

ESL ADVANCED WRITING



Katelyn Endow
De Anza College

ESL Advanced Writing

Katelyn Endow

De Anza College

This text is disseminated via the Open Education Resource (OER) LibreTexts Project (<https://LibreTexts.org>) and like the thousands of other texts available within this powerful platform, it is freely available for reading, printing, and "consuming."

The LibreTexts mission is to bring together students, faculty, and scholars in a collaborative effort to provide an accessible, and comprehensive platform that empowers our community to develop, curate, adapt, and adopt openly licensed resources and technologies; through these efforts we can reduce the financial burden borne from traditional educational resource costs, ensuring education is more accessible for students and communities worldwide.

Most, but not all, pages in the library have licenses that may allow individuals to make changes, save, and print this book. Carefully consult the applicable license(s) before pursuing such effects. Instructors can adopt existing LibreTexts texts or Remix them to quickly build course-specific resources to meet the needs of their students. Unlike traditional textbooks, LibreTexts' web based origins allow powerful integration of advanced features and new technologies to support learning.



LibreTexts is the adaptable, user-friendly non-profit open education resource platform that educators trust for creating, customizing, and sharing accessible, interactive textbooks, adaptive homework, and ancillary materials. We collaborate with individuals and organizations to champion open education initiatives, support institutional publishing programs, drive curriculum development projects, and more.

The LibreTexts libraries are Powered by [NICE CXone Expert](#) and were supported by the Department of Education Open Textbook Pilot Project, the California Education Learning Lab, the UC Davis Office of the Provost, the UC Davis Library, the California State University Affordable Learning Solutions Program, and Merlot. This material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. 1246120, 1525057, and 1413739.

Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation nor the US Department of Education.

Have questions or comments? For information about adoptions or adaptations contact info@LibreTexts.org or visit our main website at <https://LibreTexts.org>.

The LibreTexts name, logo, and book covers are trademarked by LibreTexts, Inc. (a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization) and protected against unauthorized use.

This text was compiled on 09/26/2026

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Licensing

1: Essays 101

- 1.1: Essay Structure
- 1.2: Thesis Statements
- 1.3: MLA Essay Format

2: Logical Division Writing

- 2.1: What is Logical Division Writing?
- 2.2: TEA Paragraphs
- 2.3: Transition Words and Cohesion
- 2.4: Cohesion between Paragraphs
- 2.5: Essay Introductions
- 2.6: Writing a Conclusion Paragraph

3: Compare and Contrast Writing

- 3.1: What is Comparison and Contrast Writing?
- 3.2: Organizing the Compare and Contrast Essay
- 3.3: Language for Comparison and Contrast

4: Argumentative Writing

- 4.1: What is Argumentative Writing?
- 4.2: Opposing Points of View, Concessions, and Refutations

5: Using Information from Sources

- 5.1: Evaluating Sources
- 5.2: Language for Reporting
- 5.3: Quoting, Paraphrasing and Summarizing
- 5.4: Paraphrasing Strategies
- 5.5: Quotations
- 5.6: MLA Works Cited Pages

6: Grammar

- 6.1: Compound Sentences (FANBOYS)
- 6.2: Complex Sentences
- 6.3: Commas
- 6.4: Descriptive Language
- 6.5: Modal Verbs for Argumentation
- 6.6: Conditionals for Argumentation

Index

Glossary

Detailed Licensing

Licensing

A detailed breakdown of this resource's licensing can be found in **Back Matter/Detailed Licensing**.

1: ESSAYS 101

Close message

[Learn more](#)

Welcome to your new guide!

Click on "New" to build out your guide.

[1.1: Essay Structure](#)

[1.2: Thesis Statements](#)

[1.3: MLA Essay Format](#)

1.1: Essay Structure

What is an Essay?

- Used when a topic is **too big** for just one paragraph
 - Contains more than one paragraph (usually five is considered minimum)
 - Develops **one** main idea
 - Is a common type of college exam or assignment
 - Can help you **think deeply** about a topic and develop your understanding
-

Essay Structure

Part 1: Essay Introduction (minimum one paragraph)

Purpose:

- To grab the reader's attention and spark interest in topic (hook)
- To help the reader become familiar with the topic
- To introduce the main idea of the essay

Parts of an Introduction:

1. **General Statements:** Get the reader's interest, introduce the topic of the essay, and provide background information
 -  Do not **announce your intentions** for the essay
 - **Weak:** I'm going to tell you about my culture.
 - **Weak:** This essay is going to be about the culture of North Americans.
2. **Thesis Statement:** Shares the **topic** (main idea) and the **controlling idea** (what you want to say about the topic) of the essay in a single sentence.
 - The **controlling idea** may have several parts
 - The thesis is usually the **last sentence** in the introduction paragraph
 -  Do not use **language for examples** (e.g. *for example, such as, like*)
 - **Weak:** North Americans have important cultural characteristics, such as independence, equality, and innovation.

Note

The thesis statement is the **MOST IMPORTANT** sentence of the entire essay!

Strong Thesis Example: The most important cultural characteristics of North Americans are that they value independence, they strive for equality, and they are innovative.

Part 2: Body Paragraphs (minimum three paragraphs)

Purpose:

- To **explain** (develop) the thesis statement

- Each paragraph addresses **one part** of the **controlling idea**

Parts of a Body Paragraph:

1. **Topic Sentence:** Must restate the essay's **topic** AND one part of the **controlling idea**
 - All paragraphs should be logically connected together with appropriate **transition signals** (e.g. *first, second, one, another, finally*)
2. **Supporting Sentences:** details, examples, facts, explanations, etc.
 - **Transition signals** can also help readers move through the supporting points within a body paragraph (e.g. *for instance, in addition, therefore*)

Note

Body paragraphs usually do not have a concluding sentence, but the last sentence should make a meaningful connection to the **topic sentence** and/or **thesis statement**.

Example:

One **important characteristic of North American culture** is a **strong value for self-reliance** (independence). ...My coworker grew up in San Jose, California, and moved into a dormitory at San Jose State University even though her parents' home was only a 45 minute drive away...

- **Weak Ending:** This is a good example of independence.
- **Strong Ending:** **Living on their own** allows **young North Americans** to make their own decisions, make mistakes, and grow in wisdom from their experiences.

Part 3: Essay Conclusion (minimum one paragraph)

Purpose:

- To **remind** the reader of your thesis (main idea)
- To let the reader know that you've **completed** the essay

Parts of a Conclusion:

1. A **summary** of the main points or a **restatement** of the thesis in **different** words.
2. Your **final comment** (opinion) on the subject; **"So what?"**

Thesis: The most important cultural characteristics of North Americans are that they value independence, they strive for equality, and they are innovative.

Conclusion Example: In conclusion, North American culture centers around fully supporting oneself, treating everyone fairly, and innovating new products and technology. While the United States continues to make exciting advancements in areas like A.I. and self-driving cars, a difficult market for entry-level jobs and the rising cost of housing in 2026 may result in more multigenerational households as young adults delay moving out.

From Paragraph to Essay

An essay is a more detailed version of a paragraph. In a single paragraph, you might spend just one or two sentences on a

single supporting point. This gives readers a general idea of each point, but not an in-depth understanding of what exactly that supporting point means.

In an essay, we can take a single supporting point and expand it into its own dedicated paragraph. This allows us as writers to give more detailed descriptions and "show" our readers what abstract ideas mean with concrete examples. In addition, essay paragraphs allow writers to analyze and explain the significance of the information in a paragraph. This is the exciting part of essay writing where you get to share your thoughts and insights about how and why your topic is interesting and important.

diagram of how to expand a paragraph into an essay

1.2: Thesis Statements

The **thesis statement** is like a **road map**. It tells readers what topic the essay will cover and provides a helpful preview of the different stops along the way. It is **the most important** part of an academic essay in the U.S. because the thesis reveals the writer's main claim and determines the organization of the rest of the paper.

Notice This: Characteristics of a Thesis Statement

A complete thesis statement...

- Is **one sentence** at the **end** of the introduction
- Clearly states the **main topic** of the essay
- Makes a **claim** (or takes a **stance**) that others can disagree with
- Lists the **main points** of each body paragraph (**controlling idea**)
- Has **parallel structure**
- Is **strong** and **confident**

Parts of a Thesis

Thesis = topic + controlling idea + 3 main points

A **topic** is the general subject an essay.

The **controlling idea** represents the writer's opinion about the topic or what they want to say about it. The structure of the controlling idea will differ depending on the genre of the essay.

The **three main points** tell readers what each body paragraph or section will focus on.

Exercise 1.2.1

Identify the **topic**, **controlling idea**, and **three main points** in this argumentative thesis statement:

Cats are better pets than dogs because cats don't need outdoor exercise, show deep affection, and take care of their own droppings.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Exercise 1.2.2

Identify the **topic**, **controlling idea**, and **three main points** in this argumentative thesis statement:

College students should take daily 10-minute walks because the outdoors can refresh mental health, exercise is good for the heart, and the skin can absorb natural vitamin D.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Exercise 1.2.3

Identify the **topic**, **controlling idea**, and **three main points** in this logical division thesis statement:

Three distinctive locations at De Anza College are The Hub, the Language & Communication Village, and the Listening & Speaking Center (LSC).

Answer available at the end of this section.

Exercise 1.2.4

Identify the **topic**, **controlling idea**, and **three main points** in this cause & effect thesis statement:

The internet has made communication more effective by enabling instant connection, reducing the cost, and supporting multimedia messages.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Exercise 1.2.5

Identify the **topic**, **controlling idea**, and **three main points** in this compare & contrast thesis statement:

American fast-food joints In-n-Out Burger and Five Guys differ in terms of french fries, menu variety, and business models.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Answers

Exercise 1.2.1

Cats are better pets than dogs because cats don't need outdoor exercise, show deep affection, and take care of their own droppings.

- **Topic:** cats
- **Controlling Idea:** are better pets than dogs
- **Main Point 1:** cats don't need outdoor exercise
- **Main Point 2:** cats show deep affection
- **Main Point 3:** cats take care of their own droppings

Exercise 1.2.2

College students should take daily 10-minute walks because the outdoors can refresh mental health, exercise is good for the heart, and the skin can absorb natural vitamin D.

- **Topic:** college students
- **Controlling Idea:** should take daily 10-minute walks
- **Main Point 1:** the outdoors can refresh mental health
- **Main Point 2:** exercise is good for heart health
- **Main Point 3:** the skin can absorb natural vitamin D

Exercise 1.2.3

Three distinctive locations at De Anza College are The Hub, the Language & Communication Village, and the Listening & Speaking Center (LSC).

- **Topic:** De Anza College
- **Controlling Idea:** three important locations
- **Main Point 1:** The Hub
- **Main Point 2:** Language & Communication Village
- **Main Point 3:** Listening & Speaking Center (LSC)

Exercise 1.2.4

The Internet has made communication more effective by enabling instant connection, reducing the cost, and supporting multimedia messages.

- **Topic:** communication
- **Controlling Idea:** the Internet made it more effective
- **Main Point 1:** the Internet enabled instant connection
- **Main Point 2:** the Internet reduced the cost
- **Main Point 3:** the Internet supports multimedia messages

Exercise 1.2.5

American fast-food joints In-n-Out Burger and Five Guys differ in terms of french fries, menu variety, and business models.

- **Topics:** In-n-Out Burger and Five Guys
- **Controlling Idea:** they are different
- **Main Point 1:** french fries
- **Main Point 2:** menu variety
- **Main Point 3:** business models

1.3: MLA Essay Format

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (4 min, 27 sec):

One of the ways we can create a sense of being part of one larger academic conversation is by adopting an agreed-upon, consistent and uniform way of presenting academic material. By following these conventions, we build our credibility because we signal to readers that we are part of the larger conversation and aware of its customs. For English classes and a variety of humanities disciplines, the agreed-upon style is called MLA. For other classes, you may also be asked to format your papers in APA or Chicago Style.

The following sample paper shows how the first page of a paper written in MLA is formatted. Note the header information in the upper-left corner, the last name and page numbers in the upper-right corner, the double-spaced text, and indentations that begin each paragraph:

Freeman 1

Brandon Freeman
Professor Lee
English 101
25 February 2017

Problems with Assisted Reproductive Technology and the Definition of the Family

It is not unusual for people to think of a family in its basic form as a mother and a father and the child or children they conceive together. But a genetic connection between parents and children is not necessary for a family to exist. New families are often created by remarriage after a divorce or the death of a spouse, so that only one parent is genetically related to the child or children. Also, the practice of adoption is long-standing and creates families where neither parent is genetically related to the child or children. There are many single-parent families in the United States, and some of these may be families where the parents live together but are not married (Coontz 147). Couples that consist of two men or two women are also increasingly common, and

[Text description of the MLA-formatted sample paper](#)

Use a Template

The simplest way to get the format right is to use a template. You can download this [MLA format essay template](#) and open it in any word processing program. (You can also [make a copy of the Google Docs template](#) rather than downloading.) Then just replace the text with your own name, title, and essay.

A slightly different way is to create a new document in Google Docs, Pages, or Microsoft Word and use the built-in template for MLA essays. You'll want to choose the option to create a new document from a template and then search the template gallery for "MLA," which may be categorized under "Education."

General MLA Formatting Rules

If you prefer not to use a template, you can also manually format your essay.

Font: Your paper should be written in 12-point text. Whichever font you choose, MLA requires that regular and italicized text be easily distinguishable from each other. Times and Times New Roman are often recommended.

Line Spacing: All text in your paper should be double-spaced.

Margins: All page margins (top, bottom, left, and right) should be 1 inch. All text should be left justified.

Indentation: The first line of every paragraph should be indented 0.5 inches.

Page Numbers: Create a right-justified header 0.5 inches from the top edge of every page. This header should include your last name, followed by a space and the page number. Your pages should be numbered with Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3...) and should start with the number 1 on your title page. Most word-processing programs have the ability to automatically add the correct page number to each page so you don't have to do this by hand.

Use of Italics: In MLA style, you should *italicize* (rather than underline) the titles of books, plays, or other standalone works (shorter works such as articles or speeches should be in quotation marks with no italics). You should also italicize (rather than underline) words or phrases you want to lend particular emphasis—though you should do this rarely

The first page: Like the rest of your paper, everything on your first page, even the headers, should be double-spaced. The following information should be left justified in regular font at the top of the first page (in the main part of the page, not the header):

- on the first line, your first and last name
- on the second line, your instructor's name
- on the third line, the name of the class
- on the fourth line, the date

The title: After the header, the next double-spaced line should include the title of your paper. This should be centered and in title case, and it should not be bolded, underlined, or italicized (unless it includes the name of a book, in which case just the book title should be italicized).

Additional resources

Visit the [Modern Language Association website](#) to see an example of a student paper following MLA guidelines. You can also read more on the MLA website about correctly [formatting your document](#).

Attributions

Adapted by Anna Mills from [English Composition I: MLA Document Formatting](#), provided by Lumen Learning and licensed [CC BY-SA](#).

This page titled [1.3: MLA Essay Format](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by LibreTexts.

- [6.10: MLA Essay Format](#) is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#).

2: LOGICAL DIVISION WRITING

2.1: What is Logical Division Writing?

2.2: TEA Paragraphs

2.3: Transition Words and Cohesion

2.4: Cohesion between Paragraphs

2.5: Essay Introductions

2.6: Writing a Conclusion Paragraph

This page titled [2: Logical Division Writing](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Katelyn Endow.

2.1: What is Logical Division Writing?

Logical Categories

Take a look at this picture from a recent grocery shopping trip. The groceries were nicely organized and placed into a bag (thank you, cashier!), but now they have been randomly dumped on a table at home. How would you group these items into different categories to make things more organized?



Here are some organization ideas:

- By food group (produce / dairy / protein / seasonings)
- By storage (pantry / refrigerator / freezer)
- By color (green / blue / red / brown)
- By packaging materials (plastic / paper / aluminium)
- Other?

Logical division writing is just like organizing your groceries (or any shopping haul) — we want to divide a larger topic into several smaller, more manageable parts. Working with smaller parts is much more manageable for both the writer and reader of a text.

Here are a few ways a writer could approach a topic along with related **vocabulary for logical division**:

- **Place:** area, location, region, setting
- **Time:** stages, phases, periods, eras
- **Qualities:** aspects, features, elements, characteristics, attributes

From Paragraph to Essay

You might be used to writing single paragraphs with multiple parts. This is great for shorter writing, but for academic essays, the reader wants to see more details and deeper thinking. This means that we cannot talk about every single part of a topic; instead, we must be selective and choose only a few aspects to explore in an essay.

Exercise 1

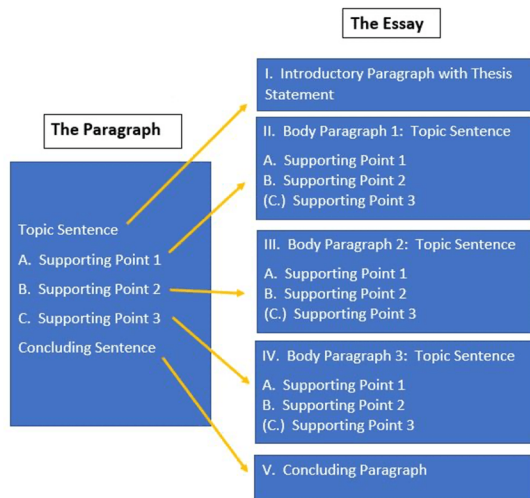
Highlight the topic and underline the main idea of this paragraph. How many subtopics are given? How could this topic and subtopics be used to write an essay with five paragraphs (introduction, 3 body paragraphs, conclusion)?

Paragraph:

A variety of technological advancements in the modern kitchen has revolutionized the lives and health of millions of people. One advancement that has enabled cooks and consumers to enjoy fruits, vegetables, and wholesome meals year-round is the freezer. Prior to modern methods of freezing and refrigeration, food choices were limited only to what was seasonally and locally available, which itself was dependent on factors like the weather. In addition to modern freezing methods, advancements in stove and cooktop technology have provided quick and safe ways to get hot meals to the table at any time. The efficient, clean, and compact electric and gas stoves allow cooks to heat food indoors without the mess and risks that older coal and wood stoves and even campfires once posed. Finally, the microwave has enhanced the benefits of refrigeration and modern stoves by allowing us to heat or reheat food or drinks in a fraction of the time that older heating methods required. Thus, people can literally eat “on the run.” Indeed, freezer, freezer, stovetop, and microwave technology have revolutionized the way people can cook, eat, and live. They are time-saving, clean, and efficient.

The diagram below shows the overall structure of a typical five-paragraph essay and how it is similar to the structure of a paragraph. In most of your college writing you will write longer essays that usually have anywhere from eight to fifteen paragraphs. The length will depend on the topic and how deeply you need to explore that topic according to the assignment instructions.

From Paragraph to Essay



Now you will see how a writer takes the same topic and main idea from the paragraph above to write an essay. Notice how the writing process is used to further develop the topic and subtopics.

The following is an EXAMPLE of an essay that was developed by using the writing process. Notice how the information and ideas develop and become clearer and more organized as the writer goes through the process.

Example Writing Prompt

Always read prompts carefully:

We live in an ever-changing world with many new developments, some productive and some destructive. Think about how developments in technology have affected people in modern times. Technology can have positive or negative impacts on people's lives. Think about some areas in life where developments in technology have changed lives. Then plan and write an essay about how one type of development has changed people's lives.

Outlining (Organizing Ideas)

I. Introduction

- Hook & Background Information
- **Thesis Statement:** Advancements in food technology have changed people's lives by allowing them to store food for longer, prepare meals efficiently and safely, and reheat food quickly.
 - **Topic:** advancements in food technology
 - **Controlling Idea:** has changed people's lives
 - **Main Points:** 1) food can be stored for longer, 2) meals can be prepared efficiently and safely, 3) food can be reheated quickly

II. Topic Sentence 1: (use transitional expressions!): *One advancement that has enabled cooks and consumers to enjoy fruits, vegetables, and wholesome meals year-round is the freezer.*

- **Supporting Point 1:** *Talk about how in the past, we had to eat seasonal food.*
- **Supporting Point 2:** *Food spoiled and people ran out of food in winter.*

III. Topic Sentence 2: *In addition to modern freezing methods, advancements in stove and cooktop technology have provided quick and safe ways to get hot meals to the table at any time.*

- **Supporting Point 1:** *How meals are fast and easy.*
- **Supporting Point 2:** *No pollutants or danger posed by fire or coal.*

IV. Topic Sentence 3: *Finally, the microwave has enhanced the benefits of refrigeration and modern stoves by allowing us to heat or reheat food or drinks in a fraction of the time that older heating methods required.*

- **Supporting Point 1:** *We can "eat on the run"!*
- **Supporting Point 2:** *Heat up frozen meals.*

V. Conclusion:

- **Restate your thesis:** *In conclusion, with the combination of refrigeration and stove and microwave technology, people can eat and drink whatever they want, whenever they want, with no concerns about a poor crop yield and no dependence on locally-produced foods.*
- **Final Comment — share a prediction, suggestion, or opinion:** *In the near future, smart kitchens might use artificial intelligence to automatically choose cooking times and temperatures, making it even easier for families to prepare meals at home.*

2.2: TEA Paragraphs

Parts of a TEA Body Paragraph

Body paragraphs support and develop your thesis statement. Each body paragraph should focus on one point, which is usually communicated at the beginning of the paragraph in the form of a **topic sentence**. A strong body paragraph should also contain **supporting evidence** that illustrates or demonstrates the main topic. Finally, **analysis** will explain how your evidence connects to your topic sentence and thesis statement.

In this class, we will practice the **TEA** paragraph structure to ensure our body paragraphs are well supported and developed for our readers.

Noticing the structure of a body paragraph

Let's look at a sample body paragraph and evaluate how effective it is.

Notice this!

Read the following body paragraph. As you read, think about how the body paragraph does or doesn't fit with our definition above. The thesis statement for this essay is, "The problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete, and make one story become the only story."

Adichie argues that a single story usually provides only one part of a story: just one negative or positive side of a person, yet this becomes their label or their definition. Adichie cites the example of Modupe Akinola, a female African-American professor. When she began teaching at Columbia Business School, students often asked her when the professor would arrive because she did not fit the stereotype of what a professor should look like in the U.S. Stereotypes are "incomplete" and can lead to prejudice as Adichie points out in her TED talk. Due to a lack of exposure, Akinola's students were probably expecting to see an old white male or possibly a white female professor instead of a young African-American female professor. Also, because of the angry black female stereotype (Eberhardt), during lectures, this may lead students to read Akinola's facial expressions in an incorrect way which may cause confusion.

If you found the paragraph a little confusing, you aren't alone (see figure 2.5.1)! For example, this paragraph lacks a clear **topic sentence**; this makes it more difficult for both readers and the writer of the essay to get a clear grasp of the paragraph's purpose. The **supporting evidence** also isn't sufficiently introduced, and there's no clear concluding sentence.



Figure 2.2.1: "Confused" by CollegeDegrees360 is marked with CC BY-SA 2.0.

Let's explore each element of a strong TEA body paragraph in further detail. Then, we'll come back to this paragraph about stereotypes.

TEA Paragraphs: Topic Sentences

Each body paragraph should begin with a **topic sentence** that is directly related to and supportive of your thesis statement. The topic sentence should be an opinion statement and should introduce the main idea of the body paragraph. All of the sentences in the rest of the paragraph should relate to, support, and expand on the topic sentence.

Topic Sentence Guidelines

- Usually the **first sentence** of a body paragraph
- Should be **arguable** (meaning people can disagree) and **specific**
- Has **coherence** with the thesis statement by restating the essay topic and one of the main points in different words
- Can also help the reader **transition** from one idea in the previous paragraph to the next by referring to a previous idea (bridging)

Another way to think about it is this: A topic sentence expresses both the **topic** and **controlling idea** of a body paragraph. This means that the topic sentence of a body paragraph goes beyond just stating the topic, but also shows the writer's perspective on the subject.

Read the following topic sentence examples.

1. In the STEM field, stereotypes attribute girls' achievements to diligence instead of talent
 - **Topic:** stereotypes in the STEM field
 - **Controlling Idea:** attribute girls' achievements to diligence instead of talent
2. Stereotypes are harmful because they give an insufficient view of a person within a group.
 - **Topic:** stereotypes
 - **Controlling Idea:** are harmful and give an insufficient view of a person within a group
3. Recognizing your stereotypes and the potential damage they do is the first step in creating change.
 - **Topic:** recognizing your stereotypes and the potential damage they do
 - **Controlling Idea:** is the first step in creating change

Although the **topic—stereotypes**—is the same in all three topic sentences, the **controlling idea** differs depending on the writer's viewpoint.

TEA Paragraphs: Supporting Evidence

Develop the main idea in your topic sentence by following it up with **supporting evidence**. Supporting sentences help describe, explain, prove, or enhance the topic sentence. Supporting evidence can take many forms:

Examples

Examples provide specific instances, cases, or illustrations that demonstrate your main point. Examples can come from various sources including current events, history, pop culture (films, TV shows, music, social media), public figures, well-known scenarios, or specific situations from real-life explained in detail. Examples make abstract ideas concrete and help readers see your argument in action.

- **From pop culture:** In the film *Crazy Rich Asians*, the protagonist Rachel struggles against stereotypes about Asian Americans being perpetual foreigners, even though she is a successful economics professor born and raised in New York.
- **From history:** During World War II, Japanese Americans were sent to internment camps based on the single story that they were threats to national security, despite the fact that many were second and third-generation American citizens.

Personal experience and anecdotes

Personal experience can count as evidence when appropriate as well (e.g., to illustrate a point). Personal experience includes examples from your own life. They can also be examples from other people's lives, such as something that happened to a family member or friend. Personal experience is often most effective when paired with other types of evidence.

- **Example:** When I transferred to a new high school my junior year, I was immediately labeled as "the quiet one" by my classmates. This label stuck with me for months, even though I was actively involved in debate club and sang in the school choir.

Descriptions

Detailed descriptions help readers visualize and understand your subject. This type of evidence uses sensory details (smell, sound, touch, taste, etc.), specific observations, or vivid imagery to "paint a picture" for your readers. This type of evidence is particularly effective in narrative, descriptive, or analytical essays where you need to establish context or bring a scene, person, or object to life for your reader.

- **Example:** The waiting room at the immigration office was filled with families clutching their carefully organized manila folders. Children sat quietly on old plastic chairs while parents rehearsed answers in whispered tones.

Explanations

Explanations clarify how something works, why something happens, or what something means. Explanations break down complex ideas, processes, or concepts into understandable parts. They are especially useful when you need to demonstrate your understanding of a topic or help your reader grasp challenging material before presenting your argument.

- **Example:** Confirmation bias occurs when people only look for information that agrees with their beliefs while ignoring evidence that contradicts them. For instance, if someone believes that a certain group is unfriendly, they will remember times when people from that group were not nice. They may forget or ignore times when people from that group were warm and kind.

Textual Evidence

Textual evidence involves integrating outside sources into your writing. We will practice using textual evidence in Essays 3 and 4.

- Publications such as books, journals, websites, newspapers, and magazines
- TED talks and documentary films
- Information from sources such as facts, statistics, and examples

Integrating supporting evidence

There are many ways to integrate evidence as text in body paragraphs of your essay.

- **Direct Quote:** Adichie states, "...when we reject the single story, when we realize that there is never a single story about any place, we regain a kind of paradise."
- **Paraphrase:** Adichie states that **when we to listen to more than one person's story about a person or place, we can see how there are several stories.**
- **Summary:** In her TED Talk, Adichie warns that **hearing only one person's story can create critical misunderstandings about that person, their country, or their culture.**
- **Combination (paraphrase and quote example):** Adichie states that **when we to listen to more than one person's story about a person or place, "we realize that there is never a single story about any place, we regain a kind of paradise."**

Sometimes you might include graphs, charts, tables, or images depending on the essay genre and topic.

You must always credit the original source of your information! In this class, we will practice the **Modern Language Association (MLA)** citation style.

TEA Paragraphs: Analysis (also known as *commentary*)

Analysis is where you interpret, explain, or comment on your evidence so your reader knows what to do with the point you are making. Your commentary should connect back to your topic sentence and the core of your thesis statement.

Here are some questions to think about when writing your analysis of the evidence:

- How is this idea related to my thesis statement? How does it support my thesis?
- What conclusions can I draw?
- What are the consequences (positive or negative) of this information?
- What does this information imply or suggest?
- I just said that something happens, so how or why does it happen? How can I explain this?
- How does this information relate to other sources, texts, or ideas?

Example: In her TED Talk, Adichie states, "...when we reject the single story, when we realize that there is never a single story about any place, we regain a kind of paradise." **This idea demonstrates that people experience and practice the same culture in different ways. Therefore, it is important to listen to multiple perspectives to better understand the complexity and beauty of a culture.**

Concluding sentence

The concluding sentence is the last sentence in the paragraph. This sentence should signal to the reader that you are closing this paragraph, idea, or argument. Here are some strategies for writing a concluding sentence:

- Summarize the main point of the paragraph
- Paraphrase the topic sentence with different words
- Reference one of the main points
- Use concluding words like *therefore*, *overall*, *as a result*, *lastly*, *given these points*

Example: In her TED Talk, Adichie states, "...when we reject the single story, when we realize that there is never a single story about any place, we regain a kind of paradise." This idea demonstrates that people experience and practice the same culture in different ways. Instead, it is important to listen to multiple perspectives to better understand the complexity and beauty of a culture. **Overall, relying on a single point of view can result in reducing a culture to a harmful stereotype that does not accurately represent everyone in a cultural group.**

Finding the parts of a body paragraph

Let's put this all together.

Try this!

Read the following paragraph. It is a revised version of the body paragraph at the beginning of this section. Can you identify the following elements?

- Topic sentence
 - What is the topic?
 - What is the controlling idea?
- Evidence
- Analysis
- Concluding sentence

Stereotypes are problematic because they give an incomplete view of a person within a group. In her TED talk "The Danger of a Single Story," Adichie argues that a single story usually provides only one part of a story: just one negative or positive side of a person, yet this becomes their label or their definition. An example of this kind of stereotyping is what happened to Modupe Akinola, a female African-American professor. When she began teaching at Columbia Business School, students often asked her when the professor would arrive because she did not fit the stereotype of what a professor should look like in the U.S (Akinola). People tend to make assumptions about the single story they hold of a particular group. Due to a lack of exposure, Akinola's students were probably expecting to see an old white male or possibly a white female professor instead of a young African-American female professor. Also, because of the angry black female stereotype (Eberhardt), during lectures, this may lead students to read Akinola's facial expressions in an incorrect way which may cause confusion. Thus, stereotypes are "incomplete" and can lead to prejudice as Adichie points out in her TED talk.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Works Cited

Adichie, Chimimanda. "The Danger of a Single Story." *TED*. July, 2009.

Eberhardt, Jennifer. "How Racial Bias Works — And How to Disrupt it." *Ted*. June, 2020.

Licenses and Attributions

Authored by Susie Naughton, Santa Barbara City College, and Clara Zimmerman, Porterville College. License: CC BY NC.

Answers

Try this!

Stereotypes are problematic because they give an incomplete view of a person within a group. In her TED talk "The Danger of a Single Story," Adichie argues that a single story usually provides only one part of a story: just one negative or positive side of a person, yet this becomes their label or their definition. An example of this kind of stereotyping is what happened to Modupe Akinola, a female African-American professor. When she began teaching at Columbia Business School, students often asked her when the professor would arrive because she did not fit the stereotype of what a professor should look like in the U.S (Akinola). People tend to make assumptions about the single story they hold of a particular group. Due to a lack of exposure, Akinola's students were probably expecting to see an old white male or possibly a white female professor instead of a young African-American female professor. Also, because of the angry black female stereotype (Eberhardt), during lectures, this may lead students to read Akinola's facial expressions in an incorrect way which may cause confusion. Thus, stereotypes are "incomplete" and can lead to prejudice as Adichie points out in her TED talk.

Topic Sentence: Stereotypes are problematic because they give an incomplete view of a person within a group.

- **Topic:** Stereotypes
- **Controlling idea:** They are problematic because they give an incomplete view of a person within a group.

Evidence

- **Evidence 1 (summary):** In her TED talk "The Danger of a Single Story," Adichie argues that a single story usually provides only one part of a story: just one

negative or positive side of a person, yet this becomes their label or their definition.

- **Evidence 2 (example):** An example of this kind of stereotyping is what happened to Modupe Akinola, a female African-American professor. When she began teaching at Columbia Business School, students often asked her when the professor would arrive because she did not fit the stereotype of what a professor should look like in the U.S. (Akinola).

Analysis

- **Analysis 1:** People tend to make assumptions about the single story they hold of a particular group. Due to a lack of exposure, Akinola's students were probably expecting to see an old white male or possibly a white female professor instead of a young African-American female professor.
- **Analysis 2:** Also, because of the angry black female stereotype (Eberhardt), during lectures, this may lead students to read Akinola's facial expressions in an incorrect way which may cause confusion.

Concluding Sentence: Thus, stereotypes are "incomplete" and can lead to prejudice as Adichie points out in her TED talk.

2.3: Transition Words and Cohesion

What is cohesion?

Cohesion describes how well your writing "sticks" together, just like screws and hinges hold together the parts of a door together in Figure 2.7.1.



Figure 2.3.1: "Close-up, electric screwdriver secures the door hinge" by Marco Verch is licensed under CC BY 2.0.

If your writing has cohesion, your readers will easily be able to understand not only each sentence, but also the main idea.

Transition words are the most common ways of creating cohesion, and you probably already use them in your writing. These words show your readers the clear connection between sentences. They help readers to understand *why* you are connecting two sentences in a certain way. Are you introducing more information, a contrast, or a result? Let the reader know by using a clear transition word.

Table

2.3.1

Transition

Words

Cheat

Sheet

Function or logic	Transitions	Example
Addition	also, furthermore, moreover, similarly, likewise	Community gardens are nutritious than what can be found in supermarkets.
Contrast	instead, however, otherwise	Research on Google Maps shows that community gardens are more nutritious than what can be found in supermarkets like Whole Foods.

Function or Logic	Transitions	Example
Emphasis	namely, certainly, indeed	It is important to draw United States.
Cause and Effect	accordingly, as a result, consequently, hence, thus, therefore	There are insufficient c food deserts to access
Time	finally, next, subsequently, then, after	First, we are going to t
Condition	otherwise	On Tuesdays Mandela have to travel a great d
Choice or Alternative	alternatively, on the other hand, conversely	Community gardens ar and energy to grow foo

See [6.6: Language Toolkits](#) for this transition words table and more language resources.

Using transitions effectively

Transition words are most often used at the beginning of a sentence, and they are *always* followed by a **comma**.

Lastly, there are two words of warning about transition words. **First**, don't always use the same transition words, since that sounds repetitive. **Furthermore**, don't start every sentence in the paragraph with transition words as that will get boring for the reader. **For example**, I probably used too many transition words in this paragraph! **To sum up**, transitions are a good tool to use, but they should not be the *only* way of building cohesion.

Academic transition words

In speaking and casual writing, we often start sentences with FANBOYS or coordinating conjunctions (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so). However, in academic writing, try to avoid starting sentences with FANBOYS. In Table 2.7.1 we look at 3 of the FANBOYS and the more academic transition words we could use instead.

Table 2.3.2 Transition words that can be substituted for the common conjunctions *and*, *but*, and *so*

FANBOY	And	But	So
Purpose	Add more of the same type of information	Show contrast	Show a result
Transition words that can replace this FANBOY	- Moreover, - Furthermore, - In addition, - Also,	- However, - Nevertheless, - On the contrary, - On the other hand,	- Thus, - Therefore, - As a result, - Consequently, - Hence,

FANBOY	And	But	So
Example sentence	New stereotypes are being created from world events all the time. Furthermore , they become even more problematic when people harm others based on these stereotypes.	While her roommate had a single story about African people, Adichie had a negative stereotype about Mexicans because she heard an “endless story” of news coverage of desperate immigrants crossing the U.S. border illegally and scamming the healthcare system. However , she changed her perspective when she visited Mexico and she realized that Mexicans are hard-working and happy too.	Adichie's roommate only knew “one story” about people from Africa. As a result , she was surprised Adichie could speak English and knew how to use a stove.

Adding appropriate transition words

Let's practice adding transition words to make a paragraph stronger:

Try this!

Here is part of a body paragraph. Add at least two transition words from Table 2.3.1 to increase the cohesion.

Stereotyping helps us quickly understand or make a decision about others. It gives people surface knowledge and a limited understanding of other people. People are all labeled and everyone categorizes others, which is necessary to do in order to make quick judgments. Jennifer Eberhardt points out that “the content of those stereotypes is culturally generated and culturally specific.”

Work Cited: Eberhardt, Jennifer. "How Racial Bias Works — And How to Disrupt It." *Ted*. June, 2020.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Now, let's apply this to your own writing.

Apply this!

Look at your own or a classmate's draft. Focus on one paragraph at a time.

1. Highlight any sentences that start with FANBOYS. Choose a transition word from Table 2.3.2 to replace the FANBOYS.
2. Circle the beginning of any sentence that has an unclear or sudden transition. Choose a transition word from Table 2.7.1 to add to this part.
3. Underline any transition words that are already there. Are they appropriate for the meaning? Is each transition word followed by a comma?

More methods of creating cohesion

Here are an additional four ways of creating cohesion **within** paragraphs. Feel free to follow the links for more in-depth information about each cohesion method.

- [Demonstrative Pronouns](#)
- [Demonstrative Adjectives + Summary Nouns](#)
- [Parallel structure](#)
- ["Known to New" Sentence Structure](#)

Licenses and Attributions

Authored by Susie Naughton, Santa Barbara City College. License: CC BY NC.

Sample body paragraph on stereotypes is adapted from an essay entitled "Stereotypes are Everywhere" by Marin Lowman. License: CC BY.

Answers

Try this!

Here is one possible solution:

Stereotyping helps us quickly understand or make a decision about others. **[However,]** it gives people surface knowledge and a limited understanding of other people. **[As a result,]** people are all labeled and everyone categorizes others, which is necessary to do in order to make quick judgments. **[Furthermore,]** Jennifer Eberhardt points out that “the content of those stereotypes is culturally generated and culturally specific.”

This page titled [2.3: Transition Words and Cohesion](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC 4.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Gabriel Winer and Elizabeth Wadell ([ASCCC Open Educational Resources Initiative \(OERI\)](#)).

2.4: Cohesion between Paragraphs

Making paragraphs stick together

We have talked about how you can create cohesion *within* your paragraphs, but you will also want to make sure that each paragraph sticks to the next one. In this section, we will cover four strategies to strengthen the cohesion of an entire essay.

1. Thesis Statement Order

Your thesis statement lays out the main ideas of your essay. To create cohesion between paragraphs, your **body paragraphs should follow the same order** as the ideas in your thesis. This helps your reader predict the structure and understand the flow of your writing.

Example Thesis Statement:

*Exercise is important for college students because it **improves mental health, increases focus, and can build social skills.***

Expected Body Paragraph Order (matches thesis):

1. **Mental health benefits** → first body paragraph
2. **Focus** → second body paragraph
3. **Social skills** → third body paragraph

2. Language in the Topic Sentence

Another method to strengthen cohesion is to **echo words and key ideas** from the thesis statement in each topic sentence. Using synonyms or different word families can help avoid sounded repetitive while keeping ideas clearly linked. Other cohesion strategies include:

- **repeating** key words
- using **synonyms**
- changing **word forms**
- **rephrasing** key ideas

Example Thesis Statement:

Exercise** is important for college students because it **improves mental health, increases focus, and can build social skills.

Topic Sentence 1: *The first benefit of **exercise** is its **positive effect** on **mental health**.*

- **Repeats** the essay's topic "**exercise**" from thesis
- **Rephrases** the verb "**improves**" from the thesis into the noun phrase "**positive effect**"
- **Repeats** key phrase "**mental health**" from thesis

Topic Sentence 2: *Another **advantage** of **regular physical activity** is that it **increases** students' **focus**.*

- **advantage** = **synonym** of "**benefit**" from Topic Sentence 1
- **regular physical activity** = **synonym** of "**exercise**" from the thesis

- **increase** = **synonym** of “**boosts**” from the thesis
- **Repeats** key phrase “**focus**” from thesis

Topic Sentence 3: *Finally, **exercising** contributes to the **development** of **social skills** among students.*

- **exercising** (gerund) = **word form** of key word “**exercise**” (noun) from the thesis
- **development** (noun) = **word form** of “**develop**” (verb) from the thesis
- **Repeats** key phrase **social skills** from thesis

3. Language in the Topic Sentence

An effective way to create cohesion in an essay is to start each new paragraph with a transition word in the topic sentence. Let's look at the transitions from the previous topic sentence examples:

- **The first benefit** of exercise is its positive effect on mental health.
- **Another advantage** of regular physical activity is that it increases students' focus.
- **Finally**, exercising contributes to the development of social skills among students.

Common Paragraph Transitions

- First, / The first ____ / First of all, / Firstly,
- Second, / The second ____ / Secondly, / Another reason is ____
- Third, / The third ____ / Thirdly, / Another feature is ____
- Next, / Then,
- In addition, / Moreover,
- Finally, / Lastly, / Most importantly, / The most significant characteristic is ____

4. Bridging Techniques (Advanced)

In addition to using transition words, you can also use your words to connect one body paragraph to the next. These act like a "bridge" between the two paragraphs (see figure 2.4.1).



Figure 2.4.1
"bridge"
barnyz
is licensed under
[CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](#)

Strategies for Bridging Paragraphs

- In addition to **[last paragraph]**, another important characteristic of X is **[new paragraph topic]**.
- Along with **[last paragraph]**, **[new paragraph topic]** is another important aspect of X.
- In addition to **[last paragraph]**, **[new paragraph topic]**...
- Continuing from **[last paragraph]**, **[new paragraph topic]**...
- Though **[last paragraph]** is well-known, fewer people recognize **[new paragraph topic]**.

Of course, you must make sure that your topic sentence matches the meaning of your two paragraphs!

Example Thesis Statement:

Exercise is important for college students because it **improves mental health, increases focus, and can build social skills**.

Bridge from Body Paragraph 1 to 2

- Along with **mental well-being, exercising** also helps students **maintaining focus** during class and study sessions.
- Continuing from **mental health benefits, exercise** can help college students **concentrate and stay focused**.

Bridge from Body Paragraph 2 to 3

- In addition to **boosted focus**, students also **benefit socially** from **regular exercise**.
- Though the **cognitive benefits** of exercising are well-known, fewer people recognize that **exercise** also **strengthens social connections**.

Now, let's apply this to your writing.

Apply this!

Look at your own or a classmate's draft. Underline or highlight the last sentence of each body paragraph and the first sentence of the next paragraph. Do they lead into each other smoothly?

1. Think about how the ideas are connected and write a topic sentence that shows the connection. You may also need to add a conclusion sentence to the previous paragraph to make the connection smooth.
2. If it is not clear how the paragraphs are connected, you may need to reorganize them!

Licenses and Attributions

Authored by Elizabeth Wadell, Laney College. License: CC BY NC.

2.5: Essay Introductions

The purpose of an introduction

The introduction of an essay is like a frame for the essay, similar to the frame in figure 2.5.1. That framing helps your audience better understand the argument of your writing by preparing reader for the ideas that are to come in the body of your essay.



Figure 2.5.1 A frame. "Single-Sheet Picture Frame" by Michal Kosmulski is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0

Not only does a good introduction capture your reader's attention and make them want to read on, but it also gives the reader the information they need to understand what you are writing in your paper.

But just because the introduction comes at the beginning, it doesn't have to be written first. Many writers compose their introductions last, once they are sure of the main points of their essay and have had time to construct a thought provoking beginning, and a clear, cogent thesis statement.

Parts of an introduction paragraph

The introduction consists of three parts: a hook, background information, and a thesis:

Part 1 - Hook: Introduce the topic and get readers interested

The purpose of a hook is to provide a general statement about your topic and to engage your reader and get your audience excited about reading your essay. You may begin with a question, offer a statistic, share an interesting fact, tell a story, provide a quotation, describe an event, pose a problem, etc.

Here are some different strategies for writing a hook and example hooks.

- **General Statement:** It is hard to admit that we may be affected by other peoples' stereotypes of us.
- **Proverb:** According to an African proverb, "Until the lion learns to write, every story will glorify the hunter."
- **Quotation:** "We believe the one who has power. He is the one who gets to write the story. So when you study history, you must ask yourself: Whose story am I missing? Whose voice was suppressed so that this voice could come forth?" wrote the author Yaa Gyasi in her novel *Homegoing*.
- **Question:** Did you know that what others assume about you can affect how well you perform on a test?

- **Story:** When I was growing up in my country, I loved giving public speeches. I would participate in speech competitions against children in other schools, and I often one. When I started school in the US, I was excited when we had the chance to give presentations. I knew that I was probably the most prepared student in the class, and that my body language, expressions, and tone of voice could draw listeners in. However, right before I gave my presentation, a classmate said to me, "Even though you are not a native English speaker, I think you can do a good job." I think she meant to be kind, but I was shocked. I went on to give my speech, but I was distracted and did poorly.

Part 2 - Background: Build context for your essay

The background information defines your topic and shows why your topic matters. It provides context for your thesis statement. You may introduce important sources, define key terms, share a brief history, explain the debate, etc.

Caution

Please assume that your readers don't know much about your topic. Giving some context and general information about your topic at the beginning will help your readers better understand your essay. Background information can answer the 5 W questions: **Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How.**

Here is the background information for a **logical division essay** about aspects of a family culture. For this kind of essay, the background information provides details about the writer and their connection to the topic.

My mother was born in Hawaii and moved to the San Francisco Bay Area when she was 5 years old. My father was born in Stockton California, which is about a 1.5 hour drive east towards Pleasanton and Tracey. Both sides of my family have only married other Japanese-Americans, which miraculously makes me completely ethnically Japanese even as a "gosei" (五世) 5th-generation. Due to the Japanese-American internment during World War II, my grandparents raised their children (my parents' generation) as "American" as possible to avoid discrimination in school and on the streets. While my parents could not understand Japanese, they knew that their parents shouting it meant they were in big trouble. While our family still retains some Japanese culture, our family has evolved into its own blend of Japanese, Hawaiian, and American cultures.

Here is the background information for a **summary/response essay**. For this kind of essay, the background information includes a summary of a text.

This is just one of the findings reported by Kristy McRaney and her colleagues in "Stereotype Threat," a chapter in the textbook *The Psychology of Gender*. In this chapter, McRaney and her colleagues discuss a number of studies that examine the phenomenon known as stereotype threat: a situation in which someone is stereotyped, is aware of the stereotype, and is taking part in an activity related to the stereotype (par. 1). According to research reported by McRaney et al., "being aware that *others* believe [the stereotype], is enough to create a stereotype threat outcome" of poorer performance (par. 5). McRaney and her colleagues also look at research exploring *why* stereotype threat impacts test performance, including the commonly-accepted theory by Toni Schmader that preoccupation with a stereotype threat means that the test-taker "ties up valuable cognitive resources" which "impacts the capacity that one has to draw on their memory and to attend and focus on the task before them" (par. 8). Finally, their article acknowledges and responds to criticism of the idea of stereotype threat (McRaney et al. par 9).

Part 3 - Thesis statement: Roadmap to your essay

Your thesis statement drives your essay. It's your controlling idea.

- What do you intend to prove in your essay?
- What is your position about the topic, and your reasons for believing it?

A thesis is generally one sentence, but it can be longer for a long essay. It should present your idea, not an announcement of what you will do (ie, "In this essay, I will give three examples of...."). In the U.S., a thesis statement usually comes at the end of an introduction paragraph. Here are two strong thesis statement examples:

Logical Division: Three important aspects of the Endow family tool-kit are Birthday Eve pie, the primacy of our rice cooker, and cheering for Bay Area sports teams.

Summary/Response: Overall, McRaney and her colleagues make an understandable and compelling argument for the existence of stereotype threat; the information they present is engaging, seems balanced, and helped me make sense of my own experiences.

Let's put it all together

Here is an example of two complete introduction paragraphs, with a hook, background, and thesis statement.

Logical Division Introduction:

"You are not American. You are not Japanese. You are Japanese-American." Growing up, my mother would always firmly remind me that I wasn't just American, or even Asian American - I was specifically Japanese-American. My mother was born in Hawaii and moved to the San Francisco Bay Area when she was 5 years old. My father was born in Stockton California, which is about a 1.5 hour drive east towards Pleasanton and Tracy. Both sides of my family have only married other Japanese-Americans, which miraculously makes me completely ethnically Japanese even as a "gosei" (五世) 5th-generation. Due to the Japanese-American internment during World War II, my grandparents raised their children (my parents' generation) as "American" as possible to avoid discrimination in school and on the streets. While my parents could not understand Japanese, they knew that their parents shouting it meant they were in big trouble. While our family still retains some Japanese culture, our family has evolved into its own blend of Japanese, Hawaiian, and American cultures. **Three important aspects of the Endow family tool-kit are Birthday Eve pie, the primacy of our rice cooker, and cheering for Bay Area sports teams.**

Summary/Response Introduction:

Did you know that what others assume about you can affect how well you perform on a test? This is just one of the findings reported by Kristy McRaney and her colleagues in "Stereotype Threat," a chapter in the textbook *The Psychology of Gender*. In this chapter, McRaney and her colleagues discuss a number of studies that examine the phenomenon known as stereotype threat: a situation in which someone is stereotyped, is aware of the stereotype, and is taking part in an activity related to the stereotype (par. 1). According to research reported by McRaney et al., "being aware that *others* believe [the stereotype], is enough to create a stereotype threat outcome" of poorer performance (par. 5). McRaney and her colleagues also look at research exploring *why* stereotype threat impacts test performance, including the commonly-accepted theory by Toni Schmader that preoccupation with a stereotype threat means that the test.

Identifying the parts of an introduction

Try this!

Here is another sample introduction. Can you find the hook, background, and thesis statement?

Have you ever realized that your first impression about someone was wrong? It is common to have this experience, but it can be useful to understand more about why you thought this. Were your first impressions based on someone's race, gender, general appearance, age, etc.? Chimamanda Adichie describes a similar experience in her TED talk, "The Danger of a Single Story." When she started to write her writing was only influenced by British and American books that she used to read and she was not influenced by her everyday reality. She thought that all books are the same. Later she read books written by African writers like Chinua Achebe and Camara Laye, Adichie felt familiar with the places and characters in the stories. She understood that people like her exist in stories and that knowing only a single story is a danger and it leads to creating stereotypes. "Single stories" develop from making assumptions about others based on hearsay or the media. Therefore, the way to combat harmful "single stories" is to increase opportunities for genuine interaction between people from different backgrounds.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Licenses and Attributions

CC Licensed Content: Original

Authored by Susie Naughton, Santa Barbara City College. License: CC BY NC.

Sample introduction paragraph on stereotype threat by Clara Zimmerman, Porterville College. License: CC BY NC.

CC Licensed Content: Previously Published

[The Purpose of an Introduction](#) is adapted from the Excelsior Online Writing Lab's [Introductions](#). License: CC BY.

Answers

Try this!

Hook: Have you ever realized that your first impression about someone was wrong? It is common to have this experience, but it can be useful to understand more about why you thought this. Were your first impressions based on someone's race, gender, general appearance, age, etc.?

Background Information:

Chimamanda Adichie describes a similar experience in her TED talk, "The Danger of a Single Story." When she started to write her writing was only influenced by British and American books that she used to read and she was not influenced by her everyday reality. She thought that all books are the same. Later she read books written by African writers like Chinua Achebe and Camara Laye, Adichie felt familiar with the places and characters in the stories. She understood that people like her exist in stories and that knowing only a single story is a danger and it leads to creating stereotypes. "Single stories" develop from making assumptions about others based on hearsay or the media.

Thesis: Therefore, the way to combat harmful "single stories" is to increase opportunities for genuine interaction between people from different backgrounds.

This page titled [2.5: Essay Introductions](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC 4.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Gabriel Winer and Elizabeth Wadell ([ASCCC Open Educational Resources Initiative \(OERI\)](#)).

2.6: Writing a Conclusion Paragraph

The main parts of a conclusion

The conclusion, or concluding paragraph, is the final paragraph in the essay and the last part your readers will read. It will wrap up your ideas and leave them something to think about. Having a strong conclusion will help to leave a clear idea in the reader's mind and make them feel like the essay is finished.

With the introduction, you started with a broader idea (the hook) and got more specific as you moved through the background section, until you got to the very focused thesis statement. In a conclusion you will do the opposite. Instead, you will start with the specific ideas in your paper and move outwards, ending on a bigger idea that is related to your topic but not covered in the body paragraphs.

The three main parts of a conclusion are:

- Summary
- Final Comment (food for thought)

Let's look at each of them in more detail.

Part 1 - Summary of main points

Remind the reader of the points you made in your essay so your readers can see how everything fits together. Summarize the main idea of each paragraph in 1 to 3 sentences. Try to change the words so you are not using the exact same language as your thesis statement and topic sentences.

Let's compare a thesis statement with a summary sentence.

Here is a student's **thesis statement**:

"Stereotypes are harmful because they take away people's true identities, lead to unfair discrimination in society, and can even cause physical violence."

A possible **summary sentence** in the conclusion paragraph could be:

"Stereotypes may seem funny and innocent, but they are actually very harmful because they replace identity with a label, lead to unequal and harmful treatment against particular groups of people, and can escalate into acts of violence."

Identifying the summary

Let's see what that looks like:

Notice this!

Read the following two conclusions.

1-Sentence Summary:

Stereotypes may seem like simple labels, but they are actually very harmful because they replace identity with a label, lead to unequal and harmful treatment against particular groups of people, and can escalate into acts of violence. By working hard to combat our own biases and speaking up when we see a “single story” dominate, we can lessen the damaging impact of stereotypes and make the world a safer, more equitable place.

3-Sentence Summary:

On an individual level, stereotypes are harmful because they take away a person’s true identity; a person is given a label based on a group identity that cannot accurately be applied to each person. On a societal level, stereotypes can lead to policies that discriminate against particular groups of people. Stereotypes can also lead to physical violence, as in the examples of the anti-Muslim mosque attacks and anti-Semitic synagogue attacks in Southern California. By working hard to combat our own biases and speaking up when we see a “single story” dominate, we can lessen the damaging impact of stereotypes and make the world a safer, more equitable place.

Part 2 - Final Comment (food for thought)

Finally, give some final idea to leave the reader thinking. We call this “food for thought” because the reader will need to spend some time pondering and digesting it, just as you spend some time eating and digesting food (see figure 2.6.1). Basically, as you say goodbye to your reader you want them to keep thinking about the ideas in your essay and why these ideas are important. Your final comment can be:

- a **suggestion** for the readers or other people group
- an **explanation** of why this is important or what you want readers to learn
- a **prediction** or warning for the future
- an **opinion** or your own perspective on the topic
- a **reflection** on how your own thinking changed through writing this
- **return to the hook** from the introduction with an explanation of how the knowledge we have gained through your paper changes our understanding of it (this makes your paper feel like a full circle, and can be satisfying for the reader)



Figure 2.6.1: “ice-cream” by EEPaul is marked with CC BY 2.0.

Identifying the final comment

Let’s see what some of these final comments look like:

Try this!

Can you identify what type of final comment is shown in each of the following sentences?

1. By working hard to combat our own biases and speaking up when we see a “single story” dominate, we can lessen the damaging impact of stereotypes and make the world a safer, more equitable place.
2. Researching the topic of bias revealed some large gaps in my understanding, and now I realize that more than ever, identifying and addressing our own personal biases is critical.
3. Although it may be easier to avoid the potential discomfort of considering more than a “single story” about a person or group of people, failure to take multiple stories into account risks a bleak, increasingly polarized future.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Apply this!

Look at a draft of your writing, focusing on the conclusion.

- Can you identify the two main elements of a conclusion?
- Does your summary address all the topics in your body paragraphs? (Hint: Look at the topic sentences in each body paragraph; this should help you answer this question.)
- What final comment do you leave your reader with in the very last sentence? A suggestion? A return to your hook? Or something else?

Licenses and Attributions

Authored by Susie Naughton, Santa Barbara City College, Clara Zimmerman, Porterville College, and Elizabeth Wadell, Laney College. License: CC BY NC.

Answers

Try this!

1. a suggestion or call to action
2. a reflection on how your own thinking changed through writing this
3. a prediction or warning for the futureWriting your conclusion

This page titled [2.6: Writing a Conclusion Paragraph](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC 4.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Gabriel Winer and Elizabeth Wadell ([ASCCC Open Educational Resources Initiative \(OERI\)](#)).

3: COMPARE AND CONTRAST WRITING

- 3.1: What is Comparison and Contrast Writing?
- 3.2: Organizing the Compare and Contrast Essay
- 3.3: Language for Comparison and Contrast

3.1: What is Comparison and Contrast Writing?



Figure: Image by Pixabay

The Purpose of Comparison and Contrast in Writing

Comparison in writing discusses elements that are similar, while contrast in writing discusses elements that are different. A compare-and-contrast essay, then, analyzes two subjects by comparing them, contrasting them, or both.

The key to a good compare-and-contrast essay is to choose two or more subjects that connect in a meaningful way. The purpose of conducting the comparison or contrast is not to state the obvious but rather to **illuminate subtle differences or unexpected similarities**.

For example, if you wanted to focus on contrasting two subjects you would not pick apples and oranges; rather, you might choose to compare and contrast two types of oranges or two types of apples to highlight subtle differences. For instance, Red Delicious apples are sweet, while Granny Smiths are tart and acidic. Drawing distinctions between elements in a similar category will increase the audience's understanding of that category, which is the purpose of the compare-and-contrast essay.

Similarly, to focus on comparison, choose two subjects that seem at first to be unrelated. For a comparison essay, you likely would not choose two apples or two oranges because they share so many of the same properties already. Rather, you might try to compare how apples and oranges are quite similar. The more divergent the two subjects initially seem, the more interesting a comparison essay will be.

Writing at Work

Comparing and contrasting is also an evaluative tool. In order to make accurate evaluations about a given topic, you must first know the critical points of similarity and difference. Comparing and contrasting is a primary tool for many workplace assessments. You have likely compared and contrasted yourself to other colleagues. Employee advancements, pay raises, hiring, and firing are typically conducted using comparison and contrast. Comparison and contrast could be used to evaluate companies, departments, or individuals.

Exercise 1

Brainstorm an essay that leans toward contrast. Choose one of the following three categories. Pick two examples from each. Then come up with one similarity and three differences between the examples.

1. Romantic comedies
2. Internet search engines
3. Cell phones

Exercise 2

Brainstorm an essay that leans toward comparison. Choose one of the following three items. Then come up with one difference and three similarities.

1. Department stores and discount retail stores
2. Fast food chains and fine dining restaurants
3. Dogs and cats

The Structure of a Contrast Essay

This type of compare-and-contrast essay starts with a thesis that clearly states the two subjects that are to be contrasted and the reason for doing so. Remember, the point of comparing and contrasting is to provide useful knowledge to the reader. Take the following thesis as an example that leans more toward contrasting.

Thesis statement: Organic vegetables and conventionally grown vegetables **differ in terms of** protective chemicals, nutrition, and taste.

Here the thesis sets up the two subjects to be compared and contrasted (organic versus conventional vegetables), makes a claim about how they are different, and lists the main points of contrast the writer will explore.

- **Topic 1:** organic vegetables
- **Topic 2:** conventional vegetables
- **Controlling idea:** they differ
- **Point of Comparison 1:** chemicals
- **Point of Comparison 2:** nutrition
- **Point of Comparison 3:** taste

You may organize compare-and-contrast essays in one of the following two ways:

1. According to the **subjects** themselves, discussing one then the other (Side-by-Side)
2. According to **individual points**, discussing each subject in relation to each point (Point-by-Point)

See Figure 3.1.1, "Comparison and Contrast Diagram", which diagrams the ways to organize our organic versus conventional vegetables thesis.

Figure 3.1.1: Compare and Contrast Essay Organization

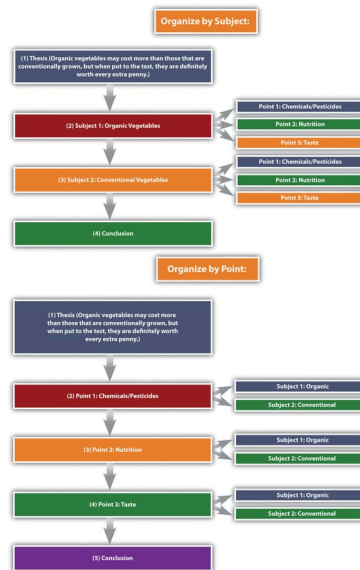


Figure: The organizational structure you choose depends on the nature of the topic, your purpose, and your audience.

Writing a Comparison and Contrast Essay

First choose whether you want to compare seemingly disparate subjects, contrast seemingly similar subjects, or compare and contrast subjects. Once you have decided on a topic, introduce it with an engaging opening paragraph. Your thesis should come at the end of the introduction, and it should establish the subjects you will compare, contrast, or both as well as state what can be learned from doing so.

The body of the essay can be organized in one of two ways: by subject (Side-by-Side organization) or by individual points (Point-by-Point organization). The organizing strategy that you choose will depend on, as always, your audience and your purpose. You may also consider your particular approach to the subjects as well as the nature of the subjects themselves; some subjects might better lend themselves to one structure or the other. Make sure to use comparison and contrast phrases to cue the reader to the ways in which you are analyzing the relationship between the subjects.

After you finish analyzing the subjects, write a conclusion that summarizes the main points of the essay and reinforces your thesis. See below for a sample compare-and-contrast essay.

Writing at Work

Many business presentations are conducted using comparison and contrast. The organizing strategies—by subject or individual points—could also be used for organizing a presentation. Keep this in mind as a way of organizing your content the next time you or a colleague have to present something at work.

Exercise 3

Create an outline for each of the items you chose in Exercise 1 and Exercise 2. Use the point-by-point organizing strategy for one of them, and use the subject organizing strategy for the other.

Language of Differences

Given that compare-and-contrast essays analyze the relationship between two subjects, it is helpful to have some phrases on hand that will cue the reader to such analysis. See Table 9.4.1: “Phrases of Comparison and Contrast” for examples.

Table 3.1.1 - Language of Differences

I. Coordinating Conjunctions	
but	The twins love traveling, but their brother prefers spending time at home.
yet	I studied for months for the TOEFL test, yet I did not get the passing score to apply for graduate school.
II. Subordinating Conjunctions	
while	Many Americans love basketball, while many Canadians love ice hockey.
whereas	Bruce never throws anything away, whereas his sister declutters her house every three months.
although, though, even though	Even though she is old enough, her parents do not allow her to drink at a family dinner.
III. Conjunctive Adverbs	
on the contrary, on the other hand	I love winter vacations; on the contrary , my husband prefers summer vacations.
in contrast, in comparison	Amir was nervous before the test; in contrast , Tammy was very calm.
however	Some people enjoy hosting holiday parties. However , others see it as a waste of time and money.
nevertheless	Most parents know that sugar is bad for children; nevertheless , many parents do not limit the amount of sugar they consume.
IV. Other	
despite + noun	
(be) unlike , (be) different from	Her new million dollar home is unlike the apartment she had in New York.
to differ (from)	George Washington University differs from Howard University in many ways.

Contributors and Attributions

- Adapted from [Writing for Success](#). **Provided by:** The Saylor Foundation. **License:** [CC-NC-SA 3.0](#).

This page most recently updated on June 6, 2020.

This page titled [3.1: What is Comparison and Contrast Writing?](#) is shared under a [CC BY-SA 4.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Athena Kashyap and Erika Dyquisto ([ASCCC Open Educational Resources Initiative](#)).

- [9.4: Comparison and Contrast](#) by Athena Kashyap and Erika Dyquisto is licensed [CC BY-SA 4.0](#).

3.2: Organizing the Compare and Contrast Essay

When organizing a compare & contrast essay, it is important to know whether you are writing mainly about the similarities or the differences, or if you are writing about both. Consider using a graphic organizer to help you organize your ideas.

Step 1: Brainstorming

Brainstorming for a Comparison Contrast Essay

Point of Comparison/ Contrast	Topic 1: George Washington University	Topic 2: University of Maryland	Similar OR Different
1. Cost	\$50K-75K	\$18K-27K	Different
2. Majors & Programs	- Political Science - Public Administration - Law School - Medical School	- Computer Science - Business - Biology - Criminology	Different
3. Location	Washington DC	Maryland	Different
4. Graduation rate	80.6%	84.5%	Similar
5.			
6.			

The Side-by-Side Method

SIDE-BY-SIDE METHOD		
Introduction	Paragraph I	Hook, background information and THESIS!

SIDE-BY-SIDE METHOD

Body	Paragraph II	<u>Topic 1</u> Point 1 Point 2 Point 3
	Paragraph III	<u>Topic 2</u> Point 1 Point 2 Point 3
Conclusion	Paragraph IV	Restatement of the thesis, suggestion/opinion/prediction

Side-by-Side Method Example

SIDE-BY-SIDE METHOD EXAMPLE

Introduction	Paragraph I	Hook, background information and Thesis!
Body	Paragraph II	<u>GW University</u> - Location - Cost of tuition - Programs of study
	Paragraph III	<u>University of MD</u> - Location - Cost of tuition - Programs of study

SIDE-BY-SIDE METHOD EXAMPLE

Conclusion	Paragraph IV	Restatement of the thesis, suggestion/opinion/prediction
-------------------	--------------	--

Point-by-Point Method

POINT-BY-POINT METHOD

Introduction	Paragraph I	Hook, connection information and THESIS!
Body	Paragraph II	<u>Point 1</u> Topic 1 / GW Topic 2 / UMD
	Paragraph III	<u>Point 2</u> Topic 1 / GW Topic 2 / UMD
	Paragraph IV	<u>Point 3</u> Topic 1 / GW Topic 2 / UMD
Conclusion	Paragraph V	Restatement of the thesis, suggestion/opinion/prediction

Point-by-Point Method Example

POINT-BY-POINT METHOD EXAMPLE

Introduction	Paragraph I	Hook, connection information and THESIS!
---------------------	-------------	--

POINT-BY-POINT METHOD EXAMPLE

Body	Paragraph II	<u>Location</u> GW University University of Maryland
	Paragraph III	<u>Cost of tuition</u> GW University University of Maryland
	Paragraph IV	<u>Employment opportunity</u> GW University University of Maryland
Conclusion	Paragraph V	Restatement of the thesis, suggestion/opinion/prediction

3.3: Language for Comparison and Contrast

This page will help you to better understand the expressions of comparison (similarities) and contrast (differences) that connect ideas in and between sentences.

Language for Similarities

I. Coordinators	
and	Community college students need financial aid to support themselves, and four-year college students need financial aid to pay for school.
both.... and ...	Both in-state and out-of-state students pay the same tuition rate in private universities.
not only...but also...	Not only Professor Smith but also Professor Brown had a significant impact on my career choice. The college not only offers more majors but also has lower tuition.
neither ... nor ...	Neither my mom nor my dad will be able to attend my graduation.
II. Subordinating Conjunctions	
just as, like (informal)	I can skate very well, just as my big sister can.
III. Conjunctive Adverbs (Transitions)	
similarly	My grades have significantly improved. Similarly , I have gained confidence in participating in class projects.
likewise	His writing skill has improved. Likewise , he has expanded his English vocabulary knowledge.
also	Tim enjoyed working with his colleagues. He also developed a clear understanding of teamwork.
too	Chemistry is a difficult field to be in; physics is, too .

IV. Others (Note: These connectors are usually followed by a noun phrase.)

similar to	Similar to her husband, she has a military background.
(be) similar to	My sister's sense of style is similar to mine.
(be) the same as	Her sense of humor is the same as her father's.
like	Many foreign movies like American movies have cruel scenes in them.
just like	Competitive swimming is just like hockey. They both require endurance and speed.

Exercise 3.1

The following sentences use signal words to show similarities. In each sentence, highlight the signal word and add punctuation. (Avoid semicolons.)

1. Jeff's son started college this year likewise my daughter is attending San Jacinto College.
2. Both Paula and Lucca had a great time working on the campaign.
3. She loves hiking and gardening similarly he enjoys participating in outdoor activities.
4. Not only Tim but also Janet spent a full month evaluating their company's safety plans.
5. Netflix is making their own movies and television shows just as Amazon Prime has gotten into the business of making shows for streaming.

Exercise 3.2

Add connecting words or phrases to the two sentences using the comparison signal word given in parentheses. Some will be combined, and others will remain as separate sentences. (avoid semicolons)

1. George liked studying mathematics.

He saw that English would help him in his career as a counselor. (**similarly**)

2. The dog barked for several hours.

The dog chewed through the pillows on the couch. (**not only.... but also**)

3. Stanford's women's basketball team has now won the most national championships.

The University of Maryland's women's lacrosse team has won the most national championships. **(similar to)**

4. The United States has the Pacific Ocean on its western border.

The United States has the Atlantic Ocean on its eastern border. **(just as)**

5. Recycling aluminum cans is beneficial to the environment.

Reusing plastic bags helps reduce pollution. **(both....and)**

Language of Differences

I. Coordinators	
but	The twins love traveling, but their brother prefers spending time at home.
yet	I studied for months for the TOEFL test, yet I did not get the passing score to apply for graduate school.
II. Subordinating Conjunctions	
while	Many Americans love basketball, while many Canadians love ice hockey.
whereas	Bruce never throws anything away, whereas his sister declutters her house every three months.
although /though / even though	Unexpected Result: Though/ Although/ Even though she is old enough, her parents do not allow her to drink at a family dinner. Direct Contrast: Although/Though Mary prefers to live in the city, her husband prefers the suburbs.
III. Conjunctive Adverbs (Transitions)	
on the contrary	I thought that Sheila loved to travel. On the contrary, she is a true homebody. Be careful about using "on the contrary." You can read about it here: On the Contrary vs However https://www.englishcurrent.com/grammar-and-however/

on the other hand	My vacation is going to cost a lot. On the other hand , my sister's choice of vacation is going to be more affordable.
in contrast	Amir was nervous before the test. In contrast , Tammy was very calm.
in comparison	Tammy enjoyed the holiday party. In comparison , James found it boring.
however	Some people enjoy hosting holiday parties. However , others see it as a waste of time and money.
nevertheless	Most parents know that sugar is bad for children. Nevertheless , many parents do not limit the amount of sugar they consume. Note: "Nevertheless" is used to express unexpected result. It cannot be used to express direct contrast (opposites.)

IV. Others	
despite (+ noun phrase)	Despite her illness, Jan attended class today.
in spite of (+noun phrase)	In spite of the rain, we went on a picnic.
(be) unlike	Her new million dollar home is unlike her apartment that she had in New York.
unlike + noun phrase	Unlike her sister, Joan decided not to go to college.
(be) different from	I am different from my sister, who is an introvert.
to differ (from)	George Washington University differs from Howard University in many ways.
compared (to)	Compared to private schools, public schools do not require uniforms.

Exercise 3.3

The following sentences use signal words to show differences. In each sentence, highlight the signal word(s) and punctuate it properly, (Avoid semicolons)

1. Philadelphia is not as expensive as New York City.
2. New York has a relatively low crime rate but Philadelphia's crime rate is higher.
3. Many people think New York has the best museums whereas the art museum in Philadelphia is world-class.

4. Housing prices in New York City are consistently the highest in the country in contrast Philadelphia offers more reasonable housing costs.
5. Although Philadelphia offers job opportunities in the health sector New York City offers many jobs in the financial sector.
6. The two cities differ from each other significantly in size with Philadelphia having a larger space than New York City but fewer people.

Exercise 3.4

Connect the two sentences with the comparison signal word given in parentheses. Some will be combined, others will remain as separate sentences. (Avoid semicolons.) Be careful to punctuate correctly.

1. The University of Maryland has a large campus in Prince George's County.

George Washington University has a small campus in downtown Washington, DC. **(however)**

2. The University of Pennsylvania is a private school in downtown Philadelphia.

Pennsylvania State is a public school in State College, Pennsylvania. **(unlike)** *Hint: Use "which is."*

3. The University of Maryland has strong programs in the sciences and engineering.

Students for George Washington University tend to study political science and international studies. **(while)**

4. The University of Maryland is a public university with low tuition.

George Washington University is private university with a much higher tuition. **(but)**

Exercise 3.5

Read the example sentences below and decide whether the two sentences show similarities or differences. Connect the two sentences by either making them into one sentence or by adding an adverbial conjunction (transition) before the second sentence. Use an appropriate connector to show either similarity or contrast.

Pair 1

Teachers in China do not expect students to ask questions or to make comments in class.

American teachers think that asking questions and making comments shows good participation.

Pair 2

Some people find it helpful to listen to music when they study.

Others prefer silence.

Pair 3

English is spoken in America.

It is spoken in Great Britain, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

Pair 4

College students have to complete an average of three to five assignments per week.

High school students tend to have one to three assignments per week.

Pair 5

American students enjoy working on collaborative school projects.

Chinese students enjoy working more on their own.

Compiled by Delpha Thomas; adapted by Tim Krause. Introduction to Academic Writing for ESOL. Second Edition, released 2018, licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International License](#)

This page titled [3.3: Language for Comparison and Contrast](#) is shared under a [CC BY-SA 4.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Allyson Marceau.

4: ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING

4.1: What is Argumentative Writing?

4.2: Opposing Points of View, Concessions, and Refutations

4.1: What is Argumentative Writing?

The Purpose of Persuasive Writing

The purpose of persuasion in writing is to convince, motivate, or move readers toward a certain point of view, or opinion. The act of trying to persuade automatically implies more than one opinion on the subject can be argued.

The idea of an argument often conjures up images of two people yelling and screaming in anger. In writing, however, an argument is very different. An argument is a reasoned opinion supported and explained by evidence. To argue in writing is to advance knowledge and ideas in a positive way. Written arguments often fail when they employ ranting rather than reasoning. It is very possible that the majority of the essays you write in college will be persuasive arguments.

Tip

Most of us feel inclined to try to win the arguments we engage in. On some level, we all want to be right, and we want others to see the error of their ways. More times than not, however, arguments in which both sides try to win end up producing losers all around. The more productive approach is to persuade your audience to consider your opinion as a valid one, not simply the right one.

The Structure of a Persuasive Essay

The following five features make up the structure of a persuasive essay:

1. Introduction and thesis
 2. Opposing and qualifying ideas
 3. Strong evidence in support of claim
 4. Style and tone of language
 5. A compelling conclusion
-

Creating an Introduction and Thesis

The persuasive essay begins with an engaging introduction that presents the general topic. The thesis typically appears somewhere in the introduction and states the writer's point of view.

A complete argumentative thesis statement...

- Has one clear opinion
- Is strong and direct
 - Uses the word “**should**” or an **evaluative adjective** (effective, better, terrible, etc.)
- Give clear reasons that support your opinion
- Has parallel structure

Thesis Statement Examples

Employers **should** hire teenagers **because** they are eager to work, they are flexible, and they have the knowledge and skills required to do many entry-level jobs.

Tracking (placing students in certain classes according to their ability level) **is crucial / effective / good** for both teachers and students **because** it decreases the likelihood of the fastest learners becoming bored, the slowest learners become less frustrated, and grading becomes more fair for all students.

The school day **should** start later **to allow for** more sleep for students, _____, and _____.

Parents **should** control children's screen time **by / in order to** _____, _____, and _____.

It **is crucial** that parents control their children's screen time **because** _____, _____, _____.

Tip

Avoid forming a thesis based on a negative claim. For example, "The hourly minimum wage is not high enough for the average worker to live on." This is probably a true statement, but persuasive arguments should make a positive case. That is, the thesis statement should focus on how the hourly minimum wage is low or insufficient.

Exercise 1

Try to form a thesis for each of the following topics. Remember the more specific your thesis, the better.

1. Foreign policy
2. Television and advertising
3. Stereotypes and prejudice
4. Gender roles and the workplace
5. Driving and cell phones

Organizing a Persuasive Essay

Introduction

- hook
- background information
- thesis statement (with "should" or an evaluative adjective)

Body Paragraph 1: Reason 1

- Evidence + Analysis
- Evidence + Analysis

Body Paragraph 2: Reason 2

- Evidence + Analysis
- Evidence + Analysis

Body Paragraph 3: Reason 3

- Evidence + Analysis
- Evidence + Analysis

Conclusion

- restate thesis
 - final comment (suggestion, prediction, implication, etc.)
-

Bias in Writing

Everyone has various biases on any number of topics. For example, you might have a bias toward wearing black instead of brightly colored clothes or wearing jeans rather than formal wear. You might have a bias toward working at night rather than in the morning, or working by deadlines rather than getting tasks done in advance. These examples identify minor biases, of course, but they still indicate preferences and opinions.

Handling bias in writing and in daily life can be a useful skill. It will allow you to articulate your own points of view while also defending yourself against unreasonable points of view. The ideal in persuasive writing is to let your reader know your bias, but do not let that bias blind you to the primary components of good argumentation: sound, thoughtful evidence and a respectful and reasonable address of opposing sides.

The strength of a personal bias is that it can motivate you to construct a strong argument. If you are invested in the topic, you are more likely to care about the piece of writing. Similarly, the more you care, the more time and effort you are apt to put forth and the better the final product will be.

The weakness of bias is when the bias begins to take over the essay—when, for example, you neglect opposing ideas, exaggerate your points, or repeatedly insert yourself ahead of the subject by using *I* too often. Being aware of all three of these pitfalls will help you avoid them.

Fact and Opinion

Facts are statements that can be definitely proven using objective data. The statement that is a fact is absolutely valid. In other words, the statement can be pronounced as true or false. For example, $2 + 2 = 4$. This expression identifies a true statement, or a fact, because it can be proved with objective data.

Opinions are personal views, or judgments. An opinion is what an individual believes about a particular subject. However, an opinion in argumentation must have legitimate backing; adequate evidence and credibility should support the opinion. Consider the credibility of expert opinions. Experts in a given field have the knowledge and credentials to make their opinion meaningful to a larger audience.

For example, you seek the opinion of your dentist when it comes to the health of your gums, and you seek the opinion of your mechanic when it comes to the maintenance of your car. Both have knowledge and credentials in those respective fields, which is why their opinions matter to you. But the authority of your dentist may be greatly diminished should he or she offer an opinion about your car, and vice versa.

In writing, you want to strike a balance between credible facts and authoritative opinions. Relying on one or the other will likely lose more of your audience than it gains.

Tip

The word *prove* is frequently used in the discussion of persuasive writing. Writers may claim that one piece of evidence or another proves the argument, but proving an argument is often not possible. No evidence proves a debatable topic one way or the other; that is why the topic is debatable. Facts can be proved, but opinions can only be supported, explained, and persuaded.

Contributors and Attributions

CC LICENSED CONTENT, SHARED PREVIOUSLY:

- Adapted from [Writing for Success](#). **Provided by:** The Saylor Foundation. **License:** [CC-NC-SA 3.0](#).

This page most recently updated on June 6, 2020.

This page titled [4.1: What is Argumentative Writing?](#) is shared under a [CC BY-SA 4.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Athena Kashyap and Erika Dyquisto ([ASCCC Open Educational Resources Initiative](#)).

- [9.7: Persuasion](#) by Athena Kashyap and Erika Dyquisto is licensed [CC BY-SA 4.0](#).

4.2: Opposing Points of View, Concessions, and Refutations

Because an argument implies differing points of view on the subject, you must acknowledge those opposing ideas exist and hold a level of validity. Avoiding ideas that conflict with your own gives the reader the impression that you may be uncertain, fearful, or unaware of opposing ideas. Thus, it is essential that you address counterarguments and do so respectfully.

Acknowledging points of view different from your own also builds your credibility as a writer and demonstrates to your readers that you are aware of opposing ideas and are not afraid to give them space.

It is also helpful to establish the limits of your argument and what you are trying to accomplish. In effect, you are conceding that your argument is not the ultimate authority on a given topic. Such humility can go a long way toward earning credibility and trust with an audience. Audience members will know from the beginning that you are a reasonable writer, and audience members will trust your side of the argument as a result. For example, in the following concessionary statement, the writer advocates for stricter gun control laws, but she admits it will not solve all of our problems with crime:

Although tougher gun control laws are a powerful first step in decreasing violence in our streets, such legislation alone cannot end these problems since guns are not the only problem we face.

Such a concession will be welcomed by those who might disagree with this writer's argument in the first place. To effectively persuade their readers, writers need to be modest in their goals and humble in their approach to get readers to listen to the ideas.

However, the essay still needs to support your point of view in the end. Therefore, you always want to refute opposing arguments with a logical point that supports your own perspective. This way, you leave your reader thinking about your argument rather than someone else's. You have the last word.

Phrases to Introduce an Opposing Idea	Phrases to Signal a Concession	Phrases to Signal a Refutation
Some people say that... (opposing idea) Proponents of ____ (opposing idea) claim that... Critics of ____ (your point) maintain that... (opposing idea) A criticism of ____ (your point) is that... (opposing idea)	Granted, ____ (valid point about the opposing idea) Indeed, ____ (valid point about the opposing idea) It is [true / a fact] that ____ (valid point about the opposing idea)	However, ____ (your counter-argument) Nevertheless, ____ (your counter-argument) But [in fact / as a matter of fact / it is a fact that] ____ (your counter-argument) Yet [in fact / as a matter of fact / it is a fact that] ____ (your counter-argument)

Examples:

Student A

One reason college students should work part-time while in college is that it will prepare them for a future full-time job. **OPPOSING VIEW:** Some people are concerned that working too much might have a negative impact on grades. **CONCESSION:** Indeed, working too many hours could lead to physical and mental exhaustion, making it difficult to concentrate on schoolwork after a grueling shift. **REFUTATION:** However, research shows that balancing a job and college studies can help build efficient planning and prioritization skills (Nuñez and Sansone). One college student reported she went from taking three classes without a job to successfully managing four classes while working on-campus as an administrative assistant. Taking on a part-time job pushed this student to optimize and realize how much more she could handle, which demonstrates that working a moderate amount in college can develop effective time management skills that any employer will find valuable.

Student B

One reason why asynchronous online classes are better for colleges students is because they allow for a flexible schedule. For example, asynchronous classes still have weekly deadlines, but they give students the freedom to study the course materials, listen to lectures, and complete the work on their own time. **OPPOSING VIEW:** However, a criticism of asynchronous online classes is that it's extremely difficult to ensure students are doing their own work as there is no way to verify exactly who (or what!) is actually doing the work. **CONCESSION:** It is true that it is much easier to cheat and deceive the system with asynchronous classes. **REFUTATION:** Yet, it is a fact that some students, especially those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, might never have the opportunity to pursue higher education without the flexibility of asynchronous classes.

This page titled [4.2: Opposing Points of View, Concessions, and Refutations](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Amber Kinonen, Jennifer McCann, Todd McCann, and Erica Mead](#).

- [13.3: Acknowledging Opposing Ideas and Limits to Your Argument](#) by [Amber Kinonen, Jennifer McCann, Todd McCann, and Erica Mead](#) is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#).

5: USING INFORMATION FROM SOURCES

5.1: Evaluating Sources

5.2: Language for Reporting

5.3: Quoting, Paraphrasing and Summarizing

5.4: Paraphrasing Strategies

5.5: Quotations

5.6: MLA Works Cited Pages

5.1: Evaluating Sources



Figure: Image from Pixabay

Critical thinking is interwoven in all steps of the research process, and one of the places you will definitely use it is when you evaluate your sources. As you research sources for your essay, you may develop a good sense of which sources are going to be the most useful in supporting your thesis. However, the credibility of your essay relates directly to your sources. Are your sources themselves valid? You need to consciously evaluate your sources in order to make final choices about using them in your writing.

The two main questions you should ask yourself when evaluating sources are the following:

1. Is this source suitable?
2. Is this source trustworthy?

Not every suitable source is trustworthy, and not every trustworthy source is suitable. In Miguel's example that follows, you'll see that the writing professor encourages Miguel to *talk* to the right sources as part of the conversation on his topic. To do this, he needs to find authors who are trustworthy *and* knowledgeable.

Miguel: If I used a university or government website on bottled water quality, would readers trust me more than if I just used a bottled water company website?

Prof: Yes. Refresh my memory. What kinds of questions do you need answers to before you can write your paper?

Miguel: Well, I need to know if bottled water is truly healthier, like the beverage companies claim. Or would I be just as well off drinking tap water?

Prof: To answer this question, you'll want to find out who's *talking* about these issues in the overall conversation (or *discourse*) about bottled water. The authors of texts aren't speaking aloud, of course, but they're making written statements that others can "listen" and "respond" to. Knowing which texts you can trust means understanding which authors you can trust.

Miguel: How do I figure that out?

Prof: It helps to know who the authors are. What they're saying. Where, when, and to whom they're saying it. To go into more depth into questions about suitability and trustworthiness of sources, consider the following.

Determining Suitability

Your task as a researcher is to determine the appropriateness of the information your source contains for your particular research project. Ask this simple question: Will this source help me answer my research questions? Will it help me learn as much as I can about my topic? Will it help me write an interesting, convincing essay for my readers?

Qualities of suitable sources:

- Contain facts or opinions that help answer your research question
- May contain illustrations or data that help answer your research question
- Clearly explain their information
- Are written by a well known authority or expert
- Carefully cite the sources they used

Qualities of unsuitable sources:

- May not offer any relevant or important information
- May not contain any new information that advances your understanding of your topic
- May be too narrow or too broad in coverage of your topic
- May be from very general sources and not from a scholarly journal or peer-reviewed source
- May be from a scholarly journal but be too technical or difficult for you to understand
- May be out of date
- Do not cite the sources they used

Determining Trustworthiness

To determine the trustworthiness and credibility of a source, you want to ensure that a source is current, written by an expert, accurate, and unbiased. You'll want to consider the rhetorical context of a source, including its purpose, audience, and focus.

View the following video, which clearly identifies a variety of questions to ask in order to evaluate sources.

YouTube Video

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

[View this YouTube Video online](#)



Video 5.1.1

[Evaluating Sources to Find Quality Research](#). Authored by: PCC Library. License: All Rights Reserved. License Terms: Standard YouTube license.

Evaluating the credibility and validity of a resource can be very difficult, particularly when doing research using the Internet. Below are some basic guidelines to help you select reliable resources and use those to glean, or find, accurate information about a given subject.

Characteristics of Reliable Sources

Whenever you consult a source, always think carefully about the author's or authors' purpose in presenting the information. Few sources present facts completely objectively. In some cases, however, the source's content and tone are significantly influenced by biases or hidden agendas.

Bias refers to favoritism or prejudice toward a particular person or group. For instance, an author may be biased against a certain political party and present information in a way that subtly—or not so subtly—makes that organization look bad. Bias can lead an author to present facts selectively, edit quotations to misrepresent someone's words, and distort information.

Hidden agendas are goals that are not immediately obvious but influence how an author presents the facts. For instance, an article about the role of beef in a healthy diet would be questionable if it were written by a representative of the beef industry—or by the president of an animal-rights organization. In both cases, the author would likely have a hidden agenda.

As Miguel conducted his research, he read several research studies in which scientists found significant benefits to following a low-carbohydrate diet. He also noticed that many studies were sponsored by a foundation associated with the author of a popular series of low-carbohydrate diet books. Miguel read these studies with a critical eye, knowing that a hidden agenda might be shaping the researchers' conclusions.

When using websites for research, check to see when the site was last updated. Many sites publish this information on the homepage, and some, such as news sites, are updated daily or weekly. Many nonfunctioning links are a sign that a website is not regularly updated. Do not be afraid to ask your professor for suggestions if you find that many of your most relevant sources are not especially reliable—or that the most reliable sources are not relevant.

If you are finding your sources on the internet, it is also important to think about who is sponsoring the information. The URL can provide information about the origin of the resource. The following are examples of ways you can determine the type of organization that is sponsoring the content for a specific website.

Sites ending in....

.edu are usually educational institutions and generally a good source of information.

.gov are government websites and usually good sources for statistical information

.org are typically non-profit organizations often set up as a public service. Be on the lookout for political agendas and biases.

Example: If you are looking for information about gun control, then you might check .gov sites for statistics related to gun ownership, laws, etc. Sites affiliated with specific biases on gun ownership will probably be listed on .org sites (handguncontrol.org or nrahg.org).

Blogs

While interesting, these are usually not fact-based and as a general rule should not be used for conducting research. However, you could use a personal story or real-life example from a blog as a supporting anecdote in your essay. Anecdotes can work as compelling illustrations that can help persuade your audience, but they cannot be considered a proven, objective fact.

Online magazines or journals

These articles often contain a detailed bibliography and site specific resources as evidence for claims and statistics.

Online news sources

Virtually every network and cable news station has an online site as do local affiliates. It is important to realize that while they do provide news, they are also involved in the entertainment industry and may present some information that is based in opinion and not necessarily facts.

Television/Internet video news broadcasts

When viewing video, keep in mind that if it is not from a source that can be accurately documented with origin, date, and key information like who, what, when, where, why and how, then the source may not be credible.

Source Rankings	
------------------------	--

High Quality Sources These sources provide the most in-depth information. They are researched and written by subject matter experts and are carefully reviewed.	• Scholarly books and articles in scholarly journals • Trade books and magazines geared toward an educated general audience, such as <i>Smithsonian Magazine</i> or <i>Nature</i> • Government documents, such as books, reports, and web pages • Documents posted online by reputable organizations, such as universities and research institutes • Textbooks and reference books, which are usually reliable but may not cover a topic in great depth
Varied-Quality Sources These sources are often useful. However, they do not cover subjects in as much depth as high-quality sources, and they are not always rigorously researched and reviewed. Some, such as popular magazine articles or company brochures, may be written to market a product or a cause. Use them with caution.	• News stories and feature articles (print or online) from reputable newspapers, magazines, or organizations, such as <i>Newsweek</i> or the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) • Popular magazine articles, which may or may not be carefully researched and fact checked • Documents published by businesses and nonprofit organizations
Questionable Sources These sources should be avoided. They are often written primarily to attract a large readership or present the author's opinions and are not subject to careful review.	• Loosely regulated or unregulated media content, such as Internet discussion boards, blogs, free online encyclopedias, talk radio shows, television news shows with obvious political biases, personal websites, and chat rooms

Free online encyclopedias and wikis may seem like a great source of information. They usually appear among the first few results of a web search. They cover thousands of topics, and many articles use an informal, straightforward writing style. Unfortunately, these sites have no control system for researching, writing, and reviewing articles. Instead, they rely on a community of users to police themselves. At best, these sites can be a starting point for learning about a topic in general and finding other, more trustworthy sources. Never use them as final sources.

Avoiding Conspiracy Theories and Fake News

Avoiding conspiracy theories and fake news is essential for conducting credible research. The following guides have helpful resources to help you determine whether a news story you are considering is legitimate or not. The second source allows you to search and find out if a conspiracy theory or urban legend is true or not.

How to Spot Fake News (Harvard University Library)

www.snopes.com

Strategy: The CRAAP Test

One excellent tool to examine both the suitability and trustworthiness of a source is the CRAAP method, which stands for:

- **Currency:** the timeliness of the information

- **Relevance:** the importance of the information for your needs
- **Authority:** the source of the information
- **Accuracy:** the reliability, truthfulness, and correctness of the information
- **Purpose:** the reason the information exists

The following video offers a good explanation of these points of analysis.

YouTube Video

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

[View this YouTube Video online](#)



Video 5.1.1

[Study Help: Evaluating Information](#). Authored by: University of South Australia. **License:** All Rights Reserved. **License Terms:** Standard YouTube license.

Currency: The Timeliness of the Information

Key Question: When was the item of information published or produced?

Determining when an item of information was published or produced is an aspect of evaluating information. The date the information was published or produced tells you how current it is or how relevant it is to the topic you are researching.

For example, if you were writing a research paper on the survival of passengers in car crashes, you would need the most recent information on automobile crash tests, structural strength of materials, car wreck mortality statistics, etc. If, on the other hand, you were writing a research paper on the feelings of college students about the Vietnam War during the 1960s, you would need information written in the 1960s by college students (primary sources) as well as materials written since then about college students in the 1960s (secondary sources). Key indicators of the currency of the information are:

- date of copyright
- date of publication
- date of revision or edition
- dates of sources cited
- date of patent or trademark

Relevance: The Importance of the Information for Your Needs

Key Question: How does this source contribute to my essay?

When you read through your source, consider how the source will effectively support your argument and how you can use the source in your essay. You should also consider whether the source provides sufficient coverage of the topic. Information sources with broad, shallow coverage mean that you need to find other sources of information to obtain adequate details about your topic. Information sources with a very narrow focus or a distinct bias mean that you need to find additional sources to obtain the information on other aspects of your topic. Some questions to consider are:

- Does the information relate to my topic, controlling idea, or one of the main reasons in my thesis?
- Who is the source's intended audience?
- Is the information at an appropriate level (e.g., not too simple or advanced) for my needs?
- Did I look at a variety of sources before deciding to use this one?

Authority: The Source of the Information

Key Question: Is the person, organization, or institution responsible for the intellectual content of the information knowledgeable in that subject?

Determining the knowledge and expertise of the author is an important aspect of evaluating the reliability of information. Anyone can make an assertion or a statement about some thing, event, or idea, but only someone who knows or understands what that thing, event, or idea is can make a reasonably reliable assertion about it. Some external indications of expertise are:

- a formal academic degree in a subject area
- professional or work-related experience, e.g., businessmen, government agency personnel, sports figures, etc. who have expertise in their areas of work
- active involvement in a subject or organization by serious amateurs who spend substantial amounts of personal time researching and studying that subject area
- organizations, agencies, institutions, corporations with active involvement or work in a particular subject area.

HINT: Be careful of opinions stated by professionals outside of their area of work expertise.

Accuracy: The Reliability, Truthfulness, and Correctness of the Information

Key Question: How free from error is this piece of information?

Establishing the accuracy of information is an important part of evaluating the reliability of information. It is easier to establish the accuracy of facts than it is opinions, interpretations, or ideas. The more an idea, opinion, or other piece of information varies from the accepted point of view on a particular topic, the harder it is to establish its accuracy. An important aspect of accuracy is the intellectual integrity of the item:

- Are the sources appropriately cited in the text and listed in the references?
- Are quotations cited correctly and in context? Out-of-context quotations can be misleading and sometimes completely erroneous.
- Are there exaggerations, omissions, or errors? These are difficult to identify if you use only one source of information, so always use several different sources of information. Analyzing what different sources say about a topic is one way to determine exaggerations, omissions, and errors.

In addition to errors of fact and integrity, you need to watch for errors of logic. Errors of logic occur primarily in the presentation of conclusions, opinions, interpretations, editorials, ideas, etc. Some indications that information is accurate are:

- the same information can be found in other reliable but different sources
- the experiment can be replicated and returns the same results
- the documentation provided in support of the information is substantive
- the sources used for documentation are generally reliable
- the author of the information is known to have expertise on that subject
- the presentation is free from logical fallacies or errors
- quotations are "in context" so that the intended meaning of the information quoted is retained
- quotations, paraphrases, and summaries are correctly cited

Some indications that information may **not** be accurate are:

- facts cannot be verified or are contradicted in other sources
- sources used are known to be unreliable or highly biased
- bibliography of sources used is inadequate or non-existent
- quotations are taken out of context and given a different meaning
- presence of one or more logical fallacies
- authority cited is another part of the same organization
- inclusion of emotionally laden language

Purpose: The Reason the Information Exists

Key Question: Who is this information written for, and what is the author's purpose?

Identifying the intended audience of the information and identifying the author's purpose are other important aspects of evaluating information. The intended audience of an item generally determines the style of presentation, the level of technical detail, and the depth of coverage.

Determining the intended audience of a particular piece of information will help you decide whether or not the information is too basic, too technical, too general, or just right for your needs. The intended audience can also indicate the potential reliability of the item because some audiences require more documentation than others.

For example, items produced for scholarly or professional audiences are generally produced by experts and go through a peer review process. Items produced for the mass market frequently are not produced by experts and generally do not go through an evaluation process. Some indications of the intended audience are:

- Highly technical language, complex analysis, very sophisticated/technical tools can indicate a technical, professional, or scholarly audience.
- How-to information or current practices in "X" are frequently written by experts for practitioners in that field.
- Substantive and serious presentations of a topic with not too much technical language are generally written for the educated lay audience.
- Popular language, fairly simple presentations of a topic, with little or no analysis, can indicate a general or popular audience.
- Bibliographies, especially long bibliographies, are generally compiled by and for those doing research on that topic.

You should also consider the author's purpose. Is the information intended to inform or persuade? Does the author intend to present a bias? While it is unlikely that anything humans do is ever absolutely objective, it is important to establish that the information you intend to use is reasonably objective, or if it is not, to establish exactly what the point of view or bias is. There are times when information expressing a particular point of view or bias is useful, but you must use it consciously. You must know what the point of view is and why that point of view is important to your project.

Writing at Work

The critical thinking skills you use to evaluate research sources as a student are equally valuable when you conduct research on the job. If you follow certain periodicals or websites, you have probably identified publications that consistently provide reliable information. Reading blogs and online discussion groups is a great way to identify new trends and hot topics in a particular field, but these sources should not be used for substantial research.

Contributors

CC LICENSED CONTENT, SHARED PREVIOUSLY:

- Adapted from [College Writing](#). **Authored by:** Susan Oaks. **Provided by:** Lumen Learning. **License:** CC-BY-NC 4.0.
- Adapted from [Writing for Success](#). **Provided by:** The Saylor Foundation. **License:** [CC-NC-SA 3.0](#).

This page titled [5.1: Evaluating Sources](#) is shared under a [CC BY-SA 4.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Athena Kashyap and Erika Dyquisto ([ASCCC Open Educational Resources Initiative](#)).

- [10.5: Evaluating and Working with Sources](#) by Athena Kashyap and Erika Dyquisto is licensed [CC BY-SA 4.0](#).

5.2: Language for Reporting

Reporting Language Sentence Frames

Use language for reporting before you **paraphrase**, **quote**, or **summarize** information from another source. This avoids plagiarism by giving the original author, researcher, or thinker credit for their work. Below are four sentence frames writers can use to introduce ideas from sources:

According to **[Author's last name]**, _____.

- According to **Gardner**, there is more than one type of intelligence.

From **[Author's last name]**'s point of view, _____.

- From the **Gardner's** point of view, schools value linguistic-language intelligence the most.

In **[Author's last name]**'s opinion, _____.

- In **Kohn's** opinion, grades are harmful to learning, so schools should not use them to assess students.

[Author's last name] + **[strong verb]** _____.

Reporting Language Examples

Brody warns that some strategies for coping with stress may do more harm in the long run. (*Jody Brody — "Hello to College Joys: Keep Stress Off Campus"*)

Bruni suggests that students should prioritize making connections with others in college. (*Frank Bruni — "How to Get the Most Out of College"*)

Dunn cites evidence from a 1938 Harvard study that indicates strong social connections are connected to happiness in life. (*Jancee Dunn — "The 7-Day Happiness Challenge"*)

Gay compares happiness to stumbling upon a rainbow on a drizzly day. (*Ross Gay — "The Show of Delights"*)

Edlund demonstrates that all logic is based on probability and assumptions by sharing the example of people erroneously killing cats to stop a plague because they assumed cats, and not fleas, were spreading the disease. (*John R. Edlund — "Three Ways to Persuade"*)

Strong Verbs

- argues, claims, states, asserts, declares
- narrates, illustrates, describes, discusses, reports,
- provides examples, presents facts
- compares, contrasts, explains, defines, informs,
- recommends, warns, criticizes, suggests, evaluates, reviews, questions

5.3: Quoting, Paraphrasing and Summarizing

Introducing paraphrasing and summarizing:

Let's explore paraphrasing and summarizing in an article about DACA recipients or "Dreamers". Figure 5.3.1 shows a young woman protesting in support of DACA.



Figure 5.3.1: "DACA protest(opens in new window)" by vpickering(opens in new window) is marked with CC BY-NC-ND 2.0(opens in new window).

Look at the example quotation, paraphrase, and summary from the article "What the Supreme Court's DACA Ruling Means for Undocumented Students and the Colleges and Universities They Attend, Today" in Table 5.3.1 below. What similarities do you notice between the quotation, paraphrase, and summary? What differences do you observe?

Table 5.3.1 Table comparing a quotation, paraphrase and summary of an article

Quotation	Paraphrase	Summary
In The Conversation's "What the Supreme Court's DACA Ruling Means for Undocumented Students and the Colleges and Universities They Attend, Today," Sayil Camacho states, "an estimated 1.1 million undocumented children live in the United States, according to data drawn from the Census Bureau. This number includes about 100,000 undocumented students who graduate from high school every year. The most recent estimates indicate that approximately 450,000 undocumented immigrants are enrolled in colleges and universities, including some 45,000 pursuing advanced degrees."	In The Conversation's "What the Supreme Court's DACA Ruling Means for Undocumented Students and the Colleges and Universities They Attend, Today," Sayil Camacho states that over a million children are in the United States without legal papers. The latest data that was collected by the Census Bureau also shows that almost half a million undergraduate students in higher education are undocumented. Furthermore, this number includes 45,000 students who are enrolled in graduate school.	In The Conversation's "What the Supreme Court's DACA Ruling Means for Undocumented Students and the Colleges and Universities They Attend, Today," Sayil Camacho shares that a large number of children (about 1.1. million) are in the U.S. without legal papers of which 100,000 are in high school, 450,000 in college and 45,000 in graduate school.

Now, check the following list. Did you observe all the similarities and differences?

Similarities:

- Quotations, paraphrases, and summaries all use reporting words to refer to the source.
- Quotations, paraphrases, and summaries all report ideas from the original text.
- Paraphrases and summaries both report ideas from the original text, but change the words and sentence structure.

Differences:

- Quotations use the same exact words from the original text, unlike paraphrases and summaries.
 - Quotations use quotation marks "..." to show which words are copied directly.
 - Summaries are shorter than the original passage, while paraphrases are closer to the same length as the original.
-

Paraphrasing

You can paraphrase a passage to show our comprehension and the meaning of a text. In essays, you might use a paraphrase to provide support for the point you are making. When you paraphrase, you capture what the text says.

With a paraphrase you:

- Keep the length similar to the text we are paraphrasing.
 - Use our own words - they should be different from the text (unless a key term is of essence).
 - Keep the meaning the same as the original text - we do not include our opinion.
 - Use a different sentence structure and change up the grammar.
 - Reference the writer's name and title of the text.
-

Summarizing

We can also demonstrate our understanding of a text by writing a summary. A summary can be short or long, but it is always significantly shorter than the original text. We might be asked to summarize a whole text or a particular point in a text, and we may have to summarize a text or passage in a sentence, a paragraph, a page, or even a whole essay.

With a summary you:

- Start with an introductory sentence that lists the title of the text, author and the main idea (thesis) restated in your own words.

Example: In "Title," author states that.... (or choose a different verb, for example, claims, explains, defends, insists, asserts, compares, warns, observes, condemns, suggests, refutes, shows, or acknowledges.)

- Use your own words to express the ideas.
- Condense the text: it is significantly shorter than the original text.
- Give an overview of the text.
- Accurately capture the key/main points of the original text and ignore most of the details, examples, illustrations or explanations.
- Keep the meaning the same as the original text - we do not include our opinion.
- Use academic conventions (e.g., avoid *you,* contractions such as isn't - use is not instead - and qualifiers like really / very) + use the writer's last name after you've introduced them by their full name.
- Write the summary as a paragraph.
- Connect points with transition words.

To summarize, consider doing the following:

1. Preview the text.
 2. Annotate it.
 3. Look for the main idea (thesis).
 4. Write a 1-sentence summary for each paragraph in your own words.
 5. Write a sentence that summarizes the whole text in your own words.
 6. Order key points in a way that makes sense.
 7. Connect the points with transition words.
 8. Avoid repetition.
-

Licenses and Attribution

CC Licensed Content: Original

Authored by Marit ter Mate-Martinsen, Santa Barbara City College. License: CC BY NC.

This page titled [5.3: Quoting, Paraphrasing and Summarizing](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC 4.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Phuong Emily Bank and Rachel Cohen-Reyes.

- [3.5: Quoting, Paraphrasing and Summarizing](#) by Phuong Emily Bank and Rachel Cohen-Reyes is licensed [CC BY-NC 4.0](#).

5.4: Paraphrasing Strategies

Learning outcomes:

1. Practice various strategies for paraphrasing sentences and paragraphs.

Paraphrasing step 2 - make it your own - common paraphrasing strategies:

The next step is to look at your explanation. How similar or different is it to the original passage? If it is already very different - while still conveying the same meaning - your paraphrase might be complete! However, if the vocabulary and grammar are still quite similar, you'll have to keep working on it. Here are six strategies (which should always be used in combination) you can use to make your paraphrase your own:

A. Use synonyms

One effective way to quickly put a passage in your own words is to replace those words with synonyms, or words that have the same meaning. Take a look at the example paraphrase from this chapter's introduction. Some of the synonyms have been highlighted:

Notice this!

Quotation:

Nicole Pajer points out in "How to Have a Healthy Relationship with Social Media in 2021" that social media is "driving wedges between families and friends over differing political views, keeping us glued to our phones all day long, and causing some to develop self-esteem issues from comparing their lives to other people's virtual ones."

Paraphrase:

In "How to Have a Healthy Relationship with Social Media in 2021," Nicole Pajer suggests that social media causes us to stare at our phones 24/7, argue with our loved ones over politics, and even have problems with self-confidence because we compare ourselves to others' online selves.

Notice that one key phrase - social media - hasn't been changed. That's OK! When paraphrasing, you want to make sure the core meaning of the passage stays the same. This sometimes means keeping key words.

Try this!

Identifying key words and synonyms:

Highlight the synonyms you see in the quotation and paraphrase below. Underline the key word that has not changed.

Quotation:

According to Don Anair, the research director of the UCS Clean Transportation Program, "There are opportunities for ride-hailing to be part of a low-carbon transportation future, with some concerted effort among ride-hailing companies, policymakers, and consumers alike."

Paraphrase:

Don Anair, the research director of the UCS Clean Transportation Program, suggests that ride-hailing could produce fewer emissions in the years ahead if governmental organizations, companies like Uber and Lyft, and customers all work together.

B. Change word forms:

We've talked about using synonyms to convey the author's meaning. If the author's word choice is key to the passage's meaning, though - or if you're having trouble finding an appropriate synonym - you might change the form of the word instead. Remember that each word in English has its own part of speech; it might be a noun, verb, adjective, adverb, or another kind of word like a conjunction or article. Don't worry about those other kinds; we'll just focus on the main four here.

Take a look at these examples of word families:

Notice this!

1. **beauty**

beauty (n.) - His speech showed beauty.

beautiful (adj.) - His speech was beautiful.

beautifully (adv.) - He spoke beautifully.

Notice how the three sentences above convey the same meaning while using different forms of the word beauty.

1. **run**

run (n.) - We often see the track team go on a run around our neighborhood.

run (v.) - We often see the track team run around our neighborhood.

running (adj.) - We often see the running team around our neighborhood.

Again, notice how these three sentences mean the same thing while using different forms of the word run.

Try this!

Identifying word forms:

Highlight the different word forms you see in the quotation and paraphrase below:

Quotation:

"It's easy to imagine an alternate future where advanced machine capabilities are used to empower more of us, rather than control most of us," Tufekcki writes.

Paraphrase:

Tufekci suggests that it's not difficult to dream of a different future in which people use sophisticated machines to help humanity, with these machines empowering us instead of controlling us.

Try this!

Paraphrasing with word forms:

Change the highlighted words to a different word form (for example, noun --> verb) to make a sentence with the same meaning.

1. Alex enjoys photographing his friends and family.
2. They find written assignments really challenging.
3. Cristina Hunger has taught her dog to communicate clearly.
4. Her book, *How Stella Learned to Talk*, is fascinating.

C. Modify verbs:

Another straightforward way to change a passage is to change the form of its verbs. For instance, you can change the tense (for example, past simple to present perfect or present simple to present continuous) or add a modal such as "can" or "might."

Again, see our example from Strategy 1. In addition to most of these words being synonyms, their verb forms are different:

Notice this!

Quotation:

Nicole Pajer points out in "How to Have a Healthy Relationship with Social Media in 2021" that social media is "driving wedges between families and friends over differing political views, keeping us glued to our phones all day long, and causing some to develop self-esteem issues from comparing their lives to other people's virtual ones."

Paraphrase:

In "How to Have a Healthy Relationship with Social Media in 2021," Nicole Pajer suggests that social media causes us to stare at our phones 24/7, argue with our loved ones over politics, and even have problems with self-confidence because we compare ourselves to others' online selves.

Try this!

Paraphrasing with verb forms:

Highlight the changed verb forms you see in the quotation and paraphrase below.

Quotation:

"The best way to avoid destructive conflict in the future is to continue the advance of our social ideals, which has already greatly reduced violence" (Kurzweil 28).

Paraphrase:

Ray Kurzweil suggests that the ideal way of avoiding destructive conflict is continuing to make societal progress, which is already greatly reducing violence.

D. Move sentence parts:

Another paraphrasing strategy is to move parts of a sentence. You might rearrange a list of items or swap the order of clauses. Note the different placement of the highlighted phrases in the example below:

Notice this!

Quotation:

According to Don Anair, the research director of the UCS Clean Transportation Program, "There are opportunities for ride-hailing to be part of a low-carbon transportation future, with some concerted effort among ride-hailing companies, policymakers, and consumers alike."

Paraphrase:

Don Anair, the research director of the UCS Clean Transportation Program, suggests that ride-hailing could produce fewer emissions in the years ahead if governmental organizations, companies like Uber and Lyft, and customers all work together.

Try this!

Moving sentence parts:

Highlight the rearranged elements you see in the quotation and paraphrase below.

Quotation:

Emma Marris argues that "The climate change crisis is not going to be solved by personal sacrifice. It will be solved by electing the right people, passing the right laws, drafting the right regulations, signing the right treaties - and respecting those treaties already signed, particularly with indigenous nations."

Paraphrase:

According to Emma Marris, we aren't going to be able to fix climate change with individual changes. Rather, governmental organizations will be able to solve it by making and acknowledging official agreements (especially with indigenous nations), creating strong laws and regulations, and bringing in good elected officials.

E. Use negative forms/opposites:

Another way you can change a passage is by using words with the opposite meaning in order to make negative phrases positive and vice versa. Just make sure to keep the meaning the same; this can be tricky!

Note the use of negatives and opposites in the example below:

Notice this!

Quotation:

Nicole Pajer points out in "How to Have a Healthy Relationship with Social Media in 2021" that social media is "driving wedges between families and friends over differing political views, keeping us glued to our phones all day long, and causing some to develop self-esteem issues from comparing their lives to other people's virtual ones."

Paraphrase:

In "How to Have a Healthy Relationship with Social Media in 2021," Nicole Pajer suggests that social media causes us to not get along with each other because of politics, stop doing other activities, and not feel positive about ourselves because we compare ourselves to other people.

Note too that in addition to changing positive clauses to negative ones, the writer has used synonyms; a good paraphrase uses multiple strategies.

Try this!

Identifying negative forms:

Highlight the opposite forms you see in the quotation and paraphrase below.

Quotation:

"It's easy to imagine an alternate future where advanced machine capabilities are used to empower more of us, rather than control most of us," Tufekcki writes.

Paraphrase:

Tufekci suggests that it's not difficult to dream of a different future in which people use sophisticated machines to help humanity, with these machines empowering us instead of controlling us.

Try this!

Using negative forms:

Paraphrase the sentences below, focusing on changing the negative forms to positive ones, and the positive forms to negative ones.

1. Our professor told us that it's not a big deal to miss class from time to time, as long as we finish all of the required work.
2. Kaisong was confident that he was well-prepared for the presentation.

F. Combine or separate sentences

Yet another way to improve your paraphrase is to combine shorter sentences or break apart longer ones. Note this strategy in the example below:

Notice this!

Quotation (1 sentence):

Nicole Pajer points out in "How to Have a Healthy Relationship with Social Media in 2021" that social media is "driving wedges between families and friends over differing political views, keeping us glued to our phones all day long, and causing some to develop self-esteem issues from comparing their lives to other people's virtual ones."

Paraphrase (divided into 3 sentences):

In "How to Have a Healthy Relationship with Social Media in 2021," Nicole Pajer suggests that social media causes us to not get along with each other because of politics. She says it also stops us from

Try this!

Combining sentences:

Combine the two sentences in the quotation below to make one longer sentence.

Emma Marris argues that "The climate change crisis is not going to be solved by personal sacrifice. It will be solved by electing the right people, passing the right laws, drafting the right regulations, signing the right treaties - and respecting those treaties already signed, particularly with indigenous nations.

This page titled [5.4: Paraphrasing Strategies](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Phuong Emily Bank and Rachel Cohen-Reyes.

- [2.5: Paraphrasing Step 2 - Make It Your Own- Common Paraphrasing Strategies](#) by Trischa Duke, Becky Bonarek, and Steph Mielcarek is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#).
- [3.10: Paraphrasing Step 2 - Make It Your Own- Common Paraphrasing Strategies](#) by Phuong Emily Bank and Rachel Cohen-Reyes is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#).

5.5: Quotations

Direct quotation, or someone's exact words, provide specific, concrete evidence from your primary and secondary sources. When reviewing a film or book, for example, you are likely to incorporate a number of direct quotations into your writing. Quotations are effective when they are used appropriately and correctly. For example, a general statement of observation such as "The candidate for senate gave a disastrous interview on TV last night" should be backed up with concrete evidence from the interview. To demonstrate how and why the interview was "disastrous," you might give examples such as these: "When asked whether she supported ethics reform, Ms. Simpson did not give a direct answer. She stated, 'I think ethics are important, and I hold myself to a high ethical standard.'"

While quotations are covered more extensively in Punctuation, this section will introduce you to using quotations in a review.

When to Use Quotations

Use quotations to support a point you are making. Avoid using them to *present* a point. Don't pepper your essay with randomly selected quotations because you think they make your essay look well researched. Instead, present your point, and back it up with a quotation.

Additionally, a teacher may have suggested you use details to "show instead of tell." Quotations are one way to *show* your audience what you mean rather than *tell* them.

Using a direct quotation is effective in the following instances:

- Because of its source, the quotation adds credibility to your point.

Example: Wearing a mask is the easiest thing we can do as individuals to stop the spread of COVID-19. According to Dr. Anthony Fauci, **"There should be universal wearing of masks"** (Castillejo and Yang).

Because Fauci is the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), his statement on mask wearing is credible evidence that supports the point.

- Because the author makes a statement in a particular way, its meaning would be less effective if paraphrased.

Example: In his review of the Microclimate Air Helmet, critic Drew Magary injects humor by quipping, **"No one at the vape shop cared that I was dressed like I was in an old Moby video."**

Using a direct quotation from Magary's review illustrates his style of humor more effectively than a description or paraphrase of the joke.

- Because the quotation contains important information, it is more effective than a paraphrase.

Example: Hurricane Harvey brought a record amount of flooding when it hit the Houston, Texas, area in 2017. Harvey's rainfall **"dumped an estimated 27 trillion gallons of rain over Texas and Louisiana during a 6-day period"** (Griggs).

The direct quotation contains the exact statistics that show the record amount of flooding.

- Because the quotation adds variety to the language and voice of the essay, it makes the most impact on the audience in its original form. For example, quote directly from a person you are writing about so that the audience imagines them speaking.

Embedding Quotations

In reviews particularly, you may want to use dialogue or narration as evidence to support a point. Because a quotation should illustrate or support your point, be sure to state clearly and in your own words the point you are making. A properly formatted quotation will contain the following:

- **Quote in exact words:** Use ellipses (. . .) to omit irrelevant sections of a quotation or to shorten it. Use brackets ([]) to add information to a quotation to help it make sense.

Original Quotation: “Cybersecurity is an important issue for businesses **of all sizes. Every business from Fortune 500 companies to mom-and-pop stores has an obligation to protect customers’ sensitive data.** Data breaches, such as the Target breach in 2014, have been known to erode trust.” (Flynn)

Quotation using ellipses and brackets: “Cybersecurity is an important issue for businesses . . . Data breaches, such as the Target breach in 2014, have been known to erode **[consumers’]** trust **[in the company]**” (Flynn).

- **Correct punctuation:** Use quotation marks (“ ”) to show exactly where the quotation begins and ends. This punctuation helps separate the quotation from your words and ideas and helps you avoid plagiarism.
- **Signal phrase:** Simple attribution phrases like “Smith says” or “As Jones argues” are important to use with quotations so that the quotation is integrated into your own sentence. When quoting directly, set off the quoted material from the signal phrase, or speaker tag, with a comma, as in Example 1 below. When the quotation is broken up by a **signal phrase**, use quotation marks around the quotation and commas around the signal phrase.

Example 1: Smith shows us the importance of good time management skills when she says, “90% of A and B students begin their essays at least two weeks before they are due” (Flynn).

Example 2: “Many students,” **Smith says**, “leave insufficient time for writing assignments” (Flynn).

- **Parenthetical citation:** Cite the source of your quotation by stating the source's author in the signal phrase or with a correct parenthetical citation at the end of the sentence. Place a final period inside the quotation marks if there is no citation in parenthesis. If there is a parenthetical citation, place the final period outside the quotation marks and after the parenthesis.

This page titled [5.5: Quotations](#) is shared under a [CC BY 4.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [OpenStax](#) via [source content](#) that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

- [7.6: Editing Focus - Quotations](#) by [OpenStax](#) is licensed [CC BY 4.0](#). Original source: <https://openstax.org/details/books/writing-guide>.

5.6: MLA Works Cited Pages

In MLA style, each source cited in the text of your paper refers readers to the list of works cited, a complete list of all the sources you quoted, paraphrased, or summarized. Every source cited in the text of your paper must be included in the works-cited list, and every source in the works-cited list must be cited in the text of your paper.

Format of the Works Cited list

After the last page of the paper, start a new page with the centered title “Works Cited” at the top. Create an entry for each source using the following guidelines and examples:

- Begin each entry at the left margin, and indent subsequent lines one-half inch. (In Microsoft Word, you can also highlight the entire page when you are finished and select “Hanging” from the Special options on the Indentation section of the Paragraph menu.)
- Alphabetize the entries according to authors’ last names. If two or more authors have the same last name, alphabetize by first name or initial. Alphabetize sources with unknown authors by the first word of the title, excluding *a*, *an*, or *the*.
- Double-space the entire page.

Core elements

Each entry in the list of works cited consists of core elements:

- **Author.** Who is responsible for the work?
- **Title.** What is the work called?
- **Publication information.** Where can the work be found so that others can consult it? Publication information includes the date of publication and any larger work, which MLA calls a “container,” in which a shorter work is published, such as a journal, magazine, newspaper, database, streaming service, and so on.
A note on access dates. Although access dates for online sources are not required, MLA acknowledges that an access date can indicate the version of a source you consulted. If you add an access date, place it at the end of the works-cited entry in this format: “Accessed 4 Apr. 2020.” Ask your instructors whether they require access dates.

Works Cited tools and templates

Tools

Online tools can generate works cited entries automatically; just be sure to double-check that the entries are correct according to the MLA rules. Most have free versions.

- [Citation Machine](#)
- [EasyBib](#)
- [Zbib](#)
- [KnightCite](#)
- [NoodleTools](#) (check if your college subscribes by going to your college library website)

Templates

You can also make a copy of [Columbia College's Word MLA template](#), [Google docs MLA template](#), or [Google docs MLA Works Cited template](#), and then put in your own content.

How to list different types of authors and contributors

General rules

- **Authors.** Give the author's last name, a comma, the author's first name and any middle name or middle initial, and then a period. For works with more than one author, an organization as an author, or an unknown author, see the models below.
- **Contributors.** People who contributed to the work in addition to the author are called contributors. Refer to them by their role in a phrase such as "adapted by," "directed by," "edited by," "illustrated by," "introduction by," "narrated by," "performance by," and "translated by." (See Models 19, 20, 21, 30, and 58 for examples.)

Specific cases

Book: one author

Sotomayor, Sonia. *My Beloved World*. Vintage Books, 2013.

Book: two authors

Kristoff, Nicholas D., and Sheryl WuDunn. *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2009.

Book: three or more authors

Barlow, David H., et al. *Abnormal Psychology: An Integrative Approach*. 8th ed., Cengage Learning, 2017.

Book: two or more works by the same author

When you cite two works by the same author, use three hyphens in place of the author's name, and alphabetize the works by title:

Trethewey, Natasha. *Memorial Drive: A Daughter's Memoir*. Ecco, 2020.

---. *Native Guard: Poems*. Mariner Books, 2007.

Work by an organization, a government, a corporation, or an association

If the author and publisher are *not* the same, start with the author:

United States Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration. *Healthy Living Resource Guide*. Government Printing Office, 2020.

If the author and the publisher *are* the same, give the title of the work in place of the author, and list the organization as the publisher:

MLA Handbook. 8th ed., Modern Language Association of America, 2016.

"This Is Who We Are." *U.S. Forest Service*, United States Department of Agriculture, Mar. 2019, www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/This-is-Who-We-Are.pdf.

Unknown author

If no author is given, start with the title.

"The Most Beautiful Battalion in the Army." *Grunt Magazine*, 1968, pp. 12-15.

Articles in journals, magazines, and newspapers

Articles, reviews, editorials, and other short works are published in journals, newspapers, and magazines. They appear in print, on

databases, and on websites (though often through a paywall). As a student, you are likely to access many articles and other short research sources primarily through databases available through your library.

Basic format for a journal article in a database

Author's Last Name, First Name. "Title of Article." *Title of Journal*, volume number, issue number, Date of Publication, page numbers. *Title of Database*, DOI or URL.

- **Author.** Give the last name, a comma, the first name, and any middle name or initial. Do not list an author's professional title, such as *Dr.* or *PhD.* End with a period.
- **Title of the article.** Give the full title and any subtitle, separating them with a colon. Capitalize all significant words in the title. Put the title of the article in quotation marks. End with a period inside the closing quotation mark.
- **Title of the journal.** Put the title of the journal in italics. Capitalize all significant words in the title. End the title with a comma.
- **Volume and issue numbers.** Use the abbreviations *vol.* and *no.* followed by the number and a comma.
- **Publication date.** Give the month or season and the year of publication, if available. Use the following abbreviations for months: *Jan.*, *Feb.*, *Mar.*, *Apr.*, *Aug.*, *Sept.*, *Oct.*, *Nov.*, and *Dec.* Do not abbreviate May, June, or July.
- **Page numbers.** Give p. (singular) or pp. (plural) and the page number or numbers of the article, followed by a period.
- **Title of the database.** Put the database title in italics, followed by a comma.
- **Location.** Give a DOI if available, and end with a period. If there is no DOI, give a URL, preferably a permalink, without <http://>.

Article in an academic journal

- Database

Daddis, Gregory A. "Out of Balance: Evaluating American Strategy in Vietnam, 1968–72." *War & Society*, vol. 32, no. 3, Oct. 2013, pp. 252–70. EBSCOhost, doi:10.1179/0729247313Z.0000000000026.

- Print

Daddis, Gregory A. "Out of Balance: Evaluating American Strategy in Vietnam, 1968–72." *War & Society*, vol. 32, no. 3, Oct. 2013, pp. 252–70.

- Online

Squires, Scot. "Do Generations Differ When It Comes to Green Values and Products?" *Electronic Green Journal*, no. 42, 2019, escholarship.org/uc/item/6f91213q.

The journal in the example numbers issues only, so no volume number is given.

Article in a magazine

To cite an article in a magazine, give the author, title of the article, title of the magazine, publication date (day, month, year), and page numbers. If you found the article through a database, add the title of the database and a DOI or URL. If you found the article online, add the URL.

- Database

Sanneh, Kelefa. "The Color of Money." *The New Yorker*, 8 Feb. 2021, pp. 26–31. EBSCOhost, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=aph&AN=148411685&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

- Print

Sanneh, Kelefa. "The Color of Money." *The New Yorker*, 8 Feb. 2021, pp. 26–31.

- Online

Ferrer, Ada. "My Brother's Keeper." *The New Yorker*, 22 Feb. 2021, www.newyorker.com/magazine/2021/03/01/my-brothers-keeper.

Article in a newspaper

To cite an article in a newspaper, give the author, title of the article, title of the newspaper, publication date (day, month, year), and the page numbers. If you found the article through a database, add the title of the database and a DOI or a URL. If you found the article online, add the URL.

- Database

Krueger, Alyson. "When Mom Knows Best, on Instagram." *The New York Times*, 27 Nov. 2019, pp. B1-B4. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=aph&AN=139891108&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

- Print

Krueger, Alyson. "When Mom Knows Best, on Instagram." *The New York Times*, 27 Nov. 2019, pp. B1-B4.

- Online

Smith, Doug. "They're Building Affordable Housing for the Homeless—Without Government Help." *Los Angeles Times*, 10 Feb. 2021, www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-02-10/theyre-building-affordable-housing-for-the-homeless-without-government-help.

Books and parts of books

Use the following guidelines for books and parts of books, such as a selection from an anthology, an article in a collection, a published letter, and so on.

Basic entry for a book

Author's Last Name, First Name. *Title of Book*. Publisher, Year of Publication.

- **Author.** Give the last name, a comma, the first name, and any middle name or initial. Do not list an author's professional title, such as *Dr.* or *PhD.* End with a period.
- **Title of the book.** Put the book's title in italics. Give the full title and any subtitle, separating them with a colon. Capitalize all significant words in the title, even if the book's cover does not use conventional capitalization. End the title with a period.
- **Publisher.** List the publisher's name without words such as "Inc." or "Company." Shorten "University Press" to "UP." End with a comma.
- **Year of publication.** Provide the publication date, and end with a period.

Print book

Wilkerson, Isabel. *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*. Vintage Books, 2010.

E-book formatted for a specific reader device or service

Wilkerson, Isabel. *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*. Kindle ed., Vintage Books, 2010.

Revised or later edition

For a book published in an edition other than the first, give the edition number after the title:

Strunk, William, Jr., and E. B. White. *The Elements of Style*, 4th ed., Pearson, 2019.

Sacred text

Give the complete title of the version you consulted followed by the name of the editor and/or translator, the edition, the publisher, and the publication date:

The Bible. Authorized King James Version. Edited by Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett, Oxford UP, 2008.

The Koran. Translated by N. J. Dawood, rev. ed., Penguin Books, 2015.

Websites and parts of websites

Use the following guidelines for works that are published *only* online and do not have an overarching publication, such as a journal, newspaper, magazine, or database.

Basic format for a short work or page on a website

Author's Last Name, First Name. "Title of Short Work." *Title of Website*, Publisher, Publication Date, URL.

- **Author.** Give the last name, a comma, the first name, and any middle name or initial. Do not list an author's professional title, such as *Dr.* or *PhD.* End with a period.
- **Title of the short work.** Put the title in quotation marks. Give the full title and any subtitle, separating them with a colon. Capitalize all significant words in the title. End with a period inside the closing quotation mark.
- **Title of the website.** Put the title of the website in italics. Capitalize all significant words in the title. End the title with a comma.
- **Publisher.** If the publisher of the website is different from the title of the website (as shown in Model 48), give it next, followed by a comma. If they are the same (as shown in Model 47), give only the title of the website.
- **Publication date.** Give the day, month, and year the work was posted, if available. Use the following abbreviations for months: *Jan.*, *Feb.*, *Mar.*, *Apr.*, *Aug.*, *Sept.*, *Oct.*, *Nov.*, and *Dec.* Do not abbreviate May, June, and July.
- **URL.** Give the URL, without "http://."

Short work or page on a website

Shetterly, Margot Lee. "Katherine Johnson Biography." *NASA*, 24 Feb. 2020, www.nasa.gov/content/katherine-johnson-biography.

If the source you are citing has no author listed, start with the title. If the page has no title, give the name of the site and a descriptive label, such as "Home page" or "Blog post."

Blog post

Blazich, Frank A. "The Cold Morning of the Day After." *Smithsonian Voices*, *Smithsonian Magazine*, 5 Feb. 2021, www.smithsonianmag.com/blogs/national-museum-american-history/2021/02/05/cold-morning-day-after/.

Entire website

Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Yale U, 2021, beinecke.library.yale.edu/.

If the website lists an editor, give the person's name as you would an author, followed by a comma and *ed*.

Wiki

"Coronavirus." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 22 Feb. 2021, [en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Coronavirus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coronavirus).

Social media

Basic format for a social media post

Author. "Text of untitled post" or "Title of post" or Descriptive label. *Title of Site*, Date of Post, Time of Post, URL.

- **Author.** Give the author's handle and name. End with a period.
- **Text, title, or description of post.** Match the capitalization exactly, add quotation marks, and end with a period inside the closing quotation mark.
- **Title of the social media site.** Put the title of the site in italics, ending with a comma.
- **Publication date and time.** Give the day, month, year, and time of the post. Use the following abbreviations for months: *Jan.*, *Feb.*, *Mar.*, *Apr.*, *Aug.*, *Sept.*, *Oct.*, *Nov.*, and *Dec.* Do not abbreviate May, June, and July.
- **URL.** Give the URL, without "http://."

Social media post

@Holleratcha (James Holler). "People go out and vote tomorrow!" *Twitter*, 2 Nov. 2020, 2:08 p.m., [twitter.com/ holleratcha/ status/1270432672544784384](https://twitter.com/holleratcha/status/1270432672544784384).

Death Valley National Park. "What does it mean to protect something you love?" *Facebook*, 23 Feb. 2021, 5:01 p.m., www.facebook.com/DeathValleyNPS/posts/4108808255810092.

Online forum post

@Duckpond318. "Turkeys in the arboretum." *Reddit*, 15 Mar. 2021, 11:22 a.m., [www.reddit.com/r/Wildlife/ comments/lqlbo3/ turkeys_in_the_arboretum/](https://www.reddit.com/r/Wildlife/comments/lqlbo3/turkeys_in_the_arboretum/). Accessed 4 Feb. 2021.

Online comment

AKJersey. Comment on "Can We Stop Fighting about Charter Schools?" *The New York Times*, 22 Feb. 2021, www.nytimes.com/2021/02/22/opinion/charter-schools-democrats.html#commentsContainer.

Video, audio, and other media sources

Use the following guidelines to cite various media sources.

Film

Begin with the title, followed by the director, the studio, and the year released.

Casablanca. Directed by Michael Curtiz, Warner Brothers, 1942.

You may also cite other contributors and their roles after the title (as illustrated below). If your paper is concerned with a particular person's work on a film, such as the director, an actor, or someone else, begin with that person's name and arrange all other information accordingly. For a film you stream, add the title of the streaming service and the URL:

Moonlight. Directed by Barry Jenkins, performances by Mahershala Ali, Naomie Harris, and Trevante Rhodes. A24, 2016. *Netflix*, www.netflix.com/watch/80121348?trackId=13752289&tctx=8%2C.

Online video

NASA. "Apollo 11 Moonwalk – Original NASA EVA Mission Video." 20 July 1969. *YouTube*, 17 July 2014, [www.youtube.com/ watch?v=S9HdPi9Ikhk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S9HdPi9Ikhk).

Television series or episode

- TV Series

The Good Place. Michael Schur, creator. NBC, 2016-20.

- Streamed TV episode

"Jason Mendoza." *The Good Place*, season 1, episode 4, NBC, 2016. *Netflix*, [www.netflix.com/watch/ 80191852?trackId=13752289&tctx=%2C%2C](https://www.netflix.com/watch/80191852?trackId=13752289&tctx=%2C%2C).

Podcast

McEvers, Kelly, host. "This Is Not a Joke." *Embedded*, season 9, episode 2, NPR, 7 Nov. 2019, Apple Podcasts.

If you listened to the podcast on the web, add the URL instead of the podcast service.

Attributions

Adapted by Anna Mills from [Writing Guide with Handbook](#) by Michelle Bachelor Robinson, Maria Jerskey, featuring Toby Fulwiler, published by [OpenStax](#) in 2021 and licensed [CC BY](#).

This page titled [5.6: MLA Works Cited Pages](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC 4.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by LibreTexts.

- [21.4: MLA Documentation and Format](#) is licensed [CC BY 4.0](#).
- [6.12: MLA Works Cited Pages](#) is licensed [CC BY-NC 4.0](#).

6: GRAMMAR

6.1: Compound Sentences (FANBOYS)

6.2: Complex Sentences

6.3: Commas

6.4: Descriptive Language

6.5: Modal Verbs for Argumentation

6.6: Conditionals for Argumentation

6.1: Compound Sentences (FANBOYS)

FANBOYS Coordinating Conjunctions

Coordinating conjunctions are words that link other words, phrases, and clauses together.

The good news is that there are only 7 coordinating conjunctions! We can use the acronym **FANBOYS** to help us remember these 7.

fans holding up signs for each coordinating conjunction

image generated by ChatGPT DALL-E (OpenAI)

- **F:** for
- **A:** and
- **N:** nor
- **B:** but
- **O:** or
- **Y:** yet
- **S:** so

In general, fanboys (and fangirls) are highly enthusiastic, extremely loyal, and intensely passionate fans. Fanboys go beyond the typical "fan" behavior of strongly liking, appreciating, or enjoying a group, brand, idol, team, etc. Sometimes, a fanboy's devotion can become very important to their identity and sense of happiness. Communities of fanboys can unite people together and create a deep sense of belonging.

Just like how real fanboys join together people from all over the world, we can use **coordinating conjunction FANBOYS** to join together details, ideas, and even entire sentences in our writing.

- The exam was neither **long nor difficult**. (*"nor" connects two words*)
- My brother has shoes **under the table, on top of the washing machine, and all over the hallway floor**. (*"and" connects three prepositional phrases in a list*)
- I **finished all of my work before 7pm yet didn't go to sleep until 2am**. (*"yet" connects two verb phrases with the same subject "I"*)
- I **want to go shopping at Costco, but I have too much leftover food in the fridge, so I decided not to go**. (*"but" connects clauses 1 and 2; "so" connects clauses 2 and 3*)

Compound Sentences

A **compound sentence** contains two or more independent clauses that are connected with a **comma [,]** and a **coordinating conjunction**.

An **independent clause**, also known as a complete sentence, has a **subject** and a **verb** or **verb phrase** (predicate).

Compound Sentence = independent clause + **comma** + **FANBOYS** + independent clause

Coordinating Conjunction	Function	Example
--------------------------	----------	---------

FOR	gives a reason or explanation (similar to "because")	Jane stayed home from work, for she was feeling unwell. • Subject 1: Jane • Verb 1: stayed • FANBOYS: for • Subject 2: She (Jane) • Verb 2: was feeling
AND	adds information or connects ideas	I want to start my own business, and you are going to help me. • Subject 1: I • Verb 1: want • FANBOYS: and • Subject 2: you • Verb 2: are going
NOR	shows and connects two negative ideas	My boyfriend didn't remember to call me on my birthday, nor did he get me a gift. • Subject 1: My boyfriend • Verb 1: didn't remember • FANBOYS: nor • Subject 2: he • Verb 2: did get ("nor" makes this a negative statement meaning "<i>he did not get me a gift</i>") Note In the second independent clause, the "helping verb" (<i>does, did, is, are, etc.</i>) comes before the subject.
BUT	shows a contrast or opposing ideas	Tim tried to cook a romantic dinner, but it turned into a disaster. • Subject 1: Tim • Verb 1: tried • FANBOYS: but • Subject 2: it (dinner) • Verb 2: turned
OR	shows a choice or alternative	I can help you study, or you can review your notes independently. • Subject 1: I • Verb 1: can help • FANBOYS: or • Subject 2: you • Verb 2: can review

YET	shows a surprising or unexpected contrast (similar to "but")	Jennifer already passed this class, yet she wants to take it again for extra practice. • Subject 1: Jennifer • Verb 1: passed • FANBOYS: yet • Subject 2: she (Jennifer) • Verb 2: wants
SO	shows a result, consequence, or solution (similar to "therefore")	Sammy missed the bus, so he had to walk to school. • Subject 1: Sammy • Verb 1: missed • FANBOYS: so • Subject 2: he (Sammy) • Verb 2: had

More Examples of Compound Sentences

Each example has something wrong or missing. What could you do to revise each compound sentence?

Exercise 6.1.1

✗ She studied hard for the exam so she got a good grade.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Exercise 6.1.2

✗ I wanted to go to the park, it started raining.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Exercise 6.1.3

✗ I wanted to go shopping, but forgot my wallet.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Answers

Exercise 6.1.1

There are two independent clauses, so a comma needs to go before the FANBOYS "so".

✓ She studied hard for the exam, **so** she got a good grade.

Exercise 6.1.2

There are two independent clauses connected with only a comma. This is an error called a "**comma splice**" because a comma is "splicing" (combining) two sentences together. We can add a FANBOYS connector word to correct this.

✓ I wanted to go to the park, **but** it started raining.

Exercise 6.1.3

A subject is missing from the second independent clause.

✓ I wanted to go shopping, **but I** forgot my wallet.

Note: You can remove the comma to make this a regular sentence and not a compound sentence.

✓ I wanted to go shopping **but** forgot my wallet. (*"but" is connecting two **phrases** that share the subject "I" so no comma is needed*)

6.2: Complex Sentences

Subordinating Conjunctions

Unlike FANBOYS coordinating conjunctions, there are many, many, many **subordinating conjunctions**. These connector words join a **dependent clause** to an **independent clause** to create a **complex sentence**. Remember that all types of clauses contain a subject and a verb.

Here, we will focus on one type of subordinating clause called **adverbial clauses** that can modify a verb, an adjective, or an entire main clause. **Adverbial clauses** answer questions like *when? why? how? and under what condition?*

Common Subordinating Conjunctions

- after
- although
- as
- as long as
- because
- before
- by the time
- considering that
- even if
- even though
- ever since
- given that
- if
- in case
- just as
- once
- provided that
- since
- so that
- though
- unless
- until
- when
- whenever
- whereas
- while

Examples of Subordinating Clauses

- I usually catch up on Netflix shows **while I walk on the treadmill**.
- **Because I had a bad day**, I ate an entire pint of ice cream.
- Betty gave an incredible presentation to a packed room **even though she was extremely nervous**.
- **Whereas my brother enjoys ordering from DoorDash**, I prefer cooking my own food.

Complex Sentences

A **complex sentence** contains one **independent clause** and at least one **subordinating clause**.

A **subordinating clause** starts with a **subordinating conjunction** and must include both a **subject** and a **verb** or **verb phrase**

(predicate). A subordinating clause is a type of **dependent clause** that cannot stand alone, so we need to connect it with an independent clause to form a complex sentence.

Complex Sentence Type A = independent clause + [**subordinating conjunction** + **subject** + **verb**]

Complex Sentence Type B = [**subordinating conjunction** + **subject** + **verb**] + **comma** + independent clause

Note

If you **start** a sentence with a subordinating clause, you must add a **comma** to mark the end of the subordinating clause.

Remember that we are working specifically with **adverbial subordinating clauses**, which add information about *when*, *where*, *why*, or *how* (under what conditions) something happens.

Subordinating clauses can come at the **beginning** or **end** of a sentence. If the subordinating clause comes **first** in the sentence, remember to put a **comma** at the end of it. You can also switch the order of the sentence so that the subordinating clause comes at the **end**. In this case, **no comma** is needed.

Below are more examples of common subordinating conjunctions that are used to introduce adverbial clauses.

Category	Subordinating Conjunction	Example
Time (When?)	when	When I was a child , I liked to go outside and play in the creek.
	while	dependent clause: when I was a child independent clause: I liked to go outside and play in the creek
	before	
	after	As I was parking the car , I noticed my neighbor dragging a large and suspicious bag into his home.
	as	dependent clause: as I was parking the car independent clause: I noticed my neighbor dragging a large and suspicious bag into his home.
	as soon as	
	since	The weather has gotten colder since you've been gone.
	until	dependent clause: since you've been gone independent clause: The weather has gotten colder I won't stop asking until you say "yes" to my plan. dependent clause: until you say "yes" to my plan independent clause: I won't stop asking

Cause, Reason, or Purpose (Why?)	because since as so (that)	Because it is rainy and cold today, I'm going to stay inside with a warm blanket and good book. • dependent clause: because it is rainy and cold today • independent clause: I'm going to stay inside with a warm blanket and good book I went to bed at 6pm as I was completely exhausted from the pickleball tournament. • dependent clause: as I was completely exhausted from the pickleball tournament. • independent clause: I went to bed at 6pm Nancy stayed up all night so (that) she could study for Tuesday's big test. • dependent clause: so that she could study for Tuesday's big test • independent clause: Nancy stayed up all night
Concession or Contrast	although even though	Although my brother hates vegetables, he will eat a tiny bite of salad at family gatherings. • dependent clause: although my brother hates vegetables • independent clause: he will eat a tiny bite of salad at family gatherings I think I will drive home now even though the traffic is really bad. • dependent clause: even though the traffic is really bad • independent clause: I think I will drive home now
Condition	if even if unless as long as provided that	As long as you have that awful manager, try to lay low and stay on her good side. • dependent clause: as long as you have that awful manager • independent clause: try to lay low and stay on her good side You might get a good grade if you come to class and turn in the homework on time. • dependent clause: if you come to class and turn in the homework on time • independent clause: you might get a good grade I'm going to break up with him unless he calls and begs for forgiveness. • dependent clause: unless he calls and begs for forgiveness • independent clause: I'm going to break up with him

More Examples of Complex Sentences

Each example has only a dependent clause, which cannot be by itself. What could you add to create a complex sentence?

Exercise 6.2.1

✗ Because this class is difficult.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Exercise 6.2.2

✗ As soon as my alarm goes off.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Exercise 6.2.3

✗ Even if it rains tomorrow.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Answers

Exercise 6.2.1

- ✓ **Because this class is difficult**, I should sign up for weekly tutoring at the Writing and Reading Center.
- ✓ I should sign up for weekly tutoring at the Writing and Reading Center **because this class is difficult**.

Exercise 6.2.2

- ✓ **As soon as my alarm goes off**, I always jump out of bed and chug a glass of water.
- ✓ I always jump out of bed and chug a glass of water **as soon as my alarm goes off**.

Exercise 6.2.3

- ✓ **Even if it rains tomorrow**, I will continue my habit of walking outside for 30 minutes.
- ✓ I will continue my habit of walking outside for 30 minutes **even if it rains tomorrow**.

6.3: Commas

The Importance of Commas

The **comma** [,] is a handy punctuation mark that helps the reader pause between parts of a sentence. Commas can also help to clarify the meaning of our written words. There are many uses for commas, but we will cover four especially helpful uses here: introductory phrases, compound sentences, lists, and extra information.

Notice This!

😱 **Jane enjoys cooking her family and dog.** -- *Jane likes to use her family and dog as ingredients to cook. Oh, no!*

😊 **Jane enjoys cooking, her family, and dog.** -- *Jane likes these three things. Everyone is safe.*

Use a comma and save a life!

1. Introductory Words and Phrases

Introductory word/phrase → **comma** → main clause

Use a comma after an introductory clause or phrase that comes **before the main sentence**. This tells the reader where the introduction ends and where the main clause begins.

- **Yesterday**, I studied until midnight. -- *introductory word*
- **Because of the rainy forecast**, I brought an umbrella with me to school. -- *introductory phrase*
- **According to the textbook**, researchers found a strong link between sleep and memory. -- *introductory phrase*
- **Even though I would love to eat 5 pounds of chocolate everyday**, it causes weight gain, clogs arteries, and contains caffeine. -- *introductory dependent clause*

2. Compound Sentences (FANBOYS Coordinating Conjunctions)

Two sentences + **FANBOYS** → use a **comma**

Use a comma **before** a coordinating conjunction (**for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so**) if it joins **two complete sentences** (independent clauses). A complete sentence has a **subject** and a predicate (**verb**).

Caution

FANBOYS conjunctions can also join together two **words** or **phrases**. In these cases, you do **not** need a comma.



Comma needed:

- Many students prefer to take notes on laptops, **but** others believe handwriting is more effective for learning.
- The experiment was successful, **so** the results were published in an academic journal.
- The *Twilight* films received negative reviews, **yet** many fans flocked to watch each movie multiple times in theaters.
- The witness neither confirmed the suspect's identity, **nor** did they offer any useful details.

✗ No comma:

- Many students prefer to take notes on laptops **but** not on tablets. --- **"but" joins two prepositional phrases**
 - The experiment was successful **and** well-designed. --- **"and" joins two adjectives**
 - The *Twilight* films received negative reviews **yet** generated over 3 billion dollars in profits combined. --- **"yet" joins two verb phrases that share the subject "the Twilight films"**
 - The witness neither confirmed the suspect's identity **nor** offered any useful details. --- **"nor" joins two verb phrases that share the subject "the witness"**
-

3. Lists or Series

List of 3 (or more) items → use **commas**

Use commas to separate items in a list of **three or more**. The comma before the last item ("and") is called the **Oxford comma**, which is common in academic writing.

Oxford comma: I want to thank my parents, Spider-man, **(Oxford comma)** and Taylor Swift.

- *I am clearly thanking four people: 2 parents, 1 Spider-man, 1 Taylor Swift.*

No Oxford comma: I want to thank my parents, Spider-man and Taylor Swift.

- *Am I thanking two people - my father Spider-man and my mother Taylor Swift?*
- *Or, am I thanking four people: 2 parents, 1 Spider-man, 1 Taylor Swift?*

I personally prefer the Oxford comma because it ensures clarity, so I will continue to use it in the following examples.

However, you can choose to use the Oxford comma or not based on your personal preference and writing style. The key is to be consistent and either always use it or never use it.

More examples:

- I can take a chemistry, English, **or** math class this quarter.
- Computers have improved our lives tremendously by simplifying word processing, streamlining data storage, **and** promoting a global exchange of information.
- The writing process includes recursive, non-linear stages that writers can rapidly shift between: pre-writing, drafting, revising, polishing, **and** publishing.

No commas - only 2 list items:

- I can take chemistry **or** English the quarter.
 - Computers have improved our lives tremendously by simplifying word processing **and** streamlining data storage.
 - The writing process includes recursive, non-linear stages that writers can rapidly shift between, including pre-writing **and** revising.
-

4. Extra Information

Extra information → **commas** around it

Use commas to set off **extra information** that is **not essential** to the meaning of the sentence. If you remove the extra information, the sentence still makes sense and contains enough information to communicate your main point.

Paris, **the capital of France**, is known for its art and history.

- **Appositive:** the capital of France

Recycling programs, **though expensive at first**, are ultimately an efficient and cost-effective means of reducing waste in our environment.

- **Adverbial clause:** though expensive at first

Last night, I got so upset playing a video game, **which was called *Hollow Knight: Silksong***, that I ended up throwing my controller across the room.

- **Relative (adjective) clause:** which was called *Hollow Knight: Silksong*

The student submitted her essay, **hoping to receive a high grade**.

- **Participial phrase:** hoping to receive a high grade

I really enjoy watching super-hero movies, **such as / including / like** Batman, Guardians of the Galaxy, and the Avengers.

- **Prepositional phrase:** such as Batman, Guardians of the Galaxy, and the Avengers

6.4: Descriptive Language

Each word counts. This is why, when you're revising your draft, you should pay special attention to the words you choose. Some choices will make your writing more effective than others.

Specific vs. general words

Choose words with specific meanings instead of general ones. For example, instead of “things,” tell your reader what the “things” are. For example, instead of referring to the collection of vegetables in figure 6.5.1 as “things,” or even “vegetables,” consider being more specific, naming and describing them.



"Farmers Market" by [ianmalcm](#) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#)

Strong verbs

If you choose a noun and a weak verb (such as *be* or *do*) rather than a strong verb, the sentence loses a sense of momentum and it's easy to make it too wordy.

Compare these two sentences. Which one is more precise and dynamic?

- The community garden's committee **made a decision** to revise the community guidelines.
- The community garden's committee **decided** to revise the community guidelines.

The second sentence conveys the same meaning with fewer words and more lively action.

Try to choose verbs with a more specific meaning. Depending on your meaning, try substituting stronger, more specific verbs for these weak verbs.

Instead of **get**, try using

- obtain
- understand
- fetch
- receive
- attain

Instead of **make**, try using

- cause
- require
- produce
- create
- construct

Instead of **have** (as a main verb) try using

- possess
- experience
- keep
- own
- exhibit

Instead of **do** (as a main verb), try using

- attempt
- complete
- finish
- achieve
- participate in
- contribute to

Analyzing a paragraph for strong and specific words

Let's look at the student essay in terms of strong and specific words:

Try this!

Look again at the second paragraph of Amanda's essay, paying special attention to word choice.

- What are some effective choices Alicia has made?
- Can you identify some areas where her word choice could be improved?

It's tough for people of lower socioeconomic status to get healthy food because they cannot afford high-end organic food. According to American FactFinder, the median family income in West Oakland was 35,037 dollars in 2017, which is below the U.S. median family income of \$70,850. Based on this, residents in West Oakland are considered to be of a lower socioeconomic status. As mentioned previously, organic food has no chemical fertilizers or pesticides. Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, the 6th Edition, 2019, states that "organic farming requires more manual labor and attention" ("Organic Food"), so its price is higher than conventional food. Take salted butter as an example; one box of four bars of organic salted butter costs \$5.29, while one box of non-organic salted butter only costs \$3.49 (as listed on the Whole Foods website). Additionally, as reported by an article, "Socioeconomic Status and Risk Factors for Cardiovascular Disease: Impact of Dietary Mediators," "Low-income families purchase low-cost items" because "the price of fruit and vegetables was the most determinative barrier in the consumption of these products from low-income families" (Psaltopoulou Chapter: 2.2. Cost). People with lower income may face difficulty living a self-sufficient life, much less purchasing good food.

Adapted from "Accessibility and Affordability of Healthy Food Dependent Upon Socioeconomic Status" by Amanda Wu

Revising for strong and specific words

Now let's apply this to your own writing:

Apply this!

Take a piece of writing you are working on and read it over.

- Think about your verb choice. Can you revise any weak verbs?
- Are there places where you can make your meaning clearer by using words with more specific meaning? A dictionary or thesaurus may be useful here. Check out information about using a dictionary or thesaurus in our [Language Toolkit](#).

Licenses and Attributions

CC Licensed Content: Original

Authored by Clara Hodges Zimmerman, Porterville College. License: CC BY NC.

Sample paragraphs on food deserts are adapted from "[Accessibility and Affordability of Healthy Food Dependent Upon Socioeconomic Status](#)" by Amanda Wu. License: CC BY.

CC Licensed Content: Previously published

"Strong verbs" and "Specific vs. general words" are adapted from 11.1 "[Academic Style](#)" in Athena Kashyap and Erika Dyquisto's text *Writing, Reading, and College Success: A First-Year Composition Course for All Learners*. License: CC BY SA.

6.5: Modal Verbs for Argumentation

Modal verbs (should, can, might, shall, etc.) come before the main verb and are used to express your opinions and attitudes. They can also express helpful nuance like ability, permission, and possibility.

Modals can be especially helpful in argumentative writing because we can employ them to strengthen our points and weaken opposing views.

modal verb + verb base form

Modal Verb	Meaning	Example
should	opinion, recommendation, expectation	Physical education should be mandatory for teenagers. (opinion / recommendation) Physical education should increase the overall wellness of teenagers. (expectation)
must	strong necessity	High school students must burn off restless energy.
can	possibility in general statements "can" = general claim "could" = cautious / tentative claim	Physical education can become the highlight of the school day and could provide students with important health benefits.
may might	possibility "may" = somewhat confident but not certain "might" = more cautious / less confident	Through physical education, a teenager may/might discover a new interest or pastime.
will	very confident and strong prediction	A mandatory physical education program will have many benefits.

Modals that Strengthen Points: can, should, must, will

Point: Using phones during meals with others interferes with social interactions.

- Using phones during meals **can distract** people from actively listening to each other. (**general claim**)
- Putting away phones **should improve** the quality of conversations by allowing people to give each other their full, undivided attention. (**likely claim**)
- People **must put away** their phones if they want to give and receive respect from others. (**assertive claim**)
- Putting away phones while eating **will boost** intimacy and a sense of belonging between people. (**strong claim**)

Modals that Weaken Opposing Points: may, might, could

Opposing View: Using phones during meals with others reduces anxiety.

- Proponents of using phones argue that they **may provide** a way to direct everyone's focus to a single screen, using entertaining videos or images, and away from any one individual at the table. **(uncertain claim)**
- Some people claim that phones **could create** a distraction during uncomfortable conversations or awkward stretches of silence. **(weak/cautious claim)**
- Another argument is that phones **might help** with anxiety by connecting users to friends through messaging apps and social media. **(very cautious and uncertain claim)**

6.6: Conditionals for Argumentation

We can use **conditionals** to describe consequences, solutions, and hypothetical situations. Conditionals can serve as helpful illustrations or supporting points in argumentative writing. There are four main types of conditionals in English, but here we will focus only on the First and Second Conditionals.

Take a look at these examples. How are they different grammatically? How does the grammar change the meaning?

Example - First Conditional

If I pass this class, I **will celebrate** by going out to a fancy dinner with friends.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Example - Second Conditional

If I passed this class, I **would celebrate** by going out to a fancy dinner with friends.

Answer available at the end of this section.

First Conditional “Future Real”

Use **If + present simple** and **will / can** to discuss a **certain or likely** possibility in the future. (realistic future prediction)

If students **work** with Writing Center tutors, they **will succeed** more often.

- **"If"** signals that the sentence is conditional
- **Present simple** "work" describes a suggested action
- A **comma** marks the end of the "if" clause
- **Future simple** "will succeed" describes the result

More examples:

- Students **will feel** less stressed **if** professors **assign** less homework.
- **If** students **have** less homework, they **will have** more free time.
- **If** students **have** more free time, they **can spend** more time with their families. ("can" expresses a realistic opportunity / ability to do something)
- **If** students **have** more free time, they **will spend** more time with their families. ("will" expresses a realistic prediction)

Pro Tip

Keeping the "if" statement in the **present tense** shows that it is a real possibility that actually could happen. There is hope it could come true!

Second Conditional “Unreal Present/Future”

Use **If + past simple** and **would / could** to describe an **unlikely or imaginary** (unreal) situation in the present or future.

If De Anza College **became** completely tuition-free, more students **would take** classes.

- **"If"** signals that the sentence is conditional
- **Past simple** "became" describes an unlikely event
- A **comma** marks the end of the "if" clause
- **"Would + verb"** describes the result of the unlikely event

More examples:

- Students **would be** happy **if** De Anza College **cancelled** finals weeks.
- **If I were** a teacher, I **would assign** zero homework.
- **If I had** more free time, I **would exercise** more. ("would" expresses the likely result of an imaginary, unrealistic situation)
- **If I had** more free time, I **could exercise** more. ("could" expresses the possibility or ability to do something in an imaginary, unrealistic situation)

Notice This!

In the Second Conditional, we say **"I were"** (instead of the standard past "I was") to indicate this "unreal conditional". This is the pattern for all pronouns and be-verbs when talking about unreal, imaginary situations.

- If I **were** you...
- If you **were** here...
- If it **were** possible...
- If s/he **were**...
- If they **were**...

Pro Tip

Keeping the "if" statement in the **past tense** shows that the situation is unreal, imaginary, or impossible. We can still dream and imagine the possibilities if it could happen, even though the reality is slim to none.

Practice with Conditionals

Exercise 6.6.1

Directions: Look at the clue in parentheses and decide if the sentence is a real or unreal possibility. Then, write the correct form of the verb.

If the San Francisco Giants  **1. _____ (win)** tonight, I will actually start believing in miracles. If I **2. _____ (be)** the manager, I would focus on giving the youngest players the most play time, even if it means losing a lot. If the younger players **3. _____ (develop)** the resilience and confidence to consistently perform well, the Giants can make it to the playoffs by 2030. If I **4. _____ (have)** the power to change the team, I would only keep Bryce Eldridge and make him the new face of the team. I would be pleasantly surprised if the Giants **5. _____ (finish)** the next season with a winning record (win more than 50% of all games).

Answer available at the end of this section.

Answers

Example - First Conditional

Meaning: There is a chance this student can pass the class. Perhaps they have been attending class, taking good notes, and doing decently on the exams. There might be some uncertainty about passing, but the **condition** (passing the class) is possible and realistic.

Therefore, the **result** (celebrating with a fancy dinner) also has a real chance of occurring.

Example - Second Conditional

Meaning: It is very unlikely that this student will pass the class. They haven't been doing any of the work and have a very weak grasp of the key concepts. It is also near the end of the term, and their Canvas grade is only 50%. The **condition** (passing the class) is hypothetical or unobtainable at this point.

However, this student has a vivid imagination and can still dream about what could happen if things were different. Sadly, this **imaginary result** (celebrating with a fancy dinner) is not expected to happen in reality. You can't celebrate a bad result.

Exercise 6.6.1

If the San Francisco Giants  **1. win** tonight (**real, future possibility**), I will start believing in miracles. If I **2. were** the manager (**imaginary situation**), I would focus on giving the youngest players the most playing time, even if it means losing a lot. If the younger players **3. develop** the resilience and confidence to consistently perform well (**realistic future possibility**), the Giants can make it to the playoffs by 2030. If I **4. had** the power to change the team (**imaginary scenario**), I would only keep Bryce Eldridge and make him the new face of the team. I would be pleasantly surprised if the Giants **5. finished** the next season with a winning record (win more than 50% of all games --**very unlikely scenario**).

INDEX

A

- academic integrity
 - 5.1: Evaluating Sources
- academic writing
 - 2.3: Transition Words and Cohesion
 - 2.5: Essay Introductions
 - 2.6: Writing a Conclusion Paragraph
 - 5.3: Quoting, Paraphrasing and Summarizing
 - 6.4: Descriptive Language
- accuracy
 - 5.1: Evaluating Sources
- analysis
 - 3.1: What is Comparison and Contrast Writing?
- argumentation
 - 4.1: What is Argumentative Writing?
- assessing
 - 5.1: Evaluating Sources
- audience
 - 2.3: Transition Words and Cohesion
 - 2.5: Essay Introductions
- audience engagement
 - 4.1: What is Argumentative Writing?

B

- background
 - 2.5: Essay Introductions
- biases
 - 5.1: Evaluating Sources
- bibliography
 - 5.6: MLA Works Cited Pages
- bridging techniques
 - 2.4: Cohesion between Paragraphs

C

- cid:engl100
 - 5.6: MLA Works Cited Pages
- clarity
 - 2.3: Transition Words and Cohesion
- coherence
 - 2.3: Transition Words and Cohesion
- cohesion
 - 2.3: Transition Words and Cohesion
 - 2.4: Cohesion between Paragraphs
 - 2.6: Writing a Conclusion Paragraph
- communication
 - 2.6: Writing a Conclusion Paragraph
 - 4.1: What is Argumentative Writing?
- community garden
 - 6.4: Descriptive Language
- comparison
 - 3.1: What is Comparison and Contrast Writing?
- composition
 - 2.5: Essay Introductions
- conclusion
 - 2.6: Writing a Conclusion Paragraph
- contrast
 - 3.1: What is Comparison and Contrast Writing?
- credibility
 - 4.1: What is Argumentative Writing?
 - 5.1: Evaluating Sources

critical thinking

- 2.6: Writing a Conclusion Paragraph
- 5.1: Evaluating Sources

cultural

- 3.1: What is Comparison and Contrast Writing?

D

DACA

- 5.3: Quoting, Paraphrasing and Summarizing

direct quotations

- 5.5: Quotations

drafting

- 2.4: Cohesion between Paragraphs

Dreamers

- 5.3: Quoting, Paraphrasing and Summarizing

E

economic

- 3.1: What is Comparison and Contrast Writing?

education

- 3.1: What is Comparison and Contrast Writing?

effective writing

- 6.4: Descriptive Language

end notes

- 5.6: MLA Works Cited Pages

essay

- 2.5: Essay Introductions
- 2.6: Writing a Conclusion Paragraph

essay writing

- 2.4: Cohesion between Paragraphs

essays

- 3.1: What is Comparison and Contrast Writing?

evaluating

- 5.1: Evaluating Sources

evidence

- 4.1: What is Argumentative Writing?

F

fake news

- 5.1: Evaluating Sources

food affordability

- 6.4: Descriptive Language

H

healthy food

- 6.4: Descriptive Language

higher education

- 5.3: Quoting, Paraphrasing and Summarizing

historical

- 3.1: What is Comparison and Contrast Writing?

hook

- 2.5: Essay Introductions

I

introduction

- 2.5: Essay Introductions

M

MLA

- 5.6: MLA Works Cited Pages

MLA 9

- 5.6: MLA Works Cited Pages

MLA essay

- 1.3: MLA Essay Format

MLA format

- 1.3: MLA Essay Format

MLA works cited

- 5.6: MLA Works Cited Pages

O

organic food

- 6.4: Descriptive Language

organization

- 2.6: Writing a Conclusion Paragraph

P

paragraphs

- 2.4: Cohesion between Paragraphs

paraphrasing

- 5.3: Quoting, Paraphrasing and Summarizing

persuasive writing

- 4.1: What is Argumentative Writing?

R

research process

- 5.1: Evaluating Sources

revising

- 6.4: Descriptive Language

rhetorical devices

- 2.5: Essay Introductions

rhetorical strategies

- 4.1: What is Argumentative Writing?

S

sentence structure

- 2.3: Transition Words and Cohesion

smooth transitions

- 2.4: Cohesion between Paragraphs

strong verbs

- 6.4: Descriptive Language

structure

- 2.4: Cohesion between Paragraphs
- 2.6: Writing a Conclusion Paragraph

summarizing

- 5.3: Quoting, Paraphrasing and Summarizing

Supreme Court

- 5.3: Quoting, Paraphrasing and Summarizing

T

text analysis

- 5.3: Quoting, Paraphrasing and Summarizing

thesis

- 2.5: Essay Introductions
- 4.1: What is Argumentative Writing?

thesis statement

[2.6: Writing a Conclusion Paragraph](#)

topic sentence

[2.4: Cohesion between Paragraphs](#)

transition words

[2.3: Transition Words and Cohesion](#)

transitions

[2.3: Transition Words and Cohesion](#)

[2.4: Cohesion between Paragraphs](#)

U

understanding

[2.3: Transition Words and Cohesion](#)

undocumented students

[5.3: Quoting, Paraphrasing and Summarizing](#)

V

visual elements

[4.1: What is Argumentative Writing?](#)

W

word choice

[6.4: Descriptive Language](#)

workplace

[3.1: What is Comparison and Contrast Writing?](#)

works cited

[5.6: MLA Works Cited Pages](#)

Works Cited entry

[5.6: MLA Works Cited Pages](#)

writing

[2.3: Transition Words and Cohesion](#)

[2.5: Essay Introductions](#)

[2.6: Writing a Conclusion Paragraph](#)

[3.1: What is Comparison and Contrast Writing?](#)

[6.4: Descriptive Language](#)

writing tips

[2.4: Cohesion between Paragraphs](#)

GLOSSARY

S

Sample Word 1 | Sample Definition 1

DETAILED LICENSING

Overview

Title: ESL Advanced Writing

Webpages: 42

Applicable Restrictions: Noncommercial

All licenses found:

- Undeclared: 28.6% (12 pages)
- CC BY-NC-SA 4.0: 21.4% (9 pages)
- Public Domain: 16.7% (7 pages)
- CC BY-NC 4.0: 11.9% (5 pages)
- CC BY-SA 4.0: 9.5% (4 pages)
- CC BY 4.0: 7.1% (3 pages)
- Unknown License: 4.8% (2 pages)
- Unknown License: 0% (0 page)

By Page

- ESL Advanced Writing - *Unknown License*
 - Front Matter - *Unknown License*
 - TitlePage - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - InfoPage - *Public Domain*
 - Table of Contents - *Public Domain*
 - Licensing - *Public Domain*
 - 1: Essays 101 - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - 1.1: Essay Structure - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - 1.2: Thesis Statements - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - 1.3: MLA Essay Format - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - 2: Logical Division Writing - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - 2.1: What is Logical Division Writing? - *CC BY 4.0*
 - 2.2: TEA Paragraphs - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - 2.3: Transition Words and Cohesion - *CC BY-NC 4.0*
 - 2.4: Cohesion between Paragraphs - *Undeclared*
 - 2.5: Essay Introductions - *CC BY-NC 4.0*
 - 2.6: Writing a Conclusion Paragraph - *CC BY-NC 4.0*
 - 3: Compare and Contrast Writing - *Undeclared*
 - 3.1: What is Comparison and Contrast Writing? - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
 - 3.2: Organizing the Compare and Contrast Essay - *CC BY 4.0*
 - 3.3: Language for Comparison and Contrast - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
 - 4: Argumentative Writing - *Undeclared*
 - 4.1: What is Argumentative Writing? - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
 - 4.2: Opposing Points of View, Concessions, and Refutations - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - 5: Using Information from Sources - *Undeclared*
 - 5.1: Evaluating Sources - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
 - 5.2: Language for Reporting - *Undeclared*
 - 5.3: Quoting, Paraphrasing and Summarizing - *CC BY-NC 4.0*
 - 5.4: Paraphrasing Strategies - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - 5.5: Quotations - *CC BY 4.0*
 - 5.6: MLA Works Cited Pages - *CC BY-NC 4.0*
 - 6: Grammar - *Undeclared*
 - 6.1: Compound Sentences (FANBOYS) - *Undeclared*
 - 6.2: Complex Sentences - *Undeclared*
 - 6.3: Commas - *Undeclared*
 - 6.4: Descriptive Language - *Undeclared*
 - 6.5: Modal Verbs for Argumentation - *Undeclared*
 - 6.6: Conditionals for Argumentation - *Undeclared*
 - Back Matter - *Public Domain*
 - Index - *Public Domain*
 - Glossary - *Public Domain*
 - Detailed Licensing - *Public Domain*

This page titled [ESL Advanced Writing](#) is shared under a license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Katelyn Endow.