by _____.
- The idea that _____ should be taught in _____ classes.
- We should all talk to those we know about _____.

Introduce alternate claims

- Instead of _____, I would argue that _____.
- A more accurate claim would be _____.
- In actuality, _____.
- The idea that _____ better accounts for the evidence.
- We can find a better explanation of _____ in _____.
- As we have seen, it is not true that _____. Rather, _____.

Reframe the issue

- Instead of focusing on _____, we should look at the question in the light of _____.
- A better way to frame the issue of _____ would be in terms of _____.
- To better understand _____, we should first ask ourselves _____.

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5.7: SAMPLE RESPONSE ESSAYS

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (36 sec):

1. In "Spread Feminism, Not Germs," student Gizem Gur summarizes, assesses, and responds to the *Atlantic Magazine* article "The Coronavirus Is a Disaster for Feminism." Annotations point out how Gur structures the response paper.
    - Sample response paper "Spread Feminism, Not Germs" in PDF with margin notes
    - Sample response paper "Spread Feminism, Not Germs" accessible version with notes in parentheses
2. In "Typography and Identity," Saramanda Swigart summarizes, assesses, and responds to the *New York Times* article “A Debate Over Identity and Race Asks, Are African-Americans ‘Black’ or ‘black’?” Annotations point out how Swigart structures the response paper.
    - Sample response paper "Typography and Identity" in PDF with margin notes
    - Sample response paper "Typography and Identity" accessible version with notes in parentheses

5.7.1: Annotated Sample Response Essay- "Spread Feminism, Not Germs"

5.7.2: Annotated Sample Response Essay- "Typography and Identity"

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5.7.1: Annotated Sample Response Essay- "Spread Feminism, Not Germs"

Media Alternative

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Gizem Gur

English 1A

Anna Mills

Spread Feminism, Not Germs

COVID-19 is not the first outbreak in history and probably won't be the last one. (Note: The opening statement provides the essay's overall context: the effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic.) However, its effects will be long-lasting. (Note: The followup statement introduces the essay's particular focus: the impact of the Pandemic on women.) While the Pandemic has affected everyone's lives in every aspect, its impacts on women are even more severe. Helen Lewis, the author of "The Coronavirus Is a Disaster for Feminism" explains why feminism cannot survive during the Pandemic. (Note: An outside text is introduced that the essay will engage with.) Lewis starts her article with a complaint by saying "enough already" because, in terms of housework especially for child care, there has been inequality since the past. This inequality has become even more explicit with the coronavirus outbreak. Women have to shoulder not only more housework but also childcare more than ever due to school closures. The Pandemic started as a public health crisis and brought along an economic one. Women are mainly affected by this crisis more than men because women are more likely to take housework and childcare responsibilities while men are expected to work and "bring home the bacon." (Note: The author provides a clear thesis statement to close the opening (introduction) paragraph).)

Each gender has a different role in society. While men are usually seen as breadwinners, women mostly spend their time at home and do housework. (Note: The first supporting argument: the unpaid labor of women under traditional gender roles.) Women also are the primary caregivers for both children and elders. As Lewis mentions, "looking after" duty is on women's shoulder. Then she adds " all this looking after—this unpaid caring labor—will fall more heavily on women because of the existing structure of the workforce," and she includes a provocative question from Clare Wenham, an assistant professor of global health policy at the London School of Economics: "Who is paid less? Who has the flexibility?" The author intentionally uses this quote to express her frustration. At the same time, she implies that this existing structure is based upon the gender pay gap. (Note: The author supports her argument with evidence from the text, and provides analysis to tie that evidence to her argument.) We all are familiar with the reality that "women's income is less than men's" so this fact goes a long way towards explaining why women mainly stay at home and take caregiving responsibilities. It is a kind of survival rule that whoever earns less should stay at home. In this case, it seems like couples do not have many options.

One of the most challenging aspects of the Pandemic for dual-income parents is the school and daycare closures. (Note: Whereas the first support focused on gender roles, the second paragraph focuses on the particular challenges for parents during the Covid-19 epidemic.) These dual-earner parents should find a way to split children's needs during the shelter-in-place. If they do not balance paid work and child care, both sides will feel the consequences. To emphasize these consequences, Lewis humorously says "Dual-income couples might suddenly be living like their grandparents, one homemaker, and one breadwinner." (Note: Drawing on evidence from the text, this passage shows how gender roles relate to the challenges of Covid-19 for working parents and families.) Instead of splitting the housework, women take the role of "homemaker" so the author implies here that this regresses gender dynamics two generations backward. It obviously demonstrates that nothing much has changed over time and the mentality remains. While many couples are trying to find a middle way, others think that women have to suck it up and sacrifice their jobs.

In reference to school closures, Lewis brings up the Ebola health crisis which occurred in West Africa in the time period of 2014-2016. (Note: The following paragraph cites a historical precedent for the Covid-19 outbreak as a basis for comparison.) According to Lewis, during this outbreak, many African girls lost their chance at education; moreover, many women died during childbirth because of a lack of medical care. Mentioning these elaborations proves once again that not only coronavirus but also many other outbreaks have caused a disaster for feminism. Pandemics, in other words, pile yet another problem on women who always face an uphill battle against patriarchal structures. (Note: This passage ties this observation about the Ebola outbreak in West Africa to a greater observation about Pandemics and gender roles overall.)

I started reading her article with a feeling of frustration. While the main topic of the article is feminism, Lewis gives a couple of male examples from the past, such as William Shakespeare and Isaac Newton. (Note: The author makes a personal note here, marking an emotional connection and reaction to the text.) She seems at times to attribute their success to their masculinity. They both lived in times of plague, demonstrating that despite all our progress, the human species is still grappling with the same issues. According to Lewis, neither Newton nor Shakespeare had to worry about childcare or housework. Even though her comparison seemed odd to me, she managed to surprise me that in over 300 years many gender inequities remain the same. This is actually very tragic. It is hard to acknowledge that women are still facing gender inequality in almost every area even 300 years after the time of these great English thinkers. (Note: The author cites historical precedent again: this passage argues that the relationship between plagues and gender roles has not changed much in centuries.) Assuming housework is the natural place of women without asking women if they want to do it is asking for too big a sacrifice. Since couples have the option to split the housework and childcare, why should only women have to shoulder most of the burden? This is a question that I might never be able to answer, even if I search my whole life. It is unacceptable that there is pressure on women to conform to gender roles, such as cultural settings and expectations. (Note: The author uses a rhetorical question to segue into a new supporting argument.) Women should not have to sacrifice their leisure time completing unpaid work. I agree with Lewis when she mentions the “second shift” situation. When we consider women’s first shift as their paid work, the second shift represents the time that they spend working in the home. In this case, there is apparently no shift for leisure time. Lewis also supports this by saying “Across the world, women—including those with jobs—do more housework and have less leisure time than their male partners.” Additionally, it seems like economic recovery is going to be long-lasting because of the Coronavirus. As a solution, if men and women have equal housework responsibilities, women may spend more of their time completing paid work. (Note: The author makes a call to action near the end of the essay.) In this way, they can contribute to the economy while they are socializing. Especially after the Pandemic is over, we will need a greater workforce, so hopefully both men and women can equally participate in the economy. (Note: Much like the first sentence of the essay, the last sentence speaks to a greater, big-picture context: the need for equality in a post-pandemic world.)

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5.7.2: Annotated Sample Response Essay- "Typography and Identity"

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Sample Essay Z

English 1C

Prof. Saramanda Swigart

Typography and Identity

John Eligon's *New York Times* article, “A Debate Over Identity and Race Asks, Are African-Americans ‘Black’ or ‘black’?” outlines the ongoing conversation among journalists and academics regarding conventions for writing about race—specifically, whether or not to capitalize the “b” in “black” when referring to African-Americans (itself a term that is going out of style). (Note: The opening sentence introduces the text this essay will respond to and gives a brief summary of the text's content.) Eligon argues that, while it might seem like a minor typographical issue, this small difference speaks to the question of how we think about race in the United States. Are words like “black” or “white” mere adjectives, descriptors of skin color? Or are they proper nouns, indicative of group or ethnic identity? Eligon observes that until recently, with the prominence of the Black Lives Matter movement, many journalistic and scholarly publications tended to use a lowercase “black,” while Black media outlets typically capitalized “Black.” He suggests that the balance is now tipping in favor of "Black," but given past changes, usage will probably change again as the rich discussion about naming, identity, and power continues. (Note: The thesis statement includes two related ideas explored by Eligon: the current trend toward using "Black" and the value of the ongoing discussion that leads to changing terms.)

Eligon points to a range of evidence that "Black" is becoming the norm, including a recent change by "hundreds of news organizations" including the Associated Press. This comes in the wake of the George Floyd killing, but it also follows a longtime Black press tradition exemplified by newspapers like *The New York Amsterdam News*. Eligon cites several prominent academics who are also starting to capitalize Black. However, he also quotes prominent naysayers and describes a variety of counterarguments, like the idea that capitalization gives too much dignity to a category that was made up to oppress people. (Note: Summary of a counterargument.) Capitalizing Black raises another tricky question: Shouldn't White be likewise capitalized? Eligon points out that the groups most enthusiastic to capitalize White seem to be white supremacists, and news organizations want to avoid this association. (Note: The choice of "points out" signals that everyone would agree that mostly white supremacist groups capitalize White.)

Eligon's brief history of the debate over racial labels, from “Negro” and “colored” to “African-American” and “person of color,” gives the question of to-capitalize-or-not-to-capitalize a broader context, investing what might seem like a minor quibble for editors with the greater weight of racial identity and its evolution over time. (Note: This paragraph shifts focus from present to past trends and debates.) He outlines similar disagreements over word-choice and racial labels by scholars and activists like Fannie Barrier Williams and W.E.B. Du Bois surrounding now-antiquated terms like “Negro” and “colored.” These leaders debated whether labels with negative connotations should be replaced, or embraced and given a new, positive connotation. (Note: This paragraph summarizes the historical examples Eligon gives. Phrases like "He cites" point out that certain ideas are being used to support a claim.) Eligon observes that today's "black" was once used as a pejorative but was promoted by the Black Power movement starting in the late sixties, much as the word "Negro" was reclaimed as a positive word. (Note: Summary of a historical trend that parallels today's trend.) However, the Reverend Jesse Jackson also had some success in calling for a more neutral term, "African American," in the late eighties. He thought it more appropriate to emphasize a shared ethnic heritage over color. (Note: Summary of a historical countertrend based on a counterargument to the idea of reclaiming negative terms.) Eligon suggests that this argument continues to appeal to some today, but that such terms have been found to be inadequate given the diversity of

ethnic heritage. “African-American” and the more generalized “people/person of color” do not give accurate or specific enough information. (Note: Describes a response to the counterargument, a justification of today's trend toward Black.)

Ultimately, Eligon points to personal intuition as an aid to individuals in the Black community grappling with these questions. He describes the experience of sociologist Crystal M. Fleming, whose use of lowercase “black” transformed to capitalized “Black” over the course of her career and years of research. Her transition from black to Black is, she says, as much a matter of personal choice as a reasoned conclusion—suggesting that it will be up to Black journalists and academics to determine the conventions of the future. (Note: This last sentence of this summary paragraph focuses on Eligon's conclusion, his implied argument about what should guide the choice of terms.)

Eligon's statistical and anecdotal survey of current usage of Black and black covers enough ground to convince us of the trend in favor of capitalization. (Note: This sentence indicates the shift from summary to a positive assessment of the argument's effectiveness.) But the value of Eligon's article lies in the attention it brings both to the convention and the discussion as a way for the Black community to wrestle with history and define itself. By presenting a variety of past and present opinions from Black leaders, Eligon gives a sense of the richness and relevance of this ongoing debate. (Note: this part of the assessment emphasizes not just what is effective at convincing readers, but what is most valuable about the argument.) His focus at the end on the opinion of one Black scholar, Crystal Fleming, offers an appealing intuitive approach to these decisions about naming. This idea is more hinted at than developed, leaving us to wonder how many other leaders share Fleming's approach and whether this approach might lead to chaos, as each writer might choose a different way to refer to racial identity. (Note: This last sentence offers a gentle critique of the limits of Eligon's evidence on this last point and the existence of possible counterarguments that are not addressed.) Still, Eligon's ending leaves us hopeful about the positive outcome of continuing the discussion: perhaps decisions about naming can help the Black community find self-definition in the face of historical injustice.

We could build on Eligon's analysis to make a further claim about success not just of Black but of other terms that remind us of a shared history of oppression. Despite the ongoing debates, his evidence suggests that the Black community has gravitated more toward reclaiming negative terms rather than inventing neutral ones. (Note: The writer suggests a way to draw a new conclusion using Eligon's evidence.) He notes that historically, W.E.B Dubois's push to embrace Negro and transform it into a positive was successful and that the Black Power movement did the same with black. It is true that the term African American has been partially successful, but clearly its relevance is waning: Eligon scarcely considers it necessary to mention this term further as he turns to the discussion of black vs. Black. The Black Lives Matter movement chose Black rather than African American, and this choice continued to feel appropriate when the movement grew dramatically after the killing of George Floyd. (Note: The writer points to ideas that were implied but not emphasized by Eligon.)

Why has the Black community continued to gravitate toward previously negative terms? Perhaps in this time of racial reckoning, in the face of active ongoing injustice, a label that points to the history of oppression is more empowering. It expresses defiance and determination. If so, perhaps it would make sense for *The New York Times* to adopt Black. Eligon does not take a side on this issue, perhaps because he is not writing an opinion piece, but it is a short distance from his piece to a piece advocating that the *Times* follow the lead of the Associated Press and the majority of Black leaders of the moment. (Note: Here, the response claims that a particular stance on a controversial issue follows from Eligon's argument.) Howard Zinn, radical author of *A People's History of the United States,* writes, “The memory of oppressed people is one thing that cannot be taken away, and for such people, with such memories, revolt is always an inch below the surface.” Reclaiming an oppressor's name for a people keeps this memory, and this potential for revolt, alive. Ideally, each time we use such a reclaimed term, we remember that inequity still permeates our society, and we recommit ourselves to fighting its many forms. (Note: The essay suggests a way in which this discussion of terms for an oppressed community can inspire us to fight oppression more broadly.)

Eligon focuses only on the Black community in America, but it would be interesting to learn more about the appeal of reclaiming negative terms by looking at trends among other marginalized groups. (Note: This passage adds to the conversation by suggesting parallels to groups beyond the Black community.) Which ones have chosen to embrace once-hateful terms, and which have chosen new, more accurate, more inclusive names? Does reclaiming negative terms become more common when oppression is more active? One obvious example lies in the reclaiming of the term "queer." Despite ongoing marginalization of queer people, the reclaimed term never gained dominance. "LGBTQ" and variations are used more commonly, despite their awkwardness. Another parallel lies in the debate over the use of Indian vs. Native American vs. indigenous. The term "cholo," too, was initially a slur referring to persons of mixed Amerindian ancestry in Bolivia and Peru, but is now used by some as a badge of indigenous pride and power. (It has various other meanings in Mexico, the United States, and in other Latin American countries.) Future discussions could analyze the historical trends in terminology and their relation to changing power relations for each of these groups. Perhaps comparing these histories could shed new light on the complex role of names in the struggle for social justice.

Works Cited

(Note: Works Cited page uses MLA documentation style appropriate for an English class)

Eligon, John. “A Debate Over Identity and Race Asks, Are African-Americans ‘Black’ or ‘black’?” The New York Times, 26 Jun 2020. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/26/u...merican-style-debate.html?action=click&module=Top%20Stories&pgtype=Homepage

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5.8: Brainstorming Tool for Response Writing

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6: THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Learning Outcomes

- Understand a research paper assignment prompt
- Choose, evaluate, and integrate sources from a wide variety of publications including academic journals
- Narrow a research topic.
- Use correct MLA format for essays and in-text citations.

6.1: The Ultimate Tool for Thinking and Sharing Our Thoughts

6.2: Approaching a Research Paper Assignment

6.3: Choosing a Focused Topic

6.4: Find the Conversation That Interests You

6.5: Types of Sources

6.6: Getting Familiar with Academic Journal Articles

6.7: Searching Databases of Academic Journal Articles

6.8: Strategies for Each Phase of the Research Process

6.9: Creating an Annotated Bibliography

6.10: MLA Essay Format

6.11: MLA In-Text Citations

6.12: MLA Works Cited Pages



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6.1: The Ultimate Tool for Thinking and Sharing Our Thoughts

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (4 min, 41 sec):

Reasons to be excited about the research paper

Why are research papers assigned so often in college? Why is the research paper the focus of most writing courses?

It's really not because instructors are sadists. Quite the contrary! The process of writing a research paper can help us learn about a complex topic and come up with our own informed perspective. It's a way to find clarity when the world is complicated. We immerse ourselves in others' ideas and then come to our own conclusion.

We might consider that in writing a research paper we are fully joining the academic conversation. As Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein put it in *They Say / I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*, the research paper is "the highest expression of the conversational approach to writing...it is a chance to practice a set of skills that you can use the rest of your life: going out into the community, finding a space for yourself, and making a contribution of your own" (219).



A research paper brings together many voices on a topic. Image by Marc Wathiew on Flickr, licensed CC BY NC 2.0.

Earlier chapters of this book have focused on responding to other people's arguments. Summary, assessment, and response essays and compare-and-contrast essays require us to write about the things someone else considers important. As we start the research paper, we can enjoy a bit more freedom. We can find multiple perspectives on the same topic and decide how much of each to include.

Many students, after some initial anxiety, ultimately find the research paper to be empowering and meaningful. Here are a few reasons to celebrate this kind of assignment:

- We become relative experts on one micro subject.
- We build our own argument and choose our focus.
- We are free to choose a variety of sources; we don't have to use what a teacher selects.
- We don't have to cover everything. We have flexibility about which ideas to include and how to narrow our topic.
- We can choose a personally meaningful topic that connects to an area of interest, experience, or career plans.

- We get to teach the teacher and our classmates something they may enjoy learning.

We build on existing skills for responding to sources

Thus far we have focused on skills for close reading and summary of one text (Chapters 2 and Chapter 3), assessment of that text (Chapter 4), and then original responses to the text (Chapter 5). All these skills will be useful as we work with multiple texts in the research paper, but we won't need to be as thorough with each source. We'll focus more on summarizing, assessing, and responding to main ideas rather than examining all the twists and turns of each argument.

Which new skills do we need? Since we are going to be finding our own sources, we need to know where to look. We need to know which sources are credible. Since there are many kinds of sources, from academic studies to newspaper articles, to interviews, videos, and social media posts, we need to see which kinds of sources can be useful for which purposes. The rest of this chapter will give guidance on choosing sources.

In essays that focus on summary, assessment, and response, the structure is to a large extent determined by the text we are responding to. With the research paper, we have a lot more freedom, so we may need new organizational strategies. How do we come up with a central idea for our paper that builds on a bunch of different sources? Conversely, how do we mention multiple sources in different paragraphs and use them to support a central idea? Chapter 7 sections on definition, evaluation, causal, and proposal arguments will offer ideas for organization based on the argument's purpose.

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6.2: Approaching a Research Paper Assignment

Media Alternative

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Before getting started on a research paper, spending some time with the prompt will help keep us from becoming overwhelmed. A research essay **prompt** is the instructor's description of the assignment. It will answer many of the questions we may have about the requirements, such as the following:

1. How many sources will we need?
2. What types of sources (see Section 6.5: Types of Sources)?
3. Do the sources need to be found somewhere specific, like the college library?
4. How long does the research essay need to be?
5. Is there a specific structure we are supposed to follow?

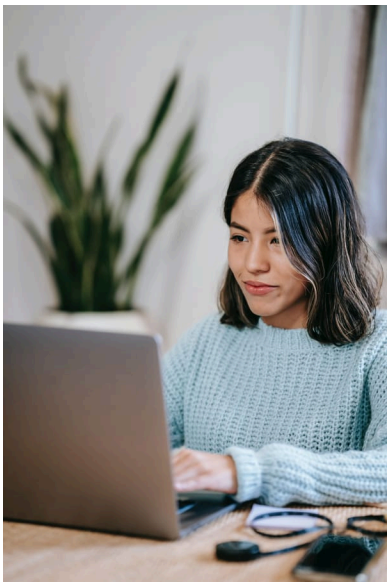


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The steps below will help us analyze the essay prompt to get a clear picture of what the finished paper should include.

- First, circle or highlight all of the most important verbs in the prompt. Verbs are action words that often communicate the most important tasks in the assignment, like *analyze*, *evaluate*, *describe*, and so on.
- Then, create a chart that lists each verb in its own row on the left and the rest of the sentence it occurs in on the right. This will contain the most important components of the assignment, so you can use it later to review your draft.
- Is one of these writing tasks more the focus of the essay than the others? For example, an assignment might ask you to summarize a problem but spend more of the essay describing a proposed solution. In that case, you could put a star next to the task of describing the solution.
- Underline or highlight any words or requirements you don't understand, and ask your professor to clarify.
- Summarize the research essay prompt aloud by telling a friend or classmate what your assignment is about and what the basic requirements are.

Chapter 6 will describe what authoritative sources are, where to find them, and how to choose them. However, you can find your instructor's specific approach in the assignment description, so keep their instructions in mind as you read other advice on the research process.

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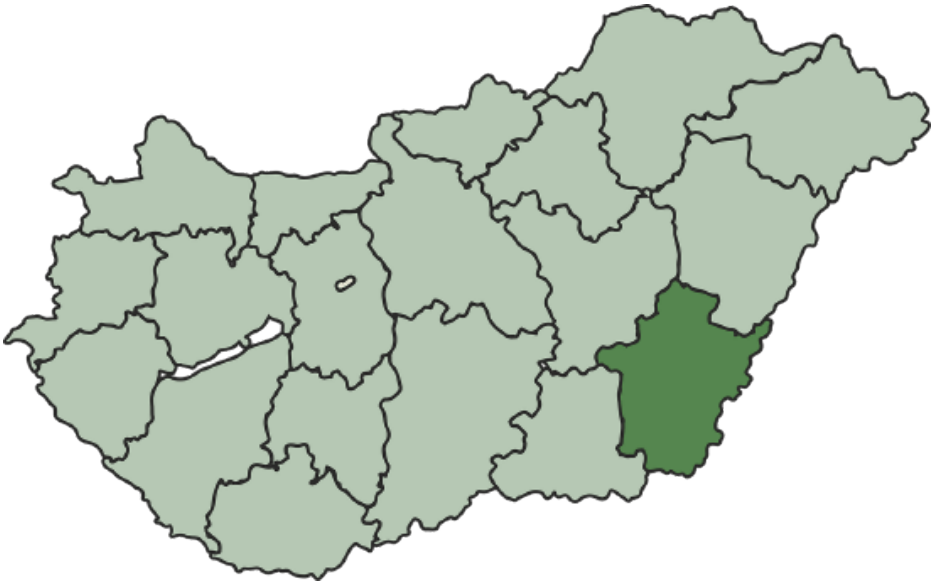
6.3: Choosing a Focused Topic

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (4 min, 46 sec):

Choosing a Focused Topic

We can start with any general area of interest within the guidelines of the research essay prompt. See Section 11.3: Brainstorming on ways to come up with ideas. In most cases, as we research we will want to narrow our topic from this general beginning in order to be able to really dive into the conversation on the topic and consider multiple perspectives and counterarguments. We will likely learn about many subtopics as we explore our initial topic. If we read an overview of the initial topic, we can often identify subtopics by the way that overview is organized into sections. Though Wikipedia is not a scholarly source, it can be very helpful for this phase of the research process. Along the way, we can decide which we are interested in, research some more, and possibly narrow the topic yet further — all before attempting a rough draft.



Just as this map highlights one province within a country, a good research paper often focused on a limited aspect of a larger topic. Image by timacs on Pixabay under the Pixabay License.

Let's take the example of solar energy as a general area of interest. As we research solar energy, we will see that there are different ways of harnessing the energy--from the sun's light and from the sun's heat. These correspond to the subtopics of solar photovoltaic energy and solar thermal energy. Say may decide we are more interested in solar thermal energy. We research that topic further and find that the sun's heat can be used to heat water in buildings or to heat the ventilation system, but they can also be used to generate electricity in large solar thermal power plants using a technique called Concentrated Solar Power, or CSP. Let's say that last use intrigues us. However, as we start to read the technical details of how these power plants work, we realize we are more interested in the potential of these plants than in their engineering. We are excited to read about the largest existing solar thermal power plant, the Ivanpah Solar Power Facility in the Mojave Desert of California, and we wonder how that facility can serve as a model for others. So the sequence of topics as we narrow it down goes like this:

1. Solar energy
2. Solar thermal energy
3. The Concentrated Solar Power technique for using solar thermal power to generate electricity
4. The potential renewable energy contribution of Concentrated Solar Power thermal energy plants
5. Ivanpah Solar Power Facility as a model for renewable electricity through large-scale Concentrated Solar Power thermal energy plants

If you are finding it hard to be specific about a topic, take a break from defining it and keep researching and brainstorming.

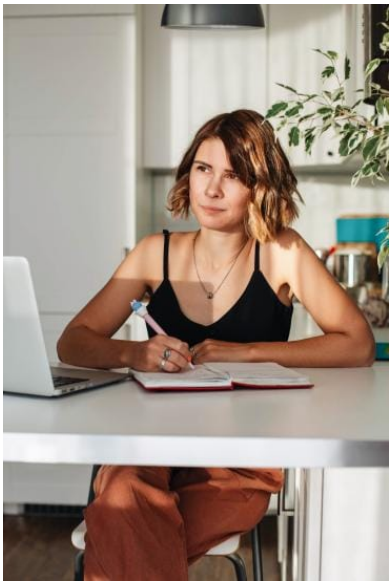


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Developing a research question

Knowing what question we are trying to answer can help us research efficiently. Before we start, we can use our focused topic to articulate a **research question**.

If we already have a guess as to what our answer is likely to be, we may want to articulate that as well in what is sometimes called a **working thesis**. We can come up with a hypothesis that we will test against the information you find in sources as we research. Keep in mind, we may want to modify the question and the hypothesis as we learn more.

A good research question will be challenging or potentially arguable. It will suggest the need for further investigation. Here are three possible research questions related to the topic above:

- Should we build more large-scale Concentrated Solar Power thermal energy plants like the Ivanpah Solar Power Facility?
- What are the environmental and social benefits of a large-scale Concentrated Solar Power thermal energy plant like the Ivanpah Solar Power Facility?
- Under what circumstances will large-scale Concentrated Solar Power thermal energy plants like the Ivanpah Solar Power Facility be cost-effective choices for clean energy?

As we research, we can revisit our research question from time to time to see if we are on track to answer it or if we need to change the question or the research.

Practice exercise 6.3.1

Write a phrase to describe a general area of interest you would like to investigate. Then do some preliminary online research using Wikipedia to identify subtopics. Choose one subtopic, do some research on it, and identify an even narrower subtopic. Create a list of at least three increasingly specific topics. Use the list above that started with solar energy as your model.

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6.4: Find the Conversation That Interests You

Media Alternative

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Before we start talking about how to choose search terms and where to search for sources, it can help to get a sense of what we're hoping to get out of the research. We might think that in order to support a thesis we should only look for sources that prove an idea we want to promote. But since writing academic papers is about joining a conversation, what we really need is to gather the sources that will help us situate our ideas within that ongoing conversation. What we should look for first is not support but the conversation itself: who is saying what about our topic?

The sources that make up the conversation may have various kinds of points to make and ultimately may play very different roles in our paper. After all, as we have seen in Chapter 2, an argument can involve not just evidence for a claim but limits, counterarguments, and rebuttals. Sometimes we will want to cite a research finding that provides strong evidence for a point; at other times, we will summarize someone else's ideas in order to explain how our own opinion differs or to note how someone else's concept applies to a new situation.

As you find sources on a topic, look for points of connection, similarity and difference between them. In your paper, you will need to show not just what each one says, but how they relate to each other in a conversation. Describing this conversation can be the springboard for your own original point.



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Here are five common ways research papers can build on multiple sources to come up with an original point:

1. **Combine research findings from multiple sources to make a larger summary argument.** You might find that none of the sources you're working with specifically claim that early 20th-century British literature was preoccupied with changing gender roles but that, together, their findings all point to that broader conclusion.

2. **Combine research findings from multiple sources to make a claim about their implications.** You might review papers that explore various factors shaping voting behavior to argue that a particular voting-reform proposal will likely have positive impacts.

3. **Identify underlying areas of agreement.** You may argue that the literature on cancer and the literature on violence both describe the unrecognized importance of prevention and early intervention. This similarity will support your claim that

insights about one set of problems may be useful for the other.

4. **Identify underlying areas of disagreement.** You may find that the controversies surrounding educational reform—and its debates about accountability, curricula, school funding—ultimately stem from different assumptions about the role of schools in society.

5. **Identify unanswered questions.** Perhaps you review studies of the genetic and behavioral contributors to diabetes in order to highlight unknown factors and argue for more in-depth research on the role of the environment.

There are certainly other ways authors use sources to build theses, but these examples illustrate how original thinking in academic writing involves making connections with and between a strategically chosen set of sources.

Here's a passage of academic writing (an excerpt, not a complete paper) that gives an example of how a writer can describe a conversation among sources and use it to make an original point:

> Willingham (2011) draws on cognitive science to explain that students must be able to regulate their emotions in order to learn. Emotional self-regulation enables students to ignore distractions and channel their attention and behaviors in appropriate ways. Other research findings confirm that anxiety interferes with learning and academic performance because it makes distractions harder to resist (Perkins and Graham-Bermann, 2012; Putwain and Best, 2011). Other cognitive scientists point out that deep learning is itself stressful because it requires people to think hard about complex, unfamiliar material instead of relying on cognitive short-cuts.
>
> Kahneman (2011) describes this difference in terms of two systems for thinking: one fast and one slow. Fast thinking is based on assumptions and habits and doesn't require a lot of effort. For example, driving a familiar route or a routine grocery-shopping trip are not usually intellectually taxing activities. Slow thinking, on the other hand, is what we do when we encounter novel problems and situations. It's effortful, and it usually feels tedious and confusing. It is emotionally challenging as well because we are, by definition, incompetent while we're doing it, which provokes some anxiety. Solving a tough problem is rewarding, but the path itself is often unpleasant.
>
> These insights from cognitive science enable us to critically assess the claims made on both sides of the education reform debate. On one hand, they cast doubt on the claims of education reformers that measuring teachers' performance by student test scores is the best way to improve education. For example, the Center for Education Reform promotes "the implementation of strong, data-driven, performance-based accountability systems that ensure teachers are rewarded, retained and advanced based on how they perform in adding value to the students who they teach, measured predominantly by student achievement." The research that Willingham (2011) and Kahneman (2011) describe suggests that frequent high-stakes testing may actually work against learning by introducing greater anxiety into the school environment.
>
> At the same time, opponents of education reform should acknowledge that these research findings should prompt us to take a fresh look at how we educate our children. While Stan Karp of Rethinking Schools is correct when he argues that "data-driven formulas [based on standardized testing] lack both statistical credibility and a basic understanding of the human motivations and relationships that make good schooling possible," it doesn't necessarily follow that all education reform proposals lack merit. Challenging standards, together with specific training in emotional self-regulation, will likely enable more students to succeed.

In that example, the ideas of Willingham and Kahneman are summarized approvingly, bolstered with additional research findings, and then applied to a new realm: the current debate surrounding education reform. Voices in that debate were portrayed as accurately as possible, sometimes with representative quotes. Most importantly, all references were tied directly to the author's own interpretative point, which relies on the source's claims.

As you can see, there are times when you should quote or paraphrase sources that you don't agree with or do not find particularly compelling. They may convey ideas and opinions that help explain and justify your own argument. Whether or not we agree with a source, we can focus on what it claims and how exactly its claims relate to other sources and to our own ideas.

[1]Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, *They Say/I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2009).

[2]The sources cited in this example:

- Daniel T. Willingham, "Can teachers increase students' self control?" American Educator 35, no. 2 (2011): 22-27.
- Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*.
- Suzanne Perkins and Sandra Graham-Bermann, "Violence exposure and the development of school-related functioning: mental health, neurocognition, and learning," *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 17, no. 1(2012): 89-98.
- David William Putwain and Natalie Best, "Fear appeals in the primary classroom: Effects on test anxiety and test grade," *Learning and Individual Differences* 21, no. 5 (2011): 580-584.

Practice Exercise 6.4.1

Browse the website TheConversation.com and select an article that interests you. Read it and reflect on how it uses sources. Which of the five ways of using sources listed above best describes its approach? Next, reread it looking for sentences that stand out. Select one memorable phrase or sentence that you would quote if you were writing an essay about this piece. Explain why you chose it. Select another point that you would paraphrase and explain why that one doesn't need to be quoted.

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6.5: Types of Sources

Media Alternative

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You probably know by now that if you cite Wikipedia as an authoritative source, the wrath of your professor shall be visited upon you. Why is it that even the most informative Wikipedia articles are still often considered illegitimate? And what are good sources to use? The table below summarizes types of secondary sources in four tiers. All sources have their legitimate uses, but the top-tier ones are preferable for citation.



Just as different fruits have different internal structures, different kinds of sources have different characteristics and uses.
Photo by Deon Black on Unsplash under the Unsplash License.

Types of Sources

Tier	Type	Content	Uses	How to find them
1	Peer-reviewed academic publications	Rigorous research and analysis	Provide strong evidence for claims and references to other high-quality sources	Google Scholar, library catalogs, and academic article databases
2	Reports, articles, and books from credible non-academic sources	Well researched and even-handed descriptions of an event or state of the world	Initial research on events or trends not yet analyzed in the academic literature; may reference important Tier 1 sources	Websites of relevant agencies, Google searches using (site: *.gov or site: *.org), academic article databases
3	Short pieces from newspapers or credible websites	Simple reporting of events, research findings, or policy changes	Often point to useful Tier 2 or Tier 1 sources, may provide a factoid or two not found anywhere else	Strategic Google searches or article databases including newspapers and magazines
4	Agenda-driven or uncertain pieces	Mostly opinion, varying in thoughtfulness and credibility	May represent a particular position within a debate; more often provide keywords and clues about higher quality sources	Non-specific Google searches

Tier 1: Peer-reviewed academic publications

These are sources from the mainstream academic literature: books and scholarly articles. Academic books generally fall into three categories: (1) textbooks written with students in mind, (2) monographs, long documents which give an extended report on a particular research project, and (3) edited volumes in which each chapter is authored by different people. Scholarly articles appear in academic journals, which are published multiple times a year in order to share the latest research findings with scholars in the field. They're usually sponsored by some academic society. To get published, these articles and books had to earn favorable anonymous evaluations by qualified scholars. Who are the experts writing, reviewing, and editing these scholarly publications? Your professors. I describe this process below. Learning how to read and use these sources is a fundamental part of being a college student.

Tier 2: Reports, articles, and books from credible non-academic sources

Some events and trends are too recent to appear in Tier 1 sources. Also, Tier 1 sources tend to be highly specific, and sometimes you need a more general perspective on a topic. Thus, Tier 2 sources can provide quality information that is more accessible to non-academics. There are three main categories. First, official reports from government agencies or major international institutions like the World Bank or the United Nations; these institutions generally have research departments staffed with qualified experts who seek to provide rigorous, even-handed information to decision-makers. Second, feature articles from major newspapers and magazines like *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The London Times*, or The Economist are based on original reporting by experienced journalists (not press releases) and are typically 1500+ words in length. Third, there are some great books from non-academic presses that cite their sources; they're often written by journalists. All three of these sources are generally well-researched descriptions of an event or state of the world, undertaken by credentialed experts who generally seek to be even-handed. It is still up to you to judge their credibility. Your instructors and campus librarians can advise you on which sources in this category have the most credibility.

Tier 3. Short pieces from periodicals or credible websites

A step below the well-developed reports and feature articles that make up Tier 2 are the short tidbits that one finds in newspapers and magazines or credible websites. How short is a short news article? Usually, they're just a couple paragraphs or less, and they're often reporting on just one thing: an event, an interesting research finding, or a policy change. They don't take extensive research and analysis to write, and many just summarize a press release written and distributed by an organization or business. They may describe things like corporate mergers, newly discovered diet-health links, or important school-funding legislation. You may want to cite Tier 3 sources in your paper if they provide an important factoid or two that isn't provided by a higher-tier piece, but if the Tier 3 article describes a particular study or academic expert, your best bet is to find the journal article or book it is reporting on and use that Tier 1 source instead. If the article mentions which journal the study was published in, you can go right to that journal through your library website. Sometimes you can find the original journal article by putting the scholar's name and some keywords into Google Scholar.

What counts as a credible website in this tier? You may need some guidance from instructors or librarians, but you can learn a lot by examining the person or organization providing the information (look for an "About" link). For example, if the organization is clearly agenda-driven or not up-front about its aims and/or funding sources, then it definitely isn't something you want to cite as a neutral authority. Also look for signs of expertise. A tidbit about a medical research finding written by someone with a science background carries more weight than the same topic written by a policy analyst. These sources are sometimes uncertain, which is all the more reason to follow the trail to a Tier 1 or Tier 2 source whenever possible.

Tier 4. Agenda-driven or pieces from unknown sources

This tier is essentially everything else, including Wikipedia.[4] These types of sources—especially Wikipedia—can be hugely helpful in identifying interesting topics, positions within a debate, keywords to search on, and, sometimes, higher-tier sources on the topic. They often play a critically important role in the early part of the research process, but they generally aren't (and shouldn't be) cited in the final paper. Throwing some keywords into Google and seeing what you get is a fine way to get started, but don't stop there. Start a list of the people, organizations, sources, and keywords that seem most relevant to your topic. For example, suppose you've been assigned a research paper about the impact of linen production and trade on the ancient world. A quick Google search reveals that (1) linen comes from the flax plant, (2) the scientific name for flax is *Linum usitatissimum,* (3) Egypt dominated linen production at the height of its empire, and (4) Alex J. Warden published a book about ancient linen trade in 1867.

Similarly, you found some useful search terms to try instead of “ancient world” (antiquity, Egyptian empire, ancient Egypt, ancient Mediterranean) and some generalizations for linen (fabric, textiles, or weaving). Now you’ve got a lot to work with as you tap into the library catalog and academic article databases.

Practice Exercise 6.5.1

Choose a topic that interests you and find one source related to it in each of the four tiers. What could you learn from each source? What are the limitations of each source?

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6.6: Getting Familiar with Academic Journal Articles

Media Alternative

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Most of the Tier 1 sources available are academic articles, also called scholarly articles, scholarly papers, journal articles, academic papers, or peer-reviewed articles. They all mean the same thing: a paper published in an academic periodical after being scrutinized anonymously and judged to be sound by other experts in the subfield. Their origin explains both their basic structure and the high esteem they have in the eyes of your professors.

Many journals are sponsored by academic associations. Most of your professors belong to some big, general one (such as the Modern Language Association, the American Psychological Association, the National Association for Sport and Physical Education, or the American Physical Society) and one or more smaller ones organized around particular areas of interest and expertise (such as the Association for the Study of Food and Society, the International Association for Statistical Computing, or the Slavic and East European Folklore Association). There are also generalist organizations organized by region of the country or state, such as the Eastern Sociological Society or the Southern Management Association. Each of these associations exists to promote the exchange of research findings and collaboration in their disciplines. Towards this end, they organize conferences, sponsor working groups, and publish one or more academic journals. These journals are meant to both publicize and archive the most interesting and important findings of the field.

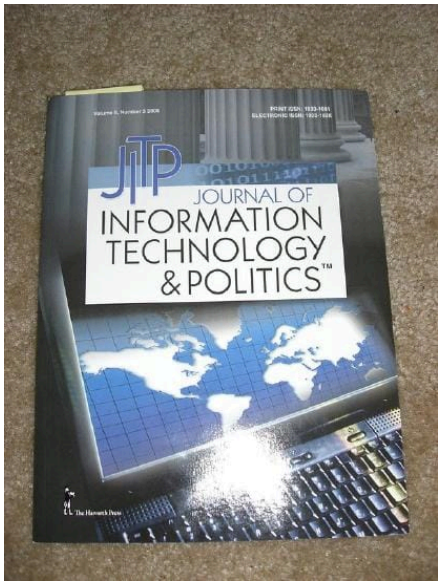


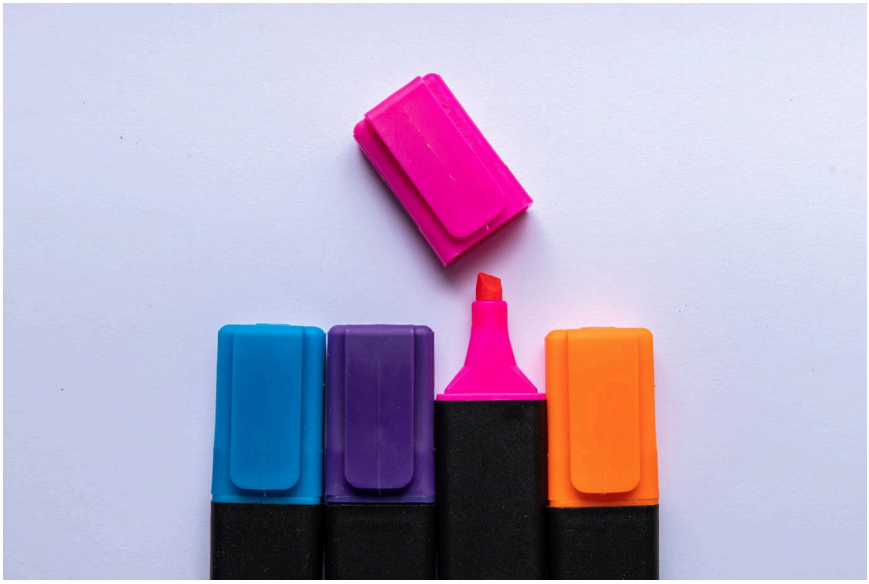
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Academic papers are essentially reports that scholars write to their peers—present and future—about what they've done in their research, what they've found, and why they think it's important. Thus, in a lot of fields they often have a structure reminiscent of the lab reports you've written for science classes:

1. **Abstract:** A one-paragraph summary of the article: its purpose, methods, findings, and significance.
2. **Introduction:** An overview of the key question or problem that the paper addresses, why it is important, and the key conclusion(s) (i.e., thesis or theses) of the paper.
3. **Literature review:** A synthesis of all the relevant prior research (the so-called "academic literature" on the subject) that explains why the paper makes an original and important contribution to the body of knowledge.
4. **Data and methods:** An explanation of what data or information the author(s) used and what they did with it.
5. **Results:** A full explanation of the key findings of the study.
6. **Conclusion/discussion:** Puts the key findings or insights from the paper into their broader context; explains why they matter.

Not all papers are so "sciencey." For example, a historical or literary analysis doesn't necessarily have a "data and methods" section; but they do explain and justify the research question, describe how the authors' own points relate to those made in other relevant articles and books, develop the key insights yielded by the analysis, and conclude by explaining their significance. Some academic papers are review articles, in which the "data" are published papers and the "findings" are key insights, enduring lines of debate, and/or remaining unanswered questions.

Scholarly journals use a peer-review process to decide which articles merit publication. First, hopeful authors send their article manuscript to the journal editor, a role filled by some prominent scholar in the field. The editor reads over the manuscript and decides whether it seems worthy of peer review. If it's outside the interests of the journal or is clearly inadequate, the editor will reject it outright. If it looks appropriate and sufficiently high quality, the editor will recruit a few other experts in the field to act as anonymous peer reviewers. The editor will send the manuscript (scrubbed of identifying information) to the reviewers who will read it closely and provide a thorough critique. Is the research question driving the paper timely and important? Does the paper sufficiently and accurately review all of the relevant prior research? Are the information sources believable and the research methods rigorous? Are the stated results fully justified by the findings? Is the significance of the research clear? Is it well written? Overall, does the paper add new, trustworthy, and important knowledge to the field? Reviewers send their comments to the editor who then decides whether to (1) reject the manuscript, (2) ask the author(s) to revise and resubmit the manuscript, or (3) accept it for publication. Editors send the reviewers' comments (again, with no identifying information) to authors along with their decisions. A manuscript that has been revised and resubmitted usually goes out for peer-review again; editors often try to get reviews from one or two first-round reviewers as well as a new reviewer. The whole process, from start to finish, can easily take a year, and it is often another year before the paper appears in print.



Highlighting is just one strategy for reading academic journal articles strategically.
Photo by Mitchell Luo on Unsplash under the Unsplash License.

Understanding the academic publication process and the structure of scholarly articles tells you a lot about how to find, read and use these sources:

1. **Find them quickly.** Instead of paging through mountains of dubious web content, go right to the relevant scholarly article databases in order to quickly find the highest quality sources.
2. **Use the abstracts.** Abstracts tell you immediately whether or not the article you're holding is relevant or useful to the paper you're assigned to write. You shouldn't ever have the experience of reading the whole paper just to discover it's not useful.
3. **Read strategically.** Knowing the anatomy of a scholarly article tells you what you should be reading for in each section. For example, you don't necessarily need to understand every nuance of the literature review. You can just focus on why the authors claim that their own study is distinct from the ones that came before.
4. **Don't sweat the technical stuff.** Not every social scientist understands the intricacies of log-linear modeling of quantitative survey data; however, the reviewers definitely do, and they found the analysis to be well constructed. Thus, you can accept the findings as legitimate and just focus on the passages that explain the findings and their significance in plainer language.
5. **Use one article to find others.** If you have one really good article that's a few years old, you can use article databases to find newer articles that cited it in their own literature reviews. That immediately tells you which ones are on the same topic and offer newer findings. On the other hand, if your first source is very recent, the literature review section will describe the

other papers in the same line of research. You can look them up directly.

Students sometimes grumble when they're ordered to use scholarly articles in their research. It seems a lot easier to just Google some terms and find stuff that way. However, academic articles are the most efficient resource out there. They are vetted by experts and structured specifically to help readers zero in on the most important passages.

Practice Exercise 6.6.1

Enter a topic into a general subscription database that has both scholarly and non-scholarly sources (such as Academic Search Complete or Academic OneFile); browse the first few hits and classify each one as scholarly or not-scholarly. Look at the structure of the piece to make your determination.

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6.7: Searching Databases of Academic Journal Articles

Media Alternative

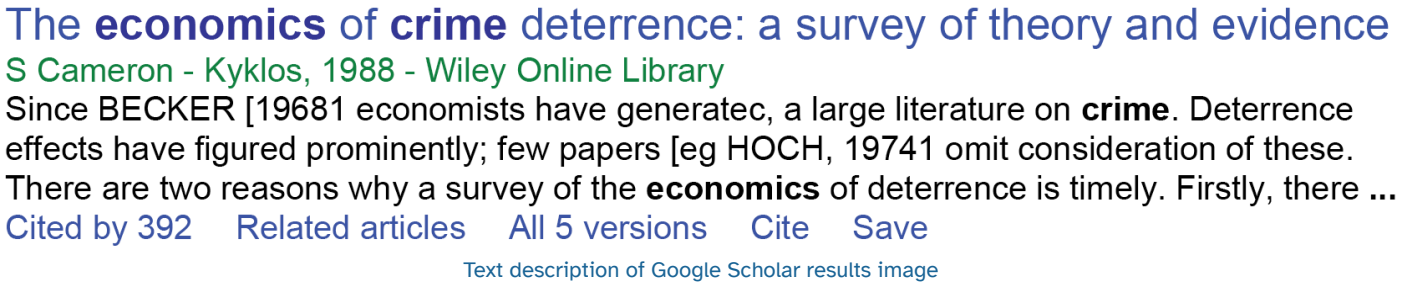
Listen to an audio version of this page (4 min, 43 sec):

Your campus library pays big money to subscribe to databases for Tier 1 articles. Some are general-purpose databases that include the most prominent journals across disciplines, such as Academic Search Premier (by EBSCO), Academic Search Complete (by EBSCO), Academic OneFile (by Cengage), General OneFile (by Cengage), ArticleFirst (by OCLC), and JSTOR (by ITHAKA). Some are specific to a particular discipline, such as PsycINFO (for psychology), CINAHL (for nursing), Environment Complete (for environmental science), Historical Abstracts (for history). Often they have the full-text of the articles right there for you to save or print. We won't go over particular databases here because every campus has different offerings. If you haven't already attended a workshop on using the resources provided by your library, you should. A one-hour workshop will save you many, many hours in the future. If there aren't any workshops, you can always seek advice from librarians and other library staff on the best databases for your topic. Many libraries also have online research guides that point you to the best databases for the specific discipline and, perhaps, the specific course. Librarians are eager to help you succeed with your research—it's their job and they love it!—so don't be shy about asking.

An increasingly popular article database is Google Scholar. It looks like a regular Google search, and it aspires to include the vast majority of published scholarship. Google doesn't share a list of which journals they include or how Google Scholar works, which limits its utility for scholars. Also, because it's so wide-ranging, it can be harder to find the most appropriate sources. However, if you want to cast a wide net, it's a very useful tool.

Here are three tips for using Google Scholar effectively:

1. **Add your field** (economics, psychology, French, etc.) as one of your keywords.
   If you just put in "crime," for example, Google Scholar will return all sorts of stuff from sociology, psychology, geography, and history. If your paper is on crime in French literature, your best sources may be buried under thousands of papers from other disciplines. A set of search terms like "crime French literature modern" will get you to relevant sources much faster.
2. **Don't ever pay for an article.**
   When you click on links to articles in Google Scholar, you may end up on a publisher's site that tells you that you can download the article for $20 or $30. Don't do it! You probably have access to virtually all the published academic literature through your library resources. Write down the key information (authors' names, title, journal title, volume, issue number, year, page numbers) and go find the article through your library website. If you don't have immediate full-text access, you may be able to get it through inter-library loan.
3. **Use the "cited by" feature.**
   If you get one great hit on Google Scholar, you can quickly see a list of other papers that cited it. For example, the search terms "crime economics" yielded this hit for a 1988 paper that appeared in a journal called *Kyklos*:


The **economics** of **crime** deterrence: a survey of theory and evidence
S Cameron - Kyklos, 1988 - Wiley Online Library
Since BECKER [19681 economists have generatec, a large literature on **crime**. Deterrence effects have figured prominently; few papers [eg HOCH, 19741 omit consideration of these. There are two reasons why a survey of the **economics** of deterrence is timely. Firstly, there **...**
Cited by 392 Related articles All 5 versions Cite Save

Text description of Google Scholar results image

1988 is nearly 30 years ago; for a social-science paper you probably want more recent sources. You can see that, according to Google, this paper was cited by 392 other sources. You can click on that "Cited by 392" to see that list. You can even search within that list of 392 if you're trying to narrow down the topic. For example, you could search on the term "cities" to see which of those 392 articles are most likely to be about the economic impact of crime on cities.

Practice Exercise 6.7.1

Choose a research topic, enter it into Google and then into Google Scholar and then into your library's biggest database search engine. Compare your results.

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6.8: Strategies for Each Phase of the Research Process

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (5 min, 33 sec):

Finding good sources is a much more creative task than it seems on the face of it. It's an extended problem-solving exercise, an iterative cycle of questions and answers. Go ahead and use Wikipedia to get broadly informed if you want. It won't corrupt your brain. But use it, and all other sources, strategically. You should eventually arrive at a core set of Tier 1 sources that will enable you to make a well informed and thoughtful argument in support of your thesis. It's also a good sign when you find yourself deciding that some of the first sources you found are no longer relevant to your thesis; that likely means that you have revised and specified your thinking and are well on your way to constructing the kind of self-driven in-depth analysis that your professor is looking for.

Browsing for topics

Imagine you've been assigned a research paper that can focus on any topic relevant to the course. Imagine further that you don't have a clue about where to start and aren't entirely sure what counts as an appropriate topic in this discipline. A great approach is to find the top journals in the specific field of your course and browse through recent issues to see what people are publishing on. For example, when I assign an open-topic research paper in my Introduction to Sociology course, I suggest that students looking for a topic browse recent issues of *Social Problems* or *American Journal of Sociology* and find an article that looks interesting. They'll have a topic and—booyah!—their first source. An instructor of a class on kinesiology might recommend browsing *Human Movement Science*, the *Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research*, or *Perceptual and Motor Skills*.

Choosing keywords for your topic

When you have a topic and are looking for a set of sources, your biggest challenge is finding the right keywords. You'll obviously start with words and phrases from the assignment prompt, but you can't stop there. One strategy is to brainstorm keywords and keep track of what you have tried in a table like this one:

Coming up with Alternate Keywords

	Initial keywords	Alternate word or phrase	Alternate word or phrase	Related Terms
Example	iPhones and privacy	iPhone: Apple, smart phone, android	privacy: security, liberty, surveillance	data, data sharing, data harvesting, data economy, data privacy, data collection, digital footprint, informed consent, privacy policy

	Initial keywords	Alternate word or phrase	Alternate word or phrase	Related Terms
Fill-in your topic & keywords as you work				

As explained above, lower-tier sources (such as Wikipedia) or the top-tier sources you already have are great for identifying alternative keywords, and librarians and other library staff are also well-practiced at finding new approaches to try. Librarians can also point you to the best databases for your topic as well.

Returning to find more sources

As you assess your evidence and further develop your thesis through the writing process, you may need to seek additional sources. For example, imagine you're writing a paper about the added risks adolescents face when they have experienced their parents' divorce. As you synthesize the evidence about negative impacts, you begin to wonder if scholars have documented some positive impacts as well. You go back and search until you find a fairly recent article such as Ilana Sever, Joseph Gutmann, and Amnon Lazar, "Positive Consequences of Parental Divorce Among Israeli Young Adults", Marriage and Family Review 42, no. 4 (2007): 7-28. Thus you delve back into the literature to look for more articles, find some more concepts and keywords (such as "resiliency"), assess new evidence, and revise your thinking to account for these broader perspectives. Your instructor may have asked you to turn in a bibliography weeks before the final paper draft. You can check with your professor, but he or she is probably perfectly fine with you seeking additional sources as your thinking evolves. That's how scholars write.

Practice Exercise 6.8.1

You can download the keywords worksheet or copy the Google doc keywords worksheet to complete the exercise.

1. Start with a phrase to describe a topic that interests you. Use a keywords table like the one above to generate alternate and related search terms.
2. Do a search on your original phrase and list the three best sources you come up with. Then do five additional searches, each one for a different related term or combination of terms taken from your keywords table. For each search, copy the titles and links for any good sources you find.
3. Reflect on which phrases led you to the sources that most interest you. Did you learn anything about how your topic is most commonly described? Do any alternate keywords suggest new ways to focus your topic?

Attributions

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6.9: Creating an Annotated Bibliography

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (8 min, 3 sec):

Overview

Instructors often assign an annotated bibliography, a useful tool to beginning a research paper which allows you to evaluate and cite your sources. Most often, an annotated bibliography is a list of sources on a particular topic that includes a brief summary of what each source is about, an assessment of the source's reliability, and an overview of how you will use the source in your essay. Here is an example:

Sample annotated bibliography entry

Morey, Darcy F. "Burying Key Evidence: the Social Bond between Dogs and People." *Journal of Archaeological Science*, vol. 33, no. 2, Feb. 2006, pp. 158–175., doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jas.2005.07.009.

In this article, Morey documents the widespread human practice of burying domesticated dogs and questions what this practice can reveal about relationships between the two. He argues that dog burials have been more frequent and more consistent than burials of other types of animals, suggesting that humans have invested dogs with spiritual and personal identities. Morey also demonstrates that the study of dog burials can help scholars to more accurately date the domestication of dogs; thus, he challenges scholars who rely solely on genetic data in their dating of domestication to consider more fully the importance of archaeological finds. To support his arguments, Morey provides detailed data on the frequency, geographic and historical distribution, as well as modes of dog burials and compares the conclusions he draws from this data to those found by scholarship based on genetic data. He is also a well-known anthropology scholar and Ph.D candidate at the University of Wyoming. This article is useful to a literature review on the domestication of dogs because it persuasively shows the importance of using burial data in dating dog domestication and explains how use of this data could change assessments of when domestication occurred. I will likely use it to develop my first body paragraph.

Sections of each annotated bibliography entry

Annotated bibliography entries have two parts. The top of the entry is the **citation**. It is the part that lists information like the name of the writer, where the evidence appeared, the date of publication, and other publishing information. Composition classes typically use MLA format, but other formats like APA and Chicago are popular in other disciplines. To learn more about MLA format and how to make a perfect citation, check out the section on MLA format and works cited pages (add link).

The second part of the entry is the **summary** and **evaluation** of the evidence being cited. A good annotation provides enough information to help you and others understand what the research is about, why it is (or isn't) reliable, and how you may use it in your essay.

Summary

Summaries can be challenging when we are trying to write them about longer and more complicated sources of research. Review Chapter 3: Writing a Summary of Another Writer's Argument to review best practices for summary writing. Chapter 3 mostly focuses on extended summaries of shorter texts, but in an annotated bibliography, we will often find yourself needing to put a large text into a few sentences. How can we do so?

Keep these guidelines in mind:

- **Keep your summary short.** Good summaries for annotated bibliographies are not "complete" summaries; rather, they

provide the highlights of the evidence in as brief and concise a manner as possible.

- **Summarize what you find helpful**. You definitely won't need to quote every part of an academic journal in your essay. For that reason, your summary only needs to include what is most relevant to your research essay topic.
- **No need to quote from what you are summarizing.** Summaries will be more useful to you if you write them in your own words. Instead of quoting directly what you think is the point of the piece of evidence, try to paraphrase it.
- **Use abstracts to help you, but paraphrase them in your own words.** Many of the periodical indexes that are available as part of your library's computer system include abstracts of articles. Of course, copying the exact words from the abstract would be plagiarism. Paraphrasing in your own words in the annotated bibliography will help you understand and explain in preparation for writing your paper.

Sample summary

In this article, Morey documents the widespread human practice of burying domesticated dogs and questions what this practice can reveal about relationships between the two. He argues that dog burials have been more frequent and more consistent than burials of other types of animals, suggesting that humans have invested dogs with spiritual and personal identities. Morey also demonstrates that the study of dog burials can help scholars to more accurately date the domestication of dogs; thus, he challenges scholars who rely solely on genetic data in their dating of domestication to consider more fully the importance of archaeological finds.

Evaluation

The evaluation aspect of an annotation can help you decide if a text has any fallacies, reasons, or assumptions that impact the reliability. Chapter 4: Assessing the Strength of an Argument provides many useful templates for beginning your assessment of a source's reliability.

Sample evaluation

To support his arguments, Morey provides detailed data on the frequency, geographic and historical distribution, as well as modes of dog burials and compares the conclusions he draws from this data to those found by scholarship based on genetic data. He is also a well-known anthropology scholar and Ph.D candidate at the University of Wyoming.

Connection to the essay

Once you summarize and evaluate the source, very briefly show the reader how you intend to use the source. Consider the following:

- What parts of the source connect to your particular topic and argument?
- Where might you incorporate this source?
- Does the source support a particular idea you want to promote or refute?

Sample connection to the essay

This article is useful to a literature review on the domestication of dogs because it persuasively shows the importance of using burial data in dating dog domestication and explains how use of this data could change assessments of when domestication occurred. I will likely use it to develop my first body paragraph.

Annotated bibliography template

You may want to use this annotated bibliography template, created by Andrew Gurevich, to format your annotated bibliography.

Here are the steps to use it:

1. Make sure you are signed in to Google.
2. Open the template.
3. Go to “File” in Google docs and select “Make a copy.”
4. Enter your own title and change the text in the template to fit your own topic and sources.

Practice exercise

In a small group or by yourself, cite and annotate “The Relationship Between Cell Phone Use and Academic Performance in a Sample of U.S. College Students” by Andrew Lepp, Jacob E. Barkley, and Aryn C. Karpinski. Then, discuss each part of the annotation, including the summary, evaluation, and connection to the larger topic of technology and social issues.

Attributions

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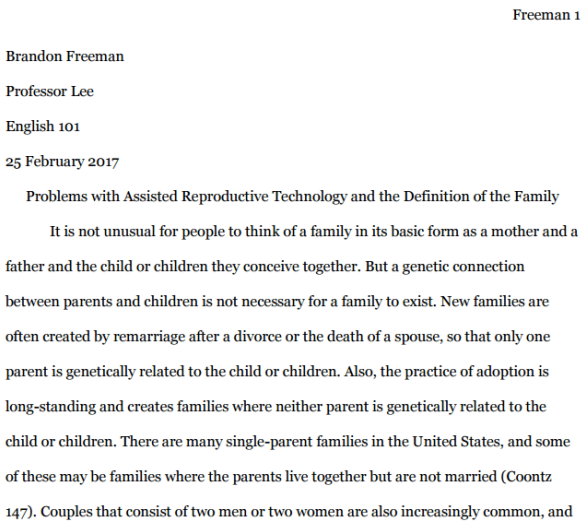
6.10: MLA Essay Format

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (4 min, 27 sec):

One of the ways we can create a sense of being part of one larger academic conversation is by adopting an agreed-upon, consistent and uniform way of presenting academic material. By following these conventions, we build our credibility because we signal to readers that we are part of the larger conversation and aware of its customs. For English classes and a variety of humanities disciplines, the agreed-upon style is called MLA. For other classes, you may also be asked to format your papers in APA or Chicago Style.

The following sample paper shows how the first page of a paper written in MLA is formatted. Note the header information in the upper-left corner, the last name and page numbers in the upper-right corner, the double-spaced text, and indentations that begin each paragraph:



Freeman 1

Brandon Freeman

Professor Lee

English 101

25 February 2017

Problems with Assisted Reproductive Technology and the Definition of the Family

It is not unusual for people to think of a family in its basic form as a mother and a father and the child or children they conceive together. But a genetic connection between parents and children is not necessary for a family to exist. New families are often created by remarriage after a divorce or the death of a spouse, so that only one parent is genetically related to the child or children. Also, the practice of adoption is long-standing and creates families where neither parent is genetically related to the child or children. There are many single-parent families in the United States, and some of these may be families where the parents live together but are not married (Coontz 147). Couples that consist of two men or two women are also increasingly common, and

Text description of the MLA-formatted sample paper

Use a Template

The simplest way to get the format right is to use a template. You can download this MLA format essay template and open it in any word processing program. (You can also make a copy of the Google Docs template rather than downloading.) Then just replace the text with your own name, title, and essay. A slightly different way is to create a new document in Google Docs, Pages, or Microsoft Word and use the built-in template for MLA essays. You'll want to choose the option to create a new document from a template and then search the template gallery for "MLA," which may be categorized under "Education."

General MLA Formatting Rules

If you prefer not to use a template, you can also manually format your essay.

- **Font**: Your paper should be written in 12-point text. Whichever font you choose, MLA requires that regular and italicized text be easily distinguishable from each other. Times and Times New Roman are often recommended.
- **Line Spacing**: All text in your paper should be double-spaced.
- **Margins**: All page margins (top, bottom, left, and right) should be 1 inch. All text should be left justified.

- **Indentation**: The first line of every paragraph should be indented 0.5 inches.
- **Page Numbers**: Create a right-justified header 0.5 inches from the top edge of every page. This header should include your last name, followed by a space and the page number. Your pages should be numbered with Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3...) and should start with the number 1 on your title page. Most word-processing programs have the ability to automatically add the correct page number to each page so you don't have to do this by hand.
- **Use of Italics:** In MLA style, you should italicize (rather than underline) the titles of books, plays, or other standalone works (shorter works such as articles or speeches should be in quotation marks with no italics). You should also italicize (rather than underline) words or phrases you want to lend particular emphasis—though you should do this rarely.
- **The first page:** Like the rest of your paper, everything on your first page, even the headers, should be double-spaced. The following information should be left justified in regular font at the top of the first page (in the main part of the page, not the header):
  - on the first line, your first and last name
  - on the second line, your instructor's name
  - on the third line, the name of the class
  - on the fourth line, the date
- **The title:** After the header, the next double-spaced line should include the title of your paper. This should be centered and in title case, and it should not be bolded, underlined, or italicized (unless it includes the name of a book, in which case just the book title should be italicized).

Additional resources

Visit the **Modern Language Association website** to see an example of a student paper following MLA guidelines. You can also read more on the MLA website about correctly **formatting your document.**

Attributions

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6.11: MLA In-Text Citations

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (4 min, 22 sec):

When we refer to other texts in a college paper, what information do we need to provide and in what format? We need to help readers

- differentiate between our words and ideas and our sources' words and ideas and
- locate the original source.

MLA guidelines outline how to provide just enough information when we quote or paraphrase in the course of the essay so that readers can look up the full description of the source in the Works Cited page. In-text citations should appear at the end of the quoted or paraphrased material.

What goes in the in-text citation?

In parentheses after the quotation or paraphrase, we need to include the author's name or abbreviated title and the page number.

Author's name or abbreviated title

In parentheses after the quotation or paraphrase, we put the first listed information from the Works Cited entry. Usually that will be the author's last name (Lastname).

Example 6.11.1

Some scholars have found that gig worker satisfaction varies greatly depending on the particular employer's policies (Myhill and Richards).

If there is no listed author, then an abbreviated version of the work's title goes in the parentheses in quotation marks ("Abbreviated Title").

Example 6.11.2

Other scholars emphasize the differences in gig workers' objectives and resources ("What are the experiences of gig workers?").

Note

In MLA style, titles of long works like books are italicized while shorter works are placed in quotation marks. Hence a newspaper article like "Hurricane Wendy Hits the Texas Coast" would be in quotation marks while a book title like *Isaac's Storm: A Man, a Time, and the Deadliest Hurricane in History* would be italicized.

Including this minimal information should enable readers to locate the Works Cited entry where they will find more data on the original source material. It also gives credit to the original author, which is not only ethical but also legally required as a means to avoid copyright infringement. However, there is an exception! If we have just mentioned the author's last name or the abbreviated title in the sentence leading up to the quotation or paraphrase, we should not repeat it in the parentheses. MLA conventions ask us to be efficient in this way.

Example 6.11.3

Myhill and Richards have found that gig worker satisfaction varies greatly depending on the particular employer's policies.

Page number or paragraph number, if available

To help readers find the original location of the quotation or the idea paraphrased, we should also add the page number, if any, in parentheses: (Lastname 21) or ("Abbreviated Title" 21). If the source is a website that does not otherwise have page numbers, including the paragraph number will help readers find the information quickly. That being said, for internet web pages and websites, even without a paragraph or page number, readers will be able to use "Control-F" to search on the author's last name or the abbreviated title of the work to find the original source for the quotation or paraphrase.

Example 6.11.4

Writing in *Labor Today,* Thibodeaux argues that platforms like Amazon's Mechanical Turk treat gig workers like robots (par. 3).

Every in-text, parenthetical citation should point readers towards a more detailed Works Cited page entry. And every Works Cited page entry should match at least one in-text, parenthetical citation. If one or the other is missing, this is a form of **plagiarism**. Why? Because if a student is missing a Works Cited entry, there is no way for readers to find the original information. It is like a broken link on the internet.

Attributions

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6.12: MLA Works Cited Pages

In MLA style, each source cited in the text of your paper refers readers to the list of works cited, a complete list of all the sources you quoted, paraphrased, or summarized. Every source cited in the text of your paper must be included in the works-cited list, and every source in the works-cited list must be cited in the text of your paper.

Format of the Works Cited list

After the last page of the paper, start a new page with the centered title “Works Cited” at the top. Create an entry for each source using the following guidelines and examples:

- Begin each entry at the left margin, and indent subsequent lines one-half inch. (In Microsoft Word, you can also highlight the entire page when you are finished and select “Hanging” from the Special options on the Indentation section of the Paragraph menu.)
- Alphabetize the entries according to authors’ last names. If two or more authors have the same last name, alphabetize by first name or initial. Alphabetize sources with unknown authors by the first word of the title, excluding *a*, *an*, or *the*.
- Double-space the entire page.

Core elements

Each entry in the list of works cited consists of core elements:

- **Author.** Who is responsible for the work?
- **Title.** What is the work called?
- **Publication information.** Where can the work be found so that others can consult it? Publication information includes the date of publication and any larger work, which MLA calls a “container,” in which a shorter work is published, such as a journal, magazine, newspaper, database, streaming service, and so on.
  A note on access dates. Although access dates for online sources are not required, MLA acknowledges that an access date can indicate the version of a source you consulted. If you add an access date, place it at the end of the works-cited entry in this format: “Accessed 4 Apr. 2020.” Ask your instructors whether they require access dates.

Works Cited tools and templates

Tools

Online tools can generate works cited entries automatically; just be sure to double-check that the entries are correct according to the MLA rules. Most have free versions.

- Citation Machine
- EasyBib
- Zbib
- KnightCite
- NoodleTools (check if your college subscribes by going to your college library website)

Templates

You can also make a copy of Columbia College's Word MLA template, Google docs MLA template, or Google docs MLA Works Cited template, and then put in your own content.

How to list different types of authors and contributors

General rules

- **Authors.** Give the author's last name, a comma, the author's first name and any middle name or middle initial, and then a period. For works with more than one author, an organization as an author, or an unknown author, see the models below.
- **Contributors.** People who contributed to the work in addition to the author are called contributors. Refer to them by their role in a phrase such as "adapted by," "directed by," "edited by," "illustrated by," "introduction by," "narrated by," "performance by," and "translated by." (See Models 19, 20, 21, 30, and 58 for examples.)

Specific cases

Book: one author

Sotomayor, Sonia. *My Beloved World*. Vintage Books, 2013.

Book: two authors

Kristoff, Nicholas D., and Sheryl WuDunn. *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2009.

Book: three or more authors

Barlow, David H., et al. *Abnormal Psychology: An Integrative Approach*. 8th ed., Cengage Learning, 2017.

Book: two or more works by the same author

When you cite two works by the same author, use three hyphens in place of the author's name, and alphabetize the works by title:

Trethewey, Natasha. *Memorial Drive: A Daughter's Memoir*. Ecco, 2020.

---. *Native Guard: Poems*. Mariner Books, 2007.

Book author and editor

Add the editor's name after the title:

Hemingway, Ernest. *Conversations with Ernest Hemingway*, edited by Matthew J. Bruccoli, UP of Mississippi, 1986.

Book author and translator

Add the translator's name after the title:

Ferrante, Elena. *My Brilliant Friend*. Translated by Ann Goldstein, Europa Editions, 2012.

If you are citing the work of the translator, place the translator's name in the author position:

Goldstein, Ann, translator. *My Brilliant Friend*. By Elena Ferrante, Europa Editions, 2012.

Book author and illustrator

Add the illustrator's name after the title. If you are citing the work of the illustrator, place the illustrator's name in the author position, as shown in the preceding example:

Fasler, Joe. *Light in the Dark: Writers on Creativity, Inspiration, and the Artistic Process*. Illustrated by Doug McLean, Penguin Books, 2017.

Work by an organization, a government, a corporation, or an association

If the author and publisher are *not* the same, start with the author:

United States Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration. *Healthy Living Resource Guide*. Government Printing Office, 2020.

If the author and the publisher *are* the same, give the title of the work in place of the author, and list the organization as the publisher:

MLA Handbook. 8th ed., Modern Language Association of America, 2016.

"This Is Who We Are." *U.S. Forest Service*, United States Department of Agriculture, Mar. 2019, www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/This-is-Who-We-Are.pdf.

Unknown author

If no author is given, start with the title.

"The Most Beautiful Battalion in the Army." *Grunt Magazine*, 1968, pp. 12-15.

Articles in journals, magazines, and newspapers

Articles, reviews, editorials, and other short works are published in journals, newspapers, and magazines. They appear in print, on databases, and on websites (though often through a paywall). As a student, you are likely to access many articles and other short research sources primarily through databases available through your library.

Basic format for a journal article in a database

Author's Last Name, First Name. "Title of Article." *Title of Journal*, volume number, issue number, Date of Publication, page numbers. *Title of Database*, DOI or URL.

- **Author.** Give the last name, a comma, the first name, and any middle name or initial. Do not list an author's professional title, such as *Dr.* or *PhD*. End with a period.
- **Title of the article.** Give the full title and any subtitle, separating them with a colon. Capitalize all significant words in the title. Put the title of the article in quotation marks. End with a period inside the closing quotation mark.
- **Title of the journal.** Put the title of the journal in italics. Capitalize all significant words in the title. End the title with a comma.
- **Volume and issue numbers.** Use the abbreviations *vol.* and *no.* followed by the number and a comma.
- **Publication date.** Give the month or season and the year of publication, if available. Use the following abbreviations for months: *Jan.*, *Feb.*, *Mar.*, *Apr.*, *Aug.*, *Sept.*, *Oct.*, *Nov.*, and *Dec.* Do not abbreviate May, June, or July.
- **Page numbers.** Give p. (singular) or pp. (plural) and the page number or numbers of the article, followed by a period.
- **Title of the database.** Put the database title in italics, followed by a comma.
- **Location.** Give a DOI if available, and end with a period. If there is no DOI, give a URL, preferably a permalink, without http://.

Article in an academic journal

- Database
  Daddis, Gregory A. "Out of Balance: Evaluating American Strategy in Vietnam, 1968–72." *War & Society*, vol. 32, no. 3, Oct. 2013, pp. 252-70. EBSCOhost, doi:10.1179/0729247313Z.00000000026.
- Print
  Daddis, Gregory A. "Out of Balance: Evaluating American Strategy in Vietnam, 1968–72." *War & Society*, vol. 32, no. 3, Oct. 2013, pp. 252-70.
- Online
  Squires, Scot. "Do Generations Differ When It Comes to Green Values and Products?" *Electronic Green Journal*, no. 42, 2019, escholarship.org/uc/item/6f91213q.
  The journal in the example numbers issues only, so no volume number is given.

Article in a weekly or biweekly magazine

To cite an article in a weekly or biweekly magazine, give the author, title of the article, title of the magazine, publication date (day,

month, year), and page numbers. If you found the article through a database, add the title of the database and a DOI or URL. If you found the article online, add the URL.

- Database
  Sanneh, Kelefa. "The Color of Money." *The New Yorker*, 8 Feb. 2021, pp. 26-31. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=aph&AN=148411685&site=ehost-live&scope=site.
- Print
  Sanneh, Kelefa. "The Color of Money." *The New Yorker*, 8 Feb. 2021, pp. 26-31.
- Online
  Ferrer, Ada. "My Brother's Keeper." *The New Yorker*, 22 Feb. 2021, www.newyorker.com/magazine/2021/ 03/01/my-brothers-keeper.

Article in a monthly or bimonthly magazine

To cite an article in a monthly or bimonthly magazine, give the author, title of the article, title of the magazine, publication month and year, and page numbers. If you found the article through a database, add the title of the database and a DOI or URL. If you found the article online, add the URL.

- Database
  Sneed, Annie. "Giant Shape-Shifters." *Scientific American*, Sept. 2017, pp. 20-22. *EBSCOhost*, *doi:10.1038/scientificamerican1017-20*.
- Print
  Sneed, Annie. "Giant Shape-Shifters." *Scientific American*, Sept. 2017, pp. 20-22.
- Online
  Stewart, Jamila. "A Look Inside the Black Designers of Canada Initiative." *Essence*, July 2020, www.essence.com/fashion/black-designers-of-canada-digital-index/.

Article in a newspaper

To cite an article in a newspaper, give the author, title of the article, title of the newspaper, publication date (day, month, year), and the page numbers. If you found the article through a database, add the title of the database and a DOI or a URL. If you found the article online, add the URL.

- Database
  Krueger, Alyson. "When Mom Knows Best, on Instagram." *The New York Times*, 27 Nov. 2019, pp. B1-B4. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType =aph&AN=139891108&site=ehost-live&scope=site.
- Print
  Krueger, Alyson. "When Mom Knows Best, on Instagram." *The New York Times*, 27 Nov. 2019, pp. B1-B4.
- Online
  Smith, Doug. "They're Building Affordable Housing for the Homeless—Without Government Help." *Los Angeles Times*, 10 Feb. 2021, www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-02-10/theyre-building-affordable-housing-for-the-homeless-without-government-help.

Editorial or letter to the editor

An editorial may or may not have an author's name attached to it. If it does, give the author's name first. If it does not, start with the title. In both situations, add the designation Editorial or Letter to the Editor after the title.

"For Better Elections, Copy the Neighbors." Editorial. The Wall Street Journal, 16 Feb. 2021, www.wsj.com/ articles/for-better-elections-copy-the-neighbors-11613518448.

Review

To cite a review of a book, film, television show, or other work, give the name of the reviewer and title of the review, add *Review of* before the title of work being reviewed, and give the name of the work's author, director, or creator after the title.

Girish, Devika. "Refocusing the Lens on Race and Gender." Review of *Test Pattern*, directed by Shatara Michelle Ford. *The New York Times*, 18 Feb. 2021, www.nytimes.com/2021/02/18/movies/test-pattern-review.html.

Books and parts of books

Use the following guidelines for books and parts of books, such as a selection from an anthology, an article in a collection, a published letter, and so on.

Basic entry for a book

Author's Last Name, First Name. *Title of Book*. Publisher, Year of Publication.

- **Author.** Give the last name, a comma, the first name, and any middle name or initial. Do not list an author's professional title, such as *Dr.* or *PhD*. End with a period.
- **Title of the book.** Put the book's title in italics. Give the full title and any subtitle, separating them with a colon. Capitalize all significant words in the title, even if the book's cover does not use conventional capitalization. End the title with a period.
- **Publisher.** List the publisher's name without words such as "Inc." or "Company." Shorten "University Press" to "UP." End with a comma.
- **Year of publication.** Provide the publication date, and end with a period.

Print book

Wilkerson, Isabel. *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*. Vintage Books, 2010.

E-book formatted for a specific reader device or service

Wilkerson, Isabel. *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*. Kindle ed., Vintage Books, 2010.

Book, anthology, or collection with an editor

Add the abbreviation *ed.* or *eds.* (if more than one) after the editor's first name:

Lunsford, Andrea, ed. *Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition*. U of Pittsburgh P, 1995.

Work in an anthology or chpater in an edited collection

After the author and title of the work, give the title of the anthology or edited collection, name of the editor, publication information, and page numbers of the work:

Royster, Jacqueline Jones. "To Call a Thing by Its True Name: The Rhetoric of Ida B. Wells." *Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition*, edited by Andrea Lunsford, U of Pittsburgh P, 1995, pp. 167-84.

Two or more works in an anthology or edited collection

When you cite two or more selections from the same anthology or edited collection, list the anthology separately under the editor's name. In the entries for the selections you cite, include the editor's name and the page numbers on which the selections appear:

Lipscomb, Drema R. "Sojourner Truth: A Practical Public Discourse." Lunsford, pp. 227-46.

Lunsford, Andrea, ed. *Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition*. U of Pittsburgh P, 1995.

Royster, Jacqueline Jones. "To Call a Thing by Its True Name: The Rhetoric of Ida B. Wells." Lunsford, pp. 167-84.

Revised or later edition

For a book published in an edition other than the first, give the edition number after the title:

Strunk, William, Jr., and E. B. White. *The Elements of Style*, 4th ed., Pearson, 2019.

Multi-volume work

For a book published in more than one volume, give the total number of volumes after the title:

Klinger, Leslie S. *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes*. 2 vols., W. W. Norton, 2005.

One volume of a multi-volume work

Klinger, Leslie S. *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes*. Vol. 2, W. W. Norton, 2005.

When each volume of a multi-volume set has an individual title, list the volume's full publication information first, followed by series information (number of volumes, dates). When separate volumes were published in different years, give inclusive dates:

Churchill, Winston S. *Triumph and Tragedy*. Houghton Mifflin, 1953. Vol. 6 of *The Second World War*. 6 vols. 1948-53.

However, if the volume you are using has its own title, you may cite the book without referring to the other volumes as if it were an independent publication.

Book in a series

Add the title of the series at the end of the entry:

Thaiss, Christopher. *Language across the Curriculum in the Elementary Grades*. WAC Clearinghouse, 2011, wac.colostate.edu/books/landmarks/thaiss/. Landmark Publications in Writing Studies.

Republished book

Give the original publication date after the title and the date the book was republished after the publisher:

Evans, Elizabeth E. G. *The Abuse of Maternity*. 1875. Arno, 1974.

Sacred text

Give the complete title of the version you consulted followed by the name of the editor and/or translator, the edition, the publisher, and the publication date:

The Bible. Authorized King James Version. Edited by Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett, Oxford UP, 2008.

The Koran. Translated by N. J. Dawood, rev. ed., Penguin Books, 2015.

Introduction, preface, foreword, or afterword

Start with the author of the introduction, preface, foreword, or afterword, followed by a description of the work you are citing, such as "Foreword." Give the author of the work after the title:

Offill, Jenny. Foreword. *Mrs. Dalloway*, by Virginia Woolf, Penguin Classics, 2021, pp. vii-xiv.

Published letter

Roosevelt, Theodore. Letter to Upton Sinclair. 15 Mar. 1906. *Theodore Roosevelt: Letters and Speeches*, edited by Louis Auchincloss, 2004, pp. 310-11.

Conference paper

Killi, Stainer, and Andrew Morrison. "Could the Food Market Pull 3D Printing Appetites Further?" *Industry 4.0—Shaping the Future of the Digital World: Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Sustainable & Smart Manufacturing*, edited by Paulo Bartolo et al., CRC Press, 2021, pp. 197-203.

Websites and parts of websites

Use the following guidelines for works that are published *only* online and do not have an overarching publication, such as a journal, newspaper, magazine, or database.

Basic format for a short work or page on a website

Author's Last Name, First Name. "Title of Short Work." *Title of Website*, Publisher, Publication Date, URL.

- **Author.** Give the last name, a comma, the first name, and any middle name or initial. Do not list an author's professional title, such as *Dr.* or *PhD.* End with a period.
- **Title of the short work.** Put the title in quotation marks. Give the full title and any subtitle, separating them with a colon. Capitalize all significant words in the title. End with a period inside the closing quotation mark.
- **Title of the website.** Put the title of the website in italics. Capitalize all significant words in the title. End the title with a comma.
- **Publisher.** If the publisher of the website is different from the title of the website (as shown in Model 48), give it next, followed by a comma. If they are the same (as shown in Model 47), give only the title of the website.
- **Publication date.** Give the day, month, and year the work was posted, if available. Use the following abbreviations for months: *Jan.*, *Feb.*, *Mar.*, *Apr.*, *Aug.*, *Sept.*, *Oct.*, *Nov.*, and *Dec.* Do not abbreviate May, June, and July.
- **URL.** Give the URL, without "http://."

Short work or page on a website

Shetterly, Margot Lee. "Katherine Johnson Biography." *NASA*, 24 Feb. 2020, www.nasa.gov/content/katherine-johnson-biography.

If the source you are citing has no author listed, start with the title. If the page has no title, give the name of the site and a descriptive label, such as "Home page" or "Blog post."

Blog post

Blazich, Frank A. "The Cold Morning of the Day After." Smithsonian Voices, *Smithsonian Magazine*, 5 Feb. 2021, www.smithsonianmag.com/blogs/national-museum-american-history/2021/02/05/cold-morning-day-after/.

Entire website

Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Yale U, 2021, beinecke.library.yale.edu/.

If the website lists an editor, give the person's name as you would an author, followed by a comma and *ed.*

Wiki

"Coronavirus." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 22 Feb. 2021, en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Coronavirus.

Social media

Basic format for a social media post

Author. "Text of untitled post" or "Title of post" or Descriptive label. *Title of Site*, Date of Post, Time of Post, URL.

- **Author.** Give the author's handle and name. End with a period.
- **Text, title, or description of post.** Match the capitalization exactly, add quotation marks, and end with a period inside the closing quotation mark.
- **Title of the social media site.** Put the title of the site in italics, ending with a comma.
- **Publication date and time.** Give the day, month, year, and time of the post. Use the following abbreviations for months: *Jan.*, *Feb.*, *Mar.*, *Apr.*, *Aug.*, *Sept.*, *Oct.*, *Nov.*, and *Dec.* Do not abbreviate May, June, and July.
- **URL.** Give the URL, without "http://."

Social media post

@Holleratcha (James Holler). "People go out and vote tomorrow!" *Twitter*, 2 Nov. 2020, 2:08 p.m., twitter.com/ holleratcha/status/ 1270432672544784384.

Death Valley National Park. "What does it mean to protect something you love?" *Facebook*, 23 Feb. 2021, 5:01 p.m., www.facebook.com/DeathValleyNPS/posts/4108808255810092.

Online forum post

@Duckpond318. “Turkeys in the arboretum.” *Reddit*, 15 Mar. 2021, 11:22 a.m., www.reddit.com/r/Wildlife/ comments/lqlbo3/ turkeys_in_the_arboretum/. Accessed 4 Feb. 2021.

Online comment

AKJersey. Comment on “Can We Stop Fighting about Charter Schools?” *The New York Times*, 22 Feb. 2021, www.nytimes.com/ 2021/02/22/opinion/charter-schools-democrats.html#commentsContainer.

Personal communication

Use the following guidelines to cite email, text messages, and letters that you sent or received.

Email

Roberts, Jeffrey. “Study results.” Received by Kenneth Berg, 21 Oct. 2020.

Text message

Roberts, Jeffrey. “Study results.” Received by Kenneth Berg, 21 Oct. 2020.

Personal letter

Atwood, Margaret. Letter to the author. 11 Mar. 2007.

Video, audio, and other media sources

Use the following guidelines to cite various media sources.

Film

Begin with the title, followed by the director, the studio, and the year released.

Casablanca. Directed by Michael Curtiz, Warner Brothers, 1942.

You may also cite other contributors and their roles after the title (as illustrated below). If your paper is concerned with a particular person’s work on a film, such as the director, an actor, or someone else, begin with that person’s name and arrange all other information accordingly. For a film you stream, add the title of the streaming service and the URL:

Moonlight. Directed by Barry Jenkins, performances by Mahershala Ali, Naomie Harris, and Trevante Rhodes. A24, 2016. *Netflix*, www.netflix.com/watch/80121348?trackId=13752289&tctx=8%2C.

Online video

NASA. “Apollo 11 Moonwalk – Original NASA EVA Mission Video.” 20 July 1969. *YouTube*, 17 July 2014, www.youtube.com/ watch?v=S9HdPi9Ikhk.

Television series or episode

- TV Series
  The Good Place. Michael Schur, creator. NBC, 2016-20.
- Streamed TV episode
  “Jason Mendoza.” *The Good Place*, season 1, episode 4, NBC, 2016. *Netflix*, www.netflix.com/watch/ 80191852?trackId=13752289&tctx=%2C%2C.

Advertisement

- Print
  XOFLUZA. Flu medication advertisement. *The New Yorker*, 8. Feb. 2021, pp. 5-6.

- Online
  General Motors. “Will Ferrell Super Bowl Ad.” *YouTube*, 3 Feb. 2021, www.youtube.com/ watch?v=mdsPvbSpB2Y&t=24s.

Cartoon or comic

If the source you cite appears in a local newspaper, give the city and state in brackets after the name of the newspaper if the city is not part of the newspaper’s name.

- Print
  Davis, Jim. “Garfield.” Cartoon. *Courier* [Findlay, OH], 17 May 1996, p. 18.
- Online
  Gauld, Tom. “Waiting for Godot to Join the Zoom Meeting.” *You’re All Just Jealous of My Jetpack*, 31 Jan. 2021, myjetpack.tumblr.com/.

Painting or other visual artwork

If the city is not part of the name of the museum, add it after museum. For example, if the work you viewed was at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, you would end the entry as follows: Museum of Modern Art, New York.

- Original work
  Rivera, Diego. *Detroit Industry Murals*. 1932-33. Detroit Institute of Art.
- Reproduction
  Neel, Alice. *Elenka*. 1936. *Alice Neel: People Come First*, by Kelly Baum and Randall Griffey, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2021, p. 142.
- Online
  Basquiat, Jean-Michel. *Untitled*. 1983. *Museum of Modern Art*, www.moma.org/collection/works/63997?artist_id=370&page=1&sov_referrer=artist. Accessed 24 Sept. 2020.

Map, chart, or diagram

- Print
  Everglades National Park. National Geographic Society Maps, 2019.
- Online
  “Map: Expedition of Lewis and Clark.” *National Park Service*, 2 Jan. 2018, nps.gov/subjects/ travellewisandclark/map.htm.

Sound recording

Sound recordings include songs, albums, and spoken word. If you stream a sound recording or watch a performance online, add the name of the streaming service, such as Spotify, Apple Music, or Amazon Music, after the date. If you access the recording online, add the name of the website and the URL after the date.

- Album
  Prince. *Purple Rain*. Warner Brothers, 1984.
- Song
  The Supremes. “Baby Love.” *Where Did Our Love Go*, Motown, 1964. Spotify.
- Online
  Gorman, Amanda. “The Hill We Climb.” 20 Jan. 2021, *YouTube*, www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZ055ilIiN4.

Radio

The Road to Higher Ground. Hosted by Jonathan Overby. WPR, 9 Jan. 2021.

If you listened to the radio program online, add the URL after the date.

Podcast

McEvers, Kelly, host. “This Is Not a Joke.” *Embedded*, season 9, episode 2, NPR, 7 Nov. 2019, Apple Podcasts.

If you listened to the podcast on the web, add the URL instead of the podcast service.

Interview

- Broadcast
  Wilkerson, Isabel. Interview. *Fresh Air*, NPR, 4 Aug. 2020.
- Online
  Sowell, Thomas. Interview. *Hoover Institution*, 3 Jan. 2015, www.wsj.com/video/uncommon-knowledg-thomas-sowell-basic-economics/51837CB6-9FF2-305AE55D179A.html.
- Personal interview
  Wong, Diana. Personal interview. 12 Sept. 2020.

Video game, software, or app

Houser, Dan, et al., writers. *Grand Theft Auto V*. Rockstar Games, 2013. Xbox 360.

Other sources

Live lecture, speech, address, or reading

Diaz, Shanna. "Your Dazzling Brain: The Symphony of Sleep." Community Lecture Series, University of New Mexico Health Science and the City of Albuquerque, 13 Mar. 2018, Albuquerque Academy.

Live performance

Hamilton. By Lin-Manuel Miranda, directed by Thomas Kail, 11 Mar. 2018, CIBC Theater, Chicago.

If you watch a video of a performance online, cite it as you would cite an online video.

Letter in an archive

Mucklestone, Ada. Letter to Maj. Gen. Ralph J. Olson. 6 Nov. 1958. Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Alphabetical Subject File, 1950-66, 1715, Box 13.

Dissertation

- Database
  Park, Eun Jung. *Korean American Artists and the 1992 Los Angeles Riots*. 2013. U of California, San Diego, PhD dissertation. ProQuest, www.proquest.com/doc-view/1425303659.
- Print
  Boothby, Daniel W. *The Determinants of Earnings and Occupation for Young Women*. 1978. U of California, Berkeley, PhD dissertation.

Pamphlet

"Facts about Fallout." Civil Defense Administration, 1961.

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7: FORMING A RESEARCH-BASED ARGUMENT

Learning Outcomes

- Determine the purpose of an argument
- Distinguish between definition, evaluation, causal, and proposal arguments
- Explain what common questions will need to be answered for each of the above argument types.

7.1: Deciding the Purpose of a Research-Based Argument

7.2: Tailoring an Argument to an Audience

7.3: Definition Arguments

7.3.1: Annotated Sample Definition Argument

7.3.2: Sample Definition Outline

7.4: Evaluation Arguments

7.4.1: Sample Evaluation Argument Prompt and Outline

7.4.2: Annotated Sample Evaluation Argument

7.5: Causal Arguments

7.5.1: Annotated Sample Causal Argument

7.6: Proposal Arguments

7.6.1: Annotated Sample Proposal Argument



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7.1: Deciding the Purpose of a Research-Based Argument

Media Alternative

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Every argument sets out to convince readers or listeners to believe it, no? In that sense, every argument has the same purpose. However, there are different kinds of beliefs we might want to encourage and different attitudes we might take toward those beliefs. Besides, we may want an argument not just to convince but to lead to action. Sometimes the purpose goes beyond just “Believe me!” For example, when the argument is part of an advertisement, the goal is clear: "Buy me!" The goal of a stump speech is to get listeners to cast their votes in support of a candidate. Sometimes, the purpose is simply to struggle with a topic in order to begin to come up with an informed opinion. Many times, the purpose of a piece of writing is to encourage critical thinking on a subject, and maybe change something wrong in our world in response.



Photo by Magda Ehlers on Pexels, under the Pexels License.

For example, we could set out to write about global warming for different purposes. We might simply aim to make people believe that global warming is real. Alternately, we might try to convince readers to make drastic changes in their lives to combat climate change, or to protest a particular company responsible for climate change. Our purpose will shape the ideas we express, but it will also shape the emotional appeals we make.

Identifying our purpose can help us decide what we need to include to achieve that purpose. Often arguments with a particular kind of purpose will share common features. Below we will describe four kinds of research-based essays, each of which we will explore in more depth in a later section of this chapter.

Purposes for research papers

We can ask ourselves which of the following best describes our purpose:

- We want to describe the nature of something.
- We want to assess how good or bad something is.
- We want to demonstrate that one thing causes or caused another.
- We want to propose some action.

An argument may contain multiple elements from this list, but if we can decide which is ultimately the most important, we can

shape the introduction and conclusion with that goal in mind. Each type of argument has particular questions that may be worth addressing, as we will explore in the later sections.

In the following sections, we suggest strategies and components of four different types of arguments, matched to the four purposes mentioned above.

- **Definition** arguments describe the nature of something or identify a pattern or trend. Generally speaking, they answer the question, "What is it?"
- **Evaluation** arguments assess something according to particular criteria. They answer the question, "How good or bad is it?"
- **Causal** arguments attempt to show that one thing leads to or has led to another. They answer the question, "What caused it?"
- **Proposal** arguments present a case for action. They answer the question, "What should we do about it?"

Let's look at some examples of argument purposes divided into these categories.

Definition argument examples

- We want readers to know what kinds of communication dolphins are capable of.
- We want to clarify which groups of people the term "Latinx" refers to.
- We want to show how Kurdish communities differ in Iraq, Syria, and Turkey.

Evaluation argument examples

- We want to recommend a gaming device.
- We want to convince readers that the Supreme Court decision to give corporations First Amendment rights to free speech was misguided.
- We want to show that a new Alzheimer's drug meets the criteria for emergency use authorization.

Causal argument examples

- We want to argue that the attack on the United States Capitol on January 6, 2021 actually made Americans value American democracy more and want to protect it.
- We want to show that parents can't change a child's feeling of being male, female, or nonbinary.
- We want to suggest that the Covid-19 pandemic led to an increase in internet addiction.

Proposal argument examples

- We want readers to take the online Harvard Implicit Association Tests and reflect on what the results suggest about their unconscious biases.
- We want legislators to double the gas tax in order to speed up the transition to clean energy.
- We want to make community college free for all Americans.

Comparing and contrasting for different purposes

It's worth noting that we may want to discuss more than one thing for any of the purposes above. If we are comparing and contrasting two or more things in our essay, we will want to think about essay structure for compare and contrast essays as well as thinking about the elements of the argument according to the overall purpose. See Section 3.9: Comparing and Contrasting Arguments for more on this.

> **Practice exercise** 7.1.1
>
> For each argument below, select the category that best describes the argument's purpose. Explain how it fits the category.
>
> 1. Muslim women should be allowed to wear full face and body coverings such as burkas in public if they choose.
> 2. Minecraft play offers many opportunities for creativity and learning.

3. The explosion of mental health content on TikTok has reduced the shame many people feel about their mental health issues.
4. Only apartments where the rent is less than 30% of a minimum wage worker's income can truly be considered "affordable housing."
5. Composting food waste can generate energy with a minimum of greenhouse gas emissions.

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7.2: Tailoring an Argument to an Audience

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (8 min, 10 sec):

There is a common misconception about writing that it is a solitary exercise. As such, each time you get stuck on a word or sentence, it may be up to you alone to move past that writer's block. However, that's simply not true. Beyond the support of your instructor, peers, or tutors, you have an audience that you're writing to that can help you generate ideas and stay focused. The more we imagine our audience's likely reactions as part of the writing process, the more likely we are to generate ideas, reach them, and convince them or affect their thinking. Why? Because, as we saw in Section 9.1, an argument implies a relationship. So, read on to find out more about how you can work together with your audience to develop your paper.



"Audience listens at Startup School" by Robert Scoble is licensed under CC BY 2.0

Audience Awareness in the Writing Process

Analyzing your audience affects nearly every stage of your writing, from early drafting to how you revise and get to the final draft. Beyond writing to answer a prompt, at a really basic level, you're writing to be read, by your peers, your professor, or by any audience designated in your prompt. To do this effectively, consider the following questions. Many of these considerations already happen intuitively when we talk with other people. When we're writing we need to be a bit more conscious about imagining the audience.

- What does your audience probably already know about your topic? Depending on how much your audience knows, there may be background information you should include or leave out. For example, if we are writing on global warming in an English Composition class for an audience of an English professor and assorted students, we might need to use more detailed explanations for scientific concepts. However, if we are writing on global warming in an upper-level environmental science class, we can assume that our audience is more well-versed in the basics of climate science. We wouldn't need to explain the details of the greenhouse effect works and could probably use more jargon from the discipline without defining every term.

- How is your audience likely to feel about your topic? A skeptical audience needs more evidence than an open-minded one. Is the audience likely to have a prejudice or misconception that needs to be addressed? Assessing how your audience feels may also be the key to finding common ground. Refer to 9.8: Reaching a Hostile Audience for more information.

- What new information can you provide? New information about a topic or its purpose can keep the audience engaged in a

way rehashing old information cannot.

- What is your relationship to the audience? This can affect your tone and how much of yourself you insert into the paper. For example, addressing an authority figure would require a different approach than addressing a relative peer or a complete stranger.

The Effect of Audience on Style

Like a conversation, in addition to your audience affecting what you say, your audience can sometimes affect how you say that content as well. The following items are some things to consider:

- **Purpose:** What does your audience care about or believe in? What will move your audience to act? It will help your paper if you can align its purpose with something the audience cares about. See 9.6: Moral Character for more information on this.
- **Backing:** What kind of evidence will convince your audience? Remember what looks like strong evidence to you may appear flimsy to your audience.
- **Sentence Type and Length:** Should you use long and complex sentences? Or short ones? The reading level of your paper should match the reading level of your audience.
- **Level of Formality:** Should you use technical jargon? Or slang? Avoid the temptation to 'sound academic' with technical words and phrases unless the situation calls for it.
- **Tone:** Formal or informal? Serious or humorous? Distanced or personal? Hitting the right tone will help your audience take you more seriously. Consider checking out 8.4: Tone or 9.3: Distance and Intimacy for more resources related to this.

Reaching Out to the Audience

Many audiences form an opinion about what they read by the end of the introduction. Take advantage of this information to make sure you make a positive first impression. Try to pick a title that your audience may recognize or resonate with. Work on a hook that is geared towards your audience (as opposed to something that is purely provocative or attention-grabbing). Consider making a direct appeal to your audience in the introduction, and end your introduction with a thesis statement modeled after the values you know your reader will identify with. Check out 7.1: Introductions for more information about this.

Addressing a Diverse Audience



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While the previous points have been geared towards writing to a specific audience, the following items are some good practices to observe for any audience you may encounter.

- **Recognize your cultural filter**: Cultures are formed from a variety of factors like class, gender, generation, religion, and education. Your culture shapes how you view the world and can at times prevent you from understanding different backgrounds. Do your best to understand how your cultural values may be affecting your argument and how they may differ from your audience's.

- **Avoid ethnocentrism**: Assuming that your culture's values, customs, or beliefs are superior to another's is ethnocentrism. It's an attitude that can alienate your audience. Be careful not to assume that all cultural practices are shared. Suspend any judgments or cultural stereotypes.

- **Adopt bias-free language**: Biased language is tricky and has a way of sneaking into writing when you least expect it. While you may think writing "the male lawyer" provides important detail, including the lawyer's gender suggests the law is an inherently male or masculine profession. So, be mindful of any biased, sexist, or stereotypical language that may come from unconscious biases as you're writing and edit accordingly.

- **Acknowledge issues of oppression.** Similar to ethnocentrism, the language we write or speak might convey a negative bias towards individuals or groups. If your message stereotypes a group, even unconsciously, you risk offending your audience. Examples of discriminating language to avoid include:

    - ***Racism*** – Your audience will be diverse. By recognizing that there are many cultural frames of reference, you'll reach each reader or listener effectively. Unless it is necessary, avoid references to ethnicity.

    - ***Heterosexism*** – If your essay or speech depicts a relationship, don't assume that each member of your audience is heterosexual.

    - ***Ageism*** – Many pervasive stereotypes exist with regard to the age of individuals. If you write or speak about an elderly person, challenge discriminating ideas such as "old people are feeble" or "teenagers lack wisdom."

    - ***Sexism*** – Archaic sexist usage assumes one male term for all genders. Now we can use a singular they for this purpose (see 13.7: Pronoun Agreement). Sexism suggests one sex or gender is inferior to another. Avoid sexist stereotypes such as the idea that females are emotional and men are logical. It's also important to avoid assuming that gender is binary or based only on biology.

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7.3: DEFINITION ARGUMENTS

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (14 min, 32 sec):

What is a definition argument?

A research-based argument may have as its goal to describe the nature of something, whether it be an abstract concept like justice, a historical event, or an ongoing trend. Definition arguments like this are arguments because they seek to shape our vision of reality. We can think of them as answering the question "What is it?"

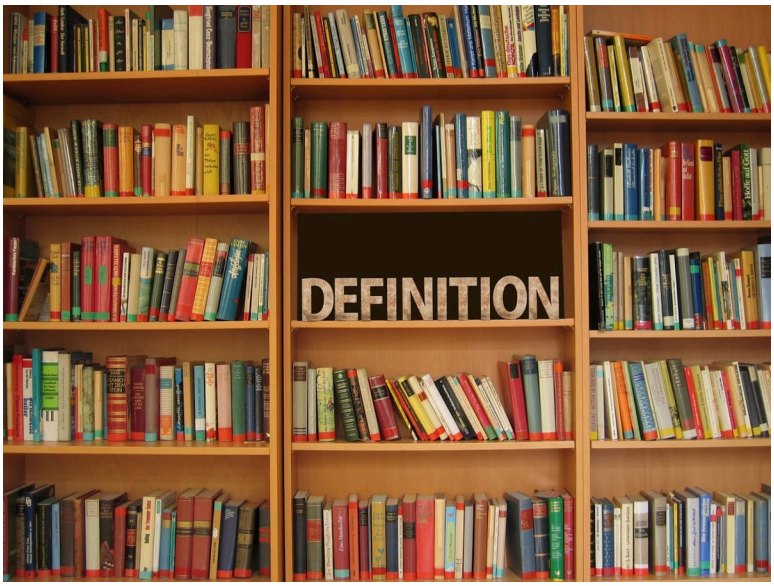


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Definition arguments may attempt to explain what is meant by a particular term. Take the following claim:

> Organic, in terms of food, means plants and animals raised without additives or artificial growing conditions.

The argument here hinges upon understanding the definition of the word “organic.” In this case, organic is the subject of the argument. The claim goes on to base the argument on definition criteria. The claim states that two definition criteria of “organic” are “raised without additives” and “raised without artificial growing conditions.” "What do they mean by ‘artificial’?" If you find yourself questioning other terms used in the claim, that might mean your argument will need to dedicate a paragraph or more to defining those terms. An extended argument on organic food would need to explain in detail what distinguishes artificial growing conditions from natural ones. Can greenhouse-grown food be organic? In such a situation, it may benefit the argument to offer the dictionary definition of “organic” as a way to confirm that writer and the readers’ assumptions are the same.

There are a number of online dictionaries that student authors can derive a definition from, but should the writer wish to ensure trust (ethos) with the audience, the source of the dictionary definition might matter. The dictionary.com site offers this definition for “organic”:

> Organic: pertaining to, involving, or grown with fertilizers or pesticides of animal or vegetable origin, as distinguished from manufactured chemicals” (“organic”).

Readers who respect the history and legacy of the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* might consider its definition more credible. Considered the most definitive and complete dictionary available, the OED offers differentiated definitions of different uses of

the word. In the case of “organic,” we’d need to look at sub-definition 8c to find one that works for our purposes:

> Organic: of food: produced without the use of artificial fertilizers, pesticides, or other artificial chemicals.

A definition argument can put a more specific subject into a category based on criteria, as in the following:

> Though it omits hormones and antibiotics, organic ice cream remains unhealthy because it contains high levels of fat and sugar, while offering little nutritional value.

Here we have a subject – organic ice cream – and a category – unhealthy. Presumably, unhealthy things often contain similar criteria – high levels of fat and sugar, low nutritional value, and industrial additives. Organic ice cream might not contain industrial additives, but, because it meets the other two criteria, it can still be considered unhealthy. A good way to test your thesis is to try out examples to see if the criteria work to distinguish things that fit the category from things that don't. Are other things we consider unhealthy full of sugar and/or fat, low in nutrition, and made with industrial additives? Yes. Fast food hamburgers are unhealthy because they contain high levels of fat, low nutritional value, and are full of chemical preservatives.

Definition arguments will need to provide evidence for any generalizations they make about a subject. If they use a specific example, how can they show that the example is **typical**? They may also need to justify the choice of **criteria** for the definition. If we argue that the Vietnam War should not be considered a "World War" even though it involved two global superpowers, the U.S. and the Soviet Union, we will need to explain why a criterion like the number of deaths should be considered more important than the number or size of the countries involved.

The benefits of definition

Once we understand the value of definition for clarifying terms in an essay, we can start to appreciate the value of definition in shaping an argument, especially one centered around a contentious term. When controversy revolves around an issue, defining terms explicitly and precisely is even more critical. In Section 4.2: Check If the Meaning Is Clear, we saw how mixing different meanings of one term can disguise a problem with the logic of an argument (if this is done intentionally, it is called **equivocation**). A definition argument can help avoid this kind of slippage, and it can clarify where disagreements lie. Even if it doesn't resolve the disagreements, it may at least prevent misunderstandings.

One example lies in the definition of "life" in the abortion debate. Those on the pro-life side argue "life" is defined by the initial meeting of sperm and egg, and the subsequent division of cells. On the other hand, those on the pro-choice side often argue that "life" is determined by autonomy, by the fetus's ability to survive outside the womb, and this, generally, is possible at twenty-four weeks. Prior to that, the fetus is fully dependent for survival upon the security of the woman's womb.

To take another example, let's say the government decides to allow health insurance providers to exclude coverage to individuals with preexisting conditions. The question then arises, what precisely does constitute a preexisting condition? Any diagnosis of cancer, including minor skin cancers? Diabetes? Obesity? Hypertension? Consider how many of our friends and family members have been diagnosed with any of these conditions.

Laws rely on definitions. Many of us are familiar with the purpose of Title IX, which ensured that equal funding should be applied for both male and female athletic programs in schools. However, with the recognition of transgender students and their rights, the U.S. Department of Education offered a statement of clarification to the language of Title IX: “explaining that it will enforce Title IX's prohibition on discrimination on the basis of sex to include: (1) discrimination based on sexual orientation; and (2) discrimination based on gender identity” (“Title IX”). Schools, students, and parents can now point to this language in debates about who is protected by Title IX status, and who can be included in the funding of gender-specific sports teams. Legal definitions often depend upon qualifiers, as in the case of the gun debate. Many on the pro-gun rights argument will not extend the definition of guns to include fully automatic guns; thus, they will often only agree with new gun restrictions that exclude AR 47s from such regulations.

Definitions involve emotional associations as well as descriptions of literal meaning. Public opinion can be swayed by casting a person involved in a very public event as "famous" or "infamous," a term that has decidedly negative connotations. In the case of Trayvon Martin, a young black man who was shot by George Zimmerman, a white man, Martin was defined alternately as a "boy in a hoodie" or as a "potential thug." And Zimmerman was defined as "a neighborhood watch leader" or "private citizen" by some, and a "vigilante" by others. In each case, the label implies a definition of the person and his behavior, and this extends the impression built in the mind of the audience.

Strategies for definition

Referring to existing definitions

A dictionary definition can be helpful if the term under consideration is new or very unusual or uncommon, words which readers may be unfamiliar with, or whose definitions may have become obscured with modern use. If an argument takes the position that reduced literacy rates in freshman college students makes them less apt to learn from a professor who leans toward sesquipedalian speech, yet, such speech is exactly the challenge these students need to pull them away from their social media feeds and engage them in the vigorous mental workout that academia provides, the author is more likely to earn the trust of the audience if a dictionary definition is provided for this uncommon and archaic word: words that are a foot and a half long (O.E.D.).

Identifying emotional associations (connotations)

Emotional associations offer the various levels of meaning a word may have. For example, love can have several variants, such as platonic love, romantic love, familial love, passionate love, self-love, and even more specific ones, such as spirituality, philanthropy, humanity, nationalism/patriotism, and *agapé*, and each carries its own emotional tone which informs the definition. The essay "What is Poverty" offers multiple connotations of poverty through the numerous illustrations.

Defining a term based on what it's not (negation)

Sometimes complex words are best explained by what they are *not,* specifically by contrasting the word to another term. Needs are often confused with wants, but needs are anything necessary for survival. For example, people often say "I need a vacation," when what they really mean is, "I want a vacation." You may *want* coffee, but you *need* water. You may *want* a new car, but a used one may suit your *needs*. In an article about sexual predators, Andrew Vachss says that when he tells people about the individuals he prosecutes for abuse against children, people often say, "that's sick." But he clarifies that there is a difference between "sick" and "evil." A mother who hears voices in her head telling her to lock her baby in a closet is sick. A man who sells a child to pornographers is evil. "Sickness," he says, "is the absence of choice," while evil is the volition, the awareness of choice, and the intentional choice to commit a sinister act (Vachss).

Creating an original definition (stipulation)

This use of definition asks the reader to accept an alternate definition from the standard or commonly accepted one. This is usually the best way to utilize definition in an essay, as it allows the author the freedom to put his or her own spin on a key term. But the author must do it responsibly, providing supportive examples. For example, many young people believe that true parental love is the willingness to do *anything at all* for a child. However, real love isn't expressed by doormat behavior. A parent who does his child's homework so the child receives all "A" grades isn't demonstrating love {*note the use of negation here*}. Rather, true parental love is the willingness to apply fair rules and limits on behavior in order to raise a child who is a good worker, a good friend, and a good citizen.

Elaborating on a definition (extended definition)

There is no rule about how long a definition argument should be. When a simple one-line definition will not suffice, writers can develop a multi-paragraph, multi-page or multi-chapter definition argument. For example, a newspaper article might explore at length what is meant by the phrase "cancel culture." An entire book each might be needed to explain what is meant by the following terms: "critical race theory," "microagression," "gender identity," "fascism," or "intersectionality." When the concept under examination is complex, contentious, or weighted by historical examples and emotional connotations, an extended definition may be needed.

Sample definition arguments

This sample outline for an essay titled "When Colleges Talk about Diversity, Equity, and Antiracism, What Do They Mean?" shows the structure of one definition argument.

The student essay "Defining Stereotypes" by Imanol Juarez can serve as another example. Annotations on this essay point out

how Juarez uses several definition argument strategies.

- Sample definition essay "Defining Stereotypes" in PDF version with margin notes
- Sample definition essay "Defining Stereotypes" accessible version with notes in parentheses.

Practice Exercise 7.3.1

How are attitudes to gender changing in today's society? Come up with a definition argument you think has some validity about a current trend related to gender. What kind of evidence could be gathered to support this claim? How would you convince readers that this evidence is typical? You could choose one of the claims below or invent your own.

- People today still associate femininity with weakness and masculinity with strength.
- Women are still more nurturing than men.
- Teenagers today see gender as a spectrum.
- Cisgender people still fear transgender people.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Practice Exercise 7.3.2

Construct a definition with criteria for one of the following terms, or another term of your choice related to gender. Feel free to research the terms to get ideas. Possible terms: masculine, feminine, androgynous, macho, femme, butch, manly, womanly, machista, metrosexual, genderqueer, third gender, transgender.

Practice Exercise 7.3.3

Choose one of the following articles. Which of the definition strategies listed in this section can you identify in the argument? Can you think of any other strategies the author might have used?

- "The True Meaning of the Word 'Cisgender'" by Dawn Ennis in *The Advocate*
- "The Definition of Terrorism" by Brian Whitaker in *The Guardian*

Attributions

- Parts of the above are written by Allison Murray and Anna Mills.
- Parts are adapted from the Writing II unit on definition arguments through Lumen Learning, authored by Cathy Thwing and Eric Aldrich, provided by Pima Community College and shared under a CC BY 4.0 license.

Answers

7.3.1: Annotated Sample Definition Argument

7.3.2: Sample Definition Outline

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7.3.1: Annotated Sample Definition Argument

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (4 min, 49 sec):

Format note: This version is accessible to screen reader users. Refer to these tips for reading our annotated sample arguments with a screen reader. For a more traditional visual format, see the PDF version of "Defining Stereotypes."

Imanol Juarez

Professor Peterkin

English 103

May 8, 2020

Defining Stereotypes

What defines you? As people, we often consider ourselves to be multifaceted, complex beings. (Note: The author opens the essay with a personal question, a strategy to get the reader's attention.) Yet in every culture people stereotype others, and oversimplified beliefs about people and cultures have a negative impact every day. (Note: A literal definition of the word "stereotypes.") Even though America's society is exceptional in positive ways, it is also exceptional in its use of stereotypes, which can be seen through the racism that still pervades the U.S. Stereotyping is a form of racism that creates a single depiction of a group of people based on one aspect of their identity. (Note: The thesis defines stereotypes and the criteria the essay will use to explain this definition.)

Most cultures intentionally or unintentionally manipulate the images of a certain group or person, and as a result, stereotypical depictions are a widespread form of racism. (Note: The essay focuses on the connotation of stereotypes and how they function in the U.S.)For example, the Ferris State University's Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia can give a dark glimpse into racist depictions of Latinos: "The stereotypical depictions of Mexicans, especially those thought to be in the United States illegally, are harsh and demeaning. The men are portrayed as illiterate criminals. The women are depicted as hypersexual. Both men and women are portrayed as lazy, dirty, physically unattractive menaces" (Ferris State). (Note: Evidence for the assertion that stereotypes are racist.) In extreme cases, racial profiling can be considered a form of stereotyping. Racial profiling is "the use of race or ethnicity as grounds for suspecting someone of having committed an offense." One example of racial profiling took place on February 23, 2020, when two white men took the life of a young 26-year-old African American man named Ahmad Marquez Arbery while he was jogging around his neighborhood: "Gregory McMichael told the police that he thought Mr. Arbery looked like a man suspected in several break-ins in the area," demonstrating the most abhorrent outcome of racist stereotypes (*New York Times*).

Some may argue that there is such a thing as a good stereotype, but all stereotypes are inherently racist. (Note: Juarez addresses the counterargument to his definition of stereotypes.) Yes, many cultures have stereotypes that are positive, but are they truly beneficial? Sam Killermann states in "3 Reasons Positive Stereotypes Aren't That Positive," "Positive stereotypes exist for just about every identity and have the capacity to be just as damaging as the negative ones." Take the stereotype that people of Asian descent are good at math. Positive stereotypes not only set standards high but also discourage individuals from performing; good stereotypes can also alienate individuals and make them depressed because they don't have the characteristics everybody believes they have. (Note: The definition argument leads to a causal argument about how positive stereotyping can impact people.) There are many forms of stereotypes, but one thing is for sure: there is never such a thing as a good stereotype.

(Note: The Works Cited page uses MLA documentation style appropriate for an English class.)

Works Cited

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The New York Times. “Ahmaud Arbery Shooting: A Timeline of the Case.” *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 8 May 2020, www.nytimes.com/article/ahmaud-arbery-timeline.html.

Attribution

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7.3.2: Sample Definition Outline

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (3 min, 33 sec):

When Colleges Talk about Diversity, Equity, and Antiracism, What Do They Mean?

I. **Thesis:** Colleges sometimes use the terms "diversity," "equity," and "antiracism" as if they are interchangeable, but they have very different implications.
II. **Background**: Colleges are looking to use inclusive language to show their support for students who are at a disadvantage in their education because of who they are.
    i. Consider the history of academia, largely centered around white, Western European men.
    ii. Social change movements have demanded progress
        a. The Civil Rights Movement lead to access, but no real changes in academic language.
        b. The Equal Rights Amendment increased interest and awareness of Women's Studies.
        c. Chicano Rights Movement lead to the creation of Chicano Studies courses of study and major programs.
    iii. In some cases, mainstream core curriculum maintains a Eurocentric Western male focus; in others, that's no longer true.
II. **"Diversity"** emphasizes inclusion and representation of different identities.
    i. The Oxford English Dictionary's definition of "diverse": "Different in character or quality; not of the same kind; not alike in nature or qualities" (OED).
    ii. "Diverse" doesn't refer to a precise form of identity, but can include race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability
    iii. Such an open definition extends inclusion to all possible groups in an academic setting.
    iv. Note that "Diverse" does not suggest a critique of systems of power that help some people and hurt others.
IV. **"Antiracist"** draws attention to one form of oppression and the need to actively oppose that oppression
    i. How the term became popular
        a. The Black Lives Matter Movement: Social outrage over the murders of unarmed African Americans escalated with each new death: Trayvon Martin (2013), George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery
        b. X. J. Kendi's work, *How to be an Antiracist* introduces the world to the definition of "antiracist."
        c. The national conversation changes to include antiracist; educators take note and respond.
    ii. "Antiracist" doesn't refer to other forms of oppression, such as classism, sexism, cissexism, heterosexism, ableism, anti-immigrant sentiment or others.
V. **"Equity"** emphasizes providing educational resources to disadvantaged groups according to need.
    i. The Center for Public Education defines equity as "when all students receive the resources they need so they graduate prepared for success."
    ii. It suggests trying to compensate for systemic inequalities in how people are able to access their education based on class, race, gender, learning style, ability.
    iii. What equity doesn't mean (negation): Equity doesn't refer to equal opportunity or equal rights.
    iv. Image commonly used to show equity: Three people of varying heights pick apples from a tree. Each stands on a stool just high enough to allow them to reach.



Image by MPCA Photos on Flickr, licensed CC BY-NC 2.0.

VI. **Conclusion**: When considering which term to choose or whether to use all three, we can think about whether we want to emphasize inclusion of an infinite range of identities, resistance against racism in particular, or the attempt to compensate for systemic inequalities and get all students what they need to succeed at a high level.

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7.4: EVALUATION ARGUMENTS

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (3 min, 42 sec):

What is an evaluation argument?

In college, professional life, politics, and everyday life, we constantly must assess how things measure up. We are faced with questions like the following:

- Does our employer treat us fairly?
- Does our local cafe deserve five stars or four?
- Is the “Free City” program that makes City College of San Francisco tuition free for residents a success?
- Is a particular hillside a good location for a wind farm?
- Does the president deserve their current approval rating?

To answer each of these questions and convince others that our answer is valid, we would need to make an evaluation argument. Most commonly, evaluation arguments rate their subject on a scale from positive to negative. Evaluation arguments make a claim about the quality of something. We can think of them as answering the question "How good or bad is it?"



A convincing evaluation depends on careful thought about the criteria.
Photo by Liza Summer from Pexels under the Pexels License.

Criteria

Evaluation arguments usually need to define and justify the **criteria** they use to make the evaluation. These criteria may consist of moral standards, aesthetic standards, or tests of successful functioning. Depending on how controversial the criteria are, the argument may need to defend and explain why they have been chosen. How can we support our choice of criteria? We may cite precedent or the authoritative sources in the field, or we may discuss the merit of the criteria in themselves by arguing for the good results they lead to and aligning them with values we believe our audience will share.

Judgment

Once we have convinced readers that the criteria for quality are valid, we will need to articulate our **judgment** about the extent to which the subject meets or doesn't meet those criteria.

Evidence

Finally, the argument will need to provide **evidence** of the way in which the subject meets or does not meet the criteria. See 4.4: Decide How Strong the Evidence Is and 12.5: Developing Paragraphs. for ideas on the types of evidence to choose from.

Ranking criteria

In cases where there are multiple valid criteria, the writer may need to **rank** them in order of importance and justify this ranking. For example, an editorial supporting Alyesha Jenkins for mayor would need to explain what the city should be looking for in a mayor at the moment. The editorial might argue that the top priority should be finding someone who has a workable plan to address the homelessness crisis. It might then go on to identify as secondary priority finding someone who has been an effective leader of a large organization. Finally, it might argue that finding a candidate who will focus on ending police brutality in the city should be the third priority. Given these criteria, the argument might praise describe Alyesha Jenkins' concrete, popular plan on homelessness and background as a successful city supervisor and head of a law firm. It might note that her record on police brutality is limited, but we still judge her to be a strong candidate.

Types of criteria

We can classify evaluative arguments by the kind of criteria they use. They may focus on aesthetics, that is the appearance or appeal of something (a movie, a work of art, or a building), or practical concerns about how something functions, or moral judgements based on values.

Aesthetic Criteria

What makes a great film can be an academic question or an everyday debate among friends going to the movies. Film critics and Film Studies classes try to identify clear **aesthetic criteria** for award-worthy movies. Film blogger Tyler Schirado, who writes for the San Diego Film festival, details criteria including acting quality, dialogue, pacing, plot coherence, cinematography, production design, and special effects. Each of those criteria could in turn include sub-criteria. For example, the criteria for the quality of the special effects might include both how innovative and how spectacular they are.

Operational Criteria

Sometimes the criteria that matter are very practical. We use **operational criteria** when we are looking for certain concrete results. What does the subject we are evaluating do? If we want to evaluate a new car's safety features, we will ended to see how it performs under challenging conditions. When the FDA evaluates and tests a new vaccine, they follow an set of procedures to test how the vaccine affects first cells, then animal bodies, and finally human bodies. The FDA considers the results of all these procedures to help it decide whether to approve the vaccine or not. And if the consumer has confidence in the FDA's standards for data collection, they can use the criteria about the vaccine's past record of immune protection and side effects to help them decide whether or not to get vaccinated.

Moral Criteria

An evaluation argument based on **moral criteria** will claim that something is right or wrong. It will need to appeal to shared values or make a case for a particular value that serves as criteria. Some values are nearly universal, such as honesty, reasonableness, and fairness, as we will discuss in 9.6: Moral Character. However, even values that seem universal may be defined differently by different groups. We each grow up in an environment that instills a particular set of family or cultural or religious values. These help to shape our own sense of morality, or personal values and codes that we chose to live by.

Many values may be unconsciously held, but a moral argument will need to articulate them explicitly in order to make its

case. Remembering our discussion of assumptions in 4.5: Check the Argument's Assumptions, we recall that each argument is based upon spoken or unspoken beliefs (warrants), such as "free speech is worthy of protection," or "democracy is desirable," or "cheating is wrong." As we saw in 7.2: Tailoring an Argument to an Audience, it can be helpful to recognize our particular audience's values and see where they align with our own. Convincing readers that we share values can enhance the sense of trust between reader and writer, as we will see in Chapter 9: How Arguments Appeal to Trust and Connection (Ethos).

As an example, the Motion Pictures Academy includes some moral criteria as well as aesthetic criteria when it selects winners for Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Actors. Responding to the #OscarsSoWhite campaign, the Academy of Motion Pictures decided to incorporate the value of inclusiveness into their criteria. In order to emphasize "the inclusion of people in underrepresented groups, including women, people of color, LGBTQ+ people and those with cognitive or physical disabilities," they developed a new set of criteria for nominations for Best Picture. The criteria state that starting in 2024, "To be eligible for best picture, a film must meet at least two standards across four categories: 'Onscreen Representation, Themes and Narratives,' 'Creative Leadership and Project Team,' 'Industry Access and Opportunities' and 'Audience Development,' (Rottenberg). Each of these new criteria responds to the demands for inclusivity and equity, and is evidence that criteria can and should evolve as social morals evolve.

Comparative Evaluation

Many times we will need to evaluate the worth of one subject in relation to another in order to judge which is better. Of course, we will need to decide on the basis for comparison, or the criteria to be used, and make that basis clear. Then we will need to evaluate each subject according to the criteria. In comparisons, ranking the criteria will often be important because one subject may do better on one criterion and worse on another. We'll need to know which criterion is more important in order to decide which comes out ahead overall.

The point-by-point organizational technique described in 3.9: Comparing and Contrasting Arguments can be helpful in structuring such an essay because it allows us to write about one criterion at a time and see how both subjects compare on that one point before moving on to the next criterion. For example, we might compare the job of being a nanny with the job of being a preschool teacher. In one section, we would compare earnings for each job, and in another section, we would discuss potential for professional growth. If nannies come out ahead on earnings and teachers come out ahead on professional growth opportunities, then we will need to rank these criteria in order of importance to decide which job to recommend.

Sample evaluation arguments

To get a sense of what research-based evaluation arguments look like in college classes, see this sample evaluation argument essay prompt and the sample outline to match it. For a full sample evaluation essay, see "Universal Health Care Coverage for the United States." Annotations on that essay point out how the author uses evaluation argument strategies. We offer it in two formats:

- Sample evaluation essay "Universal Health Care Coverage for the United States" in PDF version with margin notes
- Sample evaluation essay "Universal Health Care Coverage for the United States" accessible version with notes in parentheses

Practice Exercise 7.4.1

Reflect on the following questions to construct your own evaluation argument.

- What makes a person a good role model? Choose your top three criteria.
- How would you rank those criteria in order of importance?
- Choose two prominent public figures from history, pop culture or politics, dead or alive, who would be interesting to compare as role models.
- Evaluate each person according to the three criteria you identified.
- Which figure comes out as the better role model?
- If you ranked the criteria differently, would the other one come out ahead?
- What is most controversial in your evaluation? Is it the choice of criteria, the ranking of the criteria, or the idea that your figure fits certain criteria?

7.4.1: Sample Evaluation Argument Prompt and Outline
7.4.2: Annotated Sample Evaluation Argument

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7.4.1: Sample Evaluation Argument Prompt and Outline

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (4 min, 53 sec):

Below is a sample essay prompt that calls on students to make a case that a particular environmental focus will meet certain criteria for engaging the public. We offer one sample argument outline to respond to the prompt.

Sample Evaluation Argument Prompt

Background

Environmental groups and journalists choose many different approaches to engaging the public. Clearly, they need to raise awareness about urgent concerns, but they also need to consider what viewers will connect to emotionally. Some issues have direct adverse effects for humans, like toxins in the water we drink. Others have immediate effects on ecosystems, like the destruction of the Amazon rainforest. Others, like endangered species such as elephants and whales, become symbols of human longing, empathy, and reverence.

Assignment

Choose one environmental issue you would recommend such groups to focus on and explain your choice. What makes this issue both scientifically urgent and emotionally appealing? In order to make your case, consider how you will measure urgency (By statistics on health impacts? Species extinction? Economic disruptions?) and how you will gauge the emotional appeal (By the popularity of past memes and documentaries and campaigns on the issue? By its connection to popular leisure activities? By how relatable it is?).

Sample Evaluation Argument Outline



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Title: My Love is as Great as the Ocean: Engaging Citizen Oceanic Stewards

I. Thesis Statement: Because of its scientific importance and its power in the human imagination, the ocean should be a focus of environmental advocacy.

II. Topic Sentence: The ocean has symbolic resonance because in many cultures, it is connected with the birth of life and powerful goddesses and gods.

1. Mami Wata, a West African water goddess, is important to many in the African Diaspora and has her own priests today.
2. In Hindu mythology and classic texts, Samudra and Varuna play key roles as gods of the ocean.
3. In Greek mythology, Eros, or love, gave birth to earth, Gaia, which included the sea.
4. Greek gods like Poseidon and Roman Neptune have figured in western popular culture for many centuries.
5. In the Ancient Summerian text *Enuma Elish*, the goddess Tiamat gives birth to all life by releasing her waters around Earth.

III. Topic Sentence: The ocean also has symbolic resonance because it gave rise to the first life forms.

1. Ancient myths have their parallel in scientific fact.
2. Science has popularized the idea that life likely originated in the oceans over 3 billion years ago.
3. 2021 research into microbe fossils in South African gold mines supports the idea that life first formed in thermal vents on the sea floor.

III. Topic Sentence: Our visceral response to the ocean's presence is even more powerful than its symbolism.

1. Our intuitive sensory and emotional response to the ocean is deep.
2. We love the ocean because it's powerful; it humbles us with its relentless kinetic energy.
3. It grounds us with its refreshing breeze and rhythmic waves, renewing our spirits.
4. It promotes well-being: water contains negative ions which counter the positive ions that cause bad moods.

III. Topic Sentence: Oceans help heal our planet; they counteract various environmental problems.

1. In addition to fast-disappearing rainforests, oceans provide the majority of our oxygen
2. Recent climate science tells us we're at the tipping point. Oceans help maintain atmospheric temperatures by absorbing carbon dioxide.

IV. Topic Sentence: Yet oceans are being profoundly damaged by human activities.

1. As oceans absorb carbon dioxide, they get more acidic, which threatens species that depend on hard shells.
2. Millions of tons of plastic enter the ocean every year, creating huge garbage patches.
3. Overfishing has depleted fish stocks: there may be more plastic than fish in the ocean by 2050 unless trends change.

Conclusion: Perhaps if environmental groups focus more on spreading these ideas, many more people will help protect the ocean and feel their love for it grow.

1. While science is an excellent reason to take action, our basic humanity should be commanding us to protect and cherish the oceans that begat us.
2. Love is the greatest quality humans possess and it can and should guide us to protect our mother ocean.

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7.4.2: Annotated Sample Evaluation Argument

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Anonymous Student

Anonymous Professor

English 101

Universal Health Care Coverage for the United States

The United States is the only modernized Western nation that does not offer publicly funded health care to all its citizens; the costs of health care for the uninsured in the United States are prohibitive, and insurance companies are often more interested in profit margins than providing health care. These conditions are incompatible with U.S. ideals and standards. Universal health care coverage is a better system for all citizens because it is more cost-effective and upholds the value of human life. (Note: The thesis evaluates universal healthcare based on two specific criteria.)

One of the most common arguments against providing universal health care coverage (UHC) is that it will cost too much money, but in fact, UHC is a cheaper option than private insurance if one considers all costs. (Note: This body paragraph addresses the criteria of cost by answering the question, "How cheap is universal healthcare?" The author summarizes a counterargument about cost and then refutes it.) While providing health care for all U.S. citizens would cost a lot of money for every tax-paying citizen, citizens need to examine exactly how much money it would cost, and more importantly, how much money is too much when it comes to opening up health care for all. Those who have health insurance already pay a considerable amount of money, and those without coverage are charged unfathomable amounts. The cost of publicly funded health care versus the cost of current insurance premiums is unclear. In fact, some Americans, especially those in lower income brackets, could stand to pay less than their current premiums.

Under the current system, even patients with coverage must pay for some treatments out of pocket. (Note: This paragraph continues the discussion of cost, introducing a particular case in which the current system means high costs for patients.) Each day an American acquires a form of cancer, and the only effective treatment might be considered experimental by an insurance company and thus is not covered. The costs may be so prohibitive that the patient will either opt for a less effective, but covered, treatment; opt for no treatment at all; or attempt to pay the costs of treatment and experience unimaginable financial consequences. Medical bills in these cases can easily rise into the hundreds of thousands of dollars, which is enough to force even wealthy families out of their homes and into perpetual debt. Even though each American could someday face this unfortunate situation, many still choose to take the financial risk. Instead of gambling with health and financial welfare, U.S. citizens should press their representatives to set up UHC, where their coverage will be guaranteed and affordable.

A common argument against UHC in the United States is that other comparable national health care systems, like that of England, France, or Canada do not deliver timely patient care. (Note: Introduces a counterargument.) UHC opponents claim that sick patients in these countries often wait in long lines or long wait lists for basic health care. A fair amount of truth lies in these claims, but Americans must remember to put those problems in context with the problems of the current U.S. system as well. (Note: The author admits seeing some merit in the counterargument before they go on to offer a rebuttal.) It is true that people often wait to see a doctor in countries with UHC, but we in the United States wait as well, and we often schedule appointments weeks in advance, only to have onerous waits in the doctor's waiting rooms.

Even if UHC would cost Americans a bit more money each year, we ought to reflect on what type of country we would like to live in, and what types of morals we represent if we are more willing to deny health care to others on the basis of saving a few

hundred dollars per year. (Note: This paragraph focuses on the criteria of values.) In a system that privileges capitalism and rugged individualism, little room remains for compassion and love. It is time that Americans realize the amorality of U.S. hospitals forced to turn away the sick and poor. UHC is a health care system that aligns more closely with the core values that so many Americans espouse and respect, and it is time to realize its potential.

Despite the opponents' claims against UHC, a universal system will save lives and encourage the health of all Americans. It is time for Americans to start thinking socially about health in the same ways they think about education and police services: as a right of U.S. citizens.

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7.5: CAUSAL ARGUMENTS

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Causal arguments attempt to make a case that one thing led to another. They answer the question "What caused it?" Causes are often complex and multiple. Before we choose a strategy for a causal argument it can help to identify our purpose. Why do we need to know the cause? How will it help us?

Purposes of causal arguments

To get a complete picture of how and why something happened

In this case, we will want to look for multiple causes, each of which may play a different role. Some might be background conditions, others might spark the event, and others may be influences that sped up the event once it got started. In this case, we often speak of **near causes** that are close in time or space to the event itself, and **remote causes**, that are further away or further in the past. We can also describe a **chain of causes**, with one thing leading to the next, which leads to the next. It may even be the case that we have a **feedback loop** where a first event causes a second event and the second event triggers more of the first, creating an endless circle of causation. For example, as sea ice melts in the arctic, the dark water absorbs more heat, which warms it further, which melts more ice, which makes the water absorb more heat, etc. If the results are bad, this is called a vicious circle.

To decide who is responsible

Sometimes if an event has multiple causes, we may be most concerned with deciding who bears responsibility and how much. In a car accident, the driver might bear responsibility and the car manufacturer might bear some as well. We will have to argue that the responsible party caused the event but we will also have to show that there was a moral obligation not to do what the party did. That implies some degree of choice and knowledge of possible consequences. If the driver was following all good driving regulations and triggered an explosion by activating the turn signal, clearly the driver cannot be held responsible.

In order to determine that someone is responsible, there must be a clearly defined **domain of responsibility** for that person or entity. To convince readers that a certain party is responsible, readers have to agree on what the expectations for that party in their particular role are. For example, if a patient misreads the directions for taking a drug and accidentally overdoses, does the drug manufacturer bear any responsibility? What about the pharmacist? To decide that, we need to agree on how much responsibility the manufacturer has for making the directions foolproof and how much the pharmacist has for making sure the patient understands them. Sometimes a person can be held responsible for something they didn't do if the action omitted fell under their domain of responsibility.

To figure out how to make something happen

In this case we need to zero in on a factor or factors that will push the event forward. Such a factor is sometimes called a **precipitating cause.** The success of this push will depend on circumstances being right for it, so we will likely also need to describe the **conditions** that have to be in place for the precipitating cause to actually precipitate the event. If there are likely factors that could block the event, we need to show that those can be eliminated. For example, if we propose a particular surgery to fix a heart problem, we will also need to show that the patient can get to a hospital that performs the surgery and get an appointment. We will certainly need to show that the patient is likely to tolerate the surgery.

To stop something from happening

In this case, we do not need to describe all possible causes. We want to find a factor that is so necessary to the bad result that

if we get rid of that factor, the result cannot occur. Then if we eliminate that factor, we can block the bad result. If we cannot find a single such factor, we may at least be able to find one that will make the bad result less likely. For example, to reduce wildfire risk in California, we cannot get rid of all fire whatsoever, but we can repair power lines and aging gas and electric infrastructure to reduce the risk that defects in this system will spark a fire. Or we could try to reduce the damage fires cause by focusing on clearing underbrush.

To predict what might happen in future

As Jeanne Fahnestock and Marie Secor put it in *A Rhetoric of Argument,* "When you argue for a prediction, you try to convince your reader that all the causes needed to bring about an event are in place or will fall into place." You also may need to show that nothing will intervene to block the event from happening. One common way to support a prediction is by comparing it to a past event that has already played out. For example, we might argue that humans have survived natural disasters in the past, so we will survive the effects of climate change as well. As Fahnestock and Secor point out, however, "the argument is only as good as the analogy, which sometimes must itself be supported." How comparable are the disasters of the past to the likely effects of climate change? The argument would need to describe both past and possible future events and convince us that they are similar in severity.

Techniques and cautions for causal argument

So how does a writer make a case that one thing causes another? The briefest answer is that the writer needs to convince us that the factor and the event are correlated and also that there is some way in which the factor could plausibly lead to the event. Then the writer will need to convince us that they have done due diligence in considering and eliminating alternate possibilities for the cause and alternate explanations for any correlation between the factor and the event.

Identify possible causes

If other writers have already identified possible causes, an argument simply needs to refer back to those and add in any that have been missed. If not, the writer can put themselves in the role of detective and imagine what might have caused the event.

Determine which factor is most correlated with the event

If we think that a factor may commonly cause an event, the first question to ask is whether they go together. If we are looking for a sole cause, we can ask if the factor is always there when the event happens and always absent when the event doesn't happen. Do the factor and the event follow the same trends? The following methods of arguing for causality were developed by philosopher John Stuart Mill, and are often referred to as "Mill's methods."

- If the event is repeated and every time it happens, a **common factor** is present, that common factor may be the cause.
- If there is a **single difference** between cases where the event takes place and cases where it doesn't.
- If an event and a possible cause are repeated over and over and they happen to varying degrees, we can check whether they always increase and decrease together. This is often best done with a graph so we can visually check whether the lines follow the same pattern.
- Finally, ruling out other possible causes can support a case that the one remaining possible cause did in fact operate.

Explain how that factor could have caused the event

In order to believe that one thing caused another, we usually need to have some idea of how the first thing could cause the second. If we cannot imagine how one would cause another, why should we find it plausible? Any argument about **agency**, or the way in which one thing caused another, depends on assumptions about what makes things happen. If we are talking about human behavior, then we are looking for motivation: love, hate, envy, greed, desire for power, etc. If we are talking about a physical event, then we need to look at physical forces. Scientists have dedicated much research to establishing how carbon dioxide in the atmosphere could effectively trap heat and warm the planet.

If there is enough other evidence to show that one thing caused another but the way it happened is still unknown, the argument can note that and perhaps point toward further studies that would establish the mechanism. The writer may want to qualify their argument with "may" or "might" or "seems to indicate," if they cannot explain how the supposed cause led to the effect.

Eliminate alternate explanations

The catchphrase "**correlation is not causation**" can help us to remember the dangers of the methods above. It's usually easy to show that two things happen at the same time or in the same pattern, but hard to show that one actually causes another. Correlation can be a good reason to investigate whether something is the cause, and it can provide some evidence of causality, but it is not proof. Sometimes two unrelated things may be correlated, like the number of women in Congress and the price of milk. We can imagine that both might follow an upward trend, one because of the increasing equality of women in society and the other because of inflation. Describing a plausible agency, or way in which one thing led to another, can help show that the correlation is not random. If we find a strong correlation, we can imagine various causal arguments that would explain it and argue that the one we support has the most plausible agency.

Sometimes things vary together because there is a common cause that affects both of them. An argument can explore possible third factors that may have led to both events. For example, students who go to elite colleges tend to make more money than students who go to less elite colleges. Did the elite colleges make the difference? Or are both the college choice and the later earnings due to a third cause, such as family connections? In his book *Food Rules: An Eater's Manual,* journalist Michael Pollan assesses studies on the effects of supplements like multivitamins and concludes that people who take supplements are also those who have better diet and exercise habits, and that the supplements themselves have no effect on health. He advises, “Be the kind of person who takes supplements -- then skip the supplements.”

If we have two phenomena that are correlated and happen at the same time, it's worth considering whether the second phenomenon could actually have caused the first rather than the other way around. For example, if we find that gun violence and violence within video games are both on the rise, we shouldn't leap to blame video games for the increase in shootings. It may be that people who play video games are being influenced by violence in the games and becoming more likely to go out and shoot people in real life. But could it also be that as gun violence increases in society for other reasons, such violence is a bigger part of people's consciousness, leading video game makers and gamers to incorporate more violence in their games? It might be that causality operates in both directions, creating a feedback loop as we discussed above.

Proving causality is tricky, and often even rigorous academic studies can do little more than suggest that causality is probable or possible. There are a host of laboratory and statistical methods for testing causality. The gold standard for an experiment to determine a cause is a double-blind, randomized control trial in which there are two groups of people randomly assigned. One group gets the drug being studied and one group gets the placebo, but neither the participants nor the researchers know which is which. This kind of study eliminates the effect of unconscious suggestion, but it is often not possible for ethical and logistical reasons.

The ins and outs of causal arguments are worth studying in a statistics course or a philosophy course, but even without such a course we can do a better job of assessing causes if we develop the habit of looking for alternate explanations.

Sample annotated causal argument

The article "Climate Explained: Why Carbon Dioxide Has Such Outsized Influence on Earth’s Climate" by Jason West, published in *The Conversation*, can serve as an example. Annotations point out how the author uses several causal argument strategies.

- Sample causal essay "Climate Explained: Why Carbon Dioxide Has Such Outsized Influence on Earth’s Climate" in PDF version with margin notes
- Sample causal essay "Climate Explained: Why Carbon Dioxide Has Such Outsized Influence on Earth’s Climate" accessible version with notes in parentheses

Practice Exercise 7.5.1

Reflect on the following to construct a causal argument. What would be the best intervention to introduce in society to reduce the rate of violent crime? Below are some possible causes of violent crime. Choose one and describe how it could lead to violent crime. Then think of a way to intervene in that process to stop it. What method from among those described in this section would you use to convince someone that your intervention would work to lower rates of violent crime? Make up an argument using your chosen method and the kind of evidence, either anecdotal or statistical, you would find convincing.

Possible causes of violent crime:

- Homophobia and transphobia
- PTSD
- Testosterone
- Child abuse
- Violence in the media
- Role models who exhibit toxic masculinity
- Depression
- Violent video games
- Systemic racism
- Lack of education on expressing emotions
- Unemployment
- Not enough law enforcement
- Economic inequality
- The availability of guns

7.5.1: Annotated Sample Causal Argument

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Jason West

From *The Conversation*

September 13, 2019

Climate Explained: Why Carbon Dioxide Has Such Outsized Influence on Earth's Climate

(Note: The title frames the article as a causal argument, a demonstration of how carbon dioxide affects the climate.)

Climate Explained is a collaboration between The Conversation, Stuff and the New Zealand Science Media Centre to answer your questions about climate change.

Question

I heard that carbon dioxide makes up 0.04% of the world's atmosphere. Not 0.4% or 4%, but 0.04%! How can it be so important in global warming if it's such a small percentage?

I am often asked how carbon dioxide can have an important effect on global climate when its concentration is so small – just 0.041% of Earth's atmosphere. And human activities are responsible for just 32% of that amount. (Note: Jason West presents his article as a rebuttal to a counterargument.)

I study the importance of atmospheric gases for air pollution and climate change. (Note: West establishes his credibility as a researcher on the subject.)The key to carbon dioxide's strong influence on climate is its ability to absorb heat emitted from our planet's surface, keeping it from escaping out to space. (Note: West summarizes his causal argument by explaining a mechanism that could account for CO2's surprising effect on temperature.)

Early greenhouse science

The scientists who first identified carbon dioxide's importance for climate in the 1850s were also surprised by its influence. (Note: This bit of history underlines West's sympathy for the surprise expressed in the opening question.)Working separately, John Tyndall in England and Eunice Foote in the United States found that carbon dioxide, water vapor and methane all absorbed heat, while more abundant gases did not.

Scientists had already calculated that the Earth was about 59 degrees Fahrenheit (33 degrees Celsius) warmer than it should be, given the amount of sunlight reaching its surface. The best explanation for that discrepancy was that the atmosphere retained heat to warm the planet.

Tyndall and Foote showed that nitrogen and oxygen, which together account for 99% of the atmosphere, had essentially no influence on Earth's temperature because they did not absorb heat. (Note: West shows how scientists eliminated what seemed like likely causes for the warming effect.) Rather, they found that gases present in much smaller concentrations were entirely

responsible for maintaining temperatures that made the Earth habitable, by trapping heat to create a natural greenhouse effect.

A blanket in the atmosphere

(Note: Comparing heat-trapping gases to a blanket helps readers visualize the causal argument.)

Earth constantly receives energy from the sun and radiates it back into space. For the planet's temperature to remain constant, the net heat it receives from the sun must be balanced by outgoing heat that it gives off. (Note: West gives background on what influences the earth's temperature.)

Since the sun is hot, it gives off energy in the form of shortwave radiation at mainly ultraviolet and visible wavelengths. Earth is much cooler, so it emits heat as infrared radiation, which has longer wavelengths.

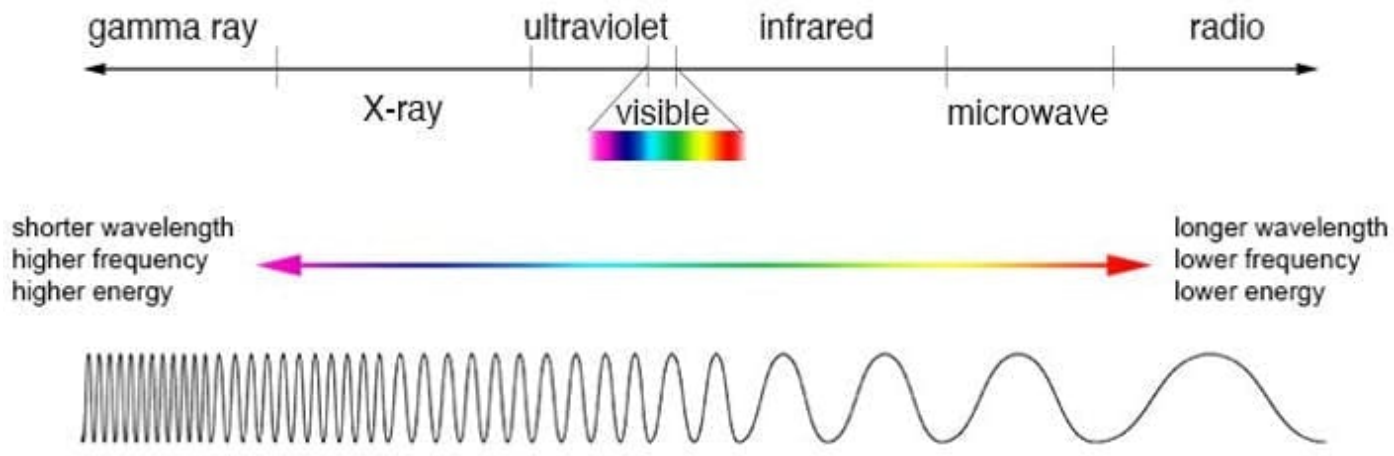


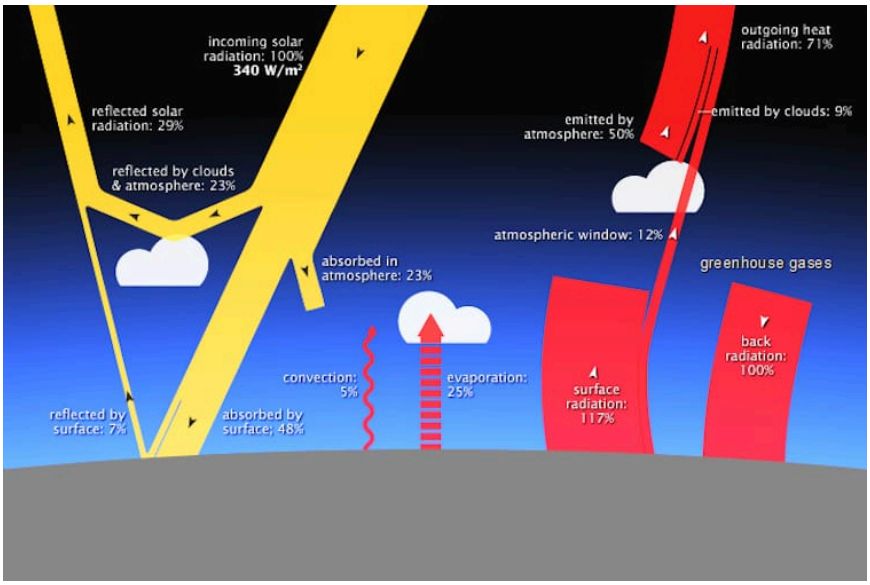
Figure 2: The electromagnetic spectrum is the range of all types of EM radiation – energy that travels and spreads out as it goes. The sun is much hotter than the Earth, so it emits radiation at a higher energy level, which has a shorter wavelength. NASA

Carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping gases have molecular structures that enable them to absorb infrared radiation. The bonds between atoms in a molecule can vibrate in particular ways, like the pitch of a piano string. When the energy of a photon corresponds to the frequency of the molecule, it is absorbed and its energy transfers to the molecule. (Note: This section establishes agency, an explanation for how CO2 could trap heat.)

Carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping gases have three or more atoms and frequencies that correspond to infrared radiation emitted by Earth. Oxygen and nitrogen, with just two atoms in their molecules, do not absorb infrared radiation. (Note: West explains why two other possible causes of warming, oxygen and nitrogen, do not trap heat.)

Most incoming shortwave radiation from the sun passes through the atmosphere without being absorbed. But most outgoing infrared radiation is absorbed by heat-trapping gases in the atmosphere. Then they can release, or re-radiate, that heat. Some returns to Earth's surface, keeping it warmer than it would be otherwise.

Figure 3: Earth receives solar energy from the sun (yellow), and returns energy back to space by reflecting some incoming light and radiating heat (red). Greenhouse gases trap some of that heat and return it to the planet's surface. NASA via Wikimedia. (Note: Figure 3, with the rightmost red stripe pointing back to earth, makes a visual argument that greenhouse gases trap heat.)



Research on heat transmission

During the Cold War, the absorption of infrared radiation by many different gases was studied extensively. The work was led by the U.S. Air Force, which was developing heat-seeking missiles and needed to understand how to detect heat passing through air.

This research enabled scientists to understand the climate and atmospheric composition of all planets in the solar system by observing their infrared signatures. For example, Venus is about 870 F (470 C) because its thick atmosphere is 96.5% carbon dioxide. (Note: The comparison to Venus shows that a high concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere correlates with high temperature on another planet.)

It also informed weather forecast and climate models, allowing them to quantify how much infrared radiation is retained in the atmosphere and returned to Earth's surface.

People sometimes ask me why carbon dioxide is important for climate, given that water vapor absorbs more infrared radiation and the two gases absorb at several of the same wavelengths. The reason is that Earth's upper atmosphere controls the radiation that escapes to space. The upper atmosphere is much less dense and contains much less water vapor than near the ground, which means that adding more carbon dioxide significantly influences how much infrared radiation escapes to space. (Note: In this paragraph, West eliminates another possible driver of climate change, heat-trapping water vapor.)

Carbon dioxide levels rise and fall around the world, changing seasonally with plant growth and decay.

Observing the greenhouse effect

Have you ever noticed that deserts are often colder at night than forests, even if their average temperatures are the same? Without much water vapor in the atmosphere over deserts, the radiation they give off escapes readily to space. In more humid regions radiation from the surface is trapped by water vapor in the air. Similarly, cloudy nights tend to be warmer than clear nights because more water vapor is present.

The influence of carbon dioxide can be seen in past changes in climate. Ice cores from over the past million years have shown that carbon dioxide concentrations were high during warm periods – about 0.028%. During ice ages, when the Earth was roughly 7 to 13 F (4-7 C) cooler than in the 20th century, carbon dioxide made up only about 0.018% of the atmosphere. (Note: West gives more evidence from Earth's history to show a correlation between high carbon dioxide concentration and higher temperatures.)

Even though water vapor is more important for the natural greenhouse effect, changes in carbon dioxide have driven past temperature changes. In contrast, water vapor levels in the atmosphere respond to temperature. As Earth becomes warmer, its atmosphere can hold more water vapor, which amplifies the initial warming in a process called the "water vapor feedback." (Note: West describes a feedback loop or vicious circle where warming leads to more warming.) Variations in carbon dioxide have therefore been the controlling influence on past climate changes.

Small change, big effects

It shouldn't be surprising that a small amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere can have a big effect. We take pills that are a tiny fraction of our body mass and expect them to affect us. (Note: West supports his causal claim by making a comparison to something more familiar, pills.)

Today the level of carbon dioxide is higher than at any time in human history. Scientists widely agree that Earth's average surface temperature has already increased by about 2 F (1 C) since the 1880s, and that human-caused increases in carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping gases are extremely likely to be responsible. (Note: West points to a correlation between CO2 and temperature. Here he relies on experts to support the idea of causation.)

Without action to control emissions, carbon dioxide might reach 0.1% of the atmosphere by 2100, more than triple the level before the Industrial Revolution. This would be a faster change than transitions in Earth's past that had huge consequences. Without action, this little sliver of the atmosphere will cause big problems. (Note: West ends with a brief prediction. He compares the potential rise in carbon dioxide with past changes to imply that the consequences of human-induced climate change will be more dramatic than in the past.)

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7.6: PROPOSAL ARGUMENTS

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Proposal arguments attempt to push for action of some kind. They answer the question "What should be done about it?"

In order to build up to a proposal, an argument needs to incorporate elements of definition argument, evaluation argument, and causal argument. First, we will need to define a problem or a situation that calls for action. Then we need to make an evaluation argument to convince readers that the problem is bad enough to be worth addressing. This will create a sense of urgency within the argument and inspire the audience to seek and adopt proposed action. In most cases, it will need to make causal arguments about the roots of the problem and the good effects of the proposed solution.

Below are some elements of proposal arguments. Together, these elements can help us create a sense of urgency about the need for action and confidence in your proposal as a solution.

Common elements of proposal arguments

Background on the problem, opportunity, or situation

Often just after the introduction, the background section discusses what has brought about the need for the proposal—what problem, what opportunity exists for improving things, what the basic situation is. For example, management of a chain of daycare centers may need to ensure that all employees know CPR because of new state mandates requiring it, or an owner of pine timberland in eastern Oregon may want to make sure the land can produce saleable timber without destroying the environment.

While the named audience of the proposal may know the problem very well, writing the background section is useful in demonstrating our particular view of the problem. If we cannot assume readers know the problem, we will need to spend more time convincing them that the problem or opportunity exists and that it should be addressed. For a larger audience not familiar with the problem, this section can give detailed context.

Description of the proposed solution

Here we define the nature of what we are proposing so readers can see what is involved in the proposed action. For example, if we write an essay proposing to donate food scraps from restaurants to pig farms, we will need to define what will be considered food scraps. In another example, if we argue that organic produce is inherently healthier for consumers than non-organic produce, and we propose governmental subsidies to reduce the cost of organic produce, we will need to define “organic” and describe how much the government subsidies will be and which products or consumers will be eligible. See 7.2: Definition Arguments for strategies that can help us elaborate on our proposed solution so readers can envision it clearly.

Methods

If we have not already covered the proposal's methods in the description, we may want to add this. How will we go about completing the proposed work? For example, in the above example about food scraps, we would want to describe and how the leftover food will be stored and delivered to the pig farms. Describing the methods shows the audience we have a sound, thoughtful approach to the project. It serves to demonstrate that we have the knowledge of the field to complete the project.

Feasibility of the project

A proposal argument needs to convince readers that the project can actually be accomplished. How can enough time, money, and will be found to make it happen? Have similar proposals been carried out successully in the past? For example, we might

observe that according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Rutgers University runs a program that sends a ton of food scraps a day from its dining halls to a local farm.[1] If we describe how other efforts overcame obstacles, we will persuade readers that if they can succeed, this proposal can as well.

Benefits of the proposal

Most proposals discuss the advantages or benefits that will come from the solution proposed. Describing the benefits helps you win the audience to your side, so readers become more invested in adopting your proposed solution. In the food scraps example, we might emphasize that the Rutgers program, rather than costing more, led to $100,000 a year in savings because the dining halls no longer needed to pay to have the food scraps hauled away. We could calculate the predicted savings for our new proposed program as well.

In order to predict the positive effects of the proposal and show how implementing it will lead to good results, we will want to use causal arguments. The strategies in 7.5: Causal Arguments will be helpful here. This is a good time to refer back to the problem we identified early in the essay and show how the proposal will resolve that original problem.

Sample annotated proposal argument

The sample essay "Why We Should Open Our Borders" by student Laurent Wenjun Jiang can serve as an example. Annotations point out how Jiang uses several proposal argument strategies.

- Sample proposal essay "Why We Should Open Our Borders" in PDF with margin notes
- Sample proposal essay "Why We Should Open Our Borders" accessible version with notes in parentheses

Practice Exercise 7.6.1

Find a proposal argument that you strongly support. Browse news and opinion websites, or try The Conversation. Once you have chosen a proposal, read it closely and look for the elements discussed in this section. Do you find enough discussion of the background, methods, feasibility, and benefits of the proposal? Discuss at least one way in which you think the proposal could be revised to be even more convincing.

Works Cited

[1] "Fact Sheet About the Food Scraps Diversion Program at Rutgers University." *Environmental Protection Agency, U.S.* October 2009, https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-mana...ers-university. Accessed 12/10/2021.

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Laurent Wenjun Jiang

Prof. Natalie Peterkin

English 1C

July 25, 2020

Why We Should Open Our Borders

Refugees, inequalities, economic instabilities...the fact that we are bombarded by news on those topics every day is proof that we live in a world with lots of problems, and many of us suffer as a consequence. Nations have tried a variety of solutions, but the reality has not improved. Yet there exists a single easy measure that could solve almost all of the problems mentioned above: an open-border policy. The current border and immigration practices, including border controls and detention centers, are unjustified and counterproductive. (Note: The first body paragraph gives background on the problem, opportunity, or situation.) This paper discusses the refugee problem, the history of open-border policy, the refutations for the current border policies on philosophical and moral grounds, and the arguments why this open-border policy will work economically.

Refugees are a problem of worldwide concern. Recently the biggest wave of refugees came from Syria, which witnessed an eight-year-long civil war. In an interview, a Syrian refugee expresses deep sorrows regarding the loss of her home: “My brothers, sisters, uncles, neighbors, streets, the bread ovens, schools, children going to schools ...we miss all of that, everything in Syria is precious to us” she says, with tears hovering in her eyes (Firpo). She also exposes the terrible living conditions there: “[W]e didn’t run away, Syria has become uninhabitable. Not even animals could live there. No power, no running water, no safety, and no security. You don’t know who to fight...even when you lock yourself away, you’re not safe...I was most scared of seeing my children die right in front of me” (Firpo). (Note: Moving refugee testimonies serve as evidence supporting the claim that their situation is one of great urgency.) As heart-breaking as it sounds, we should also know that this is only the tip of the iceberg: Gerhard Hoffstaedter, an anthropologist at the University of Queensland, states that there are around 70 million displaced people in developing countries, which is the highest recorded number since the 1950s, causing the United Nations to call this world issue “a crisis.” The leading nations in the world do not offer enough support to displaced people living in abject conditions. Refugees at the U.S.-Mexico border and in Southeast Asia and Australia are constantly kept in detention centers. Many nations do not comply with the provisions signed in the 1951 Refugee Convention and the succeeding 1967 Protocol; they treat the refugees only as those in passive need of simply humanitarian aids (Hoffstaedter). In this crisis, it is our common responsibility as members of an international community to help those who are in need.

Historically, the large-scale control of the mobility of people is a relatively new phenomenon worldwide. (Note: This body paragraph starts with a definition argument to show that the current trend is new. This argument later becomes support for the idea that open borders are possible.) In the modern era, border signifies “ever more restrictive immigration policies” at the same time grants “greater freedom of mobility to capital and commodities”, as defined in the editorial “Why No Borders.” This creates a contradictory ideology that could cause potential harm to those who need to migrate (Anderson, et al.). John Maynard Keynes dates the beginning of this process only back to World War I in the early 20th century. However, this trend did not become widespread until after World War II. According to a historical outline created by Christof Van Mol and Helga de Valk, due to the booming in the industrial production in northwestern Europe in the 1950s, the local workers were increasingly educated and gradually became whitecollar employers, leaving vacancies in blue-collar occupations (Mol and Valk).

Thus, those countries started recruiting immigrants from other parts of Europe and even North Africa: for example, Germany

and France started seasonal working programs to attract immigrants (Mol and Valk). Because of the lack of job opportunities in the other parts of Europe and North Africa and the need for workers in the industrializing countries in Northern and Western Europe, “international migration was generally viewed positively because of its economic benefits, from the perspective of both the sending and the receiving countries" (Mol and Valk). This early migration pattern within Europe provides the basic model for the European Union that builds on the fundamental ideology of the free movements of goods and human resources. In recent days, the European Union has become one of the biggest multinational organizations, which can also serve as a successful example of this open-border ideology, at least on a regional scale.

Borders do not satisfy the needs of contemporary societies. From both philosophical and moral perspectives, restrictive border policies are not justified. First of all, borders divide and subjugate people. The editorial “Why No Borders” describes the border as being“thoroughly ideological” (Anderson, et al.). The authors argue that because border policies try to categorize people into “desirable and non-desirable” according to their skills, race, or social status, etc., they thus create an interplay between “subjects and subjectivities,” placing people into “new types of power relationship” (Anderson, et al.). This is what is identified as the ultimate cause of the divisions and inequalities between people.

Some fear that competition from immigrants would cause a reduction in the wages of local workers (Caplan). (Note: In this body paragraph, the author attempts to disprove the counterargument about a downside of open borders for local workers.)This is not an uncalled-for worry, but it is also a misunderstanding of the nature of the open-border policy. Nick Srnicek reasons that this kind of competition has already existed under the current trend of globalization, where workers in developed countries are already competing against those in developing countries that have cheaper labor. He argues, “Workers in rich countries are already losing, as companies eliminate good jobs and move their factories and offices elsewhere” (Srnicek). The border serves companies by making workers in the developing world stay where wages are low. Thus, “companies can freely exploit” cheap labor. In this sense, workers on both sides will be better off under an open-border policy (Srnicek). A recent study from the University of Wisconsin-Madison investigating the economic implications of immigration between rich and poor countries concluded that the benefits of an open-border policy far outweigh the cons and that “the real wage effects are small” (Kennan).

Although an open border could lead to minor reductions in the wages of local workers in developed countries, there is a simple solution. Since the labor market follows the economic law of supply, work supply and wages are inversely related, meaning that the lower the supply of labor, the more wages rise. (Note: This paragraph could be seen as a limit and a rebuttal because the open border would need to be combined with changes to labor laws in order to avoid a possible bad effect.) Nick Srnicek proposes, “a shortening of the workweek...would reduce the amount of work supplied, spread the work out more equally among everyone and give more power to workers ... more free time to everyone” (Srnicek). Thus, although the open-border policy is not perfect, its downside is easy to address. (Note: The author does not investigate how much time, money, and will an open border policy would need; the argument remains mostly theoretical because it doesn’t address feasibility.)

As an expatriate myself, I can truly relate to this type of thinking. Due to a variety of the political, economic, and social limitations that I came across in my home country, I was not able to achieve self-actualization. In pursuit of a better education and a more free living environment, I went abroad and finally arrived in this country a few years ago. It was not until then that I gained a vision of my future. Now I am working in hopes that one day the vision could become reality. Sometimes I cannot help wondering what could happen if I was not so lucky to be where I am today. But at the same time, I am also conscious of the fact that there are also millions of people out there who cannot even conceive of what it is like to actualize their lives. (Note: The conclusion humanizes the possible benefits of the proposed solution.)I am sure that one of the mothers who escaped her war-torn home country with her family has the sole hope to witness her children growing up in a happy and free place, just like any mother in the world. I am sure that there is one little girl whose family fled her country in desperation who once studied so hard in school, dreaming of becoming the greatest scientist in the world. I am also sure that there is a young boy who survived persecutions and wishes to become a politician one day to make the world a better place for the downtrodden. Because of borders, these children can only dream of the things that many of us take for granted every day. We, as human beings, might be losing a great mother, great scientist, great politician, or just a great person who simply wishes for a better world. But everything could be otherwise. Change requires nothing but a minimal effort. With open borders, we can help people achieve their dreams.

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8: HOW ARGUMENTS APPEAL TO EMOTION (PATHOS)

Learning Outcomes

- Describe the value of emotional appeals in written academic argument
- Identify the ways in which a given argument appeals to emotion through word choice, tone, or powerful examples
- Assess the likely effectiveness of an emotional appeal for a particular audience
- Distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate emotional appeals
- Use legitimate emotional appeals to support their own written arguments.

8.1: The Place of Emotion in Argument

8.2: Word Choice and Connotation

8.3: Powerful Examples

8.4: Tone

8.5: Varying the Emotions

8.6: Fitting the Emotions to the Audience

8.7: Legitimate and Illegitimate Emotional Appeals

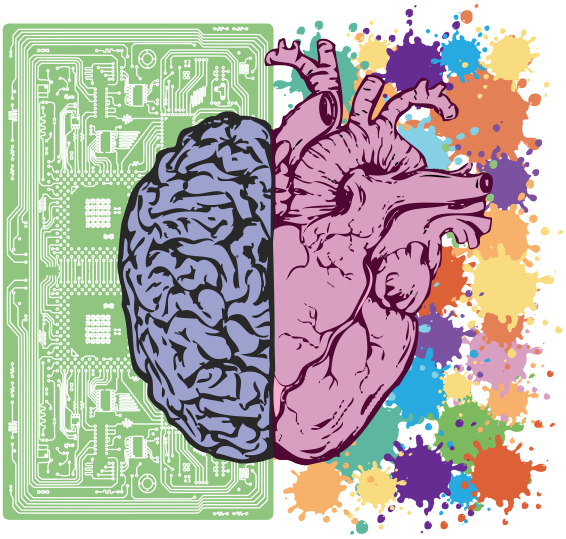


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8.1: The Place of Emotion in Argument

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (5 min):

We have spent the bulk of this book analyzing arguments' logical structure. We have mapped out arguments and assessed their reasoning, evidence, and assumptions without referring to our feelings about them. And yet we all know that arguments are not won and lost solely on the merits of the ideas. Humans are not robots. As Jeanne Fahnestock and Marie Secor put it in *A Rhetoric of Argument,* emotions are "powerful incentives to belief and action." Philosophers and laypeople have long asked what role emotions should have in shaping our ideas. Is it right for arguments to appeal to emotion, or is it a cheap trick? Should we guard against feeling what an argument asks us to feel? Or should we let emotions play a role in helping us decide whether we agree or not?



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In one oversimplified view, logic is a good way to decide things and listening to emotions is a bad way. We might make this assumption if we tell ourselves or others, "Stop and think. You're getting too emotional." According to this view, no one reasons well under the influence of emotion. Pure ideas are king, and feelings only distort them.

Of course, sometimes emotions do lead us astray. But emotions and logic can work together. Consider Dr. Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech. Was it illegitimate for him to ask listeners to feel deeply moved to support racial equality? He famously proclaimed, "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character." Should listeners have guarded themselves against feeling sympathy for those four children? If we care about things that matter and an argument is about something that matters, then we will and should have feelings about it. King intertwines his logical argument against racism with an appeal to our empathy, tenderness, and sense of justice.

Not all arguments are as intense as that one. Many, such as scientific journal articles, are calm and dispassionate. But all arguments must call on emotion, broadly defined, because they must motivate readers to stay engaged. Even a captive audience could potentially tune out. Every argument needs a reason to exist, a reason why it is important or relevant or just worth reading. It needs to keep us interested, or, failing that, to keep us convinced that reading on will be worthwhile. This reason to exist is sometimes called **exigence**. An argument can create exigence and motivate readers in many ways, but all these ways depend on emotion.

Besides the basic human emotions we might recognize on a toddler's face--anger, joy, sadness, fear, disgust, desire, and

surprise--each one with many options for levels of intensity, there are others that we don't always think of as emotion. If we appeal to readers' self-interest, we play on fear and hope and desire for emotional, physical and economic wellbeing. Another kind of emotion is the desire for belonging, for a sense of being seen and validated. We feel pride in a group or sense of identity or social status, so references to that shared identity or status appeal to this sense of belonging. Our motivation to uphold our most precious values is bound up in deep feeling.

Another form of emotion present in the most seemingly objective arguments is curiosity. This is often combined with an appeal to a sense of pride in our intellectual capacity. Academic journal articles and popular newspaper and magazine articles and nonfiction books must all appeal to readers' curiosity about the world and its workings and surprises to encourage them to keep reading. An argument may implicitly invite us to enjoy learning and discovery. It can offer a sense of relief, comfort, and pleasure in ideas laid out clearly in an ordered fashion.



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Arguments can call on emotions in support of claims, but they can also make shaping readers' emotions their primary purpose. An argument may set out to define or change how a reader feels about something. Or, it may set out to reinforce emotions and amplify them. A eulogy, for example, is a speech that praises a person who has passed away, a person usually already known to the audience. It serves to help people feel more intensely what they already believe about the value of the person's life.

In this chapter, we will explore how writers use examples, word choice, and tone to affect readers' feelings. We will look at how writers can vary their emotional appeals in the course of an argument and adapt them to specific audiences. Finally, we will consider how to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate emotional appeals, between those that fit the logic of the argument and those that stray from it.

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8.2: Word Choice and Connotation

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (6 min, 6 sec):

In previous chapters, we considered argument in terms of logic. We have asked ourselves if claims, reasons, and assumptions are correct in what they assert. Now we will look at how writers choose words not only to convey ideas but to shape readers' emotional experience and subconscious reactions.



The dreamy, glowing colored sparkles around the word "dream" express the sense of wonder and vague possibility associated with the word. Photo by Sharon McCutcheon on Unsplash under the Unsplash License.

Connotation refers to the emotions, social and cultural implications, and related concepts that most people associate with a word. Some connotations are obvious: anyone would prefer be called "assertive" rather than "pushy" for demanding something they consider to be their right. Other connotations are more subtle. Consider the difference between the feelings associated with the words "change" and "transform." "Transform" has connotations of visionary change for the better. If we hear that "the new college president has transformed the admissions process" we are more likely to feel hopeful, perhaps impressed, without knowing anything at all about the nature of the changes. If we hear simply that "the new college president has changed the admissions process," we will probably feel more skeptical about these changes and what their positive and negative impacts may be.

Consider what different feelings about journalists come across in the following two sentences:

- The media were swarming around the pileup on the expressway to capture every conceivable injury for the evening news.
- The journalists were on the scene at the expressway crash to document the incident for the evening news.

The first sentence gives us a sense of media reporting that is inappropriately aggressive through the words "swarm" and "capture." In the second sentence, on the other hand, "were on the scene" and "document" imply that the journalists are neutral, diligent, and professional.

If something in an argument is likely to set the reader against the argument, the writer can try to soften that reaction by choosing the most positive words available to fit the meaning. If the writer wants to intensify feelings of outrage, tragedy, or absurdity around a phenomenon that readers might otherwise dismiss as ordinary, the writer will need to think of an unfamiliar and dramatic way to describe that phenomenon.

The border argument we analyzed in Chapters 2 and 3 offers many examples of emotional word choice. In the opening paragraph, the author starts out by referring to "illegal immigration," acknowledging the familiar, commonly used phrase in the question "Is illegal immigration actually wrong?" However, she quickly shifts to words with gentler connotations when she reframes the question as, "Is it unethical to cross a border without permission?" This is the emotional shift she is encouraging readers to make--away from harsh judgment and toward a clear-eyed understanding. As she expands her exploration of the position of the undocumented in the next paragraph, she describes them in sympathetic terms with the following phrases: "people who are driven by need and good intentions," "raising children in an impoverished third-world community plagued by violence," "under desperate circumstances." The connotations and emotional appeal are very much the same as those in the poem inscribed on the Statue of Liberty, "The New Colossus" by Emma Lazarus, 1883. Lady Liberty talks about immigrants in words full of pathos and hope:

> Give me your tired, your poor,
> Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
> The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
> Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
> I lift my lamp beside the golden door!



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Practice Exercise 8.2.1

Write down the connotations of each of the following words used to refer to immigrants:

- undocumented immigrants
- refugees
- asylum-seekers
- Dreamers
- illegal immigrants
- illegal aliens
-

Decide when or if you would use each term in discussions of current U.S. policy.

Practice Exercise 8.2.2

1. Rank the words below from most negative to neutral to most positive. What are the connotations of each one? In what kind of situation would it be appropriate to use each one?
    - riot
    - demonstration
    - protest

    - rally
    - uprising
    - insurrection
    - unrest
    - march
    - revolt
    - movement
2. Then, discuss the different feelings and images called up by the following two sentences:
    1. Rioters flooded downtown streets on Monday afternoon.
    2. Protestors marched through the city.
3. Think of a situation in which there were public demonstrations or unrest. Describe what happened, choosing your words to shape readers' feelings and associations.

Practice Exercise 8.2.3

Working in a pair or small group, list the following groups of words from least to most positive, using your knowledge of connotation to guide you. Note where you agree or disagree on a word's connotation. What cultural, socio-economic, or personal factors possibly caused your group's disagreements or lack thereof?

- thin, fit, lanky, skinny, gaunt, slender
- aggressive, assertive, domineering, dynamic, pushy
- shrewd, nerdy, bright, brilliant, cunning, smart, intelligent

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8.3: Powerful Examples

Media Alternative

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Emotional language can certainly affect readers, but even the most fervent appeals to values and sympathies may feel too abstract without examples. To feel connected to an argument, readers need to be able to imagine what it means in some particular case. Writers can bring an example to life by describing a scene, developing a character, or building suspense and ending with a dramatic resolution.

The sample border argument we have referenced invites readers to imagine a hypothetical example where they themselves are desperately seeking to protect a child and bring them into the United States. The argument could well be expanded by adding the story of a real parent and child. One book, *Solito/Solita: Crossing Borders with Youth Refugees from Central America*, edited by Steven Mayers and Jonathan Freedman, dedicates itself to first-person stories of asylum seekers. One of these is “Rosa, a Salvadoran mother fighting to save her life as well as her daughter’s after death squads threatened her family. Together they trekked through the jungles on the border between Guatemala and Mexico, where masked men assaulted them.” Another is "Adrian, from Guatemala City, whose mother was shot to death before his eyes. He refused to join a gang, rode across Mexico atop cargo trains, crossed the US border as a minor, and was handcuffed and thrown into ICE detention on his eighteenth birthday." The publisher, *Voice of Witness*, sees powerful individual stories as its best tool to affect social change. Its mission statement declares, “Voice of Witness (VOW) advances human rights by amplifying the voices of people impacted by injustice…Our work is driven by the transformative power of the story, and by a strong belief that an understanding of crucial issues is incomplete without deep listening and learning from people who have experienced injustice firsthand.”

Of course, an argument calling for more controls on immigration would choose a wholly different kind of story. The following excerpt from President Trump’s speech accepting the nomination for the presidency in 2016 focuses on a young woman killed by an immigrant: “They are being released by the tens of thousands into our communities with no regard for the impact on public safety or resources. One such border-crosser was released and made his way to Nebraska. There, he ended the life of an innocent young girl named Sarah Root. She was 21 years old, and was killed the day after graduating from college with a 4.0 Grade Point Average. Her killer was then released a second time, and he is now a fugitive from the law. I’ve met Sarah’s beautiful family. But to [the Obama] Administration, their amazing daughter was just one more American life that wasn’t worth protecting. One more child to sacrifice on the altar of open borders.”

Obviously, there are as many stories to choose from as there are immigrants. If a story serves as an illustration of a general point, we have to ask how representative it is. Is it presented as typical? If so, is there evidence to show its **typicality**? Arguments can complement specific examples with statistics to show typicality.

Even if an example represents a common experience, we need to look carefully at how it is used. Does the story promote harmful stereotypes while neglecting accounts that are just as common or more common and that contradict those stereotypes?

Practice Exercise 8.3.1

Review some local headlines on news sites like NPR, Fox News, ABC, or any other news site you frequently visit, and find an article or video that uses a powerful example to illustrate a point. Then, evaluate the powerful example, addressing the following questions:

- What point does the powerful example illustrate?
- What types of emotions does the example play on? How will these emotions affect the reader's opinion on an issue discussed in the piece?
- Is the powerful example presented as typical? If so, is there evidence to show its typicality?
- Does the powerful example promote harmful stereotypes? How so, or why not?

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8.4: Tone

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (12 min):

What is tone?

Tone refers to the overall emotional attitude of the argument. We know intuitively what “tone of voice” means when we’re describing a conversation. If we hear a person speaking and ask ourselves the following questions, we will usually be able to describe the tone:

- What emotions do the sound of the voice convey?
- What expression do we see or imagine on the speaker's face as they make the argument?



This performer conveys confidence, friendliness, and humor through her smile and posture.
Photo by Loui G. from Pexels under the Pexels License.

When we read, we lack the visual and auditory clues, but we still intuitively sense the writer's attitude. Tone comes across through emotional word choice and choice of examples, as we have seen in 8.2: Word Choice and Connotation and 8.3: Powerful Examples, but also in other ways, both subtle and overt. These include sentence structure, use of questions, emphasis, and direct declarations of feeling. All of these contribute to an overall pattern.

For example, let's look at the border argument we analyzed in Chapters 2 and 3. The third paragraph reads as follows:

> I don’t have a clear vision yet of what the right border policy would be, and I admit that completely open borders would put our security at risk. But surely there are ways to regulate the border without criminalizing people who are driven by need and good intentions.

In 8.2: Word Choice and Connotation, we noted that words like "driven by need" and "good intentions" evoke feelings of compassion and sympathy. In describing the tone, however, we could go further to talk about the writer's purpose and attitude. Their admissions of uncertainty in the first sentence indicate an attitude of humility and openness, so we could describe the tone as "humble." In the second sentence, the word "surely" suggests urgency and an appeal to common sense. The contrast between the orderly, neutral phrase "regulate the border" and the more aggressive-sounding "criminalizing people" suggests that one

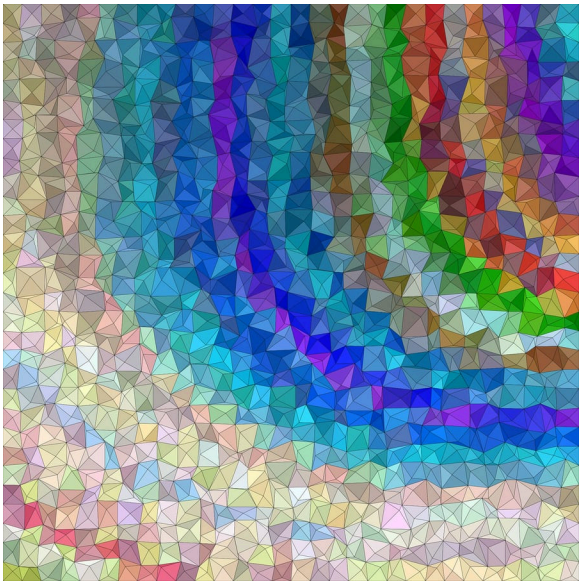
option is decent and the other cruel. The feelings of compassion and sympathy evoked by people's "need" and "good intentions" reinforce the sense of urgency and appeal to decency. The combination of all of this suggests that the writer cares very much about the ethics of what they are discussing because innocent people's wellbeing is at stake. We could describe the tone, then, as "earnest," "urgent," or "impassioned."

How can we identify a writer's tone?

If we want to describe the tone of an argument, we can ask ourselves these general questions:

- How does the writer feel about the topic of the argument?
- How does the writer feel about their own knowledge of the topic?
- What is the writer's attitude toward the reader?

If we are not sure how to answer or we want more insight, we can consider specific aspects of the writer's attitude, such as the degree of respect, seriousness, or certainty they feel. To describe the tone very precisely, we will need to use multiple words. We can ask ourselves about each of the aspects of tone listed in the table below and consider which of the accompanying tone words best describe the argument we are analyzing. Note that words clustered together are in most cases not synonyms. They convey shades of meaning, so they are worth looking up in an online dictionary to confirm their connotations before using them.



Like colors grouped next to similar colors, related tone words may describe similar but slightly different tones. Image by David Zydd from Pixabay under the Pixabay License.

Words to describe a writer's tone

Aspect of the writer's attitude	Tone words	Contrasting tone words
Degree of seriousness	conversational, flippant, glib, childish, frivolous, facetious, humorous, sarcastic, comic, satiric, amused, ironic, mocking, irreverent, casual, lighthearted, playful, cheerful, ridiculous, giddy, dreamy	vs. serious, earnest, solemn, grave, intense, impassioned, prayerful, reverent, idealistic

Aspect of the writer's attitude	Tone words	Contrasting tone words
Degree of respect	dismissive, patronizing, condescending, arrogant, haughty, chauvinistic, macho, domineering	vs. humble, respectful, reverent, intimidated, obsequious, submissive, complimentary, flattering, simpering
Degree of formality	irreverent, informal, coarse, vulgar, casual, conversational, improvisational, exploratory	vs. formal, businesslike, professional, professorial, esoteric, clinical
Degree of self-regard	condescending, arrogant, patronizing, proud, majestic, haughty, obnoxious	vs. modest, humble, self-effacing, self-deprecating, down-to-earth
Degree of goodwill toward others	benevolent, kind, loving, affectionate, amiable, genial, agreeable, friendly, jovial, encouraging, warm	vs. mean-spirited, mean, malicious, spiteful, cruel, hateful, hating, vengeful
Degree of anxiety	agitated, excited, sensational, alarmed, nervous, anxious, obsessive, worried, fearful, frightened, paranoid, frantic, frazzled, desperate, dramatic, disturbed, perturbed	vs. calm, tranquil, serene, unworried, contemplative, meditative, reflective, thoughtful
Degree of hesitation	cautious, hesitating, reticent, evasive	vs. bold, audacious, straightforward, direct, outspoken, authoritative
Degree of certainty	conflicted, uncertain, reluctant, contradictory, confused, baffled, ambivalent, uneasy, apologetic, regretful, pensive	vs. confident, sure, definite, unapologetic, righteous, self-righteous, determined, persuasive, hypnotic
Degree of interest in the topic	wondering, curious, inquisitive, fascinated	vs. bored, apathetic, removed, indifferent, wooden, world-weary, dull, bland, banal, blasé
Degree of surprise	unbelieving, incredulous, surprised, innocent, naive, disbelieving	vs. knowing, jaded, nonplussed, weary
Degree of distance	intimate, impassioned, passionate, ardent, personal	vs. formal, impersonal, objective, neutral, journalistic, informative, professional, businesslike, intellectual, detached, numb, distant, disinterested
Degree of openness	open, direct, forthright, candid	vs. secretive, sneaky, cagey, sly

Aspect of the writer's attitude	Tone words	Contrasting tone words
Degree of approval	elated, enthusiastic, ecstatic, celebratory, euphoric, joyous, jubilant, zestful, exuberant, blissful, happy, delighted, awestruck, appreciative, approving	vs. disapproving, disappointed, concerned, alarmed, critical, caustic, appalled
Degree of warmth toward the audience	warm, cordial, friendly, flirtatious, seductive	vs. cold, forbidding, aloof, impersonal
Degree of connection to suffering	concerned, compassionate, tender, consoling, comforting, sympathetic, empathetic	vs. apathetic, indifferent, detached, aloof, callous
Desire to communicate	talkative, eager	vs. laconic, taciturn, reluctant
Pace	abrupt, hurried, hasty	vs. patient, gradual, unhurried, lethargic, languid, pensive, scrupulous
Attitude to the future	despairing, tragic, defeated, discouraged, resigned, overwhelmed, disheartened, dismal, foreboding, dejected, depressed, bitter, bleak, bewildered, pessimistic, distressed, cynical, pathetic, melancholy, nostalgic, saddened, miserable, morbid, morose, mournful, sorrowful, somber, lamenting, grave, grim	vs. hopeful, sanguine, optimistic, content, excited, enthusiastic
Attitude to another's success	envious, jealous	vs. admiring, congratulatory, celebratory, enthusiastic
Attitude to another's failing	critical, annoyed, angry, frustrated, impatient, disappointed, resentful, hurt, aggravated, outraged, appalled, indignant, disgusted, impotent, vindictive, vengeful, furious	vs. forgiving, indulgent, understanding, accepting, tolerant
Attitude to one's own failing	apologetic, remorseful, repentant, disgusted, self-critical	vs. defensive, self-indulgent, complacent
Attitude to powerful forces like spirit, country, religion	patriotic, pious, religious, reverent, mystical, spiritual, obedient	vs. irreverent, scoffing, impious, skeptical



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Phrases for analyzing tone

If the tone is constant

- X takes a _____ tone in this piece.
- X's _____ attitude come across in phrases like "_____."
- The tone of the argument is _____.
- The _____ tone suggests that _____.
- X's choice of words like "_____" to describe _____ suggests their _____ attitude.
- X's _____ tone reflects their attitude to _____.

If the tone shifts in the course of the argument

- Early on, X adopts a _____ tone, but later they seem more _____.
- Although at first, the tone is _____, X shifts to a more _____ tone when _____.
- X takes a _____ attitude to _____, but when it comes to _____, X is more _____.
- X's _____ tone in the section on _____ contrasts with their more _____ attitude to _____.

Practice Exercise 8.4.1

Write three one-sentence versions of the same argument, each with a different tone. Label each version with a tone word that describes it precisely.

Practice Exercise 8.4.2

Choose an argument you have read recently and describe its tone. Choose a sample sentence from the argument in which the tone comes across clearly and explain which words expressed that tone.

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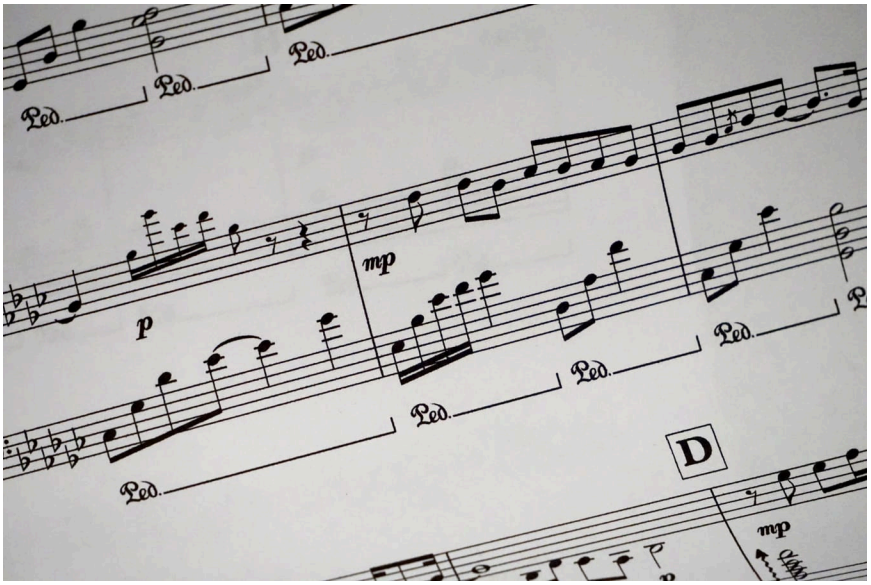
8.5: Varying the Emotions

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (2 min, 22 sec):

As we analyze emotion and tone, we won't always find one description that fits the entirety of the argument. The writer may be shifting tone and emotional appeal in subtle or dramatic ways either to match shifts in the ideas or to create variety. If we think of argument in terms of relationship and intimate conversation, this idea becomes clearer. One style when we talk to another person is to stick with one tone and repeat an emotional appeal over and over. This can be successful in reinforcing the message and perhaps wearing down resistance, but it can also be offputting. It could even seem robotic, unresponsive to the reader's needs. A more flexible, varied tone with moments of greater and lesser intensity can provide contrast and relief and thus seem more sensitive to the audience. Thus, sometimes even in serious, earnest arguments, it can help keep readers from tuning out if the writer lightens the tone or takes a step back.

We think of Shakespearean drama as exalted high culture, but Shakespeare famously wrote scenes of terrible puns, sex jokes, and plenty of slapstick into his most intense tragedies to keep the audience from pelting actors with rotten tomatoes. Similarly, a writer may choose to offer some relief or distraction after an impassioned appeal through a moment of humor or a neutral statement.



Like music, an argument can shift in tone and pacing to engage listeners.
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We can think of variety in emotional appeal as similar to the way music varies in volume and pacing. Sometimes a piece of music keeps the same volume and pace throughout, but more often the composer adds notes to the musician on when to boom or hush, hurry or draw out the notes. Often the music gets faster and louder toward the end, in a crescendo of intensity. This is one traditional way of ending an argument: on what we sometimes call a "ringing note" meant to inspire and fire up readers to agree, remember, or take action.

Practice Exercise 8.5.1

Choose a Ted talk that includes a transcript, such as Jamila Lysicott's "3 ways to speak English." Watch the talk and then read the transcript, making notes on the tone in the margins. Choose one place where the tone shifts and reflect on why the writer chose to shift there.

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8.6: Fitting the Emotions to the Audience

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (3 min, 5 sec):

An argument's success will depend not just on how well the writer expresses emotion but on how well the writer gauges the reader's likely response. Values, cultural beliefs, and life experiences shape our emotional reactions. While some appeals to our feelings, such as the reference to parents' desire to protect their children, may be more universal, others will be more audience specific. Different readers can have opposite emotional reactions to the same sentence. When the writer misjudges readers' values, assumptions or experiences, an emotional appeal may fall flat or may hurt the argument instead of helping. An obvious example is a racist or sexist comment.



The speaker here seems attentive to the emotional reactions of her audience.
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In the case of the border argument, the intended audience seems to be Americans who are citizens or legal residents. What if the writer knew more about how the person's life experience might relate to the issue of illegal immigration? For example, how might Anna Mills shape the argument and appeal to emotions differently if she knew the reader was one of the following?

- A person whose parents are undocumented
- A person who waited seven years for a visa to come to the U.S.
- A person who has been raised to be afraid of Mexican immigrants

In the case of the person whose parents are undocumented, the writer might actually spend less time encouraging readers to feel empathy. She could choose not to waste time "preaching to the choir" and instead focus on policy suggestions.

In the case of the person who waited for the visa, she might need to find a way to overcome some resentment against people who came to America without waiting so long.

In the case of the person raised to be afraid of Mexican immigrants, she might focus on specific immigrant stories so the reader would begin to have some vivid, moving stories of real people in their minds rather than racist stereotypes.

Practice Exercise 8.6.1

For each argument, consider how you would persuade the two different audiences without misleading them.

Here's a sample claim: "Police should wear body cameras."

We could write this version for an audience of police: "Body cameras seem unnecessary, and they make moving around more difficult, but hard-working police should relish the opportunity to make their actions viewable. It shows integrity and honesty."

In contrast, Black Lives Matter protesters would likely respond better to the following version: "Body cameras will finally hold police accountable for their cruel, untenable actions against innocent civilians; these cameras will bring us justice!"

1. Argument: We should lower the drinking age to sixteen.
    a. Young adults who want to party.
    b. Parents of teenagers.
2. Argument: The U.S. should ban fossil fuels in favor of green renewable energy.
    a. Coal miners from Kentucky.
    b. Liberal artists from New York City.

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8.7: Legitimate and Illegitimate Emotional Appeals

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (6 min, 58 sec):

We made the case at the beginning of this chapter that emotion is a legitimate part of argument. But there is a reason emotional appeals have a dubious reputation: they are often abused. If a writer knows there is a problem with the logic, they may use an emotional appeal to distract from the problem. Or, a writer may create a problem with the logic, knowingly or unknowingly, because they cannot resist including a particular strong emotional appeal. In Chapter 4, we looked at fallacies, or problems with arguments' logic. Many of the fallacies we have already looked at are so common because the illogical form of the argument makes a powerful appeal. The writer chose the faulty reasoning because they thought it would affect readers emotionally. Arguments that focus on a "red herring," for example, distract from the real issue to focus on something juicier. A straw man argument offers a distorted version of the other side to make the other side seem frighteningly extreme.

To be legitimate, emotional appeals need to be associated with logical reasoning. Otherwise, they are an unfair tactic. The emotions should be attached to ideas that logically support the argument. Writers are responsible for thinking through their intuitive appeals to emotion to make sure that they are consistent with their claims.



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Emotional appeals should not mislead readers about the true nature or the true gravity of an issue. If an argument uses a mild word to describe something horrific, that means the argument can't connect its emotional appeal to any logical justification. A **euphemism** is a substitute neutral-sounding word used to forestall negative reactions. For example, calling a Nazi concentration camp like Auschwitz a "detention center" would certainly be an unjustifiable euphemism**.** Given the amount of evidence about what went on at Auschwitz, using the phrase "Death Camp" would be a legitimate emotional appeal.

A more controversial question is what to call the places where people are detained if they are caught trying to cross the U.S. border without permission. An argument calling U.S. Customs and Border Patrol detention centers to "concentration camps" would need to justify its comparison by arguing for significant similarities. Otherwise, critics would claim that the comparison was a cheap shot intended to make people horrified by detention centers without good reason. Even if the argument simply called the centers "camps," the word would still bring to mind Nazi concentration camps and also the Japanese internment camps created by our own government during World War II. The word "camp," when referring to a place where people are held against their will, has inevitable overtones of racism and genocide. An argument should only choose a word with connotations that it can stand by and explain.

A question like this about whether an emotional appeal is legitimate or not often is often at the heart of any disagreement or productive discussion of the argument. If we agree that the comparison to concentration camps is legitimate, we will certainly agree that the detention centers, as they are currently organized, should be done away with.

Practice Exercise 8.7.1

Read each argument below and describe the emotional appeal it makes. Do you think this appeal is legitimate or illegitimate in relation to the argument? Why? Do you personally find it compelling?

1. "Please, even if you don't feel sick, you may be transmitting this disease," he said. "Please, please, practice common sense, common decency. Protect yourself, but also protect others. … What more evidence do we need?"-- California Governer Gavin Newsom at a press conference, June 26, 2020

2. "Refusing to wear a mask is no more a "personal choice" than is drinking all evening and then stumbling into your car and heading down the road. In a time of plague, shunning a face mask is like driving drunk, putting everyone in your path in danger." -- "Refusing to wear a mask is like driving drunk" by Nicholas Kristof, *New York Times* Op-Ed, July 1, 2020

3. "The irony is that these men think they're manifesting the ideal of the rugged, individualistic American, when their refusal [to wear a mask] really traces in part to a fear of what other people will think about them. Drunk on a toxic brew of self-interest and that masculine ideology, they mistake their refusal to protect themselves and others as a mark of character when instead, it's a mark on their characters."-- "The condoms of the face: why some men refuse to wear masks" by Emily Willingham, *Scientific American*, June 29, 2020

4. "While mask mandates provide a comfort level that is needed to get people back to work and resume economic activity, they may also induce a false sense of security. In early April, as the Trump administration was debating whether to change its guidance on masks, Deborah Birx of the White House virus task force warned that "we don't want people to get an artificial sense of protection because they're behind a mask" or "send a signal that we think a mask is equivalent" to social distancing and good hygiene…Masks have benefits, but moralism can be harmful to public health." --Allysia Finley, "The Hidden Danger of Masks," *Wall Street Journal*, August 4, 2020

5. ""The face-covering directive is the definition of government overreach," said Aaron Withe, national director of the Freedom Foundation, a national public policy organization based in Olympia, Wash. "If people choose to wear a mask, that's their choice. But Inslee is going after otherwise law-abiding citizens when there are rioters destroying Washington cities such as Seattle with no punishment in sight." The Washingtonians represented by the Freedom Foundation argue that by requiring them to wear face masks the state is essentially compelling them to support junk science in violation of their freedom of conscience, which is prohibited by the state constitution." --Freedom Foundation press release, July 7, 2020

6. "Think of it like the push for condom use during the AIDS epidemic, when public service announcements noted that when you have sex with someone, you're having sex with every person that person has slept with. It's the same idea, though transmission of the coronavirus is far easier. If you're unprotected (mask-less) around someone, you're effectively around anyone that person has been near. You have to assume the worst….Please put on a mask. Practice safe living. Anything less is selfish. Anything less should be straight-up embarrassing." -- "Not wearing a mask is as dumb as not wearing a condom" by Rex Huppke, *Chicago Tribune*, July 14, 2020

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9: HOW ARGUMENTS ESTABLISH TRUST AND CONNECTION (ETHOS)

Learning Outcomes

- Describe the value of building trust and connection in a written academic argument
- Evaluate the effectiveness and legitimacy of an argument's appeals to trust and connection
- Use effective, legitimate strategies for building trust and connection in written arguments.

9.1: An Argument Implies a Relationship

9.2: Authority

9.3: Distance and Intimacy

9.4: Shared Sense of Identity

9.5: Respect and Goodwill

9.6: Moral Character

9.7: Combining Different Approaches to Trust and Connection

9.8: Reaching a Hostile Audience (Rogerian Argument)

9.9: Faulty Appeals to Trust



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9.1: An Argument Implies a Relationship

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (2 min, 45 sec):

As we saw in Chapter 8, arguments attempt to affect our emotions, but their success depends on how well writers have gauged their readers' values and cultural associations. Now we can back up and look at readers' responses through a different lens: that of trust. Trust provides an underlying foundation for the success of emotional and logical appeals. If we don't have a certain degree of trust in the writer, we will be less willing to let an argument affect us. We may not allow even a skillfully worded emotional appeal to move us, and we may not be ready to agree even with a well-supported claim.



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How does a writer build trust if they never come face to face with the reader? This chapter will look at various approaches to creating trust in written argument, including establishing the writer's authority on the subject, convincing readers of the writer's moral character, showing respect and goodwill, and creating a sense of closeness or shared identity. To understand each of these approaches to trust, it will help to think of an argument not as words blared through a loudspeaker into the void, but as an offering within the context of a relationship. Even as the writer explains their ideas, they are also consciously or unconsciously implying a particular relation between reader and writer.

What do I mean by relationship here? Each relationship implies expected ways people interact, and it often involves a shared identity, whether a family connection, an ethnic similarity, a job they need to complete together, or a situation they are concerned in. A relationship can be casual or formal, intimate or distanced. The writer draws the reader close, beckons the reader to their side, or holds the reader at arm's length. They choose a style typical of the role they imagine, whether of a friend, confidante, preacher, doctor, or expert. The way they address us affects how we warm to their words. When we analyze an argument, we can ask ourselves what kind of roles and interactions the words imply. Is the writer talking to us as if we were buddies? As if we were students in a lecture hall? As if we were spiritual followers? As if we were professional colleagues working together? Or as if we were the jury at a trial?



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Focusing on trust and relationship allows us to see how nuanced argument can be and how varied its effects on different readers. An argument is not an equation. Not only does it affect our emotions, but, like a movie, a song, a novel, or a poem, it invites us into a lived experience. If we accept, we grapple with ideas in an imagined encounter with another human being.

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9.2: Authority

Media Alternative

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One kind of relationship of trust is between a person who is an authority on the subject and a person who is less of an authority. The writer relates to us as a teacher and we defer to their greater knowledge. So the most common and ready way to establish trust is to make sure readers know what makes the writer an authority on the subject at hand. Here are some messages that writers send, either explicitly or implicitly, to readers about why they should be regarded as authorities. This kind of trust depends on the qualifications of the writer rather than on the style of writing. It is sometimes called **extrinsic ethos**.

"I am a recognized expert"

How can a writer convince us that they are an expert on a topic? In general, they need to show that experts in their field have recognized some level of competence or leadership in them. Different topics require different forms of expertise. If the topic fits within a particular academic field, the writer can refer to their degree and to the college, university, or think tank where they do research. The reputation of the institution they are affiliated with will affect their reputation as an expert. Readers will expect a higher level of expertise from a Yale professor, for example, then from a state college professor. Sometimes specific departments develop reputations for excellence, however. For example, those familiar with the field will know that the University of Michigan has a top sociology department.

Any work the person has produced can also serve as evidence. Publishing a book on a topic lends credibility, but if the writer can point to positive reviews of the book, robust sales, and examples where other experts have cited the book, so much the better. Newspaper and magazine articles will gain credibility from the reputation of the newspaper or magazine. We can assume that the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* have high standards and make sure that their articles represent expert knowledge.

If the topic requires professional expertise, the writer will want to point to job experience, title, role in any professional associations, and any professional awards or certifications. For example, a lawyer must pass a bar examination to be allowed to practice law, so identifying a person as a lawyer implies a certain level of expertise. If the lawyer works for a firm that is well known in its specific area of law, naming that firm will boost the lawyer's credibility further. Of course, a partner at a prestigious firm will have much more credibility than an intern.



"Eastern Sociological Association 2020 Philadelphia" by Beverly Yuen Thompson on Flickr is licensed CC BY-NC 2.0.

If the writer has a public reputation as an expert above and beyond the items that could be listed on a resume, they can provide evidence of that reputation in the form of praise from other experts, number of times their work has been cited, radio or television shows where they have been interviewed, or any other sign of public recognition of expertise.

If we want to prove or assess the level of expertise of a writer, we may want to review the following list:

- Degrees earned
- Institutional affiliation
- Job title
- Job rank
- Job experience
- Awards
- Publications
- Public reputation

To be relevant, of course, all of these need to be related to the topic of the argument at hand. Dr. Phil McGraw, for example, has a Ph.D. in clinical psychology and has focused his career on mental health. He is not medically trained. Readers should only appeal to him as an expert on psychological matters.

"I have personal experience"

We are all authorities on our own experiences, feelings, and values. If something in our experience is relevant to our topic, we can speak with authority even without expertise. Using "I," also called speaking in the first person, can allow a writer to speak honestly and with conviction to further an argument. Maybe a story from our lives illustrates a larger point we want to make. Or maybe an emotional reaction to something becomes part of our argument. The sample argument about immigration which we analyzed earlier describes what the writer herself would do if she were in a desperate situation in another country and needed to flee in order to protect her children. Even though she has no experience of immigration, she can be considered an authority on her own sense of morality. Thus, the claim that she would feel justified in crossing illegally is hard to refute. From this starting point, she launches into a broader argument, claiming that others would feel the same way and that therefore, Americans need to rethink how they criminalize undocumented immigrants.

Sometimes the authority of personal experience is combined with the authority of power. This allows the CEO of a company or the director of a nonprofit or the president of a country to use the pronoun "we" to speak for their group. Thus, David Drummond, Google's senior vice-president for corporate development and chief legal officer, can title an opinion piece, "Google: We will bring books back to life." In the same *Guardian* opinion piece published in February, 2010, he supports a legal settlement to make copyrighted books available online, arguing that, "We at Google could make that wealth of knowledge available at a click. And authors would earn too."

“I’ve done my research”

When a writer has no particular qualification in relation to the subject, they can still establish a certain degree of authority by citing authoritative sources. The essence of a journalist or a science writer's job, for example, is to find and present authoritative sources. In academic research papers, we want readers to see that we have done due diligence and can represent a range of authorities on the subject. We can build credibility by describing for readers what kind of expertise each source has. MLA and APA in-text citations and Works Cited pages are designed to help us showcase our authoritative sources and allow readers to check up on them.

Practice Exercise 9.2.1

Use a popular search engine like Google to find an article about a controversial topic. Then, investigate the source of the information, such as the author, organization, or institution that published it. Consider the following questions:

- Is the source of information an authority in the topic they discuss?
- Where does the source gain their authority (i.e. by being recognized experts, by having relevant personal experience, or by doing research)?

Practice Exercise 9.2.2

Do a quick brainstorm about your life's experiences, education, and personal interests. Then, with a pair or small group, describe some areas you have authority in, and explain if you got that authority by being a recognized expert, by having relevant personal experience, or by doing research.

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9.3: Distance and Intimacy

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (9 min, 13 sec):

Trust through Distance and Formality

Often when we think of an "authoritative style," we think of someone who speaks impersonally and with confidence, describing how some aspect of reality works without involving their own or the reader with "I," "you" or "we." This approach to earning the reader's trust is all about setting aside the personal to pursue objective, neutral, unbiased pronouncements. It requires the writer to step back from their own personality and feelings to ally their speech with impersonal truth.

A formal style indicates that the writer takes seriously the institution they are speaking for and the rigorous expectations of argument. Traditionally, academic writing is expected to be relatively formal and distanced.

Think of a judge in black robes presiding over a courtroom. The judge is there as an official, not a private individual, and what they say is understood to represent the rule of law, not their personal opinion. When they speak, they use formal language and usually describe events impersonally. As a representative of the law, they represent the government and the interests of the people as a whole.



"Hennepin County Judge Tanya Bransford" by Tony Webster on Flickr, licensed CC BY-NC 2.0.

Think also of a professor asked to speak on a news program about their area of expertise. Despite a climate scientist's degrees and institutional affiliation, we may not trust their personal musings about the future of humanity while flying over melting Greenland ice. Their impersonal style of speech and their focus on facts about climate, reassure us that what they tell us is unbiased, objective, neutral, and vested with all the authority of academic rigor. If they use "we" it will be to refer to their academic colleagues, as in "As climate scientists, we look at overall trends rather than specific snowstorms or heat waves." We will expect the scientist to speak in definite, precise language and to speak with a certain dignity and seriousness.

Formality and distance have their disadvantages as well as their advantages. They can make the argument seem objective and solid, but they can also alienate the reader. After all, distance means we are being pushed away. Our trust in a formal argument depends on our trust in the institutions it represents, like the government or academia. The reader may be disillusioned with these institutions or may never have trusted them in the first place. The reader may not believe that the topic calls for neutrality. We may wonder, too, what personal opinions and experiences and feelings the writer is hiding behind a mask of neutrality.

Trust through Intimacy and Informality

Over the last few decades, academia has become less wedded to the idea of objectivity and formality. In the humanities, as we have questioned the history of deferring to the white European male voice and considering it universal, many have questioned whether any observer can be objective. Even in physics, the discovery of the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principal introduced the idea that the observer affects the phenomenon observed and is not separate from it.

An alternate approach to trust involves connection rather than distance. We relate to the writer as to a friend or loved one rather than an authority figure. The writer reveals their humanity and particular responses. A sense that the writer is being open with us and inviting us into an intimate conversation leads to trust.



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An argument could be both intimate and formal, like a marriage vow, but that combination is rare. Usually the more comfortable we are and the more we share about ourselves in an argument, the less formal the style. Conversely, the less formal the style, the friendlier and more connected the argument usually feels. Of course, for this approach to work, the writer has to make the intimate conversation seem appealing and convince us they are genuine in their openness. The writer's approach and knowledge of how the reader will likely respond are key here. An informal and intimate approach can backfire if it comes across as presumptuous or invasive. The reader may be uncomfortable with the degree of closeness presumed.

So how does a writer create a sense of intimacy with a reader they will probably never meet? The more the argument can follow the style of a close conversation, the more readers may consciously or unconsciously go along with that feeling. Using an informal style will often help. That might look like casual language, the use of humor, some simpler or abbreviated sentence structure or occasional questions interjected. The most direct and obvious way to create the feeling of a conversation, however, is to declare it to the reader by using the "I," the "we" or the "you" instead of an impersonal voice.

The "I" of personal experience

Many of us have heard the advice that academic arguments should never use “I.” In fact, many arguments in academic journals nowadays do use “I” on occasion, especially in introductions and conclusions. They use it judiciously when the personal experience of the writer is relevant to the argument. In addition to offering an emotional connection, personal anecdotes give readers a sense that the author is a person who is reaching out to us as people.

The ordinary 'I'

Using the first person "I" to talk about an experience that many people share can create a folksy sense of the author as a humble, ordinary person we can relate to. We might think that drawing attention to the writer's ordinariness would undermine credibility. Of course, if we are looking to find out how black holes work, we know we need to turn to an expert. But if the topic is less technical

and closer to everyday life, we may trust someone down to earth and easy to relate to more than we trust a distant authority figure.

The attention-getting “you”

When we use 'you' we are demanding the reader's attention. We can think of it as taking the reader by the hand, tapping them on the shoulder, or grabbing their collar, depending on how forceful the tone is. Papers written for college classes can use “you” on occasion, especially to command the reader’s attention in an introduction or a conclusion.

The 'we' that unites reader and writer

A writer may use 'we' to convey that they are not only in conversation with the reader other but on the same side or in the same boat. This approach is often combined with a reference to a shared identity, an appeal we will explore in the next section. It can also be used, however, to speak more generally about the writer and readers as fellow humans, as in the sentence, "We often forget that our parents were ever new to parenting."

Practice Exercise 9.3.1

Read the two student paragraphs below and reflect on the following questions:
- What parts help you to relate to the writer as a friend?
- What words or phrases show that the writer is being open with you?
- What words or phrases make this feel like a conversation?
- Which of these two paragraphs creates more trust through intimacy overall?

Rewrite one or more sentences in each paragraph to help create more trust through intimacy.

Paragraph 1:
Due to a recent pandemic, the whole world is experiencing something that has never been experienced in all of history. In order to prevent the spread of a very contagious disease, the whole world decided to go on lockdown. Now a worldwide lockdown has never happened before, and it has led to an interesting experience that is greatly changing a lot of lives. This virus causes many interesting results when studying human behavior. However, these results are also negative, which scares people when thinking of the possible economic recession. This paper will mainly cover how this pandemic affects crime rates. With everyone locked inside, it could lead to an increase in crime with fewer witnesses out. However, with fewer people to mug and not being able to go outside for no reason, this pandemic could also lead to a decrease in the current crime rate. In order to see how crime has been affected by the pandemic, it is necessary to analyze crime before and after the lockdown.

Paragraph 2:
We generate so much hate in this world. We seem to show more hate than love to each other. We put others down. We discriminate. We judge. We persecute. We hurt those who we see differently. We act before we think. Why do we hate? Hate is such a powerful word. We have all seen or experienced acts of hate occur within our lives. Whether it’s the terrorism we see on the news, or the bullying in our schools, it is extremely prevalent in every sector of our lives. The world would be a much better place if we had more empathy towards each other. Although hate and empathy can be very broad subjects, I want to focus on how giving to others can lead to less unhappiness and instead more empathy.To figure this out, we need to define what empathy truly means. We need to find the motives behind empathetic people, and then compare them with those who are hateful. We can study their respective motives and learn how to shift them.

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9.4: Shared Sense of Identity

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (6 min, 14 sec):

One way to create sense of connection and trust is to point to an identity that writer and reader share. If emotions are bound up in that identity, this can be a powerful way to gain trust and to encourage readers to care about the argument. As Jeanne Fahnestock and Marie Secor put it in *A Rhetoric of Argument,* "Audience members find themselves looking into a mirror, hearing their own interests and beliefs expressed powerfully--or perhaps they hear interests and beliefs they did not know they had until they heard them expressed by their representative."



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To signal this appeal to a shared identity, writers simply name the group, as in the phrase "My fellow Americans." They may switch to an accent or specific vocabulary used by the group, a practice called "code switching." Listeners, of course, will be deciding for themselves whether the switch feels authentic. In April 2019, Representative Alejandra Ocasio-Cortez was accused of using "verbal blackface" because of the way she switched style at a dinner for the National Action Network led by prominent black leader Reverend Al Sharpton. As *The Atlantic* put it, she "sprinkled some elements of Black English into her speech." The *Atlantic* describes it thus: “I’m proud to be a bartender. Ain’t nothing wrong with that,” she said, also stretching “wrong” out a bit and intoning in a way sometimes referred to as a “drawl,” but which is also part of the Black English tool kit." *The Atlantic* defended her speech as authentic. They explained that "since the 1950s, long-term and intense contact between black and Latino people in urban neighborhoods has created a large overlap between Black English and, for example, “Nuyorican” English, the dialect of New York’s Puerto Rican community. To a considerable extent, Latinos now speak “Ebonics” just as black people do, using the same slang and constructions."

Even if the group identity in question is not an emotionally charged one, referring to it can help readers feel connected to the writer and the argument. For example, an argument might begin, "Those of us who drink fluoridated water every day reap many health benefits, whether we know it or not." Such a reference brings the particular identity to the forefront of the reader’s mind.

Sometimes writers feel that the most powerful thing they have in common with readers is opposition to a group rather than membership in a group. They can try to get readers on their side by focusing on a group they presume the reader does not or will not want to belong to. Defining that group negatively becomes the basis for unity and trust between writer and reader.

Of course, any negative characterization of a group raises ethical questions. Is the negative assessment justifiable? Is it expressed in a disrespectful or dehumanizing way? Does its use inflame divisions within society in a way that has harmful side

effects? Apart from the question of whether or not referring to another group is right in a specific case, writers should also be aware of ways in which negative references can undermine trust, especially if the audience ends up being broader than the writer initially envisioned. Sometimes putting the opposition in a group can backfire and hurt an argument more than it help. Here are two controversial examples:

- In 2016 when Hillary Clinton referred to some Donald Trump supporters as "a basket of deplorables," she was not just criticizing their ideas but trying to make them seem other, a group no one would want to belong to. She used the phrase in a speech at an LGBT fundraising event, but news of it quickly went viral. In response, Trump declared to his supporters, "While my opponent slanders you as deplorable and irredeemable, I call you hardworking American patriots who love your country." His campaign printed shirts that read "Proud to be a deplorable." Clinton apologized for her remark soon after, but many considered that she had done irretrievable damage. In her 2017 book *What Happened,* she reflected that the comment probably contributed to her loss in the election.
- The phrase "OK Boomer," used to express Generation Z's frustration with baby boomers who seem stuck in their thinking, has been criticized as dismissive. The *New York Times* declared in October 2019 that "'OK Boomer' Marks the End of Friendly Generational Relations."

Practice Exercise 9.4.1

Look up a recent speech by a politician you admire or detest. (Try a search on "Biden speech" or "Trump speech.") What appeals to shared identity does the speech make? What assumptions about the audience does it reveal?

Practice Exercise 9.4.2

1. In a small group, find an identity unrelated to school that you share with your group members. You might consider the following questions:
   - Do you all have a sports team you like or sport you all enjoy?
   - Do you share a culture, ethnicity, country of origin, or place you grew up?
   - Do you have a language in common in addition to English?
   - What kinds of additional responsibilities do you have besides school?

   Now, come up with an argument that you can aim specifically at members of the group you all belong to. See the example below.

   Sample shared identity: musician

   Sample controversial topic: free college

   Shared identity paragraph: My fellow drummers, bassists, pianists, guitarists, and anyone else who loves to create new and exciting sounds, I am addressing you today to bring up the topic of free college, which we are totally for. Free college is better than playing the main stage at The House of Blues, and let me tell you why: it benefits the economy and provides support for low-income students. How many of us want to spend money on college instead of new guitar strings? Yeah, that's what I thought. Not to mention we are rarely paid for our work, so free college is the best way to get a new career; you know, in case this whole rockstar thing doesn't work out.

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9.5: Respect and Goodwill

Media Alternative

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We don't tend to trust people who don't respect us and don't wish us well. Regardless of how formal or informal or how intimate or distanced the argument is, if the reader feels the writer is disrespectful and doesn't care about the reader's perspective or experience, the reader will lose trust.

Conversely, if the reader feels that the writer understands the reader's perspective and uses that understanding to make the experience of reading the argument as straightforward and intellectually pleasant as possible, the reader will trust the writer more. Goodwill and respect distinguish a good argument from a rant which gives vent to the arguer's feelings while ignoring what readers might need.



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Here are a few concrete actions writers can take to show goodwill and respect toward readers:

- Express ideas in a clear and straightforward way. Making things clear often takes a lot of mental sweat. Readers generally do not appreciate having to do the work of sorting out unnecessarily convoluted sentences.
- Guide readers through the ideas with clear transitions. Showing how each part of the essay relates to the next also takes mental sweat on the part of the writer. Readers will appreciate not being left dangling at the end of one paragraph, trying to figure out why the writer switches topics in the next and how the two topics are connected.
- Tell the reader what to expect from the structure of the argument. If there will be several parts to the argument, readers may feel supported when the writer offers a clear map of what is coming. An example might be "I will first describe how neurons carry messages from the brain to other parts of the body before I explain how those messaging pathways can be disrupted in neurological disorders." Telling the readers what the writer plans to do in first person is also called the **"I" of method** because the "I" is used not to describe personal experience but to describe the writer's methods in the text itself. If there is more than one writer, as in scientific papers, of course, this would become the "we" of method. Of course, too much description of what the writer is planning to do can become boring and can get in the way of the momentum of the argument.
- Anticipate and answer likely questions. This shows respect because the writer is giving the reader credit in advance for intelligence, curiosity, and critical thinking. One way to do this is to refer to the reader directly as "you," as in "you may well ask." It can also be done in third person, as in the phrases "some will wonder" and "this raises the question of...."
- Correct misconceptions respectfully. If a writer is frustrated with popular misconceptions on a topic, they should give the reader the benefit of the doubt and politely assume that such daft misconceptions belong to others. We can refer to those

who hold the misconception in the third person in a phrase like "some may assume that" rather than targeting the reader with a "you may be assuming that..."

Practice Exercise 9.5.1

1. Read the paragraphs below and reflect on the strategies the writer used to show respect and goodwill.
   - Are there parts that are expressed clearly? Are there others that can be revised for clarity?
   - Are there enough transitions to guide you?
   - Are there any questions that show that the author gives the reader credit for intelligence, curiosity, or critical thinking? Is there a question that they could add?
2. Revise one of the paragraphs to show more respect and goodwill.

Paragraph 1

There have been many theories about the idea of nature in mental health. Many researchers have begun to investigate certain theories that focus on the correlation between our cognitive processes and the natural world. The most recognized theories are the Attention Restoration Theory (ART), the Stress Reduction Theory (SRT), and specific preferences for nature. The Attention Restoration Theory (ART), developed and popularized by Stephen and Rachel Kaplan, professors of psychology at the University of Michigan, proposes that exposure to nature can help us improve our ability to concentrate as well as reduce the stress through the automatic generation of physiologic responses. This can be attributed to the more relaxed sensation people may have when exposed to a natural environment. Stephen and Rachel Kaplan also proposed that there are four cognitive states on the way to restoration, which include a clearer head/concentration, mental fatigue recovery, soft fascination/interest, and reflection and restoration. In the first stage, thoughts, worries, and concerns are passed through the mind and are simply flowing through the mind naturally. During the second stage, restoration begins as the directed attention recovers and is restored. The third stage is focused on distracting the individual as they become engaged in low restoring activities, giving them time and space to calm down. Lastly, as a result of spending time in this environment, the individual can feel like they can relax and reflect on themselves and their goals. This is the most essential part of the restorative stage.

Paragraph 2

One factor that social media primarily affects are sleep patterns. A study concluded that 37% of 268 young adolescents confirmed that increased internet use is associated with shorter sleep duration, later bedtimes and rise times, longer sleep latencies, and increased daytime tiredness (Woods 1). Sleep in a teenager's life is one of the utmost important factors to healthy development. According to Better Health, sleep deprivation can cause an unhealthy mental state that can lead to depression, aggression, low self-esteem, reduced physical and academic performance, and poor decision making. This leads to a vicious cycle: the cell phone causes sleep deprivation, which then causes mental health issues, which are confronted with more cell phone use. This is problematic because they distract themselves with their devices and don't realize they need professional help.

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9.6: Moral Character

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (7 min, 7 sec):

A part of our trust in a writer or in another person in any relationship is based on our perception of their moral character. Do they share the values we find most important? The word "character" has connotations of both firmness and fairness. A person with character stands up for their beliefs and is principled rather than self-interested. Note that there is some overlap between the trust appeal discussed in Section 9.5: Respect and Goodwill and a trust appeal through good moral character. A basic element of good moral character is wishing others well, not ill.



Just as people signal their moral character in how we present ourselves, writers can signal moral character through their writing choices. Photo by Liza Summer from Pexels under the Pexels License.

Famous basketball coach John Wooden declared that “The true test of a man's character is what he does when no one is watching.” Still, as humans, we constantly watch each other and assess each other's character. A writer can seek to gain the reader's trust by drawing attention to their moral character either directly or indirectly. In a direct appeal, a writer might describe their values, tell stories that illustrate their past moral actions, mention their reputation for good character, or refer readers to others who can vouch for them.

If a writer anticipates that some will question their character, they can present **disclaimers**, or rejections of others' likely misconceptions. Imagine an argument that starts by asking how Robin Hood might be a relevant hero for today's America. The writer would quickly need to clarify that they are not condoning stealing: "I would never argue that we should actually steal from the rich as Robin Hood did." Such a disclaimer is usually followed by a clarification of their position which highlights their good character: "I do think that the character of Robin Hood is an inspiration for today's advocates of a wealth tax to fund education and combat rising inequality."

Direct references to a writer's moral character run the risk of coming across as arrogant or presumptuous. More common and arguably more effective are indirect attempts to demonstrate moral character in the way a writer makes their argument. As Jeanne Fahnestock and Marie Secor write in *A Rhetoric of Argument,* "We all know that character shows in what we say and do. It is equally obvious in what we write." Honesty and reasonableness are two aspects of character that are especially crucial to demonstrate in argument.

Honesty

Abraham Lincoln was known in his day and after as "Honest Abe." His reputation as such, along with his accomplishments, formed the core of his image as an American hero. Probably nothing is more important to establishing trust than truthfulness and openness.

Even lies of omission can undermine trust. As readers, we want to believe that the writer is giving us a fair overview of what they know. If a writer fails to mention something relevant that makes them look bad, readers may well hear it from an opponent and consider the writer to have wrongly concealed it. Acknowledging points that actually hurt the writer's argument can help to demonstrate openness and honesty. This includes a writer's motivations, even those that involve self-interest. This may involve a disclaimer like the following: "It is true that I have an interest in maintaining high enrollment at our community college, since my job depends on it. But I do not think that is my main motivation for supporting the push to expand our offerings. I believe that the community will benefit when we have greater community participation in adult education."

Another aspect of honesty is emotional honesty--the writer's sincerity about the values and feelings expressed. If the writer has made an emotional appeal or an appeal to shared values, we as readers need to believe that the appeal represents the writer's authentic feelings and values. If we feel we are being **manipulated**, we will likely recoil and resist both the emotions and the logic of the argument. How can we tell if a writer is sincere or not? There is no formula for this, just as there is no formula when we meet someone or listen to a speech and decide if the person is sincere. Readers' intuitions will be shaped by subtleties of word choice and cultural expectations. One highly dramatic emotional appeal or declaration of values may come across as exaggerated, and another may come across as an earnest expression of the writer's strong convictions. In my own opinion, the best way for writers to create an impression of sincerity is to be sincere, not just about their feelings but about the degree of intensity of these feelings.

Reasonableness

It is our reason that allows us to make and evaluate arguments, so it comes as no surprise that writers want to come across as reasonable. Of course, as we have seen in earlier chapters, writers must actually make reasoned arguments or readers will notice their logical flaws and lose some trust in them. But to trust a writer, readers also need to have the impression that the writer is reasonable as a character trait.

Here are some ways writers show themselves to be reasonable:

- Responding to alternate perspectives with **respect.** Even when you do not see any merit in the opposing argument, As Jeanne Fahnestock and Marie Secor put it, "Without conceding to the opposition, you can show your audience that you treat other positions with respect, understanding, and even kindness." We can show empathy for the motivations or perspectives of others even if we ultimately judge them to be misguided.
- Showing **fairness** toward alternate perspectives. We see reasonableness in the ways in which writers deal with challenges to their ideas. Do they summarize the challenge accurately without distorting it to make it seem worse or weaker than it is?
- Showing **openness** to possibilities that may challenge the writer's expectations. There is some overlap here with honesty as discussed above.
- Making **concessions** when they see some validity to an opposing point.
- Showing **moderation.** A writer can send the message that they are not an extremist by pointing out and disavowing more extreme positions.
- Admitting **uncertainty**. As Jeanne Fahnestock and Marie Secor put it "When you honestly find yourself somewhat uncertain on an issue, even after thinking through some arguments, you can shift into a lower gear by admitting your own uncertainty, the tentative nature of some of your conclusions, your openness to new ideas."

Note that too much moderation can come across as wishy-washy. Good moral character also requires **conviction** and backbone. A writer must balance being open and self-critical with being willing to take a stand and defend it.

> **Practice Exercise** 9.6.1
>
> Find a speech by a president, former president, or presidential candidate and reflect on how the speaker attempts to establish good moral character in the speech. Which of the strategies listed above do they employ? How well do these strategies work to convince you of the speaker's character?

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9.7: Combining Different Approaches to Trust and Connection

Media Alternative

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Just as arguments can change tone and emotional appeal, they can appeal to trust differently and create different imagined relationships with the reader at different moments. Arguments don't need to choose one point of view and stick with it; many arguments move between "I," "we," "you" and the impersonal, shifting from sentence to sentence. Too many shifts could be jarring for the reader, but some variety can be refreshing. Thus, a single argument can offer different ways for the reader to relate to the ideas at hand.

For example, the sample border argument we have analyzed starts with a personal declaration, but if it stayed with "I" throughout it would never be able to make an argument about policy. Usually, the first person in argument is combined with other approaches so that the argument can be extended beyond the personal. Let's look at how the appeals to trust and connection shift in the last two paragraphs of the border argument:

Argument Excerpt	**Notes on the Point of View**
If I were raising children in an impoverished third-world community plagued by violence, and if I had a chance to get my family to the U.S., I would take it.	"I": The argument starts out with a personal declaration of what the author herself would do. The repeated emphasis on the "I" provides a contrast to most news accounts which refer to undocumented immigrants as "they." It attempts to reverse a sense that such immigrants are an outgroup. The mention of the word "family" provides the first hint of the appeal to shared values around family loyalty and caring for family members.
I would try to cross a border illegally so my children would get enough to eat and would have a more stable childhood and a chance at a better education and a better career.	This focuses on a shared value around parents' obligation to nurture their children with references to children's basic needs.
What parent would sit on their hands and tell themself, "I want to give my child a better life, but oh well. If I don't have the papers, I guess it would be wrong"?	The paragraph ends with a third-person rhetorical question, implying that all parents would do the same. Saying this in the impersonal third person conveys the idea that it is a neutral, objective fact. The argument imagines and rejects as ridiculous an "I" statement by an imaginary parent. This statement is deliberately exaggerated in its contrast between the powerful emotional phrase "give my child a better life" and the rather mundane "I don't have the papers."
If most of us, under desperate circumstances, would cross the border without permission and feel no moral qualms about doing so, then we must recognize this crossing as an ethical, reasonable act.	The argument switches to "us" and "we," extending the initial personal statement to include the readers in a group united by a sense that their obligation to nurture their children takes priority over the obligation to follow immigration law.

If it is ethical and reasonable, then how can either a wall or a detention center be on the side of justice?	The impersonal rhetorical question implies the general claim that walls and detention centers are not right.
We must find a policy that treats migrants as we would want to be treated--with empathy, respect, and offers of help.	The argument returns to the "we," ending with a sense that writer and readers are united with a common, urgent moral purpose.

Practice Exercise 9.7.1

Choose a Ted talk that includes a transcript, such as Jamila Lysicott's "3 ways to speak English." Watch the talk and then read the transcript, making notes in the margins on the level of intimacy, degree of formality, appeals to authority, and mentions of moral character or shared identity. Choose one place where the writing shifts from one way of connecting to the reader to another and reflect on why the writer chose to shift at that point.

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9.8: Reaching a Hostile Audience (Rogerian Argument)

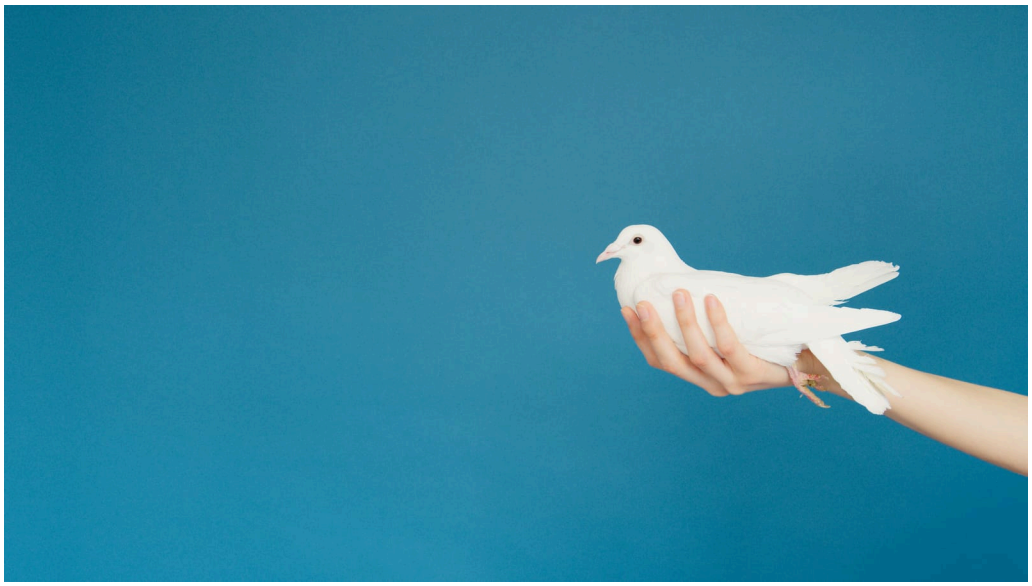
Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (6 min, 1 sec):

Think of the ongoing cultural wars in America over race and policing, abortion, and immigration. We all probably know an acquaintance or a family member or a politician who we disagree with strongly on one of these topics, and who seems unlikely to ever change their mind.

Rather than giving up on addressing the opposing side at all, we might consider an approach called **Rogerian argument**, pioneered by therapist Carl Rogers. This approach seeks to shift the focus of an argument from conflict to common ground. It involves an emotional and intellectual commitment to move forward together. If a traditional combative argument is like a courtroom debate, Rogerian argument is like mediation. In the courtroom, judge and jury have to decide between the prosecution and the defense. In mediation, both sides are looking for a sweet spot where their needs and opinions intersect.

We start by trying to convince the other side that we are not their enemy. If we describe their ideas and feelings with accuracy, respect and empathy, they may soften. If they feel seen rather than judged, they may be more open to what we have to say. The first step in Rogerian argument, then is to research the other side's beliefs, values, goals, and arguments so we can summarize them in a respectful way.



In Rogerian argument, we seek to find empathy and common ground where there is conflict.
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In Rogerian argument, we also change our end goal. We accept that we will not be able to bring the audience over entirely to our way of thinking. Instead, we focus on a more limited claim that both sides can support. The idea is to try to make progress despite deep differences. To get there, we must find beliefs, goals, or values we genuinely share.

Let's take the example of the writer who wants the U.S. to help undocumented migrants rather than criminalize them. In Chapters 2 and 3, we analyze an argument where she tries to create empathy by asking readers to put themselves in the place of a desperate migrant and imagine what they would do. This might work with an undecided audience, but what if she wants to address a group of die-hard activists who want a crackdown on illegal immigration? Let's imagine that this group of activists feels strongly that the physical safety of Americans should be our priority. They are afraid that undocumented immigrants will commit violent crimes.

One approach would be to try to convince them that their fears are unfounded. However, given the lack of trust between writer

and audience, such an attempt might fail. Another approach would be to argue that we must take into account the need of all people to be protected from violence, including refugees who face violence in their countries of origin. This might clash with the activists' nationalist belief that American policy should always prioritize the safety of Americans.

If the writer were to try a Rogerian approach, she would stop trying to show the activists that they are wrong. She would instead spend some time reading about their organization and possibly watching videos of people explaining their ideas. She might even interview one of them to find out what values and experiences led them to their opinions.

Then she would reflect on what goals and values she could sympathize with or even endorse. In her original argument, she called for "regulation" at the border; she too is concerned for the safety of Americans and believes that open immigration could involve some dangers that we should address in our policies. The question is, can she shift the focus of her argument to a claim that will both increase public safety and improve the treatment of the undocumented?

She might decide to argue for a border that does a better job of checking each person who is attempting to enter the country. Her policy would turn back more people with criminal backgrounds while also allowing more people to enter legally as economic refugees. In the process of forming this argument, she might actually become more sympathetic to the other side and her position might shift toward the center. She might realize that she does want to "secure the border" and that she is grateful to ICE efforts to combat weapons smuggling, drug cartel operations, and human trafficking. She might also decide that she would support deportation of documented violent criminals. She could use those points to try to reassure her audience that she makes public safety a priority.

Will this argument actually work to further her original goal? Would the audience become more willing to allow in desperate undocumented immigrants if reassured that law enforcement would catch more of the dangerous elements? As a separate question, the author needs to ask herself whether the new argument still represents a message she earnestly wants to send. Does she miss the impassioned plea for empathy and legitimacy for desperate undocumented immigrants? Has she strayed too far from the raw expression of her deep beliefs?

Questions of how confrontational and how collaborative argument should be arise constantly in everyday life and in the practice of democracy. Regardless of whether we personally tend toward conflict or compromise, it's worth learning the Rogerian process. Then when we run into a breakdown in trust, we can at least try out a collaborative approach as a thought experiment and decide whether it is worthwhile.

Practice Exercise 9.8.1

Choose a topic on which you hold a strong opinion and read about the opposing side on the website ProCon.org. In a paragraph, summarize respectfully what you can learn about the beliefs, values, and viewpoints of the other side. Does this research suggest any goal you might share with those who disagree with you? Can you come up with a claim that both might agree on? Do you think it would be worth pursuing this middle ground, or does it seem more important to you to fight for your precise position?

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9.9: Faulty Appeals to Trust

Media Alternative

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Just as we saw with appeals to emotion, appeals to trust and connection may or may not work. But apart from the question of whether or not they work is the question of whether or not they are legitimate. Here are three questions to ask about the legitimacy of any appeal to trust:

- Does the attempt to get the reader to trust suggest an idea that is not logical or not true?
- To what extent is the appeal to trust really relevant to the trustworthiness of the argument?
- Is the argument asking for more trust than is really warranted? Even if the attempt to gain our trust is logical and relevant, we should ask whether its importance has been exaggerated. Our decision to trust should be based on many different factors. Often appeals to trust imply that we should accept or reject a claim outright when in reality more caution is called for.

We will see answers to the above questions in each of the following faulty appeals to trust:

Insincere appeals to shared identity or values

Obviously, lying about who we are or what we believe in is not a valid way to build trust. An appeal to a shared identity that is not really shared or an appeal to a shared value that the writer does not really hold is certainly a breach of trust.



An insincere appeal to trust often comes across as creepy.
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However, referring to an identity that the writer doesn't share can be a legitimate gesture of goodwill, as long as the writer doesn't misrepresent their own background. A white politician who interjects Spanish words into a speech to a largely Latinx audience is signaling that they want to appear friendly and empathetic to a Latinx identity. Of course, the politician's accent may undermine this to some extent by reminding the audience of their different background. Will the audience be glad that the politician is trying? Will they be put off by a sense that the politician is presuming too much or encroaching on an identity that doesn't belong to them? Writers will often try to signal respect and familiarity if they do refer to another group's identity, as in "I know from talking to transgender friends that using a single-gender restroom can feel stressful and dangerous."

Appeal to popularity (bandwagon)

An extremely common technique is to suggest that a claim is true because it is widely accepted. Of course, we do legitimately need to refer to other people's opinions as guides to our own at times. An idea's popularity may be a legitimate reason to investigate it further. It might be a reason to consider it influential and thus important to address in a discussion. But it's popularity does not prove its validity. Popularity may be due to the correctness of the idea but it may be due to many other reasons as well.



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Appeals to popularity encourage readers to base their decisions too much on their underlying desire to fit in, to be hip to what everybody else is doing, not to be considered crazy. Imagine that a talk show host introduces a guest as the author of a #1 *New York Times* bestseller about climate change and the coming apocalypse. But this is a fallacy. We've all known it's a fallacy since we were little kids, the first time we did something wrong because all of our friends were doing it, too, and our mom or dad asked us, "If all of your friends jumped off a bridge, would you do that too?"

Personal attacks

We commit this fallacy when, instead of attacking an opponent's views, we attack the opponent. What makes this a fallacy is the disconnect between the reason and the claim. Logicians call this an **ad hominem** fallacy, which means "to the person." The opponent may have bad qualities, but these qualities do not make their argument incorrect. They may give legitimate reason to trust the argument less, but they do not invalidate it.



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This fallacy comes in various forms; there are a lot of different ways to attack a person while ignoring (or downplaying) their actual arguments. **Abusive attacks** are the most straightforward. The simplest version is simply calling your opponent names instead of debating them. Donald Trump has mastered this technique. During the 2016 Republican presidential primary, he came up with catchy nicknames for his opponents, which he used just about every time he referred to them: "Lyin' Ted" Cruz, "Little Marco" Rubio, "Low-Energy Jeb" Bush. If you pepper your descriptions of your opponent with tendentious, unflattering, politically charged language, you can get a rhetorical leg-up.

Another abusive attack is **guilt by association**. Here, you tarnish your opponent by associating them or his views with someone or something that your audience despises. Consider the following:

> Former Vice President Dick Cheney was an advocate of a strong version of the so-called Unitary Executive interpretation of the Constitution, according to which the president's control over the executive branch of government is quite firm and far-reaching. The effect of this is to concentrate a tremendous amount of power in the Chief Executive, such that those powers arguably eclipse those of the supposedly co-equal Legislative and Judicial branches of government. You know who else was in favor of a very strong, powerful Chief Executive? That's right, Hitler.

The argument just compared Dick Cheney to Hitler with only the tiniest shred of evidence. That evidence is not sufficient to make a legitimate comparison: if it were, then any person who favored giving most government power to one leader could be compared to Hitler. Clearly, consolidating power was not the most significant thing Hitler did, nor, in itself, is it the reason we have such negative associations with his name. Those powerful negative associations make comparisons to Hitler and the Nazis a powerful rhetorical strategy which is often used when it isn't justified. There is even a fake-Latin term for the tactic: Argumentum ad Nazium (cf. the real Latin phrase, ad nauseum—to the point of nausea.

A **circumstantial attack** is not as blunt an instrument as its abusive counterpart. It also involves attacking one's opponent, focusing on some aspect of their person—their circumstances—as the core of the criticism. This version of the fallacy comes in many different forms, and some of the circumstantial criticisms involved raise legitimate concerns about the relationship between the arguer and his argument. They only become fallacies when these criticisms are taken to be definitive refutations, which, on their own, they cannot be.

To see what we're talking about, consider the circumstantial attack that points out one's opponent's self-interest in making the argument they do. Consider:

> A recent study from scientists at the University of Minnesota claims to show that glyphosate—the main active ingredient in the widely used herbicide Roundup—is safe for humans to use. But guess whose business school just got a huge donation from Monsanto, the company that produces Roundup? That's right, the University of Minnesota. Ever hear of conflict of interest? This study is junk, just like the product it's defending.

This argument is flawed. It doesn't follow from the fact that the University received a grant from Monsanto that scientists working at that school faked the results of a study. But the fact of the grant does raise a red flag. There may be some conflict of interest at play. Such things have happened in the past (e.g., studies funded by Big Tobacco showing that smoking is harmless). But raising the possibility of a conflict is not enough, on its own, to show that the study in question can be dismissed out of hand. It may be appropriate to subject it to heightened scrutiny, but we cannot shirk our duty to assess its arguments on their merits.

A similar thing happens when we point to the hypocrisy of someone making a certain argument—when their actions are inconsistent with the conclusion they're trying to convince us of. Consider the following:

> The head of the local branch of the American Federation of Teachers union wrote an op-ed yesterday in which she defended public school teachers from criticism and made the case that public schools' quality has never been higher. But guess what? She sends her own kids to private schools out in the suburbs! What a hypocrite. The public school system is a wreck and we need more accountability for teachers.

This passage makes a strong point, but then commits a fallacy. It would appear that, indeed, the AFT leader is hypocritical; her choice to send her kids to private schools suggests (but doesn't necessarily prove) that she doesn't believe her own assertions about the quality of public schools. Again, this raises a red flag about her arguments; it's a reason to subject them to heightened scrutiny. But it is not a sufficient reason to reject them out of hand, and to accept the opposite of her conclusions. That's committing a fallacy. She may have perfectly good reasons, having nothing to do with the allegedly low quality of public schools, for sending her kids to the private school in the suburbs. Or she may not. She may secretly think, deep down, that her kids would be better off not going to public schools. But none of this means her arguments in the op-ed should be dismissed; it's beside the point. Do her reasons back up her conclusion? Are her reasons true? Even if the person arguing is hypocritical, they may still be making a sound argument. We still need to decide whether their reasoning is valid before rejecting the argument.

A very specific version of the circumstantial attack, one that involves pointing out one's opponent's hypocrisy, is worth highlighting, since it happens so frequently. It has its own Latin name: **tu quoque**, which translates roughly as "you, too." This is the "I know you are but what am I?" fallacy; the "pot calling the kettle black"; "look who's talking". It's a technique used in very specific circumstances: your opponent accuses you of doing or advocating something that's wrong, and, instead of making an argument to defend the rightness of your actions, you simply throw the accusation back in your opponent's face—they did it too. But that doesn't make it right.

The final variant of the circumstantial attack is perhaps the most egregious. It's certainly the most ambitious: it's a preemptive attack on one's opponent to the effect that, because of the type of person they are, nothing they say on a particular topic can be taken seriously; they are excluded entirely from debate. It's called **poisoning the well**. We poison the well when we exclude someone from a debate because of who they are. Imagine an English person saying, "It seems to me that you Americans should reform your healthcare system. Costs over here are much higher than they are in England. And you have millions of people who don't even have access to healthcare. In the UK, medical care is a basic right of every citizen." Suppose an American responded by saying, "What you know about it? Go back to England." That would be poisoning the well. The English person is excluded from debating American healthcare just because of who they are.

Practice Exercise 9.9.1

The following short critique mentions something about the author of the argument they critique. Do you think there is a legitimate reason to make this personal reference? Does it convincingly undermine the argument that "women can have it all"?

> The legendary Cosmo Girl, Helen Gurley Brown, died and with her, one hopes, a not-so-fabulous legacy. This would be the demonstrably ridiculous notion women can have it all. ... The most telling line from all the tributes written about her might provide a clue. Brown said she never had children because 'I didn't want to give up the time, the love, the money.
>
> --Kathleen Parker, "Death of a Salesgirl," Index-Journal 94 No. 110 (18 Aug. 2012).

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10: WRITING ARGUMENT ANALYSIS

Learning Outcomes

- Write an analysis of an argument's appeal to emotion
- Write an analysis of an argument's appeal to trust
- Connect an assessment of an argument's logical structure to an assessment of the effectiveness of its rhetorical appeals
- Give constructive feedback on an argument analysis essay
- Describe how the visual features of an image can reinforce the message of a visual argument.

10.1: How Argument Analysis Essays are Structured

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10.7: A Sample Visual Argument Analysis

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10.1: How Argument Analysis Essays are Structured

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (3 min, 24 sec):

In some humanities classes in college, you may be asked to write a kind of paper that goes further than a summary, an assessment or a response paper in describing another writer's argument. Such an **argument analysis**, also called a **rhetorical analysis**, asks you to describe what the other writer is up to, not just in terms of ideas but in terms of all the strategies they used to make the argument convincing. You become a kind of detective, piecing together the moves the writer made, the reasons for them, and their likely effects on readers.


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In such an essay, you will need to analyze and evaluate the quality of the logical reasoning, as we learned to do in Chapter 4: Assessing the Strength of an Argument. But you will also need to describe and evaluate how the writer seeks to affect readers' emotions and gain readers' trust. How well are the author's appeals to trust and emotion likely to work? Will readers likely respond as the writer imagines?

The introduction should include the title of the argument you analyze and several sentences that summarize the argument. Imagining an audience unfamiliar with the argument will encourage you to choose your words carefully and offer full explanations. After introducing readers to the content of the argument, you can state your thesis: your assessment of how convincing the argument is and what its weaknesses are, if any.

There is a lot to cover in such a paper since you will need to summarize and analyze the ideas, identify strategies the author has used, and discuss how readers will respond to these strategies. With so many points to discuss, you may wonder how you can create a cohesive thesis. The key is to focus on what you consider to be most important in propelling the argument forward or sinking it. A thesis can pick two or three important aspects of the argument and identify them as strengths or weaknesses. The more you can group several different strategies together under a common theme, the more focused and memorable your thesis becomes. For example, if a writer uses “we” to refer to Latinx people, inserts Spanish phrases, and tells a moving story of a family’s immigration to the U.S. from Mexico, you could refer to all three of those aspects of the argument at once in your thesis by noting that the writer “appeals to readers’ Latinx identity.”

Each body paragraph can focus on just one aspect of the reasoning or on an argumentative strategy. In the above example, you could develop one paragraph about the use of “we” to refer to Latinx people, another paragraph about the use of the Spanish

language in the argument, and another about how the writer introduces a Spanish-speaking immigrant story. Your transitions could refer to what these paragraphs have in common--a reference to Latinx identity. To support your ideas in each body paragraph, you can use evidence in the form of quotations and paraphrases from the argument analyzed.

The conclusion should provide some assessment of the overall effectiveness of the argument. You can make a prediction about how most readers will respond in the end. Given the combination of logical strength or weakness and appeals to trust and emotion, how convinced will readers likely be? Are there any lessons we can learn from the successes or failures of this argument?

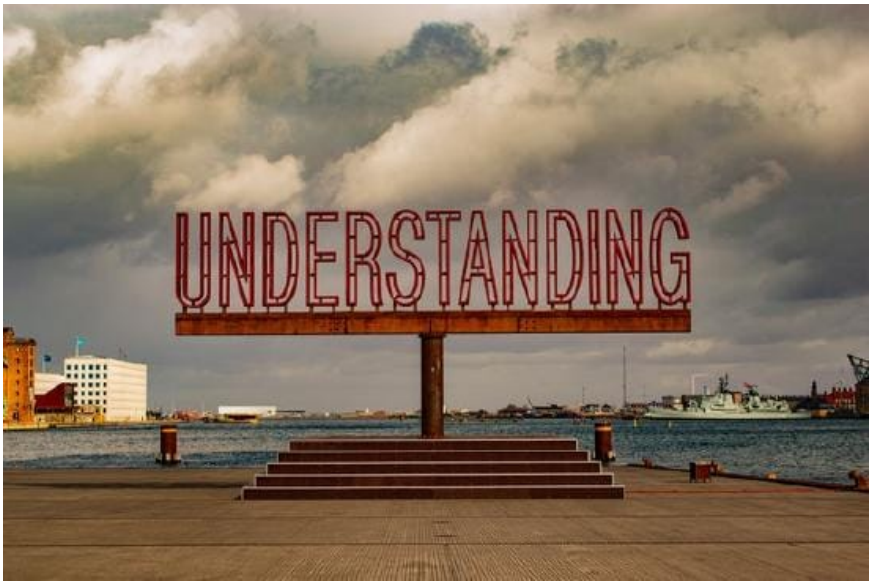


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10.2: Analyzing an Argument's Situation (Kairos, or the Rhetorical Situation)

Media Alternative

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We will often begin our analysis of an argument by "situating" it. This means figuring out who the author is, what kind of text we are dealing with, who it is trying to persuade, and when and where it was written. The **rhetorical situation** (also called **kairos**) is the combination of author, audience, context, purpose, constraints, and genre. It is the situation shaping the text, the situation to which the text responds.

Key Elements of the Rhetorical Situation

To fully understand an argument, experienced readers ask big-picture questions about the **author**, the **audience** they address, the **context**, the **genre** of the text, the **purpose** of the text, and the **constraints** that shape how it is written.

Author

Who is the author? Where are they coming from? When reading a text**,** take a few minutes to research who the author is. Who are they, what kind of writing do they do, what organizations do they belong to, what is their reputation?



Indie Author Day 2017 by BuffaloLibrary on Flickr is licensed CC BY 2.0.

Audience

In 7.2: Tailoring an Argument to an Audience, we discussed how to shape our own arguments with a particular audience in mind. We analyze an argument, we work backward to infer what the intended audience was. From there, we can also infer how the writer's sense of their audience shaped their choices as they wrote.

- Who does it appear the author is trying to reach? How does the author address and imagine the audience?
- Is the text aimed at a particular age, gender, cultural background, class, political orientation, or religion, for example? How is the text shaped to target this audience?

- Does the text also seem to address a secondary audience?
- Figuring out where the text was published, when it was published, what kind of text it is (speech, op-ed, article, song, etc.), and how it addresses readers can help provide clues to audience.
- Who is likely to find the text important, relevant, or useful? Conversely, who is going to be alienated by the text? Reread the first page and consider what readers have to believe, value, or care about to get past it. Who is likely to set it aside based on something they see at the very beginning?
- Consider style, tone, diction, and vocabulary. What do these tell you about the potential audience for the text? Examine the other authors and works referred to in the text (if there are footnotes or a Works Cited page, look at what is listed there. Just as you can learn a lot about a person by the people around them, you can learn a lot about a text from all the other texts it references). What does the author assume their readers know? What does the author assume about readers' age, education, gender, location, or cultural values?



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Purpose

What is the author trying to achieve? What does the author want us to do, believe, or understand? All writing has a purpose. We write to bring awareness to a problem, make sense of an experience, call people to action, contribute to an area of knowledge, criticize or defend a position, redefine a concept, complain, clarify, challenge, document, create a beautiful story, and entertain (to name just a few purposes for writing).

As we analyze, we can ask ourselves what seems to be the question at issue. Why has the author written this text? What is the problem, dispute, or question being addressed? What motivated them to write, what do they hope to accomplish?

As we saw in 7.1: Deciding the Purpose of a Research-Based Argument, one way to classify arguments is according to the kind of question they set out to answer. If we determine that the argument we are analyzing is a **definition**, **evaluation**, **causal**, or **proposal** argument, we can look for common elements of that type of argument to help us understand the writer's choices and assess their effectiveness.

Argument Purposes

Question the Argument Answers	Argument Purpose
What is the nature of _____?	Definition argument (see 7.3: Definition Arguments)
How good and/or bad is _____?	Evaluation argument (see 7.4: Evaluation Arguments)
What caused _____?	Causal argument (see 7.5: Causal Arguments)

Question the Argument Answers	Argument Purpose
What should be done about _____?	Proposal argument (see 7.6: Proposal Arguments)

Context

Context refers to situational influences that are specific to time, place, and occasion. When and where was the text written, and where is it intended to be read, seen, or heard? In her book *Teaching Arguments,* Jennifer Fletcher writes of "...the immediate social space and situation in which arguments must be made, including what's expected in terms of propriety or fitness for the occasion."

- What is the situation that prompted the writing of this text? What was going on at the time? Can you think of any social, political, or economic conditions that were particularly important?
- What background information on the topic or associations with the topic would a reader of this time period likely have?
- Part of the context is the "conversation" the text is part of. It's unlikely the author is the first person to write on a particular topic. As Graff and Birkenstein point out, writers invariably add their voices to a larger conversation. How does the author respond to other texts? How does she enter the conversation ("Many authors have argued X, but as Smith shows, this position is flawed, and I will extend Smith's critique by presenting data that shows...") How does the author position herself in relation to other authors?
- How does the knowledge of the text's original context influence our reading of it? How have circumstances changed since it was written?

Let's take an example: say we are analyzing an article on climate change, and we find that it doesn't try to prove that climate change is happening. Is it neglecting to address a counterargument? Is it making a bold choice to ignore likely objections? To answer, we would need to know in what decade the article was written. In the 1990s, when climate change was first widely publicized, many people doubted whether it was real. Now, in the 2020s, the negative effects of climate change are more prominently visible than before, and very few people deny that the earth is warming due to human influence. Global warming isn't talked about like a scary monster that we can warn our children about at bedtime; now, global warming is a very real monster huffing and puffing at our front door. If we were commenting on a dated article on climate change by Glaiza Aquino, we might note something like "Aquino's choice not to address climate deniers' claims is bold for its time. She counts on others to dispel those claims and focuses instead on making an informed case for nuclear energy as the only way out of the crisis."

Genre

Genres are types of communication that have become routine and conventionalized. A poem, meme, lab report, op-ed, and magazine article are all examples of genres. Identifying the text's genre can tell us a lot about audience, purpose, and context. We can ask ourselves, what kind of writing is this? Is this an academic argument? A Ted Talk? Is this a personal narrative essay that explores a momentous moment in the writer's life? Is this a literary analysis? A letter to the editor in a newspaper?

Genres give us clues about how we should read a text, what we can do with the text, and who the audience is. Consider the two images below.



"Kangaroo Sign at Stuart Highway" from Wikimedia Commons is licensed under the CC BY SA 3.0 Unported license.

 "Kangaroo Jump" by Heather on Flickr, licensed CC BY-NC 2.0.

The image below does not, by itself, give much guidance on how we should interpret it. But the image above is in a familiar genre – the road sign. Even if we have never seen a sign like this, we have a good idea of its purpose, intended audience, and meaning. Identifying a text's genre will often reveal much about the rhetorical situation.

Attributions

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10.3: Generating Ideas for an Argument Analysis Paper

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (4 min, 18 sec):

Here are some questions to consider each in relation to the argument you are analyzing. Unless your teacher specifically asks you to cover all of these questions, you will eventually want to pick and choose what you discuss in your argument analysis essay. (The essay would likely read like a list rather than a cohesive group of connected paragraphs if you did include everything.) However, it will probably help you to consider each of these before you start your rough draft to see what might be most important or interesting to focus on in your analysis.

Analyzing the Ideas

Chapter 2: Reading to Figure out the Argument describes how to map out the core ideas in the argument you are analyzing in order to write a clear summary as part of your analysis. Here are some specific questions to brainstorm on:

- What are the key claims?
- What are the reasons given for each of these key claims?
- Are the reasons ideas that are generally agreed upon, or do any of these reasons need additional support?
- What kind of evidence does the writer provide, and how convincing is it?
- Does the reader make assumptions that should be questioned or supported?
- What limits does the writer place on the key claims?
- Can we imagine exceptions or limits that the writer has not noted?
- What counterarguments, if any, does the writer refer to?
- Does the writer describe any counterarguments fairly?
- Does the writer miss any important counterarguments?
- How does the writer respond to any counterarguments mentioned?
- Are the responses convincing? Why or why not?
- Are there any places where the writer's meaning is unclear?
- Are there any fallacies or problems with the logic?

Analyzing the Emotional Appeals

Chapter 8: How Arguments Appeal to Emotion describes what to look for. Here are some specific questions:

- How would you describe the tone of the argument? Does the argument change tone at any point, and if so, why?
- How does the argument establish a sense that it is important, urgent, relevant or somehow worth reading?
- Does the argument choose words with particular emotional connotations to further the argument?
- Does the argument use powerful examples to affect readers' emotions?
- Does the argument appeal to readers' self-interest?
- Does the argument appeal to the readers' sense of identity?
- Will different groups of readers likely respond to the argument in different ways?

Analyzing Appeals to Trust and Connection

Chapter 9: How Arguments Establish Trust and Connection describes the many ways an argument might do this. Here are some questions to brainstorm on:

- What makes the writer qualified to make the argument?
- Does the writer have credentials or professional training which make them an authority?
- Does the writer point to relevant personal experience?

- How does the writer show goodwill and respect toward readers?
- How does the writer attempt to convince us of their good moral character?
- Does the argument appeal to any particular shared values to establish trust?
- How does the writer try to create the impression that they are reasonable?
- Do they succeed in appearing reasonable?
- How does the argument seem to imagine the relationship between writer and reader?
- Does the writer take a more formal or informal approach to creating trust?
- To what extent does the argument depend on a shared sense of identity for trust?
- Does the argument attempt to undermine trust in an opposing group?
- What point of view ("I," "we," "you," or an impersonal point of view) does the writer use most frequently?
- How does this point of view affect the reader?
- When does the writer switch to a different point of view, and why?

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10.4: Reviewing an Argument Analysis Essay

Media Alternative

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Whether you are revising your own draft or reviewing a classmate's draft, you can start by asking yourself the following questions:

- Is the thesis clear, specific, and focused? Does it tell us what is important or interesting about the argument's attempt to convince us and/or give a central reason for its success or failure?
- Does the essay articulate the main claims, reasons, and any important assumptions of the argument, whether implicit or explicit?
- Does the essay convincingly identify at least two key important strategies the argument uses to establish credibility and trust or affect the reader's emotions?
- Does the essay assess the effectiveness of the strategies and identify any potential pitfalls or ways in which the strategies could backfire?
- Does each body paragraph have sufficient quotations or paraphrases of specific examples?
- Does it introduce quotations and paraphrases signal phrases that accurately show us the argument's purpose?
- Does the conclusion offer a final evaluation of the argument and its significance, value, or implications?
- Does the essay clearly show how one paragraph connects to the next and back to the thesis?

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10.5: A BRIEF SAMPLE ARGUMENT ANALYSIS

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (29 sec):

The brief essay "Henig's Perspective on the Gender Revolution" by student Jun Stephens can serve as an example of argument analysis.

- Sample argument analysis essay "Henig's Perspective on the Gender Revolution" in PDF with margin notes
- Sample argument analysis essay "Henig's Perspective on the Gender Revolution" accessible version with notes in parentheses

10.5.1: Annotated Brief Sample Argument Analysis

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10.5.1: Annotated Brief Sample Argument Analysis

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (9 min, 18 sec):

Format note: This version is accessible to screen reader users. Refer to these tips for reading our annotated sample arguments with a screen reader. For a more traditional visual format, see the PDF version of "Henig's Perspective on the Gender Revolution."

Jun Stephens

English 1C

14 February 2019

Note: This essay analyzes the following three-paragraph excerpt from the January 2017 *National Geographic* article titled "Gender Revolution: How Science Is Helping Us Understand Gender"

Excerpt

Eric Vilain, a geneticist and pediatrician who directs the UCLA Center for Gender-Based Biology, says that children express many desires and fantasies in passing. What if saying "I wish I were a girl" is a feeling just as fleeting as wishing to be an astronaut, a monkey, a bird? When we spoke by phone last spring, he told me that most studies investigating young children who express discomfort with their birth gender suggest they are more likely to turn out to be cisgender (aligned with their birth-assigned gender) than trans—and relative to the general population, more of these kids will eventually identify as gay or bisexual.

"If a boy is doing things that are girl-like—he wants long hair, wants to try his mother's shoes on, wants to wear a dress and play with dolls—then he's saying to himself, 'I'm doing girl things; therefore I must be a girl,'" Vilain said. But these preferences are gender expression, not gender identity. Vilain said he'd like parents to take a step back and remind the boy that he can do all sorts of things that girls do, but that doesn't mean he is a girl…

As Vilain might have instructed, Mack tried to broaden her child's understanding of how a boy could behave. "I told my child over and over again that he could continue to be a boy and play with all the Barbies he wanted and wear whatever he liked: dresses, skirts, all the sparkles money could buy," Mack said in her podcast, How to Be a Girl. "But my child said no, absolutely not. She was a girl." (Note: the excerpt ends here.)

Henig's Perspective on the Gender Revolution

The above excerpt is from Robin Marantz Henig's article in the January 2017 issue of *National Geographic* called "Gender Revolution: How Science Is Helping Us Understand Gender." (Note: The introduction signals that the argument analyzed contrasts the ideas of two other thinkers.) Here she offers two interesting points of view: that of Eric Vilain, geneticist, pediatrician, and director of the UCLA Center for Gender-Based Biology, and Marlo Mack, a mom of a transgender girl and creator of the podcast "How to Be a Girl." Vilain states that children can't differentiate between gender expression and gender identity easily, and that they go through many phases of wanting to be impossible things. (Note: Summary of a summary of the ideas of the first thinker discussed in Henig's argument and the contrasting response of the second thinker.) He says most studies on children questioning their birth-assigned gender suggest they are more likely to be cisgender than transgender later on. He advises parents of questioning children to "take a step back" and tell their children that they can do anything a child of another gender can do, but it doesn't mean they aren't the gender they were assigned at birth. Mack, however, has tried this with her daughter, who, even though she was told that boys can play with Barbies and wear dresses, insisted that she was a girl every time.

The author relies on Vilain's scholarly reputation. He is a doctor, scientist, and in charge of a gender-related facility at a prestigious university. (Note: Discusses how Henig establishes Vilain as an authority to be trusted, with partial success.) However,

from an intrinsic ethos perspective, the quotes included for him leave something to be desired. He said that most studies on children who show discomfort with their assigned at birth gender reveal that most of those children remain cisgender (identifies with their assigned at birth gender). This leaves the reader with questions. How did they define "discomfort" with their gender and for how long had they been expressing those feelings? A specific cited study that is well respected amongst pediatricians, endocrinologists, and psychologists working with trans children would have increased the support for his claim. The author let the reader ask these questions and look at his argument critically.

As well as a trust strategy, Henig presents Vilain's argument with sound reasoning. (Note: Compares the main strength of the Vilain argument--sound reasoning--with the main strength of the Mack argument, its appeal to sympathy with parental care.) What is quoted from him is logical. His claim is that children shouldn't be trusted to identify their gender. His warrant is that children go through many phases of wanting to be things they're not, and that children can't differentiate between gender expression and identity. Finally, his reason is that one's gender identity is not a phase, or gender expression. This is countered with Mack's argument which although it also has sound reasoning, is unique because of it's appeal to emotion. Henig knows the *National Geographic* audience to be one composed of everyday people and families, so an argument with an emotional appeal that is relatable to readers is a convincing tool. She knows the values of her audience.

The author introduces Mack one paragraph away from Villain's last words. He said "he'd like parents to take a step back and remind the boy that he can do all sorts of things that girls do, but that doesn't mean he is a girl." A better quote could not have been chosen by Henig for Mack to respond to. The author begins with "As Vilain might have instructed," to start Mack's account of her experience. (Note: Shows how the summary of the second argument is effectively poised to counter the first.) Mack is a parent with a trans girl, and the article states "'I told my child over and over again that he could continue to be a boy and play with all the Barbies he wanted...But my child said no, absolutely not. She was a girl." Not only does this respond directly to Vilain's call to action—or inaction, rather, but it breaks down his assumption. His assumption was that children go through many phases of wanting to be things they're not, and that children can't differentiate between gender expression and identity. If his argument were to stand, Mack's daughter would've told her mom that she didn't know boys could play with girl things. She didn't. (Note: Shows how Henig's description of the arguments accentuates Vilain's weakness.)

Perhaps Vilain has conceded to children in the past, and has personally had experience with those who do know the difference between gender expression and identity, such as Mack's daughter. This would have proved for a stronger argument from Vilain, and would have convinced the reader that he is reasonable, and not an extremist. Either such a case of his has yet to exist, or the author purposefully left it out. Henig provided us with a real example of someone trying Vilain's technique, and it failing over and over. The similar use of language in Vilain's section and in Mack's section, as well as the placement of their arguments one after another, show that the author intended for the reader to choose one side over the other. (Note: Highlights Henig's indirect method of convincing the readers of one side through the argument's structure.)

Henig's article is an apparently unbiased piece on gender and how people come to identify. However, the positioning of Mack's response to Vilain's technique on raising gender-questioning children shows Henig's support for Mack, and therefore supports children deciding their own gender. She does this by choosing a quote from Mack that would convince the reader with intrinsic ethos. She gets a different perspective by having the counterpoint be presented by a mother of a trans child, as opposed to only showing scientists' perspectives. Henig positions Mack's story right after Vilain in this article. While it would still be relevant elsewhere, that positioning and the quote she chose indicates that it is a response to Vilain's statement just a couple paragraphs before. These strategies were effectively used by Henig to endorse one side of this controversial argument. Because of this, the reader is inclined to agree, and will come out of reading an almost neutral article with support for Mack and her experience. (Note: Here we find the positive evaluation of the effectiveness of Henig's argument as a whole.)

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10.6: A LONGER SAMPLE ARGUMENT ANALYSIS

Media Alternative

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The essay "Argument Analysis of Cory Doctorow's 'Why I Won't Buy an iPad (and Think You Shouldn't, Either)'" can serve as an example.

- Sample argument analysis essay "Argument Analysis of Cory Doctorow's 'Why I Won't Buy an iPad (and Think You Shouldn't, Either)'" in PDF with margin notes
- Sample argument analysis essay "Argument Analysis of Cory Doctorow's 'Why I Won't Buy an iPad (and Think You Shouldn't, Either)'" accessible version with notes in parentheses

10.6.1: Annotated Longer Sample Argument Analysis

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10.6.1: Annotated Longer Sample Argument Analysis

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Anonymous

Professor Anonymous

English 101

Argument Analysis of Cory Doctorow's "Why I Won't Buy an iPad (and Think You Shouldn't, Either)"

iPads, like iPhones, are so omnipresent in 2020 that a critique of the technology almost seems futile. However, a decade ago at the time of its launch, the iPad actually sparked idealistic, energetic protest. (Note: The opening seeks to catch the reader's interest through the contrast between today's perspective and a decade ago.) (Note: Mentions the author, title, and place of publication of the argument analyzed.) Writers like Cory Doctorow lamented the way the iPad shut down possibilities for an open platform not controlled by a single company. Doctorow's 2010 article "Why I Won't Buy an iPad (and Think You Shouldn't, Either)" on BoingBoing critiques the iPad in the face of enormous media hype over its release. Apple proclaimed the iPad a technological revolution, but Doctorow thinks the real revolution would consist in opening up the hardware and software to consumers to modify. (Note: A teaser hinting at the argument's main point.)

Doctorow's perspective in this article grows out of his passionate advocacy of free digital media sharing. He got his start as a CD-ROM programmer and is now a successful blogger and author on the tech site BoingBoing. (Note: Background on the author's interests and credibility.) In this article, he argues that the iPad is just another way for established technology companies to control our technological freedom and creativity. Doctorow complains that Apple limits the digital rights of those who use its products by controlling the content that can be used and created on the device. (Note: Summary of Doctorow's thesis.) While he cites valid concerns, his argument against buying the iPad will likely only persuade software developers. The disadvantages he cites for consumers are slight compared with the advantage of smooth user experience the iPad offers. Yet his argument remains relevant to all today because it can revive a sense of excitement and possibility around open models that could still be developed with the right policies. (Note: Three sentences work together as the full thesis. The first provides a negative assessment of the argument. The second explains the reason for the failure. The third suggests a way the argument could still inspire us.)

Doctorow draws readers in by encouraging them to side with him as a smart, hip techie. (Note: Topic sentence shows how one of Doctorow's strategies affects the reader. No technical rhetoric terms are needed, but we see from the wording that this paragraph focuses on an emotional appeal.) He builds credibility by quoting popular science fiction writer and technology guru William Gibson, known among techies as a brilliant expert, the one who coined the term "virtual reality." Doctorow joins with Gibson in scoring the idea that consumers are passive and stupid by quoting at length Gibson's satirical picture of this view of the consumer as a drooling mutant. The implication is that corporations that try to create a streamlined user experience are dumbing things down too much. Doctorow implies that smart and creative users will be offended by these assumptions. He appeals to readers' pride as he invites us to see ourselves as active, creative consumers who reject technology built for dummies.

Doctorow creates a sense of the wonderful, cheap variety that users could enjoy if they weren't bound by Apple's restrictive, expensive platform. (Note: This paragraph describes one reason Doctorow gives not to buy the iPad, but it also shows how he creates a feeling of excitement as he gives that reason.) He argues that consumers do not have to settle for limited digital rights; we have other options. According to him, "The reason people have stopped paying for a lot of 'content' isn't just that they can get it for free, though: it's that they can get lots of competing stuff for free, too" (4). Doctorow essentially says, "You could have this

one thing...or you could have all of these things." Why pay for an expensive iPad and monitored apps, when you can get equal or better products and programs for free?

He underscores this vision of abundance by appealing to the value of freedom. (Note: The transition refers back to the idea of the previous paragraph (summarized in the word "abundance") and introduces a complementary appeal.) He writes, "As an adult, I want to be able to choose whose stuff I buy and whom I trust to evaluate that stuff. I don't want my universe of apps constrained to the stuff that the Cupertino Politburo decides to allow for its platform" (3). By referencing the constricting forces of Communist Russia, the author appeals to a basic human fear of being controlled. He stirs up a natural rebellion against being told what to do. He appeals to our patriotism by implying that an open digital platform is more American, whereas Apple's policies are more typical of a totalitarian regime like the Soviet Union.

Doctorow appeals effectively to our values and pride in the way he contrasts the open approach to the consumer with the Apple approach. (Note: This sentence summarizes the previous body paragraphs by pointing out that they all show the success of emotional appeals.) However, he does not bother to support his claim that consumers can really get what they want from an open platform. (Note: The paper turns toward critique with the word "however" and then undercuts the more positive assessment of the previous paragraph by citing a lack of evidence and possible bias.) He asserts that the free products available elsewhere are just as good as what the iPad offers, but are they really? Doctorow provides no evidence that this is so. Rather, he creates the suspicion that his interests as an independent software creator guide his assessment more than the actual consumer experience. As a software creator, he has something personal to gain from free digital media sharing and thus opposes digital rights management (DRM). He reminds us that he identifies as a developer when he writes, "It [Apple] uses DRM to control what can run on your devices, which means that...Apple developers can't sell on their own terms" (3). He fumes, "Of course I believe in a market where competition can take place without bending my knee to a company that has erected a drawbridge between me and my customers!" (3). The problem is that not everyone is interested in making or modifying software, and, therefore, not everyone cares.

Doctorow wants consumers to take an active role like software developers, but that is his priority, not everyone's. He overestimates how much intelligent consumers want to look under the hood of their device and their apps. He underestimates how much they want a streamlined experience so they can focus on their own objectives. Doctorow could have been more fair-minded about the benefits of owning the iPad and, by implication, the benefits big corporations can offer consumers. His only positive mention of the iPad states, "Clearly there's a lot of thoughtfulness and smarts that went into the design" (2). He could have gone on to acknowledge that the iPad could be a great piece of equipment for people who are willing to commit to one platform. If he had conceded this, he would have built credibility as a person in touch with consumer needs. (Note: Doctorow's failure to recognize his readers' needs costs him readers' trust.)

The last decade has shown that the iPad succeeded in convincing consumers. (Note: A historical claim that doesn't reference the text introduces a larger perspective on the argument.) Doctorow's idea of an open platform never materialized. Apple has encountered competition in the tablet market only from other huge companies like Amazon, Microsoft, and Samsung that offer similarly proprietary platforms. (Note: A concluding meditation on the value of the argument.) Yet Doctorow's article still has value because it reminds us of the possibility of a different model. He should follow it up today with a proposal for 2020, a longer range vision for replacing these closed corporate platforms with an open marketplace. (Note: Suggests a way in which the argument could be made more convincing by changing its focus to one that it can achieve.) After all, his real enemy is not the iPad, but the laws that allow for digital rights management and monopolistic power. It remains to be seen whether, given the right government regulation, an open platform could give consumers ease of use at the same time as it gave everyone access to create and sell and modify software. Maybe a glance at Doctorow's vision from 2010 will yet help us move toward that vision. (Note: Final reference to the value of the argument, using language intended to inspire.)

Work Cited

Doctorow, Cory. "Why I Won't Buy an iPad (and Think You Shouldn't, Either)." BoingBoing. 2 Apr. 2010. Web. 10 November 2014.

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10.7: A SAMPLE VISUAL ARGUMENT ANALYSIS

Media Alternative

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The essay "An Image Is Worth a Thousand Calls to Arms" by Saramanda Swigart analyzes a visual argument.

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10.7.1: Annotated Sample Visual Argument Analysis

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Student Y

English 1C

Prof. Swigart

An Image Is Worth a Thousand Calls to Arms

It may be tempting to think of arguments as being, well, wordy: lengthy essays or speeches designed to make a point and defend it. However, arguments can be entirely or primarily visual. (Note: The author introduces visual arguments as an everyday phenomenon that the reader may often encounter without consciously recognizing as arguments.) Virtually every man-made image is meant to communicate something, and even things so simple and everyday as magazine advertisements or internet banner ads—things we see so often that we often no longer consciously notice—convey the implied argument that we should buy a product, subscribe to a service, or otherwise do what the advertisement wants us to do. The same is nonetheless true of military recruitment posters and ads, which generally share the same common argument: the viewer should join the Armed Forces. (Note: This statement narrows the broad topic of visual arguments down to a particular example: military recruitment posters and ads.)

The entry of the United States into World War I led to a massive recruitment drive for military service as a nation without a large standing army was drawn into an ongoing conflict and forced to rapidly mobilize the population. (Note: This paragraph provides historical context for the posters under discussion, focusing the lens on WWI recruitment in the United States.) Although a draft was issued, making military service for draftees compulsory, there was understandably a vested national interest in recruiting as many volunteers for the armed services as possible. These two recruitment posters below (Figs. 1 and 2), originally printed during World War I and for the United States Army and Navy respectively, use different techniques to appeal to potential recruits' sensibilities and desires. (Note: This is the essay's real thesis, citing the Army and Navy posters as using different techniques to appeal to readers. Comparing these techniques is the focus of the essay's body paragraphs.)



The “I Want YOU for U.S. Army” poster, featuring James Montgomery Flagg's iconic illustration of Uncle Sam, is an image so instantly recognizable that it has become part of the American cultural vocabulary (Fig. 1). (Note: The beginning of this body paragraph introduces the name and source for Figure 1.) Uncle Sam, with his red, white, and blue wardrobe and star-spangled hat, draws on the iconography of the American flag to represent something of the American national spirit. (Note: The author describes the poster's imagery and typography, what the poster denotes.) Although depicted as an older man, with longish white beard and hair and bushy white eyebrows, he is depicted as active and authoritative, staring and pointing with one finger at the viewer. Even without the text, it is clear from Uncle Sam's posture and gesture that we, the viewer, are the one being addressed. The text makes the poster's appeal explicit: “I Want YOU for U.S. Army,” with the “YOU” highlighted in red text for added emphasis. (Note: The author here shifts into an analysis of what that imagery may mean, or what feelings or ideas it may arouse (what the poster connotes).) The appeal here is primarily one to trust: this character of the national spirit, drawn as an older and paternalistic figure, calls on the viewer directly to go to the “Nearest Recruiting Station.” Given that the average Army recruit is bound to be a younger man, this appeal from an older, paternal figure endows the appeal to enlist with an almost filial sense of obligation: if obeying one's father is what a good son does, obeying Uncle Sam is what a good citizen does. Uncle Sam's unsmiling expression signals to the recruit that this appeal to join is a matter of grave importance and urgency, and clearly no laughing matter.



The naval recruitment poster, featuring Richard Fayerweather Babcock's illustration of a sailor riding a torpedo, employs an entirely different aesthetic and makes a radically different appeal to its audience. (Note: The author introduces the name and source of Figure 2, while also emphasizing its contrast with Figure 1.) If the Army recruitment poster invokes a sense of solemn

duty, the Navy recruitment poster invokes a sense of adventure. (Note: Here a different pattern is employed: instead of talking about the imagery or type first, the author first describes the feelings aroused by the poster, contrasting these with Figure 1.) Rather than a figure addressing the viewer, we see a sailor riding a torpedo in the manner of a rodeo cowboy riding a bull--even with reins (somewhat inexplicably) in hand. (Note: This passage describes Figure 2's imagery and typography, its content, similar to how the last paragraph described the imagery of Figure 1...) The torpedo, rather than submerged in the water, kicks up spray by the sailor's feet as it skims the water's surface. The sailor's right hand wields a length of rope to act as a crop, showing that he is not a passive passenger on his unlikely steed but in control, whipping it forward, onward. Without context, this image might be confusing as it employs not only an unrealistic depiction of the life of the average sailor but also one that seems as reckless and suicidal as well, riding a bomb. However, the poster's text clarifies its appeal and makes it explicit: "Join the Navy, the Service for Fighting Men." (Note: Here the argument shifts again into an analysis of the emotional appeal being made there.) The characterization of the Navy as the "Service for Fighting Men," combined with the rodeo cowboy imagery, the inherent and obvious danger of riding an (arguably phallic) torpedo qualify the poster's call to wild adventure with a macho, masculine sensibility. Again, given that the average recruit is a young man, these subtle and not-so-subtle appeals to the viewer's masculinity qualify as appeals to the viewer's emotions and self-image. If the Uncle Sam poster gravely calls on dutiful citizens to join the Army, the Navy poster calls on adventurous "Fighting Men." While this poster may have been effective at reaching the audience of its time, it must be noted that audience of a modern Naval recruitment poster has changed. (Note: Unlike the previous paragraph, there is an additional analysis provided of how the appeal of Figure 2's argument has perhaps not aged as well as that of Figure 1.) With the abolition of gender restrictions in the Armed Forces and the re-orientation of recruitment efforts, it's likely that a poster calling on "Fighting Men" to enlist would prove less appealing to a broader audience. Also, the cultural connotation of riding a bomb has itself changed, and would today perhaps be sooner associated with *Dr. Strangelove* and catastrophic self-destruction than a call to adventure.

Analysis of visual arguments can be rewarding and surprising. (Note: The essay returns to the broader subject of visual arguments and how visual elements can enhance, strengthen, or complicate the argument beyond what can be achieved through words alone.) Images can subtly convey a rich and dense amount of information, saying a lot without necessarily saying anything at all. In these examples, most of the message is carried in image alone. Text slogans like "I Want You for U.S. Army" and "Join the Navy" would hardly capture a sense of grave patriotic duty or wild, dangerous adventure without such evocative illustrations to appeal to patriotism and a collective national identity or a wild adventure on the high seas. The effectiveness and appeal of these posters are enough to show how effective a non-verbal argument can be.

Works Cited

(Note: Works Cited page uses MLA documentation style appropriate for an English class.)

Babcock, Richard Fayerweather, Artist. *Join the Navy, the service for fighting men / Babcock*. Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, www.loc.gov/item/2002699393/

Flagg, James Montgomery, Artist. *I want you for U.S. Army: nearest recruiting station / James Montgomery Flagg*. Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, www.loc.gov/item/96507165/

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11: THE WRITING PROCESS

Learning Outcomes

- Describe the stages of the writing process
- Identify strategies for annotation, brainstorming, outlining, and drafting
- Choose what to focus on in revision
- Give constructive feedback on a peer's draft
- Evaluate and incorporate peer feedback.

11.1: An Overview of the Writing Process

11.2: Annotation

11.3: Brainstorming

11.4: Outlining

11.5: Drafting

11.6: Revision

11.7: Giving and Receiving Feedback



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11.1: An Overview of the Writing Process

Media Alternative

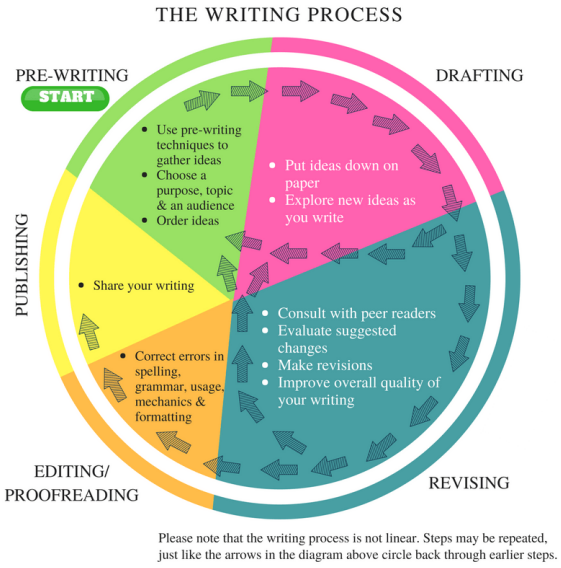
Listen to an audio version of this page (3 min, 4 sec):

Writing can be daunting. So many of us, whether we are beginning or experienced writers, feel anxious or even paralyzed as we face a new assignment. We may feel discouraged and question our skill because we can't envision a fully-formed essay on the spot.

But it's not actually a bad sign if we can't. As Anne Lamott says in her book *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*, "Almost all good writing begins with terrible first efforts. You need to start somewhere." Writing itself will help us form our ideas if we take it step by step. In Section 1.1: Why Study Argument? we suggested that writing helps us think clearly and deeply about a topic. We may start with little to no idea of where we are going, or we may have a working idea. Either way, if we engage in the process, we almost always get to greater insight and clarity for ourselves and our readers.

Below are the common steps most writers follow to move through the early stages of murky thoughts. In general, the order of these steps makes sense, but we are not bound to it. We can customize the process to fit our own style and the particular assignment. The key is to notice what is challenging at each point and find the strategy that will help the most. Often, a question or problem will arise as we work, and returning to an earlier strategy in the writing process can help us resolve the difficulty.

- **Studying the prompt:** The instructor's guidance can help us focus our efforts from the start so we don't spend time writing something that doesn't fit the assignment.
- **Reading and annotating:** Reading, rereading, and making notes on other texts is often the first step toward coming up with our own contribution to the larger conversation. As we have seen, most college writing comments on or responds to the arguments of others.
- **Generating ideas:** Various prewriting strategies can help us decide what to write about and gather specifics to support or explain what we want to say.
- **Planning how to organize the ideas:** Outlines, formal or informal, can help us structure the essay.
- **Drafting:** Writing the first version of the essay, often called the rough draft. Most writers go through many drafts.
- **Revising:** Reconsidering the ideas and content of the essay as well as refining the style and structure of the paper.
- **Editing:** Correcting grammar, punctuation, spelling, and mechanics. We can also call this **proofreading**.
- **Publishing:** Sharing the final draft with others.



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11.2: Annotation

Media Alternative

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Why annotate?

Writing notes can make reading more enjoyable. Reading doesn't have to be passive; we can find our own voices as we begin a conversation with the text. As a step in the writing process, annotation can be invaluable. As we have seen in this book, most college writing assignments ask us to respond to other arguments. We don't have to pull our ideas out of thin air. Early in the writing process, we can get ideas by rereading and making notes on any text we are going to write about. These notes will help us come up with specific points to make in our essay. We may even be able to copy and paste whole sentences of annotation into an essay's first draft.



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Annotate to engage

Annotating can help us stay focused on, and emotionally and intellectually connected to, what we are reading. It suggests that we feel empowered to speak back to the text.

Strategies for Engaging with a Text through Annotation

What we might do or think	What we might write
Respond to the text emotionally	"Inspiring :-) Discouraging :-("
Relate to the text	"Ref. Psych Prof. point about anxiety" "Me in 9th grade"

What we might do or think	What we might write
Visualize information or concept	Doodle or draw a picture to remind yourself quickly.
Ask questions	"How does this compare to middle-class students?"
Agree or disagree with the author	"Disagree (with the opinion he just described)"
Predict what is coming next	"I think the character will...."
Connect with other knowledge	"Different cause/effect than Wu describes"

Annotate to understand

As we saw in Section 2.3: Making Notes on the Writer's Claims, paraphrasing the points next to the text can help us understand fully. It can also help us prepare to write a summary, as we saw in Chapter 3. Noting any difficulties we have with understanding can remind us to ask or research the question later, and it can also get our minds working on solving the problem.

Strategies for Understanding a Text through Annotation

What we might do or think	What we might write
We don't understand a word or term, so we go back and reread the sentence and figure it out – or look it up.	Circle the word, and, after we figure out its meaning, write the meaning next to the word.
We don't understand a word, but realize we can keep reading and still understand.	Circle the word and look it up later.
We don't understand what the author is saying as it applies to a particular situation.	Write your question next to the text and bring it up in class or with a tutor.
You find the sentence that seems to be the main idea of a paragraph.	Underline and paraphrase it briefly.
You don't see the main point actually written there, but you know what it is.	Paraphrase it.
The author says she has three reasons for her point, so you decide to make sure you can find all three.	Write "3 reasons" in the margin, and underline and number the reasons – 1, 2, 3 – when you find them.
We notice that several points serve as examples for a claim.	Underline them and write "ex" and draw an arrow to the point that the example is supporting.

Annotate to assess, respond, and compare

If we are going to write an assessment of the text as we discussed in Chapter 4 or an original response as we discussed in Chapter 5, annotating can help us get started. We can note any possible strengths and weaknesses in the argument so we can later reflect more fully on the argument's validity. Often these notes about possible strengths and weaknesses will point us toward our own original responses, suggestions, or counterarguments.

Strategies for Assessing or Comparing a Text through Annotation

What we might do or think	What we might write
Question the evidence presented in the text.	"This seems like an isolated case. I don't think it's typical."
Think of a counterargument.	"What about the argument that Universal Basic Income encourages people to be entrepreneurs because they don't have to worry about just getting by?"
Think of additional evidence, examples, stories, or personal experiences that support the author's argument.	"This rings true because I've seen it so often among my relatives."
Think of other texts that advance the same or similar arguments.	"Similar to Plato's idea that the truth is absolute but we can only glimpse it through shadows."

Annotate to find evidence

Once we have an essay assignment, a topic, or an outline, we may know more specifically what it is we need from the text. We can take notes specifically for the purpose of identifying points or quotations to incorporate in an essay.

Strategies for Finding Evidence through Annotation

What we might do or think	What we might write
You find a statistic showing that more first generation students than ever are going to college.	Underline the statistic and write "1st gen population > ever"
You find a quote or detail that supports the idea that wages of people of color were rising in the '60s due to affirmative action.	Underline it and write, "aff. action 60s raises wages"

Tools and formats for annotation

- Underline or highlight words, sentences, and passages that stand out.
- Write notes by hand on the margins of the text.

- Consider using differently colored pens or highlighters to make the notes stand out or to identify different kinds of notes.
- Attach post-it notes with comments to the text.
- Write a list of notes on a separate sheet of paper with the page numbers they refer to.
- If your source is electronic, use the highlighting and commenting functions available in many e-readers.
- If your source is a web page or PDF, use a digital annotation platform such as Hypothesis or Perusall or even Google Drive.
- Keep a reading journal where you reflect in full sentences or paragraphs.
- Keep a **double-entry journal** where you divide pages into two or more columns by the type of response. For example, in the first column you might include quotation or paraphrases and in the second, you might include your questions, opinions. Be sure to include the page number or link to the part of the reading you were referencing.

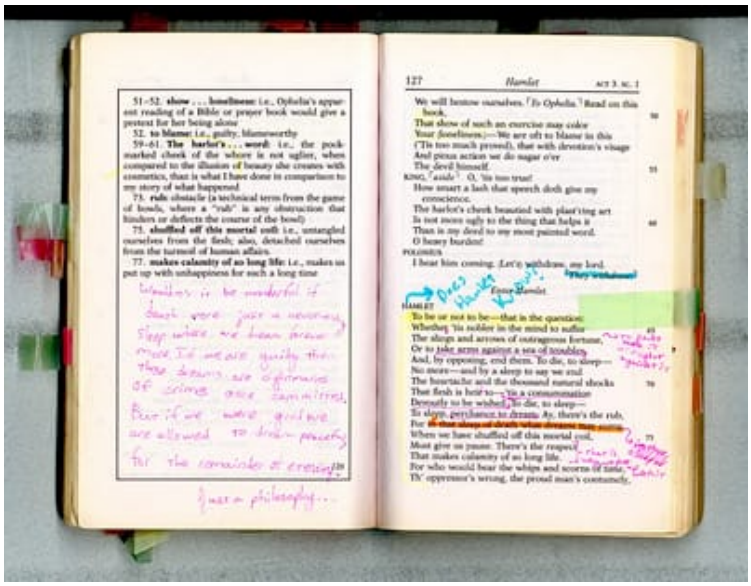


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11.3: Brainstorming

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (8 min, 40 sec):

We can choose from several methods when we want to generate ideas for a writing project. We can call these methods **brainstorming** techniques or **invention** techniques. They all have a few common rules:

- Write down everything that occurs to you; don't eliminate anything until you are done brainstorming.
- Don't bother with editing at this stage.
- Work as quickly as you can.

Listing

Brainstorm list: Simply make a list of all the ideas related to your topic. Do not censor your ideas; write everything down, knowing you can cross some off later. As you brainstorm, try not to focus your writing radar too narrowly, on a single aspect of your topic or a single question. The broader you cast your brainstorming net, the better because a large list of possibilities will give you a wealth of choices when time comes to compose your first draft.

What I know/don't know lists: If you know that your topic will require research, you can make two lists. The first will be a list of what you already know about your topic; the second will be a list of what you don't know and will have to research. For example, you might label one list "10 things I know to be true about..." and another "10 things I wonder about..."



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Mapping

A **mind map** or **cluster** is a method of brainstorming that allows you to draw connections between ideas.

1. To make a cluster, start with a big concept related to your assignment prompt. Write this in the center of a page or screen and circle it.
2. Think of ideas that connect to the big concept or branch out of it. Write these around the big concept and draw connecting lines to the big concept.

3. As you think of ideas that relate to any of the others, create more connections by writing those ideas around the one idea that connects them and draw connecting lines.

Notice that you can use color, larger type, etc., to create organization and emphasis.

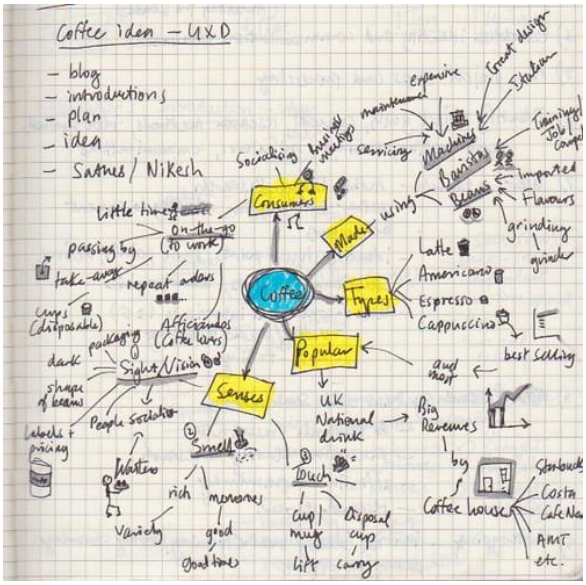


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Freewriting

Freewriting is an exercise in which you write freely (jot, list, write paragraphs, write question, take off on tangents: whatever “free” means to you) about a topic for a set amount of time (usually three to five minutes or until you run out of ideas or energy).

Try to write without checking, censoring, or editing yourself in any way. Don't put your pen or pencil down, or stop typing on the computer, no matter what. Let your mind go, go with the flow, and don’t worry about the end product. Don’t even worry about finishing your sentences or separating your paragraphs. You are not writing a draft of your paper. Instead, you are producing raw material. Later on, you just might find a gem of an idea in that raw material which you can develop into a complete draft.

- Write as much as you can, as quickly as you can.
- Don’t edit or cross anything out. (Note: if you must edit as you go, just write the correction and keep moving along. Don’t go for the perfect word, just get the idea on the page.)
- Keep your pen, pencil, or fingers on the keyboard moving.
- You don’t need to stay on topic or write in any order. Feel free to follow tangents.
- If you get stuck, write a repeating phrase until your brain gets tired and gives you something else to write. (For example, "I really hate having to do this, why isn’t it lunch-time already, please let me think of something, please let me think of something.")
- Choose a **prompt**, an idea or question that gets you started. An example of a writing prompt might be “What do I already know about this topic?” Or “What is the first idea I have about my topic?” If you started with a list or an outline, you can freewrite about each item.

Looping

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

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

4. Repeat as long as you see an interesting idea that could be expanded.

For more on using a timer and breaks to get going on tasks you tend to procrastinate on, you may want to read about the Pomodoro Technique.

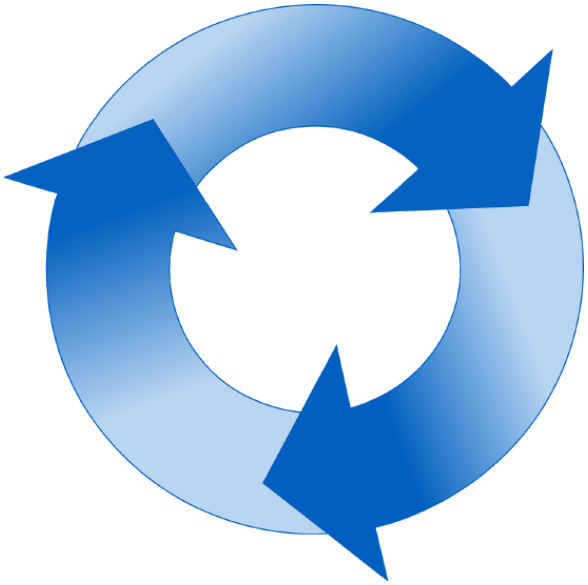


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Asking Questions

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

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

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

The set of 5 journalist's questions, sometimes called the five W's, can help us generate basic information about a topic. Here are the questions:

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



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Talking

Some of us feel more comfortable expressing ourselves in conversation than on the page. We can generate ideas by speaking aloud as well; this may stimulate our brain in a different way. All of the above strategies can be adapted for speaking rather than typing or writing. These spoken brainstorms can be social or solitary. Here are a few approaches:

Conversations with peer or tutors

A conversation with a live person can help us come up with ideas that might not have occurred to us if we weren't energized by the other person and imagining what might interest them. It can work well to follow up more solitary kinds of brainstorming with a peer or group time to share what we came up with. Writing tutors are usually trained to question, encourage and draw out ideas.



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Talking to ourselves

If we can let go of feeling foolish, a private conversation with ourselves can be a great way to get past writer's block and tap into new energy. We could start a monologue with our questions and doubts. For example, "Hmm, well, I'm somewhat interested in electric cars, but I know so many people are doing that topic. What would my angle be? The battery problems in these cars are severe, so I don't want to endorse them, but I don't want to give up on them either..."

Voice typing

Most word processing programs now, including Google Docs, include voice typing features that allow us to speak and see the words transcribed on the page. We might have to edit the transcription later, of course, but if we can bring ourselves to talk but we can't bring ourselves to write, this is a great way to get something down.

Recording ourselves

We can use our phones to record voice memos of ideas at any time. If your voicemail transcribes your message automatically, you can leave yourself voice messages and glance at what you've said later for reference.



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11.4: Outlining

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (9 min, 44 sec):

Once we have plenty of ideas for an essay, writing an outline can help us organize them. Outlining makes sense when we know a topic well or at least know the areas we want to explore. Outlines range from formal to informal. Not all writers use outlines; many writers work best from a list of ideas or from freewriting, but in some cases, outlines can save us a lot of rewriting later on.



Like a sketch of an item we want to make, a written outline shows the basic structure of an essay.
Image by Michael Burrows on Pexels under the Pexels License.

Traditional outlines

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

How much should I write?

Phrase outlines

A phrase may be sufficient to describe each topic sentence or supporting detail. It is usually helpful to write a whole sentence to describe the thesis in order to specify not just the topic, but what you plan to say about it.

Sentence outlines

Writing a full sentence for each supporting idea and detail challenges us to clarify what we are going to say about each point and to think through how it relates to the other points and the thesis. Some instructors require a complete sentence for each item in a formal outline.

Sample traditional outline format

I. Major idea or thesis
   a. Supporting idea
      i. Detail
      ii. Detail
      iii. Detail
   b. Supporting idea
      i. Detail
      ii. Detail
      iii. Detail

Sample traditional outline

I. Thesis: The Sturgis motorcycle rally has become central to the identity of Sturgis and the surrounding area.
   a. Bike Week has been going on for more than seventy years.
      i. It is an automatic assumption by locals that Bike Week will be held each year.
      ii. Most locals have never known life without Bike Week.
   b. Bike Week is a key element of area finances.
      i. Millions of dollars flow into the area economy.
      ii. Sturgis and the surrounding cities have invested heavily in the function.
      iii. Although the actual Bike Week is a central focus, bikers come here for months on either side of the week to ride the famous routes.
   c. The area has grown and developed around Bike Week.
      i. Every small town has a Harley-Davidson store.
      ii. Merchants continually create new products to sell to bikers.
      iii. The locals are very accepting and supportive of the bikers.
   d. People around the world recognize Sturgis for Bike Week.
      i. People attend Bike Week from all fifty states and many other countries.
      ii. Although Sturgis has only a few thousand people, the town is known around the world.

Outline templates

- Google Docs outline template. Make a copy of this document and then replace the text with your own.
- Microsft Word outline template. Download this template and open it in Microsoft Word.

> **Note**
>
> Most word-processing applications include automatic outlining capabilities. Search the Help section for instructions.

Rough outlines

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

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11.5: Drafting

Media Alternative

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Drafting is the stage of the writing process in which we develop a complete first version of a piece of writing. If we have done some prewriting, we probably have sentences and ideas that can become part of the draft.

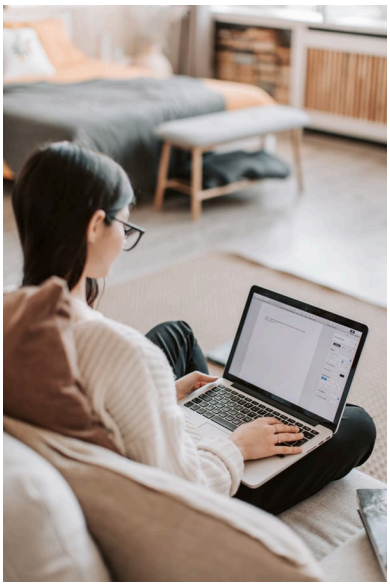


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Tips for getting going

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

- **Begin writing with the part that is clearest in your mind.** There is no need to write in the order that the paragraphs will appear in the end. You can start with the third paragraph in your outline if ideas come easily to mind. You can start with the second paragraph or the first paragraph, too. Many people write your introduction and conclusion last, after they have fleshed out the body paragraphs.
- **Take short breaks to refresh your mind.** This tip might be most useful if you are writing a multipage report or essay. Still, if you are antsy or cannot concentrate, take a break to let your mind rest. Don't beat yourself up. Try setting an alarm to limit your break, and when the time is up, return to your desk to write. As Anne Lamott says in her book *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*, "Try looking at your mind as a wayward puppy that you are trying to paper train. You don't drop-kick a puppy into the neighbor's yard every time it piddles on the floor. You just keep bringing it back to the newspaper."
- **Don't let your inner critic slow you down.** Anne Lamott says, "Perfectionism...is the main obstacle between you and a shitty first draft." Try to think of the bad first draft as the goal, not a sign of failure. A bad first draft is a step forward. Try to let go of your worries. There will be time to rethink, rephrase, and rework during the revision process.
- **Refer back to your prewriting.** If you are stuck, you may want to copy and paste something in from a brainstorm. If you have an outline, use it to guide the development of your paragraphs and the elaboration of your ideas. Each main idea becomes the topic of a new paragraph. Develop it with the supporting details and the subpoints of those details that you included in your outline.
- **Set small goals and time yourself.** Some call this "**fast drafting**." By experimenting, you can figure out how long you can usually concentrate given the right conditions: 30 minutes? 60 minutes? 75? Plan one longer session or several shorter

ones. Decide on the goal: Write a paragraph in 10 minutes, 2 pages in 1 hour, or a complete essay in 1 hour and 15 minutes. Turn off phones and social media, close extra browser windows and tabs, let the dog outside. This needs to be quiet, concentrated time. You may want to tie a small reward to each goal like watching a video, eating a snack, or checking social media.

- **Keep your audience and purpose in mind as you write.** Your purpose will guide your mind as you compose your sentences. Your sense of your audience will guide word choice. For most college assignments, the audience is assumed to be an intelligent general reader. It may help to imagine your classmates as your write. Keep asking yourself what your readers, with their background and experience, need to be told in order to understand. How can you best express your ideas so they are totally clear?



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11.6: Revision

Media Alternative

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Why Revise?

In her book on writing called *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*, Anne Lamott celebrates “shitty first drafts.” She says, “All good writers write them. This is how they end up with good second drafts and terrific third drafts” (21). Novelist Vladimir Nabokov once said, "I have rewritten–often several times–every word I have ever published. My pencils outlast their erasers."

For most writers, the process of writing and revision is the way we figure out exactly what we want to say. Writing helps us think. Revision can be one of the most important, instructive, and even pleasurable parts of the writing process. We respond to others’ critiques and questions and watch the work transform into something stronger, clearer, and more persuasive. It may seem like a paradox, but the better we get at writing, the more time we will probably spend revising.

Many people hear the words “critique” and “critical” and pick up only negative vibes. However, a critique can energize us and make us feel good about our writing. We can learn to be critical of ourselves in a constructive way and still feel good about ourselves as writers. Critiques don’t mean we’ve done something wrong. It’s better to see them as an opportunity to hear another perspective. Most well-regarded books include acknowledgments pages that thank all the people who gave feedback. The authors know that getting feedback and making changes is a normal part of producing the best possible work.

What Should We Prioritize in Revision?

By revision, we mean looking for ways to make ideas clearer and more convincing. When revising, we add, cut, move, or change whole sentences or paragraphs. Revising is far more than just editing; it is really a re-vision of an entire essay: ideas, organization, and development.



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It’s most efficient to revise from “big” to “small.” That is, we focus first on ideas and organization before turning our attention to sentence-level clarity. If we separate out these two stages, we won’t waste time editing the grammar of sentences that we might later have to change or cut.

Once we feel like we've finished the content of the essay, we can move on to sentence-level editing. Then we take a second look at *how* we expressed our ideas. We add or change words; fix problems in grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure; and improve the writing style. The goal is to turn out a polished piece of writing we feel proud of.

Strategies for Getting Perspective

Often the intense process of writing a draft leaves us feeling unsure where to begin revising. We may be too immersed in what we have done to see what can be improved. Here are some revision strategies that writers use to get a fresh perspective on what they have written:

- Take a break. Set aside your writing for a few hours or even a day until you can look at it objectively.
- Print out a clean copy of the essay you plan to revise. Mark revision notes by hand and later use the printout to go back to the computer and make changes.
- Read your work aloud to yourself or a friend, or use a computer reader like NaturalReaders.com to listen to it. Often in listening, we notice more things that we skip over when reading.
- Ask a tutor or someone you trust for feedback and constructive criticism.
- Pretend you are one of your readers. Are you satisfied or dissatisfied? Why? Think of yourself as a translator whose job it is to translate your writing into clearer, more dynamic English.
- Use the tutoring resources that your college provides. Find out where your school's writing lab is located and ask about the assistance they provide online and in person.

Four Ways to Approach Revision

1. Focus on the Connections between Ideas

One way to revise is to look at the structure of the essay and see if it is solid. We want to make sure all of our points are related to the main point—they unite to support the thesis. When a piece of writing has unity, all the ideas in each paragraph—and in the entire essay—clearly belong, and the reader can see how each idea relates to the one before it. We can achieve this through referring back, repeating key words and phrases, and using pointing and transition words. See 12.3: Showing How a New Idea Fits in and 12.4: Referring Back to Make the Connection.

Often when we are first trying to get something on paper, we may wander off topic, adding information that doesn't develop the main idea. That's fine, as long as we catch it and correct it in revision. We can check each paragraph to make sure it helps prove the thesis. Then we can make sure the sentences in the paragraph support the topic sentence. Have we addressed the important ideas and questions that will come to readers' minds?

Don't be afraid to delete material if you realize it is off topic. Alternately, you might see if you can reframe that material so it more clearly connects to the thesis and the idea that came before it.

2. Focus on Balancing "They Say" and "I Say"

As we have seen in Chapter 4: Assessing the Strength of an Argument (Logos) and Chapter 5: Responding to an Argument:, many college essays require both a summary of another text and a response to that text. In such essays, we aim for a balance of summary and response, or "they say" and "I say." If you have been told or suspect that you need more sources to back up your claims, or you need to give more of your own opinion, try this exercise:

Assess How Much "They Say" and "I Say" You Have:

1. Take two different-colored highlighters.
2. With your first highlighter color, highlight all the sentences in the body of the essay that summarize, paraphrase, or quote the ideas of your source text.
3. Now, take out highlighter color two. Go through and mark those passages containing your opinions, viewpoints, unique ideas, or thoughts. Many students will find this color a bit underused, but others will notice too much color here if their essays lack source material.
4. Take a moment to diagnose these disparate problems. Too much of one color means source overload—too much "they say" and not enough "I say." Too much of the other color means empty opinion and guesswork—too much "I say," not

backed up by "they say." Check your essay assignment to see if the teacher has given any guidance about how much of the essay should be "they say" and how much should be "I say." Do you need to add more of one or the other?

Bring in More "I Say," If Needed:

1. Take one of your sources and read yourself a few paragraphs. After each major thought or idea, free-write a response in your own words: don't restate what the author says, respond honestly with your own opinionated, conversational response to what the source has just said. Pretend that you're talking face-to-face with the author, replying naturally.

2. Once you feel you've got sufficient conversation/dialogue generated on paper, read your replies quietly to yourself, creating an actual conversation. Can you bring some of this "dialogue" into your essay? Strong essays should read like all the sources, including your analysis, are talking to each other.

3. Repeat with any other source texts.

Bring in More "They Say," If Needed:

1. Next, try the same with the highlighted source sections of your drafts. After each assessment or opinion you give, check to make sure it is linked with corresponding ideas from your source texts.
2. Pretend the author of the texts are speaking back to you. What would they have to say about your claims? Comb through their work and try to find instances in which they agreed, disagreed, or complicated your read and consider weaving it into the text. If they offer a counter-argument then you might want to address it. If they reinforce your ideas, then you may have strengthened your ideas.
3. Repeat with any other source texts.

3. Focus on the Thesis

1. Find the essay's thesis statement, the one-sentence version of the whole essay. (Some teachers may allow for two-sentence theses, but most commonly the thesis can be expressed in one sentence). If you cannot find it, read the whole essay, and craft one.
2. Does your thesis consist of a clear claim? Will readers know what you mean after reading that sentence alone? Imagine reading it to a friend. Would you want to change anything so they could understand it better?
3. Does the thesis include or at least touch on all the ideas developed in the essay? If not, you may need to revise it so it covers more.
4. If the thesis is very general, consider ways to make it more specific. Whom does this apply to? When? Where? What are the claim's implications? Look for generalizations, and replace them with specifics.

4. Focus on Developing the Ideas

If your ideas don't feel fully developed or you're struggling to fill the page requirement, one approach is to go through each sentence of each paragraph to see what you need to add. For each paragraph, determine whether all the ideas included are sufficiently explained.

1. Are all terms defined for the reader?
2. Has each point been explained in enough detail?
3. Have you given an example, quotation, or other specific information to support each point that needs it?
4. Is there anything you mention that might well leave readers confused or asking questions?
5. Is it clear how the paragraph relates to the previous paragraph and the thesis?

Revise each under-developed paragraph to answer questions and provide a full picture for the reader. If a paragraph seems to be getting long, consider whether it includes more than one important point. Often a paragraph on one topic can be split into two paragraphs, each on a subtopic. The transition can show how they are related.

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Works Cited

Lamott, Anne. “Shitty First Drafts.” *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*. New York: Random House, 1994. Print.

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11.7: Giving and Receiving Feedback

Media Alternative

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In many writing classes, students are expected to learn how to give feedback to their peers. This task is usually called peer review, a concept you will also learn about when you begin to use academic research. At first, this may seem intimidating. Writers may think, "I'm not a teacher–how can I give useful feedback to another writer?" What writers can do is give their peers an honest reaction as a reader and give advice based on their own experience. It is ultimately up to the writer to decide if they want to make use of the feedback given. If you feel unsure of your ability to give feedback, remember that you are learning from the process. In a class, the other students will also receive feedback from the instructor.

This understanding may also help students who don't feel that other students are qualified to give feedback. If you feel that the advice given to you by a peer isn't right, you can choose to ignore it or decide to check with your instructor first. Remember that your peers are learning how to give feedback, just as you are.

Giving feedback on writing is a powerful skill that you may use outside of school for work projects, for personal writing, or even to help your children with their homework.



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Giving peer feedback

When your role in peer review is to give feedback, your job is to help the writer by giving your reaction as a reader to the writing. Think about the kind of feedback you would like to get and also how you would like that feedback to be given. What follows here are some basic rules to follow for responding to someone else's writing.

- **First, listen to the writer**. What kind of feedback are they asking for? Do they want to know if their thesis is clear? Do they have questions about citing sources? Make a note about what kind of feedback the writer has requested and keep that in mind as you respond.
- **Be kind**. When you are receiving criticism, isn't it easier to hear if the person giving the criticism is kind and respectful to you? Do the same for your peer.
- **Comment on the higher-order concerns first**. That means asking questions about anything that confuses you, checking to see if the writing did what the assignment called for, and considering if the order of the paper makes sense. Sometimes your

instructor will give you specific things they want you to comment on; if so, be sure you do so.

- **Use "I" statements** to help stay focused on your reaction to the writing. For example, instead of saying, "You aren't clear in this paragraph," try saying, "I'm confused in this paragraph. Did you mean X or Y?"
- **Be specific.** Never say "I liked it" or "It was good" unless you follow up with an explanation of exactly what you liked or thought was good. The same goes for criticism; say exactly what confused you or what was missing.
- **Ask questions**. Use questions to clarify what the writer means, what the resources given are saying, and what the writer is trying to do.
- **Offer advice** based on your own experience. For example, you could say "if this were my paper, the two things I would do next are A and B." Provide options such as, "If you wanted to expand this, you could do A, B, or C."
- **Don't try to make the writer sound like you**. If a word is the wrong word, note that, but if you just think of a word you like better, that's just a matter of style and voice.
- **Don't edit your peer's writing for them**. Only comment on editing when the writing is a final draft or when your instructor has included checking for errors in the instructions for peer review. Correcting errors is important at some point, but it makes no sense to spend time editing a paragraph if that paragraph may need to be deleted or changed. It's okay to remind the writer to run spellcheck and grammar check if you notice minor errors. Otherwise, only ask about editing errors if you have trouble understanding the sentence because of the mistakes. If your instructor does want you to comment on errors, see Proofreading Strategies and be sure to follow the instructions.

Make the most of peer feedback

Now let's consider your role in receiving feedback, not giving it. Are you eager to get feedback? Scared to share your work? If you are receiving feedback from your peers, remember that ultimately you get to decide what feedback to accept. If you don't think the feedback is correct, ask your instructor what they think. And give your peers a break; they are also just learning how to give feedback.

One way to improve the feedback you get is to ask for the kind of feedback you want. Don't be afraid to give your peer reviewer some direction.

Listen to or read the feedback with an open mind. Consider that the peer reviewer is your reader. It's good to know what a real reader got out of your writing.

If you aren't sure about the feedback or feel upset about it, reconsider the suggestions after a break. It's okay to say, "I'll think about that." If you feel that the reviewer is trying to change your style so that the paper doesn't sound like you anymore, consider whether the feedback helps you make the paper better. If not, feel free to set that feedback aside.

Why meet with a writing tutor?

Sometimes your instructor may ask you to visit the Writing Center, or it may even be a requirement for your class. Or you may just be curious about what a writing tutor has to offer. Many colleges have writing centers or subscribe to online services that provide tutoring in writing. What's the benefit?

Writing tutors offer you another perspective on your writing. They serve as a real audience for your words and ideas. In addition to that, they have some additional expertise either because they are more experienced writers or they are writing instructors. Writing tutors also have experience with resources for writing that you may not be aware of.



Consider meeting with a tutor online if your college offers that option.
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Preparing to meet with a tutor

To prepare for a Writing Center session, print your paper out and consider printing a second copy to make it easier for both you and the tutor to read along at the same time. Be ready to take notes and listen carefully. It's helpful if you bring the assignment or have access to it online. Your tutor will spend a few minutes in the beginning of the session figuring out what you are writing, what the requirements are, and when your work is due. They may ask what you have already done to improve the writing, and they will almost always ask you what you would like help with.

Keep in mind that your tutor will want to focus on a few important things rather than try to catch every little thing in your paper. Tutors won't edit your paper for you, but they can help you learn how to edit your own work better. Don't be surprised if your tutor shows you how to use a writing resource such as a handbook or the Purdue OWL online; part of the tutor's job is to help you learn to navigate resources on your own, so that you eventually have the same tools as the tutor.

At the end of a session, the tutor will probably ask you what you plan to do next with your writing. That's how they check to see that you got what you needed from the session and that you understood the advice given. After you revise your writing, you may want to schedule another tutoring session to work on additional aspects of the assignment.

What about getting help from a friend or family member?

Getting feedback from a reader outside of your class can sometimes be a good idea. If you want to ask a friend or family member for feedback, set some ground rules. They should follow the same rules as a peer reviewer. At the very least, asking a friend or family member to read your paper aloud will help you hear how your paper sounds. You will probably catch more errors, too.

Preparing for a student/teacher conference

Getting in-person help from your instructor is one of the best ways to receive feedback. You can prepare for a conference with your instructor so that you get the most out of it. Usually, a conference happens with just you and your instructor. Friends aren't invited, and parents can only attend with your permission due to the Family Educational Rights to Privacy Act (FERPA). See this handy link to "FERPA General Guidance for Students" from the US Department of Education (found at studentprivacy.ed.gov).

Bring your best work to the conference. The more effort you have already made means that the instructor won't waste time telling you things you already know you need to fix. Re-read your work before the conference and prepare some questions. What do you think is working? What do you need help with? During the conference, take notes. If the instructor writes anything down, ask if you can take their notes with you. At the end of the conference, work with your instructor on an action plan to revise your work.

Attributions

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12: ESSAY ORGANIZATION

Learning Outcomes

- Write a thesis that summarizes the main point of an essay
- Write a topic sentence that summarizes the main point of a paragraph
- Introduce relevant specific evidence to support a topic sentence
- Integrate quotations and paraphrases from other texts as support
- Connect a new idea to a previous point or to the thesis
- Introduce essays in ways that engage the reader in the specific topic
- Conclude essays in ways that sum up as needed and point toward further questions or implications.

12.1: Developing a Thesis Statement

12.2: Topic Sentences

12.3: Showing How a New Idea Fits in (Transitions)

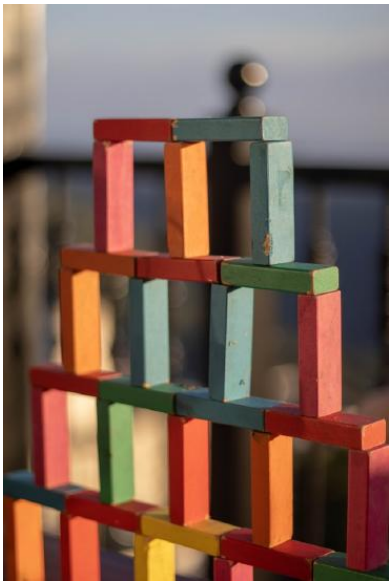
12.4: Referring Back to Make the Connection (Cohesion)

12.5: Developing Paragraphs

12.6: Quoting and Paraphrasing

12.7: Introductions

12.8: Conclusions



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12.1: Developing a Thesis Statement

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (9 min, 29 sec):

What is a thesis and why is it important?

We can think of a thesis statement as a very short version of the whole essay. If a friend asks us, "What are you trying to say in your essay?" the thesis should give the answer. It's like a signpost that signals the essay's destination. The essay itself explains, justifies, questions, and elaborates on that thesis.

As to why we need a thesis, have you ever listened to someone talk and asked yourself, "Where are they going with this? What's the point?" When we listen or when we read, we can take in multiple ideas if we know how they are related to an overall claim. Otherwise, we may be tempted to tune out.

In Chapter 2: Reading to Figure out the Argument, we practiced looking for main claims and supporting reasons as well as counterarguments and limits. When we write our own essays, we want to make clear to readers what our main claim is and how our other points fit in.

How do I come up with a good thesis?

A thesis is most commonly one sentence long and appears toward the end of the introduction. However, as our essays get longer and more complex, we may need two sentences to fully articulate the thesis. Check with your professor to see if they consider a two-sentence thesis legitimate and necessary in your case. In general, keeping the thesis short and stating it early will allow readers to easily grasp where the essay is going and how each paragraph relates. A strong thesis statement will have the following qualities:

- **Specific.** A thesis statement must be precise enough to allow for a coherent argument and remain focused on the topic. For example, health care is a broad topic, but a proper thesis statement would focus on a specific area of that topic, such as the limited options for individuals without health care coverage.
- **Arguable.** A thesis statement needs to be something that not everyone would immediately accept right away. A point of view or judgment about a topic is arguable and worth exploring in an essay. An established fact is not arguable.
- **Supportable.** For any claim we make in our thesis, we must be able to provide reasons and examples. We can rely on personal observations in order to do this, or we can consult outside sources to demonstrate that what we assert is valid. A strong argument is backed by examples and details.

In essay assignments, teachers often provide a central question they want us to answer. That question can be our guide as we develop the thesis. The thesis can be our best answer to the question, an answer we can explain in more detail throughout the essay. If the teacher does not ask a question in the essay assignment, they may still describe a general topic. In that case, we can ask ourselves, "What do I want to say about this topic?" We will discuss coming up with a topic for more open-ended essay assignments in Section 6.*: Focused Research Topics (link).

Often as we write, we get a clearer idea of what it is we are ultimately trying to say, so we can revise the thesis as we go. Writing process strategies such as brainstorming, outlining, getting feedback, and revising will help us refine the thesis (Writing Process Chapter reference and link).

Examples of thesis statements

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

3. Exposing children from an early age to the dangers of drug abuse is a sure method of preventing future drug addicts.
4. In today's crumbling job market, a high school diploma is not significant enough education to land a stable, lucrative job.
5. The societal and personal struggles of Troy Maxson in the play *Fences* symbolize the challenge of black males who lived through segregation and integration in the United States.

How can I improve a thesis?

1. Check if it covers the ideas in the essay

Your thesis will probably change as you write, so you will need to modify it to reflect exactly what you have discussed in your essay. Working thesis statements often become stronger as we gather information and form new opinions and reasons for those opinions. Revision helps us strengthen our thesis so that it matches what you have expressed in the body of the paper.

2. Make it more specific

◦ Replace nonspecific words, such as *people*, *everything*, *society*, or *life*, with more precise words.

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

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

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

◦ Add key information

We can ask ourselves the following questions to anticipate what readers will want to know.

Working thesis: Kansas City schoolteachers are not paid enough.

- ◦ Who is not paying the teachers enough?
- ◦ What is considered "enough"? Why?
- ◦ How do the low salaries of teachers affect the overall functioning of a school?

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

3. Clarify an idea

What might readers be confused about after they read the thesis? What basic questions will they have about the meaning of the thesis? We can revise to make the answers clear.

Working thesis: The welfare system is a joke.

A joke means many things to many people. Readers bring all sorts of backgrounds and perspectives to the reading process and would need clarification for a word so vague. This expression may also be too informal for the selected audience. By asking questions, the writer can devise a more precise and appropriate explanation for *joke*.

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

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

It is true that some young women in today's society are more sexualized than in the past, but that is not true for all girls. The writer of this thesis should ask the following questions:

- Which teenage girls?
- What constitutes "too" sexualized?
- Are we talking about the girls' behavior or the way other people view them, or both?
- What is causing this?
- Why does it matter? What are the repercussions?

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

Exercise 12.1.2

Read the following thesis statements. Choose three that need improvement and revise them. Explain why each revision is better.

1. The subject of this paper is my experience with ferrets as pets.
2. The government must expand its funding for research on renewable energy resources in order to prepare for the impending end of oil.
3. Edgar Allan Poe was a poet who lived in Baltimore during the nineteenth century.
4. There are many reasons why slot machines should not be legalized in Baltimore.
5. Despite his promises during his campaign, President Kennedy took few executive measures to support civil rights legislation.
6. Because many children's toys have potential safety hazards that could lead to injury, it is clear that not all children's toys are safe.
7. My experience with young children has taught me that I want to be a disciplinary parent because I believe that a child without discipline can be a parent's worst nightmare.

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12.2: Topic Sentences

Media Alternative

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What is a topic sentence and why is it useful?

Imagine reading one long block of text, with each idea blurring into the next. We are likely to lose interest in writing that is disorganized and spans many pages without breaks. Paragraphs separate ideas into logical, manageable chunks. By exploring one idea at a time, the writer has a chance to explain and support that idea. The reader can then digest the idea before moving on to the next, related paragraph.

A **topic sentence** is a sentence that summarizes the main idea of a paragraph, just as a thesis summarizes a whole essay. As the unifying sentence for the paragraph, the topic sentence is the most general, whereas other, supporting sentences provide more specific information, such as facts, details, or examples.

Each topic sentence should clearly relate to the essay's thesis. We will talk more about how to make that connection in the next sections, 12.3: Showing How a New Idea Fits in (Transitions) and 12.4: Referring Back to Make the Connection (Cohesion).



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What makes a good topic sentence?

The goal of a topic sentence is to help readers focus on and remember the main idea of the paragraph. So the trick is to write a sentence that covers all the points of the paragraph but does not cram in too many words or details. We want to give a sense of what the paragraph will contain without listing all the specifics.

Example 12.2.1

Vague topic sentence: "First, we need a better way to educate students."

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

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

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

In addition, we want to make sure that the topic sentence gets right to the point. A good topic sentence is clear and easy to follow.

Example 12.2.2

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

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

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

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

Where should I put a topic sentence?

In academic writing, the *topic sentence* is usually the first sentence or second sentence of a paragraph and expresses its main idea, followed by supporting sentences that help explain, prove, or enhance the topic sentence. In most college essays, placing an explicit topic sentence at the beginning of each paragraph (the first or second sentence) makes it easier for readers to follow the essay and for writers to stay on topic.

However, ultimately what matters is whether the reader can easily pick up on the main idea of the paragraph. Sometimes, especially in narrative or creative writing, a writer may choose to build up to the topic sentence or even leave it implied. The following examples illustrate varying locations for the topic sentence. In each example, the topic sentence is underlined.

Topic Sentence Begins the Paragraph (General to Specific)

Paragraphs that begin with the topic sentence move from the general to the specific. They open with a general statement about a subject and then discuss specific examples. This is the common pattern for most academic essays.

> After reading the new TV guide this week I wondered why we are still being bombarded with reality shows, a plague that continues to darken our airwaves. Along with the return of viewer favorites, we are to be cursed with yet another mindless creation. Prisoner follows the daily lives of eight suburban housewives who have chosen to be put in jail for the purposes of this fake psychological experiment. A preview for the first episode shows the usual tears and tantrums associated with reality television. I dread to think what producers will come up with next season and hope that other viewers will express their criticism. These producers must stop the constant stream of meaningless shows without plotlines. We’ve had enough reality television to last us a lifetime!

Here, the first sentence tells readers that the paragraph will be about reality television shows, and it expresses the writer’s distaste for these shows through the use of the word bombarded. Each of the following sentences in the paragraph supports the topic sentence by providing further information about a specific reality television show and why the writer finds it unappealing. The final sentence is the concluding sentence. It reiterates the main point that viewers are bored with reality television shows by using different words from the topic sentence.

Topic Sentence Ends the Paragraph (Specific to General)

Sometimes, especially in persuasive writing, we might want to save the general statement for last, when we have given enough supporting details to convince the reader. If we build up to the topic sentence, then the reader might feel they are coming to the conclusion along with us. The risk is that the reader will want to know sooner where the paragraph is going.

In the paragraph below, the topic sentence comes last. Specific examples, a cat that tracked down its owners and a dog that can predict seizures, prepare us for the general conclusion: animals' senses are better than humans'.

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

Topic Sentence in the Middle of the Paragraph

Occasionally, a writer might choose to hook the reader or introduce a concept before giving the topic sentence in the middle of the paragraph. In the paragraph below, the underlined topic sentence expresses the main idea—that breathing exercises can help control anxiety. The preceding sentences enable the writer to build up to their main point by using a personal anecdote. The supporting sentences then expand on how breathing exercises help the writer by providing additional information. The concluding sentence restates how breathing can help manage anxiety.

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

Note

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

Implied Topic Sentences

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

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

Although no single sentence in this paragraph states the main idea, the entire paragraph focuses on one concept—that Luella is extremely old. All the details in the paragraph can work together to convey the dominant impression of Luella's age. In a paragraph such as this one, an explicit topic sentence such as "Luella was very old" would seem awkward and heavy-handed. Implied topic sentences work well if the writer has a firm idea of what he or she intends to say in the paragraph and sticks to it. One risk is that an implied topic sentence may be too subtle for the reader to catch.

Exercise 12.2.1

In each of the following sentence pairs, **choose the more effective topic sentence** and explain what makes it better.

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

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12.3: Showing How a New Idea Fits in (Transitions)

Media Alternative

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As we develop our own arguments in longer papers in college, we get more choices about what to put in and in what order. Adding length and complexity poses a risk. How do we make sure readers don't lose the thread of what we're saying? How do we start a new paragraph so that readers will know why it comes next and how it fits into the overall argument? For that matter, how do we move from sentence to sentence so that the reader sees the connection between one supporting idea and the next?

A caution about transition words

Some writing teachers focus on encouraging students to use transition words like “however,” and “therefore.” As we have seen in the templates above, such words can definitely help show a connection. They are only useful, though, if they really reflect the relationship between the previous idea and the next. As writers, we may be tempted to rely too much on a transition word without thinking through the connection fully. The final test is whether the reader understands the connection between new and old ideas.

Some transition words do not tell us anything about how the previous idea relates to the next one. Be wary of “in addition,” “moreover,” “also,” etc. , They tell us that a new idea is coming, but not much else. We can use them if we also highlight the connection to the previous idea through a repeated key concept. Similarly, the phrases “in conclusion” and “to conclude” don’t help the reader see how the previous paragraphs have been building up to the final point. We can still use them if we make sure that the rest of the words show how your final thoughts grow out of the paragraphs that come before (see the section on conclusions for more on how to do that).

The benefits of clarifying the connections

Providing a clear sense of the connection between one idea and the next can be one of the most challenging parts of the writing process. Don’t worry if it doesn’t come naturally; for most people it requires mental sweat and revision. Even if we have already done an outline, there will be more to figure out as we face the start of a new paragraph. Ultimately, though, hitting upon the right way to link our ideas can be one of the most satisfying moments in the writing process. Everything falls into place. When we do manage to clarify that connection, we can relax and readers can relax as they follow the argument’s flow from one point to the next.

What role does the next idea play in the argument?

If we map out an argument, as we did in Chapter 2 of this book, arrows show when a reason supports a claim. Labels like “counterargument” or “limit” show how one idea modifies or responds to another. When we write our own arguments, though, we need words to stand in for these visual cues. Phrases can signal to readers how a new paragraph or sentence fits into the overall structure. In Chapters 2 and 3 when we talked about reading and summarizing, we looked for typical phrases that signal a reason, a counterargument, a limit, or a rebuttal. Now we can use many of these same phrases to guide our readers through our own arguments.

Paradoxically, the first step toward writing a good transition sentence can be to remind ourselves of the point we have just made. If we can formulate that point in a simple phrase, we can focus better on the nature of the connection. How does the new idea relate to that previous claim? Below are some possible ways it might connect along with accompanying phrases.

A reason for the previous claim

- _____ because _____.

- _____ is a result of _____.
- The reason for _____ lies in _____.
- _____ causes this _____.
- _____ happens because _____.
- We see the cause of _____ in _____.
- Why does _____ happen? One factor seems to be _____.
- _____ occurs as a consequence of _____.
- _____ explains this _____.
- _____ causes _____.
- _____ stems from _____.
- One possible explanation of _____ is that _____.

A result of the previous claim

- _____ leads to _____.
- On the basis of _____, we can conclude that _____.
- As a result of _____, it follows that_____.
- As we have seen, _____. For this reason, _____.
- As_____, _____.
- _____ gives rise to _____.
- _____, hence _____.
- _____, thus _____.
- _____; therefore, _____,
- _____, so _____.
- _____; consequently, _____.
- _____, thereby _____.
- _____ can cause _____.
- _____ may result in _____.
- As a consequence of _____, we often see _____.
- Owing to _____, _____.

An elaboration on the previous claim

- To understand _____, we can compare it to _____.
- By _____, we mean not just _____, but also _____.
- Let's look at what _____ means in greater detail.
- What does _____ mean more specifically? It implies that _____.
- _____ involves _____.
- We should pause to define what we mean by _____ in this context.

An example of the previous claim

- To illustrate_____, we can take the example of _____.
- One instance of _____ is _____.
- Let us take the case of _____, for example.
- _____ serves as a good example.
- A classic example of _____ is _____.

A limitation on the previous claim

- However, _____ is not the case if_____.
- We should clarify that _____ only applies if_____.
- Of course, _____ does not apply if_____.
- We can exclude cases where_____.
- An exception must be made for_____.
- We should note that _____ holds only if _____.

- The only exception to _____ is _____.

A counterargument to the previous claim

If we think the counterargument is completely wrong

- It is a popular misconception that_____.
- Some have fallen for the idea that_____.
- Many people mistakenly believe that_____.

If we want to describe the counterargument without giving our opinion yet

- Many people think _____.
- Some, on the other hand, will argue that _____.
- Some might disagree, claiming that _____.
- Of course, many have claimed that _____.
- Some will take issue with _____, arguing that _____.
- Some will object that _____.
- Some will dispute the idea that _____, claiming that _____.
- One criticism of this way of thinking is that _____.

If we see some merit in the counterargument

- It is true that _____.
- I do concede_____.
- We should grant that_____.
- We must admit that_____.
- I acknowledge that _____.
- X has a point that _____.
- Admittedly, _____.
- Of course, _____.
- To be sure, _____.
- There may be something to the idea that _____.

A rebuttal to a counterargument described previously

If we completely disagreed with the counterargument

- This idea misses the fact that _____.
- I disagree because _____.
- This depends on the assumption that _____, which is incorrect because _____.
- This argument overlooks _____.
- This argument contradicts itself _____.
- This is mistaken because _____.

If we partly agreed with the counterargument

- It is true that _____, but_____.
- I do concede_____, and yet_____.
- We should grant that_____, but we must still acknowledge that _____.
- We can admit that_____ and still believe that _____..
- I acknowledge that _____, and yet we should nevertheless recognize that _____.
- Critics have a point that _____; however it is more important that we focus on _____.
- Admittedly, _____. However, _____.

- Of course, _____, but I still insist that_____..
- To be sure, _____; but _____.
- There may be something to the idea that _____, and yet _____.

Practice Exercise 12.3.1

Choose one of the sample annotated essays contained in this textbook.

1. Label the paragraphs according to the categories in this section: reason, result, elaboration, example, limitation, counterargument, and rebuttal.
2. Highlight the phrases that signal the paragraph's role in the larger argument. You may see phrases listed as templates in this section, but you may see other phrases as well.

Practice Exercise 12.3.2

Choose an essay you wrote previously and review the topic sentences. Are there any places where you could make it clearer what role the paragraph plays in the overall argument, perhaps using a phrase listed above?

1. Label the paragraphs according to the categories in this section: reason, result, elaboration, example, limitation, counterargument, and rebuttal.
2. Revise the topic sentences to make it clearer what role the paragraph plays. Consider using one of the template phrases listed in this section.

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12.4: Referring Back to Make the Connection (Cohesion)

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (5 min, 56 sec):

In the popular handbook *They Say I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*, Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein suggest that as readers move from one idea to the next, they need to know not just what is new, but how it connects to what came before. Graff and Birkenstein visualize this as two hands, one pointing back in the text and one pointing forward. We remind the reader of the old and put it into relationship with the new. But how do we reference ideas we've already covered without repeating ad nauseum?



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Repetition

Repetition sounds like something boring we are supposed to avoid, and it can be. However, some repetition is actually essential to cohesion. **Repeating a short key phrase** can link two sentences or paragraphs by showing what topic they have in common. If we find we are using a particular phrase too much, we can vary the wording without changing the concept. As an example, imagine we want to prove the following thesis:

> Economic inequality in America will only increase unless the government takes the excess possessions of the ultra-rich.

We can be pretty sure we'll need to repeat the key phrase "economic inequality" in ensuing paragraphs or substitute variations like "inequality," "economic stratification" or "the disparity between rich and poor," to remind readers of our central idea. That will allow us to suggest the causes of inequality, define the extent of inequality, and make predictions about future inequality without seeming like we are jumping from one random point to another.

If we think the reader may not remember what we are referring to, or if its complexity makes it worth summing up, we might need to **briefly restate an idea**. We can paraphrase and condense a point made in a previous paragraph into just a few words. Often looking at a previous topic sentence can help us focus on the key idea and describe the heart of it.

Pointing words

In order to remind the reader that we have already discussed an idea, we can use what Graff and Birkenstein call **pointing words** like “this” or “that.” These combine with the repeated phrase or concept to work like an arrow pointing back to a section of a previous paragraph. For example, we might use the phrase “this growing inequity” or “that very economic inequality.” The words "this" and "that" reassure readers they can go back and look up the earlier idea if needed.

Abstract nouns

To make the reference to the prior idea clear, we can couple "this” or “that" with an **abstract noun,** or a word that represents the kind of idea we are talking about. You may also see these referred to as anaphoric nouns or shell nouns.

Below are a few common abstract nouns that can refer back to an established idea. There are many others. As you'll notice, the first few refer to elements of an argument.

- reason / evidence
- claim
- fact
- argument
- findings / conclusion
- purpose
- cause / factor
- effect / result / consequence
- idea / concept
- subject / issue / topic
- phenomenon
- problem / challenge / difficulty
- solution
- feature / characteristic / aspect
- method / technique / strategy / approach / way / manner
- tendency / trend / pattern

Examples of these connection techniques

Here is an example template that combines repetition, a pointing word, "this," and an abstract noun, "idea":

As we have seen, _____. This **idea** has implications for _____.

Let's look at a more extended example. Say that we want to write about inequality in the early 21st century. The topic stays the same, and the time period changes. First we give some history about the late 1800s. Then we describe how inequality changed over time, and we want to start a paragraph about the Occupy Wall Street movement that started in 2011. What is the connection between an old idea and a new idea? We might decide that Occupy Wall Street was a direct result of inequality and start the paragraph thus:

> The increased inequality that became obvious after the 2007 financial crisis eventually **led** to a backlash. In September 2011, the Occupy Wall Street protest trumpeted the cause of the “99%” of Americans who were left out while the top 1% enjoyed most of the profits of American capitalism.

The new paragraph thus points back to the cause and ahead to the effect, signaling this causal relationship with the word “led.” Note that the phrase “increased inequality” refers to a core topic of the overall argument, and the phrase “that became obvious after the 2007 financial crisis” reminds us of the concept developed in the previous paragraph.

Practice Exercise 12.4.1

Choose one of the sample annotated essays contained in this textbook. Go through it and circle any repetition, pointing words, or abstract nouns that refer back to an idea. Draw an arrow from each referring word back to the earlier part of the essay it refers to. How do these words help make the essay more cohesive and easier to follow for you as a reader? Discuss with classmates or write a few sentences of reflection.

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12.5: Developing Paragraphs

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (11 min, 29 sec):

Supporting sentences

By itself, a topic sentence will not usually fully clarify an idea or convince readers. Supporting sentences can explain, prove, or enhance the idea in the topic sentence. For example, in a persuasive essay about raising the wage for certified nursing assistants, a paragraph might focus on the expectations and duties of the job, comparing them to that of a registered nurse. Needless to say, a single topic sentence that lists the certified nursing assistant's duties will not give readers a complete enough idea of what these healthcare professionals do. If readers do not have plenty of information about the duties and the writer's experience in performing them for what she considers inadequate pay, the paragraph fails to do its part in convincing readers that the pay is inadequate and should be increased.



A paragraph, like a column, needs support in the middle. Image by Monika Grafik from Pixabay under the Pixabay License.

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

- **Fact**: Many families now rely on older relatives to support them financially.
- **Statistic**: Nearly 10 percent of adults are currently unemployed in the United States.
- **Quotation**: "We will not allow this situation to continue," stated Senator Johns.
- **Anecdote or example**: Last year, Bill was asked to retire at the age of fifty-five.

The type of supporting sentence you choose will depend on what you are writing and why you are writing. For example, if you are attempting to persuade your audience to take a particular position, you should rely on facts, statistics, and concrete examples, rather than personal opinions. Personal testimony in the form of an extended example can be used in conjunction with the other types of support. Let's look at a sample paragraph as a list of all the elements we've just discussed, plus a concluding sentence, which we'll discuss below.

Topic sentence: There are numerous advantages to owning a hybrid car.

Sentence 1 (statistic): First, they get 20 percent to 35 percent more miles to the gallon than a fuel-efficient gas-powered vehicle.

Sentence 2 (fact): Second, they produce very few emissions during low-speed city driving.

Sentence 3 (reason): Because they do not require gas, hybrid cars reduce dependency on fossil fuels, which helps lower prices at the pump.

Sentence 4 (example): Alex bought a hybrid car two years ago and has been extremely impressed with its performance.

Sentence 5 (quotation): “It’s the cheapest car I’ve ever had,” she said. “The running costs are far lower than previous gas powered vehicles I’ve owned.”

Concluding sentence: Given the low running costs and environmental benefits of owning a hybrid car, it is likely that many more people will follow Alex’s example in the near future.

Concluding Sentences

Paragraphs do not necessarily need concluding sentences. However, a concluding sentence can help if you think your readers need a reminder of what the main point was or what we have learned from the paragraph. If the material in the paragraph taken together seems to logically imply an idea, we can name that idea in the concluding sentence. This might take the form of a prediction, suggestion, or recommendation about the information in the paragraph. For example, a paragraph on childhood obesity might conclude, "These statistics indicate that unless we take action, childhood obesity rates will continue to rise."



Sometimes it seems as if all sentences in a paragraph point toward the concluding sentence.
Image by Ryan McGuire from Pixabay under the Pixabay License.

If we repeat the main point, we should express it in different words to avoid sounding too repetitive. For example, let's compare the topic sentence and concluding sentence from the first example on hybrid cars:

Topic Sentence: There are many advantages to owning a hybrid car.

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

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

Note

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

Paragraph Length

Writers often want to know how many words a paragraph should contain. There is no set number; a paragraph needs to develop an idea enough to satisfy the writer and readers. Paragraphs can vary in length from one or two sentences, to over a page; however, in most college assignments, successfully developed paragraphs usually contain one hundred to two hundred and fifty words and span one-fourth to two-thirds of a typed page.



Paragraphs, like pencils, can be of varying lengths.
Photo by Markus Spiske on Unsplash under the Unsplash License.

If a paragraph is over a page long, consider providing a paragraph break for readers. Look for a logical place to divide the paragraph; then revise the opening sentence of the second paragraph to maintain coherence.

Occasionally a short paragraph may serve to emphasize an idea, but a series of short paragraphs can be confusing and choppy. Examine the content of the paragraphs and combine ones with related ideas or develop each one further.

Exercise 12.5.1

Consider the paragraph below on the topic of trauma in novelist J. D. Salinger's work. Identify the topic sentence and supporting points. Some of the supporting points may be more than one sentence each. Explain how each illustrates the topic sentence.

> Salinger, a World War II veteran, suffered from posttraumatic stress disorder, a disorder that influenced the themes in many of his works. He did not hide his mental anguish over the horrors of war and once told his daughter, "You never really get the smell of burning flesh out of your nose, no matter how long you live." His short story "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" details a day in the life of a WWII veteran who was recently released from an army hospital for psychiatric problems. The man acts questionably with a little girl he meets on the beach before he returns to his hotel room and commits suicide. Another short Story, "For Esme – with Love and Squalor," is narrated by a traumatized soldier who sparks an unusual relationship with a young girl he meets before he

departs to partake in D-Day. Finally, in Salinger's only novel, *The Catcher in the Rye,* he continues with the theme of posttraumatic stress, though not directly related to war. From a rest home for the mentally ill, sixteen-year-old Holden Caulfield narrates the story of his nervous breakdown following the death of his younger brother.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Exercise 12.5.2

Identify the topic sentence(s), supporting sentences, and concluding sentence in the following paragraph.

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

Answer available at the end of this section.

Exercise 12.5.3

Read the following incomplete paragraph and then read the supporting sentences below it. Which sentence best fits in which location to illustrate the points made in the paragraph? Match the sentences lettered a, b, c, and d to the locations numbered 1, 2, 3, and 4.

> Lack of ownership of a television set is a way to preserve innocence, and keep the exposure towards anything inappropriate at bay. From simply watching a movie, I have seen things I shouldn't have, no matter how fast I switch the channel. **1. 2.** Television shows not only display physical indecency, but also verbal. Many times movies do voice-overs of profane words, but they also leave a few words uncensored. **3. 4.** All ages can flip through and see or hear such things. They make t.v. toxic for the mind, and without it I wouldn't have to worry about what I may accidentally see or hear.

a. On *Empire*, one of the most viewed dramas today, the main characters Cookie and Lucious Lyon use profane words during their fights throughout entire episodes.
b. The movie Fast and Furious has the same problem since the women are all half-naked in half tops and mini-skirts or short-shorts.
c. The synopsis of Euro Trip, which describes high school friends traveling across Europe, leads viewers to think that the film is an innocent adventure; however; it is filled with indecency, especially when the students reach Amsterdam.
d. Because *The Big Bang Theory* is a show about a group of science geeks and their cute neighbors, viewers might think that these science geniuses' conversations would be about their current research or other science topics. Instead, their characters regularly engage in conversations about their personal lives that should be kept private.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Attributions

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Answers

Topic sentence: Salinger, a World War II veteran, suffered from posttraumatic stress disorder, a disorder that influenced the themes in many of his works.

Supporting points:

1. A quote to illustrate posttraumatic stress disorder: "He did not hide his mental anguish over the horrors of war and once told his daughter, 'You never really get the smell of burning flesh out of your nose, no matter how long you live.'"

2. An example of a work with a theme of postraumatic stress disorder from war: "His short story 'A Perfect Day for Bananafish' details a day in the life of a WWII veteran who was recently released from an army hospital for psychiatric problems. The man acts questionably with a little girl he meets on the beach before he returns to his hotel room and commits suicide."
3. Another example of a work with a theme of postraumatic stress disorder from war: "Another short Story, 'For Esme – with Love and Squalor,' is narrated by a traumatized soldier who sparks an unusual relationship with a young girl he meets before he departs to partake in D-Day."
4. A third example of a work with a theme of posttraumatic stress disorder: "Finally, in Salinger's only novel, The Catcher in the Rye, he continues with the theme of posttraumatic stress, though not directly related to war. From a rest home for the mentally ill, sixteen-year-old Holden Caulfield narrates the story of his nervous breakdown following the death of his younger brother."

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

1. c
2. b
3. a
4. d

Revised paragraph with supporting sentences:

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

Explanation: *The original paragraph identifies two categories of indecent material, and there is mention of profanity to provide a clue as to what the student thinks is indecent. However, the paragraph could use some examples to make the idea of inappropriate material clearer. The examples help to convey why the writer thinks they would be better off without a television.*

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12.6: Quoting and Paraphrasing

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (15 min, 22 sec):

We have seen that paragraphs need supporting sentences, but how specifically can we bring in quotations and paraphrases of other sources into our own essay?

Listen to your sources

Have you ever had the maddening experience of arguing with someone who twisted your words to make it seem like you were saying something you weren't? Novice writers sometimes inadvertently misrepresent their sources when they quote very minor points from an article or even positions that the authors of an article disagree with. It often happens when students approach their sources with the goal of finding snippets that align with their own opinion. For example, the passage above contains the phrase "measuring teachers' performance by student test scores is the best way to improve education." An inexperienced writer might include that quote in a paper without making it clear that the author(s) of the source actually dispute that very claim. Doing so is not intentionally fraudulent, but it reveals that the paper-writer isn't really thinking about and responding to claims and arguments made by others. In that way, it harms his or her credibility.

Academic journal articles are especially likely to be misrepresented by student writers because their literature review sections often summarize a number of contrasting viewpoints. For example, sociologists Jennifer C. Lee and Jeremy Staff wrote a paper in which they note that high-schoolers who spend more hours at a job are more likely to drop out of school.[1] However, Lee and Staff's analysis finds that working more hours doesn't actually make a student more likely to drop out. Instead, the students who express less interest in school are both more likely to work a lot of hours *and* more likely to drop out. In short, Lee and Staff argue that disaffection with school causes students to drop-out, not working at a job. In reviewing prior research about the impact of work on dropping out, Lee and Staff write "Paid work, especially when it is considered intensive, reduces grade point averages, time spent on homework, educational aspirations, and the likelihood of completing high school"[2]. If you included that quote without explaining how it fits into Lee and Staff's actual argument, you would be misrepresenting that source.

Provide context

Another error beginners often make is to drop in a quote without any context. If you simply quote, "Students begin preschool with a set of self-regulation skills that are a product of their genetic inheritance and their family environment" (Willingham, 2011, p.24), your reader is left wondering who Willingham is, why he or she is included here, and where this statement fits into his or her larger work. The whole point of incorporating sources is to situate your own insights in the conversation. As part of that, you should provide some kind of context the first time you use that source. Some examples:

- Willingham, a cognitive scientist, claims that ...
- Research in cognitive science has found that ... (Willingham, 2011).
- Willingham argues that "Students begin preschool with a set of self-regulation skills that are a product of their genetic inheritance and their family environment" (Willingham, 2011, 24). Drawing on findings in cognitive science, he explains "..."

As the first example above shows, providing a context doesn't mean writing a brief biography of every author in your bibliography—it just means including some signal about why that source is included in your text.

Quoted material that does not fit into the flow of the text baffles the reader even more. For example, a novice student might write,

> Schools and parents shouldn't set limits on how much teenagers are allowed to work at jobs. "We conclude that

> intensive work does not affect the likelihood of high school dropout among youths who have a high propensity to spend long hours on the job" (Lee and Staff, 2007, p. 171). Teens should be trusted to learn how to manage their time.

The reader is thinking, who is this sudden, ghostly "we"? Why should this source be believed? If you find that passages with quotes in your draft are awkward to read out loud, that's a sign that you need to contextualize the quote more effectively. Here's a version that puts the quote in context:

> Schools and parents shouldn't set limits on how much teenagers are allowed to work at jobs. Lee and Staff's carefully designed study found that "intensive work does not affect the likelihood of high school dropout among youths who have a high propensity to spend long hours on the job" (2007, p. 171). Teens should be trusted to learn how to manage their time.

In this latter example, it's now clear that Lee and Staff are scholars and that their empirical study is being used as evidence for this argumentative point. Using a source in this way invites the reader to check out Lee and Staff's work for themselves if they doubt this claim.

Many writing instructors encourage their students to contextualize their use of sources by making a "quotation sandwich"; that is, introduce the quote in some way and then follow it up with your own words. If you've made a bad habit of dropping in unintroduced quotes, the quotation sandwich idea may help you improve your skills, but in general you don't need to approach every quote or paraphrase as a three-part structure to have well-integrated sources. You should, however, avoid ending a paragraph with a quotation. If you're struggling to figure out what to write after a quote or close paraphrase, it may be that you haven't yet figured out what role the quote is playing in your own analysis. If that happens to you a lot, try writing the whole first draft in your own words and then incorporate material from sources as you revise with "They Say/I Say" in mind.

Use sources efficiently

Some student writers are in a rut of only quoting whole sentences. Some others, like myself as a student, get overly enamored of extended block quotes and the scholarly look they give to the page.[7] These aren't the worst sins of academic writing, but they get in the way of one of the key principles of writing with sources: shaping quotes and paraphrases efficiently. Efficiency follows from the second principle, because when you fully incorporate sources into your own explicit argument, you zero in on the phrases, passages, and ideas that are relevant to your points. It's a very good sign for your paper when most quotes are short (key terms, phrases, or parts of sentences) and the longer quotes (whole sentences and passages) are clearly justified by the discussion in which they're embedded. Every bit of every quote should feel indispensable to the paper. An overabundance of long quotes usually means that your own argument is undeveloped. The most incandescent quotes will not hide that fact from your professor.

Also, some student writers forget that quoting is not the only way to incorporate sources. Paraphasing and summarizing are sophisticated skills that are often more appropriate to use than direct quoting. The first two paragraphs of the example passage above do not include any quotations, even though they are both clearly focused on presenting the work of others. Student writers may avoid paraphrasing out of fear of plagiarizing, and it's true that a poorly executed paraphrase will make it seem like the student writer is fraudulently claiming the wordsmithing work of others as his or her own. Sticking to direct quotes seems safer. However, it is worth your time to master paraphasing because it often helps you be more clear and concise, drawing out only those elements that are relevant to the thread of your analysis.

For example, here's a passage from a hypothetical paper with a block quote that is fully relevant to the argument but, nevertheless, inefficient:

> Drawing on a lifetime of research, Kahneman concludes our brains are prone to error:
>
> > System 1 registers the cognitive ease with which it processes information, but it does not generate a warning signal when it becomes unreliable. Intuitive answers come to mind quickly and confidently, whether they originate from skills or from heuristics. There is no simple way for System 2 to distinguish between a skilled and a heuristic response. Its only recourse is to slow down and attempt to construct an answer on its own, which it is reluctant to do because it is indolent. Many suggestions of System 1 are casually endorsed with minimal checking, as in the bat-and-ball problem.
>
> While people can get better at recognizing and avoiding these errors, Kahneman suggests, the more robust solutions involve developing procedures within organizations to promote careful, effortful thinking in making important decisions and judgments.

Even a passage that is important to reference and is well contextualized in the flow of the paper will be inefficient if it introduces terms and ideas that aren't central to the analysis within the paper. Imagine, for example, that other parts of this hypothetical paper use Kahneman's other terms for System 1 (fast thinking) and System 2 (slow thinking); the sudden encounter of "System 1" and "System 2" would be confusing and tedious for your reader. Similarly, the terms "heuristics" and "bat-and-ball problem" might be unfamiliar to your reader. Their presence in the block quote just muddies the waters. In this case, a paraphrase is a much better choice. Here's an example passage that uses a paraphrase to establish the same points more clearly and efficiently:

> Drawing on a lifetime of research, Kahneman summarizes that our brains are prone to error because they necessarily rely on cognitive shortcuts that may or may not yield valid judgments.[4] We have the capacity to stop and examine our assumptions, Kahneman points out, but we often want to avoid that hard work. As a result, we tend to accept our quick, intuitive responses. While people can get better at recognizing and avoiding these errors, Kahneman suggests that the more robust solutions involve developing procedures within organizations to promote careful, effortful thinking in making important decisions and judgments.

Not only is the paraphrased version shorter (97 words versus 151), it is clearer and more efficient because it highlights the key ideas, avoiding specific terms and examples that aren't used in the rest of the paper. If other parts of your paper did refer to Kahneman's System 1 and System 2, then you might choose to include some quoted phrases to make use of some of Kahneman's great language. Perhaps something like this:

> Drawing on a lifetime of research, Kahneman summarizes that our brains are prone to error because they necessarily rely on cognitive shortcuts that may or may not yield valid judgments.[5] System 1, Kahneman explains, "does not generate a warning signal when it becomes unreliable." [6] System 2 can stop and examine these assumptions, but it usually wants to avoid that hard work. As a result, our quick, intuitive responses are "casually endorsed with minimal checking." [7] While people can get better at recognizing and avoiding these errors, Kahneman suggests, the more robust solutions involve developing procedures within organizations to promote careful, effortful thinking in making important decisions and judgments.

Whether you choose a long quote, short quote, paraphrase or summary depends on the role that the source is playing in your analysis. The trick is to make deliberate, thoughtful decisions about how to incorporate ideas and words from others.

Paraphrasing, summarizing, and the mechanical conventions of quoting take a lot of practice to master. Numerous other resources (like those listed at the end of this chapter) explain these practices clearly and succinctly. Bookmark some good sources and refer to them as needed. If you suspect that you're in a quoting rut, try out some new ways of incorporating sources.

Choose precise signal phrases

It's time to get beyond the all-purpose "says." And please don't look up "says" in the thesaurus and substitute verbs like "proclaim" (unless there was actually a proclamation) or "pronounce" (unless there was actually a pronouncement). Here's a list of 15 useful alternatives:

- Claims
- Asserts
- Relates
- Recounts
- Complains
- Reasons
- Proposes
- Suggests (if the author is speculating or hypothesizing)
- Contests (disagrees)
- Concludes
- Shows
- Argues
- Explains
- Indicates
- Points out
- Offers

More precise choices like these carry a lot more information than “says”, enabling you to relate more with fewer words. For one thing, they can quickly convey what kind of idea you’re citing: a speculative one (“postulates”)? A conclusive one (“determines”)? A controversial one (“counters”)? You can further show how you’re incorporating these sources into your own narrative. For example, if you write that an author “claims” something, you’re presenting yourself as fairly neutral about that claim. If you instead write that the author “shows” something, then you signal to your reader that you find that evidence more convincing. “Suggests” on the other hand is a much weaker endorsement.

[1] Jennifer C. Lee, J.C. and Jeremy Staff, “When Work Matters: The Varying Impact of Work Intensity on High School Drop Out,” *Sociology of Education* 80, no. 2 (2007): 158-178.

[2] Ibid., 159.

[3] It took me a long time to stop abusing block quotes. They made me feel like my paper was an unassailable fortress of citation! With the friendly but pointed feedback of my professors, I gradually came to see how they took too much space away from my own argument.

[4] Kahneman, Thinking, Fast and Slow, 416-7.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid, 416.

[8] Ibid, 417.

[9] Robert B. Marks, The Origins of the Modern World: A Global and Ecological Narrative from the Fifteenth to the Twenty-first Century (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 95.

Practice Exercise 12.6.1

Review one of your own essays to examine areas where you have paraphrased or quoted an outside source. Circle any verbs of attribution, and decide if an alternative would help the reader see the author's purpose or approach more precisely.

Practice Exercise 12.6.2

Read the sample paragraph below from a student paper. Working alone or with a classmate, revise the paragraph to remove the clunky and unnecessary block quote. Use the main idea in the topic sentence to make a deliberate, thoughtful decision as to which chunks of quote to use.

> Visiting a doctor is often the first step to diagnosing a serious illness, but some people delay seeing a physician because of rising healthcare costs. In the article “Does forgetting a name or word mean that I have dementia?” by Laurie Archbald-Pannone, it states,
>
> First, it is important to know that dementia cannot be diagnosed from afar or by someone who is not a doctor. A person needs a detailed doctor’s exam for a diagnosis. Sometimes, brain imaging is required. And, forgetting an occasional word – or even where you put your keys – does not mean a person has dementia. There are different types of memory loss and they can have different causes, such as other medical conditions, falls or even medication, including herbals, supplements and anything over-the-counter.

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12.7: Introductions

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (33 min, 6 sec):

"In today's world ..."

Those opening words—so common in student papers—represent the most prevalent misconception about introductions: that they shouldn't really say anything substantive. The five-paragraph format that most students mastered before coming to college suggests that introductory paragraphs should start very general and gradually narrow down to the thesis. As a result, students frequently write introductions for college papers in which the first two or three (or more) sentences are patently obvious or overly broad. Charitable and well-rested instructors just skim over that text and start reading closely when they arrive at something substantive. Frustrated and overtired instructors emit a dramatic self-pitying sigh, assuming that the whole paper will be as lifeless and gassy as those first few sentences. If you've gotten into the habit of beginning opening sentences with the following phrases, firmly resolve to strike them from your repertoire right now:

- In today's world ...
- Throughout human history ...
- Since the dawn of time ...
- Webster's Dictionary defines [CONCEPT] as ...

For one thing, sentences that begin with the first three stems are often wrong. For example, someone may write, "Since the dawn of time, people have tried to increase crop yields." In reality, people have not been trying to increase crop yields throughout human history—agriculture is only about 23,000 years old, after all—and certainly not since the dawn of time (whenever that was). For another, sentences that start so broadly, even when factually correct, could not possibly end with anything interesting.

Sometimes we know that more precise and vivid intros and conclusions are ideal but still settle on the vague language that seems familiar, safe, and do-able. Knowing the general form of academic writing (simplified in the five-paragraph theme) helps writers organize their thoughts; however, it leads some student writers to approach papers as mere fill-in-the-blank exercises.

I hope you will instead envision paper-writing as a task of working through an unscripted and nuanced thought process and then sharing your work with readers. When you're engaged with the writing process, you'll find yourself deciding which substantive points belong in those introductory and concluding paragraphs rather than simply filling those paragraphs out with fluff. They should be sort of hard to write; they're the parts of the paper that express your most important ideas in the most precise ways. If you're struggling with intros and conclusions, it might be because you're approaching them in exactly the right way. Having a clear, communicative purpose will help you figure out what your reader needs to know to really understand your thinking.

So what should you do? Well, start at the beginning. By that I mean, start explaining what the reader needs to know to comprehend your thesis and its importance. For example, compare the following two paragraphs.

Five-paragraph theme version of a paragraph:

> Throughout time, human societies have had religion. Major world religions since the dawn of civilization include Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Animism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. These and all other religions provide a set of moral principles, a leadership structure, and an explanation for unknown questions such as what happens after people die. Since the dawn of religion, it has always been opposed to science because one is based on faith and the other on reason. However, the notion of embodied cognition is a place where physical phenomena connect with religious ones. Paradoxically, religion can emphasize a deep involvement in reality, an embodied cognition that empowers followers to escape from physical constraints and reach a new spirituality. Religion carefully constructs a physical environment to synthesize an individual's memories, emotions, and physical actions, in a manner that channels the individual's cognitive state towards spiritual transcendence.

Organically structured version of the same paragraph:

> Religion is an endeavor to cultivate freedom from bodily constraints to reach a higher state of being beyond the physical constraints of reality. But how is it possible to employ a system, the human body, to transcend its own limitations? Religion and science have always had an uneasy relationship as empiricism is stretched to explain religious phenomena, but psychology has recently added a new perspective to the discussion. *Embodiment* describes the interaction between humans and the environment that lays a foundation for cognition and can help explain the mechanisms that underlie religion's influence on believers. This is a rare moment where science and religion are able to coexist without the familiar controversy. Paradoxically, religion can emphasize a deep involvement in reality, an *embodied cognition* that empowers followers to escape from physical constraints and reach a new spirituality. Religion carefully constructs a physical environment to synthesize an individual's memories, emotions, and physical actions, in a manner that channels the individual's cognitive state towards spiritual transcendence.

In the first version, the first three sentences state well-known facts that do not directly relate to the thesis. The fourth sentence is where the action starts, though that sentence ("Since the dawn of religion, it has always been opposed to science because one is based on faith and the other on reason") is still overstated: when was this dawn of religion? And was there "science," as we now understand it, at that time? The reader has to slog through to the fifth sentence before the intro starts to develop some momentum.

Training in the five-paragraph theme format seems to have convinced some student writers that beginning with substantive material will be too abrupt for the reader. But the second example shows that a meatier beginning isn't jarring; it is actually much more engaging. The first sentence of the organic example is somewhat general, but it specifies the particular aspect of religion (transcending physical experience) that is germane to the thesis. The next six sentences lay out the ideas and concepts that explain the thesis, which is provided in the last two sentences. Overall, every sentence is needed to thoroughly frame the thesis. It is a lively paragraph in itself, and it piques the reader's interest in the author's original thinking about religion.

Sometimes a vague introductory paragraph reflects a simple, obvious thesis and a poorly thought-out paper. More often, though, a shallow introduction represents a missed opportunity to convey the writer's depth of thought from the get-go. Students adhering to the five-paragraph theme format sometime assume that such vagueness is needed to bookend an otherwise pithy paper. As you can see from these examples, that is simply untrue. I've seen some student writers begin with a vague, high-school style intro (thinking it obligatory) and then write a wonderfully vivid and engaging introduction as their second paragraph. Other papers I've seen have an interesting, original thesis embedded in late body paragraphs that should be articulated up front and used to shape the whole body. If you must write a vague "since the dawn of time" intro to get the writing process going, then go ahead. Just budget the time to rewrite the intro around your well developed, arguable thesis and ensure that the body paragraphs are organized explicitly by your analytical thread.

Here are two more examples of excellent introductory paragraphs written by undergraduate students in different fields. Note how, in both cases, (1) the first sentence has real substance, (2) every sentence is indispensable to setting up the thesis, and (3) the thesis is complex and somewhat surprising. Both of these introductory paragraphs set an ambitious agenda for the paper. As a reader, it's pretty easy to imagine how the body paragraphs that follow will progress through the nuanced analysis needed to carry out the thesis.

From Davis O'Connell's "Abelard":

> He rebelled against his teacher, formed his own rival school, engaged in a passionate affair with a teenager, was castrated, and became a monk. All in a day's work. Perhaps it's no surprise that Peter Abelard gained the title of "heretic" along the way. A 12th-century philosopher and theologian, Abelard tended to alienate nearly everyone he met with his extremely arrogant and egotistical personality. This very flaw is what led him to start preaching to students that he had stolen from his former master, which further deteriorated his reputation. Yet despite all of the senseless things that he did, his teachings did not differ much from Christian doctrine. Although the church claimed to have branded Abelard a heretic purely because of his religious views, the other underlying reasons for these accusations involve his conceited personality, his relationship with the 14-year-old Heloise, and the political forces of the 12th century.

From Logan Skelly's "Staphylococcus aureus"[3]:

> Bacterial resistance to antibiotics is causing a crisis in modern healthcare. The evolution of multi-drug resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* is of particular concern because of the morbidity and mortality it causes, the limited treatment options it poses, and the difficulty in implementing containment measures for its control. In order to appreciate the virulence of *S. aureus* and to help alleviate the problems its resistance is causing, it is important to study the evolution of antibiotic resistance in this pathogen, the mechanisms of its resistance, and the factors that may limit or counteract its evolution. It is especially important to examine how human actions are causing evolutionary changes in this

bacterial species. This review will examine the historical sequence of causation that has led to antibiotic resistance in this microorganism and why natural selection favors the resistant trait. It is the goal of this review to illuminate the scope of the problem produced by antibiotic resistance in S. *aureus* and to illustrate the need for judicious antibiotic usage to prevent this pathogen from evolving further pathogenicity and virulence.

If vague introductory paragraphs are bad, why were you taught them? In essence, you were taught the form so that you could later use it to deepen your thinking. By producing the five-paragraph theme over and over, it has probably become second nature for you to find a clear thesis and shape the intro paragraph around it, tasks you absolutely must accomplish in academic writing. However, you've probably been taught to proceed from "general" to "specific" in your intro and encouraged to think of "general" as "vague". At the college level, think of "general" as context: begin by explaining the conceptual, historical, or factual context that the reader needs in order to grasp the significance of the argument to come. It's not so much a structure of general-to-specific; instead, it's context-to-argument.

[1] This example is slightly adapted from a student-authored essay: Victor Seet, "Embodiment in Religion," Discoveries, 11 (2012). Discoveries is an annual publication of the Knight Institute for Writing in the Disciplines of Cornell University which publishes excellent papers written by Cornell undergraduates.

[2] Davis O'Connell, "Abelard: A Heretic of a Different Nature," *Discoveries* 10 (2011): 36-41.

[3] Logan Skelly, "Staphylococcus aureus: The Evolution of a Persistent Pathogen," *Discoveries* 10 (2011): 89-102.

Exercise 12.7.1

Browse online articles on *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, Medium.com, *The Atlantic*, *Time*, or other reputable websites, journals, or newspapers. Find an article where the introduction really engages you. Read the whole article, post a link to it, and reflect in your discussion post on why you found it so compelling. Did it meet the following three criteria described in this section?

If it did meet those criteria, how was the thesis surprising?

1. The first sentence has real substance,
2. Every sentence is indispensable to setting up the thesis, and
3. The thesis is complex and somewhat surprising.

Exercise 12.7.2

Choose one of the essays from Section 12.1: Suggested Short Readings. Read the whole essay and reflect in your discussion post on the introduction. Did it meet the following three criteria described in this section? If so, how was the thesis surprising?

Do you have any ideas for how it could be improved?

1. The first sentence has real substance,
2. every sentence is indispensable to setting up the thesis, and
3. the thesis is complex and somewhat surprising.

Exercise 12.7.3

Choose an essay you have written in this or another class and rewrite the introduction to improve it according to the principles in this section. Write an additional paragraph of reflection on how the new introduction would make a stronger impression on readers and better serve your purpose in the essay.

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12.8: Conclusions

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (9 min, 28 sec):

Strong conclusions do two things: they bring the argument to a satisfying close and they explain some of the most important implications. You've probably been taught to re-state your thesis using different words, and it is true that your reader will likely appreciate a brief summary of your overall argument: say, two or three sentences for papers less than 20 pages. It's perfectly fine to use what they call "metadiscourse" in this summary; metadiscourse is text like, "I have argued that ..." or "This analysis reveals that ... ." Go ahead and use language like that if it seems useful to signal that you're restating the main points of your argument. In shorter papers you can usually simply reiterate the main point without that metadiscourse: for example, "What began as a protest about pollution turned into a movement for civil rights." If that's the crux of the argument, your reader will recognize a summary like that. Most of the student papers I see close the argument effectively in the concluding paragraph.

The second task of a conclusion—situating the argument within broader implications—is a lot trickier. A lot of instructors describe it as the "So what?" challenge. You've proven your point about the role of agriculture in deepening the Great Depression; so what? I don't like the "so what" phrasing because putting writers on the defensive seems more likely to inhibit the flow of ideas than to draw them out. Instead, I suggest you imagine a friendly reader thinking, "OK, you've convinced me of your argument. I'm interested to know what you make of this conclusion. What is or should be different now that your thesis is proven?" In that sense, your reader is asking you to take your analysis one step further. That's why a good conclusion is challenging to write. You're not just coasting over the finish line.

So, how do you do that? A thesis can situate an arguable claim within broader implications. If you've already articulated a thesis statement that does that, then you've already mapped the terrain of the conclusion. Your task then is to explain the implications you mentioned: if environmental justice really is the new civil rights movement, then how should scholars and/or activists approach it? If agricultural trends really did worsen the Great Depression, what does that mean for agricultural policy today? If your thesis, as written, is a two-story one, then you may want to revisit it after you've developed a conclusion you're satisfied with and consider including the key implication in that thesis statement. Doing so will give your paper even more momentum.

Let's look at the concluding counterparts to the excellent introductions that we've read to illustrate some of the different ways writers can accomplish the two goals of a conclusion:

Victor Seet on religious embodiment:[1]

> Embodiment is fundamental to bridging reality and spirituality. The concept demonstrates how religious practice synthesizes human experience in reality—mind, body, and environment—to embed a cohesive religious experience that can recreate itself. Although religion is ostensibly focused on an intangible spiritual world, its traditions that eventually achieve spiritual advancement are grounded in reality. The texts, symbols, and rituals integral to religious practice go beyond merely distinguishing one faith from another; they serve to fully absorb individuals in a culture that sustains common experiential knowledge shared by millions. It is important to remember that human senses do not merely act as sponges absorbing external information; our mental models of the world are being constantly refined with new experiences. This fluid process allows individuals to gradually accumulate a wealth of religious multimodal information, making the mental representation hyper-sensitive, which in turn contributes to religious experiences. However, there is an important caveat. Many features of religious visions that are attributed to embodiment can also be explained through less complex cognitive mechanisms. The repetition from religious traditions exercised both physically and mentally, naturally inculcates a greater religious awareness simply through familiarity. Religious experiences are therefore not necessarily caused by embedded cues within the environment but arise from an imbued fluency with religious themes. Embodiment proposes a connection between body, mind, and the environment that attempts to explain how spiritual transcendence is achieved through physical reality. Although embodied cognition assuages the conflict between science and religion, it remains to be seen if this intricate scientific theory is able to endure throughout millennia just as religious beliefs have.

The paragraph first re-caps the argument, then explains how embodiment relates to other aspects of religious experience, and finally situates the analysis within the broader relationship between religion and science.

From Davis O'Connell:[2]

> Looking at Abelard through the modern historical lens, it appears to many historians that he did not fit the 12th-century definition of a heretic in the sense that his teachings did not differ much from that of the church. Mews observes that Abelard's conception of the Trinity was a continuation of what earlier Christian leaders had already begun to ponder. He writes: "In identifying the Son and Holy Spirit with the wisdom and benignity of God, Abelard was simply extending an idea (based on Augustine) that had previously been raised by William of Champeaux." St. Augustine was seen as one of the main Christian authorities during the Middle Ages and for Abelard to derive his teachings from that source enhances his credibility. This would indicate that although Abelard was not necessarily a heretic by the church's official definition, he was branded as one through all of the nontheological social and political connotations that "heresy" had come to encompass.

O'Connell, interestingly, chooses a scholarly tone for the conclusion, in contrast to the more jocular tone we saw in the introduction. He doesn't specifically re-cap the argument about Abelard's deviance from social norms and political pressures, but rather he explains his summative point about what it means to be a heretic. In this case, the implications of the argument are all about Abelard. There aren't any grand statements about religion and society, the craft of historiography, or the politics of language. Still, the reader is not left hanging. One doesn't need to make far-reaching statements to successfully conclude a paper.

From Logan Skelly:[3]

> Considering the hundreds of millions of years that *S. aureus* has been evolving and adapting to hostile environments, it is likely that the past seventy years of human antibiotic usage represents little more than a minor nuisance to these bacteria. Antibiotic resistance for humans, however, contributes to worldwide health, economic, and environmental problems. Multi-drug resistant *S. aureus* has proven itself to be a versatile and persistent pathogen that will likely continue to evolve as long as selective pressures, such as antibiotics, are introduced into the environment. While the problems associated with *S. aureus* have received ample attention in the scientific literature, there has been little resolution of the problems this pathogen poses. If these problems are to be resolved, it is essential that infection control measures and effective treatment strategies be developed, adopted, and implemented in the future on a worldwide scale—so that the evolution of this pathogen's virulence can be curtailed and its pathogenicity can be controlled.

Skelly's thesis is about the need to regulate antibiotic usage to mitigate antibiotic resistance. The concluding paragraph characterizes the pathogens evolutionary history (without re-capping the specifics) and then calls for an informed, well planned, and comprehensive response.

All three conclusions above achieve both tasks—closing the argument and addressing the implications—but the authors have placed a different emphasis on the two tasks and framed the broader implications in different ways. Writing, like any craft, challenges the creator to make these kinds of independent choices. There isn't a standard recipe for a good conclusion.

[1] This example is slightly adapted from a student-authored essay: Victor Seet, "Embodiment in Religion," Discoveries, 11 (2012). Discoveries is an annual publication of the Knight Institute for Writing in the Disciplines of Cornell University which publishes excellent papers written by Cornell undergraduates.

[2] Davis O'Connell, "Abelard: A Heretic of a Different Nature," *Discoveries* 10 (2011): 36-41.

[3] Logan Skelly, "Staphylococcus aureus: The Evolution of a Persistent Pathogen," *Discoveries* 10 (2011): 89-102.

Practice exercise

1. Choose one of the suggested short essays presented in this book. Read the whole essay and reflect in your discussion post on the conclusion:
   a) Which words did it use to repeat the thesis and other main ideas? Did it contain too much or too little summary of these for your taste?
   b) How did it answer the "So what?" question and described some meaningful implications of the essay's main ideas? Do you think it could have added or clarified anything to increase its impact on the reader?

2. Choose an essay you have written in this or another class and rewrite the conclusion to improve it according to the principles in this section. Write an additional paragraph of reflection on how the new conclusion would make a stronger impression on readers and better serve your purpose in the essay.

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13: CORRECTING GRAMMAR AND PUNCTUATION

Learning Outcomes

- Understand the value of being able to write Standard English in professional and academic settings.
- Acknowledge the value of other English dialects.
- Describe multiple proofreading techniques.
- Feel empowered to look up, learn about, and fix a variety of common errors.

13.1: Why Spend Time on "Correct" Standard English?

13.2: Proofreading Strategies

13.3: Subject-Verb Agreement

13.4: Fragments

13.5: Run-on Sentences

13.6: Verb Tense

13.7: Pronoun Agreement

13.8: Word Choice

13.9: Prepositions

13.10: Articles with Count and Noncount Nouns

13.11: Capitalization

13.12: Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers

13.13: Parallelism

13.14: Using Quotation Marks

13.15: Fitting a Quotation into a Sentence

13.16: Commas

13.17: Semicolons and Colons

13.18: Apostrophes

13.19: Dashes

13.20: Hyphens

13.21: Parentheses

13.22: Additional Resources on Grammar and Mechanics



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13.1: Why Spend Time on "Correct" Standard English?

Media Alternative

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As you probably know, writing according to the conventions of standard professional or academic English will help you maintain credibility with readers in academic or professional settings. That doesn't mean that you need to write perfectly without a single error; no one does. But as you can imagine, being able to write mostly correct Standard English will likely be a significant advantage in your working life. A résumé, an email inquiring about a job, a nurse's notes on a patient, a police report, a complaint--all need to be in Standard English. Being able to write Standard English will also allow you to have more of a voice in our democracy when you write to a politician or post on social media to express your opinion.

Let's not deny that there is inherent unfairness built into this expectation. Learning the grammar of Standard English is more work if we grew up speaking African American Vernacular English (AAVE) or Spanglish or another of the rich and beautiful dialects of English spoken in working-class communities and communities of color across America. Those who grew up speaking another language entirely will of course have to work yet harder. Meanwhile, those whose families who speak something similar to standard English will be able to write it with much less effort. None of that is fair, and the unfairness aligns with historical patterns of who has it easy and who has it harder in America.

Let's be clear, though. College does not demand that we give up speaking our own language or dialect. Most English teachers no longer assert that Standard English is superior. The National Council of Teachers of English made a public declaration of "Students' Right to Their Own Language" in 1974. They wrote that "A nation proud of its diverse heritage and its cultural and racial variety will preserve its heritage of dialects...The claim that any one dialect is unacceptable amounts to an attempt of one social group to exert its dominance over another." They write, "We affirm the students' right to their own patterns and varieties of language -- the dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style."

Still, even if much of the time we choose not to speak or write Standard English, it remains a crucial tool. Mainstream audiences will probably not consider our arguments credible in professional or academic settings unless we write in Standard English. Once we feel comfortable writing in this way, we can take pride in being able to code-switch at will. Ideally, we can enjoy our flexibility and heightened awareness of language. And we can choose to maintain a sense of pride and identity in relation to our home way of speaking.



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13.2: Proofreading Strategies

Media Alternative

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How to find errors you already know how to fix

So when we want to write correct Standard English, what are the most efficient ways to find and fix errors? The first round of proofreading is just about finding ways to notice errors so we can correct them. The strategies below can help us recognize where we have written something that we didn't intend.

- Set your paper aside for a few hours or a few days and then come back to it.
- Print out a hard copy of your paper and **read it aloud** to yourself with a pencil in hand to mark errors. Many of us feel shy about doing this even in private, but if we can get past the initial hesitation, listening to what we've written can be surprisingly helpful. Our brain registers the words differently when we hear them aloud.
- Read your paper **backward** one sentence at a time, focusing solely on grammar, punctuation, typos, and missing or repeated words.
- Read your paper aloud to a friend. Having a live audience makes us even more aware of errors. Alternately, have a friend read your paper aloud to you and make notes as you hear things you need to change.
- Listen to the computer read your paper aloud to you. This is a built-in feature of most phones and computers now. Go to "Accessibility" in settings and look for "text to speech." There are many other free programs online: one highly rated one is Natural Readers. Most will highlight the words as they read them, so you can easily track where to make corrections. Experiment with a couple of text-to-speech platforms with different voice settings and speeds to see what you are most comfortable with.

How to find and fix errors you haven't learned about yet

- Use the **Grammarly app** to identify mistakes and possible corrections. Grammar checking software has gotten better in recent years, and Grammarly is currently the top-rated one. Even the free version of Grammarly can catch many errors, and the "..." link next to each suggestion will take you to an explanation. Keep in mind that some of the suggestions will be incorrect or will change the meaning of your sentence in a way you don't intend. Look up any new suggested words or spelling variants to confirm that they fit your meaning. Use the strategies below to learn about any grammar corrections suggested by Grammarly and confirm that they reflect your meaning as well. Microsoft Word also has a built-in grammar checker.
- Refer to a **grammar handbook** when in doubt on a rule. Experienced professional writers like to have these on hand. Your college's English department may have a recommended handbook available in the library, tutoring center, or bookstore. You can also get used copies of older editions quite cheaply on Alibris or Amazon. If you get comfortable with a particular handbook, it will be easy to quickly look up a comma rule you've forgotten or the correct time to use "whom." Most handbooks have a short table of contents on the back page that allows you to scan for the right section without flipping through the entire book.
- **Online grammar resources** can take the place of a physical grammar handbook. Start with this book's Chapter 13: Correcting Grammar and Punctuation.
- Use a **dictionary** to check word choice or preposition combinations. Longman is particularly good for finding the prepositions (words like "to" and "for") that go with particular words.
- Meet with a **tutor** to focus solely on grammar. Your tutor should not fix errors for you, but rather let you know what your most

common and serious errors are. The tutor can help you to a better understanding of these errors, and practice fixing them with you, so later you can do it on your own.

- Schedule a meeting with your **instructor** to work on grammar. Most instructors will be willing to help and glad that you are motivated to improve.

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13.3: Subject-Verb Agreement

Media Alternative

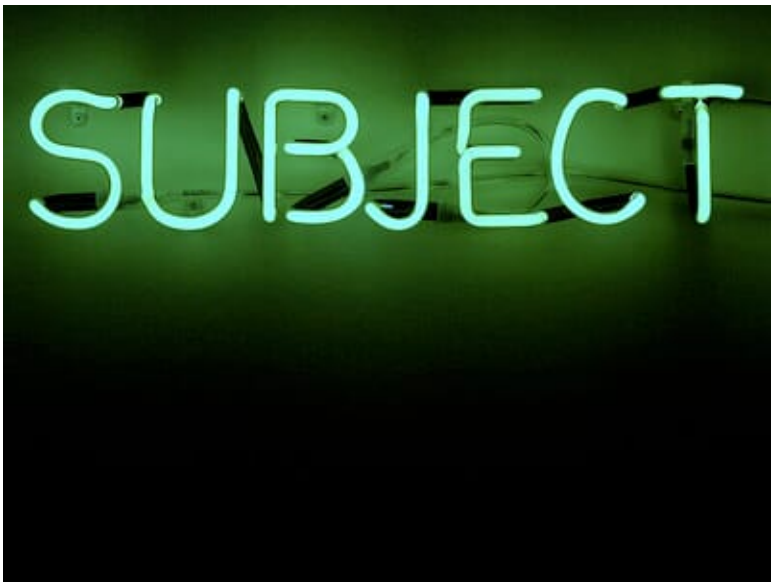
Listen to an audio version of this page (22 min, 18 sec):

Introduction

Subject-verb agreement errors are common, and correcting them will do a lot to improve the writer's professional or academic credibility and make a good impression on readers.

To correct such an error, we first need to identify the **subject** and **verb**. Every complete sentence, and indeed every complete thought, has a subject and a verb at its heart.

Identifying subjects



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The subject, or what the sentence is about, usually appears at the beginning of a sentence as a **noun** or a **pronoun**. A noun is a word that identifies a person, place, thing, or idea. A pronoun is a word that replaces a noun. Common pronouns are *I*, *he*, *she*, *it*, *you*, *they*, and *we*. In the sentences below, the subjects are in bold.

Examples of Subjects in Sentences

Sample sentence with subjects in bold	Explanation
Malik is the project manager for this project. **He** will give us our assignments.	In these sentences, the subject is a person: *Malik*. The pronoun *He* replaces and refers back to *Malik*.
The **computer lab** is where we will work. **It** will be open twenty-four hours a day.	In the first sentence, the subject is a place: *computer lab*. In the second sentence, the pronoun *It* substitutes for *computer lab* as the subject.

Sample sentence with subjects in bold	Explanation
The **project** will run for three weeks. **It** will have a quick turnaround.	In the first sentence, the subject is a thing: *project*. In the second sentence, the pronoun *It* stands in for the *project*.

Compound subjects

A sentence may have more than one person, place, or thing as the subject. These subjects are called compound subjects. Compound subjects are useful when you want to discuss several subjects at once. In the following examples, "Desmond and Maria" and "Books, magazines and online articles" are compound subjects.

- **Desmond and Maria** have been working on that design for almost a year.
- **Books, magazines, and online articles** are all good resources.

Prepositional phrases

You will often read a sentence that has more than one noun or pronoun in it. You may encounter a group of words that includes a preposition with a noun or a pronoun. Prepositions connect a noun, pronoun, or verb to another word that describes or modifies that noun, pronoun, or verb. Common prepositions include in, on, under, near, by, with, and about. A group of words that begin with a preposition is called a prepositional phrase. A prepositional phrase begins with a preposition and modifies or describes a word. It cannot act as the subject of a sentence. The following example includes the prepositional phrases "on a business trip," "with the famous pizza," "on the way" and "for lunch."

We went **on a business trip**. That restaurant **with the famous pizza** was **on the way**. We stopped **for lunch**.

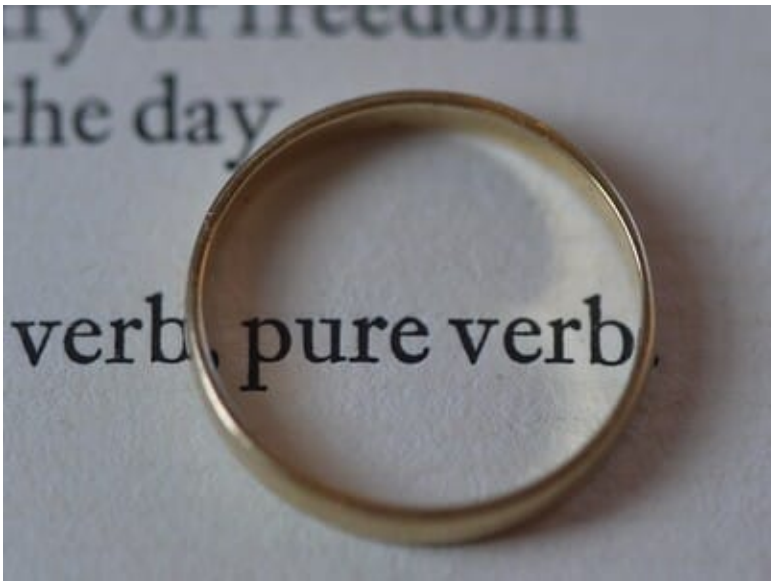
Exercise 13.3.1

Identify the subjects and the prepositional phrases in the following sentences.

1. The gym is open until nine o'clock tonight.
2. We went to the store to get some ice.
3. The student with the most extra credit will win a homework pass.
4. Maya and Tia found an abandoned cat by the side of the road.
5. The driver of that pickup truck skidded on the ice.
6. Anita won the race with time to spare.
7. The people who work for that company were surprised about the merger.
8. Working in haste means that you are more likely to make mistakes.
9. The soundtrack has over sixty songs in languages from around the world.
10. His latest invention does not work, but it has inspired the rest of us.

Identifying verbs

Once you locate the subject of a sentence, you can move on to the next part of a complete sentence: the verb. A verb is often an action word that shows what the subject is doing. A verb can also link the subject to a describing word. There are three types of verbs that you can use in a sentence: action verbs, linking verbs, or helping verbs.



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Action verbs

A verb that connects the subject to an action is called an action verb. An action verb answers the question "What is the subject doing?" The following sentences include the action verbs *barked* and *gave*.

- The dog **barked** at the jogger.
- He **gave** a short speech before we ate.

Linking verbs

A verb can often connect the subject of the sentence to a describing word. This type of verb is called a linking verb because it links the subject to a describing word. The following sentences include the linking verbs *was* and *seemed*.

- The coat **was** old and dirty.
- The clock **seemed** broken.

If you have trouble telling the difference between action verbs and linking verbs, remember that an action verb shows that the subject is doing something, whereas a linking verb simply connects the subject to another word that describes or modifies the subject. A few verbs can be used as either action verbs or linking verbs. In the following examples, the verb *looked* is paired with the subject *boy*, in one case as an action verb and in the other as a linking verb.

- **Action Verb**: The boy *looked* for his glove.
- **Linking Verb**: The boy *looked* tired.

Although both sentences start with the same words, the two sentences have completely different meanings. In the first sentence, the verb describes the boy's action. In the second sentence, the verb describes the boy's appearance.

Helping verbs

A third type of verb is a helping verb. Helping verbs are used with the main verb to describe a mood or verb tense. Helping verbs are usually a form of *be*, *do*, or *have*. The word *can* is also used as a helping verb. In the following examples, *is, does, have*, and *can* are helping verbs and *known, speak up, seen*, and *tell* are action verbs.

- **The restaurant** *is known* for its variety of dishes.
- **She** *does speak up* when prompted in class.
- **We** *have seen* that movie three times.
- **She** *can tell* when someone walks on her lawn.

Exercise 13.3.2

Find the verbs in the following sentences and decide whether each is an action, verb, linking verb, or a helping verb.

1. The cat sounds ready to come back inside.
2. We have not eaten dinner yet.
3. It took four people to move the broken-down car.
4. The book was filled with notes from class.
5. We walked from room to room, inspecting for damages.
6. Harold was expecting a package in the mail.
7. The clothes still felt damp even though they had been through the dryer twice.
8. The teacher who runs the studio is often praised for his restoration work on old masterpieces.

Subject-verb agreement

Agreement in writing refers to a consistent grammatical match between words. Subject-verb agreement describes the match between subjects and verbs. Because subjects and verbs are either singular or plural, the subject of a sentence and the verb of a sentence must agree with each other in number. That is, a singular subject belongs with a singular verb form, and a plural subject belongs with a plural verb form. In the examples below, the singular verb *jumps* is used with the singular subject *cat,* while the plural *jump* goes with plural subject *cats*.

- **Singular:** The cat **jumps** over the fence.
- **Plural:** The cats **jump** over the fence.

Regular verbs follow a predictable pattern. For example, in the third person singular, regular verbs always end in -s. Other forms of regular verbs do not end in -s.

Regular Verbs in Present Tense

Person	Singular Form	Plural Form
First Person ("I")	I do.	We do.
Second Person ("you")	You do.	You do.
Third Person ("she," "he," singular "they" or "it")	He/She/They/It does.	They do.

A note on singular *they*

They and *their* can now be used to refer to a single person whose gender is unknown or to a person who identifies as nonbinary, as in "A teacher should consider their students' responses. They should ask for student feedback." However, it is still considered awkward to use the singular *they* directly with a singular verb. So when referring to a single teacher, instead of the awkward "They *has* a duty to find out whether students are learning from their teaching," we could write, "They *have* a duty..." See the Oxford English Dictionary's "A Brief History of Singular They."

Exercise 13.3.3

Complete the following sentences with the correct present tense form of *be*, *have*, or *do*.

1. I _____ sure that you will succeed.
2. They _____ front-row tickets to the show.

3. He _____ a great Elvis impersonation.
4. We _____ so excited to meet you in person!
5. She _____ a fever and a sore throat.
6. You _____ not know what you are talking about.
7. You _____ all going to pass this class.
8. She _____ not going to like that.
9. It _____ appear to be the right size.
10. They _____ ready to take this job seriously.

Types of subject-verb agreement errors

Errors in subject-verb agreement frequently occur when

- a sentence contains a compound subject;
- the subject of the sentence is separate from the verb;
- the subject of the sentence is an indefinite pronoun, such as *anyone* or *everyone*;
- the subject of the sentence is a collective noun, such as *team* or *organization*;
- the subject appears after the verb.



Can you find the subject-verb agreement error here?
"Weird Plural-Singular conflict" by zimpenfish on Flickr is licensed under CC BY 2.0.

Compound subjects

A compound subject is formed by two or more nouns and the coordinating conjunctions *and*, *or*, or *nor*. A compound subject can be made of singular subjects, plural subjects, or a combination of singular and plural subjects.

Compound subjects combined with *and* take a plural verb form. In the sentences below, the compound subjects are in bold.

Examples of compound subjects joined with and

Subject type	Sample sentence	Explanation
Two singular subjects	**Alicia and Miguel** *ride* their bikes to the beach.	*Alicia* and *Miguel* are the singular subjects, which combine to form a plural compound subject, and *ride* is the plural verb.
Two plural subjects	**The girls and the boys** *ride* their bikes to the beach.	*Girls* and *boys* are the plural subjects, which combine to form a plural compound subject, and *ride* is the plural verb.

Subject type	Sample sentence	Explanation
Singular and plural subjects	**Alicia and the boys** *ride* their bikes to the beach.	*Alicia* is a singular subject, *boys* is a plural subject; they combine to form a plural compound subject, and *ride* is the plural verb.

Compound subjects combined with *or* and *nor* are treated separately. The verb must agree with the subject that is nearest to the verb.

Examples of compound subjects joined with or and nor

Subject type	Sample sentence	Explanation
Two singular subjects	**Neither Elizabeth nor Rianna** *wants* to eat at that restaurant.	*Rianna* is the singular subject closest to the verb, so the verb *wants* is in singular form. The other singular subject, *Elizabeth,* does not affect the verb form.
Two plural subjects	**Neither the kids nor the adults** *want* to eat at that restaurant.	*Adults* is the plural subject closest to the verb, so the verb *want* is in plural form. The other subject, *kids*, is plural but does not affect the verb form.
Singular and plural subjects	**Neither Elizabeth nor the kids** *want* to eat at that restaurant.	*Kids* is the plural subject closest to the verb, so the verb *want* is in plural form. The other subject, *Elizabeth,* is singular but does not affect the verb form.
Plural and singular subjects	**Neither the kids nor Elizabeth** *wants* to eat at that restaurant.	*Elizabeth* is the singular subject closest to the verb, so the verb *wants* is in singular form. The other subject, *kids*, is plural but does not affect the verb form.
Two singular subjects	**Either Adauto or Jason** *takes* the furniture out of the garage.	*Jason* is the singular subject closest to the verb, so the verb *takes* is in singular form. The other subject, *Adauto*, is singular but does not affect the verb form.
Two plural subjects	**Either you two or the twins** *take* the furniture out of the garage.	*Twins* is the plural subject closest to the verb, so the verb *take* is in plural form. The other subject, *you two*, is plural but does not affect the verb form.
Singular and plural subjects	**Either Jason or the twins** *take* the furniture out of the garage.	*Twins* is the plural subject closest to the verb, so the verb *take* is in plural form. The other subject, *Jason*, is singular but does not affect the verb form.
Plural and singular subjects	Either **the twins or Jason** *takes* the furniture out of the garage.	*Jason* is the singular subject closest to the verb, so the verb *takes* is in singular form. The other subject, *twins*, is plural but does not affect the verb form.

Tip

If you can substitute the word *they* for the compound subject, then the sentence takes the third person plural verb form.

Separation of subjects and verbs

Sometimes a phrase or clause separates the subject from the verb. Often, prepositional phrases or dependent clauses add more information to the sentence and appear between the subject and the verb. These words in between subject and verb may distract the writer and lead them to a subject-verb agreement error.

One way to find the main subject and verb in this case is to cross out or ignore the phrases and clauses that begin with prepositions or dependent words. The subject of a sentence will never be in a prepositional phrase or dependent clause.

The following sentences each show a subject and verb separated by a prepositional phrase:

- The **students** with the best grades *win* the academic awards. (*Students* is the subject and *win* is the verb.)
- The **puppy** under the table *is* my favorite. (*Puppy* is the subject and *is* is the verb.)

The following is an example of a subject and verb separated by a dependent clause:

- The **car** that I bought *has* power steering and a sunroof. (*Car* is the subject and *has* is the verb.)
- The **representatives** who are courteous *sell* the most tickets. (*Representatives* is the subject and *sell* is the verb.)

Indefinite pronouns

Indefinite pronouns such as *anybody*, *each*, or *all* refer to an unspecified person, thing, or number. When an indefinite pronoun serves as the subject of a sentence, you will often use a singular verb form.

However, keep in mind that exceptions arise. Some indefinite pronouns may require a plural verb form. To determine whether to use a singular or plural verb with an indefinite pronoun, consider the noun that the pronoun would refer to. If the noun is plural, then use a plural verb with the indefinite pronoun.

Common Indefinite Pronouns and the Verb Forms They Agree with

Indefinite Pronouns That Always Take a Singular Verb	Indefinite Pronouns That Can Take a Singular or Plural Verb
anybody, anyone, anything	All
each	Any
everybody, everyone, everything	None
much	Some
many	
nobody, no one, nothing	
somebody, someone, something	

Examples of Subject-Verb Agreement with Indefinite Pronouns

Sample sentence with the indefinite pronoun in bold and the verb in italics	Why the indefinite pronoun is plural or singular in this case
Singular: Everybody in the kitchen *sings* along when that song comes on the radio.	The indefinite pronoun *everybody* takes a singular verb form, *sings,* because *everybody* refers to a group performing the same action as a single unit.
Plural: All the people in the kitchen *sing* along when that song comes on the radio.	The indefinite pronoun *all* takes a plural verb form, *sing,* because *all* refers to the plural noun *people*. Because *people* is plural, *all* is plural.
Singular: All the cake *is* on the floor.	In this sentence, the indefinite pronoun *all* takes a singular verb form, *is,* because *all* refers to the singular noun *cake*. Because *cake* is singular, *all* is singular.

Collective nouns

A collective noun, such as *family* or *group,* is a noun that identifies more than one person, place, or thing and considers those people, places, or things one singular unit. Because collective nouns are counted as one, they are singular and require a singular verb. Some commonly used collective nouns are *group*, *team*, *army*, *flock*, *family*, and *class*, as in the following example.

- **Singular:** The **class** *is* going on a field trip. (*Class* is the subject and *is* is the verb.)

In this sentence, *class* is a collective noun. Although the class consists of many students, the class is treated as a singular unit and requires a singular verb form, *is*.

The subject follows the verb

In some sentences, the subject comes after the verb instead of before the verb. This may lead to a subject-verb agreement error because the writer may not recognize the subject and form the verb accordingly. The most common such sentences begin with *here* or *there*, as in the following examples.

- Here *is* my **wallet**! (*Wallet* is the subject and *is* is the verb.)
- There *are* thirty **dolphins** in the water. (*Dolphins* is the subject and *are* is the verb.)

One way to identify the subject and verb is by reversing the order of the sentence so the subject comes first, as we demonstrate below.

- "Here *is* my **wallet**!" becomes "My **wallet** *is* here." (*Wallet* is the subject and *is* is the verb.)
- "There *are* thirty **dolphins** in the water" becomes "Thirty **dolphins** *are* in the water." (*Dolphins* is the subject and *are* is the verb.)

Exercise 13.3.4

Which of the following sentences have errors in subject-verb agreement? Correct any errors you find.

1. My dog and cats chases each other all the time.
2. The books that are in my library is the best I have ever read.
3. Everyone are going to the concert except me.
4. My family are moving to California.
5. Here is the lake I told you about.
6. There is the newspapers I was supposed to deliver.
7. Which room is bigger?
8. When are the movie going to start?
9. My sister and brother cleans up after themselves.
10. Some of the clothes is packed away in the attic.

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13.4: Fragments

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (8 min, 17 sec):

What is a fragment?

A fragment is an incomplete sentence, a series of words that can't stand on its own. A fragment may express part of an idea, but the reader will be expecting something further to complete the thought. An intuitive way to see if a sentence is a fragment is to put the words "I think that" in front of it. If the sentence is a complete thought, we should be able to introduce it with "I think that" and have it make sense. For example, take the following sentence: "Children helping in the kitchen." We can try writing, "I think that children helping in the kitchen." Readers will be wondering, "What about the children helping?" Something is clearly missing.



A half of a dollar is no good on its own; likewise, a fragment needs more words to make it a complete thought.
"Dollar Bill Cut in Half" by Images_of_Money is licensed under CC BY 2.0.

Grammatically speaking, a fragment lacks a main subject or a main verb or both. "Children helping in the kitchen" is missing a main verb. We could make it into a complete sentence below by adding a main verb, *make,* as shown below.

Fragment: Children helping in the kitchen.
Complete sentence: Children helping in the kitchen often **make** a mess.

See whether you can identify which fragment below is missing a subject and which is missing a verb.

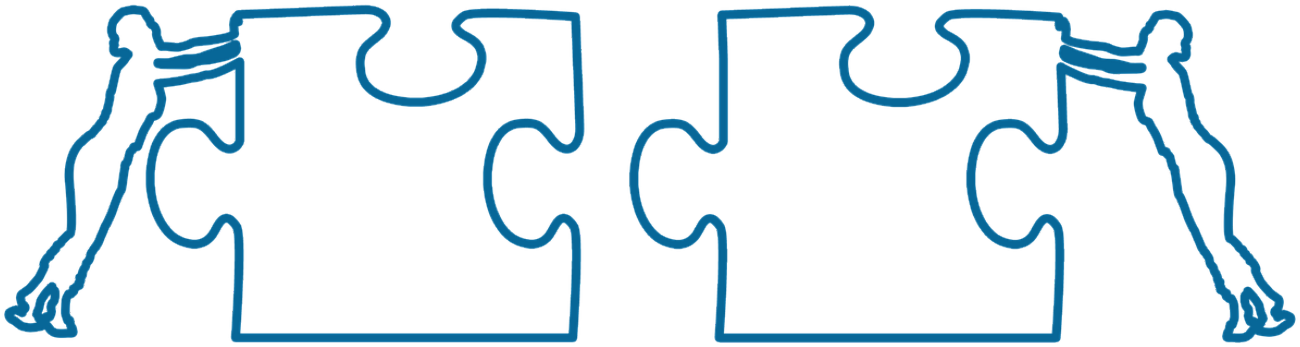
Fragment: Told her about the broken vase.
Complete sentence: I told her about the broken vase.

Fragment: The store down on MLK Drive.
Complete sentence: The store down on MLK Drive sells music.

Fixing fragments

Combine the fragment with a nearby sentence

Often a fragment belongs with the sentence before or after it. If the sentence before or after can complete the thought, the simplest way to fix the fragment is to join the two. Writers sometimes create fragments when we are trying to avoid run-ons. We may feel that a sentence is getting too long. Remember, however, that it is fine to write a long sentence if any independent clauses are connected with the right punctuation and connecting words. It is also fine to break the sentence up if it seems too long, but in that case we need to make sure that each resulting sentence is complete on its own.



Often, a fragment fits as part of a nearby sentence.
Image by Gerd Altmann from Pixabay under the Pixabay License.

Add words to complete the thought

If there is no sentence before or after the fragment that naturally completes its meaning, we can add words to make the fragment into a full sentence. This might mean adding a main subject or verb or a whole independent clause.

> **Fragment**: Not understanding the nature of capitalism and the way it encourages everyone to believe they will likely become rich.
> **Complete sentence:** The general public does not understand that capitalism by nature encourages everyone to believe they will likely become rich.

In the first version in the above example, readers would not have known who was not understanding. The beginning of the sentence was a verbal phrase without a main subject and verb. The first version did include a clause with subject and verb ("it encourages"), but that clause was serving to describe the noun "way." There was no main verb to go with "way." The revised complete sentence added a subject, "the general public" and changed the verb from the -ing form into a main verb, "does not understand." The revision also condensed the sentence by cutting out "the way it."

Common fragment patterns

Below are some common patterns that fragments take with sample corrections. In each case, there is a word or a grammatical feature that signals to the reader that the phrase is not the main idea but a side idea in the sentence.

Prepositional phrases

Prepositions are words such as *in, at, on, of, after,* and *before*. They introduce other words and make a group of words into a prepositional phrase. If a prepositional phrase is not connected to a complete sentence, it is a fragment. Often we can connect the prepositional phrase to a sentence before or after it. If we add it to the beginning of the other sentence, we need to insert a comma after the prepositional phrase.

Fragment: After walking over two miles. Tamika remembered their wallet.
Complete sentence: After walking over two miles, Tamika remembered their wallet.
Complete sentence: John remembered his wallet after walking over two miles.

Dependent words

Dependent words like *since*, *because*, *without*, or *unless* signal to the reader that a clause is not the main point of the sentence. A dependent clause will have a subject and verb, but it still cannot stand on its own. Like prepositional phrases, a dependent clause can be a fragment if it is not connected to an independent clause containing a main subject and verb. To fix the problem, we can add such a fragment to the beginning or end of an independent clause. When we add the fragment to the beginning of a sentence, we follow it with a comma.

Fragment: Because we lost power. The entire family overslept.
Complete sentence: Because we lost power, the entire family overslept.
Complete sentence: The entire family overslept because we lost power.

Fragment: He has been seeing a physical therapist. Since his accident.
Complete sentence: Since his accident, he has been seeing a physical therapist.
Complete sentence: He has been seeing a physical therapist since his accident.

Gerunds

Another common fragment pattern is a phrase that centers on a verb in *-ing* form. If we use an *-ing* form we should double-check that there is a main subject and verb. The main verb itself can't be in *-ing* form, and verbs in *-ing* form also often appear without a subject.

Fragment: Taking deep breaths. Saul prepared for his presentation.
Complete sentence: Taking deep breaths**,** Saul prepared for his presentation.
Complete sentence: Taking deep breaths helped Saul prepare for his presentation.

Infinitives

Another kind of phrase that commonly gets left to stand on its own is an infinitive phrase, or a verb paired with the word *to such as to run*, *to write*, or *to reach*. Like an *-ing* form, an infinitive cannot be used as the main verb.

Fragment: We needed to make three hundred more paper cranes. To reach the one thousand mark.
Complete sentence: We needed to make three hundred more paper cranes to reach the one thousand mark.

Exercise 13.4.1

Find the fragments below, and either add words or combine the fragment with the independent clause to create a complete sentence.

1. Working without taking a break. We try to get as much work done as we can in an hour.
2. I needed to bring work home. In order to meet the deadline.
3. Unless the ground thaws before spring break. We won't be planting any tulips this year.
4. Turning the lights off after he was done in the kitchen. Camilo tries to conserve energy whenever possible.
5. You'll find what you need if you look. On the shelf next to the potted plant.
6. To find the perfect apartment. Deidre scoured the classifieds each day.

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13.5: Run-on Sentences

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (7 min, 48 sec):

What is a run-on sentence?

A **run-on sentence** happens when we put two or more complete ideas together in a sentence without joining them correctly. Not all long sentences are run-ons. A sentence can be many lines and still be correct if all its parts are connected with the correct punctuation and connecting words.

A comma is not enough to correctly join two complete thoughts or independent clauses. Using a comma to join complete thoughts is a type of run-on sentence error called a **comma splice**.

- **Run-on sentence:** Driverless cars with drivers in them are becoming common companies must be test driving the technology.
- **Comma splice:** Driverless cars with drivers in them are becoming common, companies must be test driving the technology.

Fixing run-on sentences

There are several options for fixing a run-on sentence. We can keep the two complete ideas together in one sentence, or we can separate them into two sentences. If we keep them together, we can add a word to clarify the connection between the two ideas, or, if the connection is already obvious, we can connect them with the right punctuation. Punctuation alone can technically fix a run-on; however, if readers are likely to miss the connection between the two ideas, a connecting word will be important as well. There are several types of connecting words, each of which needs different punctuation. We can consider which option best helps the reader absorb the ideas and see their relationship.

Use a period to separate the ideas

Adding a period will correct the run-on by creating two separate sentences. This allows the reader to absorb the ideas one at a time. This can be a good option if the connection between the ideas is clear, if the combination is difficult to follow, and if the piece of writing does not already have too many short sentences. It's worth considering the other options as well before deciding to fix a run-on with a period.

- **Run-on:** There were no seats left, we had to stand in the back.
- **Complete sentence:** There were no seats left. We had to stand in the back.

Use a semi-colon to keep closely related ideas together

A semi-colon can be used to connect two complete ideas or independent clauses in one sentence. Two closely related ideas can stay together this way without any additional words. This is a good option as long as it is clear how the two ideas relate.

- **Run-on:** The accident closed both lanes of traffic we waited an hour for the wreckage to be cleared.
- **Complete sentence:** The accident closed both lanes of traffic**;** we waited an hour for the wreckage to be cleared.

Use a coordinating conjunction

You can also fix run-on sentences by adding a comma and a coordinating conjunction. A coordinating conjunction acts as a link between two independent clauses.

These are the seven coordinating conjunctions that you can use: *for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, and *so*. Choose one that shows the relationship between the ideas when you want to link the two independent clauses. The acronym *FANBOYS* will help you remember this group of coordinating conjunctions. In the example below, we correct the run-on by adding the coordinating conjunction *but* between the two independent clauses.

- **Run-on:** The new printer was installed, no one knew how to use it.
- **Complete sentence:** The new printer was installed**, but** no one knew how to use it.

Use a conjunctive adverb

Another kind of connecting word or transition word is a conjunctive adverb such as "however," "therefore," "thus," "also," and "similarly." A sentence with one of these words will still need a semi-colon in between the independent clauses. After the semicolon, add the conjunctive adverb and follow it with a comma. In the example below, we correct the run-on using the conjunctive adverb *however*.

- **Run-on:** The project was put on hold we didn't have time to slow down, so we kept working.
- **Complete sentence:** The project was put on hold**; however,** we didn't have time to slow down, so we kept working.

Use a dependent word to emphasize one idea over another

Dependent words such as *because* and *although*, also called **subordinators**, can show a relationship between two independent clauses. If we put a dependent word in front of a clause, we have a dependent clause. That means that the clause is not a complete thought on its own: the dependent word signals that we need to connect it to an independent clause.

A dependent word signals that the main point of the sentence lies elsewhere. It de-emphasizes the clause it goes with.

If a sentence starts with a dependent clause, put a comma before the independent clause starts. If the dependent word comes in the middle of the sentence no comma is used. In the examples below, we correct the run-ons using the dependent words *although* and *because*.

- **Run-on:** We took the elevator, the others still got there before us.
- **Complete sentence: Although** we took the elevator, the others got there before us.
- **Run-on:** Cobwebs covered the furniture, the room hadn't been used in years.
- **Complete sentence:** Cobwebs covered the furniture **because** the room hadn't been used in years.

Exercise 13.5.1

Find and fix the run-on sentences in the following passages:

1. The report is due on Wednesday but we're flying back from San Diego that morning. I told the project manager that we would be able to get the report to her later that day she suggested that we come back a day early to get the report done and I told her we had meetings until our flight took off. We e-mailed our contact who said that they would check with his boss, she said that the project could afford a delay as long as they wouldn't have to make any edits or changes to the file our new deadline is next Friday.
2. Alma tried getting a reservation at the restaurant, but when she called they said that there was a waiting list so she put our names down on the list when the day of our reservation arrived we only had to wait thirty minutes because a table opened up unexpectedly which was good because we were able to catch a movie after dinner in the time we'd expected to wait to be seated.

3. Without a doubt, my favorite artist is Leonardo da Vinci, not because of his paintings but because of his fascinating designs, models, and sketches, including plans for scuba gear, a flying machine, and a life-size mechanical lion that actually walked and moved its head. His paintings are beautiful too, especially when you see the computer-enhanced versions researchers use a variety of methods to discover and enhance the paintings' original colors, the result of which are stunningly vibrant and yet delicate displays of the man's genius.

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13.6: Verb Tense

Media Alternative

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What is verb tense?

Verbs indicate actions or states of being in the past, present, or future using tenses. Verb tense identifies the time of action described in a sentence. Helping verbs, such as *be* and *have,* also work to create verb tenses, such as the future tense. For a full list and descriptions of verb tenses, see "Verbs and Verb Tense" in *Writing, Reading, and College Success*, edited by Athena Kashyap and Erika Dyquisto. Here are a few of the most common tenses:

Common Verb Tenses

Verb tense	Sample verb	Sample sentence with the verb in bold
past tense	walked	Yesterday, they **walked** to the laundromat.
present tense	walks	Achara **walks** toschool.
present progressive tense	are walking	Sara and Kimmy **are walking** to a cafe.
present perfect tense	has walked	Sumita **has walked** to the corner store twice already.
future tense	will walk	Next weekend, they **will walk** to thefarmer's market.

Maintaining consistent verb tense

Sometimes without realizing it we may shift tense as we write. This can be jarring or confusing for the reader. it is important to use the same verb tense consistently and to avoid shifting from one tense to another unless there is a good reason for the tense shift.

Examples of Consistent and Inconsistent Verb Tenses

Sample sentence with the verbs in bold	Explanation
The crowd **starts** cheering as Melina **approached** the finish line.	**Inconsistent tense**: The verb *starts* is in present tense, but the verb *approached* is in past tense.
The crowd **started** cheering as Melina **approached** the finish line.	**Consistent tense**: The verbs *started* and *approached* are both in past tense.
The crowd **starts** cheering as Melina **approaches** the finish line.	**Consistent tense**: The verbs *starts* and *approaches* are both in present tense.

In some cases, we need to use different tenses in the same sentence. If the time frame for each action or state is different, a tense shift is appropriate.

Example of an Appropriate Shift in Verb Tense

Sample sentence with the verbs in bold	Explanation
When I was a teenager, I **wanted** to be a firefighter, but now I **am studying** computer science.	**Appropriate shift in verb tense:** The verb *wanted* is in past tense to describe a past feeling, whereas the verb *am studying* is in present progressive tense to describe an ongoing present action.

Exercise 13.6.1

Edit the following paragraph by correcting any cases of inconsistent verb tense.

In the Middle Ages, most people lived in villages and work as agricultural laborers, or peasants. Every village has a “lord,” and the peasants worked on his land. Much of what they produce go to the lord and his family. What little food was leftover goes to support the peasants’ families. In return for their labor, the lord offers them protection. A peasant’s day usually began before sunrise and involves long hours of backbreaking work, which includes plowing the land, planting seeds, and cutting crops for harvesting. The working life of a peasant in the Middle Ages is usually demanding and exhausting.

Past and present tense in academic essays

In academic writing, as in other situations, we generally use past tense for historical events and present tense for present conditions. There is one convention, though, that might not seem intuitive. Academic writing uses the present tense for ideas that come alive in the present as we read them, even if they were written down in the past. This is called the **literary present**. It is as if the conversation that takes place about issues in books and essays is always going on and writers continue to voice their opinions now through their recorded words. So if we write about a study, we would say "The researchers conclude that..." If we write about a newspaper opinion piece, we would say "The author maintains that..." In Chapter 3: Writing a Summary of Another Writer's Argument, we saw many examples of this use of present tense in the suggested phrases for describing arguments.

If we shift, however, to talking about a past action or a condition during a past time period, we should switch to the past tense for that. For example, let's say we are analyzing Barack Obama's memoir *Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance*. We might write, "Obama describes his upbringing by a white mother after his father returned to Kenya."

Exercise 13.6.2

For each sentence below, decide whether the verb should be in simple past or simple present tense to best fit the meaning.e

1. The Dust Bowl (is, was) a name given to a period of very destructive dust storms that occurred in the United States during the 1930s.
2. Historians today (consider, considered) the Dust Bowl to be one of the worst weather events in American history.
3. The Dust Bowl mostly (affects, affected) the states of Kansas, Colorado, Oklahoma, Texas, and New Mexico.
4. John Steinbeck's novel *The Grapes of Wrath* (describes, described) a family's flight from the Dust Bowl to California.
5. Dust storms (continue, continued, will continue) to affect the region, but hopefully they will not be as destructive as the storms of the 1930s.

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13.7: Pronoun Agreement

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (19 min, 23 sec):

Pronouns help a writer avoid constant repetition. If there were no pronouns, we would soon be frustrated by reading sentences like "Asha said Asha was tired." A pronoun, however, can refer back to a word from earlier in the text so we don't have to repeat it: "Asha said she was tired."

Since pronouns can be singular or plural and gender-neutral, feminine, or masculine, we need to make sure that we use the pronoun form that matches the word it refers to. (The word the pronoun refers to is often called the **antecedent**.) Pronoun agreement errors occur when the pronoun and the word it refers to do not match, or agree with each other.

Examples of pronoun agreement

Sample sentence with a pronoun and the noun it refers to in bold	Explanation
Lani complained that **she** was exhausted.	*She* refers to *Lani*. *Lani* is the antecedent of *she*.
Kim left the party early, so I did not see **them** until Monday at work.	*Them* refers to Kim, who takes gender-neutral they/them pronouns and identifies as nonbinary. *Kim* is the antecedent of *them*.
Crina and Rosalie have been best friends ever since **they** started high school.	*They* refers to *Crina and Rosalie*. *Crina and Rosalie* is the antecedent of *they*.



A person who identifies as nonbinary may take they/them pronouns.
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Making pronouns agree in person

If you use a consistent person, your reader is less likely to be confused.

Pronoun agreement in person

Person	Singular Pronouns	Plural Pronouns
First Person	I, me, my, mine	we, us, our, ours
Second Person	you, your, yours	you, your, yours
Third Person	• he, him, his (male) • she, her (female) • they, them (nonbinary or gender unknown) • it, its (gender-neutral for non-persons)	they, them, their, theirs

When to use singular they

You may have been taught not to use "they" to refer to just one person. It has long been common in speech to use "they" to refer to one person, but for years grammarians declared it incorrect. This rule has changed in recent years. **Singular they** has become accepted as a way to counter sexism in language and promote inclusivity. As of 2019, the Associated Press, the Oxford English Dictionary, the Chicago Manual of Style, the MLA style manual, and the APA style manual all accept use of singular they. The MLA article "How Do I Use Singular They?" outlines the following two cases:

1. Singular they can refer to a person who takes they/them pronouns.



"Gender Neutral Pronouns" by The Focal Project on Flickr is licensed CC BY-NC 4.0.

   Merriam-Webster's dictionary added this use of they in 2019, as discussed in the article "Singular 'They': Though singular 'they' is old, 'they' as a nonbinary pronoun is new—and useful." Many people do not feel 100% male or 100% female. If a person indicates that their pronoun is *they/them*, go ahead and use *they* or *them* even in cases where you are referring just to that one person. For a full discussion of etiquette around pronouns and gender identity, see MyPronouns.org.

2. Singular they can refer to a general case where gender is unknown or irrelevant. Previously, we were taught to use *his or her* in this case, but now *they* is preferred. For example, if we want to refer to a student's search for housing, we might write, "A student who can't find affordable housing should check if their college offers resources."

Examples of correct and incorrect pronoun agreement in person

Sample sentence with the pronouns and antecedents in bold	Explanation
When a **customer** takes a Lyft, **you** should tip.	**Incorrect**: the antecedent *customer* is third person, but the pronoun *you* is second person.

Sample sentence with the pronouns and antecedents in bold	Explanation
 When a **customer** takes a Lyft, **they** should tip.	**Correct**: the antecedent *customer* is third person, and the pronoun *they* is third person. We use singular they to describe the general customer since their gender is unknown.
 When **Shanell** takes a Lyft, **they** always tip.	**Correct if Shanell takes they/them pronouns**: in that case, the third-person antecedent *Shanell* agrees with the nonbinary singular third-person pronoun *they*.
 When **Shanell** takes a Lyft, **she** always tips.	**Correct if Shanell takes she/her pronouns**: the third-person singular antecedent *Shanell* agrees with the third-person singular pronoun *she*.

Making pronouns agree in number

If the pronoun takes the place of or refers to a singular noun, the pronoun must also be singular. Likewise, we need a plural pronoun to refer to a plural noun.

Examples of correct and incorrect pronoun agreement in number

Sample sentence with the pronouns and antecedents in bold	Explanation
 If an undocumented **student** wants to apply for a scholarship, **they** can ask **their** college financial aid office for resources.	**Correct**: the antecedent *student* is singular, and the pronouns *they* and *them* are singular in this case. We use singular they to describe the student since their gender is unknown.
 If undocumented **students** want to apply for a scholarship, **they** can ask **their** college financial aid office for resources.	**Correct**: the antecedent *students* is plural, and the pronoun *they* is plural.
 If **we** want to apply for a scholarship, **I** can ask **my** college financial aid office for resources.	**Incorrect**: the antecedent *we* is plural, and the pronouns *I* and *my* are singular.
 If **I** want to apply for a scholarship, **I** can ask **my** college financial aid office for resources.	**Correct**: the antecedent *I* is singular, and the pronouns *I* and *my* are singular.

Exercise 13.7.1

Edit the following paragraph by correcting pronoun agreement errors in number and person.

Over spring break I visited my older cousin, Diana, and they took me to a butterfly exhibit at a museum. Diana and I have been close ever since she was young. Our mothers are twin sisters, and she is inseparable! Diana knows how much I love butterflies, so it was their special present to me. I have a soft spot for caterpillars too. I love them because something about the way it transforms is so interesting to me. One summer my grandmother gave me a butterfly growing kit, and you got to see the entire life cycle of five Painted Lady butterflies. I even got to set it free. So when my cousin said they wanted to take me to the butterfly exhibit, I was really excited!

A special case: indefinite pronouns

Indefinite pronouns do not refer to a specific person or thing and are usually singular. When referring to a person, use the **singular they**, not "he or she," as explained above. The following are some common indefinite pronouns.

all	each one	few	nothing	several
any	each other	many	one	some
anybody	either	neither	one another	somebody
anything	everybody	nobody	oneself	someone
both	everyone	none	other	something
each	everything	no one	others	anyone

Examples of correct and incorrect indefinite pronoun agreement

Sample sentence with the pronouns and antecedents in bold	Explanation
 *Everyone* should do what *he* can to help.	**Incorrect**: The antecedent *everyone* is singular and gender-neutral. The pronoun *he* is singular and male.
 *Everyone* should do what *they* can to help.	**Correct**: The antecedent *everyone* is singular and gender-neutral. The pronoun *they* is singular in this case and gender-neutral.

A special case: collective nouns

Collective nouns suggest more than one person but are usually considered singular. Look over the following examples of collective nouns.

audience	faculty	public
band	family	school
class	government	society
committee	group	team
company	jury	tribe

Examples of correct and incorrect collective noun agreement

Sample sentence with the pronouns and antecedents in bold	Explanation
 The **jury** has reached **their** verdict.	**Incorrect**: The antecedent collective noun *jury* is singular, gender-neutral, and refers to an entity, not a person. The pronoun *their* could refer to a single person or to multiple things or people.
 The **jury** has reached **its** verdict.	**Correct**: The antecedent collective noun *jury* is singular, gender-neutral, and refers to an entity, not a person. The pronoun *its* is singular and refers to a non-person.

Exercise 13.7.2

Complete each of the following sentences by adding a pronoun that agrees with the noun it refers to.

1. In the current economy, nobody wants to waste _____ money on frivolous things.
2. If anybody chooses to go to medical school, _____ must be prepared to work long hours.
3. The plumbing crew did _____ best to repair the broken pipes before the next ice storm.
4. If someone is rude to you, try giving _____ a smile in return.
5. My family has _____ faults, but I still love them no matter what.
6. The school of education plans to train _____ students to be literacy tutors.
7. The commencement speaker said that each student has a responsibility toward _____.
8. My mother's singing group has _____ rehearsals on Thursday evenings.
9. No one should suffer _____ pains alone.
10. I thought the flock of birds lost _____ way in the storm.

Making pronouns agree in case

The pronouns *I* and *me* refer to the same person, but they are different in case. *I* is used for the subject of a sentence, and *me* is used for the object of an action, as in "She helped me." Subject pronouns function as subjects in a sentence. Object pronouns function as the object of a verb or of a preposition.

Singular subject and object pronouns

Subject pronouns	Object pronouns
I	me
you	you
he, she, it, they (gender-neutral or non-binary use)	him, she, its, their (gender-neutral or nonbinary use)

Plural subject and object pronouns

Subject pronouns	Object pronouns
we	us
you	you
they	them

In the following sentences, the pronouns *she* and *they* serve as subjects:

1. *She* loves tai chi.

2. Every summer, *they* picked up litter from the local beach.

In the following sentences, the pronouns *him* and *it* serve as objects:

1. Marie leaned over and kissed *him*.
2. Jingyi moved *it* to the corner.

Tip

Note that a pronoun can also be the object of a preposition, as in the sentence "My mother stood between *us*." The pronoun *us* is the object of the preposition *between*. It answers the question *between* whom?

Compound subject pronouns are two or more pronouns joined by a conjunction or a preposition that function together as the subject of the sentence. Compound object pronouns are two or more pronouns joined by a conjunction or a preposition that function together as the object of the sentence.

Examples of correct and incorrect pronoun case with compound subjects

Sample sentence with the pronouns in bold	Explanation
Me and Ananya just started learning Arabic.	**Incorrect**: The pronoun *me* is in object case but is used as part of the compound subject of the sentence.
Ananya and **I** just started learning Arabic.	**Correct**: The pronoun *I* is in subject case and is used as part of the compound subject of the sentence.
The conversation group helped Ananya and **I** learn Arabic.	**Incorrect**: The pronoun *I* is in subject case but is used as part of the compound object of the verb *helped*.
The conversation group helped Ananya and **me** learn Arabic.	**Correct**: The pronoun *me* is in object case and is used as part of the compound object of the verb *helped*.

Notes

- It is standard to write *Ananya and me* rather than *me and Ananya*. This rule developed because it is considered more polite to refer to ourselves after another person.
- One way to check whether the pronoun case in a compound subject is correct is to try the sentence with only the pronoun. For example, "Me just started learning Arabic" sounds more obviously incorrect.

Exercise 13.7.3

Revise any sentences in which the subject and object pronouns are used incorrectly.

1. Meera and me enjoy doing yoga together on Sundays.
2. She and him have decided to sell their house.
3. Between you and I, I do not think Jeffrey will win the election.

4. Us and our friends have game night the first Thursday of every month.
5. They and I met while on vacation in Mexico.
6. Napping on the beach never gets boring for Alice and I.
7. New Year's Eve is not a good time for she and I to have a serious talk.
8. You exercise much more often than me.
9. I am going to the comedy club with Yolanda and she.
10. The cooking instructor taught her and me a lot.

A special case: *who* versus w*hom*

Who or *whoever* is always the subject of a verb. Use *who* or *whoever* when the pronoun performs the action indicated by the verb. On the other hand, *whom* and *whomever* serve as objects. They are used when the pronoun does *not* perform an action. Use *whom* or *whomever* when the pronoun is the direct object of a verb or the object of a preposition.

Examples of correct use of who and whom

Sample sentence with the pronouns in bold	Explanation
 **Who** won the game last Tuesday?	**Correct**: The word *who* is the subject of the verb *won,* so subject case is appropriate.
 I wonder **who** came up with that terrible idea!	**Correct**: The word *who* is the subject of the verb *came,* so subject case is appropriate even though *who* is also the object of the verb *wonder*. *Who* is the subject within its own clause.
 **Whom** did Frank marry the third time?	**Correct**: The word *whom* functions as the direct object of the verb *marry,* so object case is appropriate.
 From **whom** did you buy that old CD player?.	**Correct**: The word *whom* functions as the object of the preposition *from* so object case is appropriate.

Tip

If you are having trouble deciding when to use *who* and *whom*, try this trick. Take the following sentence: "Who/Whom do I consider my best friend?" Reorder the sentence in your head, using either *she* or *her, he* or *him*, or *they* or *them* in place of *who* or *whom*.

- I consider *her* my best friend.
- I consider *she* my best friend.

The second sentence will sound wrong to experienced English speakers. So the trick is, if you can use *her, him,* or *them*, you should use *whom*.

Exercise 13.7.4

Complete the following sentences by adding *who* or *whom*.

1. _____ hit the home run?
2. I remember _____ won the Academy Award for Best Actor last year.
3. To _____ is the letter addressed?
4. I have no idea _____ left the iron on, but I am going to find out.
5. _____ are you going to recommend for the internship?
6. With _____ are you going to Hawaii?
7. No one knew _____ the famous actor was.
8. _____ in the office knows how to fix the copy machine?
9. From _____ did you get the concert tickets?
10. No one knew _____ ate the cake mom was saving.

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13.8: Word Choice

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (9 min, 18 sec):

Writers commonly struggle to find just the right word. Generally, we want to choose words that convey our meaning precisely and are not jarring to readers. If we are considering whether a particular word works in a particular sentence, we can look up its definition and examples of how it is used to check whether it fits our purpose.

Using dictionary definitions

Even professional writers need help with the meanings, spellings, pronunciations, and uses of particular words. In fact, they rely on dictionaries to help them write better. No one knows every word in the English language and their multiple uses and meanings, so all writers, from novices to professionals, can benefit from the use of dictionaries.

Most dictionaries provide the following information:

- **Spelling.** How the word and its different forms are spelled.
- **Pronunciation.** How to say the word.
- **Part of speech.** The function of the word.
- **Definition.** The meaning of the word.
- **Synonyms.** Words that have similar meanings.
- **Etymology.** The history of the word.

Look at the following sample dictionary entry and see which of the preceding information you can identify:

Definition

myth, mith, *n.* [Gr. *mythos*, a word, a fable, a legend.] A fable or legend embodying the convictions of a people as to their gods or other divine beings, their own beginnings and early history and the heroes connected with it, or the origin of the world; any invented story; something or someone having no existence in fact.—**myth • ic**, **myth • i • cal**

Checking examples of how a word is commonly used

Sometimes a word's definition suggests that it fits our meaning, but the word is not commonly used in the way we want to use it. It may call up feelings or associations we don't intend. See 8.2: Word Choice and Connotation for much more on the emotional associations of words. It may also be that a word is more formal or informal than we intend. For example, slang might be fine in conversation with peers but jarring to our readers if we are writing an essay for a general academic audience. See 9.3: Distance and Intimacy for more on choosing the level of formality that fits our purpose.

Most dictionaries also offer brief samples of sentences or phrases that use the word in question, so we can start by reading those to get an idea of a word's common usage patterns. A Google search on the word will turn up additional sample sentences. We may want to search a specific publication's website, like the New York Times. To do that, enter the word into a search engine followed by "site:" and the website we want to search. For example, if we want to look for examples of how the word *precocious* is commonly used, we would enter the following into a search engine:

precocious site:nytimes.com

The results would include many examples of the word *precocious* used in sentences in *New York Times* articles. Since the *New York Times* is known for high editorial standards, we can be confident that the word will be used correctly according to common usage.

Choosing specific words over general words

Specific words and images make writing more interesting. Whenever possible, avoid overly general words in your writing; instead, try to replace general language with particular nouns, verbs, and modifiers that convey details and that bring words to life. Add words that provide color, texture, sound, and even smell to your writing.

- **General:** My new puppy is cute.
- **Specific:** My new puppy is a ball of white fuzz with the biggest black eyes I have ever seen.

- **General:** My teacher told us that plagiarism is bad.
- **Specific:** My teacher, Ms. Liu, created a presentation detailing exactly how plagiarism is illegal and unethical.

Exercise 13.8.4

Revise the following sentences by replacing the overly general words with more precise and attractive language. Write the new sentences on your own sheet of paper.

1. I would like to travel to outer space because it would be amazing.
2. Eryka came home after a bad day at the office.
3. I thought Milo's essay was fascinating.
4. The grape pickers were tired after a long day.
5. The tropical fish are pretty.
6. I enjoyed my Mexican meal.

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13.9: Prepositions

Media Alternative

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What is a preposition?

A preposition is a word that connects a noun or a pronoun to another word in a sentence. It can show the relationship between the words it connects. Sometimes changing the preposition can change the meaning of the sentence completely.

There are some general rules about preposition use described below. Choosing the correct preposition often depends on knowing the standard patterns of usage for the words the prepositions connect to. Often consulting a dictionary will be the best way to determine the right preposition combination.

Prepositions for location and time

Most prepositions such as *above*, *below*, and *behind* usually indicate a location in the physical world, but some prepositions such as *during*, *after*, and *until* show location in time. The prepositions *in*, *at*, and *on* are used to indicate both location and time, but they are used in specific ways. The tables below show when to use each one.

The Preposition in

Time	Example	Place	Example
year	in 1942	country	in Zimbabwe
month	in August	state	in California
season	in the summer	city	in Chicago
time of day (not with *night*)	in the afternoon		

The Preposition on

Time	Example	Place	Example
day	on Monday	surfaces	on the table
date	on May 23	streets	on 124th Street
specific days/dates	on Monday	modes of transportation	on the bus

The Preposition at

Time	Example	Place	Example
time	at five o'clock	addresses	at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
with *night*	at night	location	at Rooney's Grill

Exercise 13.9.1

Edit the following letter from a resident to her landlord by correcting errors with *in*, *at*, and *on*.

Dear Mrs. Salazar,
I am writing this letter to inform you that I will be vacating apartment 2A in 356 Maple Street at Wednesday, June 30, 2010. I will be cleaning the apartment at the Monday before I leave. I will return the keys to you on 5 p.m., sharp, at June 30. If you have any questions or specific instructions for me, please contact me in my office. I have enjoyed living at Austin, Texas, but I want to explore other parts of the country now.
Sincerely,
Milani Davis

Prepositions after verbs

Prepositions often follow verbs to create expressions with distinct meanings. These expressions are sometimes called prepositional verbs. It is important to remember that these expressions cannot be separated.

Verb and Preposition Combinations

Verb + preposition	Meaning	Sample sentence with the verb and preposition in bold
agree with	to agree with something or someone	My husband always **agrees with** me.
apologize for	to express regret for something, to say sorry about something	I **apologize for** being late.
apply for	to ask for something formally	I will **apply for** that job.
believe in	to have a firm conviction in something; to believe in the existence of something	I **believe in** educating the world's women.
care about	to think that someone or something is important	I **care about** the health of our oceans.
hear about	to be told about something or someone	I **heard about** the teachers' strike.
look after	to watch or to protect someone or something	Will you **look after** my dog while I am on vacation?
talk about	to discuss something	We will **talk about** the importance of recycling.
speak to, with	to talk to/with someone	I will **speak to** their teacher tomorrow.
wait for	to await the arrival of someone or something	I will **wait for** my package to arrive.

Exercise 13.9.2

For each of the sentences below, choose the correct verb and preposition combination to fit the meaning.

1. Charlotte does not _____ (apologize for, believe in) aliens or ghosts.
2. It is impolite to _____ (hear about, talk about) people when they are not here.
3. Pavel said he was going to _____ (believe in, apply for) the internship.
4. Jonas would not _____ (talk about, apologize for) eating the last piece of cake.
5. I _____ (care about, agree with) the environment very much.

Prepositions after adjectives

Similar to prepositions after verbs, prepositions after adjectives create expressions with distinct meanings unique to English. Remember, like prepositional verbs, these expressions also cannot be separated.

Adjective and Preposition Combinations

Adjective + preposition	Meaning	Sample sentence with the adjective and preposition in bold
angry at, about	to feel or show anger toward (or about) someone or something	I am **angry about** the oil spill in the ocean.
confused about	to be unable to think with clarity about someone or something.	Shawn was **confused about** the concepts presented at the meeting.
disappointed in, with	to feel dissatisfaction with someone or something	I was **disappointed in** my husband because he voted for that candidate.
dressed in	to clothe the body	He was **dressed in** a pin-striped suit.
happy for	to show happiness for someone or something	I was **happy for** my sister who graduated from college.
interested in	giving attention to something, expressing interest	I am **interested in** musical theater.
jealous of	to feel resentful or bitter toward someone or something (because of their status, possessions, or ability)	I was **jealous of** her because she always went on vacation.
thankful for	to express thanks for something	I am **thankful for** my wonderful friends.
tired of	to be disgusted with, have a distaste for	I was **tired of** driving for hours without end.
worried about	to express anxiety or worry about something	I am **worried about** my father's health.

Exercise 13.9.3

Complete the following sentences by choosing the correct adjective and preposition combination to follow the verb.

1. Meera was deeply _____ (interested in, thankful for) marine biology.
2. I was _____ (jealous of, disappointed in) the season finale of my favorite show.
3. Jordan won the race, and I am _____ (happy for, interested in) him.
4. The lawyer was _____ (thankful for, confused about) the details of the case.
5. Chloe was _____ (dressed in, tired of) a comfortable blue tunic.

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13.10: Articles with Count and Noncount Nouns

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (7 min):

Count and noncount nouns

Nouns are words that name things, places, people, and ideas. Right now, you may be surrounded by desks, computers, and notebooks. These are called count nouns because you can count the exact number of desks, computers, and notebooks—three desks, one computer, and six notebooks, for example.

On the other hand, you may be carrying a small amount of money in your wallet and sitting on a piece of furniture. These are called noncount nouns. Although you can count the pieces of furniture or the amount of money, you cannot add a number in front of *money* or *furniture* and simply add –s to the end of the noun. Instead, you must use other words and phrases to indicate the quantity of money and furniture.

- **Incorrect:** five moneys, two furnitures
- **Correct:** some money, two pieces of furniture

Count nouns

A count noun refers to people, places, and things that are separate units. You make count nouns plural by adding –s.

Count nouns

Count noun	Sample sentence with a plural count noun in bold
quarter	It takes six **quarters** to do my laundry.
chair	Make sure to push in your **chairs** before leaving class.
candidate	The two **candidates** debated the issue.
adult	The three **adults** in the room acted like children.
comedian	The two **comedians** made the audience laugh.

Noncount nouns

A noncount noun identifies a whole object that cannot separate and count individually. Noncount nouns may refer to concrete objects or abstract objects. A concrete noun identifies an object you can see, taste, touch, or count. An abstract noun identifies an object that you cannot see, touch, or count. There are some exceptions, but most abstract nouns cannot be made plural, so they are noncount nouns. Examples of abstract nouns include anger, education, melancholy, softness, violence, and conduct.

Types of noncount nouns

Type of noncount noun	Examples	Sample sentences with noncount nouns in bold
foods	sugar, salt, pepper, lettuce, rice	Add more **sugar** to my coffee, please.
solids	concrete, chocolate, silver, soap	The ice cream was covered in creamy **chocolate**.
abstract nouns	peace, warmth, hospitality, information	I need more **information** about the insurance policy.

Exercise 13.10.1

Label each of the following nouns as count or noncount.

1. electricity
2. water
3. book
4. sculpture
5. advice

Exercise 13.10.2

Identify all the noncount nouns in the sentences below.

1. The amount of traffic on the way home was terrible.
2. Forgiveness is an important part of growing up.
3. I made caramel sauce for the organic apples I bought.
4. I prefer film cameras instead of digital ones.
5. My favorite subject is history.

Definite and indefinite articles

The word *the* is a definite article. It refers to one or more specific things. For example, *the woman* refers to not any woman but a particular woman. The definite article *the* can be used before singular and plural nouns and before count and noncount nouns as long as they refer to something specific.

The words *a* and *an* are indefinite articles. They refer to one nonspecific thing. For example, *a woman* refers to any woman, not a specific, particular woman. The indefinite article *a* or *an* is used before a singular count noun.

Definite articles (the) and indefinite articles (a/an) with count nouns

Sample sentence with an article in bold	Explanation
I saw **the** concert.	The article *the* suggests that we are referring to a specific concert, which is singular.
I saw **the** concerts.	The article *the* suggests that we are referring to specific *concerts*, which is plural.
I saw **the** U2 concert last night.	The article *the* suggests that we are referring to a specific concert by the band U2.
I saw **a** concert.	The article *a* suggests we are referring to any nonspecific concert, but not to multiple concerts.

Exercise 13.10.3

Choose the correct article, *a, an,* or *the,* to fill in the blank for each of the following sentences.

1. _____ camel can live for days without water.
2. I enjoyed _____ pastries at the Bar Mitzvah.
3. _____ politician spoke of many important issues.
4. I really enjoyed _____ actor's performance in the play.
5. _____ goal I have is to run a marathon this year.

Exercise 13.10.4

Correct the misused or missing articles in the following paragraph:

Stars are large balls of spinning hot gas like our sun. The stars look tiny because they are far away. Many of them are much larger than sun. Did you know that a Milky Way galaxy has between two hundred billion and four hundred billion stars in it? Scientists estimate that there may be as many as five hundred billion galaxies in an entire universe! Just like a human being, the star has a life cycle from birth to death, but its lifespan is billions of years long. The star is born in a cloud of cosmic gas and dust called a nebula. Our sun was born in the nebula nearly five billion years ago. Photographs of the star-forming nebulas are astonishing.

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13.11: Capitalization

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (6 min, 2 sec):

When does capitalization matter?

Text messages, casual emails, and instant messages often ignore the rules of capitalization. In fact, it can seem unnecessary to capitalize in these contexts. In other, more formal forms of communication, however, knowing the basic rules of capitalization and using capitalization correctly gives the reader the impression that you choose your words carefully and care about the ideas you are conveying.

Capitalize the First Word of a Sentence

- **Incorrect:** the museum has a new butterfly exhibit.
- **Correct:** The museum has a new butterfly exhibit.
- **Incorrect:** cooking can be therapeutic.
- **Correct:** Cooking can be therapeutic.

Capitalize Proper Nouns

Proper nouns—the names of specific people, places, objects, streets, buildings, events, or titles of individuals—are always capitalized.

- **Incorrect:** He grew up in harlem, new york.
- **Correct:** He grew up in Harlem, New York.
- **Incorrect:** The sears tower in chicago has a new name.
- **Correct:** The Sears Tower in Chicago has a new name.

Tip

Always capitalize nationalities, races, languages, and religions. For example, capitalize *American, African American, Hispanic, Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist*, and so on.

Do not capitalize nouns for people, places, things, streets, buildings, events, and titles when the noun is used in general or common way. See the following chart for the difference between proper nouns and common nouns.

Examples of Common and Proper Nouns

Common Noun	Proper Noun
museum	The Art Institute of Chicago
theater	Apollo Theater
country	Malaysia
uncle	Uncle Javier
doctor	Dr. Jackson
book	*Pride and Prejudice*

Common Noun	Proper Noun
college	Smith College
war	the Spanish-American War
historical event	The Renaissance

Exercise 13.11.1

Write five proper nouns for each common noun that is listed. The first proper noun been done for you.

Common noun: river

1. Nile River
2.
3.
4.
5.

Common noun: musician

Common noun: magazine

Capitalize Days of the Week, Months of the Year, and Holidays

Incorrect: On wednesday, I will be traveling to Austin for a music festival.
Correct: On Wednesday, I will be traveling to Austin for a music festival.
Incorrect: The fourth of july is my favorite holiday.
Correct: The Fourth of July is my favorite holiday.

Capitalize Titles

Incorrect: The play, *fences*, by August Wilson is one of my favorites.
Correct: The play, *Fences*, by August Wilson is one of my favorites.
Incorrect: The president of the united states will be speaking at my university.
Correct: The President of the United States will be speaking at my university.

Tip

Computer-related words such as “Internet” and “World Wide Web” are usually capitalized; however, “email” and “online” are never capitalized.

Exercise 13.11.2

Edit the following sentences by correcting the capitalization of the titles or names.

1. The prince of england enjoys playing polo.
2. “Ode to a nightingale” is a sad poem.
3. My sister loves to read magazines such as the new yorker.
4. *The house on Mango street* is an excellent novel written by Sandra Cisneros.
5. My physician, dr. alvarez, always makes me feel comfortable in her office.

Exercise 13.11.3

Edit the following paragraphs by correcting the capitalization.

david grann's *the lost City of Z* mimics the snake-like winding of the amazon River. The three distinct Stories that are introduced are like twists in the River. First, the Author describes his own journey to the amazon in the present day, which is contrasted by an account of percy fawcett's voyage in 1925 and a depiction of James Lynch's expedition in 1996. Where does the river lead these explorers? the answer is one that both the Author and the reader are hungry to discover.

The first lines of the preface pull the reader in immediately because we know the author, david grann, is lost in the amazon. It is a compelling beginning not only because it's thrilling but also because this is a true account of grann's experience. grann has dropped the reader smack in the middle of his conflict by admitting the recklessness of his decision to come to this place. the suspense is further perpetuated by his unnerving observation that he always considered himself A Neutral Witness, never getting personally involved in his stories, a notion that is swiftly contradicted in the opening pages, as the reader can clearly perceive that he is in a dire predicament—and frighteningly involved.

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13.12: Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (7 min, 36 sec):

What is a modifier?

A modifier is a word or phrase that describes another word or phrase. If the modifier is not right next to the word or phrase it describes, readers may not be able to tell what it is doing in the sentence. The two common types of modifier errors are called misplaced modifiers and dangling modifiers.

Misplaced modifiers

A misplaced modifier is a modifier that is placed too far from the word or words it modifies. Misplaced modifiers make the sentence awkward and sometimes unintentionally humorous.

Misplaced modifying phrases

Often a modifier is a whole phrase or clause that expresses an idea about another part of the sentence.

Examples of misplaced modifiers

Sample sentence with the modifier in bold	Explanation
 She wore a bicycle helmet on her head **that was too large.**	**Incorrect**: This version makes it sound as if her head was too large. Of course, the writer is referring to the helmet, not to the person's head.
 She wore a bicycle helmet **that was too large** on her head.	**Correct**: This version places the modifier *that was too large* next to the noun it modifies, *helmet*.
 They bought a kitten for my brother **they call Shadow**.	**Incorrect**: This version suggests that the brother's name is *Shadow*. That's because the modifier *they call Shadow* is too far from the word it modifies, *kitten*.
 They bought a kitten **they call Shadow** for my brother.	**Correct**: Now the modifier *they call Shadow* comes right after the noun it modifies, *kitten*.
 The patient was referred to the nurse practitioner **with stomach pains**.	**Incorrect**: The modifier *with stomach pains* comes right after *nurse practitioner*, so the sentence reads as if it is the nurse practitioner who has stomach pains.

Sample sentence with the modifier in bold	Explanation
 The patient **with stomach pains** was referred to the nurse practitioner.	**Correct**: Now the modifier *with stomach pains* comes right after *the patient,* so it is clear who is suffering.

Misplaced simple modifiers

A modifier can also be a single word. Simple modifiers like *only*, *almost*, *just*, *nearly*, and *barely* often get used incorrectly. Placing them in the wrong spot may not always sound wrong, but it can still confuse readers.

An example of a simple modifier

Sample sentence with the modifier in bold	Explanation
 **Confusing sentence:** Tyler **almost** found fifty cents under the sofa cushions, so he put it in the piggy bank.	**Incorrect**: The modifier *almost* comes right before *find,* so it seems to suggest that Tyler didn't quite find the money. However, if he hadn't found it, he would not have been able to put it in the bank. *Almost* is meant to refer to the quantity of money, not to the finding of the money.
 **Clearer version:** Tyler found **almost** fifty cents under the sofa cushions, so he put it in the piggy bank.	**Correct**: In this version, the modifier *almost* comes right before the noun phrase it modifies, *fifty cents*.

Exercise 13.12.1

Rewrite the following sentences to correct the misplaced modifiers.

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

Dangling modifiers

A dangling modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that describes something that has been left out of the sentence. When there is nothing that the word, phrase, or clause can modify, the modifier is said to dangle.

Examples of dangling modifiers

Sample sentence with the modifier in bold	Explanation
 **Riding in the sports car**, the world whizzed by rapidly.	**Incorrect**: The phrase *riding in the sports car* is dangling. The reader is left wondering who is riding in the sports car.
 As João was **riding in the sports car**, the world whizzed by rapidly.	**Correct**: Now the subject, *João*, comes right before the verb *was riding*.
 **Walking home at night**, the trees looked like spooky aliens.	**Incorrect**: The modifier *walking home at night* is dangling. Who is walking home at night? Not the trees.
 **Walking home at night**, Jonas thought the trees looked like spooky aliens.	**Correct**: The modifier *walking home at night* is directly followed by the subject, the person who is walking home, *Jonas*.
 As Jonas was **walking home at night**, the trees looked like spooky aliens.	**Correct**: In this version, the modifier *walking home at night* is turned into a complete clause with subject *Jonas* and verb *was walking*. Note that there can be multiple ways to fix a dangling modifier.

Exercise 13.12.2

Rewrite the following sentences to correct the dangling modifiers.

1. Bent over backward, the posture was very challenging.
2. Making discoveries about new creatures, this is an interesting time to be a biologist.
3. Walking in the dark, the picture fell off the wall.
4. Playing a guitar in the bedroom, the cat was seen under the bed.
5. Packing for a trip, a cockroach scurried down the hallway.
6. While looking in the mirror, the towel swayed in the breeze.
7. While driving to the veterinarian's office, the dog nervously whined.
8. The priceless painting drew large crowds when walking into the museum.
9. Piled up next to the bookshelf, I chose a romance novel.
10. Chewing furiously, the gum fell out of my mouth.

Exercise 13.12.3

Rewrite the following paragraph to correct the misplaced and dangling modifiers.

I bought a fresh loaf of bread for my sandwich shopping in the grocery store. Wanting to make a delicious sandwich, the mayonnaise was thickly spread. Placing the cold cuts on the bread, the lettuce was placed on top. I cut the sandwich in half with a knife turning on the radio. Biting into the sandwich, my favorite song blared loudly in my ears. Humming and chewing, my sandwich went down smoothly. Smiling, my sandwich will be made again, but next time I will add cheese.

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13.13: Parallelism

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (10 min, 48 sec):

What is parallelism?

Parallelism is the use of similar structure in related words, clauses, or phrases. If we list two or more things, we should try to refer to those things using the same grammatical form. Parallelism creates a sense of rhythm and balance within a sentence. We often correct faulty parallelism intuitively because an unbalanced sentence sounds awkward and poorly constructed. Repetition of grammatical construction makes the sentence flow and minimizes the amount of work the reader has to do to make sense of it. Try reading the following sentences aloud:

Examples of correct and incorrect parallelism

Sentences with parallel items in bold	Explanation
Kelly had **to iron**, **do the washing**, and **shopping** before her parents arrived.	**Incorrect**: Each item in the list is a verb in a different form: *to iron*, *do the washing*, and *shopping*.
Kelly had to do the **ironing**, **washing**, and **shopping** before her parents arrived.	**Correct**: Now the items in the list all have the same -ing verb form: *ironing*, *washing*, and *shopping*.
Driving a car requires **coordination**, **patience**, and **to have good eyesight**.	**Incorrect**: The list begins with a noun, *coordination*, but ends with a phrase, *to have good eyesight*.
Driving a car requires **coordination**, **patience**, and **good eyesight**.	**Correct**: Each item in the list is in noun form: *coordination*, *patience*, and *good eyesight*.
Ali prefers **jeans** to **wearing a suit**.	**Incorrect**: *Jeans* is a noun, but *wearing a suit* is a verbal phrase.
Ali prefers **wearing jeans** to **wearing a suit**.	**Correct**: Now the sentence lines up one verbal phrase, *wearing jeans*, next to another, *wearing a suit*.

Tip

A simple way to check for parallelism in your writing is to make sure you have paired nouns with nouns, verbs with verbs, prepositional phrases with prepositional phrases, and so on. Underline each element in a sentence and check that the corresponding element uses the same grammatical form.

How to create parallelism

Parallelism may be created by connecting two clauses or making a list using coordinating conjunctions; by comparing two items using *than* or *as*; or by connecting two parts of a sentence using correlative conjunctions.

Creating parallelism using coordinating conjunctions

When you connect two clauses using a coordinating conjunction (*for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, *so*), make sure that the same grammatical structure is used on each side of the conjunction. Take a look at the following example:

- **Faulty parallelism:** When I walk the dog, I like **to listen to music** and **talking to friends** on the phone.
- **Correct parallelism:** When I walk the dog, I like **listening to music** and **talking to friends** on the phone.

The first sentence uses two different verb forms (*to listen*, *talking*). In the second sentence, the grammatical construction on each side of the coordinating conjunction (*and*) is the same, creating a parallel sentence.

The same technique should be used for joining items or lists in a series:

- **Faulty parallelism:** This committee needs to decide whether the company should **reduce its workforce, cut its benefits,** or **lowering workers' wages**.
- **Correct parallelism:** This committee needs to decide whether the company should **reduce its workforce, cut its benefits,** or **lower workers' wages**.

The first sentence contains two items that use the same verb construction (*reduce*, *cut*) and a third item that uses a different verb form (*lowering*). The second sentence uses the same verb construction in all three items, creating a parallel structure.

Exercise 13.13.1

Revise each of the following sentences to create parallel structure using coordinating conjunctions.

1. Mr. Holloway enjoys reading and to play his guitar at weekends.
2. The doctor told Mrs. Franklin that she should either eat less or should exercise more.
3. Breaking out of the prison compound, the escapees moved carefully, quietly, and were quick on their feet.
4. I have read the book, but I have not watched the movie version.
5. Deal with a full inbox first thing in the morning, or by setting aside short periods of time in which to answer e-mail queries.

Creating parallelism using *than* or *as*

When you are making a comparison, the two items being compared should have a parallel structure. Comparing two items without using parallel structure can lead to confusion about what is being compared. Comparisons frequently use the words *than* or *as*, and the items on each side of these comparison words should be parallel. Take a look at the following example:

- **Faulty parallelism: Swimming in the ocean** is much tougher than **a pool**.
- **Correct parallelism: Swimming in the ocean** is much tougher than **swimming in a pool**.

In the first sentence, the elements before the comparison word (*than*) are not equal to the elements after the comparison word. It appears that the writer is comparing an action (*swimming*) with a noun (*a pool*). In the second sentence, the writer uses the same grammatical construction to create a parallel structure. This clarifies that an action is being compared with another action.

To correct some instances of faulty parallelism, it may be necessary to add or delete words in a sentence.

- **Faulty parallelism: A brisk walk** is as beneficial to your health as **going for a run**.
- **Correct parallelism: Going for a brisk walk** is as beneficial to your health as **going for a run**.

In this example, it is necessary to add the verb phrase *going for* to the sentence in order to clarify that the act of walking is being compared to the act of running.

Exercise 13.13.2

Revise each of the following sentences to create parallel structure using *than* or *as*.

1. I would rather work at a second job to pay for a new car than a loan.
2. How you look in the workplace is just as important as your behavior.
3. The firefighter spoke more of his childhood than he talked about his job.
4. Indian cuisine is far tastier than the food of Great Britain.
5. Jim's opponent was as tall as Jim and he carried far more weight.

Creating parallelism using correlative conjunctions

A correlative conjunction is a paired conjunction that connects two equal parts of a sentence and shows the relationship between them. Common correlative conjunctions include the following:

- either…or
- not only…but also
- neither…nor
- whether…or
- rather…than
- both…and

Correlative conjunctions should follow the same grammatical structure to create a parallel sentence. Take a look at the following example:

- **Faulty parallelism:** We can neither **wait** for something to happen nor **can we take** evasive action.
- **Correct parallelism:** We can neither **wait** for something to happen nor **take** evasive action.

When using a correlative conjunction, the words, phrases, or clauses following each part should be parallel. In the first sentence, the construction of the second part of the sentence does not match the construction of the first part. In the second sentence, omitting needless words and matching verb constructions create a parallel structure. Sometimes, rearranging a sentence corrects faulty parallelism.

- **Faulty parallelism:** It was both a long movie and poorly written.
- **Correct parallelism**: The movie was both long and poorly written.

Tip

To see examples of parallelism in use, read some of the great historical speeches by rhetoricians such as Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King Jr. Notice how they use parallel structures to emphasize important points and to create a smooth, easily understandable oration. You may want to watch and listen to Martin Luther King's speech "I Have a Dream."

Exercise 13.13.3

Revise each of the following sentences to create parallel structure using correlative conjunctions.

1. The cyclist owns both a mountain bike and has a racing bike.
2. The movie not only contained lots of action, but also it offered an important lesson.
3. My current job is neither exciting nor is it meaningful.
4. Jason would rather listen to his father than be taking advice from me.
5. We are neither interested in buying a vacuum cleaner nor do we want to utilize your carpet cleaning service.

Exercise 13.13.4

Read through the following paragraph, and revise any instances of faulty parallelism to create parallel structure.

Owning a pet has proven to be extremely beneficial to people's health. Pets help lower blood pressure, boost immunity, and are lessening anxiety. Studies indicate that children who grow up in a household with cats or dogs are at a lower risk of developing allergies or suffer from asthma. Owning a dog offers an additional bonus; it makes people more sociable. Dogs are natural conversation starters and this not only helps to draw people out of social isolation but also they are more likely to find a romantic partner. Benefits of pet ownership for elderly people include less anxiety, lower insurance costs, and they also gain peace of mind. A study of Alzheimer's patients showed that patients have fewer anxious outbursts if there is an animal in the home. Some doctors even keep dogs in the office to act as on-site therapists. In short, owning a pet keeps you healthy, happy, and is a great way to help you relax.

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13.14: Using Quotation Marks

Media Alternative

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Quotation marks (“ ”) set off a group of words from the rest of the text. Use quotation marks to indicate direct quotations of another person’s words or to indicate a title. Quotation marks always appear in pairs.

Direct Quotations

A direct quotation is an exact account of what someone said or wrote. To include a direct quotation in your writing, enclose the words in quotation marks. An indirect quotation is a restatement of what someone said or wrote. An indirect quotation does not use the person’s exact words. You do not need to use quotation marks for indirect quotations.

- **Direct quotation:** Carly said, **“**I’m not ever going back there again.**”**
- **Indirect quotation:** Carly said that she would never go back there.

Punctuating Direct Quotations

Quotation marks show readers another person’s exact words. Often, you will want to identify who is speaking. You can do this at the beginning, middle, or end of the quote. Notice the use of commas and capitalized words.

- **Beginning:** Madison said**, “**Let’s stop at the farmers market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner.**”**
- **Middle: “**Let’s stop at the farmers market**,”** Madison said**, “**to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner.**”**
- **End: “**Let’s stop at the farmers market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner**,”** Madison said.
- **Speaker not identified: “**Let’s stop at the farmers market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner.**”**

Always capitalize the first letter of a quote even if it is not the beginning of the sentence. When using identifying words in the middle of the quote, the beginning of the second part of the quote does not need to be capitalized.

Use commas between identifying words and quotes. Quotation marks must be placed *after commas* and periods. Place quotation marks after question marks and exclamation points only if the question or exclamation is part of the quoted text.

- **Question is part of quoted text:** The new employee asked**, “**When is lunch**?”**
- **Question is not part of quoted text:** Did you hear her say you were **“**the next Picasso**”?**
- **Exclamation is part of quoted text:** My supervisor beamed**, “**Thanks for all of your hard work**!”**
- **Exclamation is not part of quoted text:** He said I **“**single-handedly saved the company thousands of dollars**”!**

Quotations within Quotations

Use single quotation marks (‘ ’) to show a quotation within in a quotation.

- Theresa said, **“**I wanted to take my dog to the festival, but the man at the gate said, **‘**No dogs allowed.**’”**
- **“**When you say, **‘**I can’t help it,**’** what exactly does that mean?**”**
- **“**The instructions say, **‘**Tighten the screws one at a time.**’”**

Titles

Use quotation marks around titles of short works of writing, such as essays, songs, poems, short stories, and chapters in books. Usually, titles of longer works, such as books, magazines, albums, newspapers, and novels, are italicized.

- **“**The Hill We Climb**”** by Amanda Gorman is one of my favorite poems.
- The *New York Times* has been in publication since 1851.

Exercise 13.14.1

Correct the following sentences by adding quotation marks where necessary. In some cases, no quotation marks are needed.

1. Yasmin said, I don’t feel like cooking. Let’s go out to eat.
2. Where should we go? said Russell.
3. Yasmin said it didn’t matter to her.
4. I know, said Russell, let’s go to the Two Roads Juice Bar.
5. Perfect! said Yasmin.
6. Did you know that the name of the Juice Bar is a reference to a poem? asked Russell.
7. I didn’t! exclaimed Yasmin. Which poem?
8. The Road Not Taken, by Robert Frost Russell explained.
9. Oh! said Yasmin, Is that the one that starts with the line, Two roads diverged in a yellow wood?
10. That’s the one said Russell.

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13.15: Fitting a Quotation into a Sentence

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (2 min, 30 sec):

To use a quotation in our own writing, we need to fit it into a sentence of our own. There are several ways to work a quotation in so that it flows smoothly and fits logically and grammatically with our own words. Let's say we want to integrate the following opening sentence from *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens, as an example:

> "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times."

Below are three methods for bringing this quotation into a sentence.

Seamless Integration Method

Embed the quoted words, either a phrase or a whole sentence, as if they were an organic part of your sentence. With this method, if you read the sentence aloud, your listeners would not know there was a quotation. With this method, no additional punctuation is added before the quote. Here is an example:

> Charles Dickens begins his novel with the paradoxical observation that the eighteenth century was both "the best of times" and "the worst of times" [1].

Signal Phrase Method

Use a signal phrase (author + verb) to introduce the quotation, clearly indicating that the quotation comes from a specific source. See 12.5: Quoting and Paraphrasing for more on choosing signal phrases. Use a comma after the signal phrase and before the quotation, as in the example below:

> Describing the eighteenth century, Charles Dickens observes, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times" [1].

If you use the word *that* with your signal phrase in the pattern (author + verb + *that)*, however, omit the comma and do not capitalize the first word in the quote, as in this version:

> Describing the eighteenth century, Charles Dickens observes that "it was the best of times, it was the worst of times" [1].

Colon Method

If your own introductory words form a complete sentence, you can use a colon to introduce and set off the quotation. This can give the quotation added emphasis.

> Dickens defines the eighteenth century as a time of paradox: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times" [1].

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13.16: Commas

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (12 min, 28 sec):

Overview of commas

One of the punctuation clues to reading you may encounter is the comma. The comma is a punctuation mark that indicates a pause in a sentence or a separation of things in a list. Commas can be used in a variety of ways. Look at some of the following sentences to see how you might use a comma when writing a sentence.

- **Introductory word:** Personally, I think the practice is helpful.
- **Lists:** The barn, the tool shed, and the back porch were destroyed by the wind.
- **Coordinating adjectives:** He was tired, hungry, and late.
- **Conjunctions in compound sentences:** The bedroom door was closed, so the children knew their mother was asleep.
- **Interrupting words:** I knew where it was hidden, of course, but I wanted them to find it themselves.
- **Dates, addresses, greetings, and letters:** The letter was postmarked December 8, 1945.

Commas after an introductory word or phrase

You may notice a comma that appears near the beginning of the sentence, usually after a word or phrase. This comma lets the reader know where the introductory word or phrase ends and the main sentence begins.

> Without spoiling the surprise**,** we need to tell her to save the date.

In the sentence above, *without spoiling the surprise* is an introductory phrase, while *we need to tell her to save the date* is the main sentence. Notice how they are separated by a comma. When only an introductory word appears in the sentence, a comma also follows the introductory word.

> Ironically**,** she already had plans for that day.

Exercise 13.16.1

Add a comma after the introductory word or phrase to correct the sentence.

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

Commas in a list of items

When you want to list several nouns in a sentence, you separate each word with a comma. This allows the reader to pause after each item and identify which words are included in the grouping. When you list items in a sentence, put a comma after each noun, then add the word *and* before the last item. However, you do not need to include a comma after the last item.

- We'll need to get flour, tomatoes, and cheese at the store.
- The pizza will be topped with olives, peppers, and pineapple chunks.

Commas and coordinating adjectives

You can use commas to list both adjectives and nouns. A string of adjectives that describe a noun are called coordinating adjectives. These adjectives come before the noun they modify and are separated by commas. One important thing to note, however, is that unlike listing nouns, the word *and* does not always need to be before the last adjective.

- It was a bright, windy, clear day.
- Our kite glowed red, yellow, and blue in the morning sunlight.

Exercise 13.16.2

Add commas to the following sentences as needed.

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

Commas before conjunctions in compound sentences

Commas are sometimes used to separate two independent clauses. The comma comes after the first independent clause and is followed by a conjunction, such as *for*, *and*, or *but*.

- He missed class today, and he thinks he will be out tomorrow, too.
- He says his fever is gone, but he is still very tired.

Exercise 13.16.3

For each pair of sentences below, combine the two independent clauses with a comma and a coordinating conjunction.

1. The presentation was scheduled for Monday. The weather delayed the presentation for four days.
2. He wanted a snack before bedtime. He ate some fruit.
3. The patient is in the next room. I can hardly hear anything.
4. We could go camping for vacation. We could go to the beach for vacation.
5. I want to get a better job. I am taking courses at night.
6. I cannot move forward on this project. I cannot afford to stop on this project.
7. Patrice wants to stop for lunch. We will take the next exit to look for a restaurant.
8. I've got to get this paper done. I have class in ten minutes.
9. The weather was clear yesterday. We decided to go on a picnic.
10. I have never dealt with this client before. I know Leonardo has worked with them. Let's ask Leonardo for his help.

Commas before and after interrupting words

In conversations, you might interrupt your train of thought by giving more details about what you are talking about. In a sentence, you might interrupt your train of thought with a word or phrase called interrupting words. Interrupting words can come at the beginning or middle of a sentence. When the interrupting words appear at the beginning of the sentence, a comma appears after

the word or phrase.

- If you can believe it**,** people once thought the sun and planets orbited around Earth.
- Luckily**,** some people questioned that theory.

When interrupting words come in the middle of a sentence, they are separated from the rest of the sentence by commas. You can determine where the commas should go by looking for the part of the sentence that is not essential for the sentence to make sense.

- An Italian astronomer**,** Galileo**,** proved that Earth orbited the sun.
- We have known**,** for hundreds of years now**,** that the Earth and other planets exist in a solar system.

Exercise 13.16.4

Insert commas in the sentences below to separate the interrupting words from the rest of the sentence.

1. I asked my neighbors the retired couple from Florida to bring in my mail.
2. Without a doubt his work has improved over the last few weeks.
3. Our professor Professor Alamut never lectured; they always made us come up with discussion questions.
4. The meeting is at noon unfortunately which means I will be late for lunch.
5. We came in time for the last part of dinner but most importantly we came in time for dessert.
6. All of a sudden our network crashed and we lost our files.
7. Sofia hand the wrench to me before the pipe comes loose again.

Commas in dates, addresses, and the greetings and closings of letters

You also use commas when you write the date, such as in cover letters and e-mails. Commas are used when you write the date, when you include an address, and when you greet someone.

If you are writing out the full date, add a comma after the day and before the year. You do not need to add a comma when you write the month and day or when you write the month and the year. If you need to continue the sentence after you add a date that includes the day and year, add a comma after the end of the date.

- The letter is postmarked May 4**,** 2001.
- Her birthday is May 5.
- He visited the country in July 2009.
- I registered for the conference on March 7**,** 2010**,** so we should get our tickets soon.

You also use commas when you include addresses and locations. When you include an address in a sentence, be sure to place a comma after the street and after the city. Do not place a comma between the state and the zip code. Like a date, if you need to continue the sentence after adding the address, simply add a comma after the address.

- We moved to 4542 Boxcutter Lane**,** Hope**,** Missouri 70832.
- After moving to Boston**,** Massachusetts**,** Eric used public transportation to get to work.

Greetings are also separated by commas. When you write an e-mail or a letter, you add a comma after the greeting word or the person's name. You also need to include a comma after the closing, which is the word or phrase you put before your signature.

Example 13.16.1

Hello,
I would like more information about your job posting.
Thank you,
Anita Al-Sayf

Dear Mrs. Al-Sayf,
Thank you for your letter. Please read the attached document for details.
Sincerely,
Jack Fromont

Exercise 13.16.5

Add commas as needed to the following letter.

March 27 2010
Alexa Marché
14 Taylor Drive Apt. 6
New Castle Maine 90342
Dear Mr. Jian
Thank you for agreeing to meet with me. I am available on Monday the fifth. I can stop by your office at any time. Is your address still 7309 Marcourt Circle #501? Please get back to me at your earliest convenience.
Thank you
Alexa

Exercise 13.16.6

Add commas as needed to the following paragraphs.

1. My brother Nathaniel is a collector of many rare unusual things. He has collected lunch boxes limited edition books and hatpins at various points of his life. His current collection of unusual bottles has over fifty pieces. Usually he sells one collection before starting another.
2. Our meeting is scheduled for Thursday March 20. In that time we need to gather all our documents together. Alice is in charge of the timetables and schedules. Tom is in charge of updating the guidelines. I am in charge of the presentation. To prepare for this meeting please print out any e-mails faxes or documents you have referred to when writing your sample.
3. It was a cool crisp autumn day when the group set out. They needed to cover several miles before they made camp so they walked at a brisk pace. The leader of the group Aviva kept checking her watch and their GPS location. Isabelle Raoul and Maggie took turns carrying the equipment while Carrie took notes about the wildlife they saw. As a result no one noticed the darkening sky until the first drops of rain splattered on their faces.
4. Please have your report complete and filed by April 15 2010. In your submission letter please include your contact information the position you are applying for and two people we can contact as references. We will not be available for consultation after April 10 but you may contact the office if you have any questions. Thank you HR Department.

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13.17: Semicolons and Colons

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (7 min, 51 sec):

Semicolons and colons both indicate breaks in the flow of a sentence, but each has its own particular use distinct from the uses of periods or commas.

Semicolons

Semicolons to join two independent clauses

Use a semicolon to combine two closely related independent clauses. Relying on a period to separate the related clauses into two shorter sentences could lead to choppy writing. Using a comma would create an awkward run-on sentence. Note that writing independent clauses as two sentences separated by a period is correct. However, sometimes having two short sentences in a row can sound choppy. Using a semicolon to combine two clauses that are clearly connected can help avoid the choppiness and underscore the connection in meaning, as in the example below.

Correct: Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview**;** appearances are important.
Correct but choppy: Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview**.** Appearances are important.
Incorrect: Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview**,** appearances are important.

Tip

A semicolon on its own can join two main clauses. But what if there is also a connecting word joining the clauses? Use a semicolon before a conjunctive adverb such as *however* or *therefore*, but do not use a semicolon with a coordinating conjunction such as *and*, *or*, and *but*.

Semicolons to join items in a list

You can also use a semicolon to join items in a list when the items in the list already require commas. Semicolons help the reader distinguish between items in the list. By using semicolons in the example below, the reader can easily distinguish between the three sets of colors.

Correct: The color combinations we can choose from are black, white, and grey**;** green, brown, and black**;** or red, green, and brown.
Incorrect: The color combinations we can choose from are black, white, and grey, green, brown, and black, or red, green, and brown.

Exercise 13.17.1

Correct the following sentences by adding semicolons as needed. In some cases, no correction may be needed.

1. I did not notice that you were in the office I was behind the front desk all day.
2. Do you want turkey, spinach, and cheese roast beef, lettuce, and cheese or ham, tomato, and cheese?
3. Please close the blinds there is a glare on the screen.
4. Unbelievably, no one was hurt in the accident.

5. I cannot decide if I want my room to be green, brown, and purple green, black, and brown or green, brown, and dark red.
6. Let's go for a walk the air is so refreshing.

Colons

Colons to introduce a list

Use a colon to introduce a list of items. Introduce the list with an independent clause, as in the examples below.

- The team will tour three states**:** New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland.
- I have to take four classes this semester**:** Composition, Statistics, Ethics, and Italian.

Colons to introduce quotations

You can use a colon to introduce a quote as long as the words before the quote form a complete sentence in themselves, as in the following example.

Mark Twain said it best**:** "When in doubt, tell the truth."

If a quote is longer than forty words, skip a line after the colon and indent the left margin of the quote five spaces. Long quotations, which are forty words or more, are called **block quotations.** Block quotations frequently appear in longer essays and research papers. Because quotations longer than forty words use line spacing and indentation to indicate a quote, quotation marks are not necessary, as in the example below.

My father always loved Mark Twain's words**:**

> There are basically two types of people. People who accomplish things, and people who claim to have accomplished things. The first group is less crowded.

Colons to introduce examples or explanations

Use a colon to introduce an example or to further explain an idea presented in the first part of a sentence. The first part of the sentence must always be an independent clause; that is, it must stand alone as a complete thought with a subject and verb. Do not use a colon after phrases like *such as* or *for example*.

Correct: Our company offers many publishing services**:** writing, editing, and reviewing.
Incorrect: Our company offers many publishing services, such as**:** writing, editing, and reviewing.

Capitalization after colons

Capitalize the first letter following a colon for a proper noun, the beginning of a quote, or the first letter of another independent clause. Do NOT capitalize if the information following the colon is not a complete sentence.

- **Proper noun:** We visited three countries**:** Belize, Honduras, and El Salvador.
- **Beginning of a quote:** My mother loved this line from *Hamlet*: "To thine own self be true."
- **Two independent clauses:** There are drawbacks to modern technology**:** My brother's cell phone died and he lost a lot of phone numbers.
- **Incorrect:** The recipe is simple**:** Tomato, basil, and avocado.

Exercise 13.17.2

Correct the following sentences by adding semicolons or colons as needed. In some cases, no semicolon or colon should be added.

1. Don't give up you never know what tomorrow brings.
2. Our records show that the patient was admitted on March 9, 2010 January 13, 2010 and November 16, 2009.
3. Allow me to introduce myself I am the greatest ice-carver in the world.
4. Where I come from there are three ways to get to the grocery store by car, by bus, and by foot.
5. Listen closely you will want to remember this speech.
6. I have lived in Sedona, Arizona Baltimore, Maryland, and Knoxville, Tennessee.
7. The boss's message was clear Lateness would not be tolerated.
8. Next semester, we will read some more contemporary authors, such as Vonnegut, Miller, and Orwell.
9. My little sister said what we were all thinking "We should have stayed home."
10. Trust me I have done this before.

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13.18: Apostrophes

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (5 min, 7 sec):

An apostrophe (’) is a punctuation mark that is used with a noun to show possession or to indicate where a letter has been left out to form a contraction.

Possession

Singular nouns

An apostrophe and the letter s indicate who or what owns something. To show possession with a singular noun, add ’s.

Examples of possessive apostrophes with singular nouns

Sample sentence with the possessive apostrophe and s in bold	Explanation
Ibrahim**’s** dance routine mesmerized everyone in the room.	The dance routine belongs to Ibrahim, so 's is added after Ibrahim's name.
The dog**’s** leash is hanging on the hook beside the door.	The leash belongs to the dog, so 's is added after *the dog*.
Jess**’s** sister is also coming to the party.	The sister referred to is the sister of Jess, so 's is added to *Jess*.

Notice that singular nouns that end in s still take the apostrophe s (’s) ending to show possession. See "Should I use its or it's" below for one exception: we do not add an apostrophe to make the singular pronoun *it* possessive; we only add an s.

Plural nouns

To show possession with a plural noun that ends in s, just add an apostrophe (’). If the plural noun does not end in s, add an apostrophe and an s (’s).

Examples of possessive apostrophes with plural nouns

Sample sentence with the possessive apostrophe and s in bold	Explanation
The drummers**’** sticks all moved in the same rhythm, like a machine.	*Drummers* is a plural noun that ends in s, so we add an apostrophe but no additional s after the apostrophe.
The people**’s** votes clearly showed that no one supported the management decision.	*People* is a plural noun that does not end in s, so we add an apostrophe and an s.

Contractions

A contraction is a word that is formed by combining two words. In a contraction, an apostrophe shows where one or more letters have been left out. Contractions are commonly used in informal writing but not in formal writing.

For example, "I do not like ice cream" becomes "I **don't** like ice cream." The words *do* and *not* have been combined to form the contraction *don't*. The apostrophe shows where the *o* in *not* has been left out.

Commonly Used Contractions

Contraction	Original Words
aren't	are not
can't	cannot
doesn't	does not
don't	do not
isn't	is not
he'll	he will
I'll	I will
she'll	she will
they'll	they will
you'll	you will
it's	it is, it has
let's	let us
she's	she is, she has
there's	there is, there has
who's	who is, who has

Should I use it's or its?

Many writers confuse the possessive form *its* with the contraction *it's*. *Its* is a possessive pronoun. *It's* is a contraction of the words *it* and *is*. When in doubt, substitute the words *it is* in a sentence. If the sentence still makes sense, use the contraction *it's*.

Examples of its and it's

Sample sentence with *its* or *it's* in bold	Explanation
It's cold and rainy outside.	It is cold and rainy outside, so we use the contraction *it's*.
The cat was chasing **its** tail.	The tail belongs to the cat, so we use the possessive form *its*.

Exercise 13.18.1

Correct the following sentences by adding apostrophes as needed.

1. What a beautiful child! She has her mothers eyes.

2. My brothers wife is one of my best friends.
3. I couldnt believe it when I found out that I got the job!
4. My supervisors informed me that I wouldnt be able to take the days off.
5. Each of the students responses were unique.
6. Wont you please join me for dinner tonight?

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13.19: Dashes

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (1 min, 38 sec):

A dash (—) is a punctuation mark used to set off information in a sentence for emphasis. You can enclose text between two dashes, or use just one dash. To create a dash in Microsoft Word, type two hyphens together. In Google Docs, go to the Insert: menu and choose "Special Characters." Then type "dash" into the search box and select a dash. You can also set your preferences in Google Docs to replace two hyphens with a dash.

Do not put a space between dashes and text. The examples below show correct uses of the dash.

- Arrive at the interview early—but not too early.
- Any of the suits—except for the purple one—should be fine to wear.

Exercise 13.19.1

Clarify the following sentences by adding dashes. In some cases, no dashes are needed.

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

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13.20: Hyphens

Media Alternative

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A hyphen (-) looks similar to a dash but is shorter and used in a few cases to show that the two things it joins belong together.

Hyphens between two adjectives that work as one

Use a hyphen to combine words that work together to form a single description.

- The fifty-five-year-old athlete was just as qualified for the marathon as his younger opponents.
- My doctor recommended against taking the medication, since it can be habit-forming.
- My study group focused on preparing for the mid-year review.

Hyphens when a word breaks at the end of a line

Use a hyphen to divide a word across two lines of text. Most word-processing programs will do this for you. If you have to manually insert a hyphen, place the hyphen between two syllables. If you are unsure of where to place the hyphen, consult a dictionary or move the entire word to the next line.

My supervisor was concerned that the team meet-
ing would conflict with the client meeting.

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13.21: Parentheses

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (1 min, 31 sec):

Parentheses ( ) are punctuation marks that are always used in pairs and contain material that is secondary to the meaning of a sentence. Parentheses should never contain the subject or verb of a sentence. A sentence should make sense if you delete any text within parentheses and the parentheses. Try reading the sentences below without the material in parentheses.

- *Attack of the Killer Potatoes* has to be the worst movie I have seen (so far).
- Your spinach and garlic salad is one of the most delicious (and nutritious) foods I have ever tasted!

Exercise 13.21.1

Clarify the following sentences by adding parentheses as needed.

1. Are you going to the seminar this weekend I am?
2. I recommend that you try the sushi bar unless you don't like sushi.
3. I was able to solve the puzzle after taking a few moments to think about it.
4. Please complete the questionnaire at the end of this letter.
5. Has anyone besides me read the assignment?
6. Please be sure to circle not underline the correct answers.

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13.22: Additional Resources on Grammar and Mechanics

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (1 min, 23 sec):

Free online grammar and mechanics resources

- Purdue OWL's Grammar Site
- English 101: Grammar Guide
- Guide to Writing from Lumen Learning
- Reading and Writing for College Success: Grammar
- Basic Reading and Writing from Lumen Learning: Grammar
- English Grammar & Vocabulary Quizzes & Worksheets - UsingEnglish.com
- Style Academy from Brigham Young University
- Grammar Bytes! Grammar Instruction with Attitude
- Butte College Tip Sheets
- The Grammarly.com Handbook
- Walden University Grammar Site
- Khan Academy: A Brief Introduction to Grammar

Other resources

- Grammarly
- *Rules for Writers* by Diana Hacker and Nancy Sommers and the accompanying online resources in Writer's Help for Hacker Handbooks

If you'd like to practice more and get more guidance, it's worth checking if your college offers courses or workshops specifically on grammar. Ask in the English department and in the tutoring center.

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14: STYLE- SHAPING OUR SENTENCES

Learning Outcomes

- Recognize clarity as the first priority in academic writing.
- Edit out repetition and wordiness.
- Revise sentences to feature characters as subjects and actions as main verbs.
- Use parallelism to create balanced sentences.
- Employ varied sentence structures to make prose more engaging.
- Feel empowered to decipher convoluted academic prose.

14.1: What Defines Good Style in Academic Writing?

14.2: Keeping It Concise

14.3: Making Sentences Clear

14.4: Giving the Reader Pleasure

14.5: Understanding Convoluted Sentences

14.6: Sentence Variety



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14.1: What Defines Good Style in Academic Writing?

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (4 min, 26 sec):

Prioritize clarity

"Style" refers to the way in which a writer expresses something. Much as clothing style can shape how we see a person, writing style can shape how we feel about the writer and their ideas. A writing style can give pleasure through elegant, graceful, and pleasing word combinations.

However, most writers and teachers of writing agree that clarity should be our first goal. Any stylistic choices we make should also help our readers understand our points. In turn, writing clearly will generally make for good style. British poet Matthew Arnold advised "Have something to say, and say it as clearly as you can. That is the only secret of style."[1]



Photo by Justin Katigbak of Disabled And Here, licensed CC BY 4.0.

Avoid academese

Professors and students alike can be tempted to write in a wordy, complex, self-consciously scholarly style. This is an understandable mistake. We want to make our words sound formal and authoritative in part because, in the past, academic culture has favored such an ornamented style. Some call it "**academese**." Compare the following two versions of a sentence:

> **Academese style**: "To satisfy her hunger for nutrition, she consumed the bread."
>
> **Straightforward style**: "She was hungry, so she ate the bread."[1]

Clearly, the academese style runs the risk of becoming tedious and alienating readers. Unnecessary jargon, fancy vocabulary, and convoluted sentences can make anything harder to understand.

The academese style also signals elitism. It shows off a high level of education. As Joseph Williams puts it, "it is a language of

exclusion that a diverse and democratic society cannot tolerate."[2] The culture is shifting among scholars to favor plainer language and insist on clarity. Readers, including professors, are much more likely to find a self-consciously highbrow writing style annoying rather than impressive. As the saying goes[3], any fool can make simple things complicated; it takes a genius to make complicated things simple.

Of course, as writers we look for ways to develop confidence in our voices, to take ourselves seriously and make sure we are taken seriously. We can develop this sense of confidence, however, without fancy vocabulary or a hyper-formal, fussy style. Removing the pressure to sound academic can be a relief. Sometimes we can just say something very bluntly and simply and leave it at that. Confidence will come as we clarify our thinking, and writing in a straightforward style can help us to do that. Unclear and bloated prose gets in the way, both for the writer and the reader. Focusing on saying plainly what we mean can free us up to make intellectual progress.



Confidence, directness, and simplicity in writing inspire trust, as they do in in-person interactions.
Photo by Paula Bronstein for the Hewlett Foundation's Images of Empowerment, licensed CC BY NC 4.0.

Don't worry about style until the end

The best way to achieve clarity and concision in writing is to separate the drafting process from the revision process. Experienced writers routinely produce vague, tortuous, and bloated drafts, and are happy to do so. It usually means that we're onto an interesting idea. We may express the same idea in three or four different ways as we're getting thoughts down on paper. That's fine. In fact, each repetition helps us develop key ideas and alternative approaches to conveying them. A snarly first draft is often a great achievement. We just need to allow ourselves the time at the end of the writing process to revise for clarity and concision (See Chapter 11: The Writing Process).

Once we have our ideas clear, it will be easier to write effective sentences. Editing for style can then be a satisfying and not overly burdensome part of the process. One common metaphor notes that a good edit is like the last twist of a camera lens that brings the whole picture into focus. In the following sections we will look at ways to edit sentences for clarity, concision, balance, and variety.

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References

[1]Michael Harvey, *The Nuts and Bolts of College Writing*. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2003), 3.

[2]Joseph Williams, *Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace*. (New York, NY: Longman, 2003), 4.

[3] Variously attributed to Albert Einstein, E.F. Schumacher, and Woody Guthrie.

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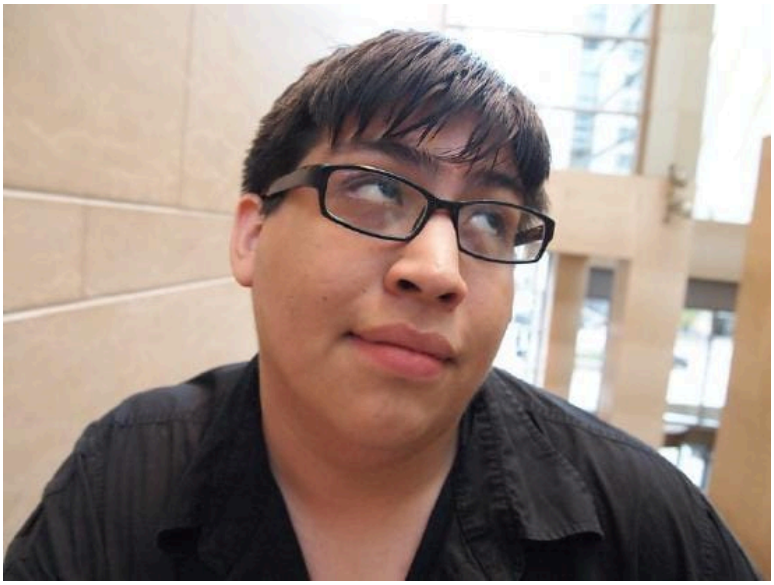
14.2: Keeping It Concise

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (6 min, 22 sec):

Why is it important to be concise?

As we develop our ideas in a draft, we are likely to repeat the same point in different phrases and sentences. In drafting, we are still thinking our ideas out and searching for the best way to articulate it. However, readers often don't want to read all those versions of the same thing. If we can cut out repetition in the final version, we can create a more lively, interesting, and focused piece. Cutting out excess wordiness can help make space for new, related ideas and a stronger argument.



Readers may roll their eyes when writers go on and on.
"Eye Roll" by Jaysin Trevino on Flickr is licensed CC BY 2.0.

A general rule to go by is that every word and sentence should be doing some significant work for the paper as a whole. Sometimes that work is more to provide pleasure than meaning—we needn't ruthlessly eliminate every flourish—but each phrase in the final version should add something unique to the paper.

Of course, we may be tempted to add padding to our writing to meet the length criteria for an assignment. But such padding will be tedious for readers, including the instructor. Often, instructors require a certain word count because they can't imagine a shorter piece of writing meeting the goals of the assignment. If our writing isn't long enough yet, a good first move is to go back to the assignment description and see if there's anything we haven't fully addressed.

Michael Harvey[1] notes that sometimes we may be reluctant to write concisely because it makes us feel more vulnerable. Wordiness may seem to add to our academic credibility, and it can cover over areas of uncertainty. Harvey writes,

> [M]any of us are afraid of writing concisely because doing so can make us feel exposed. Concision leaves us fewer words to hide behind. Our insights and ideas might appear puny stripped of those inessential words, phrases, and sentences in which we rough them out. We might even wonder, were we to cut out the fat, would anything be left?

As writers, we may need encouragement from peers and teachers to gradually gain confidence and trust that our ideas, even in their barest, simplest forms, are worthwhile. Others will take our writing seriously when it is clear and substantive.

Strategies for eliminating wordiness

It's best to wait until the final stage of the revision process to look for wordiness. (For more on how to prioritize, see Chapter 11: The Writing Process.) Then, we can try the strategies below. The more we do this, the more it will become second nature.

1. Look for words and phrases that you can cut entirely. Some bits may be redundant or meaningless, as in the following phrases, where the italicized words can be cut:
   - each ~~*and every*~~
   - ~~*unexpected*~~ surprise
   - predictions ~~*about the future*~~
   - ~~*very*~~ unique
   - ~~*certain*~~ factors
   - ~~*slightly*~~ terrifying
2. Look for opportunities to replace longer phrases with shorter phrases or words. For example, “the way in which” can often be replaced by “how” and “despite the fact that” can usually be replaced by “although.” Strong, precise verbs can often replace bloated phrases. Consider this example: “The goal of Alexander the Great was to create a united empire across a vast distance.” And compare it to this: “Alexander the Great sought to unite a vast empire.”
3. Try to rearrange sentences or passages to make them shorter and livelier. Williams and Bizup[2] recommend changing negatives to affirmatives. Consider the negatives in this sentence: “School nurses often do not notice if a young schoolchild does not have adequate food at home.” You could more concisely and clearly write, “School nurses rarely notice if a young schoolchild lacks adequate food at home.” It says the same thing, but is much easier to read which makes for a happier and more engaged reader.
4. Good parallelism can also help us write shorter text that better conveys our thinking. For example, Stacy Schiff writes this in her best-selling biography of Cleopatra[3]:

   > A goddess as a child, a queen at eighteen, a celebrity soon thereafter, she was an object of speculation and veneration, gossip and legend, even in her own time.

   Imagine if, instead, Schiff wrote this:

   > Cleopatra was seen as divine when she was a child. She became the sovereign ruler at eighteen, and she became well known throughout the ancient world early in her reign. People speculated about her, worshipped her, gossiped about her, and told legends about her, even in her own time.
   >
   > The second version says the same thing, but the extra words tend to obscure Schiff’s point. The original (“*goddess* as a child, *queen* at eighteen, *celebrity* soon thereafter”) uses parallelism to vividly convey the dramatic shifts in Cleopatra’s roles and her prominence in the ancient world. See 13.10: Parallelism for more on how to create parallel structure.

Exercise 14.2.1

Edit these passages for concision, using the three moves described above. Be sure to preserve all of the meaning contained in the original.

1. Each and every student enrolled in our educational institutions deserves and is entitled to competent instruction in all of the key academic areas of study. No student should be without ample time and help in mastering such basic skills.
2. If you really have no choice in regards to avoiding a long and extended bureaucratic process in making your complaint, it is very important that you write down and document every aspect of the case for use by all of the parties involved in the process.

Attributions

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References

[1]Michael Harvey, *The Nuts and Bolts of College Writing*. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2003), 1.

[2]Williams and Bizup, *Style*, 130.

[3]Stacy Schiff, *Cleopatra: A Life* (Boston, MA: Back Bay Books, 2011), 1.

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14.3: Making Sentences Clear

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (7 min, 12 sec):

What makes a complex line of thinking easy to follow? Williams and Bizup offer another key point. They explain that readers experience writing as clear when the "character" of a sentence is also its grammatical subject and the key "action" a grammatical verb. They provide this fanciful example:[1]

> Once upon a time, as a walk through the woods was taking place on the part of Little Red Riding Hood, the Wolf's jump out from behind a tree caused her fright.

Grammatically, the subject of the first part is "a walk through the woods," and the verb is "taking place". The character, though, is obviously Little Red Riding Hood and the action is walking. A much more straightforward version—"As Little Red Riding Hood walked through the woods"—makes the character the subject and the action the key verb. That example goes out of its way to be silly, but consider this example from a website offering free college papers:[2]

> Another event that connects the colonist and the English together is the event of a hated King in England trying to take away freedom and go back to the old ways. The idea of how much power the King had struck Parliament. After that, the Parliament and the people made the King sign the Magna Carta, which limits the amount of power the King has. The Magna Carta also affected the rights of the American colonies. It practically took away all relationships between the King and the colonies. After the relationship was broken, America broke off from England.

Apparently, the author is claiming that the colonists (in the 1700s?) pushed back against the power of the English crown in a manner similar to the Parliamentarians in 1215 (after having apparently been "struck" by an "idea" of "how much power the King had"). Grammatically, the subjects are an "event" and an "idea" rather than the characters, colonists, the king, and Parliament. The third sentence is refreshingly straightforward in structure (though vague on details). The fifth and sixth sentences are fairly straightforward, but also incredibly vague: the Magna Carta predated the American colonies by at least 400 years[3]; how does that document relate to the American Revolution? The last sentence essentially says that after the relationship was broken, the relationship was broken. If the author were to rewrite the passage to make the grammatical subjects match the characters, he or she would be prompted to clarify what exactly the king, the Parliament, the English populace, and the American colonists did (and to who), something which the author of the above passage may not actually understand. This example illustrates how clarifying "who did what to whom" for the reader also makes writers clarify it for themselves. Writing clearly involves thinking clearly, and clear rigorous thinking is why your professors assign you writing in the first place.

While the Magna Carta example is comically bad, here's one that is more or less logical but would still benefit from greater clarity:

> IgE-dependent allergic hypersensitivity reactions such as allergic asthma and food allergy involve mast cells which are typically regarded as troublesome cells as a result. Further, the allergic sensitization-processes also involves a role for mast cells. Recent findings show that their functionality is not only pro-inflammatory, but can on the contrary have suppressive or immunomodulatory effects in allergic inflammation.

The above passage isn't a terrible slog, and it's fairly clear that the whole passage is about mast cells. But here's a version of the same passage—the real version as it were—which demonstrates that the passage *feels* a lot clearer when mast cells, the "characters" driving the narrative, are also the grammatical subject of the sentence and the referent for the key verbs:[6]

> Mast cells are typically regarded as troublesome cells due to their prominent role in IgE-dependent allergic hypersensitivity reactions such as allergic asthma and food allergy. Further, it seems that mast cells are also able to play an additional role in the allergic sensitization-processes. Recent findings show that mast cell functionality is not only pro-inflammatory, but can on the contrary have suppressive or immunomodulatory effects in allergic inflammation.

Both versions of the passage are consistently about mast cells, but the second version makes that consistency much more obvious to readers as mast cells are the main character of every sentence. That clear consistency allows us to devote more of our brain power to recalling technical terms (like immunomodulatory) and comprehending the key ideas. That makes it both easier and more interesting to read.

To further illustrate the principle, let's take a nicely straightforward passage and rewrite it so that the characters are objects (rather than subjects) and the actions are nouns[7] (rather than verbs). Here's the nicely clear original:[8]

> What most people really feel nostalgic about has little to do with the internal structure of 1950s families. It is the belief that the 1950s provided a more family-friendly economic and social environment, an easier climate in which to keep kids on the straight and narrow, and above all, a greater feeling of hope for a family's long-term future, especially for its young.

In these two sentences, the character is a belief rather than a person or thing. However, the passage is still clear to the reader because it keeps the character consistent and explains what that character does (creates nostalgia) to who (people at large). Imagine if the author wrote this instead:

> People feel nostalgic not about the internal structure of 1950s families. Rather, the beliefs about how the 1950s provided a more family-friendly economic and social environment, an easier climate in which to keep kids on the straight and narrow, and above all, a greater feeling of hope for a family's long-term future (especially for its young) are what lead to those nostalgic feelings.

This second version says substantially the same thing, but it's tedious to read because the character changes abruptly from "people" to "beliefs" (which works against cohesion) and one has to get to the end of the sentence to learn how these beliefs fit in. The key point is this: one of the best things you can do to revise for greater clarity is to recast a passage so that the characters are the grammatical subjects and the key actions are the verbs.

> **Practice Exercise** 14.3.1
>
> Rewrite these passages to make the "characters" the grammatical subjects and the key "actions" the verbs. That is, make them clearer.
>
> 1. The scarcity of research funds for nutritional scientists means that offers by food companies to fund such research may be especially attractive. The implicit pressure to shape the language of the findings to avoid alienation between scholars and companies is worrisome to consider.
> 2. While educational experiences are an obvious benefit of tribal colleges, the needs tribal communities have for economic development, cultural vitality, and social ties are also addressed by educational institutions.

References

[1]Williams and Bizup, *Style*, 171.

[2]http://www.termpaperwarehouse.com/essay-on/History-Of-Magna-Carta/82596. Let this example further demonstrate why you should never, ever even look at these websites.

[3]*Encyclopædia Britannica*, s.v. "Magna Carta."

[4]Aletta D. Kraneveld and others, "The two faces of mast cells in food allergy and allergic asthma: The possible concept of Yin Yang," *Biochimica et Biophysica Acta*, 1822 (2012): 96.

[5]When you turn a verb into a noun it's called a nominalization. For example, "write" becomes "writings," and "think" becomes "thought."

[6]Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Really Are: Coming to Terms with America's Changing Families* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 34.

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14.4: Giving the Reader Pleasure

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (2 min, 58 sec):

Academic writing is not wholly utilitarian. An elegant and apt turn of phrase is satisfying both to write and to read. While you can't often summon elegance out of nowhere, you can learn a few structures that are often pleasing to the reader's ear because they harmonize *what* you're saying with *how* you're saying it. Here are two rhetorical tricks that you can use to reinforce your points.

1. Balance. Readers often find balanced sentences and phrases pleasing. The Cleopatra example above ("*goddess* as a child, *queen* at eighteen, *celebrity* soon thereafter") illustrates parallelism, which is one kind of balance: using parallel structures to convey a parallel idea. This parallelism not only helps Schiff be powerfully concise, it quickly and vividly conveys the idea that Cleopatra led a remarkable life. Williams and Bizup[1] offer another example of an elegant sentence in which the two parts are balanced in their structure:

   > A government that is unwilling to listen to the moderate hopes of its citizenry must eventually answer to the harsh justice of its revolutionaries.

   The same sentence with the parallel parts marked in bold:

   > A government that is unwilling to **listen to the *moderate hopes* of its *citizenry*** must eventually **answer to the *harsh justice* of its *revolutionaries***.

   The balanced structure and contrasting language reinforce the author's either-or point: "listen" *or* "answer"; "moderate hopes" *or* "harsh justice", "citizenry" *or* "revolutionaries." The balanced structure adds rhetorical force to the argument.

2. Emphasis. Read these sentences out loud, or imagine yourself doing so:
   - **Version 1:** But far and away, the largest weight-inducing food, out-stripping all others, was the potato chip.[2]
   - **Version 2:** But far and away, the potato chip was the largest weight-inducing food, out-stripping all others.

The first version places a particular rhetorical emphasis on "the potato chip" because it comes last in the sentence after a three-part build-up. The second version says the exact same thing, and it isn't hard to see that "potato chip" is the key part of the sentence. However, the rhetorical emphasis on "the potato chip" is somewhat weaker. This common rhetorical trick is to put the part you want to emphasize at the very end of the sentence.

These are just two rhetorical structures that scholars have identified. You can find others (Google "rhetorical device") that you can bring into your repertoire. Most people can't set out to write elegantly per se, and you certainly shouldn't spend your writing time crafting elegantly balanced sentences that have little to do with your argument or analysis. But the more familiar you are with these rhetorical structures, the more often you can recognize and use them.

References

[1]Williams and Bizup, *Style*, 171.

[2]Michael Moss, *Salt Sugar Fat: How the Food Giants Hooked Us* (New York: Random House, 2013), 328.

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14.5: Understanding Convoluted Sentences

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (3 min, 27 sec):

There is less tolerance for academese than there used to be in scholarly communities; however, a lot of landmark texts were written in a time when there wasn't such a high value placed on clarity and concision. In your studies, then, you will probably have to engage with important texts that violate almost all the advice given here.



A complex sentence makes the reader work harder; is the complexity necessary?
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Consider the following example from Talcott Parsons, a sociological theorist noted for both his intellectual force and utterly impenetrable writing style. In reading this passage, [1] imagine "ego" and "alter" as two people interacting:

> Communication through a common system of symbols is the precondition of this reciprocity or complementarity of expectations. The alternatives which are open to alter must have some measure of stability in two respects: first, as realistic possibilities for alter, and second, in their meaning to ego. This stability presupposes generalization from the particularity of the given situations of ego and alter, both of which are continually changing and are never concretely identical over any two moments in time. When such generalization occurs, and actions, gestures, or symbols have more or less the same meaning for both ego and alter, we may speak of a common culture existing between them, through which their interaction is mediated.

Here's a version after I edited for concision using the three moves described above:

> Reciprocity, or complementary expectations, depends on a common system of symbols. The symbolic alternatives for alter must be stable, in that they are both realistic for alter and meaningful to ego. That is, actions, gestures, or symbols must have a shared and persistent meaning for ego and alter even though ego and alter are in different situations and are constantly changing. When meanings are shared and persistent, we may say that the interaction between alter and ego is mediated by a common culture.

The revised version is about 30 percent shorter, and it demonstrates how concision makes one's points come through more clearly. You will almost certainly have to read works of authors who did not prioritize clarity and concision (or even cohesion and coherence), and that's a drag. But knowing how wordiness interferes with clarity can help you distill essential meanings from

challenging texts. In many ways, writing well and reading incisively are two facets of the same cognitive skill set.

Practice Exercise 14.5.1

Take these straightforward passages and make them less clear without changing the meaning. Turn verbs into nouns and make subjects into objects.

1. “Statisticians prepared to use spatial models need to keep the role of the models in perspective. When scientific interest centers on the large-scale effects, the idea is to use a few extra small-scale parameters so that the large-scale parameters are estimated more efficiently.”[2]
2. “Social scientists will be led astray if they accept the lies organizations tell about themselves. If, instead, they look for places where the stories told don’t hold up, for the events and activities those speaking for the organization ignore, cover up, or explain away, they will find a wealth of things to include in the body of material from which they construct their definitions.”[3]

References

[1]Talcott Parsons and Edward Shills eds., *Toward a General Theory of Action*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 105.

[2]Noel A.C. Cressie, *Statistics for Spatial Data* (New York: Wiley, 1991), 435.

[3]Howard S. Becker, *Tricks of the Trade: How To Think About Your Research While You’re Doing It* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 118.

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14.6: Sentence Variety

Media Alternative

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Have you ever ordered a dish in a restaurant and been not happy with its taste, even though it contained most of your favorite ingredients? Just as a meal might lack the finishing touches needed to spice it up, so too might a paragraph contain all the basic components but still lack the stylistic finesse required to engage a reader. Sometimes writers have a tendency to reuse the same sentence pattern throughout their writing. Like any repetitive task, reading text that contains too many sentences with the same length and structure can become monotonous and boring. Experienced writers mix it up by using an assortment of sentence patterns, rhythms, and lengths.

This section discusses how to introduce sentence variety into writing, how to open sentences using a variety of techniques, and how to use different types of sentence structure when connecting ideas. You can use these techniques when revising a paper to bring life and rhythm to your work. They will also make reading your work more enjoyable.

Incorporating Sentence Variety

Experienced writers incorporate sentence variety into their writing by varying sentence style and structure. Using a mixture of different sentence structures reduces repetition and adds emphasis to important points in the text. Read the following example:

> During my time in office I have achieved several goals. I have helped increase funding for local schools. I have reduced crime rates in the neighborhood. I have encouraged young people to get involved in their community. My competitor argues that she is the better choice in the upcoming election. I argue that it is ridiculous to fix something that isn't broken. If you reelect me this year, I promise to continue to serve this community.

In this extract from an election campaign, the writer uses short, simple sentences of a similar length and style. Writers often mistakenly believe that this technique makes the text more clear for the reader, but the result is a choppy paragraph that does not grab the audience's attention. Now read the revised paragraph with sentence variety:

> During my time in office, I have helped increase funding for local schools, reduced crime rates in the neighborhood, and encouraged young people to get involved in their community. Why fix what isn't broken? If you reelect me this year, I will continue to achieve great things for this community. Don't take a chance on an unknown contender; vote for the proven success.

Notice how introducing a short rhetorical question among the longer sentences in the paragraph is an effective means of keeping the reader's attention. In the revised version, the writer combines the choppy sentences at the beginning into one longer sentence, which adds rhythm and interest to the paragraph.

Exercise 14.6.1

Combine each set of simple sentences into one sentence using a connecting word (see the techniques in Fixing Run-Ons for examples using a coordinating conjunction, a conjunctive adverb, or a dependent word).

1. Heroin is an extremely addictive drug. Thousands of heroin addicts die each year.
2. Shakespeare's writing is still relevant today. He wrote about timeless themes. These themes include love, hate, jealousy, death, and destiny.
3. Gay marriage is now legal in six states. Iowa, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine all permit same-sex marriage. Other states are likely to follow their example.

4. Prewriting is a vital stage of the writing process. Prewriting helps you organize your ideas. Types of prewriting include outlining, brainstorming, and idea mapping.
5. Mitch Bancroft is a famous writer. He also serves as a governor on the local school board. Mitch's two children attend the school.

Using Sentence Variety at the Beginning of Sentences

Read the following sentences and consider what they all have in common:

- John and Amanda will be analyzing this week's financial report.
- The car screeched to a halt just a few inches away from the young boy.
- Students rarely come to the exam adequately prepared.

In each sentence, the subject is positioned at the beginning—*John and Amanda*, *the car*, *students*. Since the subject-verb-object pattern is the simplest sentence structure, many writers tend to overuse this technique, which can result in repetitive paragraphs with little sentence variety. This section examines several ways to introduce sentence variety at the beginning of sentences.

Starting a Sentence with an Adverb

One technique you can use so as to avoid beginning a sentence with the subject is to use an adverb. An adverb is a word that describes a verb, adjective, or other adverb and often ends in *–ly*. Examples of adverbs include *quickly*, *softly*, *quietly*, *angrily*, and *timidly*. Read the following sentences:

- She slowly turned the corner and peered into the murky basement.
- Slowly, she turned the corner and peered into the murky basement.

In the second sentence, the adverb *slowly* is placed at the beginning of the sentence. If you read the two sentences aloud, you will notice that moving the adverb changes the rhythm of the sentence and slightly alters its meaning. The second sentence emphasizes how the subject moves—slowly—creating a buildup of tension. This technique is effective in fictional writing.

Note that an adverb used at the beginning of a sentence is usually followed by a comma. A comma indicates that the reader should pause briefly, which creates a useful rhetorical device. Read the following sentences aloud and consider the effect of pausing after the adverb:

- Cautiously, he unlocked the kennel and waited for the dog's reaction.
- Solemnly, the policeman approached the mayor and placed her under arrest.
- Suddenly, they slammed the door shut and sprinted across the street.

Exercise 14.6.2

Rewrite the following sentences by moving the adverbs to the beginning.

1. The red truck sped furiously past the camper van, blaring its horn.
2. Jeff snatched at the bread hungrily, polishing off three slices in under a minute.
3. Underage drinking typically results from peer pressure and lack of parental attention.
4. The firefighters bravely tackled the blaze, but they were beaten back by flames.
5. Mayor Johnson privately acknowledged that the budget was excessive and that further discussion was needed.

Starting a Sentence with a Prepositional Phrase

A prepositional phrase is a group of words that behaves as an adjective or an adverb, modifying a noun or a verb. Common prepositions include works like "in," "at," "of," "after," "for," and "below." Prepositional phrases contain a preposition (a word that

specifies place, direction, or time) and an object of the preposition (a noun phrase or pronoun that follows the preposition). See Section 13.16: Prepositions for more details.

Let's take the following sentence as an example:

> The terrified child hid **underneath the table**.

Here, the prepositional phrase is *underneath the table*. The preposition *underneath* relates to the object that follows the preposition—*the table*. Adjectives may be placed between the preposition and the object in a prepositional phrase.

> The terrified child hid **underneath the heavy wooden table**.

Some prepositional phrases can be moved to the beginning of a sentence in order to create variety in a piece of writing. Look at the following revised sentence:

> **Underneath the heavy wooden table**, the terrified child hid.

Notice that when the prepositional phrase is moved to the beginning of the sentence, the emphasis shifts from the subject—the terrified child—to the location in which the child is hiding. Words that are placed at the beginning or end of a sentence generally receive the greatest emphasis. Take a look at the following examples. The prepositional phrase is underlined in each:

> The bandaged man waited **in the doctor's office**.
>
> **In the doctor's office**, the bandaged man waited.
>
> My train leaves the station **at 6:45 a.m**.
>
> **At 6:45 a.m.**, my train leaves the station.
>
> Teenagers exchange drugs and money **under the railway bridge**.
>
> **Under the railway bridge**, teenagers exchange drugs and money.

Make Sure the Prepositional Phrase Stays with What It Modifies

Note that not all prepositional phrases can be placed at the beginning of a sentence. Read the following sentence:

> I would like a chocolate sundae **without whipped cream**.

In this sentence, *without whipped cream* is the prepositional phrase. Because it describes the chocolate sundae, it cannot be moved to the beginning of the sentence. "Without whipped cream I would like a chocolate sundae" does not make as much (if any) sense. To determine whether a prepositional phrase can be moved, we must determine the meaning of the sentence.

Use Prepositional Phrases Judiciously

Experienced writers often include more than one prepositional phrase in a sentence; however, it is important not to overload your writing. Using too many modifiers in a paragraph may create an unintentionally comical effect as the following example shows:

> The treasure lay buried under the old oak tree, behind the crumbling fifteenth-century wall, near the schoolyard, where children played merrily during their lunch hour, unaware of the riches that remained hidden beneath their feet.

A sentence is not necessarily effective just because it is long and complex. If your sentence appears cluttered with prepositional phrases, divide it into two shorter sentences. The previous sentence is far more effective when written as two simpler sentences:

> The treasure lay buried under the old oak tree, behind the crumbling fifteenth-century wall. In the nearby schoolyard, children played merrily during their lunch hour, unaware of the riches that remained hidden beneath their feet.

Starting a Sentence by Inverting Subject and Verb

As we noted earlier, most writers follow the subject-verb-object sentence structure. In an inverted sentence, the order is reversed so that the subject follows the verb. Read the following sentence pairs:

1. A truck was parked in the driveway.
2. Parked in the driveway was a truck.

1. A copy of the file is attached.
2. Attached is a copy of the file.

Notice how the second sentence in each pair places more emphasis on the subject—*a truck* in the first example and *the file* in the second. This technique is useful for drawing the reader's attention to your primary area of focus.

Exercise 14.6.3

On your own sheet of paper, rewrite the following sentences as inverted sentences.

1. Teresa will never attempt to run another marathon.
2. A detailed job description is enclosed with this letter.
3. Bathroom facilities are across the hall to the left of the water cooler.
4. The well-dressed stranger stumbled through the doorway.
5. My colleagues remain unconvinced about the proposed merger.

Connecting Ideas to Increase Sentence Variety

Reviewing and rewriting the beginning of sentences is a good way of introducing sentence variety into your writing. Another useful technique is to connect two sentences using a modifier, a relative clause, or an appositive. This section examines how to connect ideas across several sentences in order to increase sentence variety and improve writing.

Joining Ideas Using an *–ing* Modifier

Sometimes it is possible to combine two sentences by converting one of them into a modifier using the *–ing* verb form—*singing*, *dancing*, *swimming*. A modifier is a word or phrase that qualifies the meaning of another element in the sentence. Read the following example:

> **Original sentences:** Steve checked the computer system. He discovered a virus.
>
> **Revised sentence:** Checking the computer system, Steve discovered a virus.

To connect two sentences using an *–ing* modifier, add *–ing* to one of the verbs in the sentences (*checking*) and delete the subject (*Steve*). Use a comma to separate the modifier from the subject of the sentence. It is important to make sure that the main idea in your revised sentence is contained in the main clause, not in the modifier. In this example, the main idea is that Steve discovered a virus, not that he checked the computer system.

In the following example, an *–ing* modifier indicates that two actions are occurring at the same time:

> Noticing the police car, she shifted gears and slowed down.

This means that she slowed down at the same time she noticed the police car.

> Barking loudly, the dog ran across the driveway.

This means that the dog barked as it ran across the driveway.

You can add an *–ing* modifier to the beginning or the end of a sentence, depending on which fits best.

> **Beginning: Conducting a survey among her friends**, Amanda found that few were happy in their jobs.
>
> **End:** Maria filed the final report, **meeting her deadline**.

Joining Ideas Using an *–ed* Modifier

Some sentences can be combined using an *–ed* verb form—*stopped*, *finished*, *played*. To use this method, one of the sentences must contain a form of *be* as a helping verb in addition to the *–ed* verb form. Take a look at the following example:

> **Original sentences:** The Jones family was delayed by a traffic jam. They arrived several hours after the party started.
>
> **Revised sentence:** Delayed by a traffic jam, the Jones family arrived several hours after the party started.

In the original version, *was* acts as a helping verb—it has no meaning by itself, but it serves a grammatical function by placing the main verb (*delayed*) in the perfect tense.

To connect two sentences using an *–ed* modifier, drop the helping verb (*was*) and the subject (*the Jones family*) from the sentence with an *–ed* verb form. This forms a modifying phrase (*delayed by a traffic jam*) that can be added to the beginning or end of the other sentence according to which fits best. As with the *–ing* modifier, be careful to place the word that the phrase modifies immediately after the phrase in order to avoid a dangling modifier.

Using *–ing* or *–ed* modifiers can help streamline your writing by drawing obvious connections between two sentences.

Joining Ideas Using a Relative Clause

Another technique that writers use to combine sentences is to join them using a relative clause. A relative clause is a group of words that contains a subject and a verb and describes a noun. Relative clauses function as adjectives by answering questions such as *which one?* or *what kind?* Relative clauses begin with a relative pronoun, such as *who*, *which*, *where*, *why*, or *when*. Read the following examples:

> **Original sentences:** The managing director is visiting the company next week. He lives in Seattle.
>
> **Revised sentence:** The managing director, who lives in Seattle, is visiting the company next week.

To connect two sentences using a relative clause, substitute the subject of one of the sentences (*he*) for a relative pronoun (*who*). This gives you a relative clause (*who lives in Seattle*) that can be placed next to the noun it describes (*the managing director*). Make sure to keep the sentence you want to emphasize as the main clause. For example, reversing the main clause and subordinate clause in the preceding sentence emphasizes where the managing director lives, not the fact that he is visiting the company.

> **Revised sentence:** The managing director, who is visiting the company next week, lives in Seattle.

Relative clauses are a useful way of providing additional, nonessential information in a sentence.

Joining Ideas Using an Appositive

An appositive is a word or group of words that describes or renames a noun or pronoun. Incorporating appositives into your

writing is a useful way of combining sentences that are too short and choppy. Take a look at the following example:

Original sentences: Harland Sanders began serving food for hungry travelers in 1930. He is Colonel Sanders or "the Colonel."

Revised sentence: Harland Sanders, "the Colonel," began serving food for hungry travelers in 1930.

In the revised sentence, *"the Colonel"* is an appositive because it renames Harland Sanders. To combine two sentences using an appositive, drop the subject and verb from the sentence that renames the noun and turn it into a phrase. Note that in the previous example, the appositive is positioned immediately after the noun it describes. An appositive may be placed anywhere in a sentence, but it must come directly before or after the noun to which it refers:

Appositive after noun: Scott, a poorly trained athlete, was not expected to win the race.

Appositive before noun: A poorly trained athlete, Scott was not expected to win the race.

Unlike relative clauses, appositives are always punctuated by a comma or a set commas.

Exercise 14.6.4

On your own sheet of paper, rewrite the following sentence pairs as one sentence using the techniques you have learned in this section.

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

Attributions

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15: TEACHER'S GUIDE



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15.1: Teaching for Equity with How Arguments Work

By Sarah Sullivan and Anna Mills

Background on culturally responsive teaching

As many of us have become aware, there is a fierce and urgent call in education to close equity gaps and fulfill the promise of education as a democratizing force of social empowerment, community empowerment, and mobility. Indeed higher education is in a transformative period. Many of us are critically examining the structures, policies, and practices that have left out so many students, particularly African American, Latinx, first-generation college students, students from low socio-economic status families as well as other racially and linguistically diverse communities. One of the realizations that has emerged from our critical examination is that Euro-centric and mainstream dominant curriculum and pedagogy, in addition to leaving historically underserved students out, has also failed to build upon diverse students' capacity for rigorous and strategic critical thinking and learning. As Zaretta Hammond, author of *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain,* writes, “the chronic achievement gap in most American schools has created an epidemic of dependent learners unprepared to do the higher-order thinking, creative problem solving and analytical reading and writing called for…” (12). While Hammond focuses on students in the K-12 system, this indictment of our current educational practices certainly applies to higher education.



Image by Bruce Emmerling from Pixabay under the Pixabay License.

For college and university instructors, the call to equity requires an intentional and critical examination and reform of our pedagogy and curriculum. Of course, culturally responsive teaching (CRT) and teaching for equity are deep and multifaceted fields. One key concept which Hammond emphasizes, however, is the need to shape pedagogy around the neuroscience of how people learn in culturally informed ways. In part, Hammond defines CRT as the educator's responsibility to design instruction that is based on the science of learning, with high expectations for students within a critical thinking, problem-solving and active learning curriculum in a culturally relevant, highly supportive and culturally affirming learning community. She further argues for the inclusion of rigor as a fundamental principle of CRT and the incorporation of neuroscience principles of learning so that students’ minds are challenged and intellectual capabilities are strengthened.

The book you hold in your hands (or more likely that you view on your screen) is a step towards culturally responsive teaching in the college composition classroom. The biggest CRT strength of the book is that it equips and empowers linguistically and racially diverse, historically underserved groups of students to engage with rigor to be able to think, read and write critically, strategically, and powerfully. This is achieved through scaffolded instruction that breaks down analytical reading and writing into steps and makes explicit the moves that will lead to success.

Strategies for working toward equity with *How Arguments Work*

1. **Make sure students know your course has no textbook cost**
   Verify that your course has any appropriate labels--such as "no-cost," "Zero Textbook Cost," "ZTC," or "low-cost"--in your college's course catalog. As we know, offering a no-cost textbook with no-cost digital ancillary resources is key, since these costs are a major barrier for low-income students. Access to the book and resources will never expire, unlike access to paid commercial textbook digital resources. Students may be used to commercial publishers' pricing structures which direct them to purchase limited-time access. Emphasize to them that this textbook can serve as a free reference before, during, and after the course.

2. **Use culturally relevant examples**
   Of course, teachers and textbooks have an obligation to show diverse student identities as part of the academic conversation. We imagine that you will already be thinking about this, but it never hurts to hear more reminders that the examples we highlight as teachers send a message about whose voices we value. Students struggle to feel confident in the academy when they don't see their own identities represented. This book chooses examples that refer to diverse ethnicities and class backgrounds, public issues of broad personal relevance and familiarity with popular culture. Many sample essays refer to social justice issues such as immigration policy, gender, and racial identity. Examples also touch on transgender issues and questions around disability and neurodiversity. We continue to add images that represent diverse identities and readings that address more topics of relevance for first-generation, traditionally underserved communities in higher education, particularly African American and Latinx.

3. **Emphasize the step-by-step approach**
   As we know, students who are the first generation in their families to attend college and students whose K-12 preparation has been inadequate may not have internalized habits of mind for academic thinking and writing. The popular commercial textbook, *They Say / I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing* by Gerald Graff and Kathy Birkenstein, offers a how-to approach to those habits of mind, an approach that has inspired *How Arguments Work*. Here, chapters are explicitly centered on moves we can make as readers and writers. We try to place each skill in the context of the larger project of a particular kind of writing assignment. To complement the text, consider drawing students' attention to the ways in which the skills in this book build sequentially to prepare them for more challenging projects. For example, their reading, summary, assessment, and response writing skills from Chapters 2-5 help them once they juggle multiple sources in the research paper.

4. **Build in scaffolding**
   The gradual release model of I do/We do/You do calls for multiple iterations of engaging with and practicing a new concept. First the teacher models; then students collaborate with each other and the teacher; then finally students are asked to work independently. Below are some resources you can use to scaffold the skills taught in *How Arguments Work*.

   - Practice exercises at the end of each section, some of them with Google docs templates.
   - Quizzes with feedback and links to relevant sections of the textbook. See Quizzes, Essay Assignments, and Other Learning Management System Ancillary Materials to access them.
   - Sample papers with annotations that point out the techniques described in the chapters. See Sample Student Essays for a full list.
   - Brainstorm exercises to help students generate ideas for specific types of essays. See Quizzes, Essay Assignments, and Other Learning Management System Ancillary Materials to access them.
   - In addition to the LMS quizzes, we have begun to build in interactive practice exercises with tips and automated feedback, all embedded directly in the textbook sections. 2.2: Types of Claims to Look out for offers an example in its practice exercise. These activities explain why an answer is right or wrong and guide students to the areas of the text that will help them understand. Students can build confidence and understanding by retrying any they get wrong until they get them right.
   - In future, we hope to add more video modeling, lesson plan ideas for collaborative work, and Google Doc templates. We know video can help scaffold concepts by modeling strategic thinking and metacognitive reflection for students as they engage in the writing process. This could help make difficult concepts like argument mapping more accessible and appealing.

5. **Make the most of the multiple means of representation of the content**
   According to Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles developed by the nonprofit education research and development organization CAST, it is important to represent the same content in multiple ways so that students with different learning styles and abilities can absorb it in different ways. We hope you will familiarize yourself with *How Arguments Work* content in alternate formats and highlight these resources for students:

- We have provided an audio version of each page of *How Arguments Work* accessible from a play button at the top of the page.
- We include images that are not merely decorative but which reinforce concepts. We continue to add more such images.
- We have included annotated sample essays which provide another way of representing the concepts described in Chapters 3, 4, 5, 7, and 11.
- The self-correcting quizzes are designed to be taken as often as the student wishes and include automated feedback, providing another, more interactive way for students to engage with the concepts of each chapter. See Quizzes, Essay Assignments, and Other Learning Management System Ancillary Materials.
- In future, we hope to include a collection of curated and original video to complement the text. In the meantime, consider supplementing with your own video.

6. **Remind students of the practical academic and career applications of the skills**
How Argument Works is explicit about the ways a student will likely use each writing or thinking skill in other classes, in professional settings, and in life. Examples are often drawn from assignments and sample essays in other disciplines, so students will have a sense of how this required class prepares them for the writing they will do in all their other classes and in their career. For example, 4.1: Use a Summary to Launch an Opinion details writing assignments in other disciplines that follow the same summary and response format. This is especially beneficial for students who are trying to educate themselves against the odds, who have to make efficient use of their time and prioritize practical concerns given family and work obligations.

7. **Keep the emphasis on relationship and conversation**
CRT emphasizes the importance of a warm, culturally affirming community of learners. Ideally, academic writing should feel like an invitation to relationship and conversation. We hope that the tone of this book communicates a sense of recognition and valuing of student ideas. This textbook uses "we" as often as possible instead of "you" to cultivate the sense that they are already part of the community of writers that teachers belong to as well. Traditionally, African American, Latinx, and other minoritized students were intentionally left out of academic conversations. This book is part of an educational equity movement to include them by equipping them with the tools and encouraging belief in the relevance of their voices. They are authors developing authority.

   Consider using a social annotation tool like Hypothes.is or Perusall in your Learning Management System to create conversation around the textbook readings. Students will be able to see and reply to each other's comments and questions.

   In the spirit of writing as conversation, we also invite students to comment on the textbook itself through the Hypothes.is Student Feedback Group. Going forward, we want to explore open pedagogy possibilities for collaborating with students to improve *How Arguments Work*. In addition to feedback, we seek original student contributions such as sample essays, practice exercises, and quiz questions. Please contact us if interested.

8. **Focus on everyday language rather than technical terms**
Consider emphasizing rhetoric concepts over terminology. We are convinced that in most cases it is possible to use terms students already know to express rhetoric concepts without loss of rigor. We have found that the focus on technical terms with elite, academic, Greek and Roman associations can intimidate students and distract them from the critical thinking practice the terms represent. Those terms can be barriers for students on an affective level because they send the message that rhetoric as a domain of learning belongs to traditional, patriarchal, white, western heritage. Thus, we have de-emphasized technical rhetoric terms where possible, including them in parentheses and never making them the focus. Instead, we focus on teaching students to apply each critical thinking skill.

9. **Streamline student access to the text by bringing it into your Learning Management System (LMS)**
We recognize that the wonderful richness of LibreTexts offerings given the current layout can be overstimulating for some students and occasionally confusing. One way to help with this is to embed the textbook pages you want to assign directly in your LMS. We offer .LMSCC files to facilitate this, or you can add embedded links directly in your LMS. Moving forward, we are considering how we can improve the user interface of the book to make it more intuitive.

10. **Offer individualized, responsive learning opportunities**
Teaching practices that offer differentiated learning paths will work well with this book. Armed with the tools to write a particular genre of essay, students can choose to write about arguments or sources with a thematic focus that interests them. The textbook covers developmental writing concepts, college composition, and quite a bit of more advanced rhetoric, so teachers can differentiate assignments without pointing students toward what they might see as a remedial text. Going forward, we are exploring creating embedded practice opportunities that adapt to the student's level of understanding of the

material. We are hoping to create question sets in LibreTexts Adapt that respond to learner level. Adaptive quizzes would create more enriching and confidence-building practice for those who need it and more challenging questions for those who are ready for them.

11. **Aspire to anti-elitist rigor**
We hope that the book's approach makes challenging rhetorical practices more accessible without dumbing them down. We have attempted to make the book both approachable and rich in mental exercise for all, from those with a lot of cultural capital and intellectual confidence to those whose cultural capital has not been traditionally valued by the academy. For example, we have included extensive coverage of fallacies in Chapter 4 and made these more intuitive by breaking them into categories according to the type of logical problem involved.

How can we revise this book to better support culturally responsive teaching?

Textbooks have often consciously or unconsciously perpetuated injustice and left many people's perspectives out--especially people of color and low-income communities. Our textbook is certainly imperfect, and while not meaning to, in some ways very likely continues to perpetuate societal inequities. We recognize this, and we intend to do further equity reviews and revisions. Designing equity pedagogy and curriculum is an iterative and continual process of reflection, learning, and intentional research-based improvement. The beauty of Open Educational Resources is that we can keep questioning and revising. This book is imperfect, but we can keep revising and adding to it continuously without asking students to pay for new editions. If you have ideas for this, or would like to be involved in any of these efforts, please contact us!

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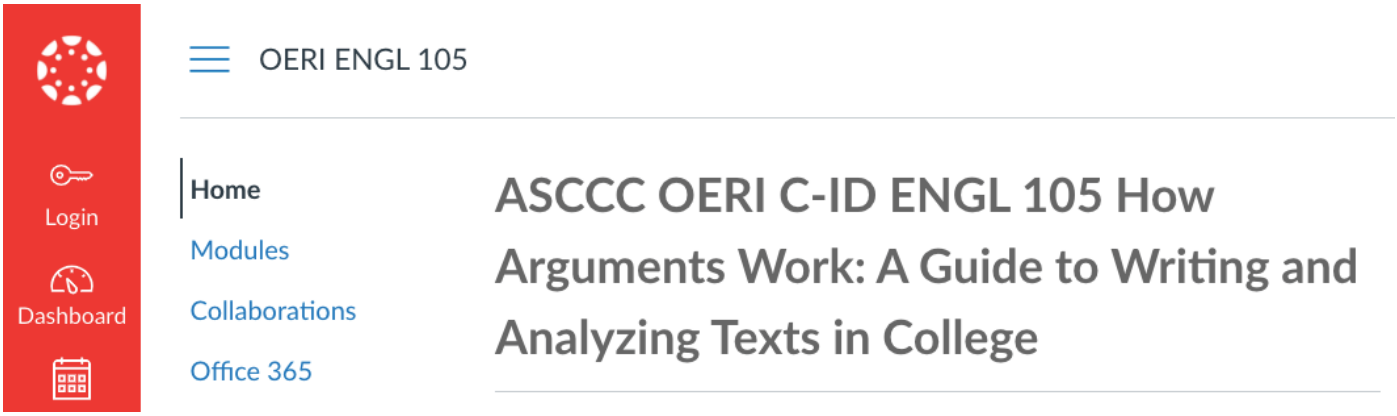
15.2: Quizzes, Essay Assignments, and Other Ancillary Materials

We have created the following kinds of ancillary materials tied to the methods and vocabulary of the book, with links to the appropriate pages and chapters. These are available in the Canvas Learning Management System (LMS) but can be imported into other systems. All are licensed CC BY NC, so you are free to customize and reshare them.

- Self-grading quizzes with automated feedback
- Essay assignments
- Brainstorming assignments with questions tailored to each essay
- Rubrics for essay assignments
- Discussions for select chapters

Browse what's available

The quickest way to get an idea of what's available is to navigate to the *How Arguments Work* Canvas shell.

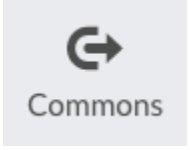


Text description of the textbook Canvas Course screenshot

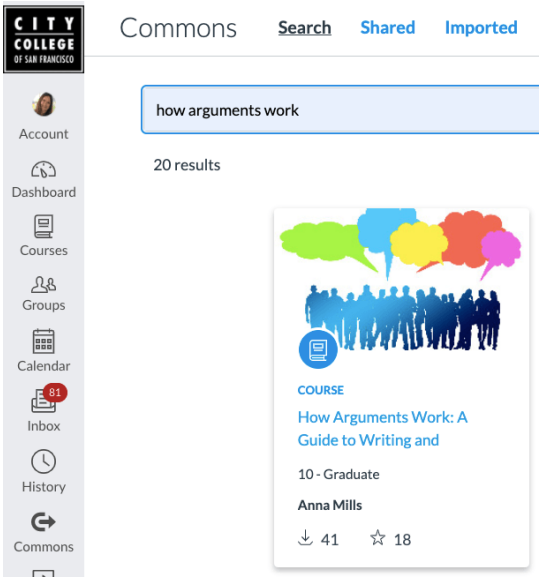
From the homepage, click on Modules in order to see a list of all resources available, organized by each chapter. Even if you are not logged in, you can view the essay assignments, brainstorming assignments, and rubrics. Quizzes and discussions are only viewable once you import them into a Canvas course.

View previews in Canvas Commons

To see previews of all materials, including quizzes and discussions, you will need to have a Canvas account. If your institution does not offer one, you can create a free Canvas instructor account. To access the materials, log in to Canvas (if you are not logged in already, the Canvas Commons link may not work). Then, in the left navigation, click on Commons:

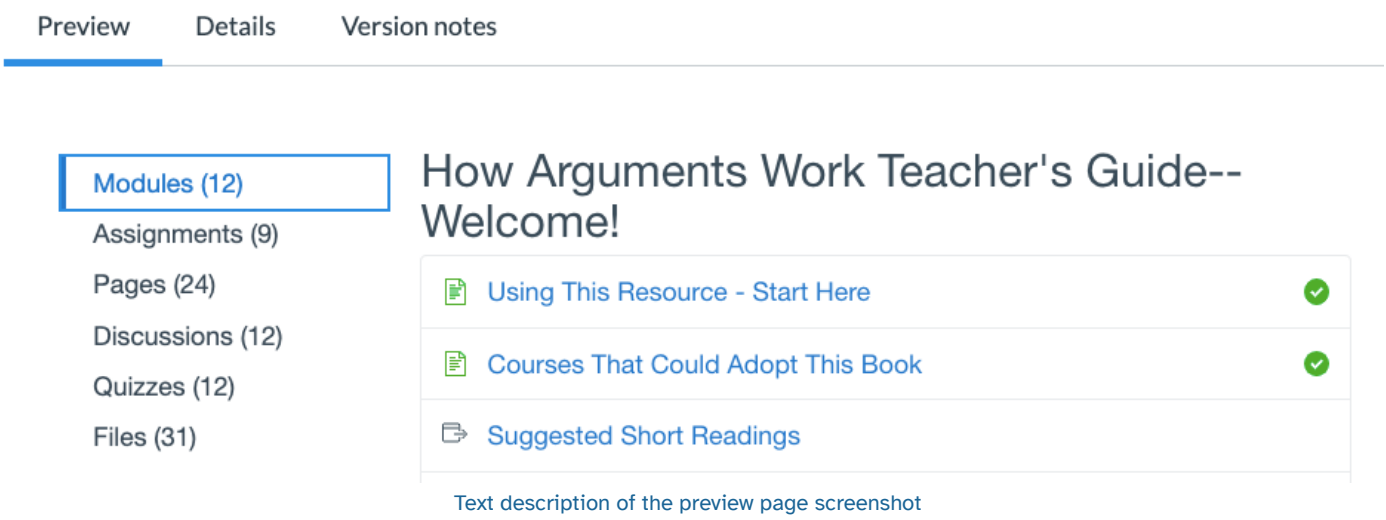


Now, search on "how arguments work":



Text description of the Canvas Commons search screenshot

If you click on the How Arguments Work course, you will see a preview:

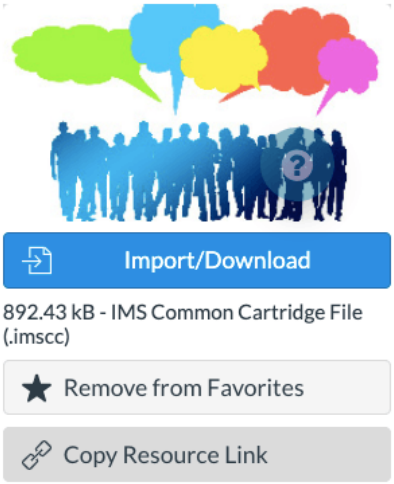


Text description of the preview page screenshot

By clicking on the various types of resources, you can see the text of each item, including quizzes.

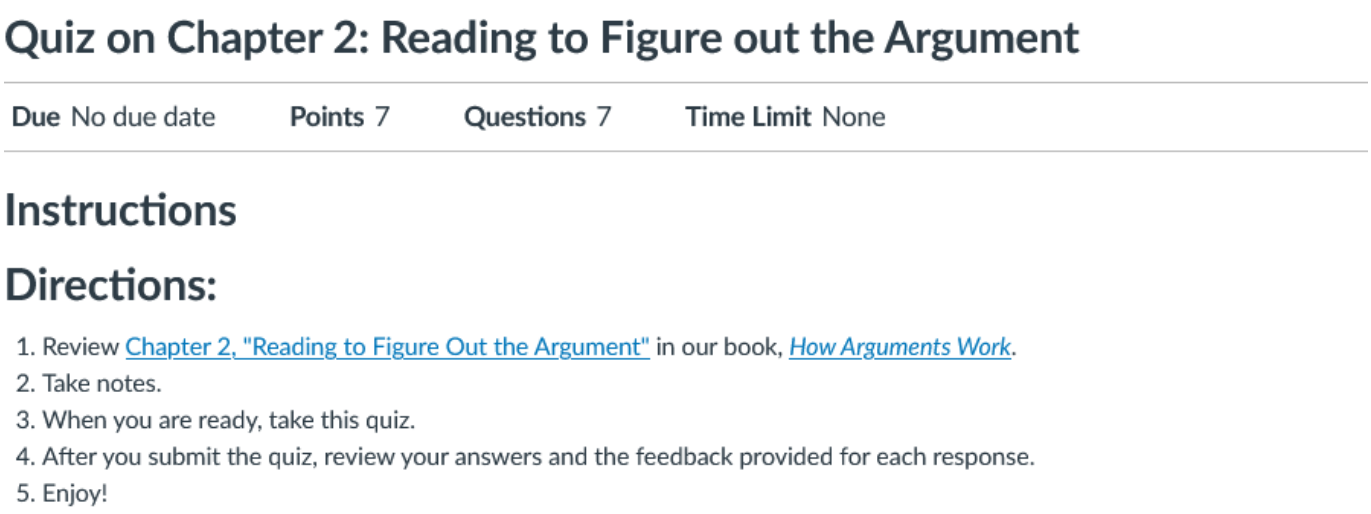
Import from Canvas Commons

If you would like to use or adapt any of the resources in your Canvas course, you will want to import the course from Canvas Commons.



Text description of the Canvas course options screenshot

If you intend to use the resources in one course, you can import the *How Arguments Work* course directly from Canvas Commons into that specific course.



Text description of the sample quiz screenshot

If you want to use the materials in more than one course or if you want to use only some of them, consider importing into a Canvas sandbox. From there, you can copy specific items to one or more courses where you will use them with students. We have begun to post quizzes and other resources individually to Canvas Commons, so if you only want one item, search to see if it is available separately. For more, see this detailed Canvas Commons guide on how to view and import materials or the Canvas Commons FAQ.

Import into a different learning management system (LMS)

If you use a learning management system other than Canvas, such as Blackboard, BrightSpace, Moodle, Teachable, or Thinkific, you should be able to import our resources using the following files:

- Course files (IMSCC format)

- Quizzes (QTI format)

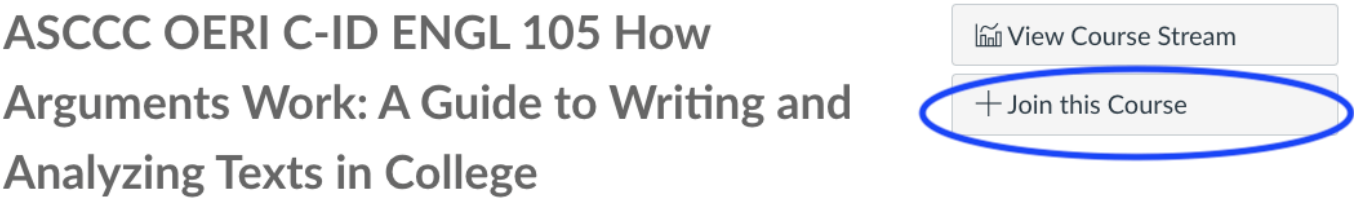
The quizzes are intended to be formative rather than summative. They are set to allow students to retake them after viewing feedback and scores. Please be aware that students may be able to get access to the answers since we have shared them publicly.

Join the Canvas course

You are welcome to join the *How Arguments Work* Canvas resources course if you have a ccconlineed.instructure.com account through the California Virtual Campus – Online Education Initiative (CVC-OEI). As we understand it, your institution's office of online learning requests accounts for faculty involved in the CVC-OERI initiative.

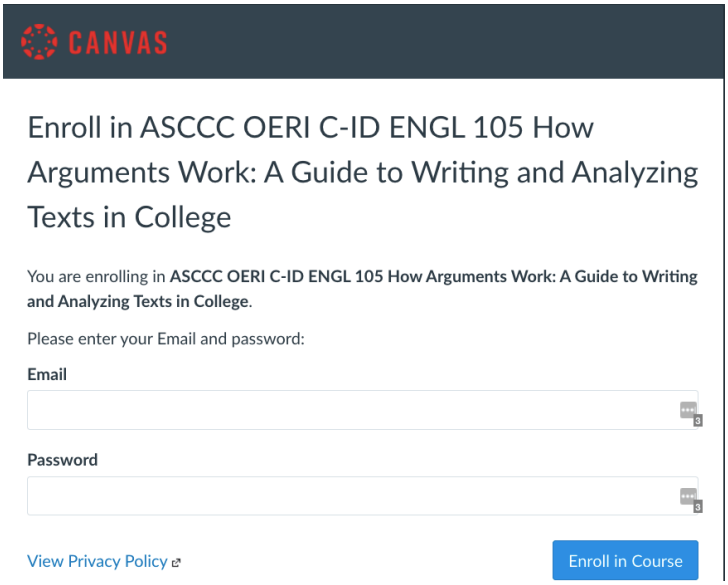
Joining the course allows you to try out quizzes and discussions directly in Canvas without importing them into your sandbox from Canvas Commons. You will also be able to copy or export specific items to other courses you are working with in the same Canvas instance (any courses that show up when you log in to ccconlineed.instructure.com).

On the How Arguments Work course page, click "Join this Course" at the top right.



Text description of the Join This Course screenshot

You will be prompted to log in to ccconlineed.instructure.com and enroll:



Text description of the enrollment page screenshot

Give attribution

If you decide to use and/or edit any of the ancillary materials, please do make sure you include an attribution according to the CC BY NC license. At the end of the item description in Canvas, give credit to *How Arguments Work* and the author of the individual resource. See more from Creative Commons on best practices for attribution. Here is a sample attribution:

Adapted from "Common Response Phrases" by Anna Mills in *How Arguments Work: A Guide to Writing and Analyzing Texts in College*, sponsored by ASCCC OERI and licensed CC BY-NC 4.0.

Request or share additional materials

If you have an idea for a kind of ancillary resource you would like to see added, please let us know by filling out our feedback survey.

If you create materials you would like to make available, consider sharing them on Canvas Commons and including the phrase "How Arguments Work" as a tag so others searching for the textbook can find them. Please let us know about them by emailing info@howargumentswork.org or commenting on this page in our Instructor Feedback Hypothesis group.

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15.3: Sample Student Essays

The essays below are intended as models for students' own writing in college.

Summaries

- In "Spread Feminism, Not Germs," student Gizem Gur summarizes the *Atlantic Magazine* article "The Coronavirus Is a Disaster for Feminism." Annotations point out the structure of the summary and the strategies Gur uses.
  - Sample summary "Spread Feminism, Not Germs" in PDF with margin notes
  - Sample summary "Spread Feminism, Not Germs" accessible version with notes in parentheses

- In "Typography and Identity," Saramanda Swigart summarizes the *New York Times* article “A Debate Over Identity and Race Asks, Are African-Americans ‘Black’ or ‘black’?” Annotations point out the structure of the summary and the strategies Swigart uses.
  - Sample summary "Typography and Identity" in PDF with margin notes
  - Sample summary "Typography and Identity" accessible version with notes in parentheses

Summary and Assessment Essays (Critical Analyses)

- In "Spread Feminism, Not Germs," student Gizem Gur summarizes and assesses the *Atlantic Magazine* article "The Coronavirus Is a Disaster for Feminism." Annotations point out how Gur structures the summary and assessment.
  - Sample assessment "Spread Feminism, Not Germs" in PDF with margin notes
  - Sample assessment "Spread Feminism, Not Germs" accessible version with notes in parentheses

- In "Typography and Identity," Saramanda Swigart summarizes and assesses the *New York Times* article “A Debate Over Identity and Race Asks, Are African-Americans ‘Black’ or ‘black’?” Annotations point out how Swigart structures the summary and assessment.
  - Sample assessment "Typography and Identity" in PDF with margin notes
  - Sample assessment "Typography and Identity" accessible version with notes in parentheses

Summary, Assessment, and Response Essays

- In "Spread Feminism, Not Germs," student Gizem Gur summarizes, assesses, and responds to the *Atlantic Magazine* article "The Coronavirus Is a Disaster for Feminism." Annotations point out how Gur structures the response paper.
  - Sample response paper "Spread Feminism, Not Germs" in PDF with margin notes
  - Sample response paper "Spread Feminism, Not Germs" accessible version with notes in parentheses

- In "Typography and Identity," Saramanda Swigart summarizes, assesses, and responds to the *New York Times* article “A Debate Over Identity and Race Asks, Are African-Americans ‘Black’ or ‘black’?” Annotations point out how Swigart structures the response paper.
  - Sample response paper "Typography and Identity" in PDF with margin notes
  - Sample response paper "Typography and Identity" accessible version with notes in parentheses

Compare-and-Contrast Essays

The essay "Contested Territory" compares and contrasts two arguments on immigration: "Wouldn't We All Cross the Border" by Anna Mills and "The Weight of the World" by Saramanda Swigart. Annotations point out how the author structures the comparison.

- Sample compare-and-contrast essay "Contested Territory" in PDF version with margin notes
- Sample compare-and-contrast essay "Contested Territory" accessible version with notes in parentheses

Argument Analysis Essays (Rhetorical Analysis)

The brief essay "Henig's Perspective on the Gender Revolution" by student Jun Stephens can serve as an example of argument analysis.

- Sample argument analysis essay "Henig's Perspective on the Gender Revolution" in PDF with margin notes
- Sample argument analysis essay "Henig's Perspective on the Gender Revolution" accessible version with notes in parentheses

The essay "Argument Analysis of Cory Doctorow's 'Why I Won't Buy an iPad (and Think You Shouldn't, Either)'" can serve as an example.

- Sample argument analysis essay "Argument Analysis of Cory Doctorow's "Why I Won't Buy an iPad (and Think You Shouldn't, Either) " in PDF with margin notes
- Sample argument analysis essay "Argument Analysis of Cory Doctorow's "Why I Won't Buy an iPad (and Think You Shouldn't, Either) " accessible version with notes in parentheses

Visual Argument Analysis Essays

The essay "An Image Is Worth a Thousand Calls to Arms" by Saramanda Swigart analyzes a visual argument.

- Sample visual argument analysis essay "An Image Is Worth a Thousand Calls to Arms" in PDF with margin notes
- Sample visual argument analysis essay "An Image Is Worth a Thousand Calls to Arms" accessible version with notes in parentheses

Research Papers

Research-Based Definition Arguments

- The student essay "Defining Stereotypes" by Imanol Juarez gives a brief definition as a basis for a critique of stereotypes. Annotations point out how Juarez uses several definition argument strategies.
  - Sample definition essay "Defining Stereotypes" in PDF version with margin notes
  - Sample definition essay "Defining Stereotypes" accessible version with notes in parentheses.
- **"**Trust**"** by Chris Thurman**.** This five-paragraph student essay defines the concept of trust and discusses its fragility and complications. (CC BY-SA)
- "Mass Incarceration: The Real Trends of the United States Justice System" by Darius Porter. This nine-paragraph student essay defines the concept of justice through the lens of America's war on drugs resulting in mass incarcerations. The author discusses the impact of mandatory sentencing laws designed to target people based on race and/or income level in order to enrich the current private prison industry. Source: Successful College Composition by Kathryn Crowther et al., provided by Galileo, Georgia's Virtual Library. CC-NC-SA-4.0.

Research-Based Evaluation Arguments

- The essay "Universal Health Care Coverage for the United States" argues that the benefits of this method of paying for health care outweigh any disadvantages. Annotations point out how the author uses several evaluation argument strategies.
  - Sample evaluation essay "Universal Health Care Coverage for the United States" in PDF version with margin notes
  - Sample evaluation essay "Universal Health Care Coverage for the United States" accessible version with notes in parentheses

- "The Story of My Working Thesis Malfunction" by Amanda Kenger. The author walks the reader through her process of writing a thesis on Janet Jackson's 2004 Super Bowl wardrobe malfunction. The author wrote four essays trying to define the focus of the final essay: A proposal essay, a critique essay, an antithesis essay, and a categorization essay. The author discusses the development of research skills and evaluates the writing process and final thesis. (CC BY-NC-SA)

Research-Based Causal Arguments

- The article "Climate Explained: Why Carbon Dioxide Has Such Outsized Influence on Earth's Climate" by Jason West, published in *The Conversation*, explains why scientists are convinced that carbon dioxide causes climate change. Annotations point out how the author uses several causal argument strategies.
    - Sample causal essay "Climate Explained: Why Carbon Dioxide Has Such Outsized Influence on Earth's Climate" in PDF version with margin notes
    - Sample causal essay "Climate Explained: Why Carbon Dioxide Has Such Outsized Influence on Earth's Climate" accessible version with notes in parentheses
- "Effects of Video Game Addiction." This six-paragraph student essay focuses on the potential negative impact of excessive video game playing. Concerns mentioned are disruption in the player's career, decline in overall health and hygiene, and a loss of valuable socialization. While video game players may perceive that they are involved in e-based communities, the author points out that these forms of communication rarely translate to face-to-face social interaction. (*English Composition I: Rhetorical Methods-Based,* CC BY-NC-SA)
- "Crossing the Line: Remembering September 11" by Theresa Henkes. This seven-paragraph student essay discusses the negative impact of commercialization of September 11th by the entertainment industry. The author mentions special features, movies, magazines, and video games all designed to make money rather than help the nation mourn and heal. In contrast, voluntary and reverent memorials and museums offer the opportunity to reflect on the tragedy without the motive of financial gain. (*Excelsior OWL*, CC BY 4.0)

Research-Based Proposal Arguments

- The sample essay "Why We Should Open Our Borders" by student Laurent Wenjun Jiang makes a brief, general proposal argument. Annotations point out how Jiang uses several proposal argument strategies.
    - Sample proposal essay "Why We Should Open Our Borders" in PDF with margin notes
    - Sample proposal essay "Why We Should Open Our Borders" accessible version with notes in parentheses
- "Rethinking Recycling: Why Reusing Needs to Be User Friendly" by Emily Hanna. This seven-paragraph student essay, in APA format, proposes colleges and communities adopt a recycling approach currently being used by the University of Maryland. This approach uses numerous color-coded bins, in a uniform manner across the entire campus, making the process of recycling easier thereby attracting more participants. Citing the cost of resources to produce new materials and the lack of landfill space, the author encourages other colleges to adopt a similar recycling approach. (*Excelsior OWL*, CC BY 4.0)

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15.4: Slide Presentations

The following can serve as starting points for in-class presentations on the first chapters of the book. We hope to add more in future; please contact us if you would be willing to share yours under a CC BY NC 4.0 license.

- Chapter 1 slides
- Chapter 2 slides
- Chapter 3 slides
- Chapter 4, sections 4.2-4.5 slides

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15.5: COURSE MAPS

Each course map shows a sequence of essay assignments and the associated *How Arguments Work* readings, quizzes, and other materials for the course indicated.

College Composition (California C-ID English 100)

- Sample course map by Ryan Hitch of Norco Community College
- Sample course map by Natalie Peterkin of East Los Angeles Community College

Argumentative Writing and Critical Thinking (California C-ID English 105)

- Sample course map by Allison Murray of Long Beach Community College
- Sample course map by Anna Mills of City College of San Francisco

15.5.1: Allison Murray's Course Map for Argumentation and Critical Thinking

15.5.2: Anna Mills' Course Map for Argumentation and Critical Thinking

15.5.3: Natalie Peterkin's Course Map for College Composition

15.5.4: Ryan Hitch's Course Map for College Composition

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15.5.1: Allison Murray's Course Map for Argumentation and Critical Thinking

Overall course narrative

Argumentative Writing and Critical Thinking (C-ID English 105) offers instruction in argumentation, critical thinking, and writing, analytical evaluation of primarily non-fiction texts, research strategies, information literacy, and MLA documentation. Students will learn to distinguish, identify and avoid logical fallacies, as well as the foundations and structures that inform strong and interesting arguments.

A Sample Essay Assignment Sequence for Argumentative Writing and Critical Thinking

Course objectives (See the course descriptor for C-ID English 105)	Essay Assignment	Preparatory activities and assessments
1, 3, 5, 7	**Essay 1: Summary Essay** Students will write a detailed and accurate summary of an assigned or chosen argumentative text. The assignment fosters a concise understanding of another's point of view and transference of that understanding. To engage with the text, students must first critically read, analyze and understand a complex non-fiction text.	• Read Chapter 2: Reading to Figure out the Argument and Chapter 3: Writing a Summary of Another Writer's Argument • Chapters 2 and 3 quizzes. (Preview quizzes by logging into Canvas and visiting How Arguments Work on Canvas Commons) • 3.6 Sample Summaries • Brainstorming questions for the summary
1, 2, 3, 5, 7	**Essay 2: Summary and Assessment** Students will write an evaluative, thesis-driven summary analysis, building upon the skills in the Summary Essay, and assessing the strengths and weaknesses of a text. Students must critically read, analyze, compare and evaluate complex non-fiction texts, as well as identify the text's premises and assumptions (warrants) in various social, historical, cultural, psychological or aesthetic contexts as appropriate. Students may also identify logical fallacies--if present--within the text.	• Read Chapter 4: Assessing the Strength of an Argument and take the quiz. Preview the quiz by logging into Canvas and visiting How Arguments Work on Canvas Commons. • Brainstorming questions for the summary and assessment essay • 4.7 Sample Assessment "Spread Feminism, Not Germs" • 4.8 Sample Assessment "Typography and Identity"

Course objectives (See the course descriptor for C-ID English 105)	Essay Assignment	Preparatory activities and assessments
1, 2, 3, 5, 7	**Essay 3: Summary, Assessment, and Response** Students will build upon summary and assessment skills by writing an essay that also responds to an argumentative non-fiction text. Students must first critically read, analyze, compare and evaluate a complex text, and demonstrate an understanding of common logical fallacies by identifying any present in the text, in addition to identifying the text's premises and assumptions. The essay will be a thesis-driven response to the text, supported by evidence from the text, and written in an academic tone, which demonstrates control of grammar, usage and sentence structure.	• Read Chapter 5: Responding to an Argument with Our Own Ideas and take the quiz. Preview the quiz by logging into Canvas and visiting How Arguments Work on Canvas Commons. • Brainstorming questions for the summary, assessment, and response essay • Sample Response Essays
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	**Essay 4: Research Essay** Students will "engage in a critical conversation about a controversial topic," using academic research to support the position (thesis), and inductive or deductive reasoning that utilizes ethos, pathos and logos, and that avoids logical fallacies. Analysis and evaluation of the issue and accompanying primary and secondary sources will demonstrate the student's understanding of premises and assumptions surrounding the issue. The writing will reflect academic tone, voice and control over English grammar and usage. Documentation will reflect MLA ethical standards, avoiding plagiarism.	• Read Chapter 6: The Research Process and take the quiz. Preview the quiz by logging into Canvas and visiting How Arguments Work on Canvas Commons. • Read Chapter 7: Forming Your Own Argument and take the quiz. Preview the quiz by logging into Canvas and visiting How Arguments Work on Canvas Commons. • Read 12.6: Quoting and Paraphrasing and do the 12.6 exercises. • Sample research-based definition argument • Sample research-based evaluation argument • Sample research-based causal argument • Sample research-based proposal argument

Course objectives (See the course descriptor for C-ID English 105)	Essay Assignment	Preparatory activities and assessments
1, 2, 3, 4, 5	**Essay 5: Argument Analysis Essay** Students will combine each skill gained in the previous assignments to construct an argument that summarizes, assesses and evaluates an assigned text to identify uses of logical or emotional appeals (logos and pathos), as well as the author's ability to build trust (ethos). The essay's thesis will argue the text's overall veracity, while body paragraphs acknowledge the text's structural choices (inductive and deductive reasoning) and identify any logical fallacies. The essay may utilize secondary sources in addition to the primary source/s, and students will use MLA citation and documentation, avoiding plagiarism. Essays will be carefully edited to reflect standards of English grammar, usage and clarity. Sample essays to analyze: • John Eligan "A Debate Over Identity and Race Asks, Are African-Americans 'Black' or 'black'?" • German Lopez "Why You Should Stop Saying 'All Lives Matter,' Explained in 9 Different Ways."	**Readings** • Chapter 10: Writing an Analysis of an Argument's Strategies • Chapter 2: Reading to Figure out the Argument, • Chapter 3: Writing a Summary of Another Writer's Argument • Chapter 4: Assessing the Strength of an Argument • Chapter 8: How Arguments Appeal to Emotion • Chapter 9: How Arguments Establish Trust and Connection **Exercises** • 10.2 Generating Ideas for an Argument Analysis • Discussion on Revising for Clarity and Concision **Quizzes** • Chapters 8, 9, 10, and 11 have associated self-grading quizzes with automated feedback. Preview these by logging into Canvas and visiting How Arguments Work on Canvas Commons.

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15.5.2: Anna Mills' Course Map for Argumentation and Critical Thinking

Overall course narrative

This course empowers students to join the academic conversation and build reading, writing, and critical thinking skills they can apply in college and professional life. Six focused writing projects will help students steadily build skills , starting with a reflection essay on fast and slow thinking. Next, we will learn how to write a summary where we work on fully understanding and describing another writer's argument. Then we will write an essay that both summarizes and evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of an argument and offers an original response to the argument. Once we have explored how to identify an argument's reasoning, we will learn about the ways arguments can appeal to readers' emotions and build trust. We will write an argument analysis essay that covers logos, pathos, and ethos.

From there we will explore how two or more sources relate to each other in a compare-and-contrast or synthesis essay. This will lay the groundwork for integrating multiple sources in the culminating project, an original research-based essay. By this point we will have learned many of the typical moves of academic writing that will enable us to both analyze and create arguments in college contexts and beyond.

A Sample Essay Assignment Sequence for Argumentative Writing and Critical Thinking

Course objectives (See the course descriptor for C-ID English 105)	Essay Assignment	Preparatory activities and assessments
2, 4, 7	**Essay 1: Reflection Essay on Fast and Slow Thinking** A 1-2 page informal reflection on the student's own interests and goals in relation to fast and slow thinking. Metacognitive reflection helps students begin to develop awareness of their own reasoning patterns and ways of interacting with sources. This reflection will help students find personal meaning in the slow thinking practices the course teaches and build relationships with peers and with the teacher.	• Chapter 1 • Group discussion exercises

Course objectives (See the course descriptor for C-ID English 105)	Essay Assignment	Preparatory activities and assessments
1, 3, 5, 7	**Essay 2: Summary Essay** A 1-2 page thesis-driven summary of a reading of the student's choice selected from a list of essays or excerpts from a book or essay. Optional: the instructor may ask students to write a personal response to the argument in an additional 1-2 paragraphs.	• Read Chapter 2: Reading to Figure out the Argument and take the quiz. • Google Docs Notes Template for paraphrasing the chosen reading's claims paragraph by paragraph. • Read Chapter 3: Writing a Summary of Another Writer's Argument and take the quiz • Two annotated sample summaries • Brainstorming questions for the summary
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7	**Essay 3: Summary, Assessment, and Response Essay** A 3-4 page analysis of a different text, again chosen from a list of essays or excerpts from a book or essay. This analysis will summarize the argument, evaluate its strengths and weaknesses, and present an original student response.	• Read Chapter 4: Assessing the Strength of an Argument and take the quiz • Two sample summary and assessment essays • Exercise: Add an assessment paragraph or two to the first summary. • Read Chapter 5: Responding to an Argument with Our Own Ideas and take the quiz • Exercise: Add a response paragraph or two to the first summary. • Brainstorming questions for the summary, assessment, and response essay
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7	**Essay 4: Argument Analysis Essay** A 3-5 page analysis of a text chosen from a list of essays or excerpts from a book or essay. This analysis will not only summarize and evaluate but also analyze the appeals to trust and emotion. The instructor may want to allow students to focus on the same text they analyzed for one of the previous papers.	• Read Chapter 8: How Arguments Appeal to Emotion (Pathos) and take the quiz • Read Chapter 9: How Arguments Establish Trust and Connection (Ethos) and take the quiz • Read Chapter 10: Writing an Analysis of an Argument's Strategies and take the quiz • A brief sample argument analysis and a longer sample argument analysis • Generating Ideas for an Argument Analysis Paper worksheet • Reviewing an Argument Analysis Paper worksheet •

Course objectives (See the course descriptor for C-ID English 105)	Essay Assignment	Preparatory activities and assessments
1, 4, 5, 6, 7	**Essay 5: Compare-and-Contrast Essay (Synthesis Essay)** A 3-4 page essay comparing and contrasting two arguments and drawing insight from the comparison. The instructor may offer a wider range of options for the texts than previously provided in order to help build in rapid source assessment practices that will help with the research paper.	• Read Section 3.7: Comparing and Contrasting Arguments • A sample compare-and-contrast essay
1, 4, 5, 6, 7	**Essay 6: Research Essay** A 6-8 page research-based argument that incorporates 6 or more reputable sources. The essay may incorporate or emphasize definition, evaluation, causal analysis, or a proposal. The essay should incorporate audience awareness and appeals to trust and emotion.	• Read Chapter 6: The Research Process and take the quiz • Read Chapter 7: Forming Your Own Argument and take the quiz • Sample definition argument • Sample evaluation argument • Sample causal argument • Sample proposal argument
7	**Individual grammar and sentence-style work** The student will do periodic individualized grammar assignments correcting and explaining instructor-identified high-priority errors from their own graded essays.	• Chapter 13: Correcting Grammar and Punctuation and quizzes • Chapter 11: Shaping Your Sentences and quiz • Discussion on revising for clarity and concision

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15.5.3: Natalie Peterkin's Course Map for College Composition

Overall course narrative

In this class, we will explore writing in a variety of ways to master expository and argumentative forms of writing appropriate for college-level composition. Our readings will come from different kinds of non-fiction texts and focus on issues relevant in today's world. We will deepen and challenge our understanding of language, identity, and cultural norms through writing a research paper.

In order to achieve all these goals, we begin with a summary and assessment essay in which you stick closely to an argumentative text in order to put its main ideas into your own words before crafting your own argument. Then, in essay 2, we begin to incorporate research into our summary and assessment. Finally, we write a paper focused on your own argument and extensive research.

A Sample Essay Assignment Sequence for College Composition

Course objectives (See the course descriptor for C-ID English 100)	Essay Assignment	Preparatory activities and assessments
• Read, analyze, and evaluate a variety of primarily non-fiction texts for content, context, and rhetorical merit with consideration of tone, audience, and purpose. • Integrate the ideas of others through paraphrasing, summarizing, and quoting without plagiarism • Apply a variety of rhetorical strategies in writing unified, well-organized essays with arguable theses and persuasive support	**Essay 1: Summarize and assess an author's argument** Students summarize and assess an argument from a text chosen by the instructor.	• Analyze one or more sample summary-and-assessment papers. • Review Chapter 2: Reading to Figure out the Argument, Chapter 3: Writing a Summary of Another Writer's Argument, and Chapter 4: Assessing the Strength of an Argument. • Make a class trip or online requirement to visit and get tutoring at the campus writing center. • Create a discussion forum or class session for peer review.

Course objectives (See the course descriptor for C-ID English 100)	Essay Assignment	Preparatory activities and assessments
• Integrate the ideas of others through paraphrasing, summarizing, and quoting without plagiarism • Apply a variety of rhetorical strategies in writing unified, well-organized essays with arguable theses and persuasive support	**Essay 2: Incorporate sources while summarizing and assessing an author's argument** Students summarize, assess, and respond to an argument from a text chosen by the instructor.	• Review Chapter 2: Reading to Figure out the Argument, Chapter 3: Writing a Summary of Another Writer's Argument, Chapter 4: Assessing the Strength of an Argument, and Chapter 5: Making Your Recommendation in Response to an Argument. • Students can reflect on the strength of their analysis with class discussions or online forums. • Students can pick a strategy from Chapter 11: The Writing Process to try for this essay.
• Write timed/in-class essays exhibiting acceptable college-level control of mechanics, organization, development, and coherence	**Essay 3: Midterm Exam: close reading and analysis** The midterm requires students to closely read a text and describe how it is persuasive. They can analyze the text's organization, pathos, and so on.	• Review of Chapter 8: How Arguments Appeal to Emotion (Pathos) and Chapter 10: Writing an Analysis of an Argument's Strategies. • Students can enjoy trying out some persuasive in-class or online activities to see how language shapes meaning.

Course objectives (See the course descriptor for C-ID English 100)	Essay Assignment	Preparatory activities and assessments
• Apply a variety of rhetorical strategies in writing unified, well-organized essays with arguable theses and persuasive support • Proofread and edit essays for presentation so they exhibit no disruptive errors in English grammar, usage, or punctuation • Find, evaluate, analyze, and interpret primary and secondary sources, incorporating them into written essays using appropriate documentation format • Proofread and edit essays for presentation so they exhibit no disruptive errors in English grammar, usage, or punctuation • Develop varied and flexible strategies for generating, drafting, and revising essays	**Essay 4: Create and research your own argument about a topic** The research essay will require students to propose, narrow, and construct a research essay about an original, argumentative topic (subject to instructor approval). Students may focus on a specific type of argument, like definition, causal, evaluation, or proposal.	• Review of Chapter 6: The Research Process and Chapter 7: Forming a Research-Based Argument and the quizzes. • Brainstorming to create and narrow a research topic. Assign a proposal in order to approve topics. • A library database orientation • Review academic journals and how to find and read them. • Review how to brainstorm keywords and other research techniques • Analysis of sample student essays that are argumentative and use 6-10 sources.
• Write timed/in-class essays exhibiting acceptable college-level control of mechanics, organization, development, and coherence • Analyze stylistic choices in their own writing and the writing of others • Find, evaluate, analyze, and interpret primary and secondary sources, incorporating them into written essays using appropriate documentation format	**Essay 5: Final Exam: letter writing** Students write a persuasive letter to their elected official arguing for local action about a controversial topic or change using primary sources such as government documents or studies.	• Group discussions about real-world issues local to students • Discuss primary sources versus secondary and tertiary sources • Chapter 6: The Research Process

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15.5.4: Ryan Hitch's Course Map for College Composition

Overall course narrative

The arc of this course is a scaffolded approach to constructing an ideal argumentative research paper (getting students ready for C-ID English 105). Students start with a summary assignment that emphasizes critical reading skills and understanding argumentative texts. They build on these skills in the following two essays through evaluation and response. The research proposal allows students a relatively low-stakes chance to practice what they have been learning which leads into the argumentative research paper.

A Sample Essay Assignment Sequence for College Composition

Course objectives (See the course descriptor for C-ID English 100)	Essay Assignment	Preparatory activities and assessments
1. Read, analyze, and evaluate a variety of primarily non-fiction texts for content, context, and rhetorical merit with consideration of tone, audience, and purpose. 3. Develop varied and flexible strategies for generating, drafting, and revising essays. 6. Integrate the ideas of others through paraphrasing, summarizing, and quoting without plagiarism 8. Proofread and edit essays for presentation so they exhibit no disruptive errors in English grammar, usage, or punctuation	**Essay 1: Summary Assignment** Example Theme: Gender and Identity Students will write a detailed and accurate summary of an argumentative text. Equal emphasis should be applied to chapters two and three as a student's ability to summarize comes directly from their critical reading ability, a tool that will come in handy during future essays. We can take a little extra time here to emphasize the writing process as well.	**Readings:** • Chapter 1: Introduction • Chapter 2: Reading to Figure out the Argument, • Chapter 3: Writing a Summary of Another Writer's Argument • Chapter 11: The Writing Process **Assignments:** • Chapters 2, 3, and 11 quizzes with automated feedback. Preview these by logging into Canvas and visiting *How Arguments Work* on Canvas Commons.

Course objectives (See the course descriptor for C-ID English 100)	Essay Assignment	Preparatory activities and assessments
1. Read, analyze, and evaluate a variety of primarily non-fiction texts for content, context, and rhetorical merit with consideration of tone, audience, and purpose. 3. Develop varied and flexible strategies for generating, drafting, and revising essays. 4. Analyze stylistic choices in their own writing and the writing of others. 8. Proofread and edit essays for presentation so they exhibit no disruptive errors in English grammar, usage, or punctuation.	**Essay 2: Summary and Evaluation** Example Theme: Superheroes and Film Students will write a thorough summary and assessment of an argumentative text. It's important to emphasize the differences and similarities between summary and evaluation as students often conflate the terms. Review critical reading, reinforce the writing process with students, and consider introducing students to the peer review process. Now may be a good time to introduce logical fallacies.	**Readings:** • Chapter 4: Assessing the Strength of an Argument • Chapter 10: Writing an Analysis of an Argument's Strategies **Assignments:** • Canvas: Brainstorming Questions for Summary and Evaluation Essay • Chapters 4 and 10 quizzes with automated feedback. Preview these by logging into Canvas and visiting *How Arguments Work* on Canvas Commons.
2. Apply a variety of rhetorical strategies in writing unified, well-organized essays with arguable theses and persuasive support. 3. Develop varied and flexible strategies for generating, drafting, and revising essays. 4. Analyze stylistic choices in their own writing and the writing of others. 8. Proofread and edit essays for presentation so they exhibit no disruptive errors in English grammar, usage, or punctuation.	**Essay 3: Summary, Evaluation, and Response** Example Theme: Politics Students will write a thorough summary, assessment, and response to an argumentative text. This should be a thesis-driven work. At this point, you should consider asking students to find secondary sources to reinforce their responses. Special emphasis should be given to educating students on the reasons why writers use secondary sources. This will prepare students for the upcoming research paper. Continue acclimating students to peer review.	**Readings:** • Chapter 5: Responding to an Argument • Chapter 6: The Research Process • Section 12.6: Quoting and Paraphrasing **Assignments:** • Canvas: Brainstorming Questions for Summary, Evaluation, and Response Essay • Chapters 5 and 6 **quizzes** with automated feedback. Preview these by logging into Canvas and visiting *How Arguments Work* on Canvas Commons. • 12.6 **exercises** on quoting and paraphrasing

Course objectives (See the course descriptor for C-ID English 100)	Essay Assignment	Preparatory activities and assessments
2. Apply a variety of rhetorical strategies in writing unified, well-organized essays with arguable theses and persuasive support. 3. Develop varied and flexible strategies for generating, drafting, and revising essays. 4. Analyze stylistic choices in their own writing and the writing of others. 6. Integrate the ideas of others through paraphrasing, summarizing, and quoting without plagiarism. 7. Find, evaluate, analyze, and interpret primary and secondary sources, incorporating them into written essays using appropriate documentation format. 8. Proofread and edit essays for presentation so they exhibit no disruptive errors in English grammar, usage, or punctuation.	**Essay 4: Research Proposal** Example Theme: Technology For this essay, students will propose an essay that engages in a critical conversation about a controversial topic while using research. While this is a separate assignment from essay five, students should be able to roll over a lot of their work from this essay into the next one. The research proposal to research paper process gives students a chance to work directly with you on revising something. Now, theoretically, we're all good teachers and regularly work with students on work like this, so maybe it's wrong to say this is the first chance. But it is an official chance to do it that applies to each student in the class vs. revision that has been happening on an as-needed basis. Review MLA standards and source credibility; you may find it worthwhile to engage students on an annotated bibliography as a small additional assignment while they work on this essay. Students may focus on a specific type of argument, like definition, causal, evaluation, or proposal.	**Readings:** • Continue referring to Chapter 6: The Research Process • Chapter 14: Style: Shaping Our Sentences **Assignments:** • Chapter 14 quiz with automated feedback. Preview it by logging into Canvas and visiting *How Arguments Work* on Canvas Commons. • Canvas: Discussion on revising for clarity and concision

Course objectives (See the course descriptor for C-ID English 100)	Essay Assignment	Preparatory activities and assessments
2. Apply a variety of rhetorical strategies in writing unified, well-organized essays with arguable theses and persuasive support. 3. Develop varied and flexible strategies for generating, drafting, and revising essays. 6. Integrate the ideas of others through paraphrasing, summarizing, and quoting without plagiarism. 7. Find, evaluate, analyze, and interpret primary and secondary sources, incorporating them into written essays using appropriate documentation format. 8. Proofread and edit essays for presentation so they exhibit no disruptive errors in English grammar, usage, or punctuation.	**Essay 5: Research Essay** Example Theme: Technology For this essay, students will build on their research proposal. They will engage in a critical conversation about a controversial topic by using research to articulate their understanding of the issue/topic. In this essay, they will also make clear the larger significance of their argument, exploration, and analyses.	**Readings:** • Chapter 8: How Arguments Appeal to Emotion (Pathos) • Chapter 9: How Arguments Establish Trust and Connection (Ethos) • Chapter 13: Correcting Grammar and Punctuation **Assignments:** • Chapters 8, 9, and 13 quizzes with automated feedback. Preview them by logging into Canvas and visiting *How Arguments Work* on Canvas Commons. • Canvas: Section 8.3 Exercises • Canvas: Section 9.2 Exercises

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15.6: SAMPLE LESSON PLANS

The lesson plans below are examples of ways to engage students around a few of the topics covered in *How Arguments Work*. Please let us know if you have a lesson plan you would like to share.

- Sample lesson plan on Section 2.2: Types of Claims to Look out for by Sarah Sullivan featuring a Think Aloud, a core Reading Apprenticeship strategy for metacognitive awareness
- Sample lesson plan on Section 2.3: Making Notes on the Writer's Claims sample lesson plan by Sarah Sullivan featuring a double-entry reading log, a metacognitive Reading Apprenticeship strategy
- Sample lesson plan on Chapter 3 by Natalie Peterkin
- Sample lesson plan on Chapter 6 by Natalie Peterkin

15.6.1: Sample Lesson Plan on Annotation

15.6.2: Sample Lesson Plan on Claims Using the Think Aloud Technique

15.6.3: Sample Lesson Plan on Key Words and Search Engines

15.6.4: Sample Lesson Plan on Summaries

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15.6.1: Sample Lesson Plan on Annotation

Objectives

- Students are more aware of their thinking processes and can direct them to understand claims in texts
- Students distinguish between claims of fact, value, and policy as laid out in Section 2.2: Types of Claims to Look out for
- Students distinguish between what they understand the text to say and what reactions and questions come up in their own minds in response.

Background on the Approach

This lesson plan emphasizes a reading log, a metacognitive routine that can be applied to other chapters and texts. A reading log is a core metacognitive Reading Apprenticeship. It has the following benefits:

- Provides practice putting names to cognitive activities that help students build comprehension and think critically.
- Encourages students to notice and say when they are confused and use each other as resources to build meaning and problem solve the claims evaluation process.

Connection to Equity Pedagogy

Engaging students in strategic metacognitive conversations, thinking about and talking together about how to become increasingly strategic in directing higher-order thinking, is a core equity pedagogy strategy. This rigorous and scaffolded approach builds student capacity in critical thinking and complex academic literacy. Metacognitive conversations are culturally responsive in that they are supportive, empowering and they engage all four areas of classroom life (described in Reading Apprenticeship as the personal, social, cognitive, and knowledge building dimensions). For more on equity and this book's approach, see *How Arguments Work* and Equity-Centered Pedagogy.

Preparation

- Have students read Section 2.2: Types of Claims to Look out for and Section 2.3: Making Notes on the Writer's Claims on their own or (listen to the audio versions by clicking the play button at the top of each page).
- Ask them to also read a sample argument of your choice, perhaps from the Suggested Short Readings.

Procedure

1. Model identifying types of claims and logging your own reactions by sharing a *sample reading log.
   Model for the students how you, as an expert reader, would read the text, focusing on evaluating the claims (using the terminology in Chapter 2.2 - claims of policy, claims of fact and claims of value).
   Be authentic. Share the contents of your thinking in a spontaneous way. Describe what and why you are using particular thinking strategies. Do not turn your model into a lecture in disguise! The goal is to authentically model the thinking processes you use to evaluate claims and build comprehension of texts.
2. Give students the opportunity to practice on their own and share their notes in pairs
   In a synchronous in-person course, students can pair up and sit together. In an online synchronous course, pairs can work in breakout rooms. In an asynchronous online course, ask students to share their note document with a partner and comment on their partner's notes.
3. Whole class discussion of student observations both about the text's claims and about the active reading process
   Lead a **whole group metacognitive conversation** - a discussion about the notetaking experience and what kinds of thinking and evaluation strategies it revealed. Focus not only on the text (evaluating the types of claims) but also on the thinking/problem solving processes of the students.
   Express to your students **your own faith** that their metacognitive conversations will build and become richer with time as will their capacity to understand and evaluate claims in texts.

Additional Resources on reading logs in college classrooms

- General information on the WestEd Reading Apprenticeship framework and downloadable Reading Apprenticeship Teacher Resources.
- The book Reading for Understanding: How Reading Apprenticeship Improves Disciplinary Learning in Secondary and College Classrooms, 2nd Edition describes Think Aloud and other core Reading Apprenticeship metacognitive routines for college readers.
- A lesson plan for Talking to the Text from *Leading for Literacy: A Reading Apprenticeship Approach*.

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15.6.2: Sample Lesson Plan on Claims Using the Think Aloud Technique

Objectives

- Students gain greater awareness of and ability to direct their thinking processes to understand claims in texts
- Students can distinguish between claims of fact, value, and policy as laid out in Section 2.2: Types of Claims to Look out for

Background on the Approach

This lesson plan emphasizes Think Aloud, a metacognitive routine that can be applied to other chapters and texts. Think Aloud is a core metacognitive Reading Apprenticeship routine that helps students become more aware of their thinking and also builds their capacity to use strategic thinking to comprehend and evaluate complex academic texts. It has the following benefits:

- Provides practice putting names to cognitive activities that help students build comprehension and think critically.
- Encourages students to notice and say when they are confused and use each other as resources to build meaning and problem solve the claims evaluation process.
- Helps students notice text structures, tone, word choice in evaluating claims and writer purpose, which builds comprehension, confidence and stamina and prepares students to develop their own argumentative claims.

Connection to Equity Pedagogy

Engaging students in strategic metacognitive conversations, thinking about and talking together about how to become increasingly strategic in directing higher-order thinking, is a core equity pedagogy strategy. This rigorous and scaffolded approach builds student capacity in critical thinking and complex academic literacy. Metacognitive conversations are culturally responsive in that they are supportive, empowering and they engage all four areas of classroom life (described in Reading Apprenticeship as the personal, social, cognitive, and knowledge building dimensions). For more on equity and this book's approach, see *How Arguments Work* and Equity-Centered Pedagogy.

Preparation

- Have students read Section 2.2: Types of Claims to Look out for on their own or (listen to the audio version by clicking the play button at the top of the page).
- Ask them to also read a sample argument of your choice, perhaps from the Suggested Short Readings.

Procedure

1. Model identifying types of claims using Think Aloud while students take notes
   Model for the students how you, as an expert reader, would read the text, focusing on evaluating the claims (using the terminology in Chapter 2.2 - claims of policy, claims of fact and claims of value). You can model this aloud in class or post your own short audio/video modeling a Think Aloud with one of the Suggested Short Readings.
   Be authentic. Share the contents of your thinking in a spontaneous way. Describe what and why you are using particular thinking strategies. Do not turn your model Think Aloud into a lecture in disguise! The goal is to authentically model the thinking processes you use to evaluate claims and build comprehension of texts.
   Keep it short - around two minutes. When students work together in pairs, they might be able to sustain the Think Aloud for longer stretches, but when modeling, keep it focused and short. See this sample video where Sarah Sullivan models Think Aloud with The Danger of a Single Story by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie from the Suggested Short Readings.
   Ask students to take notes using this metacognitive notetaker on what thinking and comprehension strategies they see you using as you model Think Aloud and what reasoning strategies you are using to evaluate the claims in the text.
2. Give students the opportunity to practice in pairs and take notes

For example, a student might practice Thinking Aloud while reading one full paragraph while their partner takes notes using the same metacognitive notetaker, and then the pair will switch roles.
In a synchronous in-person course, students can pair up and sit together. In an online synchronous course, pairs can work in breakout rooms. In an asynchronous online course, ask students to record video or audio of their Think Aloud to share with teacher/peers via discussion post, FlipGrid, Voicethread, or other easy video application.

3. Whole class discussion of student observations both about the text's claims and about the active reading process
Lead a **whole group metacognitive conversation** - a discussion about the Think Aloud experience and what kinds of thinking and evaluation strategies it revealed. Focus not only on the text (evaluating the types of claims) but also on the thinking/problem solving processes of the students.
Express to your students **your own faith** that their metacognitive conversations will build and become richer with time as will their capacity to understand and evaluate claims in texts.

Additional Resources on Think Aloud in college classrooms

- Think-Aloud - Reading Apprenticeship at TCC: Resources gathered by educators at Tacoma Community College working with the Reading Apprenticeship framework.
- General information on the WestEd Reading Apprenticeship framework and downloadable Reading Apprenticeship Teacher Resources.
- The book Reading for Understanding: How Reading Apprenticeship Improves Disciplinary Learning in Secondary and College Classrooms, 2nd Edition describes Think Aloud and other core Reading Apprenticeship metacognitive routines for college readers.
- A lesson plan for Think Aloud or Talking to the Text from *Leading for Literacy: A Reading Apprenticeship Approach*.

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15.6.3: Sample Lesson Plan on Key Words and Search Engines

Objective

This exercise will help students understand the importance of keywords and the difference between search engines.

Group Exercise

- Give the whole class one topic to investigate.
- Assign each student groups a different search engine (i.e. Google, Google Scholar, Bing, DuckDuckGo, your college library, and so on), and have each group find an interesting article on that same topic.
- With the whole class, have students share the search phrase they used and the article they found. Then, consider the following questions:
    - What keywords did the groups use, and how did that seem to impact their search results?
    - What types of sources did each group find? (See 6.5: Types of Sources) How much authority and credibility does each source have?
    - Do the search results seem to have different audiences in mind? Why or why not?

Optional Extension

- Students can practice their reading skills by quickly skimming and summarizing the articles.
- Record the process on the keywords worksheet.

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15.6.4: Sample Lesson Plan on Summaries

Objective

Students analyze how a summary writer can use phrases to point out the role of different parts of a text in its overall argument.

Preparation

Have students read Chapter 3: Writing a Summary of Another Writer's Argument on their own or (listen to the audio version by clicking the play button at the top of each page).

Group Exercise

- Put students in groups and ask everyone to read the same summary from 3.8: Sample Summaries.
- Use 3.2: Introducing the Argument and the Main Claim, 3.3: Describing the Reasoning, 3.4: Describing How the Author Treats Counterarguments, and 3.5: Describing How the Author Limits the Claim as well as the annotations on the sample summary to identify where the sample summary introduces the argument and describes the reasoning, counterarguments, and/or limits. Students can use different colors for each.
- Ask students to discuss whether they agree on what role each part of the sample summary plays.

Class Discussion

- Does labeling the parts of the summary give them a clearer picture of the argument or lead them to any new observations about it?
- Are there any places where it wasn't clear how a point fit into the overall argument? How could the writer have introduced the point to make it clearer?

Optional Extensions

- Ask students to annotate their own summary drafts to see if they have described claims, reasons, counterarguments, and limits. If they are missing any of these elements, they can reread the argument to see if it included them or not.
- Ask students to draw a map of a sample summary using this Google Drawings argument map template.

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15.7: Suggested Short Readings

This list contains various articles, sample arguments and repositories instructors may use in a composition or critical thinking course. All readings use a Creative Commons license, which lets others distribute, remix, adapt, and build upon the text to varying degrees.

Readings by theme

Gender and identity

1. "The Danger of a Single Story" by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (7-14). Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie describes her experience as a young child in Nigeria who was exposed to British and American literature instead of African literature. She posits that not having exposure to different facets of human life can create an alarmingly uncomplicated understanding of others. As an African, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has been stereotyped numerous times, and as a novelist, the author implores readers to be mindful of incomplete stories and to seek balanced narratives. This article and TedTalk can be used to illustrate how an argument establishes trust and connection because of the speaker's many personal examples. Licensed CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

2. "Where Does Anti-LGBT Bias Come from—and How Does It Translate into Violence?" by Dominic Parrott. This article analyzes the roots of anti-LGBTQ+ hate and how it may be addressed and can be used to analyze how an author makes a recommendation in response to an argument, as it attempts to answer the questions: "What spurs on these acts of violence [against the LGBTQ+ Community]? Can we do anything to prevent them?" Licensed CC BY-ND 4.0.

3. "For the parents of gender-nonconforming kids, a new approach to care" by Tey Meadow. Meadow argues that parents and clinicians should accept gender-nonconforming kids' self-assessments about their gender, even when the children experience some ambivalence. The article explores one child's story, playing on emotions and building trust around a delicate topic. A good example of a writer situating their claim within a larger conversation and responding to counterarguments. Licensed CC BY-ND 4.0.

Superheros and film

1. "How the New 'Aladdin' Stacks Up Against a Century of Hollywood Stereotyping" by Evelyn Alsultany (20-26). Evelyn Alsultany, Associate Professor of American Studies and Ethnicity at USC, argues that the live-action *Aladdin* film does not do enough to combat Middle Eastern stereotypes. Since this article is complex yet clearly organized, it would make a good example to use throughout Chapter 2. Licensed CC BY-ND 4.0.

2. "Shadows of the Bat: Constructions of Good and Evil in the Batman Movies of Tim Burton and Christopher Nolan" by Simon Philipp Born (81-111). This scholarly article evaluates the mythological struggle between good and evil as seen in Tim Burton's and Christopher Nolan's *Batman* movies, pointing out that these filmmakers upset the typical black-and-white polarity of good versus evil. Licensed CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

Technology

1. "How fake accounts constantly manipulate what you see on social media – and what you can do about it" by Jeanna Matthews. Matthew highlights a popular controversial topic involving social media and discusses how readers can take action to fight against misinformation. This is a good reading to have students recommend a response to, as everyone likely has experience with social media. Licensed CC BY-ND 4.0.

2. "That time the Internet sent a SWAT team to my mom's house" by Caroline Sinders. Sinders describes online harassment and describes why online platforms need to take harassment more seriously. Licensed CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

3. "The Relationship Between Cell Phone Use and Academic Performance in a Sample of U.S. College Students" by Andrew Lepp, Jacob E. Barkley, and Aryn C. Karpinski. This is a great academic journal article that investigates an approachable topic but still contains all the components of a journal article. Licensed CC BY 4.0.

Politics

1. "Must the President Be a Moral Leader?" by Michael Blake (69-73). Michael Black explores how a President's character and virtues may impact leadership. However, the differences between right and wrong are blurred in the world of politics. Licensed CC BY-ND 4.0.

2. "Millionaire Candidates" by Carl Schurz. This historical letter written in 1886 by Carl Schurz details the author's outrage over rich individuals seeking office who have not spent time in public service and bribe their way into office. This text is a great example of how an argument establishes trust through distance and formality (Chapter 9.3). In the public domain.

3. "Ending the Secrecy of the Student Debt Crisis" by Daniela Senderowicz (367-369). Activist and author Daniela Senderowicz gives a bleak overview of the American student debt crisis: flat incomes and skyrocketing education costs leave many students in financial ruin. However, activism and community building can be a solution to crippling debt. Licensed CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

4. "Journalism, Fake News, & Disinformation handbook" by Julie Posetti et al. Interesting reading for a course investigating contemporary political issues. It would pair nicely with "How Fake Accounts..." by Jeanna Matthews (see above). Licensed CC-BY-SA 3.0 IGO.

Race in America

1. "Demanding Equal Political Voice...And Accepting Nothing Less: The Quest for Latino Political Inclusion" by Louis DeSipio. DeSipio outlines how Latinx communities have slowly gained a louder political voice in the U.S., though he highlights that the movement still has a long way to go before achieving true inclusion. This text is a great example of a thoroughly researched piece of writing. In the public domain.

2. "Frederick Douglass, My Bondage and My Freedom, 1855" by Frederick Douglass. This is Douglass's second autobiography and is a full-length text that develops the theme of transitioning from bondage to liberty. In the public domain.

3. "On Reparations, the Question Isn't If, but When and How" by Zenobia Jeffries Warfield. Warfield outlines the history of the movement for reparations for slavery in America and makes a case for a way to implement reparations policy. Licensed CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

Nature and the environment

1. "Coronavirus closures could lead to a radical revolution in conservation" by James Stinson and Elizabeth Lunstrum. This piece explores the tensions between the needs of wildlife and our desire to promote park visitation as a way to increase human health. It suggests that we shift our paradigm and think about balancing these goals to promote "planetary health." Good for showing how to limit a claim and how to handle counterarguments. Licensed CC BY-ND 4.0.

2. "It's OK to feed wild birds – here are some tips for doing it the right way" by Julian Avery. A scientist takes us on a quick tour of the research on the good and bad impacts of feeding on wild bird populations. He concludes that if people follow certain guidelines, the benefits outweigh the risks. Good for showing how to limit a claim, how to treat counterarguments, and how to show causality. Licensed CC BY-ND 4.0.

3. "Climate change is really about prosperity, peace, public health and posterity – not saving the environment" by Ezra Markowitz and Adam Corner. The authors argue that the public would respond better to arguments about the urgency of climate change if they were framed in terms of direct impacts on humans. This is an example of a meta-argument, an argument that makes a claim about how we should think about something. Good for illustrating how to tailor an argument to an audience by prioritizing the things that audience values. Licensed CC BY-ND 4.0.

4. "The emotional lives of animals" by Marc Bekoff (61-68). This article plays on readers' emotions through word choice and anecdote to convince us that animal behavior shows that animals experience strong emotion too. Students might debate whether the article has the right balance of examples and analysis. Licensed CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

5. "Climate explained: why carbon dioxide has such outsized influence on Earth's climate" by Jason West. A scientist explains in lay terms how science came to understand the role of different gases in the atmosphere. He aims to convince us that increased carbon dioxide actually could cause significant warming. Good for illustrating how to develop trust through

authority, distance, respect, and goodwill. Licensed CC BY-ND 4.0.

6. "Which water technology will save California from its long, dry death?" by Kiki Sanford. This article creates a sense of urgency about California's water prognosis. It then explores in some detail current private-public partnerships to improve desalination and wastewater reclamation technologies. Useful for showing definition and causal argument. Licensed CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

Readings by argument type

Definition arguments

1. "Climate explained: why carbon dioxide has such outsized influence on Earth's climate" by Jason West. A scientist explains in lay terms how science came to understand the role of different gases in the atmosphere. He aims to convince us that increased carbon dioxide actually could cause significant warming. Good for illustrating how to develop trust through authority, distance, respect, and goodwill. Licensed CC BY-ND 4.0.
2. "Demanding Equal Political Voice...And Accepting Nothing Less: The Quest for Latino Political Inclusion" by Louis DeSipio. DeSipio outlines how Latinx communities have slowly gained a louder political voice in the U.S., though he highlights that the movement still has a long way to go before achieving true inclusion. This text is a great example of a thoroughly researched piece of writing. In the public domain.
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Evaluation arguments

1. "The Danger of a Single Story" by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (7-14). Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie describes her experience as a young child in Nigeria who was exposed to British and American literature instead of African literature. She posits that not having exposure to different facets of human life can create an alarmingly uncomplicated understanding of others. As an African, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has been stereotyped numerous times, and as a novelist, the author implores readers to be mindful of incomplete stories and to seek balanced narratives. This article and TedTalk can be used to illustrate how an argument establishes trust and connection because of the speaker's many personal examples. Licensed CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

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Causal arguments

1. "Where Does Anti-LGBT Bias Come from—and How Does It Translate into Violence?" by Dominic Parrott. This article analyzes the roots of anti-LGBTQ+ hate and how it may be addressed and can be used to analyze how an author makes a recommendation in response to an argument, as it attempts to answer the questions: "What spurs on these acts of violence [against the LGBTQ+ Community]? Can we do anything to prevent them?" Licensed CC BY-ND 4.0.

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3. "Which water technology will save California from its long, dry death?" by Kiki Sanford. This article creates a sense of urgency about California's water prognosis. It then explores in some detail current private-public partnerships to improve desalination and wastewater reclamation technologies. Licensed CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

Proposal arguments

1. "For the parents of gender-nonconforming kids, a new approach to care" by Tey Meadow. Meadow argues that parents and clinicians should accept gender-nonconforming kids' self-assessments about their gender, even when the children experience some ambivalence. The article explores one child's story, playing on emotions and building trust around a delicate topic. A good example of a writer situating their claim within a larger conversation and responding to counterarguments. Licensed CC BY-ND 4.0.

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3. "Climate change is really about prosperity, peace, public health and posterity – not saving the environment" by Ezra Markowitz and Adam Corner. The authors argue that the public would respond better to arguments about the urgency of climate change if they were framed in terms of direct impacts on humans. This is an example of a meta-argument, an argument that makes a claim about how we should think about something. Good for illustrating how to tailor an argument to an audience by prioritizing the things that audience values. Licensed CC BY-ND 4.0.

4. "It's OK to feed wild birds – here are some tips for doing it the right way" by Julian Avery. A scientist takes us on a quick tour of the research on the good and bad impacts of feeding on wild bird populations. He concludes that if people follow certain guidelines, the benefits outweigh the risks. Good for showing how to limit a claim, how to treat counterarguments, and how to show causality. Licensed CC BY-ND 4.0.

Repositories of additional open-licensed readings

1. "The Conversation" uses a Creative Commons license to share free articles across a wide geographic and ideological spectrum.

2. "88 Open Essays: A Reader for Students of Composition & Rhetoric" is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

3. Thematic Reading Anthology. This anthology uses open-licensed readings organized by theme, including consumer debt, literature, culture, and so on.

4. Reading Anthology: Three Levels. This anthology houses open-licensed readings on a variety of topics divided into three levels. Each reading had a faculty information guide, including information like the reading level and thematic tags.

5. Open Source Readings Arranged by Theme from *Writing, Reading, and College Success: A First-Year Composition Course for All Learner*s (Kashyap and Dyquisto).

Attributions

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15.8: Suggested Free Online Books

Nonfiction classics

These classics are all in the public domain, available through Project Gutenberg. The list includes a few works by women and people of color. Though some may seem too antiquated or difficult to assign in full, consider choosing an excerpt as short as a paragraph for a summary, response, and/or rhetorical analysis exercise.

- *Essays* by Ralph Waldo Emerson.
- *Walden* by Henry David Thoreau
- *The Republic* by Plato, especially "Allegory of the Cave," Book VII, 514 a, 2 to 517 a, 7
- *Essays of Michel de Montaigne*
- *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself* by Harriet A. Jacobs
- *The Souls of Black Folk* by W. E. B. Du Bois
- *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* by Douglass
- *Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*
- *On Liberty* by John Stuart Mill
- *On the Origin of Species By Means of Natural Selection* by Charles Darwin
- *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, Or Gustavus Vassa*
- *Democracy in America — Volume 1* by Alexis de Tocqueville
- *What Is Man? and Other Essays* by Mark Twain
- *Modern Essays*, edited by Christopher Morley.
- *The Oxford Book of American Essays*, edited by Brander Matthews
- *Anarchism and Other Essays*, by Emma Goldman
- *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic* by Henri Bergson
- *Prejudices, First Series* by H. L. Mencken
- *A Librarian's Open Shelf: Essays on Various Subjects* edited by Arthur E. Bostwick
- *Optimism* by Helen Keller
- *Table-talk* by William Hazlitt
- *The Social Contract & Discourses* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau
- U.S. PRESIDENTIAL INAUGURAL ADDRESSES Assembled by James Linden
- *Cicero's Orations* by Marcus Tullius Cicero
- *Give Me Liberty Or Give Me Death* by Patrick Henry

- The Martin Luther King Jr. Day, 1995, Memorial Issue
- *American Indian Stories* by Zitkala-Sa

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15.9: Template Phrases for Argument, Summary, Assessment, and Response

How can I use these templates?

Glancing at a collection of phrases that help with common writing tasks can energize us and give us a sense of our options as we write. Here we include all the template phrases from Chapter 2: Reading to Figure out the Argument, Chapter 3: Writing a Summary of Another Writer's Argument, Chapter 4: Assessing the Strength of an Argument, and Chapter 5: Responding to an Argument. Each section heading links to the relevant textbook section for more information.

Phrases to introduce elements of an argument

Introducing claims

Claims of policy

- We should _____.
- We ought to _____.
- We must _____.
- Let's _____.
- The best course is _____.
- The solution is to _____.
- The next step should be _____.
- We should consider _____.
- Further research should be done to determine _____.

Claims of fact

- Research suggests that _____.
- The data indicate that _____.
- _____is increasing or decreasing.
- There is a trend toward _____.
- _____causes _____
- _____leads to _____.

Claims of value

- _____is terrible/disappointing/underwhelming.
- _____is mediocre/average/decent/acceptable.
- We should celebrate _____.
- _____is great/wonderful/fantastic/impressive.

Comparative claims of value

- _____is the best _____.
- _____is the worst _____.
- _____is better than _____.
- _____is worse than _____.
- _____is just as good as _____.
- _____is just as bad as _____

Reasons

- Because_____, _____.
- Because of this, _____.
- If_____, then _____.
- Since_____, _____.
- For this reason,_____.
- We can conclude_____.
- Therefore, _____.
- So_____.
- Consequently, _____.
- As a result, _____.
- Hence_____.
- Thus_____.
- It follows that _____.

Counterarguments

Mistaken counterarguments

- It is a popular misconception that_____.
- Some have fallen for the idea that_____.
- Many people mistakenly believe that_____.

Neutrally described counterarguments

- Many people think _____.
- Some, on the other hand, will argue that _____.
- Some might disagree, claiming that _____.
- Of course, many have claimed that _____.
- Some will take issue with _____, arguing that _____.
- Some will object that _____.
- Some will dispute the idea that _____, claiming that _____.
- One criticism of this way of thinking is that _____.

Counterarguments that have merit

- It is true that _____.
- I do concede_____.
- We should grant that_____.
- We must admit that_____.
- I acknowledge that _____.
- X has a point that _____.
- Admittedly, _____.
- Of course, _____.
- To be sure, _____.
- There may be something to the idea that _____.

Rebuttal to a counterargument

- This idea misses the fact that _____.
- I disagree because _____.
- This depends on the assumption that _____ which is incorrect because _____.
- This argument overlooks _____.
- This argument contradicts itself _____.

- This is mistaken because _____.

Concession to a counterargument

- It is true that _____, but_____.
- I do concede_____, and yet_____.
- We should grant that_____, but we must still acknowledge that _____.
- We can admit that_____ and still believe that _____..
- I acknowledge that _____, and yet we should nevertheless recognize that _____.
- Critics have a point that _____; however it is more important that we focus on _____.
- Admittedly, _____. However, _____.
- Of course, _____, but I still insist that_____..
- To be sure, _____; but _____.
- There may be something to the idea that _____, and yet _____.

Limits

Less than perfect certainty

- Perhaps, _____.
- It is worth considering the idea that _____.
- _____ may_____.
- _____might_____.
- _____could possibly_____.
- Probably, _____.
- Very likely, _____.
- Almost certainly,_____.

Narrowing the scope of the argument

- Few _____.
- Some_____.
- Many_____.
- Most_____.
- The vast majority of _____.
- Almost all_____.
- _____ unless_____.
- If it is not the case that_____, then _____.
- _____, except in the case that _____.
- We can exclude cases where _____.

Phrases for Summarizing

Introducing the argument

- In an article for _____, writer _____ discusses _____.
- The recent account of _____ by _____ focuses on _____.
- Writing in the journal _____, the scholar _____ argues that _____.

Summarizing claims

Controversial claims of fact

- They argue that _____.
- She maintains that _____.
- He contends that _____.
- They assert that _____.
- She holds that _____.
- He insists that _____.
- She thinks_____.
- They believe that_____.

Widely accepted claims of fact

- He informs us of _____.
- She describes_____.
- They note that _____.
- He observes that _____.
- She explains that _____.
- The writer points out the way in which_____.

Positive claims of value

- They praise_____.
- He celebrates_____.
- She applauds the notion that_____.
- They endorse_____.
- He admires_____.
- She finds value in_____.
- They rave about_____.

Negative claims of value

- The author criticizes_____.
- She deplores_____.
- He finds fault in_____.
- They regret that_____.
- They complain that_____.
- The authors are disappointed in_____.

Mixed claims of value

- The author gives a mixed review of_____.
- She sees strengths and weaknesses in_____.
- They endorse_____ with some reservations.
- He praises_____ while finding some fault in _____
- The authors have mixed feelings about_____. On the one hand, they are impressed by_____, but on the other hand, they find much to be desired in_____.

Strongly felt claims of policy

- They advocate for_____.
- She recommends_____.

- They encourage_____to _____.
- The writers urge_____.
- The author is promoting_____.
- He calls for_____.
- She demands_____.

Tentative claims of policy

- He suggests_____.
- The researchers explore the possibility of_____.
- They hope that_____can take action to_____.
- She shows why we should give more thought to developing a plan to_____.
- The writer asks us to consider_____.

Summarizing reasons

- She reasons that _____.
- He explains this by_____.
- The author justifies this with_____.
- To support this perspective, the author points out that_____.
- The writer bases this claim on the idea that_____.
- They argue that_____ implies that _____ because_____.
- She argues that if _____, then _____.
- He claims that _____ necessarily means that_____ .
- She substantiates this idea by_____.
- He supports this idea by_____.
- The writer gives evidence in the form of_____.
- They back this up with_____.
- She demonstrates this by_____.
- He proves attempts to prove this by _____.
- They cite studies of _____.
- On the basis of _____, she concludes that _____.

Summarizing the treatment of counterarguments

Concession to a counterargument

- The writer acknowledges that _____, but still insists that _____.
- They concede that _____; however they consider that _____.
- He grants the idea that _____, yet still maintains that _____.
- She admits that _____, but she points out that_____.
- The author sees merit in the idea that _____, but cannot accept_____.
- Even though he sympathizes with those who believe _____, the author emphasizes that _____.

Rejection of a counterargument

- She refutes this claim by arguing that _____.
- However, he questions the very idea that _____, observing that _____.
- She disagrees with the claim that _____ because _____.
- They challenge the idea that _____ by arguing that _____.
- He rejects the argument that_____, claiming that _____.
- She defends her position against those who claim _____ by explaining that _____.

Summarizing limits

- He qualifies his position by_____.
- She limits her claim by_____.
- They clarify that this only holds if _____.
- The author restricts their claim to cases where_____.
- He makes an exception for_____.

Comparing two arguments

Similarities

- Just as A does, B believes that_____.
- Both A and B see _____ as an important issue.
- We have seen how A maintains that _____. Similarly, B _____.
- A argues that_____. Likewise, B _____.
- A and B agree on the idea that _____.

Differences

- A focuses on_____; however, B is more interested in_____.
- A's claim is that_____. Conversely, B maintains that _____.
- Whereas A argues that_____, B_____.
- While A emphasizes_____, B_____.
- Unlike A, B believes that_____.
- Rather than _____ like A, B_____,
- Whereas A argues that _____, B maintains _____.

Similarities and differences together

- While A condemns the weaknesses of _____, B praises its strengths.
- A outlines the problem of _____ in the abstract while B proposes solutions to the problem.
- Though A and B agree on the root cause of _____, they differ on its solution.

Phrases for assessing arguments

Assessing clarity

Lack of clarity

- What exactly does X mean by _____?
- He seems to imply that _____, but leaves ambiguous whether or not that means_____.
- They fail to clarify what exactly _____ refers to.
- He does not define what he means by _____.
- She explores _____, but fails to articulate a clear message.
- X leaves open the question of _____.
- The argument never specifies whether _____ or _____.
- Readers will wonder if they mean_____ or _____.
- Readers may be confused by the shifting meaning of the term "_____."
- Many will interpret _____ to mean _____, but some might also take it to mean _____.

Praise for clarity

- This piece clearly articulates the case that _____.
- The argument lays bare the assumptions on which the whole case for _____ is based.
- X has clarified the reasoning that underpins the common opinion that _____.

Pointing out exceptions

- The argument is based on the idea that _____, but this is not entirely true because _____.
- The reason given is that _____, but the author has not considered the possibility that, in fact, _____.
- The author does not acknowledge that _____ might be the case.
- The argument presents only two possibilities,_____ and _____, when in fact it could be the case that _____
- The question _____ assumes that _____, when, in fact, it could be that_____.

Assessing evidence

Strong evidence

- She convincingly supports this claim by _____.
- They give many examples of _____ to support the idea that _____.
- His evidence of _____ ranges from anecdotes to large-scale academic studies to expert testimonials.
- X refers to credible academic studies of _____ to bolster their argument that _____.
- X refers to a number of credible experts to establish that, in general, _____.

Weak evidence

- X asserts that _____ but does not offer any evidence.
- The argument builds on the premise that _____, but fails to support that premise.
- X offers scant evidence for the claim that _____.
- The argument gives an example to support the claim that _____, but gives no evidence that this example is typical.
- _____ is not enough to show that _____.
- The essay offers only _____ as evidence when it should also point to _____ and _____.
- The argument presents _____ as a reason to believe _____, but this supposed reason is just a rewording of the claim.
- The writer provides no real justification for the idea that _____; to convince us they just repeat that idea with different phrasing.

Assumptions

Critiquing assumptions

- The argument claims that _____ will inevitably lead to _____, but this is far from certain.
- They assume that _____ will set off a chain reaction leading to _____; however this is unlikely because _____.
- _____relies on the idea that _____; however, _____.
- The argument assumes that _____ without providing evidence.
- _____takes for granted that _____, but we may wonder whether this is a justified assumption because_____.
- _____depends on the assumption that_____. Is this always the case? Some might say that _____.
- _____ depends on a belief in _____, which may not be shared by all readers because _____.
- The underlying idea here is that _____; however we must ask ourselves whether _____.
- The implicit assumption is that _____ but some may question whether, in fact, _____.

Praising assumptions

- X is correct in their assumption that _____ because _____.
- X rightly assumes that _____.

Assessing the treatment of counterarguments

Praise

- The author effectively counters the common view that _____ by arguing that, in fact, _____.
- The writer acknowledges that _____ but explains that this is because _____.
- The argument responds to the _____ critique of their position by noting that _____.

Critique

- The argument fails to mention the opposing view that _____.
- The author attempts to respond to critics by claiming that _____, but this response is not convincing because _____.

Strengths

Praise a subsection

- Although the argument does not succeed in proving that _____, it does help us understand _____.
- Though the evidence X presents does not prove _____, it does provide rich material for further discussion.
- X's conclusion that _____ doesn't seem fully justified, but the evidence does show that _____.
- X makes an important point when they note that _____.
- X's insight into _____ sheds new light on _____.
- X clearly outlines the problem of _____, even though their solution leaves much to be desired.
- This piece does clarify the nature of _____ even though it does not _____.

Praise for bringing attention

- X brings much-needed attention to the issue of _____, which is helpful because_____.
- The essay drives home the need for more focus on _____.
- This piece highlights the urgent situation of _____.

Praise the framing

- X's discussion of _____ provides a new way to think about _____.
- The argument's biggest contribution lies in its framing of _____ as _____.

Praise for raising a question

- X's focus on _____ helps clarify an important question for further exploration: _____?
- The argument points toward the need for further study of _____ to determine _____.
- X's analysis reveals the gaps in our understanding of _____.

Phrases for responding to further the conversation

Call for clarification

- X should specify whether they mean _____ or _____.
- X should explain what they mean by _____.
- X should elaborate on the concept of _____.

Call for support and research

- Further research on _____ could show us _____.
- A study of _____ might show whether _____.
- Is it really the case that _____? We need more information about _____.
- An investigation of _____ could help us determine the role of _____ in _____.

Suggest a limit to the claim

- We should recognize that this pattern is limited to cases where _____.
- The argument holds true in situations where _____.
- It is important to note that this claim only applies to _____.
- _____ is a notable exception because _____.
- We should note that this claim is certainly not true of _____.

Point to further implications

- The idea that _____ could apply to _____ as well.
- Beyond _____, X's argument has implications for _____.
- This argument shows how important it is that we take action on _____.
- If we accept the idea that _____, as we should, then the time has come to _____.
- Given X's points, shouldn't we consider _____?

Introduce alternative or additional reasons

- Better evidence for _____ lies in _____.
- Another reason why _____ is that _____.
- The fact that _____ provides further support for X's claim.
- My own experience has also shown that _____ , which leads me to agree with X.
- I have seen firsthand how _____.
- In addition to the evidence X gives, it is also worth considering that _____.

Underscore the importance of an argument

- X's claim is important because _____.
- This is especially concerning because _____.
- We should take note of this since _____.

Suggest ways to spread the word

- We could help spread awareness of _____ by _____.
- The idea that _____ should be taught in _____ classes.
- We should all talk to those we know about _____.

Introduce alternate claims

- Instead of _____, I would argue that _____.
- A more accurate claim would be _____.
- In actuality, _____.
- The idea that _____ better accounts for the evidence.
- We can find a better explanation of _____ in _____.
- As we have seen, it is not true that _____. Rather, _____.

Reframe the issue

- Instead of focusing on _____, we should look at the question in the light of _____.
- A better way to frame the issue of _____ would be in terms of _____.
- To better understand _____, we should first ask ourselves _____.

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15.10: Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

The chapters of *How Arguments Work* aim to empower students to integrate and apply chapter concepts in the ways described below.

Chapter 1: Introduction

- Recognize ourselves as participants in a larger academic conversation.
- Explain how learning to write will help us academically, professionally, and personally.
- See reading and writing as tools for careful critical thinking.

Chapter 2: Reading to Figure out the Argument

- Identify the main claims of a text as well as the reasons that support those claims.
- Identify any limits, counterarguments, or rebuttals mentioned in an argument.
- Draw a visual map of the claims, reasons, limits, counterarguments, and rebuttals.

Chapter 3: Writing a Summary of Another Writer's Argument

- Write a thorough summary of an author's text that includes that text's main claim, reasons, counterarguments, and limits.
- Choose phrases precisely to show the role of each point summarized within the larger argument.
- Identify key similarities and differences between two arguments.
- Write an essay summarizing and comparing two arguments that highlights what we can learn from their key similarities and differences.

Chapter 4: Assessing the Strength of an Argument

- Check arguments for common problems such as exceptions, faulty evidence, invalid assumptions, and inadequate treatment of counterarguments.
- Identify insights in an argument that can contribute to future discussions on the topic.
- Write a complete assessment of an argument's strengths and weaknesses with a thesis that points to the most crucial ones.
- Use precise and varied phrases to highlight the argument's flaws and insights.

Chapter 5: Responding to an Argument with Our Own Ideas

- Distinguish between assessing the strength of an argument and offering an original idea
- Generate relevant and original responses to others' arguments
- Demonstrate the ability to suggest an exception to an argument
- Demonstrate the ability to extend an argument with an original point
- Demonstrate the ability to suggest an alternative argument.

Chapter 6: The Research Process

- Understand a research paper assignment prompt
- Choose, evaluate, and integrate sources from a wide variety of publications including academic journals
- Narrow a research topic.
- Use correct MLA format for essays and in-text citations.

Chapter 7: Forming a Research-Based Argument

- Determine the purpose of an argument
- Distinguish between definition, evaluation, causal, and proposal arguments
- Explain what common questions will need to be answered for each of the above argument types.

Chapter 8: How Arguments Appeal to Emotion (Pathos)

- Describe the value of emotional appeals in written academic argument
- Identify the ways in which a given argument appeals to emotion through word choice, tone, or powerful examples
- Assess the likely effectiveness of an emotional appeal for a particular audience
- Distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate emotional appeals
- Use legitimate emotional appeals to support their own written arguments.

Chapter 9: How Arguments Establish Trust and Connection (Ethos)

- Describe the value of building trust and connection in a written academic argument
- Evaluate the effectiveness and legitimacy of an argument's appeals to trust and connection
- Use effective, legitimate strategies for building trust and connection in written arguments.

Chapter 10: Writing an Argument Analysis

- Write an analysis of an argument's appeal to emotion
- Write an analysis of an argument's appeal to trust
- Connect an assessment of an argument's logical structure to an assessment of the effectiveness of its rhetorical appeals
- Give constructive feedback on an argument analysis essay
- Describe how the visual features of an image can reinforce the message of a visual argument.

Chapter 11: The Writing Process

- Describe the stages of the writing process
- Identify strategies for annotation, brainstorming, outlining, and drafting
- Choose what to focus on in revision
- Give constructive feedback on a peer's draft
- Evaluate and incorporate peer feedback.

Chapter 12: Essay Organization

- Write a thesis that summarizes the main point of an essay
- Write a topic sentence that summarizes the main point of a paragraph
- Introduce relevant specific evidence to support a topic sentence
- Integrate quotations and paraphrases from other texts as support
- Connect a new idea to a previous point or to the thesis
- Introduce essays in ways that engage the reader in the specific topic
- Conclude essays in ways that sum up as needed and point toward further questions or implications.

Chapter 13: Correcting Grammar and Punctuation

- Understand the value of being able to write Standard English in professional and academic settings.
- Acknowledge the value of other English dialects.
- Describe multiple proofreading techniques.
- Feel empowered to look up, learn about, and fix a variety of common errors.

Chapter 14: Style: Shaping Our Sentences

- Recognize clarity as the first priority in academic writing.
- Edit out repetition and wordiness.
- Revise sentences to feature characters as subjects and actions as main verbs.
- Use parallelism to create balanced sentences.
- Employ varied sentence structures to make prose more engaging.
- Feel empowered to decipher convoluted academic prose.

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15.11: ALIGNMENT WITH STATEWIDE COURSE OUTLINES

This textbook, *How Arguments Work*, was designed for use in two kinds of courses: a standard introductory college writing class and a higher-level course on argumentation.

If you are considering adopting *How Arguments Work* or advocating for its use in your department, you may be faced with the task of showing how it covers the content in a departmental course outline. To make that easier, we have listed the textbook resources that support each of California's statewide course objectives for two English courses. The resource guides below show which chapters address each objective and where to find the relevant ancillary resources such as quizzes, exercises, assignments, and sample papers.

As background information, the Academic Senate for the California Community Colleges (ASCCC) provides standardized descriptions for courses commonly taught throughout the state using its Course Identification Numbering System (C-ID) through its website C-ID.net. These descriptions are meant to streamline transfer and articulation in the state's public colleges. We have taken the course objectives from ASCCC's course descriptors.

- Resource Guide for College Composition, California Course ID English 100 (C-ID ENGL 100)
- Resource Guide for Argumentative Writing and Critical Thinking: California Course ID English 105 (C-ID ENGL 105)

15.11.1: How Arguments Work and the Argumentative Writing and Critical Thinking Course Objectives

15.11.2: How Arguments Work and the College Composition Course Objectives

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15.11.1: How Arguments Work and the Argumentative Writing and Critical Thinking Course Objectives

California C-ID English 105 is the outline for one of our most commonly taught courses, variously referred to as Argumentative Writing and Critical Thinking, Advanced Composition, Argumentation, Rhetoric in College, or Writing about Nonfiction. The C-ID ENGL 105 Descriptor explains, "This course offers instruction in argumentation and critical writing, critical thinking, analytical evaluation of primarily non-fiction texts, research strategies, information literacy, and documentation."

Table of Resources That Align with California Course Objectives for Argumentative Writing and Critical Thinking

Objective listed in the C-ID English 105 course descriptor	*How Arguments Work* sections centered on this objective	Ancillary resources that help students meet the objective
Objective #1: **Critically read, analyze, compare, and evaluate complex, diverse non-fiction texts**	• Chapter 2: Reading to Figure out the Argument covers annotation and how to look out for common phrases that identify the elements of a complex argument according to the Toulmin model. • Chapter 3: Writing a Summary of Another Writer's Argument covers common phrases for analyzing an argument's structure. It includes Section 3.7: Writing a Short Summary of a Long Argument and Section 3.9: Comparing and Contrasting Arguments. • Chapter 4: Assessing the Strength of an Argument shows how to evaluate arguments. • Chapter 8: How Arguments Appeal to Emotion (Pathos) shows how to analyze appeals to emotion. • Chapter 9: How Arguments Establish Trust and Connection (Ethos) shows how to analyze appeals to trust. • Chapter 10: Writing an Analysis of an Argument's Strategies discusses how to structure argument analysis essays and includes a section on audience and purpose. • Chapter 15: Teacher's Guide offers suggested short readings and free online books.	• Suggested Short Readings • Suggested Free Online Books • Practice exercises: Each section of each chapter has at least one practice exercise described at the end of the section. • Brainstorming worksheets: a summary brainstorm assignment and an assessment brainstorm assignment. Import these via the How Arguments Work Canvas Commons course. • Quizzes: Each of the chapters has an associated self-grading quiz with automated feedback. Preview these by logging into Canvas and visiting How Arguments Work on Canvas Commons. • Essay assignments: Summary, Assessment, Response, Research, and Argument Analysis essay assignments with rubrics can be imported via the How Arguments Work Canvas Commons course.

Objective listed in the C-ID English 105 course descriptor	*How Arguments Work* sections centered on this objective	Ancillary resources that help students meet the objective
Objective #2: **Demonstrate understanding of formal and informal fallacies in language and thought**	• Chapter 4: Assessing the Strength of an Argument covers logical fallacies. • Chapter 8: How Arguments Appeal to Emotion (Pathos) discusses fallacies that involve faulty appeals to emotion. • Chapter 9: How Arguments Establish Trust and Connection (Ethos) discusses fallacies that involve faulty appeals to trust or credibility.	• Practice exercises: Each section of each chapter has at least one practice exercise described at the end of the section. • Quizzes: Each of the chapters has an associated self-grading quiz with automated feedback. Preview these by logging into Canvas and visiting How Arguments Work on Canvas Commons.
Objective #3: **Identify a text's premises and assumptions in various social, historical, cultural, psychological, or aesthetic contexts**	• Chapter 2: Reading to Figure out the Argument follows the Toulmin model to teach analysis of premises via mapping out claims, reasons, counterarguments and limits (qualifiers). • Chapter 4: Assessing the Strength of an Argument includes Section 4.5: Check the Argument's Assumptions which details how to identify assumptions (warrants) and uses Toulmin mapping. • Chapter 10: Writing an Analysis of an Argument's Strategies includes 10.2: Analyzing an Argument's Situation (Kairos, or the Rhetorical Situation), which discusses how to identify the argument's context, purpose, and genre. 10.7: Analyzing Visual Arguments shows how to identify premises and assumptions when analyzing an image's message.	• Practice exercises: Each section of each chapter has at least one practice exercise described at the end of the section. • Quizzes: Each of the chapters has an associated self-grading quiz with automated feedback. Preview these by logging into Canvas and visiting How Arguments Work on Canvas Commons. • Essay assignments: the Assessment Essay and the Argument Analysis Essay assignments can be imported via the How Arguments Work Canvas Commons course.

Objective listed in the C-ID English 105 course descriptor	*How Arguments Work* sections centered on this objective	Ancillary resources that help students meet the objective
Objective #4: **Analyze and employ logical and structural methods such as inductive and deductive reasoning, cause and effect, and logos, ethos, and pathos.**	• Chapter 2: Reading to Figure out the Argument follows the Toulmin model to teach logical and structural methods of reasoning. • Chapter 3: Writing a Summary of Another Writer's Argument includes phrases for analyzing of an argument's logical and structural methods of reasoning. • Chapter 4: Assessing the Strength of an Argument covers inductive and deductive reasoning in 4.4: Decide How Strong the Evidence Is. • Chapter 7: Forming a Research-Based Argument includes extensive sections on particular methods of reasoning in definition, evaluation, causal, and proposal arguments. • Chapter 8: How Arguments Appeal to Emotion (Pathos) provides in-depth treatment of pathos strategies. • Chapter 9: How Arguments Establish Trust and Connection (Ethos) provides in-depth treatmet of ethos strategies. • Chapter 10: Writing an Analysis of an Argument's Strategies describes how to combine observations into an overall argument analysis.	• Sample Student Essays • Practice exercises at the end of each section of each chapter has at least one practice exercise described at the end of the section. • Quizzes: Each of the chapters has an associated self-grading quiz with automated feedback. Preview these by logging into Canvas and visiting *How Arguments Work* on Canvas Commons. • Essay assignments: the Argument Analysis Essay Assignment can be imported via the How Arguments Work Canvas Commons course.

Objective listed in the C-ID English 105 course descriptor	*How Arguments Work* sections centered on this objective	Ancillary resources that help students meet the objective
Objective #5: **Compose thesis-driven arguments to suit a variety of rhetorical situations, including interpretation, evaluation, and analysis, and support them with a variety of appropriate textual evidence and examples**	• Chapter 2: Reading to Figure out the Argument covers interpretation. • Chapter 3: Writing a Summary of Another Writer's Argument covers how to write a thesis-driven interpretation. • Chapter 4: Assessing the Strength of an Argument shows how to evaluate arguments and write a thesis-driven evaluation essay. • Chapter 7: Forming a Research-Based Argument shows students specific approaches to supporting definition, evaluation, causal, and proposal arguments. • Chapter 10: Writing an Analysis of an Argument's Strategies describes how to combine observations into an overall argument analysis. • Chapter 12: Essay Organization will help students generate theses and organize paragraphs with examples. 12.6: Quoting and Paraphrasing, discusses how to incorporate textual evidence.	• Practice exercises: Each section of each chapter has at least one practice exercise described at the end of the section. • Quizzes: Each of the chapters has an associated self-grading quiz with automated feedback. Preview these by logging into Canvas and visiting How Arguments Work on Canvas Commons. • Essay assignments: Summary, Assessment, Response, Research, and Argument Analysis essay assignments with rubrics can be imported via the How Arguments Work Canvas Commons course. Each essay assignment has an associated brainstorming worksheet.

Objective listed in the C-ID English 105 course descriptor	*How Arguments Work* sections centered on this objective	Ancillary resources that help students meet the objective
Objective #6: **Find, analyze, interpret, and evaluate primary and secondary sources, incorporating them into written essays using appropriate documentation format without plagiarism**	• The practice with close reading, summary, and analysis in Chapter 2: Reading to Figure out the Argument, Chapter 3: Writing a Summary of Another Writer's Argument, and Chapter 4: Assessing the Strength of an Argument serves as a foundation for the research process. • Chapter 6: The Research Process covers types of sources, search strategies, library databases, annotated bibliographies, and MLA format, including how to avoid plagiarism with MLA In-Text Citations. • Chapter 12: Essay Organization includes 12.6: Quoting and Paraphrasing, which discusses how to avoid plagiarism.	• Practice exercises: Each section of each chapter has at least one practice exercise described at the end of the section. • Quizzes: Each of the chapters has an associated self-grading quiz with automated feedback. Preview these by logging into Canvas and visiting How Arguments Work on Canvas Commons. • Essay assignments: A Research Essay Assignment with rubric can be imported via the How Arguments Work Canvas Commons course. • Sample Student Essays illustrate how to incorporate sources in MLA format.
Objective #7: **Use style, diction, and tone appropriate to the academic community and the purpose of the specific writing task; proofread and edit essays for presentation so they exhibit no disruptive errors in English grammar, usage, or punctuation**	• Chapter 13: Correcting Grammar and Punctuation covers proofreading strategies and has sections devoted to the most critical and common errors, including subject-verb agreement, fragments, run-ons, word choice, pronoun reference, parallelism, commas, semicolons and colons, verb tense, and misplaced and dangling modifiers. • Chapter 14: Style--Shaping Our Sentences covers clarity, concision, and sentence variety.	• Practice exercises: Each section of each chapter listed for this objective has at least one practice exercise described at the end of the section. • Quizzes: Each of the chapters has an associated self-grading quiz with automated feedback. Preview these by logging into Canvas and visiting How Arguments Work on Canvas Commons.

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15.11.2: How Arguments Work and the College Composition Course Objectives

California C-ID English 100 is the outline for our most commonly taught course, variously referred to as first-year composition, college composition, or first-year writing. The C-ID ENGL 100 Descriptor explains, "This is an introductory course that offers instruction in expository and argumentative writing, appropriate and effective use of language, close reading, cogent thinking, research strategies, information literacy, and documentation."

Table of Resources That Align with California Course Objectives for College Composition

Objective listed in the C-ID English 100 course descriptor	*How Arguments Work* sections centered on this objective	Ancillary resources that help students meet the objective
Objective #1: **Read, analyze, and evaluate a variety of primarily non-fiction texts for content, context, and rhetorical merit with consideration of tone, audience, and purpose.**	• Chapter 2: Reading to Figure out the Argument • Chapter 3: Writing a Summary of Another Writer's Argument • Chapter 4: Assessing the Strength of an Argument • Chapter 6: The Research Process analyzes the features of different types of sources. • Chapter 8: How Arguments Appeal to Emotion (Pathos) includes an extensive section on tone. • Chapter 9: How Arguments Establish Trust and Connection (Ethos) describes how arguments can build trust with their audiences. • Chapter 10: Writing an Analysis of an Argument's Strategies includes a section on audience and purpose. • Chapter 15: Teacher's Guide offers suggested short readings and free online books.	• Suggested Short Readings • Suggested Free Online Books • Practice exercises: Each section of each chapter has at least one practice exercise described at the end of the section. • Brainstorming worksheets: a summary brainstorm assignment and an assessment brainstorm assignment. Import these via the How Arguments Work Canvas Commons course. • Quizzes: Each of the chapters has an associated self-grading quiz with automated feedback. Preview these by logging into Canvas and visiting How Arguments Work on Canvas Commons. • Essay assignments: Summary, Assessment, Response, Research, and Argument Analysis essay assignments with rubrics can be imported via the How Arguments Work Canvas Commons course.

Objective listed in the C-ID English 100 course descriptor	*How Arguments Work* sections centered on this objective	Ancillary resources that help students meet the objective
Objective #2: **Apply a variety of rhetorical strategies in writing unified, well-organized essays with arguable theses and persuasive support.**	• Chapter 12: Essay Organization will help students generate theses, organize paragraphs and connect ideas. • Chapter 7: Forming Your Own Research-Based Argument describes how to identify the type of supporting information needed to persuade based on the argument's purpose. • Chapter 8: How Arguments Appeal to Emotion (Pathos) and Chapter 9: How Arguments Establish Trust and Connection (Ethos) will help students choose support that persuades by affecting readers' emotions and building trust.	• Sample Student Essays • Practice exercises: Each section of each chapter has at least one practice exercise described at the end of the section. • Quizzes: Each of the chapters has an associated self-grading quiz with automated feedback. Preview these by logging into Canvas and visiting How Arguments Work on Canvas Commons.
Objective #3: **Develop varied and flexible strategies for generating, drafting, and revising essays.**	• Chapter 11: The Writing Process covers annotation, brainstorming, outlines, drafts, feedback, and revision. • Chapter 12: Essay Organization will help students generate theses, organize paragraphs and connect ideas. • Template phrases for summary, assessment, and original response in Chapter 3-5 will help students generate drafts of any essay that responds to a text. • Chapter 13: Correcting Grammar and Punctuation and Chapter 14: Shaping Our Sentences will help with the final editing stage.	• Brainstorm worksheets: a summary brainstorm assignment, an assessment brainstorm assignment, and response brainstorm assignment. Import these via the How Arguments Work Canvas Commons course. • Practice exercises: Each section of each chapter has at least one practice exercise described at the end of the section. • Quizzes: Each of the chapters has an associated self-grading quiz with automated feedback. Preview these by logging into Canvas and visiting How Arguments Work on Canvas Commons. • Appendix of Template Phrases

Objective listed in the C-ID English 100 course descriptor	*How Arguments Work* sections centered on this objective	Ancillary resources that help students meet the objective
Objective #4: **Analyze stylistic choices in their own writing and the writing of others.**	• Chapter 8: How Arguments Appeal to Emotion (Pathos) • Chapter 9: How Arguments Establish Trust and Connection (Ethos) • Chapter 10: Writing an Analysis of an Argument's Strategies • Section 13.1: Why Spend Time on Correct Standard English? • Chapter 14: Style: Shaping Our Sentences	• Sample Student Essays • Practice exercises: Each section of each chapter has at least one practice exercise described at the end of the section. • Quizzes: Each of the chapters has an associated self-grading quiz with automated feedback. Preview these by logging into Canvas and visiting *How Arguments Work* on Canvas Commons. • Essay assignments: the Argument Analysis Essay Assignment can be imported via the How Arguments Work Canvas Commons course.
Objective #5: **Write timed/in-class essays exhibiting acceptable college-level control of mechanics, organization, development, and coherence.**	While *How Arguments Work* does not yet have a section on timed writing, the following sections build skills students will rely on in those assignments. • Chapter 11: The Writing Process • Chapter 12: Essay Organization • Chapter 13: Correcting Grammar and Punctuation • Chapter 14: Shaping Our Sentences	• Practice exercises: Each section of each chapter has at least one practice exercise described at the end of the section. • Quizzes: Each of the chapters has an associated self-grading quiz with automated feedback. Preview these by logging into Canvas and visiting How Arguments Work on Canvas Commons.

Objective listed in the C-ID English 100 course descriptor	*How Arguments Work* sections centered on this objective	Ancillary resources that help students meet the objective
Objective #6: **Integrate the ideas of others through paraphrasing, summarizing, and quoting without plagiarism.**	• Chapter 3: Writing a Summary of Another Writer's Argument • Chapter 7: Forming Your Own Research-Based Argument • 12.5: Developing Paragraphs • 12.6: Quoting and Paraphrasing	• Practice exercises: Each section of each chapter has at least one practice exercise described at the end of the section. • Quizzes: Each of the chapters has an associated self-grading quiz with automated feedback. Preview these by logging into Canvas and visiting How Arguments Work on Canvas Commons. • Essay assignments: Summary, Assessment, Response, Research, and Argument Analysis essay assignments with rubrics can be imported via the How Arguments Work Canvas Commons course. • Sample Student Essays illustrate how to integrate the ideas of others.

Objective listed in the C-ID English 100 course descriptor	*How Arguments Work* sections centered on this objective	Ancillary resources that help students meet the objective
Objective #7: **Find, evaluate, analyze, and interpret primary and secondary sources, incorporating them into written essays using appropriate documentation format.**	• The practice with close reading, summary, and analysis in Chapter 2: Reading to Figure out the Argument, Chapter 3: Writing a Summary of Another Writer's Argument, and Chapter 4: Assessing the Strength of an Argument serves as a foundation for the research process. • Chapter 6: The Research Process covers types of sources, search strategies, library databases, annotated bibliographies, and MLA format.	• Practice exercises: Each section of each chapter listed for this objective has at least one practice exercise described at the end of the section. • Quizzes: Each of the chapters has an associated self-grading quiz with automated feedback. Preview these by logging into Canvas and visiting How Arguments Work on Canvas Commons. • Essay assignments: A Research Essay Assignment with rubric can be imported via the How Arguments Work Canvas Commons course. • Sample Student Essays illustrate how to incorporate sources in MLA format.
Objective #8: **Proofread and edit essays for presentation so they exhibit no disruptive errors in English grammar, usage, or punctuation**	• Chapter 13: Correcting Grammar and Punctuation covers proofreading strategies and has sections devoted to the most critical and common errors, including subject-verb agreement, fragments, run-ons, word choice, pronoun reference, parallelism, commas, semicolons and colons, verb tense, and misplaced and dangling modifiers. • Chapter 14: Style--Shaping Our Sentences covers clarity, concision, and sentence variety.	• Practice exercises: Each section of each chapter has at least one practice exercise described at the end of the section. • Quizzes: Each of the chapters has an associated self-grading quiz with automated feedback. Preview these by logging into Canvas and visiting How Arguments Work on Canvas Commons.

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15.12: Share Feedback and Teaching Strategies

An open invitation

This textbook is an ongoing group effort. We welcome your feedback and participation!

Email

You are welcome to email us directly at info@howargumentswork.org.

Brief overall comments

If you're willing to take a moment to tell us what you think, please fill out the form below.

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View this Google Document online

Margin notes

As you read, you can share your questions, feedback, and teaching ideas in the margins using the Hypothesis annotation pane. Join the *How Arguments Work* Instructor Comments Group. In this group, we can see each other's comments on specific pages, sections, or sentences of the book. Once you join, you can add comments by clicking the little arrow at the top right of the page to expand the commenting pane. The annotation software, Hypothesis, is built into LibreTexts, and creating an account is free. This LibreTexts Hypothesis guide walks you through the process of annotating in LibreTexts with screenshots.

Research survey

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Reviews

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- Merlot
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16: ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND COLLEGE WRITING

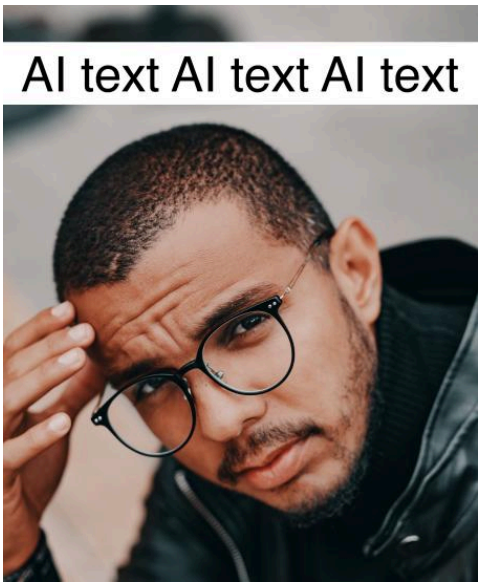


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16.1: Acknowledging and Citing Generative AI in Academic Work
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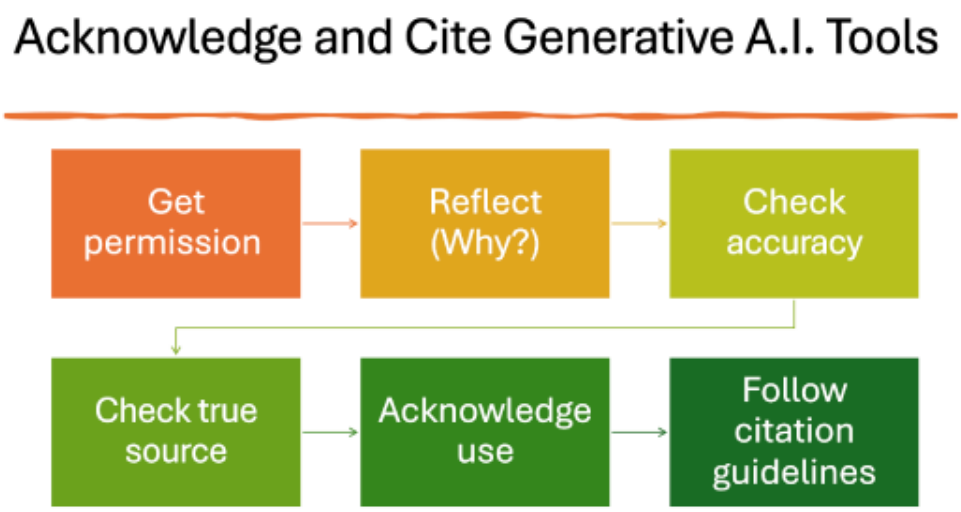
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16.1: Acknowledging and Citing Generative AI in Academic Work

Attribution

This is an adaptation by Anna Mills of an article by Liza Long, originally part of the Writing and Artificial Intelligence section of the textbook Write What Matters.

You've probably heard about the importance of citing your sources in academic work. But in cases where you are asked or allowed to use an AI chatbot such as ChatGPT for some purpose in the writing process, how do you acknowledge and cite it? These six steps can be helpful if you are considering whether or not to use and cite generative artificial intelligence in your academic work:



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1. Check with your instructor to make sure you have **permission** to use these tools and to find out what the limits are on these uses.

2. **Reflect** on how and why you want to use generative artificial intelligence in your work. What skills are you supposed to practice through this assignment? Will a particular use of generative artificial intelligence help you build those skills, or will it get in way of practice that you need?

3. **Check the accuracy** of any information provided by a generative artificial intelligence tool against a trusted source. Can you verify it? Is anything made up? Would it suit your purpose to cite the trusted source instead of the AI system?

4. **Check if the AI output is based on a source that should be cited**. Chatbots sometimes give answers that reflect a particular source's text or ideas without citing that source. So humans need to do searches on the topic to see not just whether the output is accurate but whether it should be attributed. See AI doesn't (reliably) cite its sources for more on this.

5. If you decide to use generative artificial intelligence, **acknowledge** your use, either in an end note, an appendix, or a cover letter (see below for examples).

6. **Cite** any ideas or word sequences that come from generative artificial intelligence both by mentioning the source in the body of the essay and by citing it on a References/Works Cited page according to the style format your teacher specifies, such as MLA or APA.

Whew. Let's just admit that's a long list of steps to take before incorporating generative AI in your essay. It's worth pausing to ask if it's worth it. As teachers and students alike are discovering, generative AI is not always a time saver especially if we're trying to use it in an intelligent, strategic, and ethical way.

It's not always easy to check the accuracy of outputs, and it can be even harder to figure out whether the text or ideas that a chatbot spits out really come from a specific source that needs to be cited.

If these steps seem too difficult, don't be shy about turning away from generative AI if another kind of source will suit your purpose. If you do need to use AI, consider asking your teacher, a tutor, or a librarian for help checking, acknowledging, and citing.

Acknowledging Use of AI Chatbots

An ***acknowledgment statement*** is meant to give detail about how AI was used so that readers can understand how it may have influenced the text and the author's thinking.

Monash University provides helpful recommendations for how to acknowledge when and how you've used generated material as part of an assignment or project. They suggest that acknowledgment statements include the following:

- Specify which technology was used.
- Include explicit descriptions of how the information was generated.
- Identify the prompts used.
- Explain how the output was used in your work.

The format Monash University provides is also helpful. Students may include this information either in a cover letter or in an appendix to the submitted work. Academic style guides such as APA already include guidelines for including appendices after essays and reports. Review the Purdue OWL's entry on Footnotes and Appendices for help.

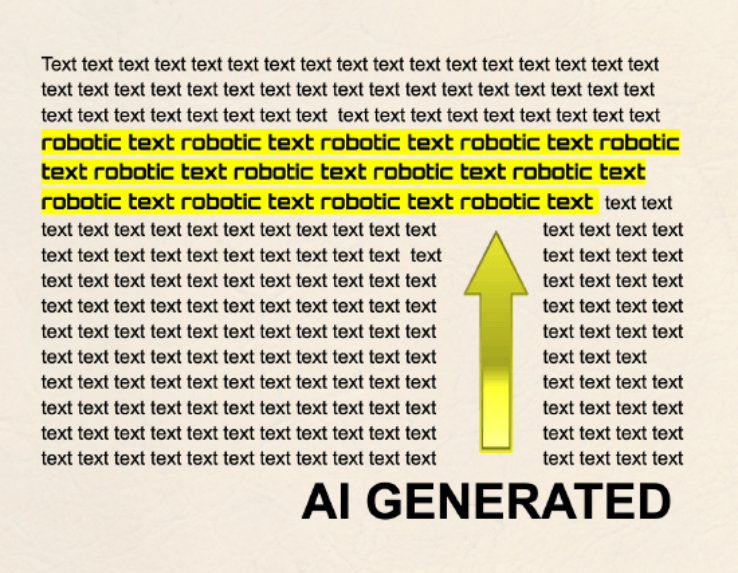
Sample Acknowledgment Template

I acknowledge the use of [insert AI system(s) and link] to [specific use of generative artificial intelligence]. The prompts used include [list of prompts]. The output from these prompts was used to [explain use].

Using chat session transcripts to document AI use

It's a great help to have a full transcript of our interaction with a chatbot when we're trying to acknowledge what we did. ChatGPT and Gemini allow users to share links to specific chats (see the directions for sharing ChatGPT chats and directions for sharing Gemini chats). Here's an example of a shared chat link in ChatGPT. When you click on the link, you'll be able to see both the author's prompts and the chatbot's responses. This give you automatic documentation and details to include in your acknowledgment.

Claude does not currently have this built-in functionality, though AIArchives.org offers a browser extension that will create links to chat transcripts of sessions with Claude. For other tools like the Google Docs Writing Assistant, links are not yet available. One option in that case is to take screenshots of the chat session and share those in an appendix.



Any text generated by AI should be labeled as such. Image by Ari Mireles, licensed CC BY NC 4.0.

Citing AI Chatbots

Academic essays require us to tell readers where we got ideas and quotes, both in the body of the essay and in a list at the end. That way readers understand where the ideas and words came from and can look up the sources and judge for themselves.

Now let's be clear: the chatbot output is not a "source" in the usual sense. Sources for academic essays are generally expected to have some person or group of people who wrote them and who stand behind them. Chatbots can't stand behind their output. If you put the same prompt into the chatbot a second time, you will most likely get a different result. So one could argue that we can't really "cite" a chatbot in the usual sense of academic citation, which assumes that the words were put together with intention and understanding.

Yet even if chatbots aren't traditional sources, it's still important to cite them if we reference text or ideas from them. Readers still need information about where the text and ideas are coming from. The American Psychological Association (APA) and the Modern Language Association (MLA), two of the most frequently used style guides for college writing, have both provided guidelines for how to do this.

Note

Even though APA and MLA do not require it, many consider it a best practice to include links to chat session transcripts in your citation as described above.

APA Style

According to the American Psychological Association (APA) as of February 23, 2024, AI chatbots should be cited like this:

Sample APA Citation

In the body of the essay:

When prompted for a list of "public-service jobs for men," ChatGPT listed two stereotypically masculine jobs first: "Firefighter" and "Police Officer." (OpenAI, 2024).

In the reference list:

OpenAI. (2024). *ChatGPT* (Mar 14 version) [Large language model]. https://chat.openai.com/chat

The APA blog post by Timothy McAdoo acknowledges that this format may evolve, and indeed the comments on the post include many suggestions and requests. Readers note that the version history date is no longer listed at the bottom of ChatGPT sessions as of Spring 2024. Some are concerned that mentioning the company in the parenthetical citation suggests that the company is the source of the idea or text when in fact the chatbot's output is shaped by all the text from the Internet that it was trained on. Others have suggested that the link to the chat session transcript should be included instead of the general link to the chatbot. You may want to check with your teacher for more guidance.

Here is one possible alternative format that follows APA style with adjustments to provide more information.

Alternate-Style Reference List Citation

OpenAI. (Prompted July 3, 2024). *ChatGPT 4o* [Large language model]. https://chatgpt.com/share/78c36969-aba3-4803-8bdb-0085332182e8

MLA Style

The Modern Language Association (MLA) provides the following guidelines:

- Cite a generative AI tool whenever you paraphrase, quote, or incorporate into your own work any content (whether text, image, data, or other) that was created by it.
- Acknowledge all functional uses of the tool (like editing your prose or translating words) in a note, your text, or another suitable location.
- Take care to vet the secondary sources it cites. (MLA)

Below are some examples of how to use and cite generative AI with MLA style. For more details, see How do I cite generative AI in MLA style?, MLA In-Text Citations, and MLA Works Cited Pages.

The MLA invites comments about its guidance and even says "the MLA template of core elements is meant to provide flexibility in citation. So if you find a rationale to modify these recommendations in your own citations, we encourage you to do so." I have modified the Works Cited entry by listing the link to the chat session transcript rather than the general link to the tool and by adding a reference to the specific model used within ChatGPT (in this case, GPT-4o) to provide more detail.

Sample MLA Citation

In-text citation of quoted text where the prompt is described in the sentence:

When prompted to list public-service jobs for men, ChatGPT listed two stereotypically masculine jobs first: "Firefighter" and "Police Officer." (2024).

In-text citation of paraphrased text where the prompt is referenced in parentheses:

ChatGPT has been known to output stereotypical answers when asked to list jobs for a certain gender. ("Public-service jobs for men" 2024).

In the Works Cited list:

"Give me a list of ten public-service jobs for men" prompt. *ChatGPT 4o*, version unknown, OpenAI, 3 Jul. 2024, https://chatgpt.com/share/78c36969-a...b-0085332182e8.

Further Resources

The Research Process chapter in *How Arguments Work: A Guide to Writing and Analyzing Texts in College*

References

McAdoo, T. (2023, April 7). How to cite ChatGPT. APA Style Blog. https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/how-to-cite-chatgpt

Modern Language Association. (2023, March 17). How do I cite generative AI in MLA style? https://style.mla.org/citing-generative-ai/

Monash University. (n.d.). *Acknowledging the use of generative artificial intelligence*.https://www.monash.edu/learnhq/build-digital-capabilities/create-online/acknowledging-the-use-of-generative-artificial-intelligence

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16.2: AI Copies Patterns; It Doesn't Think

Before we use AI-generated text, it's pretty important to get a basic intuitive sense of where it's coming from. AI text generation copies patterns from the text it's trained on. Its training involves such dense mathematical analysis of patterns in such huge quantities of text, that in replicating these patterns, it can sound pretty smart, as you're probably aware. (Hence all the fuss). But how does it get to sound that way?

The *New York Times* article Let Us Show You How GPT Works – Using Jane Austen by Aatish Bhatia shows us it what it looks like when you gradually train small AI text generation systems, called large language models, in the style of Harry Potter, Star Trek: The Next Generation, Shakespeare, Moby Dick, or Jane Austen.

Let's take the Harry Potter version. Before training, the user types in "Hermione raised her wand," and the language model continues ".Pfn"tkf^2JXR454tn7T23ZgE——yEIé\mmf'jHgz/yW;>>QQi0/PXH;ab:XV>"?y1D^^n—RU0SVGRW?c>HqddZZj:"

That's its random guess as to what comes next.

Then it goes through several rounds of training, ingesting text from Harry Potter and adjusting its internal prediction numbers to match patterns in that text.

Eventually, when the user writes "Hermione raised her wand," the model continues in a recognizably Harry Potterish way:

"Professor Dumbledore never mimmed Harry. He looked back at the room, but they didn't seem pretend to blame Umbridge in the Ministry. He had taken a human homework, who was glad he had not been in a nightmare bad cloak."

Yep, it's echoing the books and movies with main characters' names, a reference to the Ministry (of Magic), and "nightmare bad" cloaks that suggest magic and evil. But, um, there's no such word as "mimmed." And why does homework care if some person is wearing a cloak? This is where I start to chuckle.

If you kept training a system like this, it will eventually give you a sentence that might be hard to tell apart from Harry Potter author J.K. Rowling's sentences. But the system would still be matching patterns and predicting next words.

So next time you see AI produce a smooth, polished sentence that sounds just like sophisticated academic writing, remember the Harry Potterish gobbledygook. The lights might be on, but nobody's home. Check whether the text is empty or wrong. If it does make sense and matches reality, remember, that's partly luck. The system makes up true sentences the same way it makes up nonsense. So should we trust it? No.

More Silly Examples

- My 12-year-old son's question was "Why does pepperoni pizza dominate literature?" ChatGPT went with it, declaring "Pepperoni pizza's dominance in literature can be attributed to several factors."
- I asked it to write about the connection between snails and cheese. It said, "Ecologically, snails and cheese exhibit a symbiotic relationship mediated through their respective environments and the intricate ecosystems they inhabit." Snails and cheese somehow help each other out? Not so much.
- How about the essential connection between hip hop and potato mashers? ChatGPT says "The act of mashing, much like the act of mixing and sampling in hip hop, requires skill, precision, and an understanding of how to integrate diverse components into a cohesive whole." Really?
- One more: I asked ChatGPT about the "essential connection" between kiwi fruit and Call of Duty. It said "their essential connection lies in their shared narrative of globalization, cultural commodification, and the modern challenge of balancing digital and physical well-being." Hey, that's an elegantly formed sentence. The rhythm sounds nice. But there's nobody home who really had something to say something about that particular fruit and that particular video game.

Try an Experiment

You might find that you get a better intuitive sense of this through your own experiments.

1. Think of two random things that you're pretty sure have no essential connection.
2. Bring up a chat system, any of the more sophisticated chat systems. If you'd like to use one without logging in, try Perplexity (click on "focus" and choose "Writing") or ChatGPT. Other options include Gemini, Claude, and Copilot).
3. You can copy the following prompt, edit it, or write your own. Substitute your picks for X and Y, like an unusual fruit and a video game or a musical style and a particular kitchen tool.

Prompt: "In a sophisticated, authoritative academic style, explain the essential connection between X and Y."

4. Read the chatbot's output. How does it sound? Does it make any sense? Do you have an emotional reaction to see fancy text seeming to argue for something so arbitrary that isn't really your opinion or any human's opinion? Is it annoying, exciting, impressive, eye-rolling, weird, or...? What does this experiment suggest to you about how we should approach AI text? What's your takeaway?

Further Readings and Videos

- Let Us Show You How GPT Works – Using Jane Austen by Aatish Bhatia, *The New York Times*
- TikTok video on ChatGPT as predictive text (3 minutes, by @mor10webn)
- Computers are getting better at writing (7 minutes, from Joss Fong at *Vox.com)*
- Shaped like Information or Let Our Algorithm Choose Your Halloween Costume by Janelle Shane, author of the AI Weirdness blog and the book *You Look Like a Thing and I Love You: How Artificial Intelligence Works and Why It's Making the World a Weirder Place*.
- Talking about Large Language Models by Murray Shanahan

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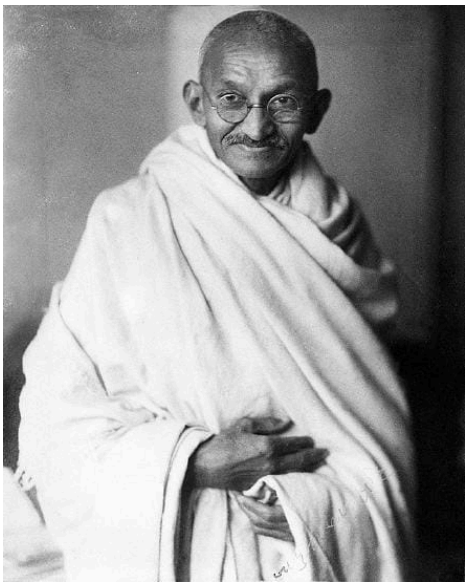
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16.3: Don't Trust AI to Cite Its Sources

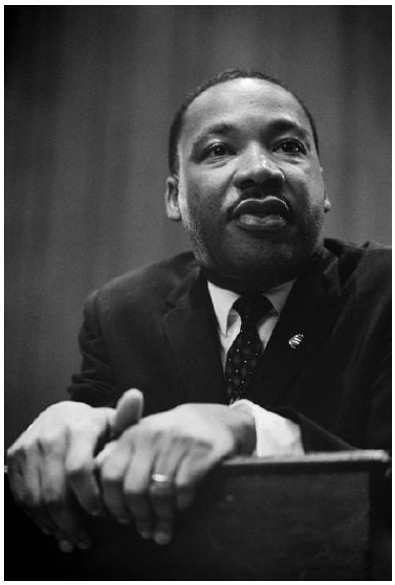
By Anna Mills and Maha Bali

Teachers will usually ask you to cite sources, right? They will explain that you should cite not just when you are quoting but also when you are referencing an idea you got from someone else. The hope here is that in academic practice we give some sense of where an idea is coming from. We think of academic work as a big ongoing conversation between people agreeing and disagreeing and building on each other's points as they try to figure things out. It helps to keep track of who is saying what. It seems only fair to give credit to the person who developed each main point.

For some concepts in the humanities and social sciences, it is also important to know the positionality of the person or people who developed them. For example, if we are studying nonviolent resistance, we need to understand the people and context in which ideas about it were developed. Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Junior, and Henry David Thoreau wrote extensively about it, and their ideas were shaped by very different experiences, times, and places.

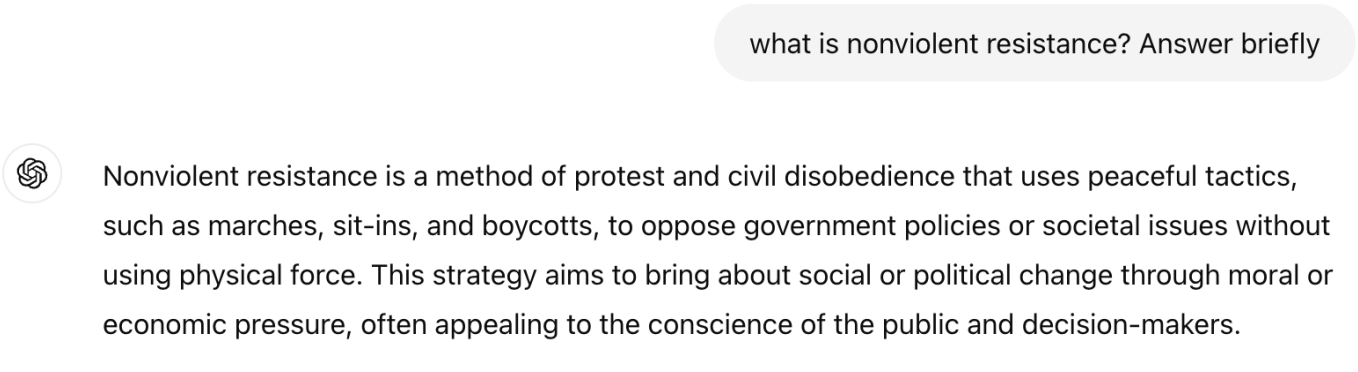


Mahatma Gandhi was instrumental in shaping current understandings of nonviolent resistance in 1931, public domain image courtesy of Wikimedia



Martin Luther King Junior was also instrumental in shaping current understandings of nonviolent resistance. Image by WikiImages from Pixabay

Knowing something about how these leaders were positioned in terms of race, gender, class, education, and politics can help us understand their ideas and think about how we want to respond from our own positionality. However, if you ask a chatbot about "nonviolent resistance," it may give you an answer without reference to any person or context at all (chatbot responses are variable). Here is an example with ChatGPT:



Screenshot from a ChatGPT4o temporary session, July 2024

In general, chatbots don't make it easy to figure out what sources have influenced their answers. As Iris Van Rooij puts it, "LLMs, by design, produce texts based on ideas generated by others without the user knowing what the exact sources were."

The systems don't "know" what influenced their answer. Dominik Lukeš refers to this limitation as a lack of "introspection." Once a system is trained, it consists of a very complicated formula, a big set of numbers that its supposed to multiply by other numbers. The chatbot puts our question or request into the formula and gets a result. It has no way to look backward to see which human writings made its formula have certain numbers.

Chatbots often don't cite when they should

Why does it matter if chatbots can't tell us where an idea came from? In June 2023, Maha Bali pointed this out to Anna Mills in a conversation on X. She wrote, "One of the things I'm stuck on right now is that a lot of the AI-generated text paraphrases work of scholars we would *normally* cite as paraphrased. This stuff now goes unacknowledged and it's not OK...E.g. I asked it about characteristics of White Supremacy Culture. It gave me the list that Tema Okun and others use, but did not cite her."

A year later, I (Anna) tested and saw the same pattern. I asked three chatbots–ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini–about "Intentionally

Equitable Hospitality," a concept developed by Maha Bali and other co-directors of the grassroots group Virtually Connecting.

- ChatGPT generated long, inaccurate descriptions of the concept with no reference to either the organization or the people who developed it. This was true of all ten times I tested (see this sample ChatGPT transcript).
- Google's Gemini described the concept vaguely, making up principles that are not in any published writings about this exact phrase, "Intentionally Equitable Hospitality." I tested it ten times and not once did t mention an organization or person. (See this sample Gemini transcript). Gemini did feature a Google "G" logo which offered to check the results when I hovered over. The check led it to highlight several passages of Gemini's output and link them to websites, including Maha Bali's blog.
- Claude 3.5's ten responses all referred to the hospitality industry, a clear error since the exact phrase "Intentionally Equitable Hospitality" was developed to refer to education (See this sample Claude transcript). They also failed to mention any organizations or people involved in developing the concept.

Citing chatbots according to the rules gives them credit for human authors' work

Labeling chatbot output as such is important. And the major academic organizations are working hard to come up with guidelines for this. But it's tricky. If we follow the current guidelines, we'll make no mention of the humans who developed the idea the chatbot is summarizing.

Take any of the examples above where we asked a chatbot about Intentionally Equitable Hospitality. Let's say a person does that and then wants to quote the output and follow the rules to cite ChatGPT in APA, MLA, or Chicago style. All of these would make it look like ChatGPT is the source of the IEH concept. For more on this, see If I use AI, how should I acknowledge or cite it?

Don't ask a chatbot what its sources are

There is a lot of confusion about this among teachers and the general public because if you ask a chatbot what its source is, it will often give an answer that sounds plausible. It still doesn't "know." It is using its word prediction abilities to "guess" which source influenced its output. It doesn't really have access to its own internal workings. The source it mentions may not exist or it may not be the one that really shaped the response. For example, in one case, ChatGPT said it got information about Intentionally Equitable Hospitality from Kimberly Crenshaw, who is known for the concept of Intersectionality and has not written about IEH.

Chatbots also respond unreliably when you ask which person developed a concept.

- When I asked ChatGPT the follow up question about IEH: "Is this a particular person's concept?" it gave credit to Dr. Tia Brown McNair, a prominent expert on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion who is not in fact associated with the phrase "Intentionally Equitable Hospitality."
- When I asked the same follow-up question of Claude 3.5, it gave credit to Ashtin Berry, a hospitality industry leader whose name is not associated with the phrase "Intentionally Equitable Hospitality."
- Google's Gemini did better. It responded to the question once by correctly referring to Virtually Connecting and its co-directors, including Maha Bali and Autumm Caines. On another trial, it referred only to Maha Bali. On another, it referred to Maha Bali, Mia Zamora, and the organization Equity Unbound, which is correct because both authors and the organization have developed this concept further beyond the original by Virtually Connecting. None of the trials trace the idea from its original formulation to its current formulation.

Even chatbots that can search often don't mention their sources

As we will see in The pros and cons of AI for research assistance (coming soon), many current chatbot/search hybrid systems can search the internet in real time to inform their response to a question. They link to documents, making it seem like they are allowing us to trace the source of their information. But we the users don't know if those links are really the sources they used or not. And it isn't always clear which of the links informed which part of their response. Besides, many people will not click on the links; they will focus on the AI response itself.

In May 2024, Google rolled out "AI overviews" at the top of many search results pages. When I try the same query about Intentionally Equitable Hospitality (IEH) in Google search, I get an answer that doesn't mention a source, though links to sources are right below it.



Screenshot of a Google search AI Overview in response to the query "What is Intentionally Equitable Hospitality?" on July 19, 2024. Four repetitions produced similar results.

The Google result above plagiarizes most of a sentence from the first source linked to, Bali and Zamora's "Intentionally Equitable Hospitality as Critical Instructional Design." Google explains "IEH is iterative and involves planning, design, and facilitation in the moment" without quoting. Bali and Zamora had written, "IEH is iterative design, planning, and facilitation in the moment."

Now let's try with the popular chat-search hybrid and Google alternative Perplexity.ai. In one instance, Perplexity mentions Virtually Connecting as a source for IEH and linked to an article by Maha Bali and Mia Zamora without mentioning their names. (How many will follow the link?) On the second, third, fourth, and fifth trials with the free version of Perplexity, it gave links but mentioned no source at all in its overviews. I repeated this five more times using my quota of free "Pro" searches. Only once did it mention Maha Bali and Mia Zamora by name in its autogenerated answer. So even though this chatbot was referencing a real source by the scholars who defined the concept, in five out of ten trials it included no equivalent at all to an in-text citation (see all of Perplexity's responses).

So how do we respect sources when using AI?

All this means that when a chatbot "says" something, we should wonder not just whether it is accurate but also whom the chatbot is parroting. Of course, many concepts have been shaped by so many contributors and have become so widespread that they do not need to be cited. For example, if we state, "Many Mexicans have both indigenous and European ancestry," we do not need to cite it.

But if the point is less well known or more controversial, it is left to us to do due diligence and see if there is a particular person or group of persons who came up with the ideas AI serves us. Internet and scholarly database searches on key concepts may lead us to the human thinkers responsible.

Should it really be on users to try to reconstruct where a chatbot may have gotten its information? Is there any way the software itself could help us? If so, how could we encourage the companies or the government to make that happen? See "Does using AI do harm? If so, should we stop using it?* for more on intellectual property and how we might participate in shaping AI in this regard.

Further reading

- Acknowledging and Citing Generative AI in Academic Work
- Find the Conversation That Interests You from the chapter on research in How Arguments Work
- ChatGPT is bad at following copyright law, researchers say by Britney Nguyen, *Quartz*
- The Times Sues OpenAI and Microsoft Over A.I. Use of Copyrighted Work, By Michael M. Grynbaum and Ryan Mac, *The New York Times,* December 23, 2023
- A new bill wants to reveal what's really inside AI training data, *The Verge,* April 10, 2024

References

- Understanding AI's limitations and dos and don'ts" by Lukeš, Dominik, included in Integrating AI into Academic Practice: Guide to Reflective Exploration
- Against Automated Plagiarism by Iris Van Rooij
- Intentionally Equitable Hospitality as Critical Instructional Design by Maha Bali and Mia Zamora in *Designing for Care*
- Jackson, K. F., Goodkind, S., Diaz, M., Karandikar, S., Beltrán, R., Kim, M. E., Zelnick, J. R., Gibson, M. F., Mountz, S., Miranda Samuels, G. E., & Harrell, S. (2024). Positionality in Critical Feminist Scholarship: Situating Social Locations and Power Within Knowledge Production. Affilia, 39(1), 5-11. https://doi.org/10.1177/08861099231219848

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16.4: Template Phrases for Reflecting on AI Feedback

AI writing feedback can sound confident, authoritative, and academic and still be bad. Large language models like ChatGPT and the apps built on them are designed to predict likely next words, not to be right.

The downside of this is that we might be distracted or misled by AI. Jane Rosensweig, director of the Harvard Writing Center, explores this risk in her piece "What Happens When a Novice Writer Asks ChatGPT for Editing Advice?"

The upside is that being skeptical of AI feedback just might be empowering. We might clarify our own purpose in writing as we reflect on whether the feedback aligns with what we really want to say. Even if the feedback does resonate, it's still valuable to articulate why we like it. And more practice critiquing plausible-sounding AI suggestions never hurts in an era when AI will likely have an increasing presence in our personal and professional lives.

Below are some phrases that reflect possible ways we might respond to AI feedback. There will be countless others; these are offered as a beginning to give a sense of the possibilities. Please feel free to suggest additional phrases by commenting on this page.

Note: the quoted phrases followed by asterisks were generated by a large language model as detailed in the acknowledgments.

Reflect on what isn't clear to us about the AI feedback

- I'm not sure what the AI feedback could refer to when it says _____.
- The AI feedback advises that I _____, but I'm not clear whether that's necessary because the assignment says _____.
- I'm puzzled by the AI's suggestion to _____. How does that fit in a _____ essay where the instructor is asking for _____?
- I'm not sure what the AI advice to _____ means in practice. Does it mean _____?

Reflect on ways the feedback doesn't fit our meaning or purpose

- The AI feedback suggests _____, but I'm not sure this is what I want to do because _____.
- The AI feedback seems to assume that I am claiming _____ when in fact I meant to say _____.
- "The AI feedback suggests a misunderstanding of the section of my essay about _____. I was aiming to convey _____."*
- The AI feedback steers me toward _____, but that's not my priority because I think it's more important to _____.
- The idea of working on _____ in my essay seems reasonable, but it's more important to me to _____ because I want to make sure that readers understand _____.
- If I follow the AI suggestion to _____, I'm concerned that _____.
- "I'm not sure if the AI feedback fits the tone I was going for. It suggests _____, but I was aiming for a more _____ feel."*

Reflect on what we do like about the AI feedback and why it fits our purpose

- The AI feedback says "_____," and that helped me see that _____ needs work in my essay. I think the feedback is right about this because _____.
- I was already thinking _____ about my essay, so the AI feedback that _____ resonates.
- I've been concerned that _____, and the suggestion that _____ could help resolve that.
- The AI feedback suggests I clarify _____, so I am considering explaining that _____.
- "The AI highlighted _____, which I had overlooked. I think this could be important to include because _____."*
- I hadn't thought about _____ in the essay, but the feedback makes a good point that _____.

Reflect on new ideas we get as we read the AI feedback

- The AI feedback on _____ makes sense, but it made me realize I don't really want to keep the part where I say _____ after all. I really want to focus on _____.
- "Reading the AI feedback about _____ made me think of a new approach: I can talk about _____ in terms of _____."*
- "The AI comments on _____ reminded me of a related point I might want to add: _____."*

Next steps

Once we've decided what we think about the AI feedback, we can brainstorm what to do about it. We may want to write a revision plan or a list of writing tasks like brainstorming on a particular topic, rereading to clarify a point, researching to add evidence, or reorganizing a section. For more on revision strategies, see Section 11.6: Revision.

AI feedback should complement, not replace, human feedback. After all, writing is a way to relate to others; it has meaning when we use it to communicate with humans. Writers often have breakthroughs when we talk through our drafts, our reactions to the AI feedback, and any uncertainties with our instructor, a tutor, or a peer.

Acknowledgments

The above template phrases followed by asterisks (*) were adapted from ChatGPT output responding to a "Template phrases for reflecting on AI feedback prompt," *ChatGPT*, 25 Sep. version, *OpenAI*, 8 Oct. 2023, https://chat.openai.com/share/9c526e9b-b654-4c24-abb3-01a17302 6a63. The remaining original phrases and the organizational structure are by Anna Mills and are shared under a CC BY 4.0 license.

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16.5: Template Phrases for Critiquing AI Outputs

Teaching critical AI literacy is now an essential aspect of digital literacy whether the purpose is to encourage critical perspectives on AI or to train students for future workplaces where they need to correct AI performance. The output of AI text generators like ChatGPT (also known as large language models, or LLMs) often sounds highly plausible and authoritative even when it is wrong, biased, or empty. The phrases below may help students practice identifying flaws in this polished text. Consider sharing a sample chat session as a web page and then inviting students to use these or similar phrases to annotate the outputs, perhaps using Hypothesis or Perusall.

Note: the quoted phrases followed by asterisks were generated by a large language model as detailed in the acknowledgments.

Clarity

- This sounds plausible because _____, but it doesn't really make sense because _____.
- This sounds good, but it doesn't fit the purpose. What we are really looking for is _____.
- This doesn't clarify _____.
- "The AI is providing a surface-level answer without diving into the nuances of _____."*

Bias

- This is biased in favor of _____ because _____.
- This is biased against _____ since _____.
- This leaves out the perspective of _____.
- "This might be valid for _____, but not for the case we're discussing, where _____."*
- "It appears the AI has taken a literal approach, missing the cultural context of _____."*

Accuracy

- This is inaccurate because _____.
- This is outdated because _____.
- "The AI seems to have misinterpreted _____."*
- "While this might be true in some contexts, in the scenario of _____, it's misleading because _____."*
- The assertion that _____ has no basis in fact. _____ is a trustworthy source, and it says _____.
- _____ appears to be made up. When I searched for _____, I found _____.

Relevance and Focus

- "While the information seems relevant, it misses the point on _____."*
- This might be technically correct, but it doesn't consider _____."*
- "The AI appears to have focused on _____, but it's overlooking the importance of _____."*
- "This is a general statement that doesn't address the specifics of _____."*
- This seems to be a repetition of known facts rather than an insight into _____.
- "This is an over-simplification of the complex issue of _____. It overlooks _____."*
- "On the surface, this looks right, but it doesn't explain _____."*
- This is so vague that it is not useful in helping us think through _____.

Acknowledgments

The above template phrases followed by asterisks (*) were adapted from ChatGPT output responding to a "Template phrases for AI output critique prompt," *ChatGPT*, 25 Sep. version, *OpenAI*, 3 Oct. 2023, https://chat.openai.com/c/a8b15d03-3...f-2014ced05511. The remaining original phrases and the organizational structure are by Anna Mills and are shared

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16.6: Student Essay Critiquing a New York Times Article on the Dangers of AI

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Lily Raabe

Professor Mills

College of Marin

ENGL 150

15 April 2024

How Dangerous Is AI?

Is there a safe way to use and develop AI, or will it inevitably be our downfall? The article "You Can Have the Blue Pill or the Red Pill, and We're Out of Blue Pills" by Yuval Harari argues that AI, specifically large language models, could use its mastery of human language to destroy democracy, culture, and possibly humanity. Although the argument is compelling, it lacks evidence to support his claims and does not provide a strong rebuttal to the counterargument that AI potentially has limitless benefits.

In the article, Yuval Harari discusses the rapid development of AI and its potential negative impact on our future. The article begins with a shocking and somewhat unsettling statistic presented by Harari. He cites a 2022 study where 700 leading experts and researchers in artificial intelligence were asked about the possible future risks of a powerful AI currently in development. Half of the participants said they believe there is a 10% or greater risk of human extinction, and if not extinction, then a similarly permanent and severe disempowerment caused by AI. This is a startling fact- companies are putting significant amounts of money into something experts believe has a 10% chance of permanently hindering us or wiping us out completely. Harari argues that tech companies are neglecting to protect consumers from this potentially dangerous product and urges that we slow down the rate of development so society can prepare for the future of AI.

Harari follows this with another issue concerning him: AI's proficiency with language. Harari claims that language is the basis of humanity and that without it, we would not have laws, money, art, or science. So, he asks, what does it mean for humans if artificial intelligence has a better grasp on language than we do? How does AI's ability to generate language influence stories, images, laws, and policies? Harari also argues that AI can exploit human weakness, bias, and addiction and form intimate relationships with people. Humans could easily be taken advantage of if their weaknesses or personal feelings are being preyed upon. He worries that an advanced knowledge of language combined with the ability to manipulate could be detrimental to humanity. He writes, "In games like chess, no human can hope to beat a computer. What happens when the same thing occurs in art, politics or religion?".

Harari believes that AI's ability to master language will impact human culture. He points out that what started with AI writing essays for students could quickly turn into "political speeches, ideological manifestos, holy books for new cults." This, Harari argues, could rewrite human culture. He continues by saying that humans are in a cultural prism, or cocoon, and how we see reality is affected by our cultural lens. He worries that if AI shapes culture, the way we interpret our reality will negatively change. He provides an example of using AI algorithms in social media to support this claim. Harari explains that companies use AI to create algorithms to keep people more engaged with the content that they view on social media. He argues that AI can create illusions that do not align with reality because the algorithm will curate content based on biases people have. The illusion he alludes to is that Donald Trump did not lose the 2020 election, and he believes people think this because of content fed to them by the algorithm. Harari claims that our current societal divide and the possible unraveling of democracy are due to social media and AI algorithms that help push propaganda.

After this, Harari provides a counterargument in his essay: "A.I. indeed has the potential to help us defeat cancer, discover lifesaving drugs and invent solutions for our climate and energy crises. There are innumerable other benefits we cannot begin to imagine. " But he immediately rebuts it, saying, "But it doesn't matter how high the skyscraper benefits A.I. assembles if the foundation collapses." Harari argues that AI development is moving too quickly and that if we don't create regulations and

enforce the safe use of AI, we cannot safely take advantage of the benefits.

Harari follows this with a call to action. He demands control of AI development before there are extreme consequences and claims democracy is at stake if we continue down this path. He calls for world leaders to address the potential issues with AI and for regulation around large language models. Finally, Harari suggests we prepare institutions for a world with AI and "to learn to master A.I. before it masters us."

This was a compelling essay. Harari highlights potential issues that the rapid development of AI could cause. He emphasizes the importance of language to drive home the point that large language models hold more influence over us than we thought and that this influence could have far-reaching consequences for democracy and culture. He also brings attention to how urgently we need to place preventative measures so AI does not become uncontrollable. One weakness in the argument is Harari's response to the counterargument. Harari acknowledges the counterargument but does not offer a convincing response. He does not explain why it is not worth the risk to find the benefits of AI or expand on his rebuttal. If AI has the potential to cure cancer or create lifesaving drugs, as he says, isn't that worth exploring? If AI is being developed anyway, we may as well take advantage of it and use it to develop cures and solutions for worldwide problems. If we use AI in professional settings or in government funded programs to solve problems, it might also spur politicians to create regulations, which Harari wants.

The other weakness is that there is little evidence to support the claims. Harari cites a survey of experts at the beginning of the argument, but the rest is purely his opinion and does not provide evidence based on actual data. He offers no real justification for the idea that AI will use manipulative language and tactics that will lead to the fall of democracy; to convince us, he just repeats that idea with different phrasing.

Harari's argument forces the reader to consider an uncomfortable prospect: AI could potentially eradicate humans. But is this really the case? AI has problems. It can be racist, show extreme bias, and make up sources or information, but could it lead to the fall of democracy, as Harari claims? We need more information about how exactly AI could use language to manipulate, exploit, or harm humans.

Harari uses borderline fearmongering tactics, writing, "However, simply by gaining mastery of language, A.I. would have all it needs to contain us in a Matrix-like world of illusions, without shooting anyone or implanting any chips in our brains. If any shooting is necessary, A.I. could make humans pull the trigger, just by telling us the right story." But how would this be possible? Harari is correct that language is the basis of humanity and its culture, and I understand why a robot having mastery of language would be worrying. Still, his argument would be much more convincing if he showed how AI could wield language as a weapon against humanity. The claims seem exaggerated and unsubstantiated. Claiming that AI could manipulate humans into behaving in a way that kills us seems far-fetched. AI is not a free-thinking entity; it has no agenda. Why would it try to manipulate us? What would it gain from that? I wish he would provide evidence or explain his reasoning. I do not believe that the language Harari is using is purposefully manipulative but rather a tactic to force readers to recognize unregulated AI as a serious issue. However, his writing comes across as dramatic and hard to believe.

Despite this, Harari does a fantastic job of convincing readers to reflect on the possibilities of unregulated AI and the importance of language, culture, and human connection. His essay empowers readers to challenge corporations and world leaders and to think critically about the benefits they are promising from AI use.

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Harari, Yuval, et al. "You Can Have the Blue Pill or the Red Pill, and We're Out of Blue Pills." *The New York Times*, 24 Mar. 2023, www.nytimes.com/2023/03/24/opinion/yuval-harari-ai-chatgpt.html.

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CRITICAL THINKING AND COMPOSITION: RESEARCHED AGUMENTS ANALYSIS (VO HOEFLING)

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ACCESSIBILITY

We have done our best to make this textbook fully accessible. Please let us know if you have suggestions for improvement! Below are some resources intended for users of screen readers.

Accessing annotated sample essays

Full descriptions of images

- Claim and reason argument map
- Claim and two reasons argument map
- Claim and three reasons argument map
- Claim, reasons, and counterargument map
- Claims, reasons, counterargument, and rebuttal map
- Claims, reasons, counterargument, rebuttal, and limits map
- Claim, reason, and assumption map
- Claim, reason, and two assumptions, one questionable
- Correlation is not causation comic strip

Annotated Sample Essays Accessibility Information

Full Description of the Correlation Is Not Causation Image

Claims, reasons, counterargument, and rebuttal map

Claims, reasons, counterargument, rebuttal, and limits map

Claim and reason argument map

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Annotated Sample Essays Accessibility Information

Annotated sample papers throughout this book are offered with annotations inserted in parentheses into the text. Each annotation is labeled as “Note.” The annotations are also in purple instead of black text and surrounded by a border. The following is an example: (Note: The annotation is in purple.)

Users of screen reading software may want to turn on the option to have changes in font formatting announced.

- JAWS: type JAWS+alt+s to change the scheme and announce font formatting or review JAWS Techniques for Examining Text Formatting for useful commands
- NVDA: type NVDA+control+d to change the Document Formatting settings or review NVDA User Guide, Document Formatting for useful commands

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Full Description of the Correlation Is Not Causation Image

Full description of the image: One person says to another, “I used to think correlation implied causation. Then I took a statistics class. Now I don’t.” The other person replies, “Sounds like the class helped.” The first person says, “Well, Maybe.” The listener hasn’t grasped the concept that just because the class came first doesn’t mean the understanding came from the class.

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Claims, reasons, counterargument, and rebuttal map

The top half is a chain of reasons. The first reason "We would feel it was right to cross the border without permission" is in a box with an arrow next to it pointing to the next reason, "We should recognize illegal crossing as ethical," which in turn has an arrow from it pointing to the reason "Border walls and detention centers are unjust," which points to the final claim, "We need a new policy that offers respect and help to migrants." Below, in red, with an arrow pointing up toward the final claim, is the counterargument "Completely open borders would put our security at risk." Below the counterargument is the response to the counterargument, in black: "Rebuttal: there are ways to regulate the border without criminalizing people." This response has an arrow from it pointing up toward the main claim to show that it supports the main claim.

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Claims, reasons, counterargument, rebuttal, and limits map

The top half is a chain of reasons. The first reason "We would feel it was right to cross the border without permission" is in a box with an arrow next to it pointing to the next reason, "We should recognize illegal crossing as ethical," which in turn has an arrow from it pointing to the reason "Border walls and detention centers are unjust," which points to the final claim, "We need a new policy that offers respect and help to migrants." Below, in red, with an arrow pointing up toward the final claim, is the counterargument "Completely open borders would put our security at risk." Below the counterargument, the response to the counterargument has been changed to blue, and the response is labeled “Rebuttal/Limit: there are ways to regulate the border without criminalizing people." This response still has an arrow from it pointing up toward the main claim to show that it supports the main claim. In addition, two limits in blue type have been added. The text “[Limit: If we were in desperate circumstances]” has a blue arrow pointing upward to the first reason to indicate that it modifies the statement “We would feel it was right to cross the border without permission." Next to it, the text “[Limit: If migrants cross because of desperate circumstances]” has an arrow pointing up to indicate that it limits the second reason, “"We should recognize illegal crossing as ethical."

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Claim and reason argument map

The reason "We would feel it was right to cross the border without permission" is in a box with an arrow next to it pointing to the claim "We should recognize illegal crossing as ethical."

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Claim and three reasons argument map

The first reason "We would feel it was right to cross the border without permission" is in a box with an arrow next to it pointing to the next reason, "We should recognize illegal crossing as ethical," which in turn has an arrow from it pointing to the reason "Border walls and detention centers are unjust," which points to the final claim, "We need a new policy that offers respect and help to migrants."

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Claim and two reasons argument map

The reason "We would feel it was right to cross the border without permission" is in a box with an arrow next to it pointing to the next reason, "We should recognize illegal crossing as ethical," which in turn has an arrow from it pointing to the claim "Border walls and detention centers are unjust."

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Claim, reasons, and counterargument map

The top half is a chain of reasons. The first reason "We would feel it was right to cross the border without permission" is in a box with an arrow next to it pointing to the next reason, "We should recognize illegal crossing as ethical," which in turn has an arrow from it pointing to the reason "Border walls and detention centers are unjust," which points to the final claim, "We need a new policy that offers respect and help to migrants." Below, in red, with an arrow pointing up toward the final claim, is the counterargument "Completely open borders would put our security at risk."

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Claim, reason, and assumption map

A reason "We would feel it was right to cross the border without permission," in a box with an arrow next to it, points to the claim, "We should recognize illegal crossing as ethical." Below, in between the reason and claim, an arrow points up, supporting the logical leap. Under the arrow we read, "We should apply the same standard to others that we would apply to ourselves.""

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Claim, reason, and two assumptions, one questionable

In the first row, the reason "We would feel it was right to cross the border without permission" is in a box with an arrow next to it pointing to the claim, "We should recognize illegal crossing as ethical." Down below, in the center, is the purple text “Assumption: We should apply the same standard to others as we would apply to ourselves.” This assumption has an arrow pointing from it up toward the arrow that links the reason and the claim, indicating that the assumption supports this link. Now, there is an additional assumption in purple with a dotted line around it and a purple question mark behind it. This one reads “Assumption: We can tell if something is ethical by whether or not it feels right.”

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Text description of the Canvas Commons search screenshot

A screenshot of a portion of the How Arguments Work Canvas Commons listing. Navigation buttons along the left read "City College of San Francisco," "Account," "Dashboard," "Courses," "Groups," "Calendar," "Inbox," "History," and "Commons." Navigation links along the top of the image read "Commons," "Search," "Shared," and "Imported." A prominent search box includes the keywords "how arguments work." "20 results" appears under the search box. Below that is an outlined rectangle with a "course" icon and the silhouettes of a dozen figures with speech bubbles of different colors connected to them. Under the figures we see the word "Course" and the title "How Arguments Work: A Guide to Writing and." Below that, we see "10 - Graduate," "Anna Mills," a download icon with the number 41 next to it, and a star icon with the number 18 next to it.

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Text description of the Canvas course options screenshot

A portion of a screenshot of the How Arguments Work Canvas Commons landing page showing the options for that resource. At the top, we see the silhouettes of a dozen figures with speech bubbles of different colors connected to them. Below that is an icon of an arrow pointing into a rectangle next to the words "Import/Download." Under that we see "892.43kB - IMS Common Cartridge file (.imscc). Under that is a star icon and the words "Remove from Favorites." Under that is a link icon and the words "Copy Resource Link."

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Text description of the enrollment page screenshot

A dialogue box features the word "Canvas" is in red with the abstract Canvas icon next to it at the top. Below is the title "Enroll in ASCCC OERI C-ID ENGL 105 How Arguments Work: A Guide to Writing and Analyzing Texts in College." Below that, we read, "You are enrolling in **ASCCC OERI C-ID ENGL 105 How Arguments Work: A Guide to Writing and Analyzing Texts in College**." Below that, we see "Please enter your Email and password:" and two entry boxes labeled "Email" and "Password." Below that we see a "View Privacy Policy" link and a button labeled "Enroll in Course."

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Text description of the Join This Course screenshot

A portion of a screenshot of the How Arguments Work Canvas course. The title reads "ASCCC OERI C-ID ENGL 105 How Arguments Work: A Guide to Writing and Analyzing Texts in College." A navigation button on the right says "View Course Stream." Below it, a navigation button reading "Join This Course" is circled as if someone has drawn on the screenshot to highlight it.

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Text description of the MLA-formatted sample paper

At the top right of the page, we see the header "Freeman 1" in twelve point font. Then at the top left of the main page, we see the following information, left-justified: one the first line, "Brandon Freeman"; one the second line, "Professor Lee"; on the third line, "English 101"; and on the fourth line, "25 February 2017." Next we see the title in twelve point font, centered, with no extra space above or below: "Problems with Assisted Reproductive Technology and the Definition of the Family."

Below the title, we see the text of the paper in twelve point font, double spaced, with the first line of the first paragraph indented. The text reads as follows and cuts off at the end of the page: "It is not unusual for people to think of a family in its basic form as a mother and a father and the child or children they conceive together. But a genetic connection between parents and children is not necessary for a family to exist. New families are often created by remarriage after a divorce or the death of a spouse, so that only one parent is genetically related to the child or children. Also, the practice of adoption is longstanding and creates families where neither parent is genetically related to the child or children. There are many singleparent families in the United States, and some of these may be families where the parents live together but are not married (Coontz 147). Couples that consist of two men or two women are also increasingly common, and"

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Text description of the preview page screenshot

A portion of a screenshot of the Canvas Commons preview page for the How Arguments Work Teacher's Guide module. Navigation options across the top read "Preview," "Details," and "Version Notes." "Preview" is underlined. "Modules 12" is highlighted in the left navigation column. Below it, other navigation options read "Assignments 9," "Pages 24," "Discussions 12," "Quizzes 12," and "Files 31." The title reads "How Arguments Work Teachers Guide--Welcome!" Below the title appears "Using this Resource--Start Here" with a green check mark by it. Under that, we see "Courses That Could Adopt This Book" with another green check mark. Below that, "Suggested Short Readings."

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Text description of the sample quiz screenshot

This portion of a screenshot of a portion of the landing page for the How Arguments Work Canvas course. The title reads "Quiz on Chapter 2: Reading to Figure out the Argument." Under that we see "Due" in bold followed by "No due date," "Points" in bold followed by 7, "Questions" in bold followed by 7, and "Time Limit" in bold followed by "None." Under that is the heading "Instructions," and under that the heading "Directions:" and a numbered list.

1. Review Chapter 2: Reading to Figure out the Argument in our textbook How Arguments Work. (Chapter 2 and the textbook title are underlined to indicate links.)
2. Take notes.
3. When you are ready, take this quiz.
4. After you submit the quiz, review your answers and the feedback provided for each response.
5. Enjoy!

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Text description of the textbook Canvas Course screenshot

This portion of a screenshot of a portion of the landing page for the How Arguments Work Canvas course. The title reads "OERI ENGL 105." Navigation buttons along the left read "Login" and "Dashboard." Another column of navigation links read "Home," "Modules," "Collaborations," and "Office 365." A larger, complete title in the center of the image reads "ASCCC OERI ENGL 105 How Arguments Work: A Guide to Writing and Analyzing Texts in College."

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Text of the Google Scholar Results Image

This portion of a screenshot of the results of a Google Scholar search starts with the following words in blue and a large font: "The Economics of Crime Deterrence: A survey of theory and evidence." On the next line, the font color changes to green, and the font gets smaller and reads "S. Cameron - Kyklos, 1988, Wiley Online Library." The next lines read in purple, "Since BECKER [19681 economists have generatec[sic], a large literature on **crime**. Deterrence effects have figured prominently; few papers [e.g. HOCH, 19741 omit consideration of these. There are two reasons why a survey of the **economics** of deterrence is timely. Firstly, there..." The final line in light blue includes five separate words or phrases separated by spacing: "Cited by 392...Related Articles...All 5 versions...Cite...Save."

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Text of the Writing Process Image

The following categories are represented as wedges in a circle, with arrows pointing from the first to the next and so on around the circle. Additional paths of arrows also point back from drafting to prewriting and from revising to drafting and prewriting. Each wedge includes a description inside it.

1. Prewriting
   - Using pre-writing techniques to gather ideas
   - Choose a purpose, topic, and an audience
   - Order ideas
2. Drafting
   - Put ideas down on paper
   - Explore new ideas as you write
3. Revising
   - Consult with peer readers
   - Evaluate suggested changes
   - Make revisions
   - Improve overall quality of your writing
4. Editing/Proofreading
   - Correct errors in spelling, grammar, usage, mechanics, and formatting
5. Publishing
   - Share your writing

Please note that the writing process is not linear. Steps may be repeated, just like the arrows in the diagram above circle back through earlier steps.

Attribution

Figure 1.11.1"The Writing Proces," Kalyca Schultz, Virginia Western Community College, licensed CC-0.

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