

ESL 720



Gizelle Ponzillo
Santa Ana College

Santa Ana College
ESL 720

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

1: Module 1 - Week 1

[1.1: Understanding the Learning Process](#)

[1.2: Academic Writing Introduction](#)

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1.1: Understanding the Learning Process

Think About the Following Questions:

- What are the steps to learning something new?
- How is the brain affected by learning?
- What kinds of learning are expected in college?

Have you ever thought about how we learn something new? Think about a skill you learned recently. Did you start with an interest in the topic or skill? Next, did you start practicing the skill or learning more about the topic? Maybe you received feedback on your abilities and started refining that skill.

When we go through the learning process, our brains actually change. This is called *neuroplasticity*, or the brain's ability to form or reorganize neural pathways in reaction to the learning process. This means that when you learn something new, and especially if you practice it and fail at getting it right the first time, your brain is changing. When you get better at a skill such as throwing a curveball or learning how to solve for X, your brain is actually reorganizing itself so that you can perform those tasks more quickly.

Your learning process has to begin somewhere (typically, beginner/novice level). Often, students try to speed through reading assignments or take only partial notes. They think that jotting down a few key ideas shows they have adequately learned something. You may learn something, however, it takes much more practice and studying to help you remember that information later. The goal in college classes is to build on foundational knowledge to learn different levels of thinking, which we will talk about in the next section.

Bloom's Taxonomy

Different professors and different courses expect different types of learning from you. Figuring out how you need to learn the material and how you will be tested on it will help you succeed.

If you want some insight into the types of learning you will do in college, you will want to get to know the work of Dr. Benjamin Bloom, an educational psychologist best known for his classification of different levels of learning, and the concept called [Bloom's Taxonomy](#).

The bottom two levels, Remember and Understand, are called "lower levels" of Bloom's because they often take less effort than the others, and they are seen as foundational to the learning process.

The remaining levels are considered "higher levels" of Bloom's because you need to understand the information and do something with it. Some examples include: applying it to a new situation, analyzing its parts, evaluating its strengths and weaknesses, or creating something new from your knowledge.

Not all of your learning in college and the workplace will be at the higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy, but as you gain more knowledge and develop more sophisticated academic and workplace skills, you will move beyond merely remembering information.

The first and lowest level is "**Remember**." At this level, you are attempting to recall information, such as definitions of terms or steps in a process. You don't have to really understand (that will come next) the concepts at this level. For example, you may be able to memorize the steps of the Krebs Cycle by naming them in order, but that doesn't mean you truly understand the processes involved and the effects of each step.

The second level is "**Understand**." This is the stage in which you can explain or describe a concept in your own words. If you can restate a definition, concept, or process in your own words, you have a basic understanding of it. These lower levels of Bloom's Taxonomy are the fundamental first steps. You need to "Remember" and "Understand" before you can move higher up on the taxonomy.

The next level is "**Apply**," which shows that you know the concept well enough to use it in a new context. In math classes, you need to remember and understand the steps of a formula. When you apply your knowledge, you know when and how to use that formula to solve a new problem.

When you "**Analyze**" and "**Evaluate**," you can examine the concepts deeply. For example, you can compare and contrast a concept with another concept (Analyze) or choose the best concept among others (Evaluate).

The final level is “**Create**,” which, according to Bloom, is the pinnacle (peak, top-most level) of learning: If you can create (or recreate) something new based on what you have learned, you have demonstrated understanding of a concept, idea, or skill.

You can read articles and take notes during the professor’s lectures. This will help you remember information for later. This is a good first step to the learning process, but as you will see later, that is not the only or final step to learning.

Bloom’s Taxonomy–Cognitive Domain (2001)

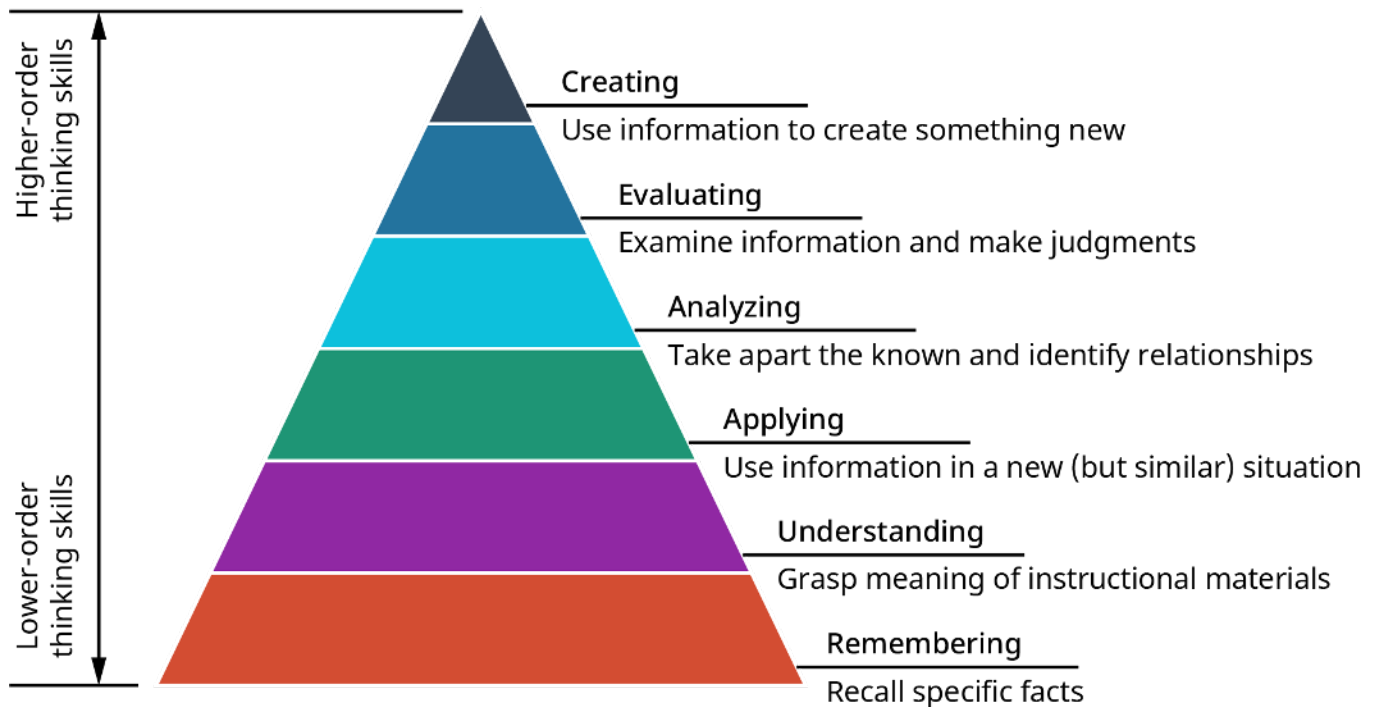


Figure 4.2 Bloom’s Taxonomy provides both instructors and students with a method to classify learning objectives and skills into different levels of complexity.

Footnotes

- 1Smilkstein, R. (2011). We’re born to learn: Using the brain’s natural learning process to create today’s curriculum. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- 2Bloom, B.S. (1980). All our children learning. NY: McGraw-Hill.

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1.2: Academic Writing Introduction

Learning Objectives

- To understand what academic writing is
- To learn the characteristics of academic writing and ways to achieve them
- To address some common misconceptions about writing

I. Warm – Up



computer keyboard, notebook, ear buds, and coffee

Think about the following questions:

1. Do you like writing in your native language? What do you usually write about?
2. How do you like writing in English? When do you write in English?
3. What makes good writing in your native language? In English?
4. What is your most unforgettable writing experience in either language?
5. What are the purposes of writing?
6. What areas of English writing are easy for you? What areas are challenging?
7. What expectations do you have for this course?
8. What do you think academic writing is?

II. Definition of Academic Writing

What is writing for? As you have just discussed, the simplest answer is to communicate meaning.

People write for different purposes. For example,

- Some of them write to inform, as in news stories and technical manuals^[1].
- Some write to entertain^[2], as in fictions and movie scripts.
- In daily life, people may scribble^[3] a short reminder note, compose a festive party invitation, or craft a well-versed^[4] love letter.
- In work, meeting memos^[5] and business reports are very common.
- In colleges and universities, students write paragraphs, essays, research papers, lab reports, and many others. These forms of writing are called academic writing – a formal, nonfictional written piece of work for learning, teaching, and researching.

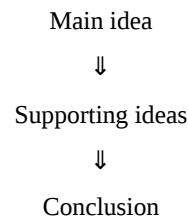
It is the last type – academic writing – that this course is introducing and focusing on. At this level, you will be learning the basic styles and uses as well as practicing editing skills associated with academic writing to be ready for higher-level compositions^[6] in colleges and universities.

III. Characteristics of Academic Writing

All types of writing share many aspects in common. However, each type has its own characteristics. Academic writing is characterized by the following:

1. Logical and direct

Academic writing in English uses a very linear organizational style. This means that the writers explain their information in a straightforward way, like a vertical line – the main idea first, followed by supporting ideas to explain the main idea, and a conclusion that signals the completion of the explanation.



Unlike the approaches^[7] in some other countries, the American style requires the students to state their focus early in their writing, without “hiding” the points or “circulating” hints till the end of writing.

2. Formal

Formal, standard English is expected. This requires a good understanding of formal grammar and usage. Colloquial^[8] and spoken English should not be used.

3. Clear

Writing clearly is extremely important as the purpose of writing is not only to clarify your own thoughts but also to communicate them for others to understand. To achieve this, you should not translate from your native language and should always proofread^[9] your writing for accuracy.

4. Concise

Being concise means not repeating the same words and ideas unnecessarily. Sometimes, repetition is important to emphasize a point, but most often needless duplications^[10] of the same ideas may make your writing redundant^[11] and inefficient.

Writing is a process. Almost no one can produce perfect writing on the first try; in fact, there is no such thing as perfect writing. Good writing takes time and repeated revisions^[12]. Most importantly, it takes patience and continuous efforts to achieve the characteristics explained above.

IV. Ten Most Common Misconceptions about Writing



wrong way traffic sign

The following ten misconceptions^[13] are very common among ESL students of all levels. Read each statement first and think/discuss whether you feel the same way. Then click to read explanations and suggestions.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://harpercollege.pressbooks.pub/academic-writing-skills/?p=57#h5p-67>

V. Unit Review Practice

Exercise: Think about the following topics. Then, choose one of them to write a paragraph.

1. What is academic writing? What are the characteristics of academic writing?
2. What has been your best writing experience? The most challenging writing experience?

3. The ten common misconceptions are explained in this unit. What are the ones that apply to you? What advice will be the most helpful to you?

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NSNT Practice



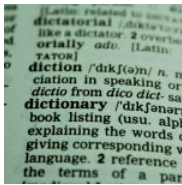
a pen writing in a notebook

Study **Appendix A NSNT Free Writing Approach** ([Open Appendix A here.](#)). Then choose two topics from the Week 1 additional prompts^[14] and practice NSNT free writing. Remember not to translate from your native language and not to stop writing once you start.

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Vocabulary Review



a page in a dictionary

The words here have appeared in this unit. The best way to learn them is to guess the meaning of each word from the context. Then hover your computer mouse over the number beside each word to check its meaning and part of speech. These words are also listed in the footnote area at the end of each unit.

Here, you can use the flashcards below to review these words.

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Summary

1. Academic writing is what students write for their classes in colleges and universities.
2. Academic writing is logical, direct, formal, clear, and concise.
3. To improve writing skills, it is important to:
 - Try not to translate from your native language.
 - Do not rely on the information on the Internet.
 - Explore your topic by brainstorming and then organize your ideas by outlining.
 - Narrow down a general topic to a more specific one.
 - Get help from your professor and ESL tutors.
 - Be proactive in contacting your professor regarding errors in your writing.
 - Do not rely too much on the help of your family and friends.
 - Study grammar.
 - Read as much as you can.

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1. manual: noun, a small book of instructions ↵
 2. entertain: verb, provide music, stories, etc. for people to enjoy ↵
 3. scribble: verb, write quickly and informally ↵
 4. well-versed: adjective, with beautiful language use ↵
 5. memo: noun, a short message or report ↵
 6. composition: noun, a piece of writing such as an essay for a college course ↵
 7. approach: noun, a way of thinking about things and doing things ↵
 8. colloquial: adjective, informal ↵
 9. proofread: verb, read and check for mistakes ↵
 10. duplication: noun, a copy, a repetition ↵
 11. redundant: adjective, wordy, repetitive unnecessarily ↵
 12. revision: noun, a new copy showing improvement ↵
 13. misconception: noun, a wrong idea ↵
 14. prompt: noun, a topic for writing ↵
-

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2.5: Grammar - Sentence Essentials

Learning Objectives

1. To distinguish between a phrase and a sentence
2. To identify the four basic parts of a sentence: subject, verbs, object, subject complement
3. To understand the five basic sentence patterns
4. To learn how to expand a basic sentence by adding adjectives, adverbs, phrases, and clauses
5. To learn and practice three sentence structure types – simple, compound, and complex – with appropriate punctuation through multiple examples and exercises

From this unit on, you will be focusing on editing / grammar skills to enable to you to express your ideas accurately and effectively in paragraphs and essays.

I. Pretest



frame at entrance of Early Childhood Lab School at Harper College

The following ten parts are about the Early Childhood Laboratory School at Harper College. Identify the structure by choosing one of the choices. After you finish one sentence, you will get instant feedback on your answer before the next sentence. If you make mistakes, you can retry all the questions or see all the answers at the end of the pre-test.

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Adapted from <https://www.harpercollege.edu/labschool/index.php>. Last retrieved on August 1, 2021.

II. Differences Between a Phrase and a Sentence

A **phrase** is two or more words used together to represent part of an idea but not a complete idea. There is not a “subject + verb” structure in the phrase. The following are examples of some common types of phrases:

- Noun phrases: boys and girls, an excellent school, picture books...
- Verb phrases: play together, read a story, learn shapes and colors...
- Prepositional phrases: in the classroom, on the wall, from home to school...

A **sentence** may contain different phrases. It has the following features:

- It must have a “subject + verb” structure.
- The first letter of the first word is always capitalized.
- It must end with a period, a question mark, or an exclamation mark.
- It must express a complete idea.

Read the three sentences below. All of them show these features.

1. The boys and girls play together in the Early Childhood Laboratory School.

2. Are they learning shapes and colors in the classroom?
3. What a beautiful painting it is on the wall!

A sentence is usually longer than a phrase but not always. Do not judge by how long it is; instead, look for the “subject + verb” structure.

- Phrase: after a long nap on a beautiful mat in the corner of the nap room (no “subject + verb” structure)
- Sentence: He woke up. (“subject + verb” structure)

For explanations and examples with periods, question marks, exclamation marks, commas, semi colons, colons, apostrophes, and quotations marks, please refer to Appendix C Punctuation. (Open Appendix C here.)

Exercise 1. Identify whether the following are phrases or sentences. Type in the box “phrase” or “sentence”. The first one is an example. When you complete the entire exercise, you can click “Check” for feedback. You may retry or see all the answers.



Building D at Harper College

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III. Basic Sentence Parts and Sentence Patterns

Four Basic Parts of a Sentence

1. Subject: It shows who/what does the action. It can also show who/what the sentence is about. It usually comes first in the sentence.
 - The writing class is important.
 - The students work hard in this class.
2. Verb: It usually comes after the subject and shows the action or explains the ideas in a sentence.
 - The teacher meets the students in Room D-144 every week.
 - The homework assignments seem interesting.
3. Object: It is usually the receiver of the action and is placed after the verb.
 - All the students have finished homework on time.
 - They have received good grades.
4. Subject complement: It usually follows a linking verb and shows what the subject is about. It can be a noun or an adjective.
 - This is a writing class. (noun)
 - The students grow confident in writing. (adjective)

Linking Verbs are verbs that can be immediately followed by an adjective. They include

- all “Be” verbs
- some “Do” action verbs: become, turn, get, grow (all of them with the same meaning as “become”)...
- some “Do” non-action verbs: look, seem, appear, smell, sound, taste, feel...

Exercise 2. Here is more information about the Then try to expand the sentences by adding Early Childhood Laboratory School. Arrange the adjectives, adverbs, phrases, or clauses. Capitalize words and phrases into sentences. When you and punctuate where necessary. Underline the added complete each sentence, you can click “Check” parts. You can do this second part in your notebook. for feedback. You may retry or see the answer. Compare your expanded sentences with your partner’s.

Example:

provides/to many families/a childcare option/The Early Childhood Laboratory School

Sentence: The Early Childhood Laboratory School provides a childcare option to many families.

Expand the sentence: The Early Childhood Laboratory School at Santa Ana College provides an excellent child care option to many busy families in the community.

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IV. Sentence Structure #1: Simple Sentences

A **simple sentence** has only one “subject + verb” group from the beginning of the sentence (with a capitalized letter) to the end (with a period, a question mark, or an exclamation mark).

1. Students take classes.
2. Learning is important.
3. Maria and Sung have three classes.
4. Maria and Sung study and work every day.
5. They are taking classes and working part time.
6. Ana goes to only one class.
7. Ana does not have a job.
8. Are Maria, Sung, and Anna busy?
9. Ana is not busy.
10. Maria and Sung have been working too hard!

All the above sentences have only one “subject + verb” group, so they are all simple sentences.

Read #3 and #8 again. You see a compound subject in each.

Compound subject: two or more subjects share the same verb.

3. Maria and Sung have three classes.
8. Are Maria, Sung, and Anna busy?

Read #5 again. You see a compound verb in it.

Compound verb: the same subject performs two or more actions.

5. They are taking classes and working part time.

Read #4 again. You see a compound subject and a compound verb in each. Here, multiple subjects perform the same multiple actions.

4. Maria and Sung study and work every day.



a single person smiling and holding a skateboard

The above sentences are all simple sentences, with one subject-verb group in each.

Each sentence is also called **an independent clause** because it explains a complete, independent idea.

You can understand a simple sentence as an unmarried adult like the single person in the image on the right. He lives an independent life.

Exercise 3. Read the following paragraph about Santa Ana College. Separate each complete, simple sentence with a capital letter in the beginning and a period in the end. Identify the subject and the verb in each sentence. Capitalize the first letter after a period. The first one is an example. (Commas have already been added.)



ESL Faculty with Santa Ana College's President, Dr. Anabelle Nery. August, 2024.

Santa Ana College was founded in 1915 in Santa Ana, California. As one of the oldest and largest community colleges in Orange County, it serves over 25,000 students each year. The college offers many academic and career programs, with options for full-time and part-time study. Santa Ana College supports students financially through scholarships and grants. Anyone interested in learning more can visit the college website or call the campus to receive guidance from staff on registration and available programs. Santa Ana College continues to help students prepare for future study, new careers, and personal success.

V. Sentence structure #2: Compound Sentences

Too many simple sentences will make your writing sound choppy^[3]. Therefore, you can combine the ideas to form compound sentences.

- Students take classes, and Anna is no exception. (compound)
- Learning is important, so Maria and Sung are taking three classes. (compound)
- Maria and Sung study every day; besides, they also work part time. (compound)
- Maria and Sung are very busy; however, they feel accomplished^[4]. (compound)

A **compound sentence** has two subject-verb groups and uses words such as “and, so, besides, however” to connect the two parts.



a couple with a heart in between

While a simple sentence is like an independent, unmarried person, a compound sentence is similar to a married couple, each independent but connected by love. That connection (love) is called a **conjunction**.

There are different types of compound sentences. In this course, you are going to learn the two below:

- with one of the coordinating conjunctions FANBOYS
- with an adverbial conjunction

Coordinating Conjunctions: FANBOYS

Coordinating Conjunctions: FANBOYS (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so)			
for:	to explain a reason	or:	to give a choice
and:	to add a point	yet:	to show an opposite point (stronger)
nor:	to add a negative point	so:	to explain a result
but:	to show an opposite point		

Compound sentences with FANBOYS should follow the sentence pattern below:

Independent Clause	Comma + FANBOYS	Another Independent Clause
Subject + verb	, for , and , nor (notes below) , but , or , yet , so	subject + verb

1. We have taken three writing classes, for writing is a very important skill.
2. We have a writing class, and we like it.
3. We do not have a test this week, nor are we going to have one next week.
4. I try to be on time for my writing class, but it's hard to get up in the morning.
5. Next semester, I may take another writing class, or I may choose a grammar class.
6. One of my classmates has failed most tests, yet he does not care.
7. Writing is challenging, so I am studying very hard.

Nor: The conjunction “nor” requires a slightly different word order: the helping verb comes before the subject. “Nor” already indicates negative, so do not add another “no” or “not”.

1. I do not like hot dogs, nor do I like hamburgers.
2. He is not going to the library after class, nor is he going home.
3. I did not have a good winter break last year, nor did I have a fun spring break.

For explanations and practice in helping verbs, please refer to Unit 9 Verb Basics in Academic Writing. (Open Unit 9 here.)

Not all the sentences with FANBOYS are compound sentences. They must follow the above format to be called compound sentences.

- We are taking this writing course for three reasons.(simple)
- We are taking this writing course, for writing is important. (compound)
- Last week, we had an editing quiz, a vocabulary quiz, and an oral presentation. (simple)
- Last week, we had two quizzes, and we did well in both. (compound)

Exercise 4. The following paragraph is about differences between a university and a community college. Decide whether each sentence is a simple or a compound sentence. Type “S” in the blank if it is a simple sentence and “C” if it is a compound sentence. Explain to your partner why you think so. The first sentence is an example.



University Center at Harper College

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Adverbial Conjunctions

They are also called transitions, as in the earlier units. This type of compound sentences is more formal.

Adverbial Conjunctions (Transitions)			
also, besides, furthermore, in addition, moreover... :	to add a point	for example, for instance... :	to give an example
as a result, consequently, therefore, thus... :	to show a result	however, nevertheless... :	to show an opposite point

Compound sentences with adverbial conjunctions should follow the sentence pattern below:

Independent Clause	Semi Colon + Adverbial Conjunction + Comma	Another Independent Clause
Subject + verb	; also, ; besides, ; furthermore, ; in addition, ; moreover, ; as a result, ; consequently, ; therefore, ; thus, ; however, ; nevertheless, ; for example, ; for instance,	subject + verb

1. The teachers give us lots of materials in class; also, they require us to study in the Language Lab once a week.
2. I am taking two courses at Harper College; in addition, I have a full-time job.
3. They have finished all the ESL courses; as a result, they are registering for English 101.
4. They had studied very hard; therefore, they passed the test with an A.
5. He liked to go on a vacation; however, he was too busy with her classes.
6. Many students want to take day classes; nevertheless, they have a job during the day.

7. We have many tests this semester; for example, we have one editing quiz in the writing class and one unit exam in the reading class every week.

It is common to break one compound sentence into two simple sentences, with the same adverbial conjunction in the beginning of the second simple sentence. This happens more often when the sentences are long. Put a period after the first independent clause and capitalize the first letter of the adverbial conjunction. Everything else remains the same. There is always a comma after the conjunction.

Independent Clause	Period + Adverbial Conjunction + Comma	Another Independent Clause
Subject + verb	. Also, . Besides, . Furthermore, . In addition, . Moreover, . As a result, . Consequently, . Therefore, . Thus, . However, . Nevertheless, . For example, . For instance,	subject + verb

1. I am taking 2 courses at Harper College; In addition, I have a full time job.
2. They had studied very hard; Therefore, they passed the test with an A.
3. He liked to go on a vacation; However, he was too busy with her classes.
4. We have many tests this semester; For example, we have one editing quiz in the writing class and one unit exam in the reading class every week.

Exercise 5. Use the given adverbial conjunctions to combine the simple sentences into compound sentences. Then use the same conjunctions to write two simple sentences.

Example:

Studying a second language is difficult. It is very useful in finding a job. (however)

Compound sentence: Studying a second language is difficult; however, it is very useful in finding a job.

Two simple sentences: Studying a second language is difficult. However, it is very useful in finding a job.

1. Almost all the jobs require good speaking skills. They need good writing skills. (moreover)
2. Many people from other countries have good technical skills. They need time to perfect their communication skills. (however)
3. They are highly motivated to learn. They work very hard. (furthermore)
4. They try different ways to improve. Some of them take classes. (for instance)
5. They are able to do well at work. Hard work pays off. (therefore)

VI. Sentence Structure #3: Complex Sentences

A complex sentence has at least two subject-verb groups. They are connected with subordinating conjunctions such as “because, as soon as, if”. There are different types of complex sentences. You are focusing on adverbial clauses in this course.

Subordinating Conjunctions			
as soon as, before, since, until, when, while...	to express a time	although, though, even though...	to show a contrast

as, because, since...	to give a reason	if, unless...	to state condition
-----------------------	------------------	---------------	--------------------

As you recall, a simple sentence is like an unmarried person living an independent life. A compound sentence resembles^[5] a couple living together as two independent adults but connected by love.



a parent pushing a baby in a stroller

A complex sentence is like a parent with a baby. Life is certainly more complex with a baby! The parent is independent, representing the independent clause. The baby is dependent on the parent for food, shelter, love, etc., so the baby resembles the dependent clause.

baby : parent = dependent : independent

A baby cannot live by himself or herself. In the same way, a dependent clause cannot exist by itself. It must be connected with an independent clause.

Dependent Clause: Subordinating Conjunction + subject + verb + Comma	Independent Clause
As soon as Before After Since Until When While As subject + verb, Because Although Even though Though If Unless ...	subject + verb

1. When I got home, my sister was watching TV.
2. Because I wanted to finish my homework, I did not go to bed till 12 am this morning.
3. Although English is a difficult language, I am trying my best to learn it.

The same complex sentences can also be written as follows. Notice that there is no comma in the middle of the sentence.

Independent Clause	Dependent Clause: Subordinating Conjunction + subject + verb
Subject + verb	as soon as before after since until when while as subject + verb because although even though though if unless ...

1. My sister was watching TV **when** I got home.
2. I didn't go to bed till 12 am this morning **because** I wanted to finish my homework.
3. I am trying my best to learn English **although** it is a difficult language.

Exercise 6. The following sentences are about my classmates. Join two simple sentences into a complex one with the subordinating conjunctions given. Use commas where necessary.

Example:

At 9 am yesterday, Jose was listening to the radio. He was driving to Harper. (while)

Complex: At 9 am yesterday, Jose was listening to the radio while he was driving to Harper.

1. Priti has decided to travel to Aruba during the semester break. She has always been interested in its culture. (because)
2. This is Amy's first year in the U.S. She speaks English fluently. (although)
3. Lilly did not wake up early on time yesterday. She missed the first part of the class. (as)
4. Yuri started an ESL class. He arrived in this city. (as soon as)
5. Max had never used a computer. He liked his first online class. (even though)
6. Misako ran into her former classmate. She was looking for her new textbook in the bookstore. (while)
7. At the end of last semester, Kang Sun returned to Korea to visit her family . She had saved enough money for a plane ticket. (after)
8. The next semester starts two months later. Every student needs to decide what classes to take. (before)

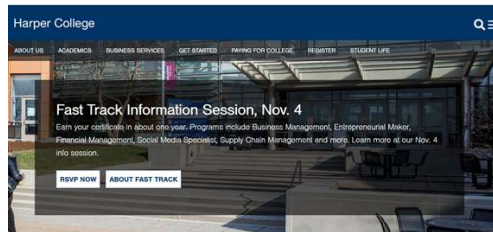
VII. Sentence Variety

Just like a balanced diet that keeps the body healthy, a good piece of writing also uses a variety of sentences including simple, compound, and complex structures. Here are some strategies to help you achieve that.

1. Try not to repeat the same conjunctions. It is common to overuse^[6] words like “and”, “because”. Try a different expression. For example, you may replace “and” with “in addition” and replace “because” with “since”. Change the sentence structure and punctuation accordingly^[7].
2. When you finish writing, count how many simple, compound, and complex sentences you have included. Ideally, the number of each should be comparable^[8]. For example, if there are ten simple sentences and only two complex ones, you may combine some of the simple ones to form one or two more complex sentences. On the other hand, too many compound and complex sentences may be hard to read, and you can improve your writing by changing some of them to simple sentences.

Read the following two paragraphs. Count the number of different sentence types in each paragraph. Discuss which paragraph is better and why.

#1



Fast Track information session announcement on College website

Fast Track Programs

Harper College has special programs called “Fast Track”. Some students want to finish their study fast. They can choose this option. There are different fast track certificate programs. Each is five to eight weeks long. The certificates include business management, human resources management, web design and interactive media, and others. Each program has a limited number of students, so they can get more personalized^[9] interaction with professors. Classes are usually from 6 pm to 10 pm. Students can still work during the day. Besides the certificate programs, there are also fast track degree programs in AAS Degree (Associate in Applied Science) in Business Administration and AAS Degree in Supply Chain Management. Students do not always need to start from the beginning because they can get credit from their previous college or work experience. The fast track programs are convenient and beneficial for many students. It may not suit everyone. The best way to start is to attend an information meeting.

Adapted from <https://www.harpercollege.edu/fasttrack/index.php>. Last retrieved on November 4, 2021.

In this above paragraph, there are 12 simple sentences, 1 compound sentence, and 1 complex sentence.

#2

Fast Track Programs

Harper College has special programs called “Fast Track”. If some students want to finish their study fast, they can choose this option. There are different fast track certificate programs, and each is five to eight weeks long. The certificates include business management, human resources management, web design and interactive media, and others. Each program has limited number of students, so they can get more personalized interaction with professors. Since classes are usually from 6 pm to 10 pm, students can still work during the day. Besides the certificate programs, there are also fast track degree programs in Associate in Applied Science (AAS) Degree in Business Administration and AAS Degree in Supply Chain Management. Students do not always need to start from the beginning because they can get credit from their previous college or work experience. The fast track programs are convenient and beneficial for many students; however, it may not suit everyone. The best way to start is to attend an information meeting.

Adapted from <https://www.harpercollege.edu/fasttrack/index.php>. Last retrieved on November 4, 2021.

In the #2 improved version, there are 4 simple sentences, 3 compound sentence, and 3 complex sentences. Work with your partner to identify each type of sentences. Discuss why #2 is better.

Exercise 7. Choose a paragraph you have written this semester and try the following:

1. Count how many simple, compound, and complex sentences are in it.
2. In what ways can you edit some of them so that the whole piece has a better balance of different structures?

VIII. Unit Review Practice

Exercise 8. Read the following paragraph about the student clubs at Santa Ana College. Identify the types of structures of the underlined sentences. In the boxes, type “simple” for a simple sentence, “compound” for a compound sentence, and “complex” for a complex sentence. The first one is an example. You will get instant feedback on your answers. When you finish the entire exercise, you can retry or see all the answers.



International Students Club doing community service at Feed My Starving Children

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://harpercollege.pressbooks.pub/academic-writing-skills/?p=481#h5p-216>

Exercise 9. Read the following paragraph about different ways people learn. Identify the types of structures of the underlined sentences. In the boxes, type “simple” for a simple sentence, “compound” for a compound sentence, and “complex” for a complex sentence. The first one is an example. You will get instant feedback on your answers. When you finish the entire exercise, you can retry or see all the answers.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://harpercollege.pressbooks.pub/academic-writing-skills/?p=481#h5p-194>

Exercise 10. Read the paragraph below about the writer’s learning and working experiences. It has too many simple sentences. Combine the underlined simple sentences into compound or complex sentences with the conjunctions given.

Example:

I arrived in California. I had never visited a college campus (before).

Before I arrived in California, I had never visited a college campus.

Getting Support and Growing

Getting support and growing keep me motivated. Last year, I enrolled at Santa Ana College's School of Continuing Education and visited the Welcome Center at Centennial Education Center. The staff helped me understand how to register for classes. I moved to California. I had never visited a college campus (before). It did not take me long to learn how to sign up for courses and get information on student services. I had already practiced searching online for local schools (for). I moved here three years ago. I had completed a basic English course (by the time). While I was visiting the Welcome Center, I learned how to access help for my classes. I have continued to use new resources from Santa Ana College since then. For example, I now join tutoring sessions and workshops offered by the Learning Center at SAC. The college provides free support and answers for students (and). The staff is very helpful. I ask many questions (therefore). These services have given me confidence and helped me feel hopeful about my education.

Learn more: [Santa Ana College Centennial Education Center Welcome Center](#)

Exercise 11. Choose and highlight the most appropriate conjunction for each blank in the paragraph below about learning to play the piano. Look carefully at the punctuation before you decide. The first one is an example. When you complete the entire exercise, you can click “Check” for feedback. You may retry or see all the answers.



black and white keys on a piano

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
<https://harpercollege.pressbooks.pub/academic-writing-skills/?p=481#h5p-115>

Exercise 12. Read the following paragraph about my uncle and me. There are five more mistakes in the use of commas (not including the example). Find them and correct them. The first one is an example.

My Uncle and I

My uncle has had a very positive influence on me in several ways. He came from Pakistan to the U.S. in the 1990s and has made a life for himself and his extended family. **First he (First, he...)** sponsored me to come to the U.S. a year ago. He made it possible for me to have a chance for a better life. For instance, I am now living in a much cleaner, and safer environment. Second his accomplishments^[10] have reminded me to work hard for my own life and for the life of my family. My uncle had worked as a waiter, a construction worker, and a newspaper delivery man before he enrolled at Harper College with a major in business ten years ago. He is now working as regional manager for a food company. He loves his job. Thanks to my uncle, I started a new life, as soon as I arrived here. I have followed his footsteps and have been working very hard since last year. My dream is to work in a finance field so I have been taking math and English as a Second Language courses to prepare for my major. Meanwhile, I have not abandoned^[11] my hobby – swimming. I swim a few times a week in the college swimming pool. My uncle always says, that a good future needs good health. I am thankful to my uncle for the inspirations^[12] and opportunities.

Exercise 13. Use the suggested conjunctions to expand the following simple sentences by adding one more clause to make new and meaningful compound or complex sentences. Use proper punctuation in each sentence. Share your sentences with your partner.

Example:

I love my community college. (for, as a result, because)

My sentence: I love my community college, for there are many interesting classes like piano and drawing.

My sentence: I love my community college; as a result, I am enjoying my study there.

My sentence: I love my community college because it is close to my home.

1. Many people come to the community college. (since, in addition, because)
2. Some young people prefer four-year universities. (so, consequently, although)
3. Nothing is perfect in all areas. (however, nor, since)
4. It all depends on which option works better for each student. (therefore, and, when)

NSNT Practice



a pen writing in a notebook

Go to **The NSNT Free Writing Approach and Additional Weekly Prompts for Writing** in Appendix A. ([Open Appendix A here.](#)) Choose two topics that you have not written about. You may start with the NSNT approach. Then revise and edit at least your paragraphs. Include some compound and complex structures. Pay attention to punctuation. You are encouraged to share your writing with your partner and help each other improve.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
<https://harpercollege.pressbooks.pub/academic-writing-skills/?p=481#h5p-20>

Vocabulary Review



a page in a dictionary

The words here have appeared in this unit. The best way to learn them is to guess the meaning of each word from the context. Then hover your computer mouse over the number beside each word to check its meaning and part of speech. These words are also listed in the footnote area at the end of each unit.

Here, you can use the flashcards below to review these words.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
<https://harpercollege.pressbooks.pub/academic-writing-skills/?p=481#h5p-202>

Summary

1. A phrase is two or more words used together to form part of meaning but not complete meaning. It does not have a “subject + verb” structure.
 2. Every sentence must explain a complete idea and have a subject and a verb.
 3. The most basic sentence parts are subject, verb, object, and subject complement.
 4. The most basic sentence patterns are
 - Subject + verb
 - Subject + verb + object
 5. A simple sentence is an independent clause with one subject-verb group.
 6. A compound sentence has two independent clauses with two subject-verb groups. They are connected by a coordinating conjunction (FANBOYS) or an adverbial conjunction such as “moreover” or “however”.
 7. A complex sentence has one dependent clause (a subordinating conjunction + subject + verb) and one independent clause (subject + verb).
 8. It is important to include a variety of sentence types in writing.
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 - a page in a dictionary © Pixabay
-

1. energetic: adjective, active, full of energy ↵
 2. premier: adjective, first in rank, leading ↵
 3. choppy: adjective, broken, not connected ↵
 4. accomplished: adjective, successful in doing something ↵
 5. resemble: verb, is similar to ↵
 6. overuse: verb, use too many times ↵
 7. accordingly: adverb, as a result, therefore ↵
 8. comparable: adjective, similar ↵
 9. personalized: adjective, customized, according to the needs of each person ↵
 10. accomplishment: noun, success, achievement ↵
 11. abandon: verb, give up ↵
 12. inspiration: noun, good influence, example ↵
-

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

2: Module 2 - Week 2

[2.1: Reading - The Nature and Types of Reading](#)

[2.2: Reading In College](#)

[2.3: The Writing Process](#)

[2.4: Defining the Writing Process](#)

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2.1: Reading - The Nature and Types of Reading

Think about the following questions:

- How can distinguishing between reading types help you academically and personally?
- How can you best prepare to read for college?

Knowing the different types of reading can help you in school and in your personal life. For example, you may read textbooks for information, stories for fun, or directions to learn how to do something. Choosing the right way to read helps you learn better and makes daily tasks easier.

College classes will expect you to read more than you did before. It is good to make reading a part of your daily routine. Try to find a quiet place, limit distractions, and set aside enough time just for reading. This will help you understand what you read and remember it better.

Research shows that reading helps students do well in school, builds stronger vocabulary, and increases the chances of finishing college. Even if you don't enjoy reading now, you can get better by practicing. Reading gives you useful skills for your future.

Not everyone likes to read, especially when the topic is new or seems boring. In college, you may read things you do not find interesting right away. A good way to stay motivated is to ask yourself questions like "How will this help me?" or "What can I learn from this?" Try to be curious, like a detective looking for clues in the text. You may discover new interests!

Types of Reading

People often read short texts, such as notes, emails, or directions, to get quick information. For tasks like repairing an item or traveling to a new place, online instructions provide clear steps. These texts serve a specific purpose. Once the needed information is found, reading can stop. This type of reading is quick and does not need to be exciting or memorable.

For longer texts, the reasons change. Readers may want to learn about a new topic or to understand familiar material more deeply. Most reading outside of leisure falls into two categories: exploring new ideas or building on existing knowledge.



Figure 4.3 A bookstore or library can be a great place to explore. Aside from books and resources you need, you may find something that interests you or helps with your course work. (Credit: MarLeah Cole / Flickr Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

Reading to Introduce New Content

Think about the following: Glenn felt uneasy talking with new roommates because their major, architecture, was unfamiliar. He knew architecture related to buildings and construction, but it was very different from his studies in biology. Glenn wanted to learn more so he could join friendly conversations. Because he was not planning to enter the field, he did not need to study deeply. Glenn's reason for reading was clear and specific. When exploring a new topic, readers can begin with simple sources and move on to more detailed ones. Further study and reading often depend on the first sources used, the purpose for reading, and interest in the topic.

Exploratory reading happens often. For example, reading reviews about a restaurant or checking opinions about a movie can help with making a decision. In school, many texts in courses are about new topics. Hearing the word "volcano" gives a general idea, but full understanding comes with deeper study of geology and other sciences. Reading different materials offers new perspectives.

With new content, extra time may be needed to read and understand the information. Looking up unfamiliar words and pausing to check for understanding can help. When there is little background knowledge, readers need to work harder to fully understand new material.

Application

A group of classmates can try an experiment. Together, brainstorm a list of ten topics that are interesting but not well known. Avoid common topics, such as reasons for drinking water; instead, consider unusual topics, like the chance that Pluto could become a planet again.

After making the list, think about how to find information about these topics. Searching online is a common option, but there are other ways. For topics with little known background, consider different sources of reading. In college classes, similar situations may occur, so classmates' suggestions are important.

Instead of just saying "go to the library," think about what a researcher would do there. Decide which articles or books would be useful. In a library, many organized sources are available. Research librarians are also helpful and can guide searches when sources are hard to find.

Reading to Comprehend Familiar Content

Reading about new topics is important, but reading about familiar topics can also be useful. If some background knowledge exists, further reading may still help. For example, knowing about Pluto and the debate about its status as a planet does not mean every detail is understood. There are always new questions: When did scientists question Pluto's status? What rules decide if something is a planet? Who creates these rules? Why is the name Pluto used? Many books and articles discuss Pluto, offering plenty of information to explore. Even with some knowledge, reading can bring new ideas and perspectives.

With familiar content, skimming helps to see what is already known and to notice any new or different viewpoints. Full attention may not be needed for known facts, but new ideas deserve more focus. It is helpful to notice if a writer presents a different definition or connects the topic to other subjects in new ways.

Students sometimes become too confident about what they know after reading a few articles or watching a documentary. True expertise comes from years of study and understanding many viewpoints, including recognizing possible mistakes or false information.

Footnotes

- ³Cunningham, A. and Stanovich, K. (1998). "What reading does for the mind." The American Federation of Teachers. *American Educator*, Vol. 22, No. 1–2, pp. 8–15.

Access for free at <https://openstax.org/books/preparing-for-college-success/pages/1-introduction>

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2.2: Reading In College

Reading and Writing in College

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

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

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

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

Table 1.1 “High School versus College Assignments” summarizes some of the other major differences between high school and college assignments.

Table 1.1 High School versus College Assignments

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

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

Throughout this chapter, you will follow a first-year student named Crystal. After several years of working as a saleswoman in a department store, Crystal has decided to pursue a degree in elementary education and become a teacher. She is continuing to work

part-time, and occasionally she finds it challenging to balance the demands of work, school, and caring for her four-year-old son. As you read about Crystal, think about how you can use her experience to get the most out of your own college experience.

Exercise 1

Review Table 1.1 “High School versus College Assignments” and think about how you have found your college experience to be different from high school so far. Respond to the following questions:

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

Reading Strategies

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

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

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

Planning Your Reading

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

Managing Your Reading Time

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

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

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

Tip

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

Setting a Purpose

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

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

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

Improving Your Comprehension

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

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

Identifying the Main Points

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Monitoring Your Comprehension

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

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

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

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

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

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

Exercise 2

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

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

Tip

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

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

Taking It to the Next Level: Active Reading

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

Using the SQ3R Strategy

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Exercise 3

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

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

Using Other Active Reading Strategies

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

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

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

Writing at Work

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

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

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

Common Writing Assignments

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

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

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

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

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

Table 1.2 “Common Types of College Writing Assignments” lists some of the most common types of college writing assignments. It includes minor, less formal assignments as well as major ones. Which specific assignments you encounter will depend on the courses you take and the learning objectives developed by your instructors.

Table 1.2 Common Types of College Writing Assignments

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

WRITING AT WORK

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

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

Key Takeaways

- College-level reading and writing assignments differ from high school assignments not only in quantity but also in quality.

- Managing college reading assignments successfully requires you to plan and manage your time, set a purpose for reading, practice effective comprehension strategies, and use active reading strategies to deepen your understanding of the text.
- College writing assignments place greater emphasis on learning to think critically about a particular discipline and less emphasis on personal and creative writing.

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2.3: The Writing Process

Learning Objectives

- To understand what the writing process is and why it is important
- To learn all the steps in the writing process by studying an assignment from beginning to completion
- To practice the steps in the writing process through exercises

I. Warm-Up



two hands kneading dough

Discuss in groups:

1. Have you ever cooked or baked anything? How do you enjoy cooking or baking?
2. When you see the above image (two hands kneading dough^[1]), what comes to your mind?
3. What is essential^[2] in baking the perfect bread?
4. Why is following steps so important?
5. Should writing also follow proper^[3] steps?
6. What steps do you usually follow when you have a writing assignment?
7. What do you think the writing process is?

II. Importance of the Writing Process

As you learned in Unit 1, academic writing should be well organized, focused, and accurate. How do you start?

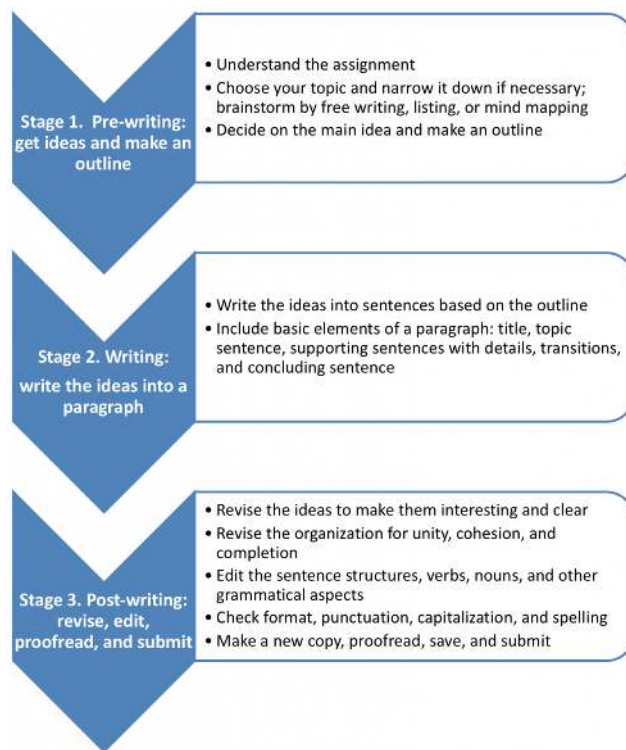
Imagine baking a loaf of bread. You need to get the ingredients ready, mix them one at a time in the right order to make dough, knead it, let it rise, put it in a container, and bake it for a length of time. Miss or reverse^[4] one step, and you may not be able to enjoy the fresh and crusty^[5] bread as anticipated. Of course, the bread machine may make the work less laborious^[6] for you, but the general process from flour to bread remains the same.

It is the same with writing. It follows a step-by-step order called **the writing process**. Using the right steps will ensure^[7] a good piece of writing that you are proud of.

III. Stages and Steps in the Writing Process

There are three major stages in the writing process. Each major stage includes a few smaller steps.

The writing Process



The Writing Process

Here is an example assignment to show you how every step works. The process is shown in the boxes below.

A Paragraph Writing Assignment

Purpose: This assignment is to show your understanding of planning and writing a paragraph. Use the writing process to help you.

Topic: What has been your most interesting experience in learning English? Explain three reasons why you think so.

Paragraph: Your paragraph should have a title, 3 supporting ideas with details, and a concluding sentence. Use some transitions to connect the supporting sentences.

Format: Type your paragraph, double spaced, font size 12, with 1-inch margins on four sides of the page. Type your name, class, and date on the upper right-hand corner of the page. The first line of your paragraph should be indented. Save your paragraph in a Word file.

Self Checklist: When you finish writing, use the Self Checklist below. Put a checkmark beside each item if you think you did a good job in that area. Otherwise, improve your paragraph until you can check off the item. Save your work again.

Submission: Submit your paragraph on the Blackboard. Go to your Blackboard course site and follow the instructions there to submit your work. Due by 11:59 pm on Monday, January 30.

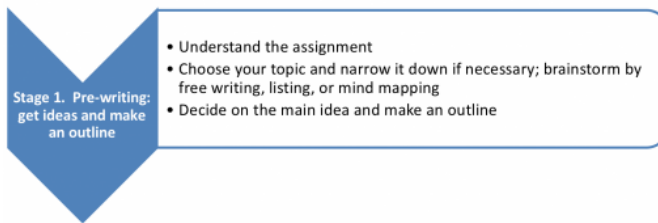
Self Checklist

Questions	Paragraph Revising and Editing Self Checklist	√
1	Is my paragraph clear to understand?	
2	Is my paragraph interesting to read?	
3	Did I include a topic sentence with a clear topic and a controlling idea?	
4	Did I include 3 supporting ideas with details and connect them with transitions?	
5	Did I include a concluding sentence?	
6	Did I try my best to use correct sentence structure, verbs, and other grammar aspects?	
7	Did I try my best to have correct spelling, punctuation, and capitalization?	
8	Did I follow the proper paragraph format?	

The Self Checklist will include more specific items as you learn more about writing and editing in the course.

Follow the three stages below to see how this assignment is completed step by step.

IV. Stage 1 Pre-writing: Get Ideas and Make an Outline



Stage 1 Writing Process

1. Understand the assignment.

Each assignment may come with different instructions. Understanding the requirements is crucial^[8] in making sure that you start out right. Here is a list of questions you ask yourself to check your understanding of the assignment:

Example: Understand the assignment

Questions	Answers to show your understanding
Purpose?	To show understanding of planning and writing a paragraph
How?	Use the writing process
Who reads?	My professor and probably some of my classmates
Final product?	A paragraph with a title, 3 supporting sentences with details, a concluding sentences, transitions
Format?	indent, double space, size 12, 1-inch on 4 sides, name/semester/date
Due?	by 11:59 pm, Monday, Jan. 30
Where?	Course Blackboard, follow instructions there.

2. Choose your topic and narrow it down if necessary; brainstorm by free writing, listing, or mind mapping.

While choosing your topic and narrowing it down,

✓ Do:

Write from your heart; consider your own interests and/or knowledge.

Reflect your unique thoughts or experiences.

Ask yourself:

- Am I interested in this topic? How much do I know about it?
- Do I have an interesting experience or perspective that most of my classmates might not have?
- Would my readers get to know the topic or me better through my writing?

X Do not:

- Pick a seemingly^[9] “easy” topic that you do not know much about or do not have a personal, meaningful experience with.
- Google search and choose your topic based on how much information you can find on the web.

For the disadvantages of relying too much on the Internet information, please refer to “Ten Most Common Misconceptions about Writing” in Unit 1 Introduction to Academic Writing. (Open Unit 1 here.)

Brainstorming means that you write down your ideas as quickly as you can for about two to ten minutes, like a storm sweeping through your mind! Do not worry about accuracy in grammar, spelling, or punctuation. Do not be overly concerned whether an idea is good or not. Rather, keep the flow of your thoughts going. You may be surprised to discover many new, hidden ideas.

Brainstorming comes in different ways: free writing, making a list, mind mapping, and some others. They may look different, but your thinking process is the same. Here are the three common brainstorming examples to show you how to get ideas for the above writing assignment on your English learning experience.

Brainstorming example 1: free writing

This is my first writing assignment in class. I want to write about my interesting English study. English, English everyday, important, tired. What aspect? Pronunciation? reading? writing? grammar? listening? Language Lab? my grades? I don't know... well, maybe something about writing. Right now I'm trying not to translate from my native language. This is stressful, but keep trying. What about writing? yes! no translation! My teacher just taught us NSNT, interesting, I'll try, maybe this topic? different way but I hope it'll help me. I tried two times already, tried not to stop writing, holding my pen tight, keep writing. Possible not to translate if I keep doing it . The teacher isn't checking my mistakes, so I'm more relaxed this way. Also fun because focus on my ideas and learn to express in total English. My teacher said, this skill will help me succeed in ESL and college classes. I want to learn. I know it's important. teacher said translation no good, agree, my language and English very different, think in English, habit, try every day, confidence.

Brainstorming example 2: making a list

English learning experience: Reading, writing, listening, speaking, language lab, international students club

a. reading: interesting stories, new words, dictionary, too many words, hard, useful, in context, guessing first??

b. writing: academic writing, paragraphs, topic sentence, punctuation, NSNT, new, interesting, hard, feel strange, how not to translate? worry my grade

- c. listening: news, recordings, hard, too fast, when driving, language lab, good materials, open, helpful staff, lots of resources, what to choose
- d. speaking: international students club, games, prizes, snacks!! new friends, some native speaks, every week, fun, nervous

Brainstorming example 3: creating a mind map



a mind map on English learning experience

3. Decide on the main idea and make an outline

You take a second look at your brainstorming and consider which area to focus on (main idea) and what information to keep or throw out. At this point, you decide to write about NSNT and the reasons why you like it.



a pen writing in a notebook

For information about the NSNT approach, please refer to Appendix A NSNT Approach. (Open Appendix A here.)

Then you organize your ideas into a simple plan called an **outline**. It may take five to ten minutes to make an outline.

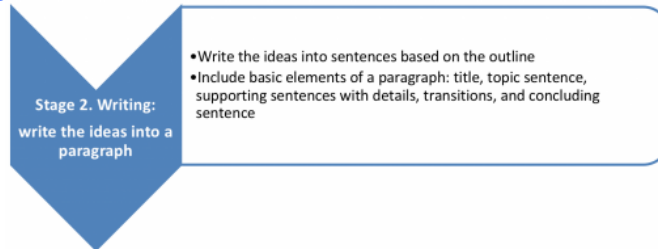
- Write the topic sentence in a complete sentence on top of the page.
- Write your supporting ideas and their details in words and phrases, or even some symbols like # for number and \$ for money. Do not write complete sentences and do not write a draft of the paragraph. When you write your ideas in words and phrases in the outline, you can spot the problem more easily if an idea does not support the topic sentence.
- When you write your paragraph later, you may have an additional idea. Do not include it in your paragraph directly. Put it in your outline to make sure it helps explain the main idea. You may ask yourself:
 - Does this idea support my topic sentence?
 - Which part of the outline should I put it in?
 - Is there already a similar idea in the outline?

An outline example:

Parts of a paragraph	Paragraph outline
Title	The Reasons Why I like NSNT (It is common to write the title after you finish the outline or the paragraph draft.)
Topic sentence	The Non-Stop-Non-Translation (NSNT) approach is one of my most interesting experiences in learning English. (Write a complete sentence)
Background info if necessary	what is NSNT in 1-2 sentences
Support 1	translation habit, different languages, others don't understand well, a good habit of thinking in English
Details 1	no subject in Spanish sentence, wrong in English
Support 2	think faster and more naturally in English

Details 2	better flow, less time in communication, not two languages in my mind
Support 3	not too hard, more relaxed, want to write more, motivation
Details 3	try every day, with music, not graded, from 5 to 15 minutes now, topics like current events, memories
Concluding sentence	summarize 3 ideas and give opinion

V. Stage 2 Writing: Write Ideas into a Paragraph



Stage 2 Writing Process

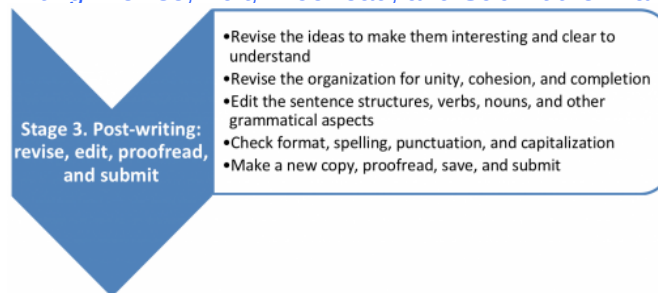
This is the stage where you create the first copy of a complete paragraph based on the outline. This copy is called **a draft**. It usually takes a longer time to write than the pre-writing activities, but once you have completed the previous steps, you have made this stage of writing much easier to accomplish.

Example: Paragraph draft

The Non-Stop-Non-Translation approach has been one of my most interesting experiences in learning English. My teacher introduce it in the beginning of the semester. Students writes on a topic nonstop for at least 5 minute, and they should not translate their ideas from their native languages to English. First, the strategy helps me learn to express my self correctly with english. i been in the U.S. for only one year, and I always translate my ideas from Spanish to English. However; people often do not understand me, or they say I am wrong. i am learning to think faster and more natural with the help in NSNT. My teacher instruct us not to let the tip of our pen to leave the surface of the paper, so we have to keep writing, even writing days of the week and months of the year until our brains forces out some ideas in English. Though, I felt very uncomfortable in the beginning now after two months of training, I starting to feel that my ideas flow more easy in English. The discussions we have in reading classes also help me think in English because my classmates cannot wait for me to translate from Spanish. Lastly, the daily practice is not as stressful as I thought so I enjoy it. I turn on my favorite music, and write from 5 minutes to 10 minutes daily. I feel I can write more and more. Because my teacher do not grade my work based on accuracy. Can let my thoughts flow freely on paper without worrying about my grade.

You have tried to write a good paragraph though it still has mistakes. Do not worry! No one can write perfectly on the first try. The instructions in Stage 3 below will guide you step by step in making your paragraph better.

VI. Stage 3 Post-Writing: Revise, Edit, Proofread, and Submit the Draft



Stage 3 Writing Process

1. Revise the ideas and organization – comments in (parentheses) and marked in pink

(No title)

The Non-Stop-Non-Translation approach is one of my most interesting experiences in learning english. My teacher introduce it in the beginning of the semester. Students writes on a topic nonstop for at least 5 minute, and they should not translate their ideas from their native languages to english. First, the strategy helps me learn to express my self correctly with english. i been in the U.S. for only one year, and I always translate from Spanish to english (**when?**). However; people often do not understand me, or they say I am wrong. (**example?**) (**transition?**) i am learning to think faster and more natural with the help in NSNT. My teacher instruct us not to let the tip of our pen leave the surface of the paper, so we have to keep writing, even writing days of the week and months of the year until our brains forces out some ideas in English. Though, I felt very uncomfortable in the beginning now after two months of training, I starting to feel that my ideas flow more easy in English. The discussions we have in reading classes also help me think in English because my classmates cannot wait for me to translate from Spanish. (**irrelevant and should be deleted**) Lastly, the daily practice is not as stressful as I thought so I enjoy it. I turn on my favorite music and write from 5 minutes to 10 minutes daily. (**examples of what I write about**) I feel I can write more and more. Because my teacher do not grade my work based on accuracy. I can let my thoughts flow freely on paper without worrying about my grade. (**no concluding sentence**)

Make a new copy to show improvement in ideas and organization.

The reasons why I like NSNT

The Non-Stop-Non-Translation approach is one of my most interesting experiences in learning english. My teacher introduce it in the beginning of the semester. Students writes on a topic nonstop for at least 5 minute, and they should not translate their ideas from their native languages to english. First, the strategy helps me learn to express my self correctly with english. i been in the U.S. for only one year, and I always translate my ideas from my native language Spanish to english when communicate. However; people often do not understand me, or they say I am wrong. For example, it is correct to write “Es un dia bonito” in Spanish. When I translate it into english. My sentence becomes “Is a day beautiful.” Second, I am learning to think faster and more natural with the help in NSNT. My teacher instruct us not to let the tip of our pen leave the surface of the paper, so we have to keep writing, even writing days of the week and months of the year until our brains forces out some ideas in English. Though, I felt very uncomfortable in the beginning now after two months of training, I starting to feel that my ideas flow more easy in English. Lastly, the daily practice is not as stressful as I thought so I enjoy it. I turn on my favorite music and write from 5 minutes to 10 minutes daily, and sometimes even longer. I have written about childhood memories, current events, and school activities. I feel more comfortable and confident in expressing my thoughts. I no longer need to fill time with “Monday, Tuesday...” as in the beginning. Besides, my teacher do not grade my work based on accuracy. Can let my thoughts flow on paper without worrying about my grade. The NSNT is one of the best approach in helping me think and use English. I will definitely keep practicing this strategy.

2. Edit grammar and sentence structure

3. Check format, spelling, punctuation, capitalization

It is common to combine these two steps, but it is better to do Step 2 before Step 3. The mistakes in grammar, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and format are highlighted in **grey** and corrections are highlighted in **purple** below.

Name? **Jane Doe**

Class? **Writing III**

Date? **January 25, 2022**

The Reasons **Reasons** why I like **Like** NSNT

The Non-Stop-Non-Translation approach is one of my most interesting experiences in learning english **English**. My teacher **introduce** **introduced** it in the beginning of the semester. Students **writes** **write** on a topic nonstop for at least 5 **minute** **minutes**, and they should not translate their ideas from their native languages to English. First, the strategy helps me learn to express **my self** **myself** correctly with **english** **English**. **i been** **I have been** in the U.S. for only one year, **and** I always translate my ideas from my native language spanish to english. When communicate. **... and I always translate my ideas from y native language Spanish to English when I communicate.** However, **,** people often do not understand me, or they say I am wrong. For example, it is correct to write “Es un dia bonito” in Spanish. **When I translate it into english.** My sentence becomes “Is a day beautiful.” **When I translate it into English, my sentence becomes “Is a day beautiful.”** Second, **I** I am learning to think faster and more **natural** **naturally** with the help in NSNT. My teacher **instruct** **instructs** us not to let the tip of our pen leave the surface of the paper, so we have to keep writing, even writing days of the week and months of the year until our brains **forces** **force** out some ideas in English. **Though, I felt very uncomfortable in the beginning** **Though I felt very uncomfortable in the beginning**, now after two months of training, I **starting** **have started** to feel that my ideas flow more **easy** **easily** in English. Lastly, the daily practice is not as **stressfull** **stressful** as I **thought** so I enjoy it. **... I thought, so I enjoy it.** I turn on my favorite music and write from 5 minutes to 10 minutes daily. About childhood memories, current events, and school activities. **... 10 minutes daily about childhood memories, ...** I feel I can write more and more. Because my teacher do not grade my work based on accuracy. **Can let my thoughts flow on paper without worrying about my grade. I feel I can write more and more because my teacher does not grade my work based on accuracy.** The NSNT is one of the best **approach** **approaches** in helping me think and use English. I will definitely keep practicing this strategy.

Fix the mistakes and make a new copy:

Jane Doe

Writing III

January 25, 2022

The Reasons Why I Like NSNT

The Non-Stop-Non-Translation approach is one of my most interesting experiences in learning English. My teacher introduced it in the beginning of the semester. Students should write on a topic nonstop for at least 5 minutes, and they should not translate their ideas from their native languages to English. First, the strategy helps me learn to express myself correctly with English. I have been in the U.S. for only one year, and I always translate from Spanish to English when I communicate. However, people often do not understand me, or they say I am wrong. For example, it is correct to write “Es un dia bonito” in Spanish. When I translate it into English, my sentence becomes “Is a day beautiful.” Second, I am learning to think faster and more naturally with the help in NSNT. My teacher instructs us not to let the tip of our pen leave the surface of the paper, so we have to keep writing, even writing days of the week and months of the year until our brains force out some ideas in English. Though I felt very uncomfortable in the beginning, now after two months of training, I am starting to feel that my ideas flow more easily in English. Lastly, the daily practice is not as stressful as I thought, so I enjoy it and write from 5 minutes to 10 minutes daily. I have written about childhood memories, current events, and school activities. I feel I can write more and more. Because my teacher does not grade my work based on accuracy, I can let my thoughts flow freely on paper without worrying about my grade. The NSNT is one of the best approaches in helping me think and use English. I will definitely keep practicing this strategy.

4. Use the Self Checklist to make sure that you have tried your best to revise and edit the paragraph. Put a checkmark in the box on the right if you have done your best in that area.

Self Checklist

Questions	Paragraph Revising and Editing Self Checklist	
1	Is my paragraph clear to understand?	√
2	Is my paragraph interesting to read?	√
3	Did I include a topic sentence with a clear topic and a controlling idea?	√

4	Did I include 2-4 supporting ideas with details and connect them with transitions?	√
5	Did I include a concluding sentence?	√
6	Did I try my best to use correct sentence structure, verbs, and other grammar aspects?	√
7	Did I try my best to have correct spelling, punctuation, and capitalization?	√
8	Did I follow the proper paragraph format?	√

The Self Checklist will include more specific items as you learn more about writing and editing in the course.

Proofread means that you read the paragraph from beginning to end at least one more time to catch the errors you missed and to make sure that your writing is as good as it can be.

Now you can save your work and submit it. Job well done!



a person dancing on a rock with sunset on horizon

Going through the steps takes time, but you can be sure that your paragraph will be the best you can write it. Some of you may feel that following the process is too much trouble and that it is a waste of time, but remember that you may need longer time redoing the assignment later if you do not properly follow the writing process. Think of this as establishing^[10] a good habit of thinking and writing. Over time, you may be able to combine some of the steps and save some time. However, you will be writing much longer, much more complicated compositions in your future classes, and the habit of following the writing process will definitely help you succeed.

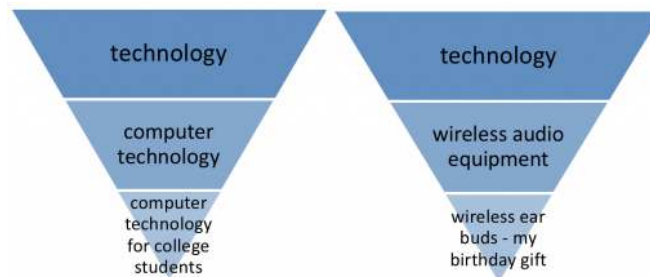
VII. Unit Review Practice

Exercise 1. Discuss the following questions about the writing process.

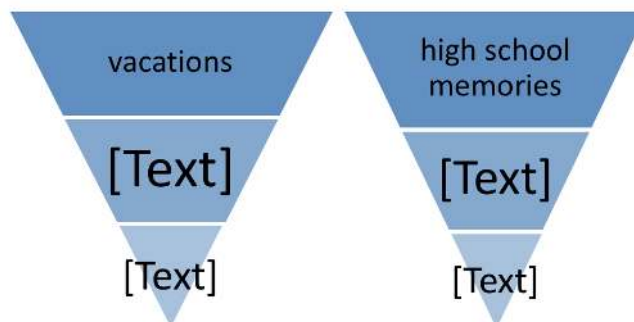
1. What is the writing process? Why is it important?
2. What are the three stages in the process? What are the steps in each stage?
3. Have you tried the writing process or a similar process before? Share your experiences.

Exercise 2. Narrowing down a broad subject will help you focus better on the main idea of your paragraph. Practice narrowing down the topics. The first two are examples. You see that the same broad topic can be narrowed down to two different focuses depending on your experiences and preferences. Compare and discuss your answers with your partner.

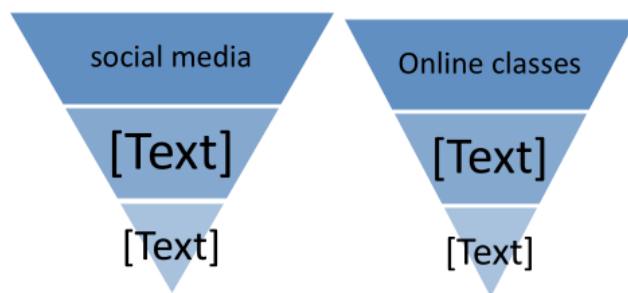
Examples:



narrowing down ideas



narrowing down ideas exercise



narrowing down ideas exercise

Exercise 3. Look at the following ideas from brainstorming. Add some of your own to the list. Then put the ideas into the categories. The categories will be used as supporting ideas when you write the paragraph. If an idea does not fit the main idea, cross it out. An example is provided in each category.

Main idea: Jerry's Burgers is my favorite lunch place.

fast service, nice decorations, fresh ingredients, clean washrooms, beautiful paintings on walls, Asian and Middle Eastern flavors, meeting room, noisy, not many salad choices, expensive, smiling owner, no place for kids to play, free soda, no parking, tasty soup bowls, kids' menu, low fat menu, vegetarian choices, background music too loud, gluten-free options, polite wait staff, no delivery...

Example:

Food	Services	Facilities
fresh ingredients	fast service	meeting room

Exercise 4. Use three of the following topics to try free writing, listing, mind mapping. Narrow down the topic if necessary. Then write an outline for each topic. Lastly, choose one of the three outlines to write a paragraph.

1. driving in the U.S.
2. my first class in the U.S. college
3. the neighborhood where I grew up
4. the person I admire the most
5. a childhood memory
6. a disappointing holiday
7. advantages or disadvantages of cell phones
8. characteristics of a good shopping mall

NSNT Practice



a pen writing in a notebook

Go to **The NSNT Free Writing Approach and Additional Weekly Prompts for Writing** in Appendix A. ([Open Appendix A here.](#)) Choose two topics to practice the steps in the writing process. You may do the NSNT free writing approach while brainstorming. Remember not to translate from your native language and not to stop writing once you start.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://harpercollege.pressbooks.pub/academic-writing-skills/?p=171#h5p-20>

Vocabulary Review



a page in a dictionary

The words here have appeared in this unit. The best way to learn them is to guess the meaning of each word from the context. Then hover your computer mouse over the number beside each word to check its meaning and part of speech. These words are also listed in the footnote area at the end of each unit.

Here, you can use the flashcards below to review these words.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://harpercollege.pressbooks.pub/academic-writing-skills/?p=171#h5p-197>

Summary

1. There are three major stages in the writing process:

- **pre-writing:** get ideas and make an outline
 - understand the assignment
 - choose topic, narrow down if needed
 - brainstorm – free writing, make a list, create a mind map
- **writing:** write a draft of the paragraph
 - write a paragraph based on the outline
 - include basic elements of a paragraph
- **post-writing:** revise and edit, proofread, and submit
 - revise ideas to make them clear and interesting
 - revise organization for unity, cohesion, and completion
 - edit sentence structure and grammatical aspects
 - check format, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling
 - make a new copy, proofread, save, submit

2. The stages and steps ensure the good quality of your paragraph.

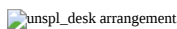
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-
1. dough: noun, a mix of flour, water, and other ingredients to make into bread, cake, etc. ↵
 2. essential: adjective, extremely important, cannot live without ↵
 3. proper: adjective, suitable, appropriate, right ↵
 4. reverse: verb, follow the opposite order ↵
 5. crusty: adjective, crisp, describing the outer layer of freshly-baked bread ↵
 6. laborious: adjective, with lots of work ↵
 7. ensure: verb, make sure, to be certain ↵
 8. crucial: adjective, very important ↵
 9. seemingly: adverb, in appearance but may not be true ↵
 10. establish: verb, build, set up ↵
-

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2.4: Defining the Writing Process

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

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

Writing is Recursive

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

Developing Your Writing Process

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

A Writer's Process: Ali Hale

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

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

A Writer's Process: Anne Lamott

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

As you watch, think about how her terms, “down draft,” “up draft,” “dental draft,” work with those presented by Hale’s [The Writing Process](#). What does Lamott mean by these terms? Can you identify with her process or with the one Hale describes? How are they related?

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



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <http://pb.libretexts.org/temp/?p=1387>

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

3: Module 3 - Weeks 3 and 4

[3.1: Pre-Reading Strategies](#)

[3.2: Paragraphs](#)

[3.3: The Perfect Paragraph](#)

[3.4: Parts and Characteristics of a Good Paragraph](#)

[3.5: Grammar - Three Common Errors in Sentence Structure and Punctuation](#)

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3.1: Pre-Reading Strategies

Questions to Consider:

- What habits help make enough time for reading?
- How does active and critical reading help, and how can it be done?
- Are there special reading expectations in each class or major?

Allowing Adequate Time for Reading

At the start of each semester, check the reading expectations for every class. It is also important to know why each text is assigned. Sometimes careful reading is needed to find details; other times, skimming helps with learning about the topic. Understanding the reason for each assignment guides how much time to spend, what notes to take, and how to read most effectively.



Figure 4.4 If you plan to make time for reading while you commute, remember that unexpected events like delays and cancellations could impact your concentration. (Credit: The LEAF Project / Flickr, Public Domain (CC-0))

Class schedules may include reading primary sources like legal documents, historic letters, or diaries, as well as textbooks, articles, summaries, and essays based on those sources. Current news articles may also be important for understanding local and global events. Planning time to read and review each assignment helps manage a busy semester.

Making time for reading supports personal success. Many well-known people throughout history were strong readers. Harry Truman said, “Not all readers are leaders, but all leaders are readers.” Thomas Jefferson said, “I cannot live without books.” Frederick Douglass believed, “Once you learn to read, you will be forever free.” George R. R. Martin wrote, “A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies. The man who never reads lives only one.”

Scheduling reading time, knowing usual reading speed, and using active and repeated reading can help fit reading into a busy routine.

Determining Reading Speed and Pacing

To determine your reading speed, select a section of text—passages in a textbook or pages in a novel. Time yourself reading that material for exactly 5 minutes, and note how much reading you accomplished in those 5 minutes. Multiply the amount of reading you accomplished in 5 minutes by 12 to determine your average reading pace (5 times 12 equals the 60 minutes of an hour). Of

course, your reading pace will be different and take longer if you are taking notes while you read, but this calculation of reading pace gives you a good way to estimate your reading speed that you can adapt to other forms of reading.

Example Reading Times

Reader	Pages Read in 5 Minutes	Pages per Hour	Approximate Hours to Read 500 Pages
Marta	4	48	10 hours, 30 minutes
Jordi	3	36	13 hours
Estevan	5	60	8 hours, 20 minutes

Table 4.1

In the table above, you can see three students with different reading speeds. So, for instance, if Marta was able to read 4 pages of a dense novel for her English class in 5 minutes, she should be able to read about 48 pages in one hour. Knowing this, Marta can accurately determine how much time she needs to devote to finishing the novel within a set amount of time, instead of just guessing. If the novel Marta is reading is 497 pages, then Marta would take the total page count (497) and divide that by her hourly reading rate (48 pages/hour) to determine that she needs about 10 to 11 hours overall. To finish the novel spread out over two weeks, Marta needs to read a little under an hour a day to accomplish this goal.

Calculating your reading rate in this manner does not take into account days where you're too distracted and you have to reread passages or days when you just aren't in the mood to read. And your reading rate will likely vary depending on how dense the content you're reading is (e.g., a complex textbook vs. a comic book). Your pace may slow down somewhat if you are not very interested in what the text is about. What this method *will* help you do is be realistic about your reading time as opposed to waging a guess based on nothing and then becoming worried when you have far more reading to finish than the time available.

[Chapter 2, "Managing Your Time and Priorities,"](#) offers more detail on how best to determine your speed from one type of reading to the next so you are better able to schedule your reading.

Scheduling Set Times for Active Reading

Active reading takes longer than reading through passages without stopping. You may not need to read your latest sci-fi series actively while you're lounging on the beach, but many other reading situations demand more attention from you. Active reading is particularly important for college courses. You are a scholar actively engaging with the text by posing questions, seeking answers, and clarifying any confusing elements. Plan to spend at least twice as long to read actively than to read passages without taking notes or otherwise marking select elements of the text.

To determine the time you need for active reading, use the same calculations you use to determine your traditional reading speed and double it. Remember that you need to determine your reading pace for all the classes you have in a particular semester and multiply your speed by the number of classes you have that require different types of reading. The table below shows the differences in time needed between reading quickly without taking notes and reading actively.

Example Active Reading Times

Reader	Pages Read in 5 Minutes	Pages per Hour	Approximate Hours to Read 500 Pages	Approximate Hours to Actively Read 500 Pages
Marta	4	48	10 hours, 30 minutes	21 hours
Jordi	3	36	13 hours	26 hours
Estevan	5	60	8 hours, 20 minutes	16 hours, 40 minutes

Table 4.2

Practicing Recursive Reading Strategies

Reading for college often means reading and rereading. Rereading the same material helps find important points a writer makes or understand responses to other ideas. This process is called recursive reading.

Most college reading is for a specific purpose. Full attention is needed to understand complex material, and it is important to think about what the writer may leave out and why. Reading for understanding is not just a simple, one-way process. Usually, reading from start to finish is only the first step. Rereading helps find meaning and connect ideas to the course, college program, or field of study.

In writing, revision is key; in college reading, rereading improves understanding and supports good note-taking.

Strong readers use several steps:

- Use prior knowledge about the topic.
- Ask questions about the content, in speech and writing.
- Make inferences from the text.
- Learn unfamiliar words, especially those for the subject area.
- Judge the value and message of what is read.
- Apply information to other studies and real-life situations.

Breaking these steps down can make reading feel less overwhelming.



Figure 4.5 The six elements of recursive reading should be considered as a circular, not linear, process.

Accessing Prior Knowledge

Before reading, recall anything already known about the topic. Documentaries, previous classes, or hobbies may help to connect new material with what is familiar.

Asking Questions

While reading, write down questions about the topic. Questions help focus attention and encourage deeper thinking. Use a notebook or computer to track questions and leave space for answers after reading.

Inferring and Implying

Look for ideas that are not directly stated. Use clues from the text to infer new information. Writers might imply opinions or facts, so pay attention to hints and suggestions.

Learning Vocabulary

New topics often contain words specific to a discipline. Use context clues or look up words to understand their meanings. Keep a vocabulary list as a reference and add new words and definitions.

Evaluating

When reading, check facts and think critically. Scan headings, read through the text, and identify main points and supporting evidence. Notice the intended audience and look for any bias presented by the author.

Applying

Apply new knowledge to other subjects or life situations. Information gained from reading can help solve problems and support bigger learning goals.

Preparing to Read for College

Different classes have different reading expectations. Some may assign articles, chapters, or primary sources like original documents. Understanding the background and planning reading time helps with classroom participation and deeper learning.

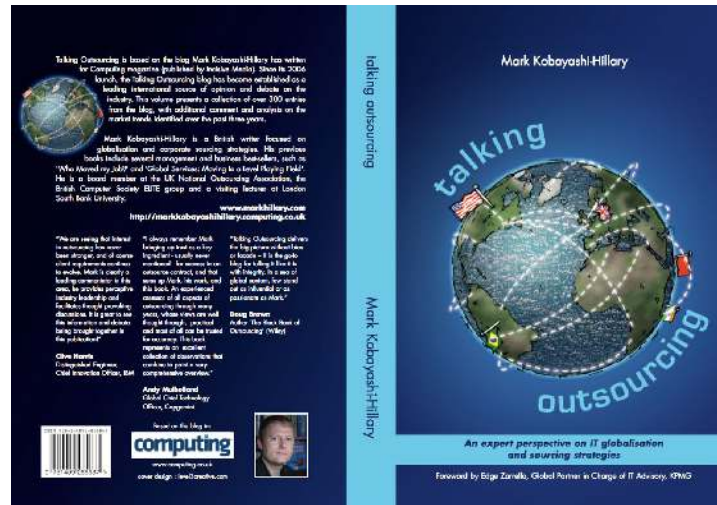


Figure 4.6 Learning about the book you're reading can provide good context and information. Look for an author's biography and forward on the back cover or in the first few pages. (Credit: Mark Hillary / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

Researching the Author and Book

Quotations about books or authors found inside a book may help, but they are often used as marketing and may not be unbiased. Authors may have other books listed near the front of a book. Look for familiar titles. Try searching for the author or book online, and look past buying sites to find more useful information. Library article databases are often better for academic research than standard search engines. If using the library database is new, ask a reference librarian for help. Librarians can suggest the best resources for research.

Understanding Preset Ideas

Readers often bring their own ideas to topics, especially subjects they care about. For example, Laura studies environmental issues and brings her own opinions and experiences to new readings. However, personal biases can prevent seeing new or different viewpoints. Honest review of evidence helps check if old ideas are still valid. Keeping an open mind is important when reading material that gives different perspectives. New learning is possible by giving attention to all ideas, even when they challenge familiar beliefs.

Analysis Question

Think about any time reading for a college course was difficult. Which strategies from above could have made the content easier to understand? Explain why these strategies would help.

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3.2: Paragraphs

What this handout is about

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

What is a paragraph?

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

How do I decide what to put in a paragraph?

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

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

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

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

How do I organize a paragraph?

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

- **Narration:** Tell a story. Go chronologically, from start to finish. ([See an example.](#))
- **Description:** Provide specific details about what something looks, smells, tastes, sounds, or feels like. Organize spatially, in order of appearance, or by topic. ([See an example.](#))
- **Process:** Explain how something works, step by step. Perhaps follow a sequence—first, second, third. ([See an example.](#))
- **Classification:** Separate into groups or explain the various parts of a topic. ([See an example.](#))
- **Illustration:** Give examples and explain how those examples prove your point. (See the detailed example in the next section of this handout.)

5-step process to paragraph development

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

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

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

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

Step 2. Explain the controlling idea

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

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

Step 3. Give an example (or multiple examples)

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

Model example A—*For example, according to Frederick Douglass, the song "O Canaan, Sweet Canaan" spoke of slaves' longing for heaven, but it also expressed their desire to escape to the North. Careful listeners heard this second meaning in the following lyrics: "I don't expect to stay / Much longer here. / Run to Jesus, shun the danger. / I don't expect to stay."*

Model example B—*Slaves even used songs like "Steal Away to Jesus (at midnight)" to announce to other slaves the time and place of secret, forbidden meetings.*

Step 4. Explain the example(s)

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

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

Model explanation for example A—*When slaves sang this song, they could have been speaking of their departure from this life and their arrival in heaven; however, they also could have been describing their plans to leave the South and run, not to Jesus, but to the North.*

Model explanation for example B—*[The relationship between example B and the main idea of the paragraph's controlling idea is clear enough without adding another sentence to explain it.]*

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

The final movement in paragraph development involves tying up the loose ends of the paragraph and reminding the reader of the relevance of the information in this paragraph to the main or controlling idea of the paper. At this point, you can remind your reader about the relevance of the information that you just discussed in the paragraph. You might feel more comfortable, however, simply transitioning your reader to the next development in the next paragraph. Here's an example of a sentence that completes the slave spirituals paragraph:

Model sentence for completing a paragraph— *What whites heard as merely spiritual songs, slaves discerned as detailed messages. The hidden meanings in spirituals allowed slaves to sing what they could not say.*

Notice that the example and explanation steps of this 5-step process (steps 3 and 4) can be repeated as needed. The idea is that you continue to use this pattern until you have completely developed the main idea of the paragraph.

Here is a look at the completed “model” paragraph:

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

Troubleshooting paragraphs

1) Problem: the paragraph has no topic sentence. Imagine each paragraph as a sandwich. The real content of the sandwich—the meat or other filling—is in the middle. It includes all the evidence you need to make the point. But it gets kind of messy to eat a sandwich without any bread. Your readers don’t know what to do with all the evidence you’ve given them. So, the top slice of bread (the first sentence of the paragraph) explains the topic (or controlling idea) of the paragraph. And, the bottom slice (the last sentence of the paragraph) tells the reader how the paragraph relates to the broader argument. In the original and revised paragraphs below, notice how a topic sentence expressing the controlling idea tells the reader the point of all the evidence.

Original paragraph

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

Revised paragraph

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

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

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

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

Original paragraph

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

Revised paragraph

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

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

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

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

Works consulted

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

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

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

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3.3: The Perfect Paragraph

As Michael Harvey writes, paragraphs are “in essence—a form of punctuation, and like other forms of punctuation they are meant to make written material easy to read.”^[1] Effective paragraphs are the fundamental units of academic writing; consequently, the thoughtful, multifaceted arguments that your professors expect depend on them. Without good paragraphs, you simply cannot clearly convey sequential points and their relationships to one another.

Many novice writers tend to make a sharp distinction between content and style, thinking that a paper can be strong in one and weak in the other, but focusing on organization shows how content and style converge in deliberative academic writing. Your professors will view even the most elegant prose as rambling and tedious if there isn't a careful, coherent argument to give the text meaning. Paragraphs are the “stuff ” of academic writing and, thus, worth our attention here.

Key Sentences (a.k.a. Topic Sentences)



Key Sentences in Academic Writing

In academic writing, each paragraph should have one or two sentences that show its main point. These are often called “topic sentences,” but some instructors prefer “key sentences.” The term “topic sentence” can be confusing. It suggests the sentence only names the topic and must be just one sentence. “Key sentence” is a better term because it expresses the paragraph's central idea. Sometimes, a question or two sentences together can be a key sentence.

Purpose of Key Sentences

Key sentences do two important jobs. First, they state the main idea that the rest of the paragraph supports. Second, they show how each paragraph fits into the argument, often by connecting to the previous paragraph.

Example:

- Version A: Now we turn to the benefits of a college degree.
- Version B: The benefits of earning a college degree include greater job opportunities, increased earning potential, and personal growth.

Both examples mention college degree benefits, but Version B is clearer. It connects the paragraph to earlier ideas and builds the argument, making the logic easy to follow.

Placement of Key Sentences

Academic writing usually puts key sentences at the beginning of each paragraph. This helps readers quickly understand the writer's argument. When reading, check the first sentence in each paragraph for the main idea. In essays, starting paragraphs with key sentences helps professors see students' main ideas first and follow the supporting evidence.

Using Key Sentences for Reading and Writing

Key sentences make both reading and writing easier. When reading, look at the first sentence or two of each paragraph for main ideas; then read the details to understand how they fit together. When writing, begin paragraphs with a key sentence to keep ideas clear and the argument strong.

Cohesion and Coherence

After writing a key sentence, the rest of the paragraph should be cohesive and coherent. Cohesion means sentences flow smoothly, linking one idea to the next. Coherence means all sentences are connected and support the main idea of the paragraph. Writing

should focus on strong ideas first, then revise for smooth organization and clear language.

Cohesion

Cohesion is the way sentences move from one idea to another. It helps paragraphs flow and makes reading easier. Compare these examples:

Version A:

A college degree is important. People with degrees get better jobs. Earning more money is easier with a degree. Studying in college teaches important skills. Education brings new opportunities.

Version B:

A college degree is important. One reason is that graduates have access to better jobs. These jobs usually offer higher pay. College study also helps students develop important skills, such as communication and problem-solving. Because education brings new opportunities, earning a degree can improve a person's future.

Version B flows better because each sentence begins with familiar information and adds something new, creating a smooth connection from one idea to the next.

Cohesion makes paragraphs easier to read by connecting sentences; coherence keeps all sentences focused on the main idea.

The first sentence gives the main idea. Each following sentence should start with a familiar idea before adding something new. For example, in a well-written paragraph about college degrees, the first sentence introduces the central idea. The next sentence continues this topic and brings in a new detail. Each sentence links with the previous one. If sentences jump between topics, readers may find the text hard to follow, even if each idea fits the overall subject. The topic stays clear, but poor connections between sentences make reading harder.

If writing feels awkward or choppy, rewrite sentences to start with familiar concepts. If there are several points that don't connect naturally, numbering them can help. For example: "Advocates of college degrees point to three main benefits." This lets readers know how each idea fits together.



Coherence

Cohesion is about smooth flow between sentences. Coherence is about all sentences fitting together to support the main idea. Sometimes, a paragraph can connect ideas from sentence to sentence but still not be clear on what the main idea is.

For example:

Having a college degree helps shape job choices and future opportunities. Skills learned in college can lead to better decisions. Higher education often leads to stronger problem-solving abilities. These skills can be useful in many areas of life.

All sentences connect, but if they do not relate clearly to one main point, the paragraph loses coherence. Both cohesion and coherence are needed for strong, clear writing.

Building Coherence in Paragraphs

A paragraph works best when each sentence starts with a familiar idea and adds something new. However, strong writing is not just about flow—it also needs to be about one main idea. Free-writing or first drafts may jump from topic to topic. Writers can use these drafts to find the main purpose, then organize the paragraph around that key idea. When the purpose is clear, writing becomes much easier. Coherent paragraphs show that the analysis is thoughtful and well planned.

Concluding Sentences

Some guides say to end each paragraph with a clear conclusion, like a small summary. Most good academic writing does not use this style. The final sentence should be in the writer's own words, but it does not always need to wrap up the paragraph as if it were an essay. As long as the paragraph supports the key sentence and develops the point, the last sentence can be simple and direct.

Example 1:

The first and last sentence both discuss "little science," making the paragraph feel complete.

Example 2:

The last sentence introduces a new idea, but the paragraph still works well because all sentences help explain the key idea.

Every sentence in a paragraph should add something new. Do not focus too much on writing a concluding sentence for every paragraph. Instead, make sure each point is explained clearly.

Paragraphs as Structure

Think of paragraphs as punctuation marks that organize writing and make it easier to read. Each paragraph should fit into the flow of ideas. Paragraphs are more like building blocks in a strong structure, each playing an important role in supporting the whole text. Make sure every part has its place and helps develop the overall argument.

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1. Michael Harvey, *The Nuts and Bolts of College Writing*, Second Edition (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 2013), 70. ↩
 2. Etiology is the cause of a disease—what's actually happening in cells and tissues—while epidemiology is the incidence of a disease in a population. ↩
 3. Joseph M. Williams and Joseph Bizup. *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace* 11th edition (New York: Longman, 2014), 68. ^[SEP]
Joseph M. Williams and Joseph Bizup. *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace* 11th edition (New York: Longman, 2014), 68. ^[SEP] ↩
 4. *Ibid.*, 71. ↩
 5. The quote uses a version of an ASA-style in-text citation for Mark S. Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties," *American Journal of Sociology* 78 (1973): 1360-80. ↩
 6. Guiffre. *Communities and Networks*, 98. ↩
 7. Harry Collins and Trevor Pinch, *The Golem: What You Should Know About Science* 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Canto, 1998), 58. ↩
 8. *Ibid.*, 74. ↩

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3.4: Parts and Characteristics of a Good Paragraph

Learning Objectives

1. To identify the parts of a paragraph: title, topic sentence, supporting sentences with details, concluding sentence, and transitions
2. To understand how each part relates to one another within a paragraph through multiple examples
3. To learn the key characteristics of a paragraph: format, unity, cohesion, and completion through multiple examples
4. To practice writing each part of a paragraph with key characteristics through a variety of exercises

I. Warm-Up



a group of children laughing and running outdoors

Read the paragraph “Missing My Childhood Days” below and do the activities that follow.

Missing My Childhood Days

Thanks to two people and one place, my childhood was filled with fun. The first special person was my cousin Hector. I was the only child to my mom, and he was the only child to his mom. We were not lonely because we played and enjoyed family trips together. I loved playing hide and seek with him the most. The running, anticipating^[1], shouting, and laughing will always be in my memories. Secondly, I really miss my best friend Lisandra from my elementary school. Our moms were best friends, so it was easier for us to do many things together. For example, we used to explore the resorts and hotels near our homes. We imagined how we could decorate our own houses as elegantly as the hotels. Additionally, Lisandra had a little sister called Lolanda, and we loved to play with her and care for her as if she were our own baby. We fed her and sang songs to her. Even though I lost contact with Lisandra after she switched to a different school, our time together was very precious to me. Lastly, I really miss my childhood home. It was a big house with a patio decorated with pots of beautiful flowers. The house was large enough for me to ride my bike inside. There was also a pool. We had many family parties there. Playing riddles^[2] by the poolside was one of the most popular games among us. Nowadays I do not have Hector and Lisandra in my life, and my childhood house has long been sold. However, I am grateful for having them all in my past because they have left me with priceless^[3] memories.

By K. P. Checo (student), ESL Writing III, Harper College. Used with permission.

Discuss in groups:

1. What are your most unforgettable childhood memories? Why are they unforgettable?
2. What three areas of childhood does the author miss the most?
3. What is the main idea of the above paragraph? Where do you find it in the paragraph?
4. Where is the title?
5. How does the author begin the paragraph?
6. What is the spacing between one line to the next?
7. Does each new sentence start a new line?
8. What do you think a paragraph is?
9. What do you like about this paragraph?
10. How would you improve the paragraph?
11. If you could ask the writer a question, what would you ask?

II. Definition of a Paragraph

A **paragraph** is a group of sentences about one main idea. The goal of a paragraph is to communicate to the readers what you think of a topic (your main idea) and why you believe this way (your supporting ideas). A paragraph also follows a certain format. Paragraph writing is the foundation^[4] for all types of academic writing assignments such as essays and research papers.

II. Paragraph Format

You can see the format of a paragraph from “Missing My Childhood Days”:

1. Center the title in the middle of the top line.
2. Start the paragraph with indentation (a few open spaces in the beginning).
3. Type or write double spaced.
4. Each sentence follows the one before it without starting a new line.
5. Use font size 12 if you type. (The font size may be hard for you to determine in this web-book.)

III. Parts of a Paragraph

Understanding each part of a paragraph is an important step to good writing. One way to do this is to identify and color code each part.

Title – **pink** Topic sentence – **red** Supporting sentences – **green**

Supporting details – **blue** Concluding sentence – **red** Transitions – **yellow**

When you color code the parts, you know that

1. you understand the paragraph organization.
2. you are not missing any important components.
3. all the parts are in the right order.
4. the supporting details (**blue**) should be the longest and the most detailed.

Missing My Childhood Days

Thanks to two people and one place, my childhood was filled with fun. The **first** special person was my cousin Hector. I was the only child to my mom, and he was the only child to his mom. We were not lonely because we played and enjoyed family trips together. I loved playing hide and seek with him the most. The running, anticipating, shouting, and laughing will always be in my memories. **Secondly**, I really miss my best friend Lisandra from the elementary school. Our moms were best friends, so it was easier for us to do many things together. For example, we used to explore the resorts and hotels near our homes. We imagined how we could decorate our own houses as elegantly as the hotels. Additionally, Lisandra had a little sister called Lolanda, and we loved to play with her and care for her as if she were our own baby. We fed her and sang songs to her. Even though I lost contact with Lisandra after she switched to a different school, our time together was very precious to me. **Lastly**, I really miss my childhood home. It was a big house with a patio decorated with pots of beautiful flowers. The house was large enough for me to ride my bike inside. There was also a pool. We had many family parties there. Playing riddles by the poolside was one of the most popular games among us. Nowadays I do not have Hector and Lisandra in my life, and my childhood house has long been sold. However, I am grateful for having them all in my past because they have left me with priceless memories.

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Exercise 1. Use Paragraph “Missing My Childhood Days” as an example. Read Paragraph “Difficulties in English Writing” and identify the parts with the following colors:

pink Title	–	Topic
red sentence	–	Concluding sentence
green sentences	–	Supporting sentences
blue Supporting details	–	Transitions
yellow Transitions	–	Supporting details

Difficulties in English Writing

For me, writing is one of the most difficult skills to learn in English. First, with writing comes spelling. Many words are pronounced the same but spelt completely differently, like flower and flour, blue and blew. I need extra efforts to learn and remember how to spell and write them correctly. Another challenge I face in English is sentence structure. There are many types of sentences in English such as simple, compound, and complex. Each type has its own punctuation rules. It takes a lot of hard work to understand how to build sentences effectively. Finally, grammar is challenging. My professors emphasize the

importance of grammar because it plays a significant role in writing. Unfortunately, it is also one of the difficulties for me because it has many, many rules and exceptions. For example, in count and noncount nouns unit, there are many confusing words like police and family. At first, I thought the word “police” was singular, but in fact it is plural. In contrast, I thought the word “family” was plural, but it is singular in many situations! Mistakes in singular and plural nouns lead to errors in verbs. Despite all these difficulties in spelling, sentence structure, and grammar, writing remains to be one of my favorite aspects of learning.

By A. Alsalman (student), ESL Writing III, Harper College. Used with permission.

Read the above two paragraphs again, and you can see that a good paragraph consists of:

1. **A title** – to show the topic and catch the readers’ interest **pink**
2. **A beginning called the topic sentence** – to show the main idea **red**
3. **A middle called the supporting sentences and details** – supporting sentences to explain the main idea **green**; details to explain the supporting sentences **blue**
4. **Transitions or connecting words** – to connect the ideas and guide the readers **yellow**
5. **An ending called the concluding sentence(s)** – to finish the paragraph **red**



a hamburger

Paragraph Organization – the Hamburger Way

To make a tasty hamburger, you need to take time to get the ingredients ready and stack^[5] them up carefully. Planning and organizing your ideas for a good paragraph can be very similar to making a hamburger.



parts of a hamburger between two hands

1. The sesame seeds on the top piece of bread is what you see as you unwrap a hamburger. It is like the **title** of a paragraph.
2. The top piece of the bread is the first part of the hamburger. It is like **the topic sentence**.
3. The middle part is what makes the hamburger delicious. The more ingredients you add, the tastier the hamburger is. This part is like **the supporting sentences with details**. More details for the paragraph will make it more interesting to read.
4. You also add condiments like mustard, ketchup, and mayonnaise to not only make the hamburger juicier but also help the other ingredients like tomato slices and beef patties stick together. Those condiments are like **transitions**.
5. The last piece of the bread makes the hamburger complete. The bread is made with the same ingredients as the top piece but with a different shape. This is like **the concluding sentence**. It restates the topic sentence but in a different way.

Below, you are going to learn how to write each part.

IV. Title of a Paragraph

A title gives the readers information about what you write in the paragraph. It usually states or implies^[6] the topic of your writing.

1. **A good title is often very short. Sometimes it is only one word or one phrase. It is usually not a complete sentence.**

The Best Invention

The Reasons for My Mediterranean Diet

The Characteristics of a Good Boss

2. **A good title catches the readers' interest. It tells the readers about the main topic, but it does not tell everything.**

Why Not Studying Hard?

A Long-Kept Secret

To Mask or Not to Mask

3. **A good title follows capitalization and punctuation rules.**

- The first letter of the first word is always capitalized.
- Do not capitalize a short preposition, an article, or a coordinating conjunction unless it is the first word.
- Never capitalize the entire title.
- Do not put a period at the end.
- Do not put quotation marks around the title.
- Do not underline the title.

Discuss each pair of the titles below and notice how the errors are corrected.

the day I arrived in Chicago X



lots of books showing titles on shelves

The Day I Arrived in Chicago ✓

THE MAKING OF A DOCTOR X

The Making of a Doctor ✓

A Very Frustrating Experience. X

A Very Frustrating Experience ✓

“Advice from My Mother” X

Advice from My Mother ✓

The Mysterious Noise X

The Mysterious Noise ✓

For more explanations and examples in capitalization, please refer to Appendix B Capitalization. (Open Appendix B here.)

Exercise 2. Here are the titles of some paragraphs. Do they follow the rules? Write the correct title in the box. After you finish all the titles, you can check your answers by clicking the “Check” button. You may retry the exercise or see all the answers.

Example:

From my home to school

Correction: From My Home to School

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://harpercollege.pressbooks.pub/academic-writing-skills/?p=208#h5p-72>

V. Topic Sentence

A **topic sentence** is a sentence that contains the main idea of a paragraph. It is usually put in the beginning of a paragraph. A good topic sentence has two essential parts and one optional part:

1. the topic of your paragraph
2. the controlling idea – your attitude/opinion about the topic
3. (optional but preferred) predictors – the points you are going to explain in the body of the paragraph

In each pair of topic sentences below, one contains the topic and controlling idea. The other has the topic, controlling idea, and predictors. Identify each part and discuss which topic sentence you like better. Explain your reasons.

- My writing class is important in helping me prepare for college study.
- My writing class is important in helping me prepare for college study because I learn how to plan, write, and edit my own writing.
- I enjoy three aspects of my writing class.
- I enjoy three aspects of my writing class: my professor, my classmates, and the course materials.
- Many students feel stressed out in the writing class for three reasons.
- Because of long class periods, daily homework assignments, and lots of tests, many students feel stressed out in the writing class.,
- Writing in English is very different from writing in my native language.
- Writing in English differs from writing in my nature language in style, sentence structure, and punctuation.

Rules for a good topic sentence:

1. It must be a complete sentence that contains a subject and a verb.



a light bulb surrounded by six circles

- My interesting writing class (not a complete sentence) X
- How to improve writing skills (not a complete sentence) X
- My writing class is interesting for three reasons. (a complete sentence) ✓
- In my writing class, I am learning how to improve writing skills in three ways. (a complete sentence) ✓

2. It can be a positive or negative statement, not a question. If you ask a question in the beginning of the paragraph, you should answer it in the next sentence. That second sentence is the topic sentence.

- Why is learning English important? (a question) X
- What is the best way to improve writing skills? (a question) X
- Why is learning English important? It is so because good English skills benefit people in their study, work, and daily life. (The second part is the topic sentence.) ✓
- What is the best way to improve writing skills? I have three suggestions for ESL students to improve writing skills. (The second part is the topic sentence.) ✓

3. Narrow down your topic. General topics are difficult to focus on and write.

- Year 2020 was a difficult year for me. (too broad) X
- The COVID pandemic in Year 2020 made it difficult for me to study. (more specific) ✓
- The COVID pandemic in Year 2020 made it difficult for me to study for three reasons: my classes went totally online in March, I could no longer use the college library and the Language Lab, and the poor Internet connection at home often interrupted my study on the course Blackboard site. (more specific) ✓

4. Do not make an announcement.

- In this paragraph, I am going to talk about the disadvantages to online learning. (an announcement) X
- Let me explain the disadvantages to online learning. (an announcement) X
- This paragraph is about the disadvantages to online learning. (an announcement) X
- There are three disadvantages to online learning. (not an announcement) ✓
- There are three disadvantages to online learning: no immediate feedback from the professors, no interactions with the classmates, and unstable Internet connection at home. (not an announcement) ✓

5. Do not write a fact because your opinion (the controlling idea) is missing.

- Harper College is a community college. (a fact) X
- My classmates come from twelve different countries. (a fact) X
- Harper College offers the best ESL programs in Illinois in three aspects: experienced professors, free tutoring, and the Language Lab. (Controlling idea “best” is added.) ✓
- Representing twelve countries, my classmates are great resources for learning different cultures. (Controlling idea “great resources for learning different cultures” is added.) ✓

Exercise 3. Read the following topic sentences. Identify the topic, controlling idea, and predictors. Type your answers in the boxes. When you complete the entire exercise, you can click “Check” for feedback. You may retry or see all the answers.

Example:

I miss my high school life for three reasons: friends, sports, and time for myself.

topic: my high school life

controlling idea: miss for three reasons

predictors: friends, sports, time for myself

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Exercise 4. Are the following good topic sentences? If not, why not? How do you improve them? Click “True” for good topic sentences and “False” for the wrong ones. You will receive instant feedback after blue each sentence. If a topic sentence is wrong, you will see the correction and explanation in .

Example:

Electric cars

This is not a good topic sentence because it is not a complete sentence and the controlling idea is missing.

Correction: I like electric cars more than gas-powered cars.

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VI. Supporting Ideas and Paragraph Unity



a man sitting on a bridge over a river

Supporting means “holding up”, just as the bridge is “holding up” the man in the image on the left. **Supporting sentences** are crucial in “holding up” the main idea while making your paragraphs interesting and convincing^[7]. They must support or explain the main idea in the topic sentence.

A good strategy for logical supporting sentences is to predict the question the readers may ask about your topic sentence. The result of this planning is actually the paragraph outline you learned in Unit 2 The Writing Process.*(Open Unit 2 here.)*

Parts in a Paragraph	Outline Ideas
Topic sentence	Young people should not live in their parents’ house after graduating from college.
Question:	Why not?
Supporting Sentence 1	practice independence in daily life
Details 1	cooking, cleaning, money, my struggles to be mature
Supporting Sentence 2	experience real meaning of life
Details 2	make decisions, take risks, manage time, my involvement in community service
Supporting Sentence 3	learn to appreciate parents
Details 3	their teaching, their love, give them time to rest, joy in visiting my parents

Paragraph Unity

Unity comes from the verb “unite” and means “hold tight, together”. In a paragraph, it means that all the supporting sentences work together to serve the same purpose: explaining the main idea.

Imagine two bouquets of flowers. Both look beautiful and in perfect harmony within themselves. However, if one sunflower is inserted in the middle of the roses, it will look out of place because it breaks the unity of the rose bouquet.



a rose bouquet



a sunflower bouquet

Then how do you tell if your paragraph has unity? There are two easy ways:

1. Ask yourself, “Does each supporting sentence explain the controlling idea in the topic sentence?” If yes, your paragraph has unity. If not, you need to delete or change the supporting sentence. It is helpful to circle or underline your controlling idea in the topic sentence for easier checking.
2. Always make an outline of the paragraph before you write. If you come up with a new idea while drafting the paragraph, put it in your outline first and ask yourself the first question.

Does the following paragraph outline show unity?

Parts of a Paragraph	Outline Ideas
Topic sentence	Taking online classes helps college students in three significant ways.
Question:	What are these three ways?
Supporting Sentence 1	provide convenience
Details 1	no driving, flexible study time, no transportation issue, hard to focus because of noisy children in the same house
Supporting Sentence 2	practice time management skills
Details 2	set study time and follow it, learn to deal with distractions
Supporting Sentence 3	not get professor’s in-person help
Details 3	difficult materials, questions not answered right away

No, it does not show unity. It contains irrelevant^[8] ideas because they do not support the main idea “help college students”. Here are ways to improve the outline:

- Cross out the irrelevant ideas.
- Add relevant information to support the main idea.
- In the second support, a personal example is also added to make the paragraph more interesting.
- In the third support, the new idea “manage time better” is a repetition of the second support “practice time management skills”. Therefore, it should be deleted. It is important not to repeat the same information that is already explained in other parts of the support.

~~hard to focus because of noisy children in the same house,~~ **childcare easier, enjoy time together** ~~not get professor’s in-person help~~ **learn to study independently** ~~difficult materials, questions not answered right away~~ **solve problems, rely on oneself, YouTube, Khan Academy, other resources, manage time better**

Parts of a Paragraph	Outline Ideas
Topic sentence	Taking online classes helps college students in three significant ways.
Question:	What are these three ways?
Supporting Sentence 1	provide convenience
Details 1	no driving, flexible study time, no transportation issue,
Supporting Sentence 2	practice time management skills
Details 2	set study time and follow it, learn to deal with distractions, my example of learning from procrastination mistakes

Supporting Sentence 3

Details 3

Exercise 5. Use the above as an example. Read the outlines below. Cross out the supporting ideas/details that are irrelevant. Revise each outline so that all the supporting ideas explain the main idea in the topic sentence.

#1

Parts of a Paragraph	Outline Ideas
Topic sentence	Social distancing is important in preventing the spread of coronavirus.
Question:	Why is social distancing important in prevention?
Supporting Sentence 1	lower chance of passing the virus
Details 1	talking, sneezing, coughing, passing one person to the next
Supporting Sentence 2	the virus highly contagious
Details 2	through physical contact, Delta variant 60% more transmissible than the one before
Supporting Sentence 3	hospitals with good medical equipment
Details 3	ICU, respirators, oxygen tanks, N95 masks
Supporting Sentence 3	some people catch virus easily
Details 4	sick people, older people, children

#2

Parts of a Paragraph	Outline Ideas
Topic sentence	I suffered from severe mental stress during the Covid 19 lockdown in April 2020.
Question:	Why did you suffer from stress?
Supporting Sentence 1	worry about my health the health of my family
Details 1	brother essential worker, baby at home
Supporting Sentence 2	worry about money
Details 2	lost restaurant job, pay bills, good unemployment benefits
Supporting Sentence 3	online classes very hard
Details 3	convenient time, hard to learn Blackboard, no face-to-face practice, missed deadline of first assignment

#3

Parts of a Paragraph	Outline Ideas
Topic sentence	My cousin did not want to get the Covid-19 vaccine for three reasons.
Question:	What were the reasons?
Supporting Sentence 1	vaccine safety not sure
Details 1	Vaccine developed in a short time, worry about reactions and long-term side effects, reports about blood clots after vaccine
Supporting Sentence 2	He's healthy
Details 2	strong, seldom sick, good immunity

Supporting Sentence 3	stayed home all the time
Details 3	not contact other people, study online, get bored, want to have parties with friends

Exercise 6. Use the topic sentences below to build relevant supporting ideas. Check to make sure that all the ideas support the main idea in the topic sentence. Share your outline with your partner and discuss each other's ideas.

Example:

Parts of a Paragraph	Outline Ideas
Topic sentence	Owning a car is a necessity for community college students.
Question:	Why is a car necessary?
Supporting Sentence 1	need it for study
Details 1	on time to class, stay late in lab and library, not relying on friends or family, in control of time, my example of schedule
Supporting Sentence 2	need it for extra curricula activities and community service
Details 2	student clubs, volunteer work, my example of community service in the homeless shelter
Supporting Sentence 3	need it for fun
Details 3	party and movie with friends, regardless of time

1. Topic sentence: Men can often be better care givers than women.
2. Topic sentence: People 18 years and older should serve two years in the military.
3. Topic sentence: Chicago is the most romantic city in the U.S.
4. Topic sentence: Chicago is the best place for children to visit on the weekend.

Exercise 7. The following paragraph about a special place does not have unity. There are four additional sentences to be deleted (not including the example). Type the numbers of the irrelevant sentences in the boxes below. When you complete the entire exercise, you can click "Check" for answers. You may also retry or see all the answers. Sentence #4 is an example.



a balcony with a table, two chairs, and some plants

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Types of Supporting Sentences

Good supporting sentences not only explain the main idea but also include interesting details such as

facts – numbers, general truths, scientific truths...

reasons – logical explanations...

experts' opinions – research findings, quotes by experts in the field...

examples – stories of well-known people, personal experiences, personal quotes...

Read Paragraph “Good Roommates” below and discuss how the writer uses the types of details. Color supporting ideas in **green** and the details in **blue**.

Good Roommates

Having good roommates makes lives more enjoyable. First, **good roommates understand each other’s need for peace and quiet after a day’s study.**¹**They do not make unnecessary noises. For example, my roommate Abia and I have different class schedules. She spends the day at school, and I attend night classes. When I come back to the apartment very tired at 10 pm, she always turns down her music or speaks very softly on the phone with her friends. Moreover, good roommates share useful information.**²Writer Barbara Dana once said, “A good roommate may be the single most important thing to have when one is away at school.” It is true because Abia’s and my families are far away. I have taken more courses at college, so I give Abia advice about classes, student clubs, and scholarships. She helps me in a different way. While I was looking for a part-time job last year, she told me about the job openings in her workplace. Finally, **good roommates respect each other’s differences.**³As the U.S. is a land of immigrants, it becomes the land of opportunities to learn different cultures and religions. I have learned about the significance of Ramadan for Abia, and she has understood the importance of Easter for me. Together, we have developed a good understanding of each other’s beliefs. In brief, good roommates help each other become more caring, supportive, and tolerant^[9]. They make living easier in this complicated world.

In the first supporting details (first **blue** block marked with 1): personal examples of Abia and me

In the second supporting details (second **blue** block marked with 2): a quote by an expert, personal examples of Abia and me

In the third supporting details (third **blue** block marked with 3): general truth, logic, personal examples of Abia and me

Exercise 8. Use Paragraph “Good Roommates” as an example, read Paragraph “No Capital Punishment” and discuss what types of interesting details the writer uses. Color the supporting ideas in **green** and the details in **blue**.

No Capital Punishment^[10]

Capital punishment should be banned^[11] because the result cannot be changed, it is killing a life, and it does not stop the crime. First of all, the result of capital punishment is irreversible^[12]; therefore, it is important to be absolutely certain of a person’s guilt. Nevertheless, in some cases, this is simply impossible to prove a person’s guilt with 100% certainty. What if a person is wrongly charged? The death penalty will affect that person and his or her family forever. Next, capital punishment is killing. Killing people for any reason is wrong. Life is sacred, and humans do not have the right to decide the lives of others. Some people believe that capital punishment will stop criminals from committing crimes as they will be afraid to die. However, this is not the reality. Violent cases still occur daily. For instance, on the weekend of July 4th, 2021, Chicago Sun times reported that over 100 people were shot in Chicago and 19 of them died. That weekend was considered the deadliest and most violent in the city that year. This shows that putting criminals to death will not reduce the crime. For these reasons, death penalty should not be supported. The people and the government must find a better solution^[13] to punishing the law breakers.

data from

<https://chicago.suntimes.com/crime/2021/7/3/22561910/chicago-weekend-shootings-july-2-5-homicide-gun-violence>.
accessed on July 10, 2021.

Last

VII. Transitions and Paragraph Cohesion

Cohesion focuses on the link between ideas so that they flow naturally from one to the next. When a paragraph has cohesion, ideas progress smoothly to create a connected whole.



waterfall in Yellowstone National Park

Imagine cohesion as a waterfall cascading^[14] smoothly and continuously.

There are different ways to achieve cohesion. One of them is by using transitions.

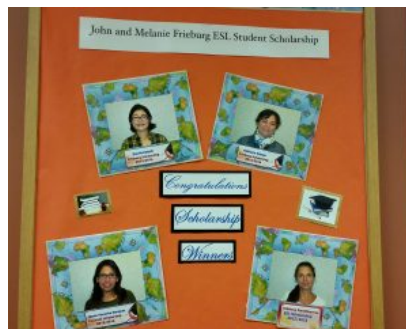
Transitions are also called **connecting words**. They help the writer organize thoughts and guide the readers in understanding the order of ideas clearly. Transitions are often needed not only between supporting sentences but also within them.

Compare the two paragraphs “Applying for the John & Melanie Frieburg ESL Student Scholarship” below. Which one is better? Why is it better? Underline the transitions in Paragraph 2 that you do not see in Paragraph 1.

Paragraph 1

Applying for the John & Melanie Frieburg ESL Student Scholarship

Applying for the John & Melanie Frieburg ESL Student Scholarship online is not hard if you follow these steps. Go to the scholarship page on the Harper College website and search for this specific scholarship. Read all the information related to it: the requirements, the deadline, and the amount of the award. Fill out the application form online completely and accurately. There are twelve supplemental^[15] questions including your grades and financial situation. Do you have an average grade of C? A paragraph about your educational aspiration is required. Get two recommendation letters from two people who know you well. Be sure to ask them first and give them enough time to write the letters. Proofread your application and submit before the deadline. You can always ask help from the Scholarship Office, the ESL Department, or the One Stop Center. The process is easy to follow and well worth your efforts for this special honor.



Frieburg ESL Student Scholarship winners 2015/2016

Paragraph 2

Applying for the John & Melanie Frieburg ESL Student Scholarship

Applying for the John & Melanie Frieburg ESL Student Scholarship online is not hard if you follow these steps. First, go to the scholarship page on the Harper College website and search for this specific scholarship. Read all the information related to it, such as the requirements, the deadline, and the amount of the award. When you are ready, fill out the application form online completely and accurately. There are twelve supplemental questions including your grades and financial situation. For example, do you have an average grade of C? A paragraph about your educational aspiration is also required. Another step is to get two recommendation letters from two people who know you well. Be sure to ask them and give them enough time to write the letters. Finally, proofread your application and submit before the deadline. At any stage of your application, you can always ask for help in the Scholarship

Office, the ESL Department, or the One Stop Center. As you can see, the process is easy to follow and well worth your efforts for this special honor.

With connecting expressions like “First”, “such as”, “When you are ready”, and other underlined transitions, Paragraph 2 explains the steps much more clearly.

How are the transitions used?

1. The transition for the first supporting idea is often optional.
2. “Finally” is usually used to show the last supporting idea in the body of the paragraph. It is not used right before the conclusion.
3. The transition before the concluding sentence is optional. It is actually more common without it.
4. After most transitions, there is usually a comma, but this is not always true. There are different types of transitions with different punctuation rules. You will learn them step by step throughout the course.
5. Do not overuse transitions; otherwise, the paragraph will read very unnatural. As you read and write more, you will gradually develop a sense of when a transition is or is not necessary.

Here are some common transitions:

Meaning	Transitions
Addition	first, second, then, next, in addition, also, furthermore, moreover, last, finally ...
Contrast	but, yet, on the other hand, on the contrary, however, nevertheless, though, even though, although ...
Time	first, second, then, next, at ____ (clock time), in the morning (afternoon, etc.), after that, soon, in the beginning, at the same time, meanwhile, at first, at last, before, after, later, when, while, as soon as, until ...
Reason	for, due to, because of, because, since, as ...
Result	so, therefore, thus, consequently, as a result ...
Location	near, beside, next to, in front, behind, around, on the top, on the bottom, on the right/left, to the right/left, under, opposite, above, below ...
Conclusion	in conclusion, in summary, to sum up, in brief, for those reasons ...
Example	like, such as, including, for example, for instance ...

Study Paragraph “Good Roommates” again. Notice how the three transitions (**first, moreover, finally**) connect the supporting ideas and the transition (**in brief**) is used before the concluding sentences.

Study Paragraph “No Capital Punishment” again. Notice how the transitions (**first of all, therefore, nevertheless, next, however, for instance**) are used to connect ideas between supporting ideas and within them. The transition (**for these reasons**) is placed before the concluding sentence.

Exercise 9. Choose the appropriate transitions below and type them in the boxes first, second, next, in to finish the paragraph about a daughter. There may be more than one correct addition, also, answer, but type just one. Not all listed transitions are needed. When you furthermore, complete the entire exercise, you can click “Check” for feedback. You may retry or moreover, last, see all the answers. The first one is an example. finally, for example, to sum up

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Exercise 10. Choose the appropriate transitions below and type them in the however, on the first boxes to finish the paragraph about a life lesson. There may be more than Saturday, then, after crying one correct answer, but type just one. Not all listed transitions are needed. for an hour, while I was When you complete the entire exercise, you can click “Check” for feedback. eating breakfast, now, at You may retry or see all the answers. The first one is an example. night, finally, after that, after I arrived

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VIII. Concluding Sentence(s)

A **concluding sentence** signals the end of a paragraph.

You can also write two or three sentences in this part with one or



words “THE END” on wooden pieces

more of the following methods:

1. Restates^[16] the main idea but in different words or sentence structure.
2. Summarize the main points in the body of the paragraph.
3. Express an opinion, make a prediction, put forth a recommendation, or ask a question related to the topic.

A conclusion must not bring up a new topic.

× For those three reasons, I enjoy swimming the most. I will also start playing basketball next week.

Topic sentence	Different ways to write a concluding sentence or concluding sentences
Swimming is my favorite hobby.	Restate the main idea: • For those three reasons, I enjoy swimming the most.
	Restate the main idea + summarize the supporting points in the body: • For the benefits of physical health, mental wellbeing, and social life, I enjoy swimming the most.
	Restate the main idea + express an opinion • For those three reasons, I enjoy swimming the most. It is the activity that has kept me healthy in the last ten years.
	Restate the main idea + make a prediction: • For those three reasons, I enjoy swimming the most. If everyone can do this activity regularly, this will be a very healthy country.
	Restate the main idea + put forth a recommendation • For those three reasons, I enjoy swimming the most and recommend this healthy activity to everyone.
	Restate the main idea + ask a question • For those three reasons, I enjoy swimming the most. Shouldn't everyone start this hobby, too?

Exercise 11. Compare the pairs of topic sentences and concluding sentences from the paragraphs you have studied in this unit. Then discuss in groups what method the concluding sentences use and how they relate to the topic sentences.

Example:

Paragraph “Missing My Childhood Days”

Topic sentence: Thanks to two people and one place, my childhood was filled with fun.

Concluding sentences: Nowadays I do not have Hector and Lisandra in my life, and my childhood house has long been sold. However, I am grateful for having them all in my past because they have left me with priceless memories.

The conclusion restates the main idea (they have left me with priceless memories), summarizes the three supporting points in the body (I do not have Hector and Lisandra in my life, and my childhood house has long been sold), and expresses an opinion (I am grateful for having them all in my past). The conclusion relates to the topic sentence and explains the controlling idea very well.

1. Paragraph "Difficulties in English Writing"
2. Paragraph "My Special Place"
3. Paragraph "Good Roommates"
4. Paragraph "No Capital Punishment"
5. Paragraph "Applying for the John & Melanie Frieburg ESL Student Scholarship"
6. Paragraph "My Daughter"
7. Paragraph "My Valuable Life Lesson"

IX. Paragraph Completion

Each paragraph explains a complete idea and needs to have a clear ending. There are several ways to check if the paragraph is complete:



a checklist and a yellow pencil

1. Does the paragraph have a title?
2. Is the topic sentence there?
3. If you have predictors in the topic sentence, are all of them explained in the body of the paragraph?
4. If the supporting sentences are present, are there details to further explain the ideas in them?
5. Do you have a concluding sentence at the end?
6. Are there proper transitions to connect ideas?

If any one part is missing, the paragraph is incomplete.

Read the following paragraph. Is it complete? If not, discuss what is missing and how you can improve the paragraph.

Jogging is beneficial physically, mentally, and socially. First, jogging makes people physically fit. It not only strengthens the muscles and immune system but also helps to reduce weight. Thirty minutes of jogging will burn about 250 calories. Extra weight causes all kinds of health problems, and a daily run will help shed^[17] the extra pounds. Besides, jogging keeps people mentally healthy by reducing their stress. Modern life is full of anxieties. Workers have project deadlines, students take tests, parents deal with family financial challenges, and all people run into relationship issues from time to time. According to many doctors, jogging can act as a stress reliever^[18], boost^[19] the feel-good hormone, and distract people from daily worries. Jogging is a simple act of activity that helps people become healthier in many ways.

What is missing?

1. There is no title. Add a title, such as "The Best Exercise" or "The Benefits of Jogging".
2. The third support is missing. From the topic sentence, the readers expect to see support in three areas: physical, mental, and social. However, the writer did not discuss the "social" aspect of jogging. Therefore, the paragraph is incomplete. The writer should add some information about the social benefits of jogging. Ideas could include joining a jogging club and meeting new friends.

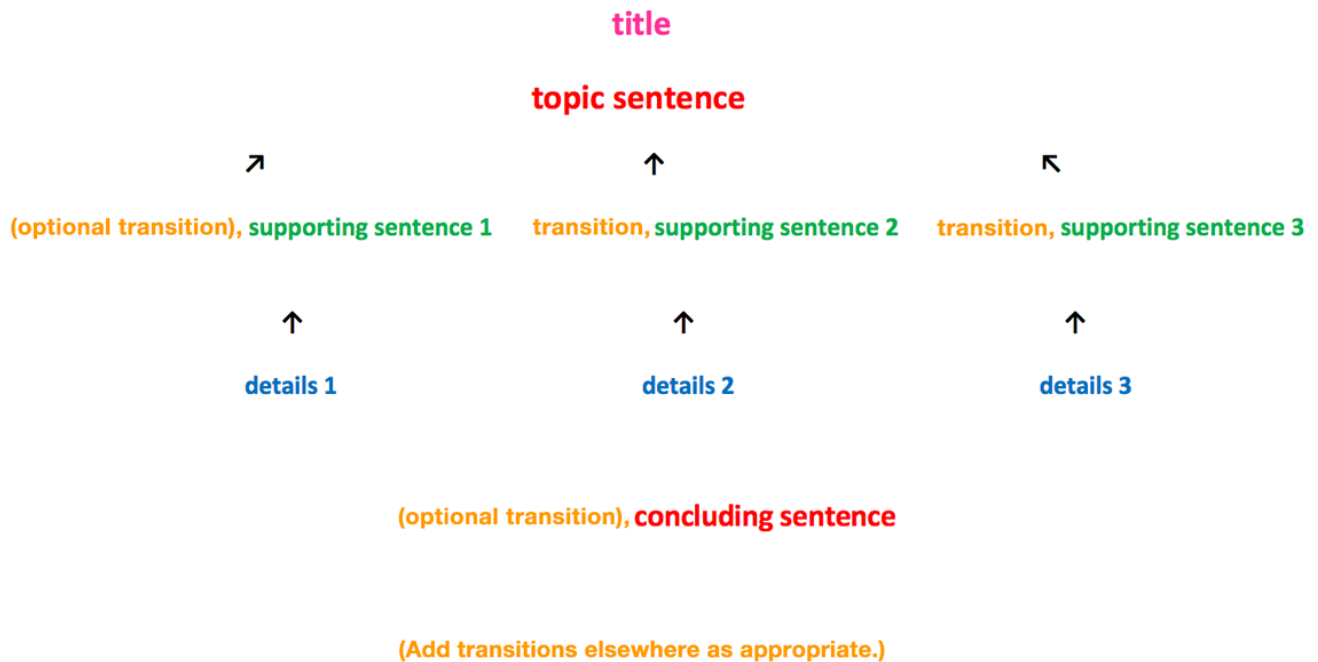
Exercise 12. Use the above paragraph as an example. Is the following new one complete? If not, discuss what is missing and how you can improve the paragraph.



unleashed dogs on beach

Unleashed dogs are dangerous to the environment, other living beings, and even to themselves. First of all, dogs do not have minds like humans; therefore, they often do not know what proper behavior is in public. When they are not restricted by a leash, they can run and step on flowers and plants in the parks. They may also leave their waste there if their owners are unaware of it. What's more, dogs can frighten the pedestrians on the street. Some of them are afraid of dogs and may experience intense fear when a dog jumps at them. Dogs may also scare drivers. What if they lose control of their vehicles? Other animals like ducks and geese will also find the running and barking "strangers" threatening. Lastly, unleashed dogs are a danger to themselves. There are many hidden holes on the roads and in the parks, and dogs can easily fall into them and hurt themselves. Because dogs can also cause traffic accidents, they may be injured as well. If there is construction nearby with heavy machinery and harmful chemicals, the consequences will be deadly to the dogs.

Now you can understand better all the parts of a paragraph and how they relate to each other. The following template is not the only way to write a paragraph, but it is a good way to start.



a paragraph structure

X. Unit Review Practice

Exercise 13. Color code the following paragraph about online learning. It is based on an outline example you studied earlier in this unit. As you read, do the following:

pink Title –
Topic sentence
red –
Supporting sentences
green –

Supporting details –
blue transitions –
yellow conclusions –
Concluding sentence(s)
red –

- Have you taken an online class? If so, have you had similar experiences as described in this paragraph?
- What types of supporting ideas and details are used to explain the main idea?
- Does the paragraph have unity?
- What types of conclusion are used?
- Is the paragraph complete?
- Is the title centered on the top line? Is the first sentence indented?
- What do you like about this paragraph?
- How do you improve the paragraph?

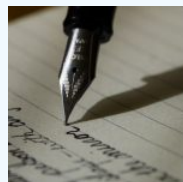


a MacBook, a notebook, etc. on a desk

Three Benefits of Online Classes for College Students

Taking online classes helps college students in three significant ways. First of all, online classes provide many conveniences. Many college students have a job, and some also need to take care of their family. When the courses are online, the students often do not have a fixed class time. As a result, they can pick any shift available at work, and they can also schedule activities with their loved ones like going to the park or even going on a vacation. For those with small children, childcare is no longer a huge issue. In addition, some college students do not own a car, but their education will not be affected because they can take classes remotely. Secondly, college students improve their time management skills. I have learned to use my time more wisely. For example, during my first semester of online class, I spent a lot of time video chatting with my friends in the beginning. My professor set all the test deadlines by midnight each Sunday, so I postponed my study till Saturday. However, there was too much reading and practicing then, and I simply could not complete the required study to get a good grade. In the second half of the semester, I forced myself to make a schedule for daily study time and to be more disciplined^[20] in following it. I was able to finish all the materials before the test, and my grade improved. The most important skill through online learning is independent learning. Even though professors are available through office hours, emails, and live sessions, students must learn to solve problems on their own most of the times. They can do so by reading, checking dictionaries, and finding additional online learning resources from YouTube videos or the Khan Academy website. The type of “self help” foster skills in independent learning, which is essential in college study and future profession. Taking online classes is challenging, but these benefits make their experiences worthwhile.

NSNT Practice



a pen writing in a notebook

Go to **The NSNT Free Writing Approach and Additional Weekly Prompts for Writing** in Appendix A. ([Open Appendix A here.](#)) Choose two topics to practice the steps in the writing process, including writing a paragraph for each. You may start with the NSNT approach and then rewrite the paragraphs. Check to see that the paragraphs have all the necessary parts and that they follow the rules for format, unity, cohesion, and completion.

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Vocabulary Review



a page in a dictionary

The words here have appeared in this unit. The best way to learn them is to guess the meaning of each word from the context. Then hover your computer mouse over the number beside each word to check its meaning and part of speech. These words are also listed in the footnote area at the end of each unit.

Here, you can use the flashcards below to review these words.

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Summary

1. A paragraph is a group of sentences with one main idea.
2. A paragraph must follow a proper format, with the title in the center of the top line and an indent in the beginning of the paragraph. All the sentences should be written/typed double spaced and follow one another without starting a new line.
3. A paragraph consists of a title, a topic sentence, several supporting ideas with details, 1-2 concluding sentences, and transitions.
4. Each paragraph should have all the above necessary components. If one of them is missing, the paragraph is not complete.
5. A title explain the topic of the paragraph or gets the readers interested in the topic. It is centered on the first line and should follow the capitalization rules.
6. A topic sentence contains the main idea of a paragraph and is usually put in the beginning. It must have a topic and a controlling idea. It must be a complete sentence and should not be a fact or an announcement.
7. Supporting sentences should be detailed and should help explain the topic sentence. If anything is irrelevant to the main idea, the paragraph will not have unity.
8. A concluding sentence restates the main idea and signals the end of the paragraph. It can include an opinion, a suggestion, a recommendation, or a question that is related to the topic.
9. Transitions are important in guiding the readers in understanding the information in the paragraph and providing a smooth connection between ideas. Transitions help maintain the cohesion of a paragraph.

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-

1. anticipate: verb, wait for something to happen ↵
 2. riddle: noun, a game of guessing the answers ↵
 3. priceless: adjective, very valuable, cannot be measured by a price ↵
 4. foundation: noun, basis, groundwork of something more complicated ↵
 5. stack: verb, to pile or put one on top of another ↵
 6. imply: verb, say indirectly ↵
 7. convincing: adjective, make people believe ↵
 8. irrelevant: adjective, not related, having nothing to do with the main idea ↵
 9. tolerant: adjective, accepting differences ↵
 10. capital punishment, noun phrase, a type of punishment to kill a criminal ↵
 11. ban: verb, stop, not allowed to happen ↵
 12. irreversible: adjective, cannot go back to the original situation ↵
 13. solution: noun, the answer to a problem ↵
 14. cascade: verb, flow from high to low smoothly ↵
 15. supplemental: adjective, extra, additional ↵
 16. restate: verb, write again, repeat ↵
 17. shed: verb, get rid of ↵
 18. stress reliever: noun phrase, something to reduce or take away stress ↵
 19. boost: verb, raise, improve ↵
 20. disciplined: adjective, self-controlled, strict with oneself ↵
-

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3.5: Grammar - Unit 8 Three Common Errors in Sentence Structure and Punctuation

Learning Objectives

1. To review the three sentence structure types: simple, compound, and complex
2. To identify the three common errors: fragments, run-ons, and comma splices
3. To learn correct punctuation in sentences containing “for example, for instance, such as, like, including”
4. To practice fixing fragments, run-ons, and comma splices through multiple examples and exercises

I. Pretest



a child holding a magnifying glass over a plant

In the following ten sentences about science, some have the correct sentence structure and punctuation, but some do not. If the sentence is correct, choose “correct”. If not, choose the other answer. After you finish one sentence, you will get instant feedback on your answer before the next sentence. If you make mistakes, you can retry all the questions or see all the answers at the end of the pre-test.

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II. Three Common Errors in Sentence Structure and Punctuation

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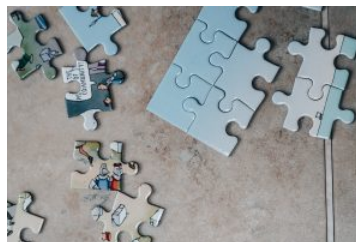
<https://harpercollege.pressbooks.pub/academic-writing-skills/?p=518#h5p-127>

For detailed explanations and practice in sentence structure and punctuation, open Unit 7 here.

The above sentence types are essential in writing. They will help you avoid and correct the three types of common errors:

- Sentence fragment
- Run-on sentence
- Comma splice sentence

III. Sentence Fragments



pieces of a puzzle

A fragment means “a part”, “not a whole”. All the large and small pieces in the image on the right are fragments because they are only parts of a complete puzzle.

A **sentence fragment** refers to an incomplete sentence, just like the puzzle pieces. While some fragments are acceptable in spoken English, they are serious mistakes in formal writing.

Read the following conversation:

Student A: Do you like science?

Student B: No.

Student A: Why not?

Student B: Because it's hard for me.

In a conversation, it is very common and perfectly fine to have the above incomplete sentences. However, in formal situations, each sentence must express a complete thought and must contain a subject and a verb. Therefore, the conversation would become:

Student A: Do you like science?

Student B: No, I don't.

Student A: Why don't you like science?

Student B: I don't like it because it's hard for me.

Sentence Fragments in Two Common Situations

1. Missing subject, missing verb, or missing both subject and verb

- Is an important class. (no subject)
- I afraid of science. I not good at it. (no verbs)
- Too hard. (no subject, no verb)
- I admire scientists. For their contributions^[1]. (second part, no subject, no verb)

2. A period between dependent and independent clauses in complex sentences

- Science is very important for all human societies. Because it brings new discoveries and innovations^[2].
- When students graduate. They apply the scientific knowledge to their work.

Ways to Fix Sentence Fragments

1. Always check for both the subject and the verb in a sentence. If one is missing or both are missing, add the subject, the verb, or both. Sometimes, you can attach the fragment to the complete sentence before or after it. In the following sentences, the subjects are underlined, and the verbs are **bold-faced**.

- Science **is** an important class.
- I **am** afraid of science. I **am** not good at it.
- Science **is** too hard.
- I **admire** scientists for their contributions.

2. If you see a subordinating conjunction such as “when” and “if”, check to see that there is not a period between the dependent and independent clauses. If the dependent clause is before the independent clause, a comma is needed in between. If the order is reversed^[3], do not add a comma.

- Science is very important for all human societies because it brings new discoveries and innovations.
- Because science brings new discoveries and innovations, it is very important for all human societies.
- When students start working, they apply the scientific knowledge to their work.
- Students apply the scientific knowledge to their work when they start working.

Exercise 1. The following sentences are about citizen scientists. Some of them are complete sentences, but some are fragments. Choose “True” for a complete sentence and “False” for a fragment. You will get blue instant feedback. If a sentence is a fragment, you will also see the correction in

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An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
<https://harpercollege.pressbooks.pub/academic-writing-skills/?p=518#h5p-126>

Exercise 2. The following paragraph explains a citizen science project. There are four additional sentence fragments (not including the example). Find them and correct them. Be careful with punctuation and capitalization. The first one is an example.

Example:

If so. A citizen science project called NeMo-Net might be for you.

Correction: If so, a citizen science project called NeMo-Net might be for you.

Playing While Contributing

Do you like playing computer games? *If so. A citizen science project called NeMo-Net might be for you.* One of the tasks is playing an iPad game to help the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) classify coral reefs by painting 3D and 2D images of coral. In this project help rebuild underwater environments and create maps. These maps “can be used to better understand and protect coral reefs globally”. This citizen science project covers many subject areas such as animals, biology, climate and weather, computers and technology, geography, nature, and many others. The project started on April 22, 2020 and is still actively recruiting^[4] volunteers. After the volunteers are accepted. They will be involved in “annotation, data analysis, data entry...measurement, observation, problem solving, sample analysis”. For more information. Please check <https://www.citizenscience.gov/catalog/519/#>. You should apply as soon as possible. If you are interested.

adapted from <https://www.citizenscience.gov/catalog/519/#>. Last accessed on June 1, 2020.

IV. Run-On Sentences



some sports cars with one on top of another

The expression “run-on” gives the image of two cars, the second one trying to run on top of the first one – a huge traffic violation^[5] causing damage to the cars as well as harm^[6] to the people inside.

Writing follows the same principle. Just as cars must maintain^[7] a safe distance from each other, sentences need to be separated by a proper punctuation and/or a conjunction.

A **run-on sentence** occurs when two complete sentences are written one after another without anything to separate them.

Examples of Run-On Sentences

1. We have just learned about citizen science have you heard of citizen journalism?
2. It is a new expression it simply means that ordinary people can publish news stories and photos online.
3. You have posted messages and photos on Facebook you are a citizen journalist.
4. You can change your posts you can also delete them.

In #1 – #4 above, there are actually two complete sentences with two complete ideas in each. The second sentence seems super aggressive^[8] and is running on top of the first one.

Ways to Fix Run-Ons

1. Separate the two sentences with a period and capitalize the first letter of the second sentence.
 - We have just learned about citizen science. Have you heard of citizen journalism?
 - It is a new expression. It simply means that ordinary people can publish news stories and photos online.
2. Combine the two sentences into a compound sentence by adding a proper coordinating or adverbial conjunction. Add appropriate punctuation.
 - You can change your posts, or you can delete them.
 - You have posted messages and photos on Facebook, so you are a citizen journalist.
 - You have posted messages and photos on Facebook; therefore, you are a citizen journalist.
3. Combine the two sentences into a complex sentence by adding a proper subordinating conjunction. Add a comma if needed.
 - If you have posted messages and photos on Facebook, you are a citizen journalist.
4. Combine the two sentences into one simple sentence.
 - You can change or delete your posts.

Exercise 3. The following sentences are about citizen journalism. Each is a run-on sentence. Use one of the strategies above to correct each error. Be careful with punctuation and capitalization.

Example:

People receive news in different ways now it is easier than ever.



a person video taping an event with a smart phone

Correction: *People receive news in different ways. Not it is easier than ever.*

1. In the past, people relied on newspapers, radios, and TV for news now they check news on their cell phone app or computer.
2. It is much more convenient to use a digital device it is fast.
3. Digital technology has made it possible to spread news more quickly people can find out what is going on in the world right away.
4. They do not need to wait for professional journalists to report news they can read or watch news instantaneously^[9] while it is happening.
5. Anyone with a smart phone can take photos and videos he/she shares them on the social media .
6. People usually learn about world events within seconds events are happening in the other parts of the globe.
7. News is not only fast it is free.

8. People used to pay for newspapers and cable subscriptions news from their smart phone costs no money.
9. Citizen journalism is changing the way the news is shared is this good?
10. It depends it can bring both positive and negative results.

Exercise 4. The following paragraph about citizen journalism has five more run-on sentences (not including the example). Correct the errors. Be careful with punctuation and capitalization. The first one is an example.

Example:

On the one hand, it provides news quickly at no cost it may also have more interesting photos, videos, and comments.

Correction: *On the one hand, it provides news quickly at no cost. In addition, it may have more interesting photos, videos, and comments.*

A Mixed Blessing

Citizen journalism is a mixed blessing. *On the one hand, it provides news quickly at no cost it may also have more interesting photos, videos, and comments.* Sometimes, such news can bring important changes to the world. Most importantly, it is a very powerful tool ordinary citizens can be actively involved in changing the world. On the other hand, the news may not be reliable the citizen journalists are not trained professionally. It is possible that their news is biased^[10] it is also possible that the stories are inaccurate^[11]. Therefore, readers may be confused or misled^[12]. Besides, inappropriate images and reports may affect other people's privacy or damage their reputation. Another effect is on the traditional media industry and professional journalists. Readers are not buying as many newspapers as before they are not reading news from the authoritative^[13] sources. Some newspaper offices have to close down and find new ways to survive. Before the digital technology, people had never thought of sharing and receiving news through citizen journalism it is hard to imagine what news reporting would be like in twenty years.

V. Comma Splice Sentences



a fender bender crash

While a run-on sentence resembles one car on top of another, a comma splice is similar to two vehicles too close to each other causing a fender bender accident^[14].

Sometimes, students try to correct a run-on sentence by placing a comma in between. They actually have created a new type of mistake called **comma splice**. When two complete sentences are separated by just a comma, it becomes a comma splice issue. It is a tricky and common issue because it is not considered a mistake in some other languages.

Examples of Common Splices

1. One of the largest news events in 2012 was the 3rd Annual iReport Awards, the event was sponsored by the Cable News Network (CNN).
2. The goal was to show the best citizen journalism work in stories, photos, and videos, many people were interested.
3. People from different countries sent more than 100,000 stories to a special CNN website, thirty-six pieces of work were finally nominated^[15] for the awards in 2012.
4. The event showed the power and popularity of citizen journalism, CNN stopped the iReport project in 2015.
5. The project ended, there had been different issues.

Adapted from <https://www.cnn.com/2013/04/03/opinion/ireport-awards-hawkins-gaar/index.html>, last retrieved on June 14, 2021, and <https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/IReport>, last retrieved on June 14, 2021.

Ways to Fix Comma Splices

1. Separate the two sentences with a period and capitalize the first letter of the second sentence.
 - People from different countries sent more than 100,000 stories to a special CNN website. Thirty-six pieces of work were finally nominated for the awards in 2012.
2. Combine the two sentences into a compound sentence by adding a proper coordinating or adverbial conjunction with appropriate punctuation.
 - The goal was to show the best citizen journalism work in stories, photos, and videos; therefore, many people were interested.
 - The event showed the power and popularity of citizen journalism, but CNN stopped the iReport project in 2015.
3. Combine the two sentences into a complex sentence by adding a proper subordinating conjunction. Add a comma if needed.
 - The project ended because there had been different issues.
 - Because there had been different issues, the project ended.
4. Combine the two sentences into one simple sentence.
 - One of the largest news events in 2012 was the 3rd Annual iReport Awards sponsored by Cable News Network (CNN).

Exercise 5. The following sentences tell a real experience in sharing information in the social media. Some sentences contain comma splice errors, and some contain run-on mistakes. Identify which type of error it is in each and correct it. Be careful with punctuation and capitalization.

Example:

People do not check facts some terrible mistakes may occur in the social media.

This is a run-on sentence.

Correction: When people do not check facts, some terrible mistakes may occur in the social media.

1. This is a true story, it happened a few years ago.
2. I was in a social media chat group with forty-five former classmates we had attended the same junior high school class many years before.
3. One day, one of the classmates posted a message, it said that Mr. Wu, one of our teachers, had just passed away.
4. We were very sad we shared our old memories of that teacher in the chat.
5. Two days later, a message popped up it was from Mr. Wu!
6. Some classmates had invited him to join the chat group a while back. He seldom spoke we forgot that he was in the group.
7. Mr. Wu protested nicely that he was still alive, he even posted his recent photo to prove that.
8. We were relieved we started to greet him.
9. The student who had posted the wrong news was embarrassed, we did not blame him.
10. This incident shows the importance of checking the facts we were pleased that the fact was a happy one in our case.

Exercise 6. The following paragraph about OhmyNews contains six more run-on and comma splice sentences (not including the example). Find the errors and correct them. Be careful with punctuation and capitalization. The first one is an example.

Example:

One of the largest and best known is OhmyNews, it is a news website from South Korea.

Correction: One of the largest and best known is OhmyNews from South Korea.

OhmyNews

There are many citizen journalism news websites. *One of the largest and best known is OhmyNews, it is a news website from South Korea.* It was established by Oh Yeon Ho in 2000 it is the first in Korea for readers to publish news. Oh Yeon Ho was born in 1964 he majored in literature, journalism, and mass communication in his studies. He believes that every citizen is a reporter. The reporters of OhmyNews come from all areas of the society – doctors, office workers, farmers, students, and many others they provide reports on politics, economy, education, culture, and other topics from around the world. OhmyNews is popular the reporters are people in the local communities. It is also powerful, for instance, many people believe that OhmyNews played an important role in the 2002 South Korean presidential election. After the election, President Roh Moo-hyun gave his first interview to OhmyNews, this shows that citizen journalism can be influential in a country's politics.

Adapted for editing purpose from <https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/OhmyNews> and <http://www.ohmynews.com/>. Last retrieved on June 14, 2021.

VI. Sentences with “for Example, for Instance, Like, Such as, Including”

In Exercise 6, you noticed the expression “for instance”. It is very common to have “for example, for instance, like, such as, including” when you give examples. This also means that the mistakes associated with them are also common.

Errors in Giving Examples

- Fragment: There are many citizen journalism sites. For example, Global News Voices and Highway Ukraine Citizen Journalism Online.
- Run-on: There are many citizen journalism sites for example, Global News Voices and Highway Ukraine Citizen Journalism Online are two of them.
- Comma splice: There are many citizen journalism sites, for example, Global News Voices and Highway Ukraine Citizen Journalism Online are two of them.

When you correct the errors, you need to consider:

1. Are these expressions followed by a word, a phrase, or a complete sentence?
2. How do the punctuation and capitalization change as a result?

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For detailed explanations and practice in sentence structure and punctuation, open Unit 7 here.

There are different ways to include examples, and the following can be a good starting point.

Common Ways to Write Examples

Writing Examples with “for Example” or “for Instance”

complete sentence . For example, complete sentence

- There are many citizen journalism sites. For example, Global News Voices and Highway Ukraine Citizen Journalism Online are two of them.

complete sentence; for example, complete sentence

- There are many citizen journalism sites; for example, Global News Voices and Highway Ukraine Citizen Journalism Online are two of them.

complete sentence, for example, words or phrases

- There are many citizen journalism sites, for example, Global News Voices and Highway Ukraine Citizen Journalism Online

- “For instance” is used exactly the same ways as “for example”.
- There is a comma after “for example” and “for instance”.
- Capitalize the letter “F” in “For” only after a period, not after a comma or semi colon.

Writing Examples with “Such as”, “Like”, or “Including”

complete sentence + such as + words or phrases

- There are many citizen journalism sites such as Global News Voices and Highway Ukraine Citizen Journalism Online.

complete sentence, + such as + words or phrases

- There are many citizen journalism sites, such as Global News Voices and Highway Ukraine Citizen Journalism Online.

- “Like” and “including” are used exactly the same as “such as”.
- They are not followed by a complete sentence.
- The comma before them is optional.
- There is no comma after them.

For more explanations and examples with periods, question marks, exclamation marks, commas, semi colons, colons, apostrophes, and quotations marks, please refer to Appendix C Punctuation. Open Appendix C here.

Exercise 7. The writer of the following sentences wants to give specific examples. You can help by filling in the information on the lines. Pay attention to the punctuation and the structure (word, phrase, sentence).

Example:

There are many sources for people to obtain news from. For example, they can read newspapers and magazines.

1. They can also learn about news from the social media such as _____.
2. In my native country, older people prefer TV news programs, such as _____.
3. However, most young people receive news from the social media; for instance, _____.
4. For me, besides the social media, I also get news from people around me including _____.
5. Some news websites like _____ are very popular among the older people.

VII. Unit Review Practice

Exercise 8. The following sentences are about citizen science in some parts of the world. Each sentence contains a fragment, run-on, or comma splice error. Identify each error and correct it. Be careful with punctuation and capitalization.

Example:

Citizen science is going on in different parts of the world. Including Asia, Australia, Europe, and North America.

The second part is a fragment.

Correction: Citizen science is going on in different parts of the world, including Asia, Australia, Europe, and North America.



Webpage of European Citizen Science Association

1. If you are interested in a project from Asia. Check its website: <https://www.facebook.com/CitSciAsia/>.
2. Australia has very active citizen science programs, one of the interesting programs in August 2021 was to match caterpillars to moths. For more information, you can check <https://citizenscience.org.au/>.
3. Europe is another huge area for citizen science. The headquarters of the organization is in the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin there are also offices in Brussels and Leiden. For projects and events, you can check <https://ecsa.citizen-science.net/>.
4. In the U.S., many different organizations support and fund^[16] citizen science. Including the U.S. government agencies as well as nonprofit organizations^[17]. The following websites give you more information: <https://www.citizenscience.gov/#>; <https://scistarter.org/citizen-science>

Exercise 9. The following paragraph tells a brief history of citizen science. It has one error in fragment, one error in run-on, and one error in comma splice (not including the example). Find the errors and correct them. Be careful with punctuation and capitalization. The first one is an example.

Example:

Scientific development has always relied on people in the local communities. Such as school children and retired professionals.
Correction: Scientific development has always relied on people in the local communities, such as school children and retired professionals.

The Beginning of Citizen Science

Scientific development has always relied on people in the local communities. Such as school children and retired professionals. Even though many people have heard about the term “citizen science” only recently. The practice of community involvement started as early as 1800s. According to the National Geographic, Wells Cooke was probably one of the first people, he started a program about bird migration^[18]. The U.S. government and volunteers started to get involved in collecting information about bird migration patterns. They recorded the information on cards their efforts helped advance^[19] scientific research and understanding of birds.

Adapted from <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/citizen-science/>. Last retrieved on June 16, 2021.

Exercise 10. The following paragraph about a citizen science project has one error in fragment, one error in run-on, and one error in comma splice (not including the example). Find the errors and correct them. Be careful with punctuation and capitalization. The first one is an example.

Example:

“What’s Your Water Level?” is another citizen science project it is very interesting.

Correction: “What’s Your Water Level?” is another very interesting citizen science project.

An Interesting Project

It is a global project, it is sponsored by a U.S. government agency called the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The project started on February 2, 2017, and it is still seeking more volunteers. They will be taking photographs and recording data of water levels the information will be used to analyze how the changing water levels affect the roads, homes, and businesses. Of course, a camera is necessary, but like all the citizen science projects, curiosity in science and willingness to participate will be the key^[20]. If you are interested. You can check the website <http://noaa.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=8e4a278576964f47b4fc050e51f344ca>.

Exercise 11. Choose one topic from #1-3 and one more from #4-6 to write two paragraphs. In each paragraph, include at least two times total of “for example”, “for instance”, “such as”, “like”, or “including”. Check for fragments, run-ons, and comma splices in your paragraphs. Be careful with punctuation and capitalization.

1. What are the benefits of citizen science for the science, community, and volunteers? For more ideas, you may watch the TEDx video on YouTube “Citizen Science: Everyone Counts”, by Caren Cooper. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G7cQHSqfSzi&t=17s>
2. What would be the potential disadvantages of citizen science? Why do you think so?
3. Have you ever participated in a citizen science project? If so, describe your project and what you have learned from it. If not, would you be interested in one and why?
4. Click on the link and read the short report “Citizen Journalism Provided Glimpses of Mumbai Attacks” from New York Times on November 30, 2008. According to the report, how are ordinary citizens transforming the traditional news media? <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/30/world/asia/30twitter.html> .
5. Do you consider yourself a citizen journalist? If yes, in what way have you been involved in citizen journalism? If not, why not?
6. Besides citizen science and citizen journalism, what are other ways for ordinary people to contribute to the global, national, or local communities?

NSNT Practice



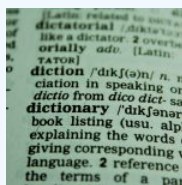
a pen writing in a notebook

Go to **The NSNT Free Writing Approach and Additional Weekly Prompts for Writing** in Appendix A. ([Open Appendix A here.](#)) Choose two topics that you have not written about. You may start with the NSNT approach. Then revise and edit your paragraphs. Check for errors in fragments, run-ons, and comma splices. You are encouraged to share your writing with your partner and help each other improve.

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Vocabulary Review



a page in a dictionary

The words here have appeared in this unit. The best way to learn them is to guess the meaning of each word from the context. Then hover your computer mouse over the number beside each word to check its meaning and part of speech. These words are also listed in the footnote area at the end of each unit.

Here, you can use the flashcards below to review these words.

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Summary

1. Three common errors in sentence structure and punctuation are fragments, run-ons, and comma splices.
2. A sentence fragment is an incomplete sentence. It could be missing the subject, verb, or both. It also occurs when a period is put in between the dependent and independent clauses in a complex sentence.
3. A run-on sentence is two complete sentences written without anything to separate them.
4. A comma splice sentence is two complete sentences written with just a comma in between.
5. There are different ways to fix a sentence fragment:
 - Add a subject, a verb, or both.
 - Delete the period between the dependent and independence clauses in a complex sentence. Add a comma if the dependent clause starts the sentence.
6. There are different ways to fix a run-on and a comma splice:
 - Separate the two complete sentences with a period.
 - Combine the two parts into a compound sentence.
 - Combine the two parts into a complex sentence.
 - Rewrite the two parts into a simple sentence.
7. “For example, for instance, like, such as, including” are often used as follows:
 - complete sentence. For example, complete sentence
 - complete sentence. For instance, complete sentence
 - complete sentence; for example, complete sentence
 - complete sentence; for instance, complete sentence

- complete sentence, for example, words or phrases
 - complete sentence, for instance, words or phrases
 - complete sentence, like words and phrases (The comma is optional.)
 - complete sentence, such as words and phrases (The comma is optional.)
 - complete sentence, including words and phrases (The comma is optional.)
-
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-
1. contribution: noun, give money, time, knowledge, etc. for a good purpose ↵
 2. innovation: noun, new creation or discovery ↵
 3. reversed: adjective, going the opposite direction ↵
 4. recruit: verb, look for new members for a group, an organization, etc. ↵
 5. violation: noun, an action that breaks the rule or law ↵
 6. harm: noun, injury ↵
 7. maintain: verb, keep, remain ↵
 8. aggressive: adjective, violent and attacking ↵
 9. instantaneously: adverb, right away, at the same time ↵
 10. biased: adjective, with prejudice ↵
 11. inaccurate: adjective, not correct, with mistakes ↵
 12. mislead: verb, cause misunderstanding ↵
 13. authoritative: adjective, as an expert ↵
 14. fender bender accident: noun phrase, a car accident with minor damage to the cars ↵
 15. nominate: verb, name, propose ↵
 16. fund: verb, give money to ↵
 17. non-profit organization: noun phrase, an organization whose purpose is not to make money ↵
 18. migration: noun, move to live in another place ↵
 19. advance: verb, move forward ↵
 20. key: noun, the most important part ↵

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4: Module 4 - Weeks 5 and 6

- 4.5: Grammar - Verb Basics in Academic Writing
- 7.1: Reading - Annotation Strategies
- 7.2: Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Avoiding Plagiarism
- 7.3: Avoiding Plagiarism
- 7.4: MLA Formatting

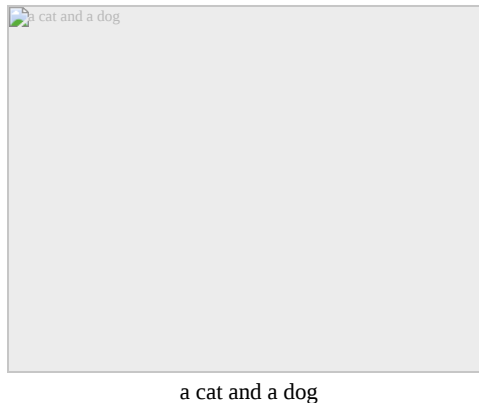
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4.5: Grammar - Verb Basics in Academic Writing

Learning Objectives

1. To understand what a verb is and why it is important
2. To differentiate between “Be” verbs and “Do” verbs, action verbs and non-action verbs, helping verbs and main verbs, with their various uses through multiple examples and exercises
3. To be aware of the twelve verb tenses and five basic verb forms

I. Pretest



The following ten sentences are about pets. Some verbs are bold-faced. Identify what type of verb each one is by selecting one of the two choices. After you finish one sentence, you will get instant feedback on your answer before the next sentence. If you make mistakes, you can retry all the questions or see all the answers at the end of the pre-test.

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II. Definition of a Verb and Its Importance

Each sentence in English must have a verb. A **verb** expresses an action or shows a state of existence^[1].

Why are verbs important? There are two reasons:

1. They appear in every sentence in English.
2. Errors in verbs cause serious misunderstanding^[2].

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For detailed explanations and practice in sentence structure and punctuation, open Unit 7 here.

Exercise 1. Highlight the verbs in the following short paragraph about pet dogs. (To highlight, you position your computer cursor on the verbs and right click.)

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III. “Be” Verbs and “Do” Verbs

“Be” verbs: They look different depending on the subjects and the verb tenses. The most common ones are “am, is, are, was, were”. A “Be” verb is often followed by a noun, a pronoun, an adjective, a prepositional phrase, or an expression of age.

1. My neighbor’s pet is a rabbit. Her name is Bonny. (followed by nouns)

2. Bonny is not mine. (a pronoun)
3. Bonny's tail is short and cute. (adjectives)
4. Bonny is in a cage when my neighbor is at work. (prepositional phrases)
5. Bonny was two months old when I first met her. (an age)

“Do” verbs: There are many “Do” verbs: study, get, sleep, wear, have, like, think...

Their forms also change based on the subjects and the verb tenses.

1. Bonny stays indoors most days.
2. My neighbor prepares special food for her.
3. Sometimes I see Bonnie in my neighbor's backyard.
4. I played with her yesterday.
5. I hope that I can play with her again soon.

A “Be” verb is NEVER followed by the base form of a “Do” verb.

1. Bonny is stay indoors most days. X
2. Bonny stays indoors most days. ✓
3. Most rabbits are stay in a cage. X
4. Most rabbits stay in a cage. ✓
5. I was meet my neighbor's pet rabbit for the first time last week. X
6. I met my neighbor's pet rabbit for the first time last week. ✓

IV. Action and Non-Action Verbs

Action verbs: They show the action of the subject. All action verbs are “Do” verbs.

1. In the U.S., many pet owners treat their pets as part of the family.
2. Those pets get special food and even regular medical checkups.
3. Some of them sleep in their owner's bed.
4. They receive toys and often wear festive^[3] outfits^[4] during holidays.
5. Most pets enjoy their good lives.

Non-action verbs: They do not show actions; instead, they show emotional or mental states, five senses, possessions, and others. Non-action verbs are also called stative verbs or non-progressive verbs. “Be” verbs are non-action verbs in most cases.

1. Pets love their owners.
2. Pets understand how much they are loved.
3. Some pets can weigh over fifty pounds.
4. Most pets have animal doctors called vets.
5. Pets are our good friends.

Common Non-Action Verbs

Emotional/mental state:

- appreciate, believe, detest, dislike, fear, forget, hate, imagine, know, like, love, mean, mind, miss, need, prefer, remember, respect, understand, want ...

Five senses:

- appear, feel, hear, look, see, seem, smell, taste ...

Possessions:

- belong, contain, have, own, possess ...

Others:

- cost, find...

Sometimes, the same verb can be both an action verb and a non-action verb, with different meanings and grammatical structures. Discuss the difference between the underlined verbs below.

1. What do you think of my kitten? It seems that she is always thinking about playing hide and seek with me. (non-action, action)
2. Feel the fur of my kitten. It feels so soft. (action, non-action)
3. My kitten measures twelve inches in length^[5]. I measure her every month to see how much she has grown. (non-action, action)
4. I see some red pots on the kitten's skin. I am taking her to her vet. We are seeing the vet at 3 pm this afternoon. (non-action, action)

Non-action verbs can be used in different verb tenses except progressive tenses, but action verbs can be used in all tenses.

1. The kitten has been napping for a long time. He looks (
- 2.
3. is looking) content^[6] in his sleep.
4. Samantha likes (
- 5.
6. is liking) kittens. She has (is having) two. Right now she is preparing their favorite snacks.

Exercise 2.^[7] The following sentences are about color-blindness of dogs. Some verbs are bold-faced. Highlight if each bold-faced verb is an action verb or a non-action verb. The first one is an example. When you finish the exercise, you can retry or see all the answers. (To highlight, you position your computer cursor on the verbs and right click.)



a black dog with a yellow tennis ball in mouth

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V. Helping Verbs and Main Verbs

Helping verbs: They are also called *auxiliary verbs*. These verbs “help” the **main verbs** to

- show verb tense
- make a negative sentence
- ask a question
- change the meaning or tone
- change the voice (from active to passive or passive to active, not addressed in this course)

Helping verbs must work with main verbs to form complete verbs. Common helping verbs include “do, does, did, have, had, had, will”.

helping verb + main verb = complete verb

1. Mohamod has always wanted to get his driver's license. (helping verb “has” + main verb “wanted”)
2. He has prepared for this driver's test for several months. (helping verb “has” + main verb “prepared”)
3. He does not want to carpool with his friend every day. (helping verb “does” + main verb “want”)
4. He hopes that he will pass the road test. (helping verb “will” + main verb “pass”)
5. Should he celebrate if he passes? (helping verb “should” + main verb “celebrate”)



two people in a car

Modals: Modals are a special type of helping verbs. They mainly show ability, possibility, obligation, advice, and many others. They are followed by the base form of the main verb.

1. Every driver in the U.S. must have a driver's license. (modal/helping verb "must" + main verb "have")
2. Should he or she buy car insurance, too? (modal/helping verb "should" + main verb "buy")
3. Maintaining a car can be expensive. (modal/helping verb "can" + main verb "be")
4. Life could become difficult without a car. (modal/helping verb "could" + main verb "become")

For detailed explanations and examples of modals, please refer to Unit 15 Modals. (Open Unit 15 here.)

Exercise 3. The following is a brief account of Jose and his car. Type the helping verb in each sentence in the appropriate box. The first sentence is an example. When you finish the entire exercise, you can retry or see all the answers.

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VI. Twelve Verb Tenses

While verbs show actions or states of being, verb tenses indicate the **time** of those actions or states of being:

- in the past, in the present, in the future, or from past to present
- happened just once, happened repeatedly, or is still happening.

There are twelve tenses in English:

	PAST	PRESENT I will study.I am...	FUTURE
SIMPLE	I studied. You studied. He studied. They studied.	I study. You study. He studies. They study.	I will study. I am going to study. You will study. You are going to study. He will study. He is going to study. They will study. They are going to study.

PROGRESSIVE	I was studying. You were studying. He was studying. They were studying.	I am studying. You are studying. He is studying. They are studying.	I will be studying. I am going to be studying. You will study. You are going to study. He will be studying. He is going to be studying. They will be studying. They are going to be studying.
PERFECT	I had studied. You had studied. He had studied. They had studied.	I have studied. You have studied. He has studied. They have studied.	I will have studied. You will have studied. He will have studied. They will have studied.
PERFECT PROGRESSIVE	I had been studying. You had been studying. He had been studying. They had been studying.	I have been studying. You have been studying. He has been studying. They have been studying.	I will have been studying. You will have been studying. He will have been studying. They will have been studying.

In this course, you will be focusing on using eight of the above tenses in writing: simple present, present progressive, present perfect, present perfect progressive, simple past, past progressive, past perfect, and simple future tenses. You will learn the rest of the tenses in future courses.

VII. Five Basic Verb Forms

In the above chart, the verb “study” appears in different forms – study, studies, am studying, had been studying, will be studying, and some others. These are called verb forms. Verbs have five basic forms:

BASE	PRESENT	PRESENT PARTICIPLE	PAST	PAST PARTICIPLE
Be	am, is, are	being	was, were	been

Do	do, does	doing	did	done
Have	have, has	having	had	had
Study	study, studies	studying	studied	studied
Move	move, moves	moving	moved	moved
Speak	speak, speaks	speaking	spoke	spoken

Always remember that a verb tense and its verb forms must match each other. There are detailed explanations and practice in verb tenses and forms from Unit 11 through Unit 14 in this book. (Open [Unit 11 Present Tenses](#), [Unit 12 Past Tenses](#), [Unit 13 Future Tenses](#), [Unit 14 Mixed Tenses](#) here.)

VIII. Unit Review Practice

Exercise 4. The following paragraph about leashing the dog is from a previous unit. Highlight “Be” for “Be verbs” and “Do” for “Do verbs”. The first one is an example. When you finish the exercise, you can retry or see all the answers. (To highlight, you position your computer cursor on the verbs and right click.)



two dogs on leash

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Exercise 5. The following is a story about two puppies in love. Some verbs are bold-faced. Select what the type of verb each one is. You will get instant feedback after each sentence. If you make a mistake, you may also retry or see the answer.



a dog swimming

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Exercise 6. Take a paragraph you have written in this course. Exchange it with your partner's.

In your partner's paragraph,

1. single underline all the "Be" verbs.
2. double underline all the helping verbs.
3. circle all the non-action verbs.

When you finish, return the paragraph to your partner. Discuss if you agree with each other on all the verbs.

NSNT Practice



a pen writing in a notebook

Go to **The NSNT Free Writing Approach and Additional Weekly Prompts for Writing** in Appendix A. ([Open Appendix A here.](#)) Choose two topics to write a paragraph each. You may start with the NSNT approach and then rewrite it. Pay attention to the use of verbs. Be mindful of the verbs you are using: Are they main verbs or helping verbs? Action verbs or non-action verbs? “Be” verbs or “do” verbs? You are encouraged to share your writing with your partner and help each other improve.

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Vocabulary Review



a page in a dictionary

The words here have appeared in this unit. The best way to learn them is to guess the meaning of each word from the context. Then hover your computer mouse over the number beside each word to check its meaning and part of speech. These words are also listed in the footnote area at the end of each unit.

Here, you can use the flashcards below to review these words.

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Summary

1. A verb shows an action or a state of being and usually comes after the subject in a sentence.
2. “Be” verbs include “am, is, are, was, were” and some others.
3. There are many “Do” verbs such as “swim, study, eat, drive”.
4. A “Be” verb is NEVER followed by the base form of a “Do” verb.
5. An action verb shows the action of the subject.
6. A non-action verb shows the state, condition, or possession of the subject. A non-action verb cannot be used in a progressive verb tense.
7. Some verbs can be both action and non-action verbs, with a different meaning.
8. A helping verb must be accompanied by a main verb in a sentence.
9. There are twelve verb tenses and five basic verb forms. Each verb tense has its own verb forms. Verb tenses and verb forms must match each other in sentences.

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- a dog swimming © Photo by Marcia Soligo on Unsplash
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- a page in a dictionary © Pixabay

-
1. existence: noun, being there, being this way ↵
 2. misunderstanding: noun, understand something in the wrong way ↵
 3. festive: adjective, joyful, about holidays or festivals ↵
 4. outfit: noun, clothing ↵
 5. length: noun, the noun form of the adjective "long" ↵
 6. content: adjective, happy and satisfied ↵
 7. color-blindness: noun, not able to see the differences in colors ↵
-

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4.1: Reading - Annotation Strategies

Think about the following:

1. What is the best way to get ready for taking notes so that the process is most helpful?
2. What specific methods can improve how notes are taken?
3. Why is it important to review and add comments to notes after the note-taking session?

Notes do more than record what is read or heard. They help organize ideas and make sense of new topics, so note-taking and reading work well together. Taking notes keeps attention on key questions. During lectures or presentations, notes help follow main ideas and simplify information. Good notes build on existing knowledge, show patterns in the material, and point out areas needing more research or study.



Figure 4.7 Strong notes build on your prior knowledge of a subject, help you discuss trends or patterns present in the information, and direct you toward areas needing further research or reading. (Credit: Betsy Weber / Flickr Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

Here is the rewritten passage, using clear headings, concise language, and examples focused on online classes. The main ideas are preserved and made accessible for intermediate-level students:

Focus on Main Ideas, Not Every Word

Trying to write down every single word a speaker says is not helpful and makes it easy to miss important points. Instead, listen for main ideas and separate them from supporting details. Use simple abbreviations to write examples that explain these ideas.

Use Notes as Study Guides

Notes work best when used actively after class. If notes are not reviewed and organized, they may not help much. Research shows that most students forget much of what they record—up to 60–75 percent—within two days if they do not review their notes. Reviewing notes soon after class and checking them often improves memory.

Practice and Memory

Learning something new, like a music piece, is hard at first. Frequent review and practice make it easier to remember. Good note-taking habits develop in the same way—through repetition and review.

Importance of Note-Taking

Taking notes helps organize thoughts, prepare for class discussions, and study for exams. Successful notes make learning easier and improve participation. Improving note-taking skills can lead to better results in college and at work.

Analysis Question

What is your favorite note-taking method? When did you start using it? Has it helped you? What other methods could work well for you?

Getting Ready to Take Notes

Be ready to take notes by thinking about why notes are important. Choose a note-taking system that works best for each situation. Learn to use efficient shorthand for faster note-taking.

Organizing Notes

Everyone has different note-taking habits. The most helpful notes are organized and easy to review. Keep notes together for each class, like in a binder or organized computer files. Well-arranged notes save time and help with study.

Handwritten or Computer Notes?

Research shows that the format—handwriting or typing—is less important than how notes are used later. Both methods have advantages and disadvantages. Choose the method that matches personal needs and helps the most with reviewing and learning.

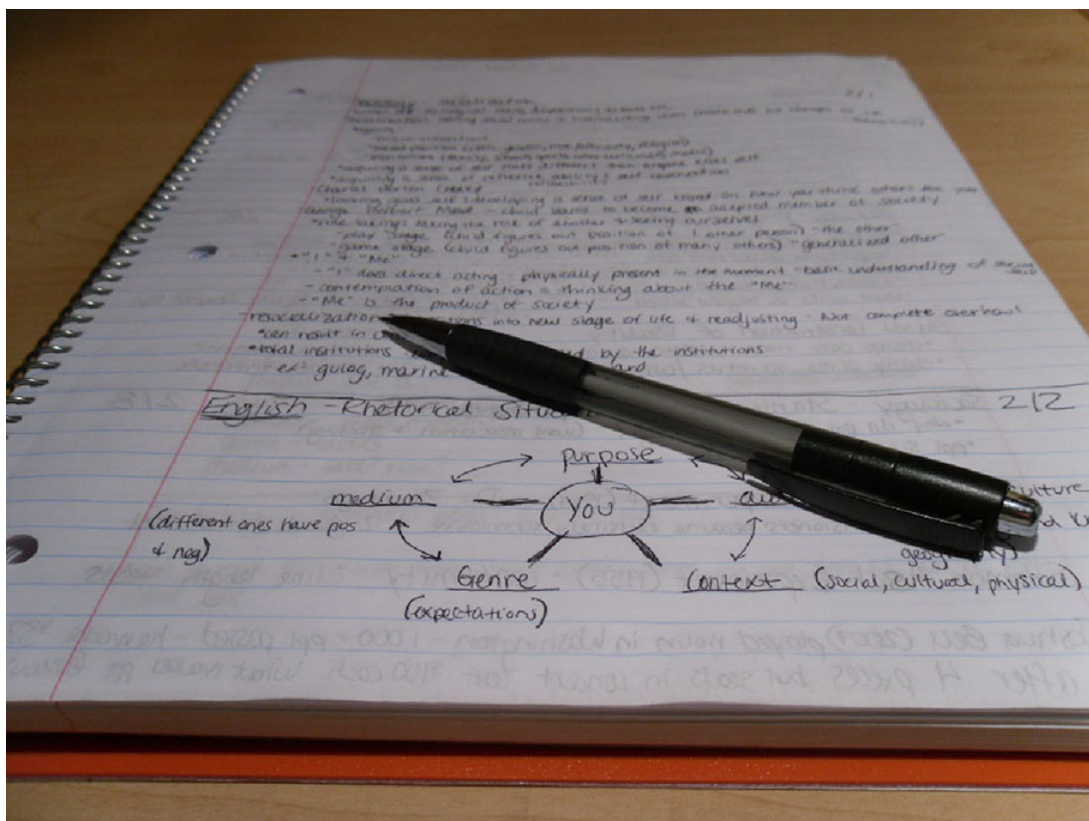


Figure 4.8 The best notes are the ones you take in an organized manner. Frequent review and further annotation are important to build a deep and useful understanding of the material. (Credit: English106 / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

Managing Note-Taking Systems

The best note-taking system is one that is used regularly. Note-taking takes practice, patience, and attention to detail. Sometimes, different note-taking styles work better for different classes. Use any combination of methods that helps organize and review notes.

Organizing Notes

Begin each set of notes with important information: date, course name, topic, and anything else useful for later review. Add reminders about related materials or handouts. Leave blank spaces so it's easy to add more notes or questions when reviewing.

Staying Connected

Keeping notes and readings organized helps with studying and remembering information. Apps like [Evernote](#) let students manage tasks, share notes, link to calendars, and access notes on different devices. [The Learning Center](#) offer study tips and strategies for different subjects and skills.

Note-Taking Strategies

A single note-taking method may have worked in high school, but college courses often need different strategies. Adjust your note-taking approach when topics get more complex, and use the best method for each class.

Cornell Method

The Cornell Method is a well-known way to organize notes. Divide paper into three sections: a summary area at the bottom, a recall column on the left, and a notes column on the right. This layout makes it easy to review and study later. The Cornell Method works for handwritten notes and can be set up in computer programs like Word or Excel. Using this method can help keep notes neat and useful for class and exams.

Topic/Objective:		Name:	
		Class/Period:	
		Date:	
Essential Question:			
Questions:		Notes:	
Summary:			

Figure 4.9 The Cornell Method provides a straightforward, organized, and flexible approach.

Using the Cornell Method

The Cornell Method is simple and organized. Write notes only on the right side of the page (the notes column) during class. Focus on main points and key ideas, and put the concepts into your own words rather than copying the speaker's exact sentences. Leave blank lines between ideas.

Use shortcut abbreviations or bullet points when possible, and avoid writing full sentences. If you need to add more details later, write the word “expand” next to those ideas so you remember to fill in the extra information after class.

Review your notes soon after class, ideally within eight hours but no later than one day. Add details and expand notes as needed. In the left recall column, write short cues—one or two words—summarizing the key ideas from your notes column.

After updating both columns, write a short summary (two or three sentences) at the bottom of the page in the summary section. Discuss notes with a classmate or group to make sure everyone understood the main points.

To study, cover the notes column and use the recall column to quiz yourself on main ideas. Practice this review regularly so you can remember information from lectures, textbook readings, and assignments when preparing for tests and exams.

Academic Essay Elements

Topic	Topic – Establishes context – Limits scope of essay – Introduces Issue/Problem
Thesis	Thesis – Central argument or point of paper – Arrives early in paper—usually toward end of first paragraph (maybe a bit later in longer papers) – Focused, clear, and specific – Reflects writer’s position on the topic/issue
Supporting Details	Supporting Detail Paragraphs – Each paragraph has a specific topic – Clarify, explain, illustrate, expand on topic – Provide EVIDENCE—quotes, data, references <u>Cite everything properly!</u>
Conclusion	Conclusion – Tie back to intro/thesis – Show how details supported the argument – Why is it important? – Point to implications/outcomes, but don’t introduce entirely new ideas

Use the structure, but don’t follow it too rigidly. The most important pieces are a strong thesis and good evidence to back it up. The conclusion should not just summarize—take it a little further.

Figure 4.10 This sample set of notes in the Cornell Method is designed to make sense of a large amount of information. The process of organizing the notes can help you retain the information more effectively than less consistent methods.

Advantages of the Cornell Method

The Cornell Method helps keep notes neat and organized. This makes studying easier since notes are divided by key ideas. In a messy group of notes, finding something like “Boxer—energetic” without context can be confusing. Is that fact important? Does it connect to the main points? Using an organized system sets you up for success.

Outlining

Outlines can also organize notes well, especially in some subjects. In a formal outline, main topics use Roman numerals, related concepts are placed below with capital letters, and supporting details are added with numbers. Indenting helps show levels of detail. This format makes it easier to see relationships between ideas, but can be challenging if the class moves quickly.

Here’s an example outline about dogs:

- I. Dogs
 - A. German Shepherd
 - 1. Protection
 - a. Assertive
 - b. Loyal
 - B. Boxer
 - 1. Family-friendly
 - a. Energetic
 - b. Playful

This system helps show connections between topics, concepts, and details. Any missing details can be added later when reviewing notes.

Chart or Table

Charts are useful for comparing topics. Divide the paper into columns with headings such as Breed, Traits, Advantages, Disadvantages, and Notes. Fill in information in the correct columns as the lecture continues.

Example chart for comparing dog breeds:

Breed	Traits	Advantages	Disadvantages	Notes
German Shepherd	Assertive, loyal	Good protection	May need lots of training	Popular police dog
Boxer	Energetic, playful	Great for families	Needs exercise	Good with children

This chart format helps organize ideas for easy review and study.

	Structure	Types	Functions in Body	Additional Notes
Carbohydrates				
Lipids				
Proteins				
Nucleic Acid				

Table 4.3 Example of a Chart to Organize Ideas and Categories

Importance of Reviewing Notes

Using organized formats like outlines, charts, or tables helps highlight important ideas and keeps notes clear for later study. Remember, reviewing notes after class is necessary with all note-taking systems. If notes are never reviewed, they do not help

much—much like writing a grocery list and then throwing it away before shopping. Reviewing makes it easier to remember key ideas from lectures, readings, and assignments.

Concept Mapping and Visual Note-Taking

Some students learn best with visuals. Concept mapping (or mind mapping) is a note-taking method that shows how main ideas connect. Draw main ideas in circles or boxes and link supporting concepts with lines. Details can branch out further. Maps can be simple or complex and use colors or shapes. Main ideas can be arranged in any direction, but using landscape paper may give more space for connections. This method makes relationships between ideas easy to see and helps organize and remember information.

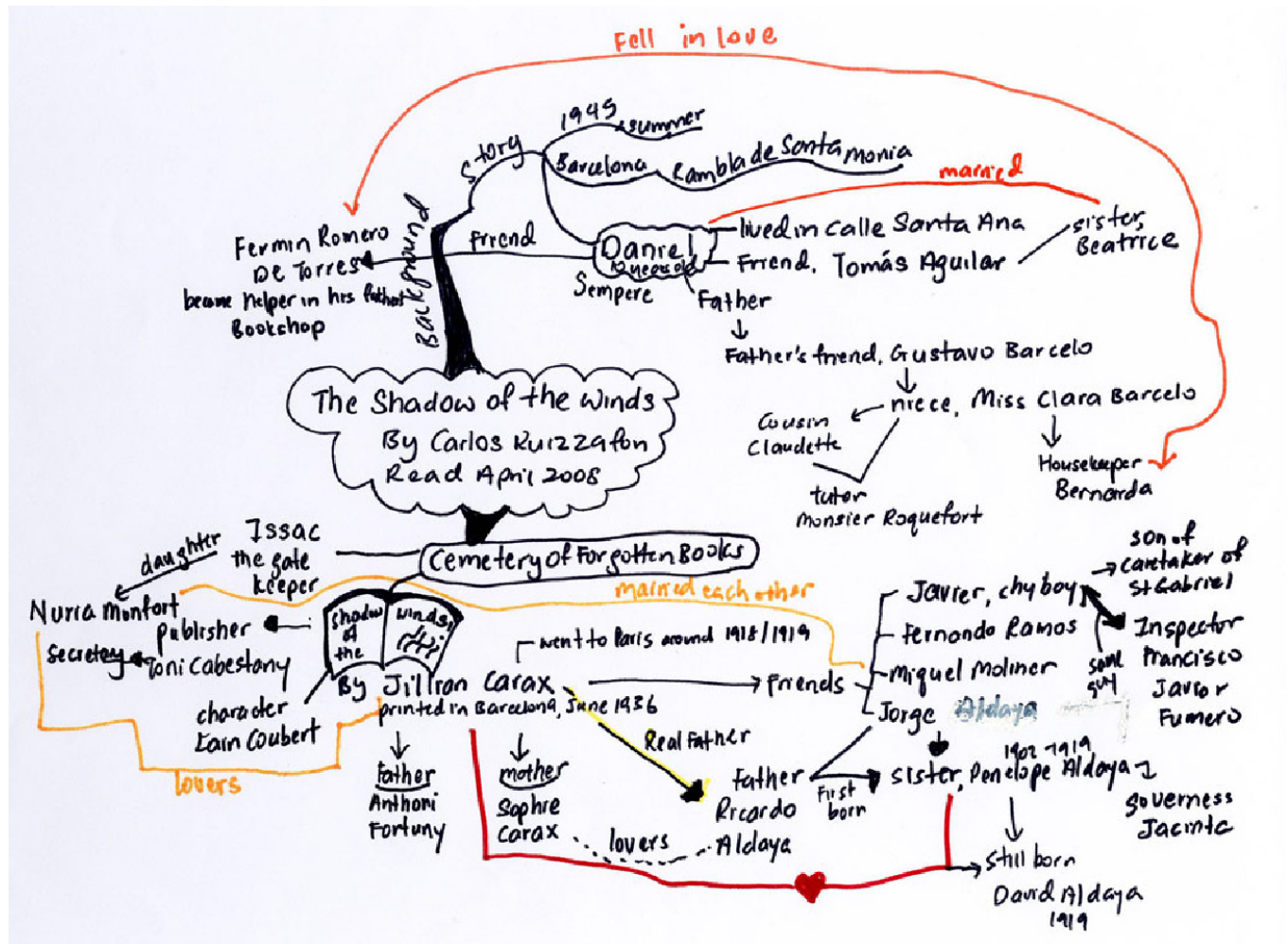


Figure 4.11 Concept mapping, sometimes referred to as mind mapping, can be an effective and very personalized approach to capturing information. (Credit: ArtistIvanChew / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

Visual Note-Taking

Adding pictures to notes can make information clearer and easier to remember. When words are hard to find or ideas feel complex, a simple drawing can help. Educators say that combining images and text in notes increases recall—using two ways to remember. Pictures in notes do not need to be perfect. Try adding sketches to your notes as a creative way to learn more effectively. Watch [Rachel Smith's TEDx Talk called "Drawing in Class"](#) to learn more about visual note-taking.

Choosing a Note-Taking Method

Experiment with different note-taking styles and use the method that works best. Practice with your chosen method will make note-taking and review easier and more organized, which can lower stress during studying and test preparation.

Using Shorthand for Notes

Most students do not learn official shorthand, but making up simple shortcuts and abbreviations can help take notes quickly in class. Personal shorthand makes note-taking faster and helps capture key points, especially when speakers talk quickly or repeat information only once. Get comfortable with basic abbreviations to speed up writing and stay organized.

Shortcut symbol	Meaning
w/, w/o, w/in	with, without, within
&	and
#	number
b/c	because
X, √	incorrect, correct
Diff	different, difference
etc.	and so on
ASAP	as soon as possible
US, UK	United States, United Kingdom
info	information
Measurements: ft, in, k, m	foot, inch, thousand, million
¶	paragraph or new paragraph
Math symbols: =, +, >, <, ÷	equal, plus, greater, less, divided by
WWI, WWII	World Wars I and II
impt	important
?, !, **	denote something is very significant; don't over use

Table 4.4

See the table above for examples of common shorthand symbols and abbreviations. Do you have any other shortcuts or symbols that you use in your notes? Ask your parents if they remember any that you may be able to learn.

Annotating Notes After Class

Reviewing and adding annotations to notes after class is a valuable study habit. Marking important points—by highlighting, underlining, or making extra notes—helps strengthen memory and understanding.

Highlighting draws attention to key information, making it easier to find during study sessions. Using different colors to organize topics can be helpful, but remember—less is more. Only highlight what is truly important. Highlighting whole passages is not effective; focus on specific terms or ideas. Always read the text before highlighting so you understand the main message first.

Underlining is another precise way to emphasize main ideas or key words. Annotations also include writing definitions, questions, or comments in the margins, circling terms, or marking passages for later review. Electronic texts can also be annotated.

Repetition and regular review of annotated notes improves learning. Check your notes and annotations before exams to save time. Use class notes and marked texts as study guides. Writing questions before reading and answering them after helps track your understanding and prepares you for assessments. As you gain more experience, you'll know what questions and notes work best for your studies.

When did Lincoln die?
April 15, 1865

The Gettysburg Address

President Abraham Lincoln

November 19, 1863

Where is Gettysburg?

Pennsylvania

What happened there?

Civil War battle of Gettysburg,
July 1-3, 1863 - union victory, but
largest # of dead in entire war

$$80(4 \times 20) + 7 = 87$$

"Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. ^{from US Constitution?} ^{No - Dec of Independence}

"Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so ^{formed} conceived and so ^{last} dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to ^{cemetery} dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But, in a larger sense, we ^{make holy} cannot dedicate — we ^{make holy} cannot consecrate — we ^{make holy} cannot hallow — this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be ^{like royalty} dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here ^{death} dedicated to the great task remaining before us — that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the ^{for no reason} last full measure of devotion — that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain — that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not ^{repetition} perish from the earth."

IRONY

phrases
from
Constitution?

↳ die

Figure 4.12 Annotations may include highlighting important topics, defining unfamiliar terms, writing questions in, underlining or circling key terms, or otherwise marking a text for future reference. Whichever approach you choose, try not to overdo it; neat, organized, and efficient notes are more effective than crowded or overdone notes.

where?
The Gettysburg Address

who
President Abraham Lincoln

why important - Thanksgiving
November 19, 1863

* "Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. *famous quote!*

everybody here in US and world
"Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that *which?* nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. *all of us* We have come to dedicate a *part* portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who here *died* gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper *we should* that we should do this. But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate — we cannot consecrate — we cannot hallow — this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. *battle not finished* It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us — that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion — that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain — that this nation, under God, shall have a new *BORN* birth of freedom and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

here Really important!

Figure 4.13 While these notes may be meaningful to the person who took them, they are neither organized nor consistent. For example, note that some of the more commonly used terms, like “we” and “unfinished,” are defined, but less common ones -- “consecrate” and “hallow” -- are not.

Smart Annotating Strategies

When annotating notes, do not go overboard. Be selective and keep annotations neat. Overusing colors, symbols, or writing too many notes can make study guides messy and hard to use. Always leave enough blank space so you can read the original text. Use brief shorthand and only write what is needed to remember key ideas. Consider writing on one side of the paper so extra notes can be added later.

Professional resources sometimes include helpful annotations, such as samples from Purdue University's Online Writing Lab (OWL), which shows how to format and annotate papers for college.

Adding Explanations to Notes

Too much multitasking during note-taking can cause stress. As in Marlon's case, trying to do everything perfectly—taking notes, highlighting, writing questions, and color-coding—can be overwhelming. Note-taking is just the first step. Preparation before class, engaging in activities, and reviewing notes after class are all important. Sometimes, simply mark in your notes that you did a group project or a special activity that day. Ask yourself questions about the instructor's teaching methods or class experiences to make sense of what you learned.

Using Technology for Note-Taking

Ereaders and apps allow electronic note-taking, including highlighting, underlining, and adding written comments. Many devices offer built-in note features, like OneNote, Google Keep, or Notes on phones. Learn the tools on your device to make note-taking easier.

Notes on Maps, Charts, and Figures

Notes can be taken on non-text materials such as maps, graphs, and tables. Study these features by asking questions:

- What is the main point?
- Who is the audience?
- Where is it located?
- What time period does it show?
- What does the legend explain?
- What other information is needed to understand it?

This approach makes studying visuals easier and helps you find key information quickly.

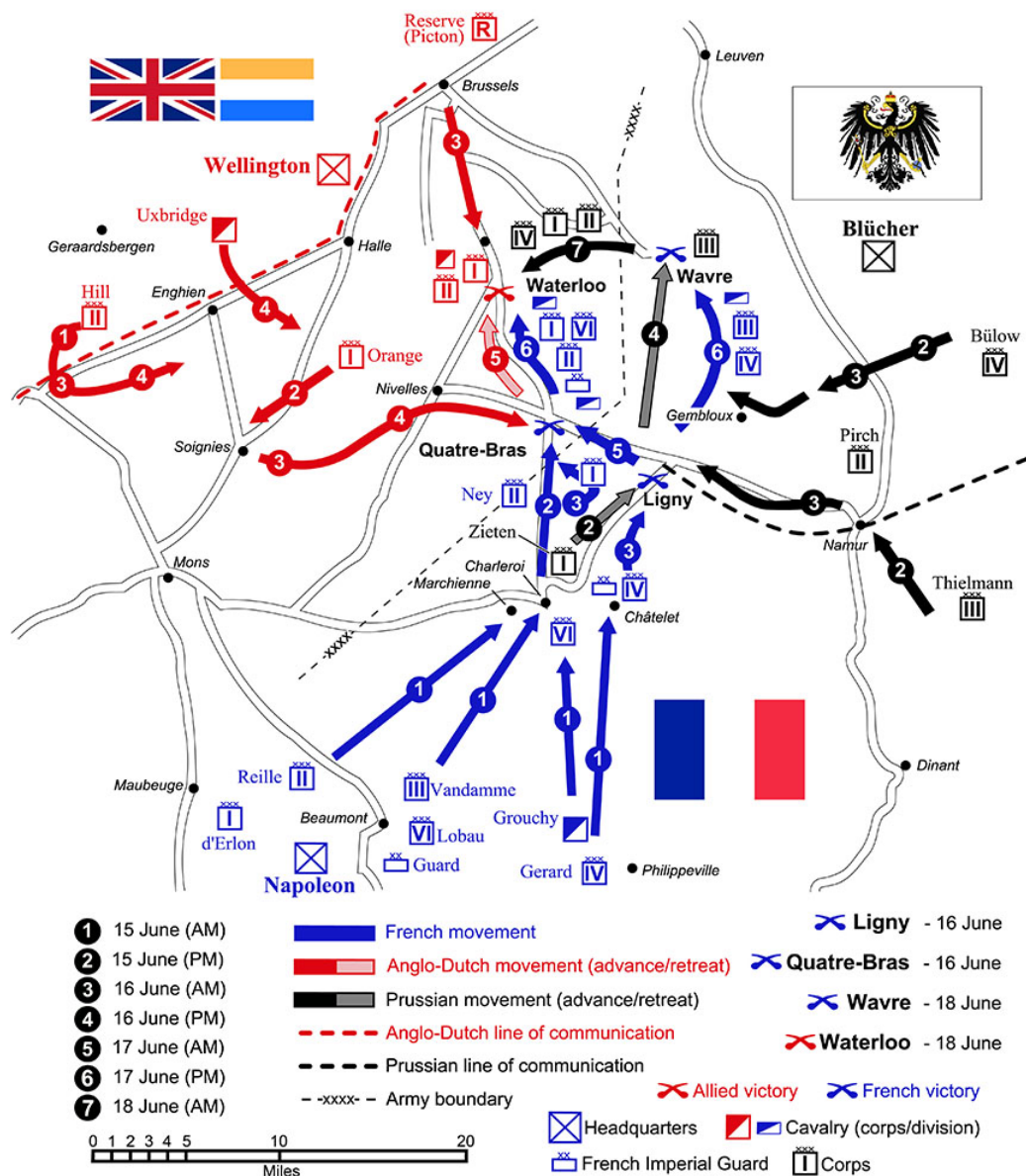


Figure 4.14 A map showing the “Order of Napoleon’s Battle of Waterloo”. Graphics, charts, graphs, and other visual items are also important to annotate. Not only do they often convey important information, but they may appear on exams or in other situations where you’ll need to use or demonstrate knowledge. (Credit: “Lpankonin” / Wikipedia Commons / Attribution 3.0 Generic (CC BY 3.0))

Annotating Graphics and Tables

If a graphic or table contains lots of information, make an extra copy before adding annotations. This avoids confusion and makes it easier to organize your notes.

Reviewing Notes After Class

After each class, review notes as soon as possible and add any missing details. Jot down questions separately so they do not get lost in other information. Try to review notes within 24 hours; waiting longer makes it easy to forget what was covered, but reviewing too soon may lead to postponing the review.

Set reminders on your phone or computer to make note review a regular habit.

Using Notes for Test Preparation

Well-organized notes help with understanding lessons, readings, labs, and assignments. Taking, annotating, and reviewing notes is only effective if used for test study. The cycle of reading, note-taking, reviewing, and exam preparation is a continuous process—even after college. Practicing these skills now will support success in professional life.

Activity: Finding Helpful Resources

Look for resources that improve reading and note-taking skills. To decide if a resource is valuable, check recommendations from instructors and the library. Review books, articles, and guides to find ones that support stronger study habits.

- ***College Rules!: How to Study, Survive, and Succeed in College***, by Sherri Nist-Olejnik and Jodi Patrick Holschuh. More than just note-taking, this book covers many aspects of transitioning into the rigors of college life and studying.
- ***Effective Note-taking***, by Fiona McPherson. This small volume has suggestions for using your limited time wisely before, during, and after note-taking sessions.
- ***How to Study in College***, by Walter Pauk. This is the book that introduced Pauk's note-taking suggestions we now call the Cornell Method. It is a bit dated (from the 1940s), but still contains some valuable information.
- ***Learn to Listen, Listen to Learn 2: Academic Listening and Note-taking***, by Roni S. Lebauer. The main point of this book is to help students get the most from college lectures by watching for clues to lecture organization and adapting this information into strong notes.
- ***Study Skills: Do I Really Need this Stuff?*** by Steve Piscitelli. Written in a consistently down-to-earth manner, this book will help you with the foundations of strong study skills, including time management, effective note-taking, and seeing the big picture.
- "What Reading Does for the Mind", by Anne Cunningham and Keith Stanovich, 1998, <https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/periodicals/cunningham.pdf>
- ***How to Read a Book: The Classic Guide to Intelligent Reading***, by Mortimer J. Adler and Charles Van Doren, 1940.
- ***Short- and Long-Term Effects of a Novel on Connectivity in the Brain***, by Gregory S. Berns, Kristina Blaine, Michael J. Prietula, and Brandon E. Pye. <https://doi.org/10.1089/brain.2013.0166>

Access for free at <https://openstax.org/books/preparing-for-college-success/pages/1-introduction>

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4.2: Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Avoiding Plagiarism

Learning how to effectively quote and paraphrase the original text can be difficult and it certainly takes practice. The goal of this chapter is to introduce some basic strategies for summarizing, quoting and paraphrasing the original source in your writing and to explain how to avoid plagiarism.

How to Summarize: An Overview

A summary is a brief explanation of a longer text. Some summaries, such as the ones that accompany annotated bibliographies, are very short, just a sentence or two. Others are much longer, though summaries are always much shorter than the original text.

Summaries of different lengths are useful in college writing because you often need to provide your readers with an explanation of the text you are discussing. This is especially true when you are going to quote or paraphrase from a source.

Of course, the first step in writing a good summary is to read and annotate the text you are going to summarize. Beyond that important start, there are a few basic guidelines you should follow when you write summary material:

- Stay “neutral” in your summarizing. Summaries provide “just the facts” and are not the place where you offer your opinions about the text you are summarizing. Save your opinions for other parts of your writing.
- Don’t quote from what you are summarizing. Summaries will be more useful to you and your colleagues if you write them in your own words.
- Don’t “cut and paste” from the original source or text.

How to Quote and Paraphrase: An Overview

Writers add a quote or paraphrase onto their paper in order to support their points and to persuade their readers. A quote or a paraphrase from a piece of evidence in support of a point answers the reader’s question, “says who?”

This is especially true in academic writing since readers are most persuaded by effective research and evidence. For example, readers of an article about a new cancer medication published in a medical journal will be most interested in the scholar’s research and statistics that demonstrate the effectiveness of the treatment. Conversely, they will not be as persuaded by emotional stories from individual patients about how a new cancer medication improved the quality of their lives. While this appeal to emotion can be effective and is common in popular sources, these individual anecdotes do not carry the same sort of “scholarly” or scientific value as well-reasoned research and evidence.

A “quote” is a direct restatement of the exact words from the original source. The general rule of thumb is any time you use three or more words as they appeared in the original source, you should treat it as a quote. A “paraphrase” is a restatement of the information or point of the original source in your own words.

While quotes and paraphrases are different and should be used in different ways in your research writing (as the examples in this section suggest), they do have a number of things in common. Both quotes and paraphrases should:

- be “introduced” to the reader, particularly the first time you mention a source;
- include an explanation of the evidence which explains to the reader why you think the evidence is important, especially if it is not apparent from the context of the quote or paraphrase; and
- include a proper citation of the source.

The method you should follow to properly quote or paraphrase depends on the style guide you are following in your academic writing. The two most common style guides used in academic writing are the Modern Language Association (MLA), and the American Psychological Association (APA). In this class you will learn MLA.

When to Quote, When to Paraphrase

The real “art” to research writing is using quotes and paraphrases from evidence effectively in order to support your point. There are certain “rules,” dictated by the rules of style you are following, such as the ones presented by the MLA. There are certain “guidelines” and suggestions, like the ones I offer in the previous section and the ones you will learn from your teacher and colleagues.

But when all is said and done, the question of when to quote and when to paraphrase depends a great deal on the specific context of the writing and the effect you are trying to achieve. Learning the best times to quote and paraphrase takes practice and experience.

In general, **it is best to use a quote when:**

- **The exact words of your source are important for the point you are trying to make.** This is especially true if you are quoting technical language, terms, or very specific word choices.
- **You want to highlight your *agreement* with the author's words.** If you agree with the point the author of the evidence makes and you like their exact words, use them as a quote.
- **You want to highlight your *disagreement* with the author's words.** In other words, you may sometimes want to use a direct quote to indicate exactly what it is you disagree about. This might be particularly true when you are considering the antithetical positions in your research writing projects.

In general, **it is best to paraphrase when:**

- **There is no good reason to use a quote to refer to your evidence.** If the author's exact words are not especially important to the point you are trying to make, you are usually better off paraphrasing the evidence.
- **You are trying to explain a particular a piece of evidence in order to explain or interpret it in more detail.** This might be particularly true in writing projects like critiques.
- **You need to balance a direct quote in your writing.** You need to be careful about directly quoting your research too much because it can sometimes make for awkward and difficult to read prose. So, one of the reasons to use a paraphrase instead of a quote is to create balance within your writing.

Tips for Quoting and Paraphrasing

- **Introduce** your quotes and paraphrases to your reader, especially on first reference.
- **Explain** the significance of the quote or paraphrase to your reader.
- **Cite** your quote or paraphrase properly according to the rules of style you are following in your essay.
- **Quote when** the exact words are important, when you want to highlight your agreement or your disagreement.
- **Paraphrase when** the exact words aren't important, when you want to explain the point of your evidence, or when you need to balance the direct quotes in your writing.

Four Examples of Quotes and Paraphrases

Here are four examples of what I mean about properly quoting and paraphrasing evidence in your research essays. In each case, I begin with a **BAD** example, or the way **NOT** to quote or paraphrase.

Quoting in MLA Style

Here's the first BAD example, where the writer is trying to follow MLA style:

There are many benefits to taking online classes. "Online courses give students flexibility to study at their own pace and schedule" (Smith, Internet).

This quote could support the writer's point, but the writer does not explain where it comes from or how it strengthens the argument. The quote is simply dropped into the paragraph, with no introduction or explanation.

Now consider this revised GOOD (or at least BETTER) example:

In her article in *College Education Today*, found through the Academic Search Internet database, Maria Smith discusses some benefits of taking online classes. She writes, "Online courses give students flexibility to study at their own pace and schedule."

In this improved version, it is clear where the information comes from and why it matters.

If a source comes from an online database rather than a print journal, make sure to mention where it was found the first time it is used. If the article has no page numbers, note that in your citation. After the first reference, you can use only the author's last name. For example:

Smith also describes the positive impact of online learning. She writes...

This approach helps readers understand the source and reason for including the quote, making your argument stronger and clearer.

Paraphrasing in MLA Style

In this example, the writer is using MLA style to write a research essay for a Literature class. Here is a **BAD** example of a paraphrase:

While Gatsby is deeply in love with Daisy in *The Great Gatsby*, his love for her is indistinguishable from his love of his possessions (Callahan).

There are two problems with this paraphrase. First, if this is the first or only reference to this particular piece of evidence in the research essay, the writer should include more information about the source of this paraphrase in order to properly introduce it. Second, this paraphrase is actually not of the entire article but rather of a specific passage. The writer has neglected to note the page number within the parenthetical citation.

A **GOOD** or at least **BETTER** revision of this paraphrase might look like this:

John F. Callahan suggests in his article “F. Scott Fitzgerald’s Evolving American Dream” that while Gatsby is deeply in love with Daisy in *The Great Gatsby*, his love for her is indistinguishable from his love of his possessions (381).

By incorporating the name of the author of the evidence the research writer is referring to here, the source of this paraphrase is now clear to the reader. Furthermore, because there is a page number at the end of this sentence, the reader understands that this passage is a paraphrase of a particular part of Callahan’s essay and not a summary of the entire essay. Again, if the research writer had introduced this source to his readers earlier, he could have started with a phrase like “Callahan suggests...” and then continued on with his paraphrase.

If the research writer were offering a brief summary of the entire essay following MLA style, he wouldn’t include a page number in parentheses. For example:

John F. Callahan’s article “F. Scott Fitzgerald’s Evolving American Dream” examines Fitzgerald’s fascination with the elusiveness of the American Dream in the novels *The Great Gatsby*, *Tender is the Night*, and *The Last Tycoon*.

How to Avoid Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the unauthorized or uncredited use of the writings or ideas of another in your writing. While it might not be as tangible as auto theft or burglary, plagiarism is still a form of theft.

In the academic world, plagiarism is a serious matter because ideas in the forms of research, creative work, and original thought are highly valued. Chances are, your school has strict rules about what happens when someone is caught plagiarizing. The penalty for plagiarism is severe, everything from a failing grade for the plagiarized work, a failing grade for the class, or expulsion from the institution.

You might not be aware that plagiarism can take several different forms. The most well known, **purposeful plagiarism**, is handing in an essay written by someone else and representing it as your own, copying your essay word for word from a magazine or journal, or downloading an essay from the Internet.

A much more common and less understood phenomenon is what I call **accidental plagiarism**. Accidental plagiarism is the result of improperly paraphrasing, summarizing, quoting, or citing your evidence in your academic writing. Generally, writers accidentally plagiarize because they simply don’t know or they fail to follow the rules for giving credit to the ideas of others in their writing.

Both purposeful and accidental plagiarism are wrong, against the rules, and can result in harsh punishments. Ignoring or not knowing the rules of how to not plagiarize and properly cite evidence might be an *explanation*, but it is not an excuse.

To exemplify what I’m getting at, consider the examples below that use quotations and paraphrases from this brief passage:

Those who denounce cyberculture today strangely resemble those who criticized rock music during the fifties and sixties. Rock started out as an Anglo-American phenomenon and has become an industry. Nonetheless, it was able to capture the hopes of young people around the world and provided enjoyment to those of us who listened to or played rock. Sixties pop was the conscience of one or two generations that helped bring the war in Vietnam to a close. Obviously, neither rock nor pop has solved global poverty or hunger. But is this a reason to be “against” them? (ix).

And just to make it clear that I’m not plagiarizing this passage, here is the citation in MLA style:

Lévy, Pierre. *Cyberculture*. Trans. Robert Bononno. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2001.

Here's an obvious example of plagiarism:

Those who denounce cyberculture today strangely resemble those who criticized rock music during the fifties and sixties.

In this case, the writer has literally taken one of Lévy's sentences and represented it as her own. That's clearly against the rules.

Here's another example of plagiarism, perhaps less obvious:

The same kind of people who criticize cyberculture are the same kind of people who criticized rock and roll music back in the fifties and sixties. But both cyberculture and rock music inspire and entertain young people.

While these aren't Lévy's exact words, they are certainly close enough to constitute a form of plagiarism. And again, even though you might think that this is a "lesser" form of plagiarism, it's still plagiarism.

Both of these passages can easily be corrected to make them acceptable quotations or paraphrases.

In the introduction of his book *Cyberculture*, Pierre Lévy observes that "Those who denounce cyberculture today strangely resemble those who criticized rock music during the fifties and sixties" **(ix).**

Pierre Lévy suggests that the same kind of people who criticize cyberculture are the same kind of people who criticized rock and roll music back in the fifties and sixties. But both cyberculture and rock music inspire and entertain young people **(ix).**

Note that changing these passages from examples of plagiarism to acceptable examples of a quotation and a paraphrase is extremely easy: properly cite your sources.

This leads to the "golden rule" of avoiding plagiarism:

Always cite your sources. If you are unsure as to whether you should or should not cite a particular claim or reference, you should probably cite your source.

Often, students are unclear as to whether or not they need to cite a piece of evidence because they believe it to be "common knowledge" or because they are not sure about the source of information. When in doubt about whether or not to cite evidence in order to give credit to a source ("common knowledge" or not), you should cite the evidence.

Plagiarism and the Internet

Sometimes, I think the ease of finding and retrieving information on the World Wide Web makes readers think that this information does not need to be cited. After all, it isn't a traditional source like a book or a journal; it is available for "free." All a research writer needs to do with a web site is "cut and paste" whatever he needs into his essay, right? Wrong!

You need to cite the evidence you find from the Internet or the World Wide Web the same way you cite evidence from other sources. To not do this is plagiarism, or, more bluntly, cheating. Just because the information is "freely" available on the Internet does not mean you can use this information in your academic writing without properly citing it, much in the same way that the information from library journals and books "freely" available to you needs to be cited in order to give credit where credit is due.

It is also not acceptable to simply download graphics from the World Wide Web. Images found on the Internet are protected by copyright laws. Quite literally, taking images from the Web (particularly from commercial sources) is an offense that could lead to legal action. There are places where you can find graphics and clip art that Web publishers have made publicly available for anyone to use, but be sure that the Web site where you find the graphics makes this explicit before you take graphics as your own.

In short, you can use evidence from the Web as long as you don't plagiarize and as long as you properly cite it; don't take graphics from the Web unless you know the images are in the public domain.

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4.3: Avoiding Plagiarism

How to Avoid Plagiarizing

Tip #1: Make Sure You Are Very Certain about What Is and is Not Plagiarism



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <http://pb.libretexts.org/temp/?p=1511>

Tip #2: Give Yourself Plenty of Time to Complete an Assignment

Running out of time on an assignment is a main cause of plagiarism. Rushing to meet a deadline can result in carelessness (leading to unintentional plagiarism – see the next tip) and the desire to find a quick, easy solution such as copying someone else's work. Don't give in to that temptation! Plagiarism is a serious academic offense, and the chance of being caught (which is likely) is not worth it.

Avoid this situation entirely by starting your assignment far ahead of time and planning out when you will complete each phase of the writing process. Even if your teacher does not require you to turn in materials for each stage of the [writing process](#) (i.e. brainstorming, creating a thesis statement, outlining, drafting, revising, etc.), set your own personal deadlines for each step along the way and make sure to give yourself more than enough time to finish everything.

Tip #3: Document Everything

Plagiarism isn't always a conscious choice. Sometimes it can be unintentional, typically resulting from poor documentation of one's sources during the research phase. For example, sometimes students will write down an idea from a source using words identical to or very close to those in the original, but then when they go to write their paper forget that the material was not already in their own words. Adopting good research habits can prevent this type of plagiarism.

Print, photocopy, or scan the relevant pages of every source you are using (including the title and copyright pages, since they have the information you need for a bibliographic citation). When taking notes by hand (or typed into a file), list the bibliographic information for each source you use. Make sure to put quotation marks around any wordings taken directly from the source (and note the page where you found it), and remember to put everything else into your own words right away, so there is no danger of forgetting something is a quote. Documenting where all of your ideas, information, quotations, and so on come from is an important step in avoiding plagiarism.

Tip #4: Don't Include Too Much Material Taken from Other Sources



Tips for integrating sources into your research.

Writing assignments are about your ideas, your interpretations, and your ability to synthesize information. You should use relevant sources to support your ideas using evidence such as quotes, paraphrases, and summaries, as well as statistics and other data. But don't lose sight of the fact that your argument is central! Including too much material from other sources can result in a paper that feels like it has been pasted together from a variety of authors, rather than a cohesive essay. Such papers also run a much higher risk of setting off plagiarism warnings in SafeAssign or other plagiarism-detecting software. Try to find a balance: use enough evidence from credible sources to prove your points but don't let the ideas of others take the place of your own thoughts.

Tip #5: When in Doubt, Give a Citation

There are certain types of information – typically referred to as common knowledge – that don't require a citation when you include them in your writing. These are facts that are widely known and can be easily found in a number of sources. They are not ideas that originated with one particular source. Examples include scientific facts (for example, that solid, liquid, and gas are three states of matter), general historical information (for example, that George Washington was the first US president), or even information commonly known to certain groups of people but not others (for example, most musicians know that a C major triad includes the notes C, E, and G, even though many non-musicians would have no idea what a C major triad is).

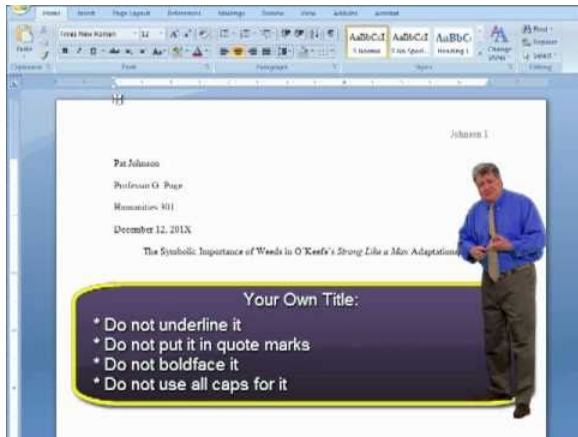
For everything else, you need to include a citation, regardless of whether you are quoting directly from the source, paraphrasing it, or giving a summary. If you are at all unsure whether something qualifies as common knowledge or not, give a citation. You can also consult a more experienced figure in your field, such as your instructor, to find out if something counts as common knowledge or not.

In academic writing, the **“Quote Sandwich” approach** is useful for incorporating other writers' voices into your essays. It gives meaning and context to a quote, and helps you avoid plagiarism. This 3-step approach offers your readers a deeper understanding of what the quote is and how it relates to your essay's goals.

1. **Step 1:** Provide context for the source. If you haven't used it yet in the essay, tell us the source's title and author (if known), and any other information that's relevant, like the purpose of the organization that published it, for instance.
2. **Step 2:** Provide the quote itself. Be sure to format correctly and use quotation marks around exact language.
3. **Step 3:** Provide a summary and/or analysis of what the quote says, and how it relates to the subject matter of your essay and your thesis.

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4.4: MLA Formatting



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Formatting the Works Cited Page (MLA)

Whenever you incorporate outside sources into your own writing, you must provide both in-text citations (within the body of the paper) and full citations (in the works cited page). The in-text citations point your reader toward the full citations in the works cited page.

That's why the first bit of information in your in-text citation (generally, the author's name; if no name is provided, the title of the article/book/webpage) should directly match up with the beginning of your works cited entry for that source. For further information about in-text citations, please read "[Formatting In-Text Citations](#)."

For example, let's say I have a quote from Benedict Anderson's

Imagined Communities in my research paper. Within the body of the paper, following the quote, I include the following in-text citation: (Anderson 56). This information points to the book's entry in my works cited page:

Anderson, Benedict.

Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism. London: Verso, 2006. Print.

[Read more...](#)

Formatting In-text Citations (MLA)

[How might you format your in-text citations so that they're more compliant with MLA guidelines?](#)

You already know why MLA formatting guidelines are an important part of an academic paper, but let's face it—who can remember all those rules about when and where certain citation information is requisite and when and where particular punctuation is appropriate? Thankfully, memorizing all of MLA's formatting guidelines is not necessary! MLA style guides can be found easily online or in texts like

The MLA Handbook, and writers can refer to these resources when they are unclear about a particular MLA style guideline.

Nonetheless, as you create multiple drafts of your composition papers, there are some MLA conventions that you will need to call on time and time again. In particular, as you integrate source material masterfully into your work, you will be required to call on proper in-text citation guidelines repeatedly. It is therefore important that you take the time to memorize the MLA guidelines for in-text citations.

[Read more...](#)

MLA Checklist

- Is the heading in the upper left-hand corner of the first page?
- Does the heading include:
 - Your name?
 - Your instructor's name?
 - The course name?
 - The date?
- Does the paper have an original title (other than something like "Final Paper")?
 - Is the title presented without being bolded, italicized, or placed in quotation marks
- [Read more...](#)

MLA Template

[Read more...](#)

Exercise: In-text Citations (MLA)

Look at the sentences below, each of which contains an incorrectly formatted in-text citation. Specify the error made in each sentence; then, write a new sentence in which the in-text citation is correctly formatted.

1. The parlor metaphor of writing describes writing as entering into a conversation, as in arriving late and a parlor and talking to guests who have been there long before you have (7).
2. In "Argument as Emergence, Rhetoric as Love," Jim Corder explains that "Everyone is an argument." (1)
3. David Sedaris's
Me Talk Pretty One Day takes place at a school in Paris (Sedaris 1).

[Read more...](#)

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

5: Module 5 - Weeks 7 and 8

5.3: Grammar - Expressing Meaning in Present Tenses

8.1: Annotating to Summarize - Identifying Key Ideas

8.2: Writing a One-Sentence Summary

8.3: Writing a Paragraph Summary

8.4: Peer Review

8.5: How to Write a Summary by Paraphrasing Source Material

8.6: Using Sources in Your Paper

8.7: Grammar - Subject-Verb Agreement

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5.3: Grammar - Expressing Meaning in Present Tenses

Learning Objectives

1. To learn the principles in using appropriate verb tenses
2. To understand the meanings and verb forms of four present tenses – simple present, present progressive, present perfect, and present perfect progressive – through multiple examples
3. To practice using the appropriate present tenses in a variety of writing situations

I. Pretest



currencies from different countries

The following ten sentences are related to the topic of money. Some of the verbs are bold-faced. If the bold-faced verb is correct, choose “correct”. If not, choose one of the other two answers. After you finish one sentence, you will get instant feedback on your answer before the next sentence. If you make mistakes, you can retry all the questions or see all the answers at the end of the pre-test.

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<https://harpercollege.pressbooks.pub/academic-writing-skills/?p=580#h5p-161>

II. Principles in Using Verb Tenses

1. Always start with meaning. The purpose of communication is to convey^[1] meaning. Therefore, it is important to start with the question: What ideas am I trying to express to others?
2. Use the appropriate verb tense and verb form as tools to express your meaning. Each verb tense uses a different verb form. The verb form shows which verb tense is being used. These two concepts are connected and must be understood as an inseparable^[2] “pair”. For example, if you want to write about current activities, you should use a present tense and should not use a past verb form with an “ed” ending.
3. Time words are extremely important. They are like traffic signs to guide you and your readers. Your time words, verb tenses, and verb forms should all match each other in order to express your meaning clearly. For example, If you are describing an event in progress at the moment of speaking, you should not use a time word such as “yesterday”.

III. Expressing Meaning in Simple Present

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For detailed explanations and practice in verbs, open Unit 9 here.

Verb Forms in Simple Present

1. When “am”, “is”, or “are” is the main verb, do not use a “do” verb. In the same way, when the main verb is a “do” verb, do not use “am”, “is”, or “are”.

- Money is important.
- Money

- ~~is~~ plays an important role in our lives.
2. If “he”, “she”, or “it” is the subject of a sentence and a “do” verb is the main verb, add an “s” to the end of the main verb.
- Many people save money because it gives them a sense of security^[3].
3. If “he”, “she”, or “it” is the subject in a question or negative sentence, leave off the “s” at the end of the main verb since you already have the helping verb “does” or “doesn’t”.
- Does money guarantee^[4] happiness? No, it does not.

Meaning, Common Expressions, and Examples in Simple Present

Meaning #1: facts and truths

Common time expressions and frequency adverbs: always, constantly, frequently, usually, often, generally, sometimes, seldom, rarely, hardly ever, never ...

Examples: Facts and truths about money



the front and back sides of a U.S. one-dollar coin

1. President George Washington’s image is on one side of the one-dollar bill.
2. One-dollar coins are not very common.
3. The Department of Treasury^[5] manages the currency in the U.S.
4. Does each state government decide how much tax money to collect?
5. How do the states collect tax money from the residents?

Meaning #2: current habits, routines, repeated activities

Common time expressions and frequency adverbs: every day, each night, once a week, twice a day, on Tuesdays ...

Examples: Routine activities and facts

1. My sister and I usually go shopping on the weekends.
2. The stores are always crowded then.
3. My sister tries to save money on many things, but she does not save money on shoes.
4. How much does she spend on shoes each year? Only she knows.
5. She always says, “I have only 2 feet, but I have only 365 days a year to keep my feet happy!”

Exercise 1. Read the following paragraph about allowance. Find ten additional errors and correct them (not including the example). The first one is an example.

Allowance – Beneficial or Not?

Many children in the U.S. **receiving** (**receive**) some money from their parents once a week or every other week. This type of money is called the allowance. People have different opinions about the allowance. Some children getting it in exchange for doing household chores like washing the dishes and taking care of a younger sibling^[6]. However, should helping the family be part of the child’s education about responsibilities? Besides, most children does not need to “work” for money. They receive it “for free”! The amount of money start from a few dollars a week and increase as the children grow. According to some experts,

the dollar amount can be based on the child's age. For instance, if a child be five years old, the allowance is five dollars a week. The following year, the child will receive six dollars. Many parents are believe that the allowance is help the children learn the value of money. They also learn to manage their money from an early age. However, other parents does not agree. They question, "Why my children need money? I buy everything for them." These parents worry that the allowance will make their kids materialistic. They also do not want their children to use the money for unhealthy snacks or addictive^[7] computer games. It is hard to say which group of parents are right.

IV. Express Meaning in Present Progressive (No Non-Action Verbs)

The present progressive tense usually expresses actions that are going on at the moment of speaking. It is also used to indicate future planned activities. In this unit, you are focusing on the current actions only. For the future planned activities, please refer to Unit 13 Expressing Meaning in Future Tenses. ([Open Unit 13 here.](#))

Verb Forms in Present Progressive: am/is/are + verb-ing

Meaning, Common Time Expressions, and Examples in Present Progressive

Meaning #1: actions or situations happening at the moment of speaking

Common time expressions: now, right now, at the moment, at the current moment, at present ...

Examples: about activities going on in the classroom right now

1. The professor is checking our homework now.
2. Is Eva sitting next to Maria?
3. My two friends and I are not sitting together.
4. What are the students discussing?

Meaning #2: Actions or situations happening during the present period of time or over an extended period of time

Common time expressions: currently, today, these days, nowadays, this semester ...

Examples: about the current ongoing situation in extended period of time

1. More students are working out in the new fitness center these days.
2. With more exercises, everyone is becoming healthier.
3. More and more students are paying attention to their health.
4. This is good news even though no one is getting younger!

For more information about non-action verbs, please refer to Unit 9 Verb Basics in Academic Writing. ([Open Unit 9 here.](#))

Exercise 2. The following paragraph is about finding a parking space on campus. The writer is looking for a spot right now. There are five more errors in the use of simple present and present progressive verbs (not including the example). Find the errors and correct them. The first one is an example.

Seeking a Parking Space

It is 9:45 am Monday morning. The parking lots at my college are looking (look) full. Many students are try to find a parking spot close to their classroom building. I circling around and around from one parting lot to another. I am seeing an empty space right there! Oh no, another car taking it. I am needing to park my car right away because my class starts at 10 am. There, a car is backing out of a space! I am so glad! It is only steps away from the building entrance. Lucky me! I will not be late today! It is getting harder and harder to find a parking space these days.

V. Express Meaning in Present Perfect

Most people will agree that the present perfect tense is the most challenging of all tenses because it can refer to the past, present, and even future situations. The good news is that your English skills have progressed far enough to be able to understand it. Once you have learned it, the other tenses will look a lot easier!

Have you noticed the three underlined present perfect verbs?

Verb Forms in Present Perfect: have/has + past participle

For a list of verbs with irregular past tense and past participle spelling, please refer to Appendix D Irregular Verbs. (Open Appendix D [here](#).)

Meaning, Common Time Expressions, and Examples in Present Perfect

Meaning #1: an action or a situation that started in the past, continues till present, and may go on into the future

Common time words and other expressions: since, for, recently, lately, so far, to date, till now, in the past/last two weeks, today, these days, this week, all life ...

Examples: about Jiali's stamp-collecting hobby



1.

two stamps indicating the Year of Rabbit

Jiali has loved stamps since she was a child.

2. Has her collection grown a lot in the last two months?
3. Yes, it has. Her friends have sent her their stamps lately.
4. How many years has she accumulated^[8] stamps?

Meaning #2: an action or a situation that completed at an unspecified time in the past

Common time words and other expressions: already, before, just, never, yet ...(sometimes no time words)

Examples: about Jiali's stamp-collecting hobby

1. Jiali has just joined a stamp-collecting club at her college.
2. Has Jiali ever received stamp-related gifts?
3. Yes, She has. For her birthday next week, her family has already ordered illuminated magnifiers^[9] and stamp tongs.
4. The gifts have not arrived yet.

Meaning #3: an action or a situation that was repeated in an unspecified past time or since a past time and may occur again in the future

Common time words and other expressions: once, two times, a few times, many times ...

Examples: about Jiali's stamp-collecting hobby

1. How many international stamps has Jiali accumulated?
2. So far, she has gathered over five hundred stamps from different countries.
3. She has attended the club meeting three times since the beginning of the semester.
4. She has traded^[footnote]trade: verb, exchange^[footnote] eight stamps with her club friends this month.

Exercise 3. Read the following paragraph about another hobby "toy Voyaging". Fill in the blanks with appropriate simple present or present perfect tense. The first one is an example. When you complete the entire exercise, you can click "Check" for feedback. You may retry or see all the answers.



three monkey plastic toys holding hands and traveling

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Adapted from <https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/ToyVoyagers>. Last accessed on August 5, 2021.

VI. Expressing Meaning in Present Perfect Progressive (No Non-Action Verbs)

The present perfect progressive tense and the present perfect tense are similar in some ways but different in others.

Verb Forms in Present Perfect Progressive: have/has + been + verb-ing

Meaning, Common Time Expressions, and Examples in Present Perfect Progressive

Meaning#1: an action or a situation that started in the past, continues till present, and may go on into the future (same as Meaning #1 in present perfect but with more emphasis)

Common time words and other expressions: since, for, recently, lately, so far, to date, till now, in the past/last 2 weeks, today, these days, this week, all life ...

Examples: about Jiali's stamp-collecting hobby



stamps from different countries

1. Jiali has been collecting stamps since she was ten years old.
2. Has her collection been growing a lot in the last two months?
3. Yes, it has. Her friends have been sending her their stamps lately.
4. She has been accumulating stamps for over ten years.

Meaning #2: an action or a situation that is still going on without a time expression

Common time words and other expressions: not needed

Examples: about Jiali's stamp-collecting hobby

1. With the help of her friends, Jiali's collection has been growing fast.
2. The stamp club has been expanding.
3. Many friends have been showing interest in Jiali's stamps.
4. Jiali's best friend has been planning to join the stamp club.

Exercise 4. Read the following paragraph about Antoni's hobby. Underline the verbs in each sentence. Then with your partner discuss the use of the verb tense and the meaning of each sentence.

Antoni's Hobby



a person doing a home improvement project

Doing home improvement projects is Antoni's hobby. He has been fixing things for his own family and friends' families for ten years. He has fixed things for his own family and friends' families for ten years. He did this with his brother Jakub for two years, but then Jakub got married and moved out of the state three years ago. However, Antoni's interest in home improvement has not changed all these years. He has cleared sewage blockage^[10], replaced roof tiles, and installed new floors for his friends. So far, he has resolved "house problems" for at least twenty families. These few weeks, he has been sealing some of the window cracks in his own house. His wife jokes, "Now you are working for me!"

VII. Unit Review Practice

Exercise 5. The following paragraph about a favorite hobby is from a previous unit. Fill in the appropriate verb tenses. The first one is an example. When you complete the entire exercise, you can click "Check" for feedback. You may retry or see all the answers.



a person opening a diary

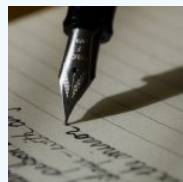
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Exercise 6. Choose one of the following topics to write a letter. Use appropriate tenses.

1. What is your favorite hobby? How long have you been pursuing it? Why do you like it? Do you enjoy it alone or with other people?
2. What do you think are some of the reasons why some people do not have a hobby? Can people remain happy without a hobby? Why or why not?

NSNT Practice



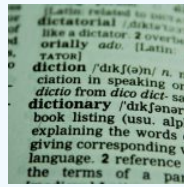
a pen writing in a notebook

Go to **The NSNT Free Writing Approach and Additional Weekly Prompts for Writing** in Appendix A. ([Open Appendix A here.](#)) Choose two topics. You may start with the NSNT approach. Then revise and edit your paragraphs. Pay attention to the use of present verbs. You are encouraged to share your writing with your partner and help each other improve.

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Vocabulary Review



a page in a dictionary

The words here have appeared in this unit. The best way to learn them is to guess the meaning of each word from the context. Then hover your computer mouse over the number beside each word to check its meaning and part of speech. These words are also listed in the footnote area at the end of each unit.

Here, you can use the flashcards below to review these words.

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Summary

1. Always focus on your meaning/ideas when you choose verb tenses.
 2. Time words, verb forms, and verb tenses must match one another.
 3. A “be” verb (am, is, are) can NEVER be followed by the base form of a “do” verb.
 4. Non-action verbs cannot be used in progressive tenses.
 5. The simple present tense is used in expressing
 - facts and truths
 - current routines
 6. The present progressive tense is used in expressing
 - actions or situations at the moment of speaking
 - actions or situations at the present period of time
 7. The present perfect tense is used in expressing
 - actions or situations that started in the past, continue till now, and may go on into the future
 - actions or situations that completed in an unspecified time in the past
 - actions and situations that repeated a certain number of times in the past and may happen again in the future
 8. The present perfect progressive tense is used in expressing
 - actions or situations that started in the past, continue till now, and may go on into the future (with emphasis)
 - actions or situations that are ongoing
-
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 - three monkey plastic toys holding hands and traveling © Photo by Park Troopers on Unsplash
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 - [a person opening a diary](#) © Photo by Daria Shevtsova on Unsplash

- a pen writing in a notebook © Photo by Aaron Burden on Unsplash
 - [a page in a dictionary](#) © Pixabay
-

1. convey: verb, express, show ↵
 2. inseparable: adjective, cannot be separated ↵
 3. security: noun, safety ↵
 4. guarantee: verb, promise, ensure ↵
 5. Department of Treasury: noun phrase, a U.S. government agency to manage the financial system in the country ↵
 6. sibling: noun, a brother or sister ↵
 7. addictive: adjective, becoming a habit, cannot stop ↵
 8. accumulate: verb, gather, collect ↵
 9. illuminated magnifier: noun phrase, a tool that can light up and that is made of glass to make things look bigger ↵
 10. sewage blockage: noun phrase, a problem where water cannot follow through the pipe because of something stuck in there ↵
-

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5.1: Annotating to Summarize - Identifying Key Ideas

Introduction

There are many instances in which you will be required to summarize, or to give a short explanation of a work in your own words. A professor might ask you to summarize a reading passage to show that you've understood its meaning, or your friend might ask you to summarize a TV show to see if it sounds interesting.

Our goals for this chapter include:

- using annotation strategies specific to summarizing.
- recognizing various patterns of organization of a text.
- using templates to construct one-sentence summaries.
- selecting and using appropriate reporting verbs.
- outlining and writing a paragraph summary.
- giving effective writing feedback.

Annotating to Summarize - Identifying Key Ideas

Good writers read a text a few times and annotate - or mark up - the text as they read. This helps them to identify the parts of the text and how they fit together.

Annotating is a personal practice; as you make it a habit, you'll discover the ways that work best for you. You may prefer to use different-colored highlighters or just a pen. The important thing is that you DO take notes while you read; this will make you a better reader and writer!

Below is one approach to annotating an article that will help you to identify the author's argument and support for it.

STEP 1. Get a general idea of the article.

First, skim the article quickly, just to get the gist of it.

- Read the title and look at the first sentence of each paragraph. What overall topic is the article about?
- Do you get a sense of what the author is trying to convey about this topic?
- If the author is trying to convince the reader to believe an idea, what kinds of evidence are they using to support that argument?
- Underline any key words or phrases that seem to be central to the topic.

STEP 2. Read carefully for the main idea.

Now that you have a sense of what the article is about, read it through carefully, thinking about how the ideas are connected to each other.

- Look for words that indicate the organizational pattern of the article; underline or highlight these. For example, is the author comparing two things, making an argument for change, or describing the reasons that something happened?
- Try to find a statement that shows the main idea of the article. Put a star next to this and write it in your own words in the margin. If you can't find this kind of statement, don't panic! The main idea might be implied (not directly stated).
- Remember that the first paragraph(s) might be background information; be careful not to confuse this with the main idea.

STEP 3. Read again for the points that support the main idea.

- As you read this time, underline the supporting points for the main idea you've identified. These sentences may occur at the beginning of paragraphs (similar to topic sentences) or at the end. One way to find these is to ask yourself as you finish reading each paragraph if the idea in this paragraph was new or if it continued the idea from the previous paragraph.
- Underline and mark each point with a number or other symbol.
- After you have found the supporting points, make sure that they match the main idea you wrote in Step 2.
- If the points don't seem to match the main idea you identified earlier, skim the article again and edit your annotations accordingly. You may need to change either the main idea or the supporting points. (For example, if you wrote that the author explained the causes of poverty, but each of the supporting points are about the effects of poverty, you would have to change your main idea statement.)

- Think about how you will explain each point; begin paraphrasing in your own words in the margin. You may want to use one or two details that you found most convincing to explain each supporting point in your summary.

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5.2: Writing a One-Sentence Summary

Writing a One-Sentence Summary

A. Introduction

A one-sentence summary provides information about the source that is being summarized and presents the thesis or argument of that source. Think of it as a very brief introduction to your reader of the article, chapter, or book you've read; all that they need to know is who wrote it, what its title is, and what its main argument is.

In order to write an effective summary sentence, you should keep the following in mind:

- Include the author's full name.
 - First mention: first and last (family) name
 - Subsequent mentions (if your one-sentence summary is followed by a paragraph summary, for example): last name only
- Include the title of the source.
 - For articles like the ones we are using in this class, put the title in quotation marks (""). If you need to summarize a book or movie, put the title in italics.
 - If you refer to this source later in your paper, you generally only need to use the author's name, not the title again.
- Include the thesis or argument of the article you are summarizing.
 - State the argument or main idea concisely and clearly.
 - Do not include details in the summary sentence.
- Use a strong reporting verb that accurately describes what the article is doing. (However, if you use "according to" in your summary sentence you will not need a reporting verb.)

B. Basic Formula for a One-sentence Summary

Title of article + Author's name (first then last) + Reporting verb + Thesis, argument, or main idea

The first three elements - information about the author/article and a reporting verb - make up a signal phrase showing that the idea came from someone else rather than you. The signal phrase is a crucial part of your one-sentence summary because it gives credit to the author.

C. One-sentence Summary Templates

Following are some examples of one-sentence summaries. You can use these as templates for writing your own.

One-Sentence Summary Templates

TEMPLATE 1: USING A REPORTING VERB	
Example	In "Coping with Procrastination," Angela Moore suggests that in order to stop procrastinating, we need to analyze the real reasons we procrastinate.
Formula	In + "Title," + Author + reporting verb + that + main idea.
Grammatical Notes	1. It is optional to add information about what kind of source this is (eg. In the article "Coping with Procrastination,..." "In the movie <i>The Avengers</i>,...") 2. The comma after the title is necessary, and should come before the end quotation mark. 3. In MLA format, the reporting verb should be in third person present simple; this generally means that it will end in an -s, but will not if there is more than one author. 4. The reporting verb is followed by a noun clause made up of that and a full sentence paraphrasing the main idea. This is also in the present tense. 5. The order in which the elements are arranged can be shifted, but note the changes to the formula: a. In order to stop procrastinating, we need to analyze the real reasons we procrastinate, suggests Angela Moore in the article "Coping with Procrastination." Formula: Main idea, + reporting verb + Author + in + "Title." b. Angela Moore suggests in the article "Coping with Procrastination" that in order to stop procrastinating, we need to analyze the real reasons we procrastinate. Formula: Author + reporting verb + in + "Title"+ that + main idea.

TEMPLATE 1: USING A REPORTING VERB	
TEMPLATE 2: USING “ACCORDING TO”	
Example	According to Angela Moore in “Coping with Procrastination,” in order to stop procrastinating, we need to analyze the real reasons we procrastinate.
Formula	According to + Author + in + “Title,” + main idea.
Grammatical Notes	1. See notes 1-3 for Template 1. 2. Using “according to” means that the reporting verb and “that” are unnecessary. 3. The order in which the elements are arranged can be shifted, but not as much as Template 1. Note the changes to the formula: In order to stop procrastinating, we need to analyze the real reasons we procrastinate, according to Angela Moore in the article “Coping with Procrastination.” Formula: Main idea, + according to + Author + in + “Title.”

D. Signal Phrases: Saying Vs Doing

When creating multiple summaries (such as a one-sentence summary and a paragraph summary) or a summary/response essay, which requires both types, it’s important to find different ways to express the main idea/thesis/argument of the article. One helpful way to approach this is to think about what the author says and what the author does.

i. Capturing What the Author Says

For a one-sentence summary or the first sentence of a summary-response essay, it might be most helpful to focus on what the author says, or the main argument of the article. These signal verbs are typically followed by that and a complete statement of the main idea.

In the article “Coping with Procrastination,” Angela Moore suggests that in order to change the habit of procrastination, it is essential to look below the surface for the real reasons why one puts off doing things. (main argument of the article)

Moore argues that procrastination is one of the most pervasive bad habits among college students. (statement of a point from the author’s argument)

ii. Capturing What the Author Does

For a paragraph summary, consider focusing on what the author does, or how he or she constructs the argument or organizes the ideas in the article. These signal verbs are generally followed by a noun or noun phrase.

Throughout the article, Moore enumerates the fundamental reasons why people procrastinate and how to overcome these issues. (reference to the organizational patterns used in the article)

Moore presents three solutions to overcoming procrastination. (one of the moves the author makes to support her main point)

Here are some signal verbs to use for each type of summary sentence:

Signal Verbs for Summary Sentences

SIGNAL VERBS FOR “SAYING”	SIGNAL VERBS FOR “DOING”

SIGNAL VERBS FOR “SAYING”

acknowledges (that)
agrees (that)
argues (that)
believes (that)
claims (that)
complains (that)
declares (that)
explains (that)
finds (that)
insists (that)
maintains (that)
makes the case (that)
notes (that)
observes (that)
points out (that)
posits (that)
shows (that)
speculates (that)
states (that)
stresses (that)
submits (that)
suggests (that)
theorizes (that)
thinks (that)
warns (that)
writes (that)

SIGNAL VERBS FOR “DOING”

acknowledges + noun
addresses + noun
affirms + noun
analyzes + noun
asks + noun
categorizes + noun
compares + noun
critiques + noun
defines + noun
demonstrates + noun
discusses + noun
disproves + noun
enumerates + noun
examines + noun
furnishes + noun
identifies + noun
illustrates + noun
interprets + noun
investigates + noun
lists + noun
outlines + noun
presents + noun
questions + noun
supports + noun
surveys + noun
traces + noun

? Exercise 3: Revising Summary Sentences

Look at the one-sentence summary that you wrote in Exercise 2. Rework it below so that your one sentence summary focuses on saying. Then imagine that you are going to write a paragraph summary. Write the first sentence of this summary, focusing on doing and pointing to the main organizational pattern used in the article.

One-sentence summary: What does the author argue? What is the thesis of the article?

First sentence of paragraph summary: What does the author do in the article? How does the author organize the argument or their ideas?

Have a classmate review your sentences. What suggestions do they have for improving them?

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5.3: Writing a Paragraph Summary

Writing a Paragraph Summary

While a one-sentence summary serves to introduce only the most essential aspects of a source, a paragraph summary includes a bit more information.

A. Characteristics of a Good Paragraph Summary

A strong paragraph summary

- includes the main idea of the article.
- includes the supporting details of the article (the ideas that prove the main idea).
- paraphrases the original article.
- has transitions between main ideas, details, and examples.
- frequently refers to the author by last name.
- identifies how the original article is organized.
- is concise (for this class, about 150-200 words in length).
- does not include any additional information from other sources or your opinion.

B. Structure of a Paragraph Summary

Use your annotations to compose your summary paragraph. Here is an outline to help you:

1. FIRST SENTENCE - ONE SENTENCE SUMMARY/OVERALL MAIN IDEA

Introduce the author, title, & thesis (main idea). For example:

In "(title of article)," (name of author) argues that (thesis).

****See 5.4: Writing a One-Sentence Summary, One-Sentence Summary Templates and Signal Phrases: Saying vs. Doing for additional templates.**

2. MIDDLE SENTENCES (approximately 4-6)

First, demonstrate the organizational pattern(s). For example:

(Author's last name) outlines (three differences between ____ and ____ / two causes and an effect of ____ / the problem of ____ and two possible solutions).

Next, introduce the main supporting details using the organizational pattern. For example:

points out (the pros) of ____ . For example...

Optional: If there is more than one organizational pattern, introduce those main supporting points next. For example:

points out (the cons) of ____ . For example ...

Remember to use transitions to show how ideas are connected to each other. For example:

goes on to say that .../____ adds that .../ ____ uses the example of ____ to explain ...

****See Using Precise Reporting Verbs (below) for additional examples.**

3. CONCLUDING SENTENCE

Restate the thesis or the conclusion of the article. For example:

The author concludes that .../ In short, the article recommends that ...

REMEMBER to use different ways to refer to the author throughout the summary paragraph, including their last name and appropriate pronouns. Try not to use "the author."

C. Using Precise Reporting Verbs

A reporting verb is a word which is used to talk about sources or to attribute an idea to someone. Reporting verbs can be very effective in conveying meaning, but the difficulty with using them is that there are many, and each of them has a slightly different and often subtle meaning.

It is repetitive and boring to write Smith says... over and over again. Fortunately, there is a wide choice of reporting verbs in English. Reporting verbs can indicate:

- the author's personal viewpoint
- your viewpoint regarding what the author says
- the author's viewpoint regarding others' ideas

To interpret the writer's ideas accurately, however, you will need to use a verb with the correct nuance (sense of meaning). Use an English learner's dictionary to check that you have the right verb for the right context.

Choosing accurate reporting verbs to reflect both the function that the author is performing and your feeling about it (or to conceal your feeling with a neutral reporting verb) is an important skill to develop. Consider the following:

Choosing Accurate Reporting Verbs

MOVE / FUNCTION	WEAKER POSITION	NEUTRAL POSITION	STRONGER
addition		adds	
advice		advises	
agreement	admits, concedes	accepts, acknowledges, agrees, concurs, confirms, recognizes	applauds, cong
argument and persuasion	apologizes	assures, encourages, interprets, justifies, reasons	alerts, argue emphasizes, promises, pers
believing	guesses, hopes, imagines	believes, claims, declares, expresses, feels, holds, knows, maintains, professes, subscribes to, thinks	asserts, guarant
conclusion		concludes, discovers, finds, infers, realizes	

MOVE / FUNCTION	WEAKER POSITION	NEUTRAL POSITION	STRONGER POSITION
disagreement and questioning	doubts, questions	challenges, debates, disagrees, questions, requests, wonders	accuses, attack, denies, discredits, disputes, disreputes, refutes, rejects
discussion	comments	discusses, explores	reasons
emphasis			accentuates, emphasizes, highlights
evaluation and examination		analyzes, appraises, assesses, compares, considers, contrasts, critiques, evaluates, examines, investigates, understands	blames, compares, contrasts, criticizes, evaluates, examines, investigates, understands
explanation		articulates, clarifies, explains	
presentation	confuses	comments, defines, describes, estimates, forgets, identifies, illustrates, implies, informs, instructs, lists, mentions, notes, observes, outlines, points out, presents, remarks, reminds, reports, restates, reveals, shows, states, studies, tells, uses	announces, proclaims, reports, states, tells, uses
suggestion	alleges, intimates, speculates	advises, advocates, hypothesizes, posits, postulates, proposes, suggests, theorizes	asserts, recommends, states, tells, uses

Example Sentences

Remember that in MLA style, reporting verbs should be in the present tense, and you should include the page number if there is one.

Boynton warns the reader that ordinary chocolate is too frail to withstand heat, moisture, and proximity to baked beans (p. 79).

Hanks defines an idiom as an expression whose "meaning...is distinct from the sum of its parts" (p. 257).

Smith disagrees with Frye when she maintains that many students have trouble with reporting verbs.

Some people subscribe to the idea that chocolate is unhealthy, but Boynton's book refutes this claim.

This paper investigates the effects of alcohol on memory and stresses that further research be done as a matter of urgency.

? Exercise 1: Evaluating Sample Student Summaries

Below are two student summaries of an article titled "The Deadly Noodle" by Michael Hastings, Stefan Thiel, and Dana Thomas. Consider the pros and cons of each summary, then decide which you think is more effective and explain why.

Summary 1 (172 words)

In their article "The Deadly Noodle," Hastings, Thiel, and Thomas explain that the spread of the American diet and lifestyle has caused health crises in countries around the world. The authors note that both developed and developing countries are experiencing negative effects because of the spread of these habits. The authors explain that one effect is that these nations are experiencing a more sedentary lifestyle. For example, people work on assembly lines, ride in cars, and watch television. In addition to physical activity, the authors also show the ways in which food is being affected. They write that foods are becoming less healthful because of increased use of carbohydrates, oil, and sugar, which all cause an increase in calories. Finally, the authors explain that because of the lack of physical activity and a healthful diet, obesity is rising, and, as a result, health care costs rise as well. The authors conclude that the popularity of the American diet and lifestyle internationally may be attractive, but it is also causing an obesity epidemic worldwide.

Summary 2 (268 words)

In their article, "The Deadly Noodle", Hastings, Thiel, and Thomas write that greasy burgers and processed food are making the world fat. First, they write that France has resisted American cultural imperialism in the area of food, but it is still influenced by America's junk food. A sign of this is that France's children are gaining more weight in recent years. Then they write that the problem of the spread of American food is even more obvious in developing countries. Urbanization is causing people to move less and foods in these countries are becoming more processed, which makes them higher in calories and healthier. The authors state that nobody thought it would be easy to resist the American diet, but it's even more difficult than people thought it would be. Derek Yach says that people can blame globalization and major brands like Coca-Cola or McDonald's for this issue. Next, the authors say that the number of overweight people in the United States has doubled, and that Asia and Europe are also seeing increasing numbers of overweight people. For example, diabetes has been rising in China and India more than in any other country. Then the authors say that cooking oil is causing a problem because it's so cheap, so Indians use it too much. After that, the authors say that sugar is another part of the problem. Another problem is that people aren't moving around and are becoming couch-potatoes. Finally, the authors say that this is all a problem because healthcare costs are rising. Popkin says, "It's a very attractive lifestyle, but it's killing people all the same."

D. Summary Review & Additional Practice

Now that we've covered one-sentence summaries and paragraph summaries, check your understanding of what makes a summary effective. Try to be as specific as possible when providing feedback in Practice 2.

? Exercise 2: Recognizing the Elements of Good and Bad Summaries

Download and open up the [interactive PPT](#) and follow the directions on slide 1.

? Exercise 3: Evaluating One-Sentence Summaries

Provide feedback for these three one-sentence summaries of an article by Zeynep Tufekci titled "[The Machines are Coming](#)." What does each do well? How can each be improved?

According to the article, the abilities of robots will be improved constantly. What people need to do to solve this problem is to learn more useful skills in order to improve ourselves.

According to the article "The Machines Are Coming," Zeynep Tufekci states how in the coming age of robots, people should reflect on their progress.

In the article "The Machines Are Coming," Zeynep Tufekci states that robots can collect customers' preference information to benefit employers. She also mentions that we need to think about the relationship between humans and technology.

? Exercise 4: Evaluating Paragraph Summaries

Provide feedback for these two paragraph summaries of the article "The Hidden Epidemic of Teen Hunger" by Laura Bliss. What does each do well? How can each be improved?

Summary 1

In her article "The Hidden Epidemic of Teen Hunger," Laura Bliss describes a recent study by Susan J. Popkin that analyzed the causes and effects of teen hunger, as well as presented some possible solutions. Bliss points out that teens in the U.S. are more likely to experience food insecurity than younger kids because programs that fight poverty focus on little kids, while older teens "take on adult-like responsibilities, feel powerful social pressures, and engage in impulsive behavior." Because teenagers can be embarrassed by being poor, many of them shoplift, sell drugs, or even sell their own bodies in order to get food. Ironically, Bliss points out, obesity and food insecurity are two sides of the same coin; fast food is cheaper than healthy food. Popkin's team also suggested some possible solutions to the problem of food insecurity and the negative ways in which teenagers try to deal with it, including giving teenagers more SNAP benefits to get food, making better teen job programs, and getting teens involved in organizations that fight food insecurity.

Summary 2

First, Bliss writes about Susan J. Popkin, a housing and poverty researcher who did a study on teen hunger. Next, she describes how little kids are different from teenagers because teenagers experiencing hunger are overlooked and also feel stigma about being hungry. Bliss says that teenagers undertake risky behavior, like stealing, selling drugs, or using sex to get food. Then, she writes that food insecurity has become "normal." Bliss describes Popkin's study that gathered 200 teenagers from 13 to 18 in 10 communities across the United States to talk about their experiences with food insecurity. First, the study found that teenagers suffer problems just as much as little kids do from food insecurity. Second, the study found that teenagers are totally aware of the problem; they understand that healthy food is expensive and that their families make sacrifices so that all the kids can eat. Third, the teenagers in the study talked about how they find ways to get food, from staying at a friend's family's house to engaging in criminal activities like shoplifting. Finally, Popkin's study talked about federal policy implications and about how teenagers are capable of solving the problem of teen hunger if they work together in organizations.

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5.4: Peer Review

Peer Review

1. Peer Review Form

Use this form to give your classmate feedback on the elements of an effective summary we've discussed in this chapter:

Writer:

Reviewer:

Mark an X in the appropriate box for each of the criteria below. Add comments and suggestions to help the writer improve their summaries.

Peer Review Form

One-Sentence Summary	YES	SO-SO	NO
The sentence has a signal phrase with the correct author's name and title.			
The signal phrase is grammatically correct.			
The sentence correctly identifies the argument of the reading.			
The sentence is paraphrased well and is not copied directly from the article.			
The sentence is not too specific, but also not too vague.			
Comments on one-sentence summary:			
Paragraph Summary	YES	SO-SO	NO
The first sentence of the paragraph summary has a signal phrase with the correct author's name and title.			
The summary correctly identifies the overall argument of the reading.			
The summary correctly identifies the main ideas of the article.			
The summary has a balance of main ideas and details. There is enough detail to understand the article, but there is also not excessive detail.			
The writer has included transitions between the main ideas and details.			
The writer has used a variety of transitions; not just list transitions (next, also, then, furthermore, in addition, first, second, third) If yes, what transitions do they use?			
The writer mentions the author's last name frequently.			
The summary is an appropriate length (150-200 words).			
Comments on paragraph summary:			
MLA Formatting	YES	SO-SO	NO
The heading includes the writer's name, class, date, and assignment name/draft in the correct format.			
The assignment is double spaced.			
The first line of the summary is indented ("Tab" button)			
The essay has a header with the writer's last name and page number.			
The margins are 1 inch on all sides.			
Comments on MLA formatting:			

2. Self Review Checklist

After you have revised your draft using the feedback you've received from your classmate and instructor, complete the self review. Make sure your summary has all of the characteristics on the checklist.

One-Sentence Summary

- One-Sentence Summary includes the author's name.
- One-Sentence Summary includes the title of the article.
- Both the author's name and title are correct.
- One-Sentence Summary has a grammatically correct **signal phrase** (*according to the author... the author states...*)
- One-Sentence Summary has correctly identified the main idea.
- One-Sentence Summary is **paraphrased**.

Paragraph Summary

- Paragraph correctly identifies the **organizational pattern** (*pro/con, cause/effect compare/contrast, problem/solution, etc.*).
- Paragraph correctly identifies the main supporting details.
- Paragraph uses **transitions** and other cohesive devices.
- Paragraph frequently refers to the author by **last name**.
- Paragraph is paraphrased (**no quotes** are used).

Formatting & Drafting

- Essay has been formatted according to MLA guidelines.
- There are clear changes between the 1st and final drafts.

Self Review Reflection - Summary

As a way to reflect on what you have learned and what is still challenging, write one paragraph (150 words min.) about the changes between your 1st and final drafts. What was challenging the first time that you wrote the assignment? What did you learn in the process of revising? What challenges do you still face?

What will you do to address those challenges? What are you most proud of about this assignment?

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5.5: How to Write a Summary by Paraphrasing Source Material

When you paraphrase material from a source, you restate the information from an entire sentence or passage in your own words, using your own original sentence structure. A paraphrased source differs from a summarized source in that you focus on restating the ideas, not condensing them.

It is important to check your paraphrase against the source material to make sure it is both accurate and original. Inexperienced writers sometimes use the thesaurus method of paraphrasing—that is, they simply rewrite the source material, replacing most of the words with synonyms. This constitutes a misuse of sources. A true paraphrase restates ideas using the writer's own language and style.

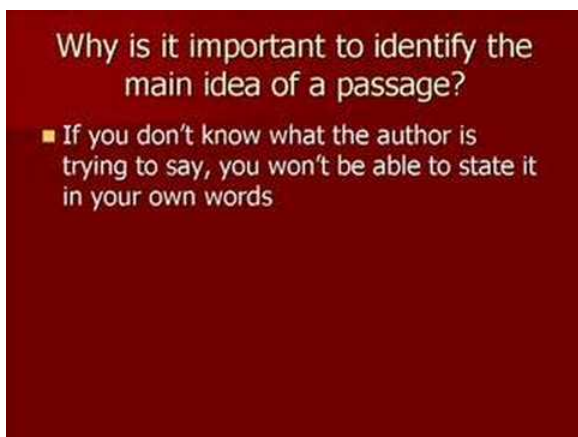
Review the videos below about developing paraphrasing skills with writing:

Instruction on how to paraphrase:



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How to avoid plagiarism when paraphrasing a text:



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <http://pb.libretexts.org/temp/?p=1513>

Paraphrase Writing Format

- **REMEMBER: IN THIS ASSIGNMENT, YOU SHOULD PARAPHRASE THE “WORD FOR WORD” PASSAGES THAT YOU CHOOSE. Follow the instructions below:**

- Write a Summary the way you always have, i.e., selecting “word-for-word” passages from the essay included in this module. Cite the page numbers in parentheses as you have up to now.
- Make a copy of your summary and place it below the original. Go into the copy of your summary and *try to paraphrase each “word-for-word” passage that you cited.*
- When writing a summary, remember that it should be in the form of a paragraph.
- A summary begins with an introductory sentence that states the text’s title, author and main point of the text as you see it.
- A summary is written in your own words.
- A summary contains only the ideas of the original text. Do not insert any of your own opinions, interpretations, deductions or comments into a summary.
- Identify in order the significant sub-claims the author uses to defend the main point.
- Using source material from the essay is important. Why? Because defending claims with source material is what you will be asked to do when writing papers for your college professors.
- Write a last sentence that “wraps” up your summary; often a simple rephrasing of the main point.

Example Paraphrase Writing Format

In the essay *Santa Ana*, author Joan Didion’s main point is (*state main point*). According to Didion ...*PARAPHRASE 1...*. Didion also CLAIMS... *PARAPHRASE 2...*. Finally, she CLAIMS “...*PARAPHRASE 3...*” Write a last sentence that “wraps” up your summary; often a simple rephrasing of the main point.

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5.6: Using Sources in Your Paper

Within the pages of your research essay, it is important to properly reference and cite your sources to avoid plagiarism and to give credit for original ideas.

There are three main ways to put a source to use in your essay: you can quote it, you can summarize it, and you can paraphrase it.

Quoting



Direct quotations are words and phrases that are taken directly from another source, and then used word-for-word in your paper. If you incorporate a direct quotation from another author's text, you must put that quotation or phrase in quotation marks to indicate that it is not your language.

When writing direct quotations, you can use the source author's name in the same sentence as the quotation to introduce the quoted text and to indicate the source in which you found the text. You should then include the page number or other relevant information in parentheses at the end of the phrase (the exact format will depend on the formatting style of your essay).

Summarizing

Summarizing involves condensing the main idea of a source into a much shorter overview. A summary outlines a source's most important points and general position. When summarizing a source, it is still necessary to use a citation to give credit to the original author. You must reference the author or source in the appropriate citation method at the end of the summary.

Paraphrasing

When paraphrasing, you may put any part of a source (such as a phrase, sentence, paragraph, or chapter) into your own words. You may find that the original source uses language that is more clear, concise, or specific than your own language, in which case you should use a direct quotation, putting quotation marks around those unique words or phrases you don't change.

It is common to use a mixture of paraphrased text and quoted words or phrases, as long as the direct quotations are inside of quotation marks.



Sources that are not properly integrated into your paper are like “bricks without mortar: you have the essential substance, but there's nothing to hold it together, rendering the whole thing formless” (Smith).

Providing Context for Your Sources

Whether you use a direct quotation, a summary, or a paraphrase, it is important to distinguish the original source from your ideas, and to explain how the cited source fits into your argument. While the use of quotation marks or parenthetical citations tells your reader that these are not your own words or ideas, you should follow the quote with a description, in your own terms, of what the quote says and why it is relevant to the purpose of your paper. You should not let quoted or paraphrased text stand alone in your paper, but rather, should integrate the sources into your argument by providing context and explanations about how each source supports your argument.^[1]

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1. Smith, Matt. "Putting It All Together: Thesis Synthesis." Web log post. Walden University Writing Center, 12 Apr. 2013. Web. 04 Apr. 2016. ↵

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5.7: Grammar - Subject-Verb Agreement

Learning Objectives

1. To understand what subject-verb agreement means
2. To learn the strategies and ten rules in correctly using subject-verb agreement
3. To apply the strategies and rules of subject-verb agreement through multiple examples and exercises

I. Pretest



snow-covered trees and houses

In the following ten sentences are about snow days, some verbs are bold-faced. If the bold-faced part in the sentence is correct, choose "correct". If not, choose the other answer. After you finish one sentence, you will get instant feedback on your answer before the next sentence. If you make mistakes, you can retry all the questions or see all the answers at the end of the pre-test.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://harpercollege.pressbooks.pub/academic-writing-skills/?p=558#h5p-155>

II. Meaning of Subject-Verb Agreement

In English, a subject and its verb must match each other. When the subject is singular, a singular form of the verb is used. When the subject is plural, a plural form of the verb is used.

The subjects are **boldfaced**, and the verbs are underlined below.

1. **Most students** love snow days.
2. When **the weather** is too severe due to snow and ice, **schools** are canceled.
3. When **that** happens, **students** have a snow day.

III. Strategies for Subject-Verb Agreement

1. The best way to decide on the correct verb is to look back at the subject. Highlight the subject if necessary, as shown in the above examples.

2. When a subject looks complicated or unclear to you, turn it into a pronoun to see its singular/plural nature. That will help you decide on the verb.

- In Chicago, there are usually **a few snow days** in most winters.
a few snow days → they (plural)
- Though **everyone** has a day off, **some teachers** assign extra homework.
everyone → he or she (singular) some teachers → they (plural)
- **The extra homework**, like small projects, keeps the students busy and safe at home.
the extra homework → it (singular)

3. The ten common rules you will be learning in this unit will help you choose the correct verbs in most situations. Some rules may be different from how people speak in informal situations, but here you are focusing on formal, standard English usage.

- **None** of my classmates enjoy driving in snow. (informal)
- **None** of my classmates enjoys driving in snow. (formal)

4. Practice, practice, and practice while enjoying your journey of learning. Be conscious of the verbs you are using. It is fun to learn a different language, and it is empowering^[1] to have the assurance^[2] that you are using the language correctly in academic writing.

IV. Ten Common Rules of Subject-verb Agreement

Rule One. In general, a subject of singular nature takes the singular form of the verb. A subject of plural nature takes the plural form of the verb.

1. **We** like outdoors, and **our puppy** loves outdoors, too.
2. **The cold weather** always keeps us all indoors.

Rule Two. If a compound subject is used, understand it as “they” and use the plural form of the verb.

1. **A wool scarf and a pair of earmuffs** protect us from the biting cold.
2. Besides a warm coat, **gloves and boots** are also essential.
3. **Both a jumper cable^[3] and a blanket** are necessary to keep in the car.

Rule Three. When “or”, “either...or...”, or “neither...nor...” is in the subject, look at the part after “or” or “nor” to decide on the verb.

1. The GPS navigation or **a detailed map** is very helpful if we are driving to a new location.
2. The GPS navigation or **printed directions** are very helpful if we are driving to a new location.
3. Either a blanket or **warm clothes** keep us warm during long-distance driving on a wintery day.
4. Either warm clothes or **a blanket** keeps us warm during long-distance driving on a wintery day.
5. Sometimes neither loud music nor **talkative passengers** are able to keep the tired driver awake.
6. Sometimes, neither talkative passengers nor **loud music** is able to keep the tired driver awake.

Exercise 1. The following paragraph is about winter fun in the McCormick Tribune Plaza in Chicago. Choose and highlight the correct verb in each sentence. Look at the subject carefully before you decide on the verb. If necessary, turn the subject into a pronoun to help you. The first one is an example. When you finish the entire exercise, you can retry or see all the answers. (To highlight, you position your computer cursor on the verbs and right click.)



person wearing ice skate

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://harpercollege.pressbooks.pub/academic-writing-skills/?p=558#h5p-156>

Rule Four. Many indefinite pronouns are singular. When such a pronoun is the subject, use the singular form of the verb.

Common indefinite pronouns include “everybody, everyone, everything, somebody, someone, something, nobody, no one, nothing, either of, neither of, one of, each of, none of”.

1. **Anyone** in Chicago understands how difficult it is to arrive on campus on time on snowy days.
2. **One** of my closest friends often comes fifteen minutes late because he is a new driver. “Better safe than sorry!” He always says.
3. **Each** of our professors allows a few extra minutes for students to arrive at the classroom.
4. **Neither** of my two courses counts attendance as part of the grade.

5. One time **everyone** was late except the professor!
6. Last week, **none** of the students was late. The whole class cheered as the professor started the lesson.

Rule Five. When “some”, “any”, “all”, or “most” is in the subject, the subject can be singular or plural. If the noun after these words is singular, use the singular form of the verb. If the noun is plural, use the plural form of the verb.

1. **Some of the students** do not have classes early in the morning, so they can sleep in.
2. There are no accidents on the road today as **some of the snow** has melted.
3. **All of the drivers** were safe at their destination this morning.
4. **All of the snow** was gone early this morning.
5. **Most of the professors** encourage extra home study when the classes are canceled due to severe weather.
6. **Most of the extra work** is optional for students.

Exercise 2. The following paragraph is about taking photos of the Bean in the Millennium Park in Chicago. Choose and highlight the correct verb in each sentence. Look at the subject carefully before you decide on the verb. If necessary, turn the subject into a pronoun to help you. The first sentence is an example. When you finish the entire exercise, you can retry or see all the answers. (To highlight, you position your computer cursor on the verbs and right click.)



a woman taking photo of the Bean

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://harpercollege.pressbooks.pub/academic-writing-skills/?p=558#h5p-157>

Rule Six. When a collective noun is used as the subject and is understood as acting together as one unit in the context, it becomes “it” and is followed by a singular form of the verb. If that collective noun focuses on its individual parts, it becomes “they” and is followed by a plural form of the verb.

Examples of collective nouns include “family”, “class”, “team”, “crowd”, “committee^[4]”, “jury^[5]”, “choir^[6]”, “audience^[7]”, etc.

1. **The family** is very quiet. The school is announcing a snow day on the radio.
2. **The family** are excited to be able to spend some time with each other at home.
3. **Our team** always works hard.
4. When the game was canceled due to snow, **the team** were not disappointed. They were excited to be able to visit each other’s homes.

If you are not sure, you can add a word like “members”.

Our team members always work hard. However, when the game was canceled due to snow, **they** were not disappointed. **They** were excited to be able to visit each other’s homes.

Rule Seven. When a gerund or an infinitive is used as a subject, use the singular form of the verb.

A gerund: verb + ing (It is not the same as the “verb + ing” in progressive tenses.)

An infinitive: to + base verb

1. **Reading** is my main activity on a snow day.
2. **Postponing** my homework till next week and **dreaming** of another snow day make me feel guilty but happy. (compound subject)
3. **Finding** a parking spot close to my classroom building is almost impossible as many spaces are covered by snow and become “unparkable”.
4. **To secure** a good parking space on campus around 10 am has been my struggle this semester.

Rule Eight. In a “There + a form of be” sentence, the verb depends on the noun after “be”.

1. There are **many parking spaces** on campus, but the snow blowers usually “park” some of the snow in those spaces.
2. Some students have no choice but park their cars in the employee parking areas. This happens more frequently when there is **an important exam** starting within ten minutes.
3. There have been **times** when I am late for an exam just because it takes too long to find parking.

Exercise 3. The following sentences are about winter fun in the Lincoln Park Zoo near Chicago. Choose and type the correct verb in each blank. Look at the subject carefully before you decide on the verb. If necessary, turn the subject into a pronoun to help you. You will get instant feedback on your answer. When you finish the entire exercise, you may retry or see all the answers.



Webpage of Lincoln Park ZooLights

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

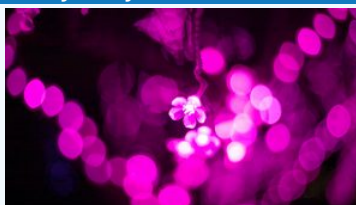
<https://harpercollege.pressbooks.pub/academic-writing-skills/?p=558#h5p-158>

Rule Nine. Some nouns are always singular even though they end with an “s”, and some other nouns are always plural. Use verbs according to the nouns.

Always Singular	Always Plural
non-count nouns: air, knowledge, milk, news, politics ...	apparels: clothes, jeans, pajamas, pants, shorts ...
school subjects: linguistics, mathematics, physics ...	groups: people, police ...
countries: the Netherlands, the Philippines, the United States ...	tools: glasses, pliers, scissors ...

1. **Cold air** is fresh and crisp on a winter morning.
2. **The United States** is a country where I am spending the coldest winter in my life.
3. **Young people** like to venture out and enjoy skiing.
4. **Scissors** are indispensable^[8] for a snow-day art project. (**A pair** of scissors is indispensable. – Refer to Rule Ten below.)

Exercise 4. The following sentences are about winter fun in the Chicago Botanic Garden. Choose and type the correct verb in each blank. Look at the subject carefully before you decide on the verb. If necessary, turn the subject into a pronoun to help you. You will get instant feedback on your answer. When you finish the entire exercise, you may retry or see all the answers.



Lights in Chicago Botanic Garden

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

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Rule Ten. A subject and a verb may not always be side by side. When there is a prepositional phrase between them, cross out that the prepositional phrase.

A prepositional phrase is a phrase consisting of a preposition plus a noun, pronoun, etc.

examples: in the room, from him ...

The prepositional phrases are crossed out below to help you locate the subjects more easily. You can see that the subjects and verbs do not change.

1. **Many international students** often find Chicago winter intolerably long and cold.

2. Many international students
3. ~~from warm countries~~ often find Chicago winter extremely long and cold.
4. A reliable car is essential on snowy days.
5. A reliable car
6. ~~with good tires~~ is essential on snowy days.
7. A car dealership installs snow tires for customers.
8. A car dealership
9. ~~on Golf Road near Harper campus~~ installs snow tires for customers.

Exercise 5. The following sentences are about winter fun in the Chicago Theatre District. Highlight the correct verb in each sentence. Look at the subject carefully before you decide on the verb. If necessary, turn the subject into a pronoun to help you. The first sentence is an example. When you finish the entire exercise, you can retry or see all the answers. (To highlight, you position your computer cursor on the verbs and right click.)



rows of red chairs in a theater

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V. Unit Review Practice

Exercise 6. The following paragraph is about museums in Chicago. There are seven more errors in the use of subject-verb agreement (not including the example). Remember to locate the subject first in each sentence. Then identify the verb error and correct it. The first one is an example.

Visiting Chicago Museums in Winter



dinosaur fossil display at Field Museum

Museums in Chicago ~~is~~ **(are)** famous. There is more than sixty of them! They provide numerous educational and recreational indoor activities, especially in winter. There are always something for everyone. People of all ages like to go there and have fun. For example, the Field Museum have displays from ancient cultures to the most modern scientific discoveries. One of the most popular exhibits is the largest Tyrannosaurus rex skeleton Sue. The Museum of Science and Industry is another well-known place. Every winter, it have a special exhibit called Christmas around the World and Holidays of Light. This event started in 1942 with one single tree but have expanded into an annual holiday tradition since then. Visitors see a four-story Grand Tree with forty smaller trees around it. The trees represents celebrations from cultures around the world. No doubt, museums in Chicago keep people warm, safe, and entertained during harsh winters.

Exercise 7. The following paragraph about winter fun at home is adapted from a paragraph in an earlier unit. There are six more errors in the use of subject-verb agreement (not including the example). Remember to locate the subjects first. Then identify the verb errors and correct them. The first one is an example.



Zootopia movie in a home theater

Winter Fun at Home

Winters in some areas of America ~~is~~ **(are)** very cold. Many people have to stay home, but they do not need to miss fun. The first interesting thing they can do is to make home a fun zone. For instance, they can set up a simple but comfortable home theatre with just a TV and a couch. A bag of popcorn and a cup of hot chocolate adds to a feeling of warmth and relaxation no matter how heavily it is snowing outside. Second, they can make household chores into a competition. Every week, they have a cleaning game. The older child vacuum the carpet, the younger child dust the furniture, and the parents clean the kitchen appliances. They can rotate being the judge and deciding on the prizes. Children are usually happier to do housework when it is fun. Lastly, they can continue with physical activities at home. If they have a treadmill or stationary bike at home, that will be great. However, it is still fine without it. On the Internet, there is many fitness programs with no required equipment, so everyone can choose what he or she like to do. One person can choose aerobics, and another can do tai chi. Winters can be long, but they do not have to be boring. It depend on the people to find fun things to do at home.

Exercise 8. In the following paragraph about winter dining in Chicago, there are ten more errors in the use of subject-verb agreement (not including the example). Remember to locate the subjects first. Then identify the verb errors and correct them. The first one is an example.

Winter Dining in Chicago



two igloos

As cold as Chicago winters are, there ~~is~~ **(are)** always many fun things to do both indoors and outdoors for everyone. Everyone are able to find activities to his or her liking. Young people loves ice-skating in the McCormick Tribune Plaza and photo shooting in the Millennium Park. Children delight^[9] in light gazing in the Lincoln Park Zoo and the Chicago Botanic Garden. Many people like to stay indoors. Watching a play in the Chicago Theater District or visiting Sue in the Field Museum guarantee a warm and safe outing. There are also many restaurants in Chicago. Believe it or not, there are outdoor dining in the deep cold. "From heated^[10] igloos^[11] to enclosed patios to rooftop bars, there are tons of outdoor dining." One of the restaurants are Beatrix Fulton Market. It offer covered^[12] igloos and heated greenhouses. Each greenhouse hold two to four customers and have a dinning time limit of one and a half hours. The igloo dining booking fee costs \$150. Neither the food nor the drinks is included in this fee. Eating there is expensive, but the dining experience will be unforgettable. If anyone are interested, it is important to check for updates at <https://www.choosechicago.com/blog/dining/open-patio-rooftops-dining-chicago/>.

The information about indoor dining, along with the quote, was adapted from the above website. Last accessed on January 15, 2021.

Exercise 9. Choose two of the topics to write a paragraph each. Pay attention to the subject-verb agreement.

1. What are different ways you have fun in winter?
2. What are popular places in your native country where people like to spend the winter?
3. What safe winter driving tips would you like to share?
4. What are different ways children enjoy snow days?
5. Have you had a snow day? If so, what did you do?

NSNT Practice



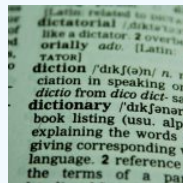
a pen writing in a notebook

Go to **The NSNT Free Writing Approach and Additional Weekly Prompts for Writing** in Appendix A. ([Open Appendix A here.](#)) Choose two topics to write a paragraph each. You may start with the NSNT approach. Then revise and edit your paragraphs. Pay attention to the subject-verb agreement in each sentence. You are encouraged to share your writing with your partner and help each other improve.

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Vocabulary Review



a page in a dictionary

The words here have appeared in this unit. The best way to learn them is to guess the meaning of each word from the context. Then hover your computer mouse over the number beside each word to check its meaning and part of speech. These words are also listed in the footnote area at the end of each unit.

Here, you can use the flashcards below to review these words.

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Summary

1. A subject and its verb must match each other.
2. The following strategies will help you use subject-verb agreement correctly:
 - Identify the subject first.
 - Turn a complicated subject into a pronoun to see its singular/plural nature before deciding on the verb.
 - Understand the rules.
 - Keep practicing.
3. The following are ten common rules in subject-verb agreement:

- In general, a subject of singular nature takes the singular form of the verb. A subject of plural nature takes the plural form of the verb.
- If a compound subject is used, understand it as “they” and use the plural form of the verb.
- When “or”, “either...or...”, or “neither...nor...” is in the subject, look at the word after “or” or “nor” to decide on the verb.
- When an indefinite pronoun is the subject, use singular form of the verb.
- In sentences with “some”, “any”, “all”, or “most” as the subject, if the noun after these words is singular, use the singular form of the verb. If the noun is plural, use the plural form of the verb.
- When a collective noun is used as the subject and is understood as acting together as one unit in the context, it becomes “it” and is followed by a singular form of the verb. If that collective noun focuses on its individual parts, it becomes “they” and is followed by a plural form of the verb.
- When a gerund or an infinitive is used as a subject, use the singular form of the verb.
- In “There + a form of be” sentences, the verb depends on the noun after “be”.
- Some nouns are always singular, and some are always plural. Use verbs according to the singular or plural nature of the nouns.
- When there is a prepositional phrase between the subject and the verb, cross out that the prepositional phrase when you look for the subject.

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- a woman taking photo of the Bean © Photo by Laura Blanshard on Unsplash
- [Webpage of Lincoln Park ZooLights](#)
- Lights in Chicago Botanic Garden © Photo by Steven Aguilar on Unsplash
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-
1. empowering: adjective, feeling powerful ↵
 2. assurance: noun, the feeling of being sure ↵
 3. a jumper cable: noun phrase, a wire to jump start a car when the car battery is not working ↵
 4. committee: noun, a group of people selected to work on a special task ↵
 5. jury: noun, a group of people in the court to decide whether a person is guilty of a crime ↵
 6. choir: noun, an organized group of singers ↵
 7. audience: noun, a group of people watching or listening, such as in a movie theater or sport game ↵
 8. indispensable: adjective, absolutely necessary, essential ↵
 9. delight: verb, enjoy ↵
 10. heated: adjective, warm, with heating on ↵
 11. igloo: noun, a "house" made of ice and snow ↵
 12. covered: adjective, having a roof or lid ↵
-

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

6: Module 6 - Weeks 9 and 10

4.1: Creating Paragraphs

4.2: Paragraphs

4.3: What is an Essay?

4.4: Organizing an Essay

6.3: Grammar - Expressing Meaning in Past Tenses

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6.1: Creating Paragraphs

What Is a Paragraph?

A paragraph is a small section of your writing. Each paragraph should make a single point that connects to your main idea (thesis). In the paragraph, you must give evidence and reasons to support your point. Often, a paragraph ends by linking the idea to the next part or the main argument.

How Many Paragraphs Do You Need?

There isn't a set number for how many paragraphs a paper should have. You need at least one paragraph for your introduction and one for your conclusion. After that, each important idea should have its own paragraph. Don't put many different ideas in one paragraph. If you include too much, it becomes hard for readers to understand your points.

Each paragraph should cover only one topic or idea. This helps your reader focus and makes your argument easier to follow.

Some teachers say you should have one paragraph for each point in your thesis. That strategy is helpful, but if your topic is complex, you can use more than one paragraph for a single idea. Use as many paragraphs as you need to explain and support your argument clearly.

Using Topic Sentences

Begin each paragraph with a topic sentence. This sentence tells the reader what the paragraph is about and how it fits with your thesis. Your topic sentences should always relate back to your main idea.

Creating Good Paragraphs

If your thesis has several important points, write each body paragraph about one of those points. Your first body paragraph should support your first main idea, and your second body paragraph should support the second idea, and so on. Each paragraph should start with an introductory sentence that is clear and interesting. End each paragraph with a sentence that connects to the next idea. Use transition words and phrases (such as "first," "next," "for example," "in conclusion") so your writing flows smoothly and makes sense.

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6.2: Paragraphs

What Is a Paragraph?

A paragraph is a group of sentences that share one main idea. Paragraphs are not defined by length—some are just one sentence long. What matters is that all the sentences in a paragraph work together to support the same point. The main idea in a paragraph is often called the “controlling idea,” because it guides what the paragraph will say.

How Do You Decide What To Put in a Paragraph?

Start by thinking about your thesis, which is the most important idea in your paper. Every paragraph should connect to the thesis. To decide what goes in a paragraph, begin with brainstorming. This means writing down all your ideas before organizing them. Good brainstorming helps you build strong paragraphs, just like a strong foundation helps build a tall building.

What Makes a Good Paragraph?

- **Unified:** All sentences in a paragraph must be about the same controlling idea (often explained in the topic sentence).
- **Connected to the Thesis:** Every sentence should connect to the paper’s main idea.
- **Coherent:** Sentences must be organized in a clear and logical way.
- **Well-developed:** Each idea needs enough explanation and details to support the controlling idea.

When you remember these rules, your writing will be clearer and easier to understand.

How Do I Organize a Paragraph?

There are several ways to organize a paragraph. The best way depends on the main idea of the paragraph. Here are some common formats:

- **Narration:** Tell a story in time order, from beginning to end. ([See an example.](#))
- **Description:** Describe how something looks, smells, tastes, sounds, or feels. Organize by location or features. ([See an example.](#))
- **Process:** Explain steps, one after another (first, second, third). ([See an example.](#))
- **Classification:** Group things or explain parts of a topic. ([See an example.](#))
- **Illustration:** Give examples to prove a point. (See the detailed example in the next section of this handout.)

Five Steps to Building a Paragraph

Follow these five steps for writing a good paragraph:

Step 1: Decide on a Main Idea and Write a Topic Sentence

Start with the most important idea for your paragraph. Write a sentence that clearly tells the reader what the paragraph is about.

Step 2: Explain Your Main Idea

Add a sentence that helps the reader understand your topic sentence. Explain why your idea is important.

Step 3: Give Examples

Support your main idea by giving examples or facts. These examples show your idea is true.

Step 4: Explain Your Examples

Show the reader how your examples connect to the main idea. Make sure the connection is clear.

Step 5: Finish the Paragraph or Connect to the Next Idea

End your paragraph by summing up the main idea or leading to the next paragraph.

Common Problems with Paragraphs

1) No Topic Sentence

Every paragraph needs a clear topic sentence. Think of paragraphs like sandwiches—the topic sentence is the top piece of bread.

2) More Than One Main Idea

If a paragraph has more than one big idea, split it into two paragraphs. Each paragraph should have only one main point.

3) Missing Transitions

Use words and phrases like “first,” “next,” “for example,” or “finally” to help your reader follow your ideas. Transitions make your writing clear and organized.

By following these steps, you can write paragraphs that are clear, easy to understand, and well-organized.

Works consulted

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

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

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

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4.3: What is an Essay?

An essay is an idea. Without an idea, there is no essay. The best essays share original and thoughtful ideas.

Where Do Good Ideas Come From?

Ideas can come from personal experiences or, in research, from combining the ideas of other writers. In this class, most essays will be personal essays, so you will use your own life experiences for ideas.

Reflecting and Brainstorming

We learn lessons from life. Before writing an essay, think about your experiences. Use brainstorming strategies to help you find a good idea. Your reader can learn from your insights, so ask yourself: What lessons have I learned? What do I know that I can share?

Why Do We Write?

We write to make the world better. Personal essays help us explore what it means to be human. By sharing our experiences and lessons, we add wisdom to our community.

Everyone is an expert on their own life. When you write a personal essay, you use your own experiences and describe them with clear and interesting language to show your idea.

Tips for Different Types of Essays

- **Narrative Essay:** Don't just list events; connect them to a main idea or lesson.
- **Example Essay:** Describe your example with detail so the reader can understand and feel your experience.
- **Comparison/Contrast Essay:** Don't only tell the differences and similarities; explain what they mean and share your insights.

You Have Something to Share

You may feel too young to have big ideas, but your experiences matter. Imagine advising a younger brother or sister who needs help with something new. Your advice comes from your experiences and can help others.

Most essays in this class use personal experience instead of outside sources. Write to help your reader learn from your life. Every experience is valuable, no matter how small.

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6.4: Organizing an Essay

What Makes a Good Essay?

A good essay has a clear topic and is written with correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation. The writer's voice should be strong but not distracting. One of the most important parts of an essay is organization. Organized writing is easy to understand and makes your main idea clear for readers.

Essay organization is like building a bike. Having all the parts in the right place makes it easier to put together and easier for others to see how it works. Essays should have ideas in a logical order so the reader can follow your points.

There isn't only one way to organize an essay—just as there are many ways to organize a kitchen. The most important thing is that ideas are grouped in a way that makes sense.

Strategies for Organizing an Essay

Strategy 1: Reverse Outlining

If you're unsure about your essay's organization, try reverse outlining. First, read your draft and write short notes about what each paragraph does. Then, write an outline with these notes so you can see the structure of your essay. Check for paragraphs that repeat the same idea, include too many topics, or do not fit your thesis. Decide what needs to be rewritten, moved, or removed.

Strategy 2: Talk It Out

Before writing, explain your essay idea to someone else, like a friend or tutor. Talking about your ideas helps you organize them. Pay attention to the order you use when you speak—this can be a good order for your essay. Take notes while talking and ask your listener to ask questions. Their feedback can help you improve your essay.

Strategy 3: Using Paragraphs

Paragraphs help organize your writing. Break the essay into paragraphs each time the topic or focus changes. Each paragraph should have one main idea and start with a topic sentence. Paragraphs can move from general to specific, specific to general, or combine both. Use details, examples, and explanations to support your ideas. End with a strong conclusion: a summary, a call to action, a question, a quote, or a memorable image.

Grouping and Reviewing Paragraphs

Group paragraphs into sections that support your thesis. Make sure each section has a clear purpose. Organize your sections and paragraphs in a way that makes your argument strong and easy to follow. If a paragraph does not fit with any section or support your thesis, consider removing it.

By using these strategies, your essay will be clear, logical, and easier for readers to understand.

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7.3: Grammar - Expressing Meaning in Past Tenses

Learning Objectives

1. To understand the verb forms and meanings of three past tenses – simple past, past progressive, and past perfect– through multiple examples
2. To practice using the appropriate past tenses in a variety of writing situations

I. Pretest



Great Fire of London

In the following account about the Great Fire of London in 1666, the verbs are bold-faced. If the bold-faced verbs are correct, choose “correct”. If not, choose one of the other two answers. You will get instant feedback on your choice. If you make mistakes, you can retry all the questions or see all the answers at the end of the pre-test.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://harpercollege.pressbooks.pub/academic-writing-skills/?p=593#h5p-173>

Adapted from https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Fire_of_London. Last accessed on September 21, 2021.

II. Expressing Meaning in Simple Past

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<https://harpercollege.pressbooks.pub/academic-writing-skills/?p=593#h5p-174>

For explanations and examples of “Be” verbs and “Do” verbs, open Unit 9 here.

Verb Forms in Simple Past

1. When “was” or “were” is the main verb, do not use a “do” verb. In the same way, when the main verb is a “do” verb, do not use “was” or “were”.
 - The Great Fire of London was a serious disaster. It
 -
 - ~~was~~ occurred in 1666.
2. Add an “ed” to the end of a regular “do” verb.
 - It destroyed a big part of London
3. After “did” in a question and negative sentence, use the base form (without -ed) since you already have a helping verb “did”.
 - How long did it last? It lasted almost five days.
 - Did it kill many people? No, it did not kill too many people. According to some reports, it killed six people.
4. “Used to + base verb” is common for past regular activities.
 - People in London used to talk about this fire in great terror^[1].

For a list of verbs with irregular past tense and past participle spelling, please refer to Appendix D Irregular Verbs. Open Appendix D [here](#).

Meaning, Common Expressions, and Examples in Simple Past

Meaning #1: activities or situations that started and completed at a specific time in the past

Common Time Words: yesterday, last night, two days ago, in 2000 ...

Examples: about the Great Chicago Fire



Great Chicago Fire

1.

The Great Chicago Fire occurred on October 8th through October 10th in 1871.

2. It killed approximately 300 people and destroyed about 3.3 square miles of the city.
3. It damaged 17,500 buildings and left more than 100,000 residents homeless.
4. The fire spread quickly because the firefighters received the wrong information and did not come to the right place to rescue^[2].
5. It was the biggest fire in the history of Chicago.

Adapted from https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Chicago_Fire. Last accessed on June 1, 2021.

Meaning #2: past routines, past habits, past situations.

Common Time Words and Frequency Adverbs: always, constantly, frequently, usually, often, generally, sometimes, seldom, rarely, hardly ever, never, every day, each night, once a week, on Tuesdays ...

Examples: about a family's past fire prevention routines

1. When I was a child, my family tried different ways to prevent house fires.
2. My mother used to make sure that the stove was off before she went to bed every night.
3. My father used to make sure that all the electronic wires were in good working order.
4. Sometimes, we had to use candles.
5. Why did we have to use candles? In those years, power outage^[3] happened very often.
6. My parents did not allow my younger sister to be near the flame, but they let me because I was old enough.

Exercise 1

An account of the Great Chicago Fire continues below. Fill in the blanks with the correct simple past verbs. The first one is an example. When you complete the entire exercise, you can click "Check" for feedback. You may retry or see all the answers.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://harpercollege.pressbooks.pub/academic-writing-skills/?p=593#h5p-175>

Adapted from https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Chicago_Fire. Last accessed on June 1, 2021.

III. Express Meaning in Past Progressive (No Non-Action Verbs)

Verb Forms in Past Progressive: was/were + verb-ing

Meaning, Common Expressions, and Examples in Past Progressive

Meaning #1: An action was in progress at a specific time in the past.

Common Time Expressions: at this time yesterday, at 9 am this morning, at 4 pm last Tuesday, at that moment, at that time ...

Examples: about encountering^[4] a car accident while driving

1. At 9 am on a Monday last December, I was driving to college.
2. My friend Angela was sitting in the passenger seat at that time.
3. At the same time, we were listening to the news on the radio. We were not talking to each other.
4. It was snowing at that moment.

Meaning #2: A long action was in progress when a short action happened.

Common Time Expressions: when, while (“when” with simple past for shorter action; “while” with past progressive for longer action)

Examples: about encountering a car accident while driving



traffic sign slippery road

1. I was driving to our college when we heard on the radio that there was an accident just ahead of us.
2. When we heard the news, Angela was drinking her morning coffee in the car.
3. While I was driving, we heard on the radio that there was an accident just ahead of us.
4. We heard the news while Angela was drinking her morning coffee in the car.

Meaning #3: Two past actions were both in progress at the same time in the past.

Common Time Expressions: while

Examples: about encountering a car accident while driving

1. I was driving while Angela was drinking coffee.
2. While we were waiting in the car for the accident to be cleared, many other drivers were also waiting patiently in their cars.
3. While Angela and I were chatting in the car, our classmates were getting ready for the morning class at college.

When you include “when” or “while” in your sentence, you are writing a complex sentence.

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<https://harpercollege.pressbooks.pub/academic-writing-skills/?p=593#h5p-176>

For detailed explanations and examples of complex sentences, open Unit 7 here.

Exercise 2

Below is a story about a man and his donkeys. Fill in the blanks with the correct simple past and past progressive verbs. The first one is an example. When you complete the entire exercise, you can click “Check” for feedback. You may retry or see all the answers.



three donkeys

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

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IV. Expressing Meaning in Past Perfect

Good news – The past perfect tense is much easier than most people think!

Verb form in past perfect: had + past participle



gloved hands holding a globe with a face mask

For a list of verbs with irregular past tense and past participle spelling, please refer to Appendix D Irregular Verbs. Open Appendix D [here](#).

Meaning, Common Expressions, and Examples in Past Perfect

Meaning: an action or a situation that had completed or repeated before another past action or situation

Common Time Expressions: by then, by that time, by + a specific past time, by + a past time clause, when, until, as soon as, before, after ...

Examples: About online learning experiences

1. When the semester started in January 2021, many college students had already taken online classes for at least one semester.
2. It was hard for new students because many of them had never had an online course before.
3. Had all the professors taught virtually before the Covid lockdown in March 2020? No, most of them had not.
4. What remote class had you tried before coming to the U.S?

Exercise 3.Example:

Write answers to the following questions with past perfect. Discuss the meaning of the questions and answers with your partner.

What were three of the things you had done by the time you came to class today?

Answer: I had eaten my breakfast, driven to Harper, and visited the college library.

1. When you began this semester, how many English classes had you taken?
2. Before you arrived in the United States, had you ever spoken on the phone in English?
3. Before you came to the United States, what food had you never tasted?
4. Before you left for the United States, how many times had you been to the consulate in order to get your visa?

V. Unit Review Practice

Exercise 4

In the following paragraph about learning English, some verbs are underlined. In these underlined verbs, find and correct ten more errors in the use of verbs (not including the example). The first one is an example.

A Positive Attitude

I have a positive attitude toward English grammar. When I first came to America, things are (**were**) different. I have never studied English before, so I am very confused about different verb forms and tenses. As time goes by, my feeling toward the language began to change. I force myself to practice even though it was hard. I write a lot, and I become more confident each time I used the language. Now, although I am more confident about grammar, I still have many problems to overcome. I find

that learning a new language takes a great deal of time and that I had to be patient and disciplined in order to be good at it. Sometimes, I was frustrated and impatient. For example, when I try very hard to include wonderful details in my paragraph, my professor and classmates may not understand some of my sentences because of many grammar mistakes. However, most times I think positively about my learning experience. I know that mistakes helped me learn. I been practicing writing with correct grammar since the beginning of this semester. I am sure that with my hard work, my skills in English will get better and better.

Exercise 5

The following paragraph is about a quiz and a joke. Some sentences are correct, but others have verb tense errors. Find ten more errors and correct them (not including the example). The first one is an example.

A Quiz and a Joke

In the reading class last week, we **have** (**had**) a vocabulary quiz. There are 20 questions about idioms. While we were taking the quiz, one of the students start to laugh loudly. We all stop to see what was going on. That student still laughed. He had forgotten that he was taking a quiz and was supposed to be quiet. Fortunately, he stopped laughing after the teacher signaled to him. After class, we all gather around him to ask why. He told us that the quiz is so easy that it reminds him of something funny:



a piece of cake on a plate

Question: Why did the students eat their test?

Answer: They ate it because their professor had told them it was a piece of cake^[5]!

At the time of our quiz, he wished that the quiz would transform itself into a piece of cake because the quiz was easy for him. Upon hearing this, we were all laughing. A week had passed. I still laughed whenever I remember this incident.

Exercise 6

There are fourteen more errors in the use of verb tenses in the following paragraph (not including the example). Find the errors and correct them. The first one is an example.

Childhood Memories

I **am having** (**have**) so many wonderful memories of my childhood. When I was five years old, my family move to Florida. My parents told me that we live in Chicago before we moved. For the first two years in Florida, we lived in a small apartment. Then, when it is time for my brother and me to start school, my parents were buying our first house. For the first time, I had my own room and did not had to share with my brother. I was loving that room! My mother was liking to sew, and she made beautiful quilts and matching curtains for each room. Sunday was my favorite day because we went to the beach. We use to pack a big lunch from the food that Mom buy the day before. On the beach, we kids ran, laugh, and play games. Our parents sometimes ran with us, but other times they sitting in the lawn chairs and watching us. We often did not left the beach until dark. I will always member those fun years.

Exercise 7. Choose one of the following topics to write a paragraph. Use appropriate verbs.

1. Write a paragraph about your teenage years. What were you like? What did you like to do then? Was there anything that you had experienced in your early childhood to cause you to think or behave the way you did as a teenager?
2. Write a letter to your spouse, child(ren), or parent(s) and reminisce^[6] about your life together.
3. Write about a celebrity^[7]. What do you know about his or her life and career? If you can, include a photo of this person.

NSNT Practice



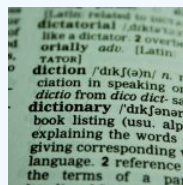
a pen writing in a notebook

Go to **The NSNT Free Writing Approach and Additional Weekly Prompts for Writing** in Appendix A. ([Open Appendix A here.](#)) Choose two topics that use past tenses. You may start with the NSNT approach and then rewrite your paragraphs. Pay attention to the use of past verbs. You are encouraged to share your paragraphs with your partners and help each other improve.

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Vocabulary Review



a page in a dictionary

The words here have appeared in this unit. The best way to learn them is to guess the meaning of each word from the context. Then hover your computer mouse over the number beside each word to check its meaning and part of speech. These words are also listed in the footnote area at the end of each unit.

Here, you can use the flashcards below to review these words.

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Summary

1. Always focus on your meaning/ideas while choosing verb tenses.
2. Time words, verb forms, and verb tenses must match one another.
3. “Was” or “were” and the base form of a “do” verb cannot be used side by side.
4. Non-action verbs cannot be used in the past progressive tenses.
5. The simple past tense is used in expressing
 - An activity or situation started and completed at a specific time in the past.
 - past routines, past habits, past situations.
6. The past progressive tense is used in expressing
 - An action was in progress at a specific time in the past.
 - A long action was in progress when a short action occurred.
 - Two past actions were both in progress at the same time in the past.
7. The past perfect tense is used in expressing

- an action or a situation that had completed or repeated before another past action or situation.
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 - [a piece of cake on a plate](#) © Photo by Karolina Grabowska from Pexels
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-

1. terror: noun, intense fear ↵
 2. rescue: verb, save, put out the fire ↵
 3. power outage: noun phrase, lost power, no electricity ↵
 4. encounter: verb, meet, see ↵
 5. a piece of cake: noun phrase, something very easy ↵
 6. reminisce: verb, remember past experiences or events ↵
 7. celebrity: noun, a famous person ↵
-

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

7: Module 7 - Weeks 11 and 12

[5.1: Conclusions](#)

[5.2: Introductions and Conclusions](#)

[7.5: Grammar - Expressing Meaning in Future Tenses](#)

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7.1: Conclusions

About Conclusions

Conclusions and introductions are sometimes the hardest parts of a paper to write. While the body (middle part) is often easier, every essay needs a good beginning and ending to help the reader understand and remember your ideas.

A strong conclusion helps the reader move from your essay back to real life. It shows why your ideas matter and gives your reader something important to remember.

Your conclusion is your chance to say the final words about your topic. In this part, summarize your main points, explain why your ideas are important, and leave your reader with a positive impression. You can also connect your ideas to bigger issues or ask readers to think more about your topic.

Good Strategies for Writing Conclusions

- **Ask “So what?”** After writing your conclusion, ask yourself or a friend, “So what?” Why do your ideas matter? Try to answer this question in your conclusion.
- **Return to your main theme.** Connect back to ideas or images from your introduction.
- **Pull your ideas together.** Briefly sum up main points, but don’t just repeat them. Show how your ideas connect.
- **Share an interesting idea, question, or quotation.**
- **Suggest an action or question for the reader.** Tell the reader what to do next or give them something new to think about.
- **Explain why your topic is important** for a bigger group, community, or the world.

What to Avoid in Conclusions

- Don’t start with “in conclusion” or “in summary.” These sound too simple or boring.
- Don’t give your thesis statement for the first time at the end—put it at the start of your paper!
- Don’t add new ideas or topics in your conclusion.
- Don’t just repeat your thesis in other words.
- Don’t use emotional or dramatic words if your paper is academic.
- Don’t add facts or quotes that belong in the body of your paper.

Weak Types of Conclusions

1. **Restatement Only (“That’s My Story and I’m Sticking to It”):** Just repeats the thesis and quickly ends.
2. **Mystery Ending (“Sherlock Holmes”):** Hides your main argument until the conclusion. The thesis should come at the beginning.
3. **Too Emotional (“America the Beautiful”):** Uses lots of feelings, which may not fit an academic essay.
4. **Extra Information (“Grab Bag”):** Adds random facts or ideas that don’t connect to the main paper.

A good conclusion makes the reader understand why your essay mattered and gives them something to think about. Here is your passage, rewritten in clear and simple language for intermediate ESL students:

About Conclusions

Introductions and conclusions can be the hardest parts of an essay to write. The introduction starts your paper and the conclusion finishes it. These parts help your reader understand your ideas clearly.

A strong conclusion helps your reader see why your essay is important. The conclusion is your last chance to explain why your ideas matter. You can remind the reader what you wrote about, show why it is important, and give them something to think about after reading your paper.

Your conclusion can do more than just repeat your introduction. You can talk about the bigger meaning of your topic or suggest new ideas for the reader to consider.

A good conclusion should make your reader feel glad they read your essay and should help them see your topic in a new way.

How to Write a Good Conclusion

- Ask yourself, “So what?” Why should the reader care about your ideas? Try to answer this in your conclusion.
- Connect back to the main theme or idea from your introduction.
- Try to bring your points together and explain how they fit.
- Share an interesting idea, question, or quote to make your ending stronger.
- Suggest an action, solution, or something for the reader to think about.
- Show why your topic matters for your school, community, or the world.

What Not to Do in Conclusions

- Don’t start with “in conclusion,” “in summary,” or similar phrases.
- Don’t explain your thesis for the first time in the conclusion.
- Don’t bring in new ideas or topics at the end.
- Don’t just restate your thesis without adding anything new.
- Don’t use emotional or dramatic words if you have not used them in the rest of your essay.
- Don’t add new evidence, facts, or quotes that should be in the body.

Examples of Weak Conclusions

1. **Just Restating (“That’s my story...”):** Only repeats the thesis, offers nothing new.
2. **Hiding the Main Idea (“Sherlock Holmes”):** Main argument comes only at the end. It should come at the start.
3. **Too Emotional (“America the Beautiful”):** Uses too many feelings; doesn’t match the rest of the essay.
4. **Extra Information (“Grab Bag”):** Adds facts or ideas that don’t fit with the essay.

A good conclusion gives a strong ending to your essay, reminds the reader of your main ideas, and explains why your topic matters.

Works consulted

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

All quotations are from:

Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, edited and with introduction by Houston A. Baker, Jr., New York: Penguin Books, 1986.

Strategies for Writing a Conclusion. Literacy Education Online, St. Cloud State University. 18 May 2005 <<http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/acadwrite/conclude.html>>.

Conclusions. Nesbitt-Johnston Writing Center, Hamilton College. 17 May 2005 <<http://www.hamilton.edu/academic/Res...nclusions.html>>.

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7.2: Introductions and Conclusions

When to Write Introductions and Conclusions

Many writers think they must write their introduction first and their conclusion last. But you do not have to do this! You can start writing any part of your essay when you feel ready. Just because the introduction comes first in the final paper does not mean you must write it first. Think of building a house: the door is at the entrance, but builders always start with the foundation underneath.

Introductions

Even though there are many ways to start different essays, most introductions have the same goal: to help readers understand the topic, time, and place.

Here are some common ways to start an introduction:

- Give background about the topic.
- Tell readers when and where the story or topic happens.
- Begin with an interesting quote or a surprising fact.
- Show you are knowledgeable and ready to talk about the topic.
- State your main idea or thesis.
- Explain why the reader should care about your essay.

Every introduction should make the reader want to keep reading and should help them understand what the essay will be about.



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Conclusions

Conclusions are important because they give a strong ending to your essay. Most conclusions do these things:

- Summarize your main ideas (especially in longer essays)
- Connect back to the introduction, like ending a story that began at the start
- Share an emotional message, helping the reader feel your ideas are important
- Ask the reader to take action or think more about your topic

A good conclusion usually reminds the reader of something from the introduction. This makes your essay feel complete and strong. Use your conclusion to show why your essay matters and to leave the reader thinking about your ideas.



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8.3: Grammar - Expressing Meaning in Future Tenses

Learning Objectives

1. To understand ways to express meaning in the future – with simple future, simple present, and present progressive tenses – through multiple examples
2. To learn future time clauses
3. To practice using the appropriate future tenses in a variety of writing situations

I. Pretest



a robot holding a computer

^[1]In the following ten sentences about artificial intelligence, some bold-faced verbs are correct in expressing future meaning, but some do not. If the bold-faced part in the sentence is correct, choose “correct”. If not, choose one of the other two answers. After you finish one sentence, you will get instant feedback on your answer before the next sentence. If you make mistakes, you can retry all the questions or see all the answers at the end of the pre-test.

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II. Expressing Meaning in Simple Future

Simple Future Tense verb forms:

- “Be” verbs: will be, am/is/are going to be
- “Do” verbs: will + base “Do” verb, am/is/are going to + base “Do” verb

For explanations and examples of “Be” verbs and “Do” verbs, open Unit 9 here.

Meaning: activities or situations that will happen in the future

Common time expressions: later today, tomorrow, next week, in 2035, soon, in the future, in the near future ...

Examples: about future medical care

1. There will be an increased need for doctors in the remote^[2] areas of the world.
2. Medical advances are going to help terminally ill patients^[3].
3. Will there be a cure for the common cold in the near future?
4. When will medical care become free for everyone?
5. Scientists and doctors are going to discover more effective cures for cancers in the next few years.
6. More patients will enjoy personalized medical care ten years from now.
7. The governments in many countries will provide free medical care to all citizens soon.

“Am/Is/Are Going to + Base Verb” vs “Will + Base Verb”

Meaning	am/is/are going to + base verb	will + base verb

Future prediction^[4] (same)	There is going to be an increased need for doctors in the remote areas of the world.	There will be an increased need for doctors in the remote areas of the world.
Future schedule (same)	The new doctors are going to begin their medical practice next week.	The new doctors will begin their medical practice next week.
Prior plan	The hospital is going to purchase ^[5] some new equipment with the donated money.	X
A future action based on strong evidence at present	The patient is eating! He is going to recover!	X
Promise, desire, determination	X	No matter how long the surgery will be, this patient will endure ^[6] it.
Decision made at the moment of speaking	X	A: The patient is in pain. Who will get the doctor? B. I will!
Invitation	X	Will you join us in the new hospital opening ceremony tomorrow?

III. Expressing Meaning in Simple Present

For verb forms in simple present please refer to Unit 11 Expressing Meaning in Present Tenses. Open Unit 11 here.

Simple present is often used for actions or events that are part of a fixed or an official schedule, such as plane, movie, and semester schedules. Common verbs with this use include “start, begin, end, finish, open, close, arrive, leave, land, take off...”

1. The new Children’s Hospital opens next month.
2. Its affiliated Urgent Care Center starts two months later.

IV. Expressing Meaning in Present Progressive (No Non-Action Verbs)

For verb forms in present progressive, please refer to Unit 11 Expressing Meaning in Present Tenses. Open Unit 11 here.

Present progressive is often used for actions that have already been planned for the future. They can include personal plans. Add a future time expression in the sentence. Common verbs with this use include “go, come, move, see, fly, move, play, meet, buy...”

1. Dr. Marcus is flying in from New York this afternoon to perform the heart surgery.
2. She is meeting the patient’s family afterwards.

Exercise 1. Correct the future verb forms in the following sentences about future houses. The first one is an example.

Example:

What are homes going look like in one hundred years?

Correction: What are homes going to look like in one hundred years?



possible future houses with multicolored roofs

1.

Some houses going to be in the outer space.

2. Some houses going to float^[7] in mid-air.

3. Are some of them going to existing under the water?

4. Most houses will still going to be on the ground.
5. What will happens to the existing homes?
6. A lecture about future homes starting at 9 am tomorrow.
7. Many students are go to that lecture.

Exercise 2. Choose a topic below and write a paragraph about the future. Use appropriate future verbs.

1. Will there be a cure for all types of cancer in thirty years? Why do you think so?
2. What will elderly care be like in year 2060?

V. Future Time Clauses

A future time clause is a type of dependent clause. It must be used with an independent clause to make a complete complex sentence.

For detailed explanations and examples of complex sentences, please refer to Unit 7 Sentence Essentials. Open Unit 7 here.

A future time clause:

when/while/before/after/until/as soon as ... + subject + main verb in simple present or present progressive tense

In a time clause, simple present or present progressive is used to mean future. Keep the future tense in the independent clause. In other words, when you look at a future time clause, you see a simple present or present progressive verb there, but it means future.



a Santa Claus and a child in mall

Therefore, the look of the verb and its real time reference are different. Try to understand this difference as if you were looking at a Santa Claus. When children sit with him for photos in the mall, he looks like a Santa Claus. However, when he takes off the costume, the real person could be a neighbor or a friend, not a Santa Claus!

1. When AI replaces more and more human jobs in the future, many people will lose their job.
2. One of my friends will need to find another job before AI takes over her work in three months.
3. She will be meeting some business friends while she is traveling next month.

Exercise 3. Combine the following sentences to form complex sentences with the conjunctions given. Each new sentence will contain a future time clause.

Example:

People will retire. They will enjoy more leisure time. (when)



a robot pet toy

When people retire, they will enjoy more leisure time.

1. They will save enough money. They will work hard. (after)
2. They will retire. They will not be lonely. (when)
3. They will enjoy many conveniences in daily retirement living. There will be more inventions. (when)
4. For example, robot pets will keep them company. Robot pets will be available. (as soon as)
5. Those pets will make the seniors^[8] happy. They will “adopt” the robot pets. (when)
6. The robot pets will even be by their bedside. The seniors will be sleeping. (while)

VI. Unit Review Practice

Exercise 4. “Will” and “am/is/are going to” can both be used to make predictions about future. Make predictions about the following statements. Explain why you feel that way. Mark your choices with “yes” or “no” and then share your thoughts with your partner..

Fifteen years later,

1. There will be no more war in the world.



Grey and Black Tunnel Overlooking White Cloudy and Blue Sky

2. There is going to be a cure for the common cold.
3. Every country is going to have free elections.
4. Everyone in the U.S. is going to have affordable health insurance.
5. The number of homeless people in Chicago is going to be reduced in half.
6. Harper College will have on-campus housing.
7. College tuition is going to be free for everyone.
8. I will enjoy whatever hobby I do not have time for right now.
9. I am going to have the kind of family I have always wanted (personality of my spouse, number of my children ...)
10. I will run into my professor in another country.

Exercise 5. The following paragraph is about the AI technology in the future. Fill in the appropriate tenses with the given verbs. The first one is an example. When you finish the entire exercise, you can retry or see all the answers.

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Adapted from https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Applications_of_artificial_intelligence#Education. Last accessed on September 22, 2021.

Exercise 6. Correct the six more verb errors in the following paragraph about future online learning (not including the example). The first one is an example.

Online Learning: A Growing Trend

Online learning ~~will be become~~ (**will become**) more popular in colleges in the next few years. In-person classes will still be dominant on college campuses, but there are going be more and more virtual learning opportunities. While many students probably did not experience this mode of education in the past, they will be grow increasingly accustomed^[9] to remote learning. It is possible that every student will has the experience of remote learning. When this will happen, more students will able to complete their study more easily. It is estimated that in five years all college students going to take at least one course online.

Exercise 7. Choose two of the following topics to write a paragraph for each. Use appropriate tenses. Include at least two future time clauses in each paragraph.

What will _____ become in ten years?

- education
- job search
- family
- health care
- traveling
- social media ...

What will your life be like in ten years? What will you do to achieve these accomplishments?

- What will you do for a living?
- What kind of family life will you have?
- What hobbies will you enjoy?
- What will your dream trip be like in the future?
- What will you do to help your community? ...

How will the artificial intelligence (or another technology) help the humanity in 2035?

- Will it do all the housework chores for families?
- Will it do all the homework assignments for students?
- Will it replace the employees in companies?
- Will it send people to the outer space?
- Will it eliminate diseases?
- Will it better preserve the environment?
- Will it promote world peace?
- Will it improve international cooperation? ...

NSNT Practice



a pen writing in a notebook

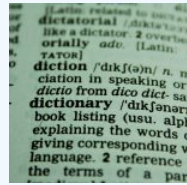
Go to **The NSNT Free Writing Approach and Additional Weekly Prompts for Writing** in Appendix A. ([Open Appendix A here.](#)) Choose two topics that use future tenses. You may start with the NSNT approach and then rewrite your paragraphs. Pay

attention to the use of future verbs. You are encouraged to share your paragraphs with your partners and help each other improve.

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Vocabulary Review



a page in a dictionary

The words here have appeared in this unit. The best way to learn them is to guess the meaning of each word from the context. Then hover your computer mouse over the number beside each word to check its meaning and part of speech. These words are also listed in the footnote area at the end of each unit.

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Summary

1. Always focus on the meaning/ideas while choosing verb tenses.
2. Time words, verb forms, and verb tenses must match one another.
3. The verbs in the simple future tense appear as “will be”, “am/is/are going to be”, “will + base verb”, and “am/is/are going to + base verb”.
4. The simple future tense is used in expressing activities or situations that will happen in the future.
5. The simple present tense is used for actions or events with a fixed or an official schedule.
6. The present progressive tense is used for actions or events that have already been planned for the future. They can include personal plans.
7. In a future time clause, simple present or present progressive is used, and a future tense is used in the independent clause.

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- [a page in a dictionary](#) © Pixabay

1. artificial intelligence: noun phrase, a technology to make machines act like humans ↵
2. remote: adjective, far away ↵
3. terminally ill patient: noun phrase, a person who is very sick and has no chance of recovery ↵
4. prediction: noun, a guess ↵
5. purchase: verb, buy ↵
6. endure: verb, go through something difficult ↵
7. float: verb, stay on the surface of water without sinking ↵
8. senior: noun, an old person ↵
9. accustomed: adjective, adapted ↵

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

8: Module 8 - Weeks 13 and 14

[6.1: Thesis Statements](#)

[6.2: How to Write a Thesis Statement](#)

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8.1: Thesis Statements

Introduction: Persuasive Writing in College

Writing essays in college is often about persuasion. This means convincing your reader that your idea is interesting and makes sense. You use persuasion every day—you may convince a roommate to clean, a parent to let you borrow something, or a friend to support your opinion. In college essays, you try to convince the reader to agree with your point of view. This is called academic argument. You start with a short introduction, then write your main idea (called a thesis statement). The thesis is a summary of your argument for the whole essay.

What Is a Thesis Statement?

A thesis statement:

- Tells the reader how you will explain the importance of the topic.
 - Acts as a road map for your essay, showing what the reader should expect.
 - Answers the main question from your assignment; it is your interpretation, not just the topic.
 - Makes a claim that others could disagree with.
 - Is usually one sentence in the first paragraph.
 - The body of your essay gives evidence to prove your thesis to the reader.
-

How Do I Write a Thesis Statement?

A thesis comes from thinking and planning. You don't always write your thesis immediately. First, gather and organize facts, look for connections, and think about their meaning. Then, write a "working thesis"—an idea you can use but change later if needed. Writers use brainstorming, lists, and questions to help find their thesis statement.

How Do I Know If My Thesis Is Strong?

Ask yourself these questions:

- Do I answer the essay question?
 - Is my thesis a position others can disagree with?
 - Is my thesis clear and specific, not vague or general?
 - Does my thesis pass the "So what?" test? (Why does it matter?)
 - Does my essay support my thesis without getting off topic?
 - Does my thesis pass the "how and why?" test? (Do I explain enough for readers to understand?)
-

Examples

Weak thesis:

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

This does not give a clear reason or explain the differences.

Better thesis:

While both sides fought the Civil War over the issue of slavery, the North fought for moral reasons, and the South fought to protect its way of life.

Best thesis:

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

Compare this strong thesis to the weak one. The strong thesis gives clear reasons and helps readers understand the argument.

Another example (Huckleberry Finn):**Weak thesis:**

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

This thesis is not specific—it only gives an opinion.

Better thesis:

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

Best thesis:

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

Strong thesis statements give readers a clear idea of what the essay will argue and help guide your writing.

Works consulted

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

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6.2: How to Write a Thesis Statement

No matter what kind of essay you are writing—short or long—your thesis statement is one of the hardest sentences to write. A good thesis statement clearly explains the purpose of your paper. It helps guide and organize your whole argument. Without a strong thesis, your essay can seem weak, confusing, or uninteresting.

One good way to create a thesis statement is to start with a question. Then, turn your answer into your thesis statement. This method works even if your topic is difficult or complex.



Asking Questions to Create a Thesis

You can make a strong thesis by starting with a question and then answering it. Here are some examples:

- **Question:** What are the benefits of using computers in a fourth-grade classroom?
Thesis: Computers give fourth graders a head start in learning technology and science.
- **Question:** Why is the Mississippi River important in Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*?
Thesis: The river shows both separation and progress, dividing people but also helping Huck and Jim become friends.
- **Question:** Why do people get angry at vegans, feminists, and other groups who talk about morals?
Thesis: Many people think members of these groups judge others as "lesser," which leads to anger and conflict.

Matching Your Thesis to Essay Type

Your thesis should match the purpose of your paper. Different essays have different goals:

- **Analytical Essay:** Breaks something down to explain it.
Example: The conflict between generations in *King Lear* causes much of the play's drama and violence.
- **Expository Essay:** Explains or teaches about a topic.
Example: New ideas in the 1800s, like Positivism and Marxism, changed people's focus from religion to real-world science.
- **Argumentative Essay:** Makes a strong point and tries to change the reader's mind.
Example: Barack Obama's choices helped America recover from its problems in the early 2000s.

Always match your thesis statement to the kind of essay you are writing. This will help your reader understand your purpose and main idea.

Ensure Your Thesis Can Be Proved



Tips for Creating a Thesis

Do not start with your thesis and then try to find facts to support it. Instead, your thesis should come from your research and thinking. Choose a thesis statement you can truly support with evidence.

Good Thesis Examples:

- By accepting and questioning difficult issues, Blake creates his own deep faith—even if he sometimes doubts. His poems only show true faith when they first lose it.
 - If a society ignores history and the future, it cannot avoid becoming stuck and unable to grow.
 - If we read "Ode to a Nightingale" with modern ideas, we see Keats thinks poetry is always changing—not fixed or strict.
-

Bad Thesis Examples:

- "The wrong people won the American Revolution." (This is too opinion-based and hard to prove.)
 - "The theory of genetic inheritance is the binding theory of every human interaction." (This is much too broad and cannot be shown with evidence.)
 - "Paul Harding's novel *Tinkers* is a cry for help from a clearly depressed author." (You would need a lot of personal proof to support this—most students cannot get this evidence.)
-

Your thesis should be focused, clear, and possible to support with facts and examples. Do not write your thesis first and then look for information to support it later. A good thesis is something you discover after doing your research and thinking about the topic. Always choose a thesis you can actually support with real evidence.

Good Thesis Examples:

- By facing contradictions and asking tough questions, Blake creates his own kind of faith. His poems need to lose faith at first to find it again.
- If a society ignores both its history and its future, it will eventually stop moving forward and become stuck.
- When we look at "Ode to a Nightingale" in a modern way, we see that Keats believed poetry can change and mean different things, not just one fixed meaning.

Bad Thesis Examples:

- "The wrong people won the American Revolution." (This is difficult to prove and too much based on opinion.)
- "The theory of genetic inheritance is the key to every human relationship." (This is way too broad and cannot be fully explained.)
- "Paul Harding's novel *Tinkers* is really a cry for help from a depressed author." (Unless you have strong proof or interviews, you can't show this is true.)

Remember, a good thesis is focused, clear, and can be supported with facts or examples.

Get the Sound Right



Making Your Thesis Statement Clear

Your thesis statement should be easy to recognize. Use strong, clear language and decisive words. Words like “because” help show your main point and reason.

Examples of good thesis statements:

- Because of William the Conqueror’s campaign in England, the country gained the power and culture needed to build the British Empire.
- Hemingway changed literature by making simple writing and honest language the new normal.

Where to Put Your Thesis Statement

Put your thesis statement at the beginning of your essay, usually at the end of the first paragraph or in your introduction. This helps readers know your main idea right away.

Keep It Short

Your thesis statement should be one or two sentences long. It should be clear, specific, and show the topic and your opinion or position.

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