ENGWR 300: COLLEGE COMPOSITION



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

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1.1: How to Read Like a Writer

How to Read Like a Writer

Mike Bunn

In 1997, I was a recent college graduate living in London for six months and working at the Palace Theatre owned by Andrew Lloyd Webber. The Palace was a beautiful red brick, four-story theatre in the heart of London's famous West End, and eight times a week it housed a three-hour performance of the musical *Les Miserables*. Because of antiquated fire-safety laws, every theatre in the city was required to have a certain number of staff members inside watching the performance in case of an emergency.

My job (in addition to wearing a red tuxedo jacket) was to sit inside the dark theater with the patrons and make sure nothing went wrong. It didn't seem to matter to my supervisor that I had no training in security and no idea where we kept the fire extinguishers. I was pretty sure that if there was any trouble I'd be running down the back stairs, leaving the patrons to fend for themselves. I had no intention of dying in a bright red tuxedo.

There was a Red Coat stationed on each of the theater's four floors, and we all passed the time by sitting quietly in the back, reading books with tiny flashlights. It's not easy trying to read in the dim light of a theatre—flashlight or no flashlight—and it's even tougher with shrieks and shouts and gunshots coming from the stage. I had to focus intently on each and every word, often rereading a single sentence several times. Sometimes I got distracted and had to re-read entire paragraphs. As I struggled to read in this environment, I began to realize that the way I was reading—one word at a time—was exactly the same way that the author had written the text. I realized writing is a word-by-word, sentence-by-sentence process. The intense concentration required to read in the theater helped me recognize some of the interesting ways that authors string words into phrases into paragraphs into entire books.

I came to realize that all writing consists of a series of choices.

I was an English major in college, but I don't think I ever thought much about reading. I read all the time. I read for my classes and on the computer and sometimes for fun, but I never really thought about the important connections between reading and writing, and how reading in a particular way could also make me a better writer.

What Does It Mean to Read Like a Writer?

When you Read Like a Writer (RLW) you work to identify some of the choices the author made so that you can better understand how such choices might arise in your own writing. The idea is to carefully examine the things you read, looking at the writerly techniques in the text in order to decide if you might want to adopt similar (or the same) techniques in your writing.

You are reading to learn about writing.

Instead of reading for content or to better understand the ideas in the writing (which you will automatically do to some degree anyway), you are trying to understand how the piece of writing was put together by the author and what you can learn about writing by reading a particular text. As you read in this way, you think about how the choices the author made and the techniques that he/she used are influencing your own responses as a reader. What is it about the way this text is written that makes you feel and respond the way you do?

The goal as you read like a writer is to locate what you believe are the most important writerly choices represented in the text—choices as large as the overall structure or as small as a single word used only once—to consider the effect of those choices on potential readers (including yourself). Then you can go one step further and imagine what *different* choices the author *might* have made instead, and what effect those different choices would have on readers.

Say you're reading an essay in class that begins with a short quote from President Barack Obama about the war in Iraq. As a writer, what do you think of this technique? Do you think it is effective to begin the essay with a quote? What if the essay began with a quote from someone else? What if it was a much longer quote from President Obama, or a quote from the President about something other than the war?

And here is where we get to the most important part: *Would you want to try this technique in your own writing?*

Would you want to start your own essay with a quote? Do you think it would be effective to begin your essay with a quote from President Obama? What about a quote from someone else?

You could make yourself a list. What are the advantages and disadvantages of starting with a quote? What about the advantages and disadvantages of starting with a quote from the President? How would other readers respond to this technique? Would certain readers (say Democrats or liberals) appreciate an essay that started with a quote from President Obama better than other readers (say Republicans or conservatives)? What would be the advantages and disadvantages of starting with a quote from a *less* divisive person? What about starting with a quote from someone *more* divisive?

The goal is to carefully consider the choices the author made and the techniques that he or she used, and then decide whether you want to make those same choices or use those same techniques in your own writing. Author and professor Wendy Bishop explains how her reading process changed when she began to read like a writer:

> It wasn't until I claimed the sentence as my area of desire, interest, and expertise—until I wanted to be a writer writing better—that I had to look underneath my initial readings . . . I started asking, *how*—*how* did the writer get me to feel, *how* did the writer say something so that it remains in my memory when many other things too easily fall out, *how* did the writer communicate his/her intentions about genre, about irony? (119–20)

Bishop moved from simply reporting her personal reactions to the things she read to attempting to uncover how the author led her (and other readers) to have those reactions. This effort to uncover how authors build texts is what makes Reading Like a Writer so useful for student writers.

How Is RLW Different from "Normal" Reading?

Most of the time we read for information. We read a recipe to learn how to bake lasagna. We read the sports page to see if our school won the game, Facebook to see who has commented on our status update, a history book to learn about the Vietnam War, and the syllabus to see when the next writing assignment is due. Reading Like a Writer asks for something very different.

In 1940, a famous poet and critic named Allen Tate discussed two different ways of reading:

> There are many ways to read, but generally speaking, there are two ways. They correspond to the two ways in which we may be interested in a piece of architecture. If the building has Corinthian columns, we can trace the origin and development of Corinthian columns; we are interested as historians. But if we are interested as architects, we may or may not know about the history of the Corinthian style; we must, however, know all about the construction of the building, down to the last nail or peg in the beams. We have got to know this if we are going to put up buildings ourselves. (506)

While I don't know anything about Corinthian columns (and doubt that I will ever *want* to know anything about Corinthian columns), Allen Tate's metaphor of reading as if you were an architect is a great way to think about RLW. When you read like a writer, you are trying to figure out how the text you are reading was constructed so that you learn how to "build" one for yourself. Author David Jauss makes a similar comparison when he writes that "reading won't help you much unless you learn to read like a writer. You must look at a book the way a carpenter looks at a house someone else built, examining the details in order to see how it was made" (64).

Perhaps I should change the name and call this Reading Like an Architect, or Reading Like a Carpenter. In a way, those names make perfect sense. You are reading to see how something was constructed so that you can construct something similar yourself.

Why Learn to Read Like a Writer?

For most college students RLW is a new way to read, and it can be difficult to learn at first. Making things even *more* difficult is that your college writing instructor may expect you to read this way for class but never actually teach you how to do it. He or she may not even tell you that you're supposed to read this way. This is because most writing instructors are so focused on teaching writing that they forget to show students how they want them to read.

That's what this essay is for.

In addition to the fact that your college writing instructor may expect you to read like a writer, this kind of reading is also one of the very best ways to learn how to write well. Reading like a writer can help you understand how the process of writing is a series of making choices, and in doing so, can help you recognize important decisions you might face and techniques you might want to use when working on your own writing. Reading this way becomes an opportunity to think and learn about writing.

Charles Moran, a professor of English at the University of Massachusetts, urges us to read like writers because:

> When we read like writers we understand and participate in the writing. We see the choices the writer has made, and we see how the writer has coped with the consequences of those choices . . . We "see" what the writer is doing because we read as

> writers; we see because we have written ourselves and know the territory, know the feel of it, know some of the moves ourselves. (61)

You are already an author, and that means you have a built-in advantage when reading like a writer. All of your previous writing experiences—inside the classroom and out—can contribute to your success with RLW. Because you "have written" things yourself, just as Moran suggests, you are better able to "see" the choices that the author is making in the texts that you read. This in turn helps you to think about whether you want to make some of those same choices in your own writing, and what the consequences might be for your readers if you do.

What Are Some Questions to Ask Before You Start Reading?

As I sat down to work on this essay, I contacted a few of my former students to ask what advice they would give to college students regarding how to read effectively in the writing classroom and also to get their thoughts on RLW. Throughout the rest of the essay I'd like to share some of their insights and suggestions; after all, who is better qualified to help you learn what you need to know about reading in college writing courses than students who recently took those courses themselves?

One of the things that several students mentioned to do first, before you even start reading, is to consider the *context* surrounding both the assignment and the text you're reading. As one former student, Alison, states: "The reading I did in college asked me to go above and beyond, not only in breadth of subject matter, but in depth, with regards to informed analysis and background information on *context*." Alison was asked to think about some of the factors that went into the creation of the text, as well as some of the factors influencing her own experience of reading—taken together these constitute the *context* of reading. Another former student, Jamie, suggests that students "learn about the historical context of the writings" they will read for class. Writing professor Richard Straub puts it this way: "You're not going to just read a text. You're going to read a text within a certain context, a set of circumstances . . . It's one kind of writing or another, designed for one audience and purpose or another" (138).

Among the contextual factors you'll want to consider before you even start reading are:

- Do you know the author's purpose for this piece of writing?
- Do you know who the intended audience is for this piece of writing?

It may be that you need to start reading before you can answer these first two questions, but it's worth trying to answer them before you start. For example, if you know at the outset that the author is trying to reach a very specific group of readers, then his or her writerly techniques may seem more or less effective than if he/she was trying to reach a more general audience. Similarly—returning to our earlier example of beginning an essay with a quote from President Obama about the war in Iraq—if you know that the author's purpose is to address some of the dangers and drawbacks of warfare, this may be a very effective opening. If the purpose is to encourage Americans to wear sunscreen while at the beach this opening makes no sense at all. One former student, Lola, explained that most of her reading assignments in college writing classes were designed "to provoke analysis and criticisms into the style, structure, and *purpose* of the writing itself."

In What Genre Is This Written?

Another important thing to consider before reading is the genre of the text. Genre means a few different things in college English classes, but it's most often used to indicate the *type* of writing: a poem, a newspaper article, an essay, a short story, a novel, a legal brief, an instruction manual, etc. Because the conventions for each genre can be very different (who ever heard of a 900-page newspaper article?), techniques that are effective for one genre may not work well in another. Many readers expect poems and pop songs to rhyme, for example, but might react negatively to a legal brief or instruction manual that did so.

Another former student, Mike, comments on how important the genre of the text can be for reading:

> I think a lot of the way I read, of course, depends on the type of text I'm reading. If I'm reading philosophy, I always look for signaling words (however, therefore, furthermore, despite) indicating the direction of the argument... when I read fiction or creative nonfiction, I look for how the author inserts dialogue or character sketches within narration or environmental observation. After reading To the Lighthouse [sic] last semester, I have noticed how much more attentive I've become to the types of narration (omniscient, impersonal, psychological, realistic, etc.), and how these different approaches are utilized to achieve an author's overall effect.

Although Mike specifically mentions what he looked for while reading a published novel, one of the great things about RLW is that it can be used equally well with either published or student-produced writing.

Is This a Published or a Student-Produced Piece of Writing?

As you read both kinds of texts you can locate the choices the author made and imagine the different decisions that he/she might have made. While it might seem a little weird at first to imagine how published texts could be written differently—after all, they were good enough to be published—remember that all writing can be improved. Scholar Nancy Walker believes that it's important for students to read published work using RLW because "the work ceases to be a mere artifact, a stone tablet, and becomes instead a living utterance with immediacy and texture. It could have been better or worse than it is had the author made different choices" (36). As Walker suggests, it's worth thinking about how the published text would be different—maybe even *better*—if the author had made different choices in the writing because you may be faced with similar choices in your own work.

Is This the Kind of Writing You Will Be Assigned to Write Yourself?

Knowing ahead of time what kind of writing assignments you will be asked to complete can really help you to read like a writer. It's probably impossible (and definitely too time-consuming) to identify *all* of the choices the author made and *all* techniques an author used, so it's important to prioritize while reading. Knowing what you'll be writing yourself can help you prioritize. It may be the case that your instructor has assigned the text you're reading to serve as a model for the kind of writing you'll be doing later. Jessie, a former student, writes, "In college writing classes, we knew we were reading for a purpose—to influence or inspire our own work. The reading that I have done in college writing courses has always been really specific to a certain type of writing, and it allows me to focus and experiment on that specific style in-depth and without distraction."

If the text you're reading is a model of a particular style of writing—for example, highly-emotional or humorous—RLW is particularly helpful because you can look at a piece you're reading and think about whether you want to adopt a similar style in your own writing. You might realize that the author is trying to arouse sympathy in readers and examine what techniques he/she uses to do this; then you can decide whether these techniques might work well in your own writing. You might notice that the author keeps including jokes or funny stories and think about whether you want to include them in your writing—what would the impact be on your potential readers?

What Are Questions to Ask As You Are Reading?

It is helpful to continue to ask yourself questions *as* you read like a writer. As you're first learning to read in this new way, you may want to have a set of questions written or typed out in front of you that you can refer to while reading. Eventually—after plenty of practice—you will start to ask certain questions and locate certain things in the text almost automatically. Remember, for most students, this is a new way of reading, and you'll have to train yourself to do it well. Also, keep in mind that you're reading to understand how the text was *written*— how the house was built—more than you're trying to determine the meaning of the things you read or assess whether the texts are good or bad.

First, return to two of the same questions I suggested that you consider *before* reading:

- What is the author's purpose for this piece of writing?
- Who is the intended audience?

Think about these two questions again as you read. It may be that you couldn't really answer them before, or that your ideas will change while reading. Knowing *why* the piece was written and *who* it's for can help explain why the author might have made certain choices or used particular techniques in the writing, and you can assess those choices and techniques based in part on how effective they are in fulfilling that purpose and/or reaching the intended audience.

Beyond these initial two questions, there is an almost endless list of questions you might ask regarding writing choices and techniques. Here are some of the questions that one former student, Clare, asks herself:

> When reading I tend to be asking myself a million questions. If I were writing this, where would I go with the story? If the author goes in a different direction (as they so often do) from what I am thinking, I will ask myself, why did they do this? What are they telling me?

Clare tries to figure out why the author might have made a move in the writing that she hadn't anticipated, but even more importantly, she asks herself what *she* would do if she were the author. Reading the text becomes an opportunity for Clare to think about her own role as an author.

Here are some additional examples of the kinds of questions you might ask yourself as you read:

- How effective is the language the author uses? Is it too formal? Too informal? Perfectly appropriate?

Depending on the subject matter and the intended audience, it may make sense to be more or less formal in terms of language. As you begin reading, you can ask yourself whether the word choice and tone/ language of the writing seem appropriate.

- What kinds of evidence does the author use to support his/her claims? Does he/she use statistics? Quotes from famous people? Personal anecdotes or personal stories? Does he/she cite books or articles?
- How appropriate or effective is this evidence? Would a different type of evidence, or some combination of evidence, be more effective?

To some extent, the kinds of questions you ask should be determined by the genre of writing you are reading. For example, it's probably worth examining the evidence that the author uses to support his/ her claims if you're reading an opinion column, but less important if you're reading a short story. An opinion column is often intended to convince readers of something, so the kinds of evidence used are often very important. A short story *may* be intended to convince readers of something, sometimes, but probably not in the same way. A short story rarely includes claims or evidence in the way that we usually think about them.

- Are there places in the writing that you find confusing? What about the writing in those places makes it unclear or confusing?

It's pretty normal to get confused in places while reading, especially while reading for class, so it can be helpful to look closely at the writing to try and get a sense of exactly what tripped you up. This way you can learn to avoid those same problems in your own writing.

- How does the author move from one idea to another in the writing? Are the transitions between the ideas effective? How else might he/she have transitioned between ideas instead?

Notice that in these questions I am encouraging you to question whether aspects of the writing are *appropriate* and *effective* in addition to deciding whether you liked or disliked them. You want to imagine how other readers might respond to the writing and the techniques you've identified. Deciding whether you liked or disliked something is only about you; considering whether a technique is appropriate or effective lets you contemplate what the author might have been trying to do and to decide whether a majority of readers would find the move successful. This is important because it's the same thing you should be thinking about while you are writing: how will readers respond to this technique I am using, to this sentence, to this word? As you read, ask yourself what the author is doing at each step of the way, and then consider whether the same choice or technique might work in your own writing.

What Should You Be Writing As You Are Reading?

The most common suggestion made by former students—mentioned by every single one of them—was to mark up the text, make comments in the margins, and write yourself notes and summaries both during and after reading. Often the notes students took while reading became ideas or material for the students to use in their own papers. It's important to read with a pen or highlighter in your hand so that you can mark—right on the text—all those spots where you identify an interesting choice the author has made or a writerly technique you might want to use. One thing that I like to do is to highlight and underline the passage in the text itself, and then try to answer the following three questions on my notepad:

- What is the technique the author is using here?
- Is this technique effective?
- What would be the advantages and disadvantages if I tried this same technique in my writing?

By utilizing this same process of highlighting and note-taking, you'll end up with a useful list of specific techniques to have at your disposal when it comes time to begin your own writing.

What Does RLW Look Like in Action?

Let's go back to the opening paragraph of *this* essay and spend some time reading like writers as a way to get more comfortable with the process:

> *In 1997, I was a recent college graduate living in London for six months and working at the Palace Theatre owned by Andrew Lloyd Webber. The Palace was a beautiful red brick, four-story theatre in the heart of London's famous West End, and eight times a week it housed a three-hour performance of the musical* Les Miserables. *Because of antiquated fire-safety laws, every theatre in the city was required to have a certain number of staff members inside watching the performance in case of an emergency.*

Let's begin with those questions I encouraged you to try to answer *before* you start reading. (I realize we're cheating a little bit in this case since you've already read most of this essay, but this is just practice. When doing this on your own, you should attempt to

answer these questions before reading, and then return to them as you read to further develop your answers.)

- Do you know the author's purpose for this piece of writing? I hope the purpose is clear by now; if it isn't, I'm doing a pretty lousy job of explaining how and why you might read like a writer.
- Do you know who the intended audience is? Again, I hope that you know this one by now.
- What about the genre? Is this an essay? An article? What would *you* call it?
- You know that it's published and not student writing. How does this influence your expectations for what you will read?
- Are you going to be asked to write something like this yourself? Probably not in your college writing class, but you can still use RLW to learn about writerly techniques that you might want to use in whatever you do end up writing.

Now ask yourself questions *as* you read.

> *In 1997, I was a recent college graduate living in London for six months and working at the Palace Theatre owned by Andrew Lloyd Webber. The Palace was a beautiful red brick, four-story theatre in the heart of London's famous West End, and eight times a week it housed a three-hour performance of the musical* Les Miserables. *Because of antiquated fire-safety laws, every theatre in the city was required to have a certain number of staff members inside watching the performance in case of an emergency.*

Since this paragraph is the very first one, it makes sense to think about how it introduces readers to the essay. What technique(s) does the author use to begin the text? This is a personal story about his time working in London. What else do you notice as you read over this passage? Is the passage vague or specific about where he worked? You know that the author worked in a famous part of London in a beautiful theater owned by a well-known composer. Are these details important? How different would this opening be if, instead, I had written:

> *In 1997, I was living in London and working at a theatre that showed* Les Miserables.

This is certainly shorter, and some of you may prefer this version. It's quick. To the point. But what (if anything) is lost by eliminating so much of the detail? I *chose* to include each of the details that the revised sentence omits, so it's worth considering why. Why did I mention where the theater was located? Why did I explain that I was living in London right after finishing college? Does it matter that it was after college? What effect might I have hoped the inclusion of these details would have on readers? Is this reference to college an attempt to connect with my audience of college students? Am I trying to establish my credibility as an author by announcing that I went to college? Why might I want the readers to know that this was a theater owned by Andrew Lloyd Weber? Do you think I am just trying to mention a famous name that readers will recognize? Will Andrew Lloyd Weber figure prominently in the rest of the essay?

These are all reasonable questions to ask. They are not necessarily the *right* questions to ask because there are no right questions. They certainly aren't the only questions you could ask, either. The goal is to train yourself to formulate questions as you read based on whatever you notice in the text. Your own reactions to what you're reading will help determine the kinds of questions to ask.

Now take a broader perspective. I begin this essay—an essay about *reading*—by talking about my job in a theater in London. Why? Doesn't this seem like an odd way to begin an essay about reading? If you read on a little further (feel free to scan back up at the top of this essay) you learn in the third full paragraph what the connection is between working in the theater and reading like a writer, but why include this information at all? What does this story add to the essay? Is it worth the space it takes up?

Think about what effect presenting this personal information might have on readers. Does it make it feel like a real person, some "ordinary guy," is talking to you? Does it draw you into the essay and make you want to keep reading?

What about the language I use? Is it formal or more informal? This is a time when you can really narrow your focus and look at particular words:

> *Because of antiquated fire-safety laws, every theatre in the city was required to have a certain number of staff members inside watching the performance in case of an emergency.*

What is the effect of using the word "antiquated" to describe the fire-safety laws? It certainly projects a negative impression; if the laws are described as antiquated it means I view them as old-fashioned or obsolete. This is a fairly uncommon word, so it stands out, drawing attention to my choice in using it. The word also sounds quite formal. Am I formal in the rest of this sentence?

I use the word "performance" when I just as easily could have written "show." For that matter, I could have written "old" instead of "antiquated." You can proceed like this throughout the sentence, thinking about alternative choices I could have made and what the

effect would be. Instead of “staff members” I could have written “employees” or just “workers.” Notice the difference if the sentence had been written:

> *Because of old fire-safety laws, every theatre in the city was required to have a certain number of workers inside watching the show in case of an emergency.*

Which version is more likely to appeal to readers? You can try to answer this question by thinking about the advantages and disadvantages of using formal language. When would you want to use formal language in your writing and when would it make more sense to be more conversational?

As you can see from discussing just this one paragraph, you could ask questions about the text forever. Luckily, you don’t have to. As you continue reading like a writer, you’ll learn to notice techniques that seem new and pay less attention to the ones you’ve thought about before. The more you practice the quicker the process becomes until you’re reading like a writer almost automatically.

I want to end this essay by sharing one more set of comments by my former student, Lola, this time about what it means to her to read like a writer:

> Reading as a writer would compel me to question what might have brought the author to make these decisions, and then decide what worked and what didn’t. What could have made that chapter better or easier to understand? How can I make sure I include some of the good attributes of this writing style into my own? How can I take aspects that I feel the writer failed at and make sure not to make the same mistakes in my writing?

Questioning why the author made certain decisions. Considering what techniques could have made the text better. Deciding how to include the best attributes of what you read in your own writing. This is what Reading Like a Writer is all about.

Are you ready to start reading?

Discussion

1. How is “Reading Like a Writer” similar to and/or different from the way(s) you read for other classes?
2. What kinds of choices do you make as a writer that readers might identify in your written work?
3. Is there anything you notice in this essay that you might like to try in your own writing? What is that technique or strategy? When do you plan to try using it?
4. What are some of the different ways that you can learn about the context of a text before you begin reading it?

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SECTION OVERVIEW

1.2: Introduction

Welcome to the Online Reading Comprehension Lab! The Reading Lab is the first completely *free*, *comprehensive*, *online* open education resource for *college-level* reading. It offers a variety of multimedia materials—instructional videos, online exercises, and handouts—that can be used alone or in a course. Use it as a complete textbook alternative for college, high school, continuing education, or training programs.

College-level reading is different from the kind of reading done in high school. The types of texts and assignments differ, but also the expectations for critical thinking, analysis, and synthesis of ideas. The more you are able to read effectively at the college level, the greater your chances of having success in college, economic advancement, and a more fulfilling life. The Reading Lab provides more than two dozen interactive, multimedia modules to help develop college-level reading skills and support student success.

This introduction covers four areas:

1.2.1: Active vs. Passive Reading

1.2.2: Learning to Read

1.2.3: Common Reading Systems

1.2.4: Explore the Reading Lab

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1.2.1: Active vs. Passive Reading

Have you ever read a page from a textbook and at the end of the page realized you have no idea what you just read?

Successful readers develop active reading habits that improve their reading comprehension, speed, and enjoyment. Active reading involves deeper engagement with the text before, during, and after reading. The Reading Lab promotes active reading by modeling strategies and techniques to support it.

A good way to understand active reading is by comparing it to what it is not, what's sometimes called passive reading.

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1.2.2: Learning to Read

Learning to read and write isn't just about doing well in school. It's also about personal development and the ability to lead a mindful and fulfilling life. Literacy skills like reading and writing shape one's personality, beliefs, and goals.

A literacy narrative is a person's story about how they learned to read and write. They talk about memorable experiences and how these experiences shaped who they are. The **Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives** at Ohio State University offers hundreds of personal literacy narratives in video and text format by students and teachers from all walks of life. The images below link to some of the literacy narratives available in the Archive. Visit the Archive for more narratives and to share your own.

Learning ESL at a Young Age



Literacy in Color: Chanelle



Discovering My Intellectual Identity in Reading Norman Mailer



Narratives of Two Professors



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1.2.3: Common Reading Systems

You probably have a process or system for many common things you do—like getting ready in the morning, going to work or school, or doing chores. Do you have a process for reading?

There are several reading systems used by college and high school students to improve their reading comprehension. The most common ones are SQ3R, KWL, and Cornell Notes.

- **SQ3R:** SQ3R is a reading comprehension method developed in the 1940s to help college students read textbooks. The name stands for *survey*, *question*, *read*, *recite*, and *review*, which are the steps in the process advocated by this reading system. The steps cover what to do before, during, and after reading. Follow the links below for more information about this system.
  - **NHTI resource page on SQ3R**
  - **YouTube video on SQ3R**
  - **Oregon State University handout on SQ3R**
- **KWL:** KWL was designed to help students conduct research. The acronym stands for *know*, *want*, and *learn*. The system involves creating a graphic organizer—in this case a chart. The chart has three columns: what I know, what I want to know, and what I learned. Students answer the first two columns before doing research and the third column after the research is over. Follow the links below for more information about this system.
  - **Explanation of the KWL system**
  - **YouTube video on KWL**
  - **Videos of educators using KWL**
  - **Blank KWL chart handout**
- **Cornell Notes:** Cornell Notes is a comprehensive note-taking system developed in the 1950s by a professor at Cornell University to help college students improve their study skills. The system involves creating a table with two columns. In the right column, which is the larger column, the student writes notes from a lecture or text. In the left column, the student goes back and writes key words, main ideas, or questions about the notes. Afterwards, the student reviews the notes and writes a short summary of the main ideas beneath the two columns. Follow the links below for more information about this system.
  - **Cornell University explanation of the Cornell Notes system**
  - **YouTube video on the Cornell Notes system**
  - **Cornell University handout on the Cornell Notes system**
  - **The Learning Toolbox explanation of the Cornell Notes system**

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1.2.4: Explore the Reading Lab

Explore the Reading Lab

The Reading Lab has modules covering over two dozen topics. It is divided into three sections: *what to do before reading*, *what to do while reading*, and *what to do after reading*. These sections are divided into nine units that cover one or more topics. Below is a map of the Reading Lab with a description of each topic to help you find the resource that's best for you. Each topic consists of a module with an instructional video, one or more interactive exercises, handouts, and links to additional resources online.

What to Do Before Reading

Previewing: Learn how to preview a text in order to familiarize yourself with its contents before you read. This will help you understand the material better and use your time more efficiently.

Questioning: Learn how to ask questions about a text before, during, and after reading to improve your understanding of the text. Topics covered include using questioning to examine your purpose, expectations, attitude, and understanding of the topic; writing guide questions; using questioning to monitor your understanding as you read; and using questioning to evaluate what you've read.

What to Do While Reading

Annotating: Learn how to engage texts by annotating while you read.

- Creating an Annotating System: Annotating while you read is the most fundamental technique of active reading. Learn how to annotate a text by watching this video.
- Annotating an Essay or Book: Learn what to look for when annotating an essay or book.
- Annotating a Textbook: Learn how to identify and annotate the key parts of a textbook.
- Annotating a Journal Article: Learn about the different types of academic journal articles and how to annotate them.
- Annotating a Work of Fiction: Learn about how to read and annotate a work of fiction, such as a short story or novel.
- How to Read Visual Aids: Learn how to read visual aids.

Inferencing: Learn how to read between the lines to identify what a text is implying rather than directly stating.

Vocabulary Strategies: Learn about techniques and tools to help you improve your reading vocabulary.

- Context Clues: Learn what context clues are and how to use them to decipher the meaning of unfamiliar words you come across while reading.
- Word-Part Clues: Learn what word parts are and how to use them to discover the meaning of unfamiliar words you come across while reading.
- Specialized Terminology: Learn how to identify and acquire specialized terminology for specific subjects and disciplines.
- Figurative Language: Learn the difference between literal and figurative language, and how to interpret different types of figurative language you may encounter as you read.
- Creating Vocabulary Flashcards: Learn how to build your reading vocabulary by making vocabulary flashcards.
- Creating a KIM Chart: Learn how to build your reading vocabulary by making a KIM Chart (keyword, information, and memory cue).
- Creating a Word Web: Learn how to build your reading vocabulary by making word webs.

What to Do After Reading

Paraphrasing: Learn how paraphrasing is different from quoting and summarizing, and how to paraphrase what you read so that you can check your understanding of what the author says and improve your memory of it.

Summarizing: Learn how summarizing is different from quoting and paraphrasing, and how to summarize what you read so that you can check your understanding of longer texts and remember the main ideas.

Analyzing: Learn how to read critically by analyzing what you read.

- Writing Patterns: Learn how to identify the patterns used by writers to organize their ideas. This will help you anticipate how a text will develop an idea and improve your own writing.
- Evaluating an Author's Intent: Learn how to evaluate an author's intent by reading critically to discern point of view, purpose, intended audience, and tone.

- Evaluating an Argument: Learn how to evaluate the arguments you come across as you read in order to uncover biases and logical fallacies.
- Evaluating a Website: Learn how to evaluate websites for reliability, accuracy, and relevance.
- Creating a Timeline: Learn how to create a timeline to organize and remember the information you gather from the texts you read.
- Creating an Outline: Learn how to make an outline of what you read so that you can understand how ideas are organized and related in the text.
- Creating a Concept Map: Learn how to create a concept map to visualize the main ideas in a text.
- Creating a Story Map: Learn how to make a story map to improve your understanding of narrative-based texts like novels, short stories, and histories.

Synthesizing: Learn how to synthesize what you read by teasing out the main ideas and combining them with other ideas to formulate new perspectives.

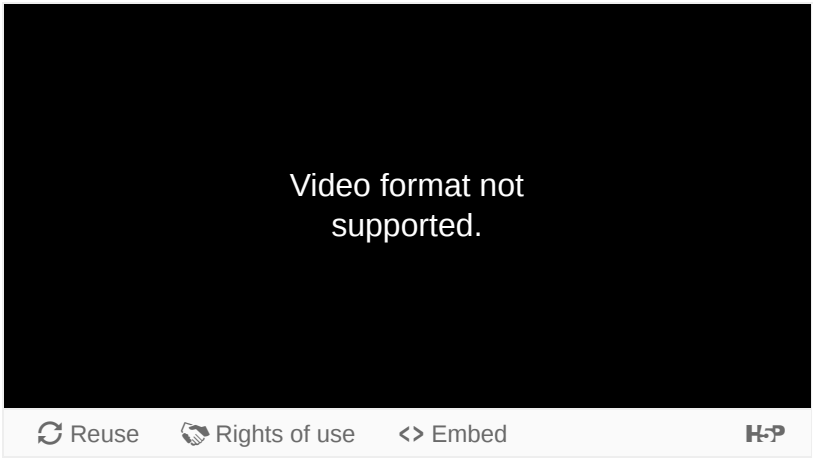
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SECTION OVERVIEW

1.3: Previewing

Previewing

Learn how to preview a text in order to familiarize yourself with its contents before you read. This will help you understand the material better and use your time more efficiently.



Video Transcript

0:00 Owl: Welcome to How to Preview a Text, an instructional video on reading comprehension brought to you by the Excelsior College Online Writing Lab.

0:15 What would you do if you were suddenly dropped into an unfamiliar place?

0:19 Would you wander around aimlessly, hoping that somehow you will find your way?

0:24 Probably not.

0:25 You'd probably want to carefully explore and investigate your surroundings so that you can gather clues and information that can help you get your bearings and decide what to do next.

0:36 The experience of reading a new text can be similar to that of navigating an unfamiliar place.

0:42 Therefore, before reading you should explore the text first to gather clues and information that can help you get your bearings.

0:49 This is called Previewing.

0:52 Previewing involves surveying or scanning a text in order to create a mental map that can help you read more effectively.

1:00 When you preview, you look for sign-posts by doing the following things:

1:05 Scan for titles, headings, and subheadings

1:09 Skim the first paragraph or introduction

1:13 Skim the last paragraph or summary

1:16 Scan the first sentence after each heading

1:19 Skim the abstract (if provided)

1:22 Make a note of graphic aids such as figures, tables, charts, graphs, and images

1:30 Make a note of typographical aids such as bold-faced or highlighted words and phrases

1:36 Scan any supplemental material at the beginning or end of the text, such as chapter outlines, chapter objectives, discussion questions, or vocabulary lists

1:47 Previewing provides some great advantages:

1:51 First, it helps you evaluate a text in order to decide if it is relevant for your purposes.

1:57 This requires you to think about what your purpose is before you read.

2:00 For instance, if you're doing research on a topic, previewing can help you evaluate if a text provides information you need.

2:08 Second, it helps you read faster by identifying passages that you must read carefully versus those that you can skim or skip.

2:16 Generally, you want to slow down and read more carefully when a passage

2:21 covers a new topic you know very little about;

2:23 contains complicated or technical material;

2:26 is cluttered with essential visual aids like tables, charts, graphs, and images;

2:32 contains a lot of new or difficult vocabulary;

2:35 or requires a lot of visualization or interpretation.

2:40 On the other hand, you may want to skim or skip material when a passage

2:44 is easy to read,

2:46 covers material you already know well,

2:48 or covers material that isn't relevant to your purpose for reading.

2:53 Finally, it helps you read better by helping you identify questions you may have about the text.

2:59 We'll address questioning in another module.

3:03 Previewing is an excellent way to save time and improve your understanding of a text.

3:09 Just like you wouldn't want to wander around aimlessly in an unfamiliar place, you wouldn't want to wander into a text without previewing it!

3:22 Thanks for listening to this instructional video on How to Preview a Text.

3:27 Visit the Excelsior College Online Writing Lab for more support with reading and writing skills.

1.3.1: Activity

1.3.2: Handouts

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1.3.1: Activity

Below, you'll find several questions that help you practice how to preview a text. Each question targets a different part of the text that you should preview. After following the directions and selecting your answer, scroll down to read the feedback and continue to the next question.

Click on the heading.

Familiarity with the human body can help you mak
of illness arise. Your knowledge in this field will h
and procedures and help you understand genetic o
some aspect of his or her body and your knowledg
caregiver.

This chapter begins with an overview of anatomy
covers the characteristics of life and how the bo
terms for body structures and for planes and positi
information covered later in the text. It ends with e

1.1 | Overview of Anator

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Compare and contrast anatomy and physiolo
- Discuss the fundamental relationship betwee

Human **anatomy** is the scientific study of the bo
be observed and analyzed with the assistance of
measured, and weighed. The word "anatomy" co
first studied by observing the exterior of the body a
were allowed to dissect bodies of the dead to augm
in order to observe their physical attributes and thei
anatomy courses, and in pathology labs. In order
techniques have been developed. These techniques
cancerous tumor or a fractured bone.

Like most scientific disciplines, anatomy has areas
the body, those visible without the aid of magnifi
referred to as macroscopic anatomy. In contrast, mi
that can be observed only with the use of a microsc
includes cytology, the study of cells and histology
anatomists have been able to observe smaller and s
to the three-dimensional structures of large molecu





(a)

Figure 1.2 Gross and Microscopic Anatomy
Microscopic anatomy can deal with the same s
cells from the brain. LM × 1600. (credit a: "Write
Regents of University of Michigan Medical Schoo

Anatomists take two general approaches to the stu
the study of the interrelationships of all of the stru
anatomy helps us appreciate the interrelationships
structures work together to serve a particular body
make up a discrete body system—that is, a group
example, a systemic anatomical study of the muscu

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Does the text below contain any section objectives? If so, click on them.

Familiarity with the human body can help you mak
of illness arise. Your knowledge in this field will h
and procedures and help you understand genetic o
some aspect of his or her body and your knowledg
caregiver.

This chapter begins with an overview of anatomy
covers the characteristics of life and how the bo
terms for body structures and for planes and positi
information covered later in the text. It ends with e

1.1 | Overview of Anator

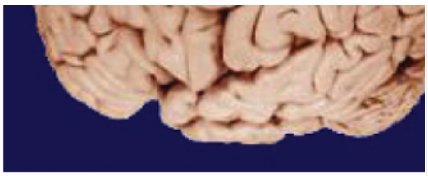
By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Compare and contrast anatomy and physiol
- Discuss the fundamental relationship betwe

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Like most scientific disciplines, anatomy has areas
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(a)

Figure 1.2 Gross and Microscopic Anatomy
Microscopic anatomy can deal with the same s
cells from the brain. LM × 1600. (credit a: "Write
Regents of University of Michigan Medical Schoo

Anatomists take two general approaches to the stu
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structures work together to serve a particular body
make up a discrete body system—that is, a group
example, a systemic anatomical study of the muscu

This content is available for free at https://cnx.org/content/col1

Find and click on the figures in this passage.

Familiarity with the human body can help you mak
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Find and click on all of the bold-faced words in this passage.

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Along with the first paragraph of a passage, are there any other paragraphs you should skim when previewing a text?

- You should skim all the paragraphs to get a sense of what the text says.
- Yes, you should also skim the last paragraph of the text.
- Yes, you should also skim the second paragraph.
- No, you should only skim the first paragraph.

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1.3.2: Handouts


Previewing Thumbnail


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SECTION OVERVIEW

1.4: Annotating

Annotation, which means “to add notes,” is one of the key skills of active reading. By reading with a pen, pencil, or highlighter in hand, the reader can pause to mark important information, reflect on ideas, and monitor his or her understanding. This unit covers how to annotate different types of texts. It also covers how to make sense of visual aids, a common feature of many texts. Click on one of the areas below to learn more.

- Creating an Annotation System: Annotating while you read is the most fundamental technique of active reading. Learn how to annotate a text by watching this video.
- Annotating an Essay or Book: Learn what to look for when annotating an essay or book.
- Annotating a Textbook: Learn how to identify and annotate the key parts of a textbook.
- Annotating a Journal Article: Learn about the different types of academic journal articles and how to annotate them.
- Annotating a Work of Fiction: Learn about how to read and annotate a work of fiction, such as a short story or novel.
- How to Read Visual Aids: Learn how to read visual aids.

1.4.1: Creating an Annotation System

1.4.2: Annotating an Essay or Book

1.4.3: Annotating a Textbook

1.4.4: Annotating a Journal Article

1.4.5: Annotating a Work of Fiction

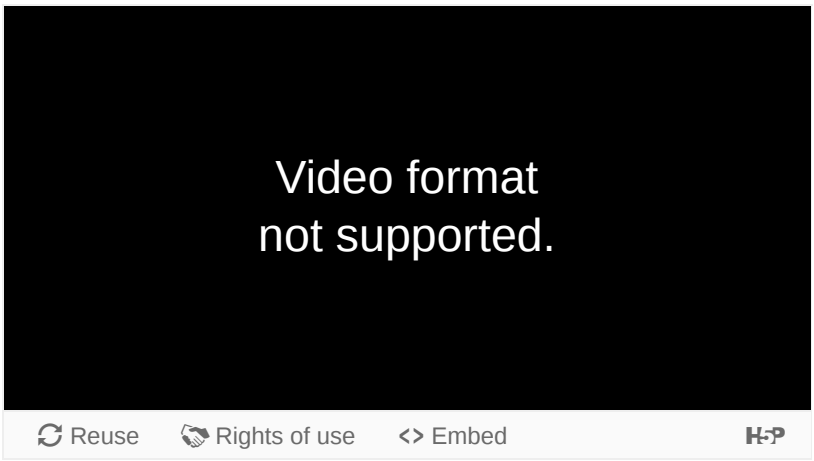
1.4.6: How to Read Visual Aids

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1.4.1: Creating an Annotation System

Creating an Annotation System

Annotating while you read is the most fundamental technique of active reading. Learn how to annotate a text by watching this video.



Video Transcript

0:00 Owl: Welcome to Annotating, an instructional video on reading comprehension brought to you by the Excelsior College Online Writing Lab.

0:21 Hold on there!

0:25 Owl: You can radically improve your understanding of what you read if you write while you read.

0:30 This is called annotating a text.

0:33 To annotate literally means to add notes to a text as you read, either in the margins or in a separate notepad or document.

0:42 This technique is at the core of active reading.

0:46 By reading carefully and pausing to reflect upon, mark up, and add notes to a text as you read, you can greatly improve your understanding of it.

0:58 Owl: It might seem that way.

0:59 But, in fact, annotating can save you a lot of time!

1:03 For instance, annotating while you read can help you avoid having to re-read passages again and again in order to get the meaning.

1:12 By actively engaging with the text the first time, you can improve your odds of understanding it without having to read it again.

1:20 Also, by pausing to reflect as you read, annotating a text helps you figure out if you're understanding what you're reading so that you can re-read or seek additional information to improve your understanding.

1:33 This is called "monitoring comprehension."

1:36 In the long term, this technique will help prevent you from wasting time by reading without understanding.

1:43 Finally, by annotating a text, you can increase your odds of remembering what you've read.

1:49 You also leave behind a set of notes that can help you find key information the next time you need to refer to that text, say when you need to study for an exam or when you want to cite it for a paper you're writing.

2:02 In short, annotating while you read will help you get the most from the time you spend reading.

2:07 So, while you may be able to read faster by reading without annotating, you can actually save time and improve your comprehension by reading carefully and pausing to reflect upon and mark-up the text as you read.

2:24 Owl: Good question!

2:26 The first step is to pick up a pen or pencil so that you can annotate as you read.

2:31 You might also want to have a highlighter handy to mark important passages or words.

2:37 Now, let's talk about a system for how to annotate.

2:41 The simplest way to annotate is to mark keywords, phrases, or passages by highlighting, underlining, bracketing, or placing symbols next to them.

3:02 In addition to this, you should also write notes in the margins.

3:06 These notes are sometimes called "marginalia."

3:10 There are four reasons for adding notes in the margins.

3:14 The first reason is to identify key ideas and help you remember them.

3:19 One way to do this is by writing keywords in the margins next to where you found them in the text.

3:25 Another way to do this is by paraphrasing what you read, which means putting it into your own words and writing it down in the margin.

3:33 A second reason for adding notes in the margins is to comment on what you are reading.

3:39 For instance, maybe you want to register your agreement or disagreement with an idea in the text.

3:44 Or maybe you want to leave a note to remind you to look up something related.

3:50 A third reason for writing notes in the margins is to record questions you have about what you are reading.

3:56 These questions generally fall into two different categories.

4:00 Questions intended to clarify meaning, —

4:02 This has to do with monitoring and improving your understanding of what you have read.

4:07 If you're not sure about something you've read, jot down some questions about it in the margins.

4:12 You might start these questions by asking who, what, why, when, where, or how.

4:21 For example, you might ask, "What is the difference between anabolism and catabolism?"

4:27 Or you might express your question as a statement like, "I don't understand what this means."

4:33 — and questions intended to evaluate what you have read.

4:37 For example, you might ask, "Do I agree with what this is in light of what Smith says?"

4:43 or

4:43 "I don't find this evidence convincing. Is there more data to support this claim?"

4:49 Finally, a fourth reason for writing notes in the margins is to answer any guide questions you may have left for yourself while previewing a text.

4:57 For instance, you may have previously written the question "What are the three conditions for intrinsic motivation?" next to a passage about this subject.

5:07 After reading the passage with this question in mind, you can now jot down your answer to the question: "Autonomy, Mastery, and Relatedness."

5:18 By recording your answers to guide questions in the margins, you can improve your comprehension and memory of what you have read.

5:25 You also leave behind valuable notes for the next time you need to consult the text.

5:35 Owl: In that case, you can record your notes in a separate notepad or document.

5:40 Even if you can mark up a text, you might want to keep up a separate notepad or document anyway.

5:46 The more you write while you read, the better you will understand what you are reading.

5:53 Owl: Most eReaders and word processors come with built-in annotation tools that allow you to underline, highlight, and even leave notes on the text.

6:03 Audiobooks sometimes allow you to leave voice-recorded notes.

6:07 If not, you can always pick up a notepad and jot down notes as you listen.

6:13 I hope you can see why annotating a text while you read is so important.

6:18 To recap, annotating a text helps you:

6:22 avoid having to re-read as often,

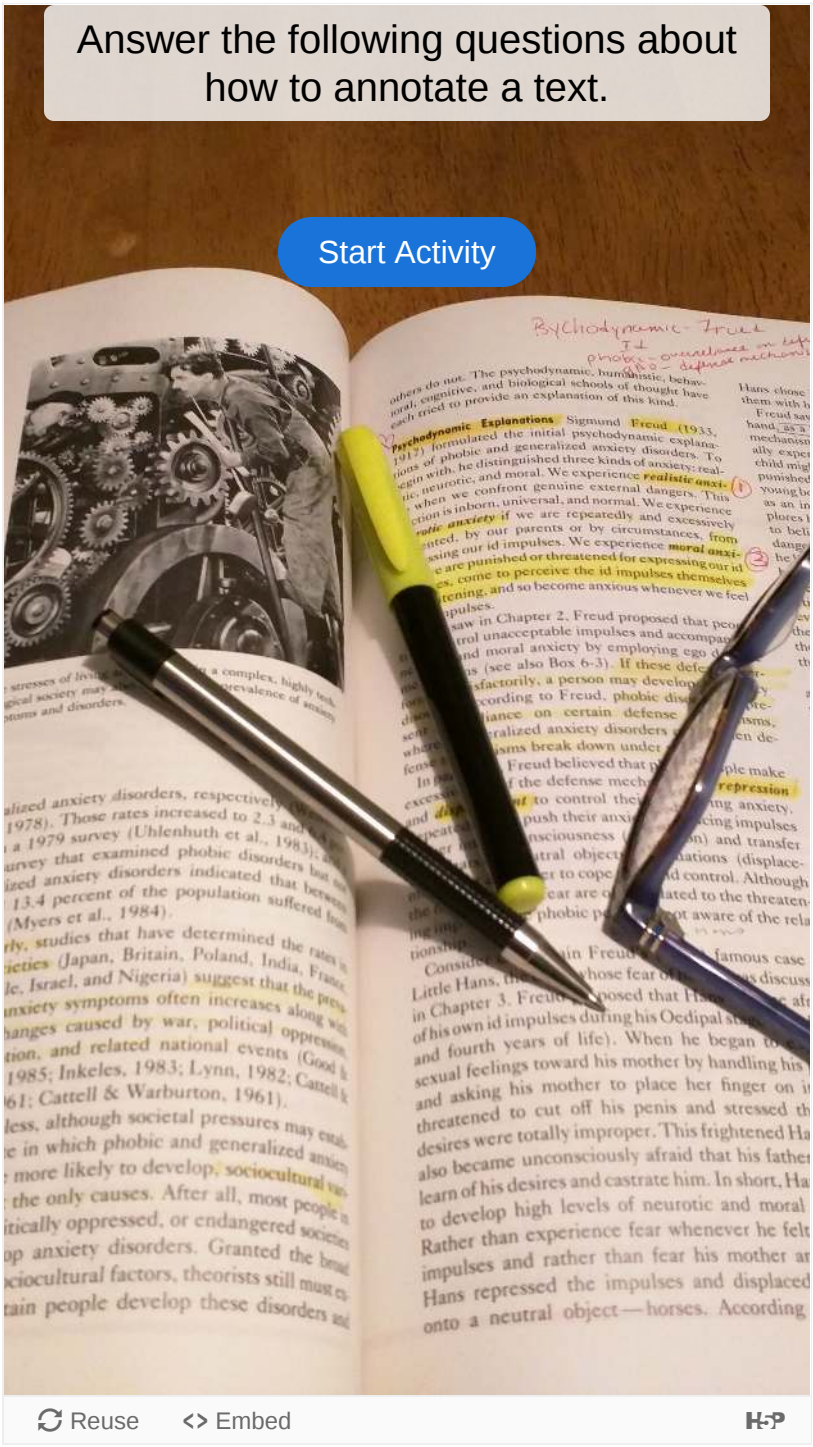
6:25 monitor and improve your comprehension,

6:28 and remember what you've read.

6:33 Thanks for listening to this instructional video on Annotating!

6:38 Visit the Excelsior College Online Writing Lab for more support with reading and writing skills.

Activity



Handouts

Annotating Thumbnail

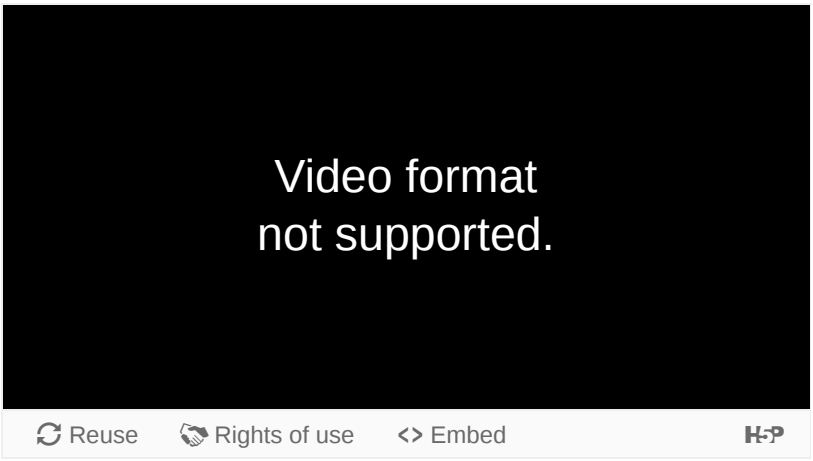
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1.4.2: Annotating an Essay or Book

Annotating an Essay or Book

Learn what to look for when annotating an essay or book.



Video Transcript

0:00 Owl: Welcome to Annotating an Essay or Book, an instructional video on reading comprehension brought to you by the Excelsior College Online Writing Lab.

0:20 Whether you're reading an essay or book for class or just for fun, it can be difficult to understand what the author is trying to say.

0:28 However, if you practice active reading strategies like annotating while you read, you can improve your understanding of the text.

0:36 We'll treat essays and books together in this video because they share a similar purpose and structure.

0:43 Both tend to be thesis-oriented, that is they put forth and support an argument.

0:50 And both do so using a common structure that has an introduction, body, and conclusion.

0:56 Of course, since books have multiple chapters, they have much more space to develop an argument than an essay does.

1:04 You can think of a book as a long essay and chapters as essays within an essay.

1:09 Therefore, while the book as a whole has an introduction, body, and conclusion, so does each chapter.

1:17 In this video, we will cover five tips for what to look for in an essay or book to help you improve your reading comprehension.

1:26 Specifically, we will talk about how to

1:29 find the stated thesis,

1:31 find the implied thesis,

1:33 identify topic sentences,

1:36 identify key supporting details,

1:39 and identify transitional words and phrases.

1:43 By looking for these things as you read, you will improve your understanding of the text and make the most of your time while you read.

1:50 Let's get started!

1:52 The thesis, also called the thesis statement, is the main idea of the text.

1:58 It's sometimes referred to as the author's central argument.

2:02 A thesis consists of a specific topic and a position statement on the topic.

2:08 All of the other ideas in the text support and develop the thesis, so it's really important to identify the thesis as you read.

2:15 There are two kinds of thesis statements: stated thesis and implied thesis.

2:21 Often the author makes his or her thesis explicit by stating it directly in the text.

2:28 This is called a stated thesis.

2:31 A stated thesis might appear in different places in the text.

2:35 Sometimes, a text opens with the thesis by stating it in the introduction or first paragraph.

2:41 This may happen after a hook—an interesting example or anecdote meant to draw the reader's interest.

2:48 Other times, the author might build up to the thesis and state it in the conclusion or last paragraph.

2:54 This approach may be combined with a rhetorical question at the beginning of the essay that serves as a hook to set up the thesis as an answer delivered at the end of the text.

3:05 Once you locate the thesis, be sure to mark it somehow, either by highlighting or underlining it, or by bracketing it or placing a symbol next to it in the margin.

3:15 You might also want to paraphrase it in the margin, which will help you to understand it and remember it.

3:21 Sometimes the thesis is not directly stated in an essay or book.

3:26 This is called an implied thesis.

3:29 In that case, there are three strategies you can use to discover the implied thesis.

3:35 You can…

3:37 add a word or phrase to a sentence in the paragraph that almost states the thesis or main idea,

3:43 identify two key sentences from the paragraph and combine all or parts of them into a single sentence that states the thesis or main idea,

3:52 or summarize important ideas into one sentence that states the thesis or main idea.

4:00 Let's look at an example of a passage with an implied thesis.

4:04 By applying the second strategy we just discussed, we can guess what the thesis is.

4:26 Okay, let's check it out.

4:28 Using this key sentence…

4:30 …and this key sentence

4:32 …we can derive the following implied thesis:

4:35 Cooperative businesses are growing in popularity across the United States, especially among millennials.

4:42 To help you remember, use the margin to write down what you think is the thesis.

4:48 In addition to locating the thesis, you also want to pay attention to topic sentences.

4:53 A topic sentence states the main idea of a paragraph.

4:57 Just like with the thesis, there are several places you might find a topic sentence.

5:02 A topic sentence might come

5:04 at the beginning of a paragraph, followed by supporting details;

5:08 at the end of a paragraph, after the supporting details;

5:11 or in the middle of a paragraph, after some kind of opening hook or example, but before the supporting details.

5:19 Now, here are some clues to help you find the topic sentence:

5:24 look for a title or heading that indicates the topic;

5:28 look for a word, name, or phrase in the paragraph that appears in special print;

5:34 look for a word, name, or phrase that is repeated throughout the paragraph;

5:39 or look for a word, name, or phrase referred to throughout the paragraph by pronouns or other words.

5:47 Once you find the topic sentence, you should note its location by underlining, highlighting, bracketing, or marking it with a symbol.

5:57 Topic sentences are normally supported by supporting details.

6:01 Supporting details are pieces of information that develop the topic sentence.

6:06 This may include:

6:08 facts (such as names, dates, and events),

6:12 figures and statistics,

6:15 quotations or paraphrases,

6:17 summaries,

6:19 and personal experiences.

6:23 Supporting details normally answer the questions who, what, when, where, why, or how.

6:34 When you locate a key supporting detail, make a note of it in the text.

6:39 Here's an example of a paragraph summarizing another study to support its main idea.

6:44 Finally, as you read, it's important to be aware of transitional words and phrases.

6:51 Transitional words and phrases are intentional signposts that the author provides to guide the reader.

6:57 Observing the author's signposts will help you to follow the author's argument and understand it better.

7:03 Transitional words and phrases come in different types.

7:06 They can be used to signal or show…

7:09 Example—such as: for example or for instance

7:15 Time or Sequence—such as: first, second, and so on

7:21 Comparison—such as: similarly or likewise

7:28 Contrast—such as: however or on the other hand

7:34 Concession—such as: admittedly or granted

7:41 Addition—such as: furthermore or in addition

7:47 Cause and effect—such as: as a result or consequently

7:54 Conclusion—such as: therefore or in conclusion

8:00 Or, they can be used to signal or show…

8:03 Summary—such as: in summary or in other words.

8:09 Here's an example of an author using transitional words and phrases to guide the reader through his or her argument.

8:17 Now, once you understand what to look for in an essay or book and how to find it, you can greatly increase your understanding of the text.

8:25 So, remember to look for the thesis (stated or implied), topic sentences, key supporting details, and finally, transitional words and phrases.

8:40 Thanks for listening to this instructional video on Annotating an Essay or Book!

8:46 Visit the Excelsior College Online Writing Lab for more support with reading and writing skills.

Complete these activities to practice annotating an essay or book.

Select the paragraph that most clearly conveys the thesis or main idea of this passage.

Many people hold on to the belie

who believe in reducing waste, some fir

exist to handle certain materials (such as

residents to go through elaborate sorting

location, all of which can seem like extr

increasingly important. According to Ze

"Recycling: The Big Picture," "Every sl

the stamp of its energy-intensive history

emitted in its creation as well as use, an

waterways" (para. 4). Essentially, recyc

energy required to produce new items fr

to accommodate in some areas, and they

(Kaufman, 2009). Because of the reperc

should be universally available and strea

At Oregon State University, the

and using recycling containers to pitch v

(Oregon State University, 2014). Howev

the recycling services on campus, creati

where. The types of bins and services av

for those who live, work, and study on c

example, the residence halls have comm

cartons, and paper, whereas the library l

difference means that, in some campus l

addition, many of the vendors and depa

waxed paper cups, coffee-cup lids, and

solve these problems, Oregon State Uni

includes matching bins across campus t

replacement of everyday items that can

Select the topic sentence of this paragraph.

Streamlined bins will allow staff
system and to use it regularly. If the recy
Memorial Union, those on campus will l
not sure if it is recyclable. The Universit
with such measures on their campus. Th
goals was to make steps toward a “zero
include installing more recycling and co
outreach activities, and eliminating the c
condiment stations near food courts” (U
made trash bins harder to access, allottir
to take to a central location. Such initiati
increases recycling participation on cam

Reuse Embed

Select the topic sentence of this paragraph.

New—and more—bins will requ
recycling for members of the community
taught what can go in each bin and why
if new systems are not accompanied by
mishap occurred in Santa Monica, Calif
plastic and put them into the recycling b
official for the city of Santa Monica, Ca
said that some citizens had unwittingly p
where they had melted and had gummed
avoided, she added, when education is p

Reuse <> Embed

Select the topic sentence of this paragraph.

The new system and education i
from products that are the hardest to dis
This not only limits waste, but also offs
example, the University of Maryland be
more than the old products (University
these new products with an emphasis on
the food services produced less waste, n
Zellar confirmed that one of the best wa
move away from heavily packaged item

Reuse <> Embed

Select the quotation used to support the main idea of this paragraph.

Streamlined bins will allow staff
system and to use it regularly. If the recy
Memorial Union, those on campus will l
not sure if it is recyclable. The Universit
with such measures on their campus. Th
goals was to make steps toward a "zero
include installing more recycling and co
outreach activities, and eliminating the c
condiment stations near food courts" (U
made trash bins harder to access, allottir
to take to a central location. Such initiati
increases recycling participation on cam

Select the fact used to support the main idea of this paragraph.

According to sources cited by Ka

for affecting change in how waste and re

and, thus, have the ability to change den

"[C]ustomers will have to be taught to th

zero-waste philosophy is to prevail, envi

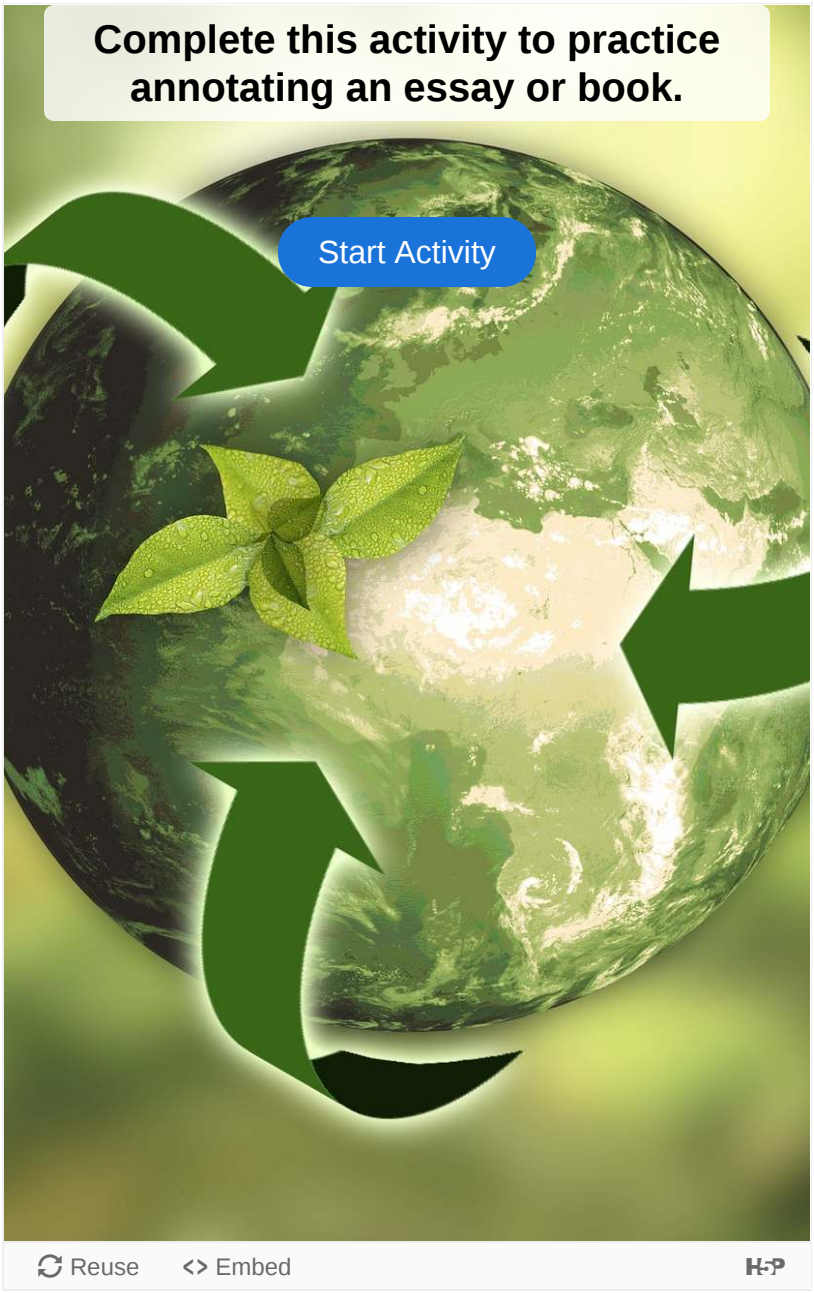
thousands of employees and students, O

institution that can make a positive impa

comprehensive, user-friendly recycling s

contact your administrative officials in F

recycling efforts on your campus!


Complete this activity to practice annotating an essay or book.
Start Activity
Reuse
Embed

Creating Marginalia

- Introduction
- Comment
- Question
- Document Export

Introduction

Complete this activity to practice annotating an essay or book.



Reuse Embed H5P

Handouts

Annotating and Essay or Book Thumbnail

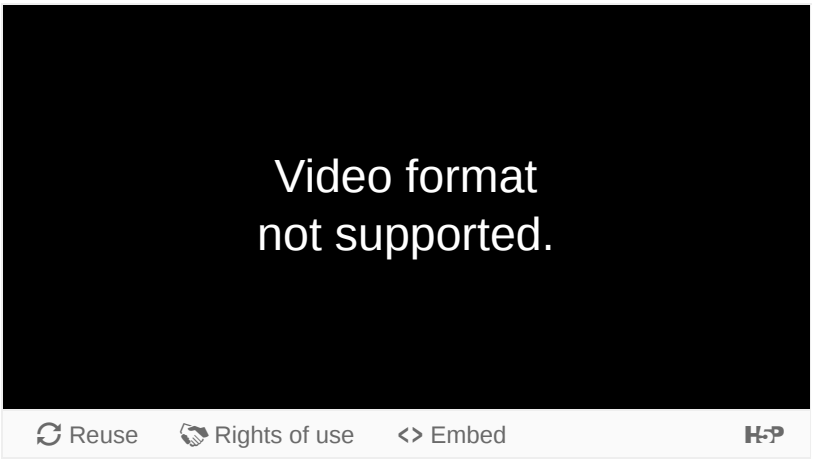
Black and White Thumbnail - Annotating an Essay or Book

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1.4.3: Annotating a Textbook

Annotating a Textbook

Learn how to identify and annotate the key parts of a textbook.



Video Transcript

0:00 Owl: Welcome to Annotating a Textbook, an instructional video on reading comprehension brought to you by the Excelsior College Online Writing Lab.

0:12 So you've been assigned to read a chapter or section in a textbook.

0:16 Most likely, your teacher plans to give a quiz, test, or exam on the material.

0:22 Owl: Well, reading a textbook is easier when you understand how it works.

0:27 You'll be able to find the information you need and remember it when it comes time to study.

0:31 Textbooks are a unique kind of genre with their own specialized organization and goals.

0:37 In general, most textbooks share the following qualities: They

0:41 follow an explicit pattern of organization or structure,

0:45 emphasize facts and evidence,

0:47 rely on references to important research,

0:50 introduce many new terms,

0:52 and provide visual aids.

0:55 Okay. Let’s look at the different elements that make up the structure of a typical chapter in a textbook.

1:01 A typical chapter may contain some or all of the following ten items:

1:06 1. An introduction, abstract, or synopsis that states the purpose of the chapter;

1:12 2. A list of chapter objectives, goals, or learning outcomes;

1:18 3. A chapter outline;

1:20 4. Titles, headings, and subheadings that divide up the chapter;

1:26 5. Key terms that are bold-faced, italicized, or made to stand out in some special way;

1:33 6. Boxes and sidebars to pull out key information;

1:38 7. Visual aids or figures;

1:42 8. A chapter summary or conclusion that reviews the main idea;

1:48 9. A vocabulary list or glossary;

1:52 and

1:53 10. Study questions and activities to help you focus on key ideas and remember them.

1:59 You can improve how well you read a textbook by applying five techniques.

2:04 First, remember to read with a pen, pencil, or highlighter in hand so that you can mark-up important information, such as key facts, terms, and ideas.

2:15 This will help you to remember them better and find them more easily when it comes time to study.

2:20 Also, write questions or comments in the margins as you read and answer any guide questions that you previously placed in the margins.

2:28 By doing so, you will improve your understanding and identify what you need to understand better.

2:34 Textbooks—especially those written for the physical and social sciences—often introduce and evaluate important theories.

2:41 When you come across a new theory, ask yourself the following questions:

2:46 What is it called?

2:48 Who proposed it and when?

2:50 What does it explain and how?

2:52 What evidence supports it?

2:54 Are there counter-theories?

2:56 If so, what are they?

2:59 You can improve your understanding of a theory by summarizing it in your own words.

3:04 You can do this in the margins or in a separate notebook.

3:09 Textbooks also tend to emphasize specialized or technical terms that are important to a field of study or discipline.

3:17 These terms are often singled out in bold-faced or italicized print and frequently accompanied by a definition in a sidebar or glossary.

3:26 Highlight or underline them.

3:28 Key terms can include the names of laws, theories, principles, models, concepts, patterns, systems, stages, processes, structures, parts, and important people in the field.

3:45 A good way to help you remember new vocabulary items such as specialized or technical terms is to make vocabulary flashcards.

3:53 As you read, make a list of all the terms that are new or challenging.

3:57 Then, look up the definition, either in the textbook or in a dictionary.

4:02 Write down the new word or phrase on one side of a notecard.

4:06 Then write the definition on the other side.

4:09 Below that, write down a sentence using the word.

4:12 This will help you understand the word better.

4:14 When it comes time to study, you can challenge yourself by reading the word and guessing at the definition.

4:20 Then check your answer on the back of the flashcard.

4:24 Go here for more help with new vocabulary.

4:27 Another key feature of textbooks is the inclusion of visual aids to convey important information.

4:33 Visual aids can be found within the body of the text or in special boxes, sidebars, and appendices.

4:40 They normally have a title and caption that explain what they are.

4:45 Each visual aid is often referred to as a “table” or “figure” and numbered to make it easier to find.

4:52 Sometimes a textbook will have a special table of contents at the beginning of the text just to list all the numbered tables and figures for the reader’s convenience.

5:01 By paying attention to visual aids, you can learn a lot about the topic that the chapter is covering.

5:06 Make a note of key visual aids that you want to revisit later when it comes time to study or review information.

5:12 If you’re having trouble reading and understanding visual aids, check out this video.

5:19 Finally, after you read make sure to give yourself some time to go over any provided study questions or activities at the end of the chapter.

5:27 This will help you to monitor your understanding of what you’ve read, deepen your understanding, and help you remember it.

5:34 It’s also a good idea to create your own study questions and write them on flashcards to help you study later on.

5:40 Go back to the beginning of the text and review your notes.

5:44 Create study questions about important theories, facts, people, dates, and terms.

5:51 To make studying easier, write up your questions and answers on note cards with questions on the front and answers on the back.

5:58 Use these note cards to help you study.

6:03 When you’re ready to study for an exam, you should:

6:06 Review your notes;

6:08 If provided, review the chapter objectives and outline;

6:12 Review important information, such as theories, facts, names, dates, and terms;

6:19 Review any vocabulary flashcards you created;

6:22 Review your answers to study questions and activities;

6:26 Review any study questions you created.

6:29 Remember to give yourself enough time to study before the exam.

6:33 Don’t wait until the last minute!

6:35 Good luck!

6:39 Owl: Thanks for listening to this instructional video on Annotating a Textbook!

6:44 Visit the Excelsior College Online Writing Lab for more support with reading and writing skills.

Annotating a textbook is easier if you understand its key parts. For each question, identify the correct part by clicking on it.

Find and click on the list of chapter objectives.

After studying this chapter, you will be able to:

- List and describe the functional anatomy of
- Discuss the processes and control of ing absorption, and defecation
- Discuss the roles of the liver, pancreas, and
- Compare and contrast the digestion of the t

The digestive system is continually at work, yet peopl biologic symphony. Consider what happens when yo but in the hours that follow, unless something goes ar system is working. You may be taking a walk or studyi

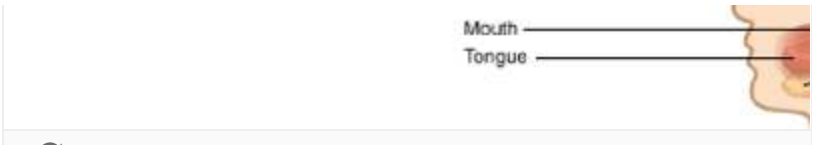
and intestines are busy digesting it and absorbing its vi the body has appropriated all it can use from the apple system perform their specific functions, allowing you structure and functions of these organs, and explores t

23.1 | Overview of the Dig

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify the organs of the alimentary canal from
- Identify the accessory digestive organs and brie
- Describe the four fundamental tissue layers of t
- Contrast the contributions of the enteric and aut
- Explain how the peritoneum anchors the digesti

The function of the digestive system is to break down into the body. Although the small intestine is the wo where most of the released nutrients are absorbed into contribution to this process (Figure 23.2).


Mouth
Tongue

Find and click on the section heading.

Regulatory Mechanisms

Neural and endocrine regulatory mechanisms work to maintain th
and absorption. These regulatory mechanisms, which stimulate dig
are controlled both extrinsically and intrinsically.

Neural Controls

The walls of the alimentary canal contain a variety of sensors
mechanoreceptors, chemoreceptors, and osmoreceptors, which are
stimuli, respectively. For example, these receptors can sense when
whether food particles have been sufficiently broken down, how
food (lipids, carbohydrates, and/or proteins). Stimulation of these r
process of digestion. This may entail sending a message that activat
or it may mean the stimulation of muscles within the alimentary ca
move food along the intestinal tract.

The walls of the entire alimentary canal are embedded with nerve p
other nerve plexuses—either within the same digestive organ or in
of reflexes. Extrinsic nerve plexuses orchestrate long reflexes, wh
and work in response to stimuli from outside the digestive syste
by intrinsic nerve plexuses within the alimentary canal wall. The
earlier as the enteric nervous system. Short reflexes regulate activit
local peristaltic movements and stimulate digestive secretions. For
reflexes that begin with a sensory neuron delivering a signal to t
stimulate cells in the stomach to begin secreting digestive juices
distends the stomach initiates short reflexes that cause cells in th
juices.

Hormonal Controls

A variety of hormones are involved in the digestive process. The r
is secreted in response to the presence of food. Gastrin stimulates
stomach mucosa. Other GI hormones are produced and act upon t
the duodenum include secretin, which stimulates a watery secretion
which stimulates the secretion of pancreatic enzymes and bile fro
gastric inhibitory peptide, which inhibits gastric secretion and slow
secreted by specialized epithelial cells, called endocrinocytes, loca
intestine. These hormones then enter the bloodstream, through whi

23.3 | The Mouth, Pharynx, and

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe the structures of the mouth, including its three acce
- Group the 32 adult teeth according to name, location, and fu
- Describe the process of swallowing, including the roles of th
- Trace the pathway food follows from ingestion into the mou

In this section, you will examine the anatomy and functions of th
mouth, pharynx, and esophagus—as well as three associated acces

The Mouth

The cheeks, tongue, and palate frame the mouth, which is also cal
the mouth are illustrated in Figure 23.7.

At the entrance to the mouth are the lips, or **labia** (singular = labi

mucous membrane in the mouth proper. Lips are very vascular with
They have a huge representation on the cerebral cortex, which pro
lips cover the orbicularis oris muscle, which regulates what come
a midline fold of mucous membrane that attaches the inner surfac

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Find and click on a key word.

The Major Salivary Glands

Outside the oral mucosa are three pairs of major salivary glands, which secr
into the mouth:

- The **submandibular glands**, which are in the floor of the mouth,
submandibular ducts.
- The **sublingual glands**, which lie below the tongue, use the lesser sublin
- The **parotid glands** lie between the skin and the masseter muscle, nea
through the parotid duct, which is located near the second upper molar t

Saliva

Saliva is essentially (95.5 percent) water. The remaining 4.5 percent is a com
growth factors, and waste products. Perhaps the most important ingredien
is the enzyme **salivary amylase**, which initiates the breakdown of carbohy
the mouth to allow all the carbohydrates to break down, but salivary amyl
stomach acids. Bicarbonate and phosphate ions function as chemical buffers,
6.85. Salivary mucus helps lubricate food, facilitating movement in the mo
contains immunoglobulin A, which prevents microbes from penetrating the e
antimicrobial. Saliva also contains epidermal growth factor, which might hav
heal a wound."

Each of the major salivary glands secretes a unique formulation of saliva a
the parotid glands secrete a watery solution that contains salivary amylase. T
those of the parotid glands, as well as mucus-secreting cells. Therefore, sali
contains amylase but in a liquid thickened with mucus. The sublingual glands
the thickest saliva with the least amount of salivary amylase.

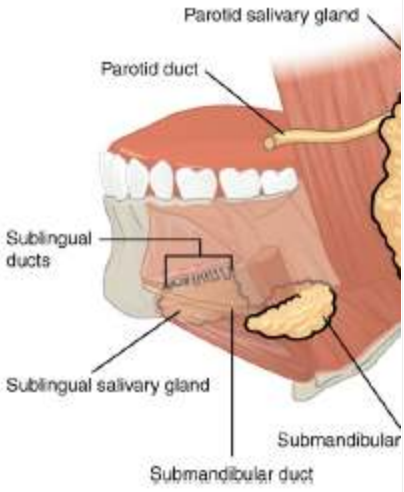


Figure 23.9 Salivary glands The major salivary glands are located out
the mouth through ducts.

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Find and click on the visual aid.

in breathing and speech. The other two subdivisions, the **oroph**
and digestion. The oropharynx begins inferior to the nasophary
23.12). The inferior border of the laryngopharynx connects to
larynx, allowing air to flow into the bronchial tree.

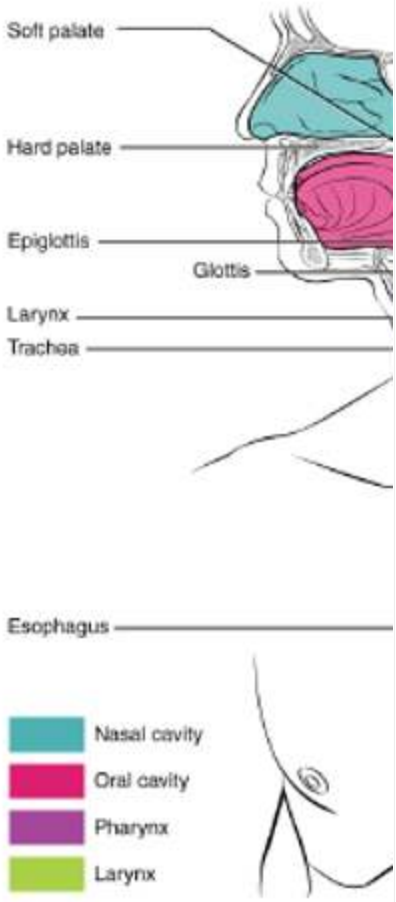


Figure 23.12 Pharynx The pharynx runs from the nostrils

Histologically, the wall of the oropharynx is similar to that of
epithelium that is endowed with mucus-producing glands. Dur
contract, raising and expanding the pharynx to receive the
constrictor muscles of the pharynx contract, forcing the bolus i

Usually during swallowing, the soft palate and uvula rise re
the same time, the larynx is pulled superiorly and the cartilag
covering the glottis (the opening to the larynx); this process ef
food "goes down the wrong way," it goes into the trachea. W
usually forces the food up and out of the trachea, and back into

The Esophagus

The **esophagus** is a muscular tube that connects the pharynx t
located posterior to the trachea, and remains in a collapsed
Figure 23.13, the esophagus runs a mainly straight route throu

esophagus penetrates the diaphragm through an opening called

Passage of Food through the Esophagus

The **upper esophageal sphincter**, which is continuous with t
food from the pharynx into the esophagus. The upper two-th
muscle fibers, with the latter fading out in the bottom third of
in the upper esophagus, propel the bolus of food toward the s
lubricate the esophagus and food. Food passes from the esop
(also called the gastroesophageal or cardiac sphincter). Recal
as valves, closing the tube when the sphincters contract and

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Find and click on the textbox.

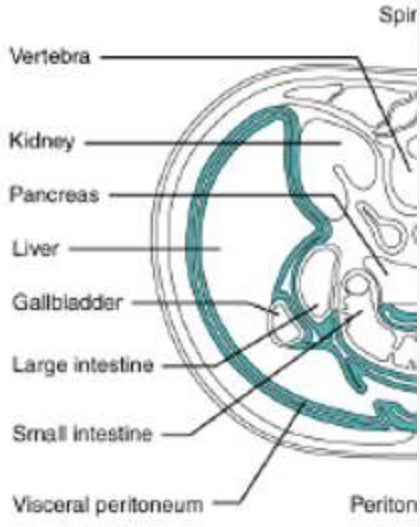


Figure 23.4 The Peritoneum A cross-section of the abd
the peritoneum (darker lines).

Disorders OF THE

Digestive System: Peritonitis

Inflammation of the peritoneum is called peritonitis. C
alimentary canal is breached, allowing the contents of th
an ulcer perforates the stomach wall, gastric juices spil
after a ruptured tubal pregnancy or traumatic injury to th
more severe peritonitis is associated with bacterial infect
inflammatory disease (infection of uterine tubes, usually b
and often results in emergency surgery to correct the und
great grandparents and even your parents were young, t
improvements in anesthesia safety, the advance of critic
mortality rate from this condition. Even so, the mortality

The visceral peritoneum includes multiple large folds that
surface of the body wall. Within these folds are blood vesse
which they are in contact, supplying their adjacent organs
Note that during fetal development, certain digestive structu
duodenum), the pancreas, and portions of the large intestin
completely or partially posterior to the peritoneum. Thus, th

The Five Major

Fold	
Greater omentum	Apron-like structure that lies superficial deposition in people who are overweigh
Falciform ligament	Anchors the liver to the anterior abdomi

Table 23.2

This content is available for free at https://cnx.org/content/col11496/1.7

Reuse <> Embed

Find and click on the review of Chapter 23.1

stomach alimentary canal organ that contrib
before releasing it, as chyme, to the small

sublingual gland one of a pair of major saliv

submandibular gland one of a pair of majo

submucosa layer of dense connective tissu
underlying muscularis

submucosal plexus (plexus of Meissner) ne

sucrase brush border enzyme that breaks dow

tenia coli one of three smooth muscle bands
large intestine except the terminal end

tongue accessory digestive organ of the mouth

transverse colon part of the colon between

upper esophageal sphincter skeletal mus
esophagus

Valsalva's maneuver voluntary contraction
which increases intra-abdominal pressure

villus projection of the mucosa of the small int

voluntary phase initial phase of deglutition,

α-dextrin breakdown product of starch

α-dextrinase brush border enzyme that acts o

CHAPTER REVIEW

23.1 Overview of the Digestive System

The digestive system includes the organs of the
continuous tube that is open to the outside envi
pharynx, esophagus, stomach, small intestine, a
tongue, salivary glands, liver, pancreas, and gall
layers: mucosa, submucosa, muscularis, and se
autonomic nervous system provides extrinsic inn

23.2 Digestive System Processes and F

The digestive system ingests and digests foo
indigestible. The six activities involved in this
absorption, and defecation. These processes are

23.3 The Mouth, Pharynx, and Esophag

In the mouth, the tongue and the teeth begin m
which plays roles in breathing and vocalization
the esophagus inferiorly (for digestion) and to th
soft palate rises to close off the nasopharynx, th
includes an upper esophageal sphincter made of

Reuse <> Embed

Find and click on the vocabulary list.

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includes an upper esophageal sphincter made of

Reuse <> Embed

Find and click on review question #9.

how this structure functions in the initiation of protein digestion. This view of the stomach shows the characteristic rugae. What is the function of these rugae?

5. Watch this animation (http://openstaxcollege.org/l/sintestine) that depicts the structure of the small intestine, and, in particular, the villi. Epithelial cells continue the digestion and absorption of nutrients and transport these nutrients to the lymphatic and circulatory systems. In the small intestine, the products of food digestion are absorbed by different structures in the villi. Which structure absorbs and transports fats?

6. By watching this animation (http://openstaxcollege.org/l/foodgroups) , you will see

REVIEW QUESTIONS

8. Which of these organs is not considered an accessory digestive structure?

a. mouth
b. salivary glands
c. pancreas
d. liver

9. Which of the following organs is supported by a layer of adventitia rather than serosa?

a. esophagus
b. stomach
c. small intestine
d. large intestine

10. Which of the following membranes covers the stomach?

a. falciform ligament
b. mesocolon
c. parietal peritoneum
d. visceral peritoneum

11. Which of these processes occurs in the mouth?

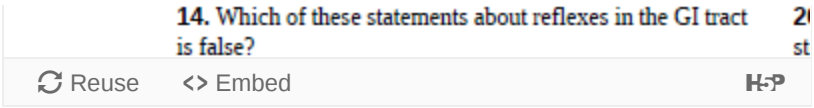
a. ingestion
b. mechanical digestion
c. chemical digestion
d. all of the above

12. Which of these processes occurs throughout most of the alimentary canal?

a. ingestion
b. propulsion
c. segmentation
d. absorption

13. Which of the following stimuli activates sensors in the walls of digestive organs?

a. breakdown products of digestion
b. distension
c. pH of chyme
d. all of the above



Annotating a textbook involves marking up or highlighting key information as you read. Answer these questions to practice this skill.

Select the sentence that summarizes the function of the digestive system.

and intestines are busy digesting it and absorbing its vitamins and other nut
the body has appropriated all it can use from the apple. In short, whether y
system perform their specific functions, allowing you to use the food you
structure and functions of these organs, and explores the mechanics and ch

23.1 | Overview of the Digestive Sy

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify the organs of the alimentary canal from proximal to distal,
- Identify the accessory digestive organs and briefly state their functi
- Describe the four fundamental tissue layers of the alimentary canal
- Contrast the contributions of the enteric and autonomic nervous sys
- Explain how the peritoneum anchors the digestive organs

The function of the digestive system is to break down the foods you eat,
into the body. Although the small intestine is the workhorse of the syst
where most of the released nutrients are absorbed into the blood or lymph,
contribution to this process (Figure 23.2).

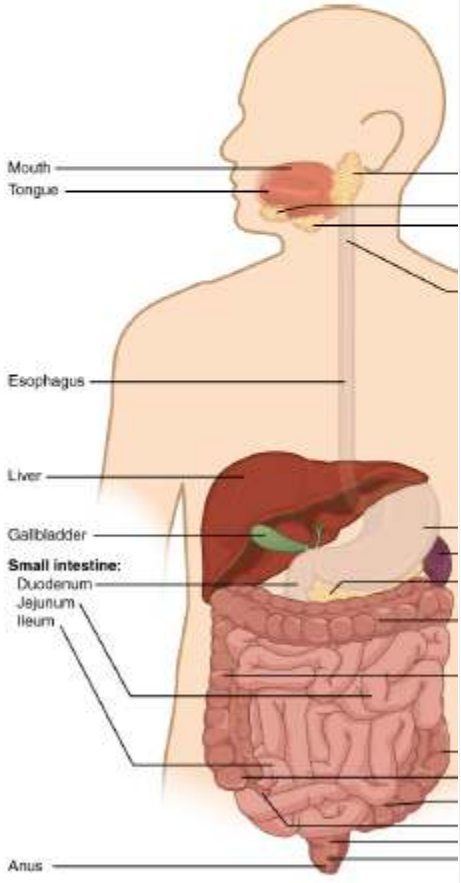


Figure 23.2 Components of the Digestive System All digestive c
process of digestion.



Annotating a textbook involves responding to what you read by writing comments and questions in the margins, copying out important information, and practicing new vocabulary items. Answer these questions to practice these skills.

Responses to Reading

- Comment
- Short-Answer Questions
- Vocabulary
- Document Export

Comment

Read the passage. Write down a question or comment you have about it.



*

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Handouts

Annotating a Textbook Thumbnail

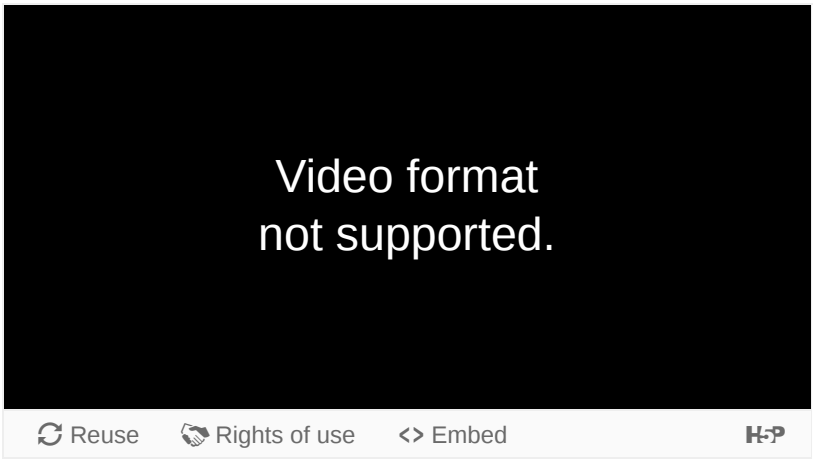
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1.4.4: Annotating a Journal Article

Annotating a Journal Article

Learn about the different types of academic journal articles and how to annotate them.



Video Transcript

0:00 Owl: Welcome to Annotating a Journal Article, an instructional video on reading comprehension brought to you by the Excelsior College Online Writing Lab.

0:12 It's common for people to read articles in newspapers, magazines, and online.

0:18 But journal articles are a different kind of article, and they often can be very challenging to read.

0:24 Journal articles differ from conventional articles in key ways:

0:29 they are published quarterly in print journals and/or online;

0:33 they may or may not require a paid subscription;

0:37 they are peer-reviewed by experts in the field;

0:41 they follow strict guidelines for organization, writing, and citations;

0:47 they are research- and evidence-based;

0:51 and they are written for specialists.

0:55 Knowing how journal articles work can greatly improve your ability to read them.

1:00 Let’s talk about some different kinds of journal articles and how they work.

1:03 Afterwards, I’ll give you some tips on how to read APA-style journal articles, which is one of the most common types of journal articles.

1:12 Journal articles follow different rules or styles based on the subject or discipline they address.

1:18 MLA and CMS style are used by journal articles written for the humanities, which include subjects such as English, History, Modern Languages, and Philosophy.

1:30 MLA- and CMS-style journal articles share some common characteristics.

1:35 They are organized like an essay, with or without headings, and have the following sections: Introduction, Body, Conclusion, Bibliography or Works Cited, and Appendices (if necessary);

1:52 use MLA or CMS style for layout, citation, and documentation;

1:58 value eloquence and good prose;

2:01 make and support arguments;

2:04 and cite primary and secondary sources.

2:09 And then there are the APA-style journal articles, so named because they follow APA guidelines for organization, writing, citation, and documentation.

2:21 Subjects that use APA style include Education, Medicine, the Natural Sciences, and the Social Sciences.

2:29 APA-style journal articles share the following characteristics.

2:34 They have complex organization with defined subheadings,

2:39 use APA style for layout, citation, and documentation.

2:44 value precise language and use of specialized terminology,

2:49 propose and test hypotheses,

2:52 cite relevant research and describe the results of an experiment.

2:57 Just like any other text, annotating while you read a journal article can greatly improve your reading comprehension.

3:05 Since Humanities articles are written similar to an essay, you can refer to the instructional video on Annotating Essays and Books for tips on how to annotate while you read a Humanities-style journal article.

3:18 In this video, I will focus on tips for how to read an APA-style journal article.

3:23 Let’s get started!

3:25 First off, there are two common types of APA-style articles.

3:29 The Literature Review is intended to summarize a body of research on an existing topic.

3:35 It defines the topic, reviews the literature on the topic, and draws conclusions about what the literature reveals and what gaps or questions remain.

3:45 Then there’s the Experimental Report.

3:47 This type of journal article is intended to convey the results of an experiment.

3:52 By and large, experimental reports are the most common type of APA-style journal article.

3:58 They are usually the type of article summarized in the literature reviews.

4:03 Let’s talk about some tips for how to read an APA-style Experimental Report.

4:08 Experimental Reports follow a common structure for APA-style journal articles.

4:14 This structure is broken down into specific sections with explicit headings and subheadings.

4:20 Each section is intended to do something different.

4:22 Understanding the purpose of each section will help you to understand what the article is saying.

4:29 After the title and author or authors, the first section is the abstract.

4:35 The purpose of the abstract is to summarize the main ideas of the article.

4:40 Read it carefully to understand what the article is about.

4:43 If you are doing research, this will help you decide if the article is worth reading for your purposes.

4:49 Highlight or underline keywords, phrases, or sentences.

4:54 If the article provides keywords, these are listed after the abstract.

4:59 These words identify the subjects covered by the article and can help you decide if the article is relevant.

5:05 Next comes the introduction.

5:07 The introduction does several things: it describes the topic, identifies the problem to be solved, provides a review of the relevant literature, defines the theoretical approach, and states the hypothesis.

5:22 Highlight or underline key passages, such as those that identify the topic and hypothesis.

5:29 A section on method comes next.

5:31 This section describes the model used to design the experiment and explains what was done.

5:37 You may want to highlight or underline the name or description of the model used and important facts about the process applied.

5:45 The results section comes next.

5:48 This section is all about describing the results of the experiment.

5:52 The results section frequently contains visual aids called “tables” and “figures” to display the data collected.

5:59 These visual aids are also sometimes listed at the end of the article.

6:04 If you’re having difficulty reading and understanding visual aids, check out this video.

6:11 After the results comes the discussion.

6:14 This section is used to interpret the results, draw conclusions, identify any limitations with the study, and point to future areas of study.

6:24 Be aware that some essays have separate discussion and conclusion sections, with the discussion section interpreting the results and drawing conclusions, and the conclusion section identifying limitations and listing ideas for future areas of study.

6:39 After the text of the article comes the list of references formatted in APA style.

6:45 If provided, appendices come after the references.

6:49 Finally, some articles list their tables and figures after the appendices.

6:54 Here are some other things you should do as you read and annotate the text:

6:59 paraphrase important information in the margins, such as the topic, hypothesis, model, and conclusion;

7:07 respond to ideas in the text by writing down your own thoughts and questions in the margins;

7:12 write down key terms in the margins;

7:16 make a list of new vocabulary items and look up the definitions;

7:21 make a note of articles you may want to read.

7:25 Reading a journal article, especially an APA-style one, can be hard.

7:31 But following these tips for active reading strategies can help you to understand it better.

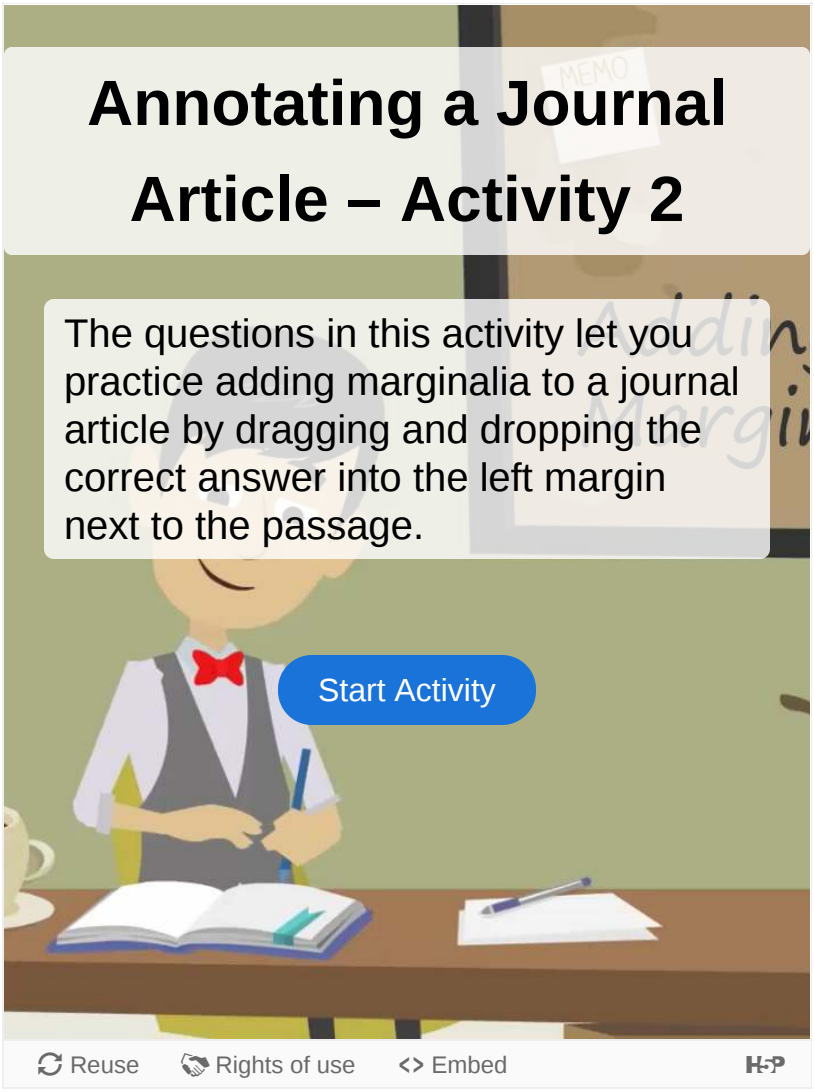
7:37 Owl: Thanks for listening to this instructional video on Annotating a Journal Article!

7:43 Visit the Excelsior College Online Writing Lab for more support with reading and writing skills.



Marginalia are words that you write in the margins of a text as you read. Marginalia can include paraphrases of important ideas, questions or comments, keywords, definitions of new terms, or notes about sources to look up.

The questions in the activity below let you practice adding marginalia to a journal article by dragging and dropping the correct answer into the margin next to the passage.


Annotating a Journal Article – Activity 2
The questions in this activity let you practice adding marginalia to a journal article by dragging and dropping the correct answer into the left margin next to the passage.
Start Activity
Reuse
Rights of use
Embed

Comment

Now, practice writing your own comment in response to the passage.

While a lot has changed in the world since the Industrial Revolution and in the ways students interact with one another and spend their spare time, our education system continues to expose them to materials and methods that have been used for many years and are, for all practical purposes, obsolete. Not only does the reproduction of past practices affect the effectiveness of instruction, it also affects the future of our youth who find it difficult to find school learning relevant. One of the essential qualities needed in our modern world is problem solving—we need our future citizens to be 'solutionaries', as Zoe Weil (2012) so expressively termed, in order to



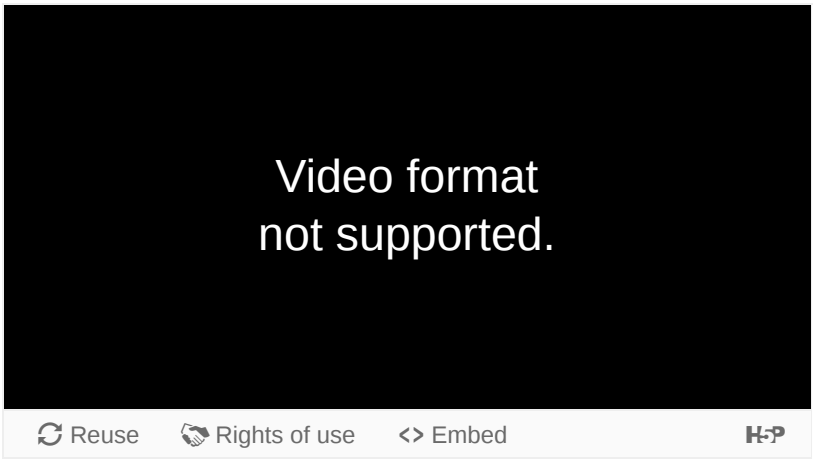


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1.4.5: Annotating a Work of Fiction

Annotating a Work of Fiction

Learn about how to read and annotate a work of fiction, such as a short story or novel.



Video Transcript

0:00 Owl: Welcome to Annotating a Work of Fiction, an instructional video on reading comprehension brought to you by the Excelsior College Online Writing Lab.

0:15 Reading a work of fiction, such as a short story, play, or novel, can be easier if you know what to look for and annotate while you read.

0:24 When reading a work of fiction, you should look for several key elements.

0:29 First, make a note of the major characters.

0:32 Many times there is a main character, or protagonist, who is the focus of the story.

0:39 The protagonist may be a hero or anti-hero, someone who is flawed but still fulfills the role of the hero.

0:47 There may also be an antagonist, someone who is opposed to the main character.

0:53 Every story has a setting, a place and time where the story unfolds.

0:59 The setting may be historical or invented.

1:03 Every story also has a plot.

1:06 The plot is the action that unfolds throughout the story.

1:09 Traditionally, a story plot centers around a conflict and a resolution.

1:15 A common plot formula has five stages.

1:18 It begins with an exposition that introduces the characters, setting, and events leading up to the story.

1:25 It then goes through a series of events known as the rising action during which conflict escalates.

1:33 This leads to a climax that marks a turning point for the main character or characters.

1:38 Afterwards comes the period of falling action during which conflicts are resolved.

1:45 Finally, the plot ends with a resolution that concludes the story.

1:51 As stories, works of fiction have a narrator who tells the story from a particular point of view.

1:57 There are different types of point of view.

2:00 For instance, a story with first-person point of view is told by a particular character and uses the pronoun “I” or “we” to tell the story.

2:10 A story with second-person point of view features the reader as the main character and uses the pronoun “you.”

2:16 While less common, this point of view is featured in choose-your-own-adventure books.

2:22 Finally, a story with third-person point of view is told by a character or entity who has privileged knowledge of the main character; this narrator uses the pronouns “he,” “she,” or “they” to tell the story.

2:37 The third-person narrator is sometimes called the omniscient narrator because of its privileged knowledge of events and characters’ thoughts.

2:47 Every narrator also has a particular tone.

2:50 For instance, Jonathan Swift’s Gulliver’s Travels is told by a narrator with a humorous and satirical tone.

2:58 On the other hand, the narrator in George Orwell’s 1984 has a serious and even tragic tone.

3:05 The narrator’s tone helps establish the feeling and meaning of the story.

3:10 Finally, every story has one or more themes that it develops.

3:15 A theme is a major idea expressed by a story.

3:19 For instance, the Myth of Sisyphus conveys the theme that human endeavor is ultimately futile, whereas Takikiji Kobayashi’s “The Cannery Boat” emphasizes the theme of working-class unity leading to successful resistance to oppression.

3:36 Look for these elements as you read and identify them with a highlight, underline, or margin note.

3:43 Let’s try this with the short story “The Story of an Hour” by Kate Chopin.

3:49 Write the main characters in the margin:

3:52 Louise Mallard

3:53 Brently Mallard, husband

3:56 Josephine, sister

3:59 Richards, friend of Brently

4:02 Describe the setting:

4:04 Late nineteenth century at the Mallard residence

4:08 Define the point of view:

4:09 Third-person omniscient

4:12 ...And the tone:

4:13 Ironic (characters misinterpret Louise’s behavior)

4:18 Finally, list the key themes:

4:21 freedom,

4:22 selfhood,

4:23 self-fulfillment,

4:25 and the meaning of love

4:29 A good way to keep track of the major elements of a story is to construct a story map either during or after you read.

4:36 A story map will help you identify the major elements of a story and remember them for later, say when it comes time to write about the story or take a quiz.

4:45 Click here to watch a video about how to make a story map.

4:50 Following these simple steps will help you improve your ability to read and understand works of fiction like short stories, plays, and novels.

5:00 If you need help understanding common literary devices found in works of fiction, such as metaphors and symbols, you may also want to take a look at our instructional video on Understanding Figurative Language.

5:15 Thanks for listening to this instructional video on Annotating a Work of Fiction!

5:21 Visit the Excelsior College Online Writing Lab for more support with reading and writing skills.



Handouts


Annotating a Work of Fiction Thumbnail

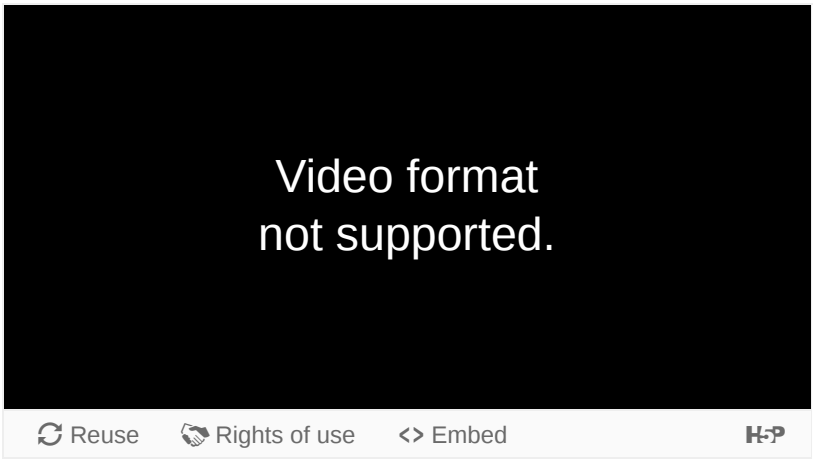

Black and White Thumbnail Annotating a Work of Fiction

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1.4.6: How to Read Visual Aids

How to Read Visual Aids

Learn how to read visual aids.



Video Transcript

0:00 Owl: Welcome to How to Read Visual Aids, an instructional video on reading comprehension brought to you by the Excelsior College Online Writing Lab.

0:19 Are you having trouble understanding visual aids?

0:22 Well, you're not alone!

0:24 Don't fret.

0:25 Let's talk about what visual aids are and how to read them.

0:30 Visual aids are images or graphics used to display information.

0:35 Visual aids can be found in just about every kind of print and electronic media.

0:40 They can appear within the body of the text, in boxes or sidebars, or in appendices.

0:46 Each visual aid has a title and caption with a brief explanation.

0:51 They are often referred to as "tables" or "figures" and numbered to keep track of them.

0:58 There are several types of common visual aids.

1:01 They are tables, graphs, charts, diagrams, maps, pictures, and photographs.

1:14 Let's take a closer look at each one of these to see how they work.

1:18 Tables are text-based graphics that display information using words and numbers arranged in columns and rows.

1:25 For example, in this table, the first column lists bone classifications, while the first row looks at just one type of bone classification—long bones.

1:37 Graphs display information on a grid using an x/y axis.

1:42 There are different types of graphs, such as line graphs and bar graphs.

1:46 Here's an example of a line graph.

1:49 The x-axis is the horizontal axis.

1:52 In this case it measures age in years.

1:55 The y-axis is the vertical axis.

1:58 In this case it measures bone mass in grams.

2:01 By following the two lines, you can find out the bone mass for males and females at different ages.

2:07 For instance, the average bone mass of a 30-year-old male is 1500 grams, whereas the average bone mass of a 30-year-old female is just under 1250 grams.

2:20 Charts use shapes to convey information, such as percentages, timelines or processes.

2:27 There are different types of charts, such as pie charts and flow charts.

2:31 Here's an example of a pie chart.

2:33 This pie chart shows the different types of video game players by age group, broken down by percentage.

2:39 For instance, the 'Under 18 Years' group is only 27%, while the '18-35 Years' group is 29%.

2:49 Diagrams are schematic drawings that show how something works, such as a physical structure, a process, or even a concept.

2:58 For instance, this diagram shows the structure of spongy bone.

3:03 Maps are used to describe a territory or identify a location.

3:09 There are different kinds of pictures that can be used as visual aids, such as political cartoons and drawings of people, places, things, and events.

3:19 Here's an example of a British eighteenth-century political cartoon by James Gillray that you might find in a history textbook.

3:26 Gillray satirizes the decline in manners brought about by the French Revolution.

3:31 The cartoon depicts a deposed aristocratic bowing humbly and saying, "I am your very humble servant," while the revolutionary rudely replies, "Kiss my butt."

3:44 Finally, photographs are also used as visual aids to convey information about people, places, things, and events.

3:52 The types and uses of photos can vary greatly because of the different types of devices used to take them, such as cameras, telescopes, microscopes, and even MRI machines.

4:04 Here's an example of a micrograph of cells and tissue in the human body.

4:08 The different parts are labeled for clarity.

4:12 I hope I've given you a better sense of what visual aids are and how they work.

4:16 By understanding visual aids, you can greatly improve your comprehension of the many different kinds of texts that use them.

4:24 Thanks for listening to this instructional video on How to Read Visual Aids!

4:29 Visit the Excelsior College Online Writing Lab for more support with reading and writing skills.



Handouts

How to Read Visual Aids Thumbnail

Black and White Thumbnail How to Read Visual Aids

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1.5: How to Remember More of What You Read (Thomas Frank)



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1.6: Composition as a Write of Passage

Composition as a Write of Passage

Nathalie Singh-Corcoran

Welcome to English 101, a course that is designed to introduce you to college-level reading and writing. This intensive class emphasizes composing–the entire process—from invention to revising for focus, development, organization, active style, and voice.

Most colleges and universities require first-year composition (hereafter FYC).

The overarching goal of FYC is to familiarize you with academic discourse (i.e. college-level reading and writing) so that you can apply what you learn in future writing situations. While the goal is sound, you might be feeling a disconnect between the writing you are doing in FYC and the writing you believe you will do in your major and career. I remember feeling that same disconnect when I was a freshman at the University of Arizona. In my first few weeks of English 101, I was ambivalent about what I was learning. I wasn't sure of the purpose of assignments like the personal narrative or the rhetorical analysis, because I believed I would never write those two papers again. If I were never going to have to write papers like that again, why did I have to do them in the first place?

Now, almost twenty years later, I teach FYC courses at West Virginia University, and I direct the writing center. In the first few weeks of the semester, I see the same look of uncertainty on my students' faces, and I hear students in other FYC courses voicing their frustrations in the writing center. They know that the writing that they do in FYC is very different from the writing that they will do (or are already doing) in biology, forestry, marketing, finance, or even writing careers. Many also believe that writing will not be a part of their academic or professional lives. Recently, I heard a young man at the writing center say, "I'll be so glad when my [English 102] class is over because then, I won't have to write anymore." However, this person was mistaken; in reality, after he passes the FYC requirement, his writing life will not be over. Other courses will require written communication as will most professions.

Given that you will continue writing in your academic and professional lives, the questions that you have about the relevance of FYC are valid. There is even some debate among compositionists (those who study and teach composition courses) about the relevancy of FYC. However, given the research on FYC, the syllabi and assignment sheets that I've gathered, studies from other disciplines I have read, the anecdotal evidence from students that I have collected, and my own experience as a former FYC student and a current FYC teacher, I can tell you the positive effects of the university writing requirement are far-reaching.

While the writing tasks in one's chosen major or even in the world of work may not resemble FYC assignments, a thoughtfully crafted FYC course does prepare you for *college-level reading and writing* and for the critical reading and writing that you will do every day in your career after college. As I reflect on my FYC experience, I believe that the things I learned as a student laid the groundwork for my future writing life. The individual essays—the personal narrative, the rhetorical analysis, the argumentative research paper, etc.—helped me understand

- how I could use writing to think through my newly forming ideas;
- how a piece of writing always has an audience;
- how to locate, evaluate, and incorporate sources;
- and how important it is to get meaningful feedback so that I could produce better writing *and* become a better writer.

It did, however, take me a long time to come to the conclusion that FYC had value beyond filling needed college credit.

Does Knowledge Transfer?

I used to be of the opinion that English 101 and 102 was a waste of time to students in the engineering discipline. —Godwin Erekaife

Godwin Erekaife, a chemical engineering student who graduated in May 2010, is not alone in his early beliefs about FYC. His opinion about the requirement stemmed from his uncertainty about its practical application and his desire to reserve credit hours for his chosen field: engineering. Godwin's uncertainty is understandable. He wanted broad preparation for chemical engineering and to know how FYC would help him later on. His questions about FYC applicability speak to something called *knowledge transfer*: the degree to which we can use newly learned skills and abilities and apply them in other contexts. In short, Godwin didn't believe that what he learned in FYC would positively impact his engineering coursework.

Godwin's initial thoughts resonate with others. In her recent study—"Understanding Transfer From FYC: Preliminary Results from a Longitudinal Study"—Elizabeth Wardle discovered that after fulfilling their FYC requirements, her students didn't immediately see connections between FYC and other courses. Wardle also found that while they saw some value in what they learned—"new textual features (new ways of organizing material), how to manage large research projects (including use of peer review and planning, how to read and analyze research articles; and how to conduct serious, in-depth academic research" (72)—her students employed few of these new abilities in their first two years of college. In a similar study, "Disciplinarity and Transfer: Students' Perceptions of Learning to Write," Linda Bergmann and Janet Zepernick found that students at their schools saw FYC as a "distraction from the important work of professional socialization that occurs in the 'content area' courses" (138). In essence, their students, like Godwin (and maybe even like you), were eager to enter their fields of study and learn the discourses (ways of thinking, speaking, writing, interpreting, and generally making knowledge in a community) of those fields and would have preferred entering those discourse communities earlier rather than take FYC.

However, both studies also suggest that FYC can be a powerful tool in helping us all learn new discourses. Wardle found that people developed a "meta-awareness about writing, language, and rhetorical strategies" (82) when they took FYC. It helped them "think about writing in the university" (82), how it works, why it works differently in different contexts, and how to use it. Similarly, Bergmann and Zepernick's findings suggest that FYC is a requirement that can teach you "*how to learn to write*" (142). Bergmann and Zepernick provide a really useful metaphor to help you think through both the idea of *meta-awareness* and *learning how to learn to write*. They ask you to consider,

> [The] specific skills athletes learn in one sport (such as how to dribble a basketball) may not be directly transferable to another sport (such as soccer), but what athletes are able to transfer from one sport to another is what they know about how to learn a new sport. Everything about getting one's head into the game is transferable, as are training habits, onfield attitudes, and a generally competitive outlook on the whole procedure. 142

If you think about the FYC requirement in terms of the above sports metaphor, then each discreet writing assignment does not transfer to other courses (just as dribbling a basketball down the court will not help us learn how to dribble a soccer ball downfield). You may write a personal narrative in a FYC course, but you will probably never write another one in any other course. Because of this reality, you might be tempted to think that the FYC requirement is, a waste of time. However, if you think about the course as a whole or the totality of our FYC writing experiences, you can begin to see how FYC is designed to help writers develop critical tools that they can apply to any writing situation (just like learning one sport can help us understand how to learn other sports).

Learning How to Learn to Write: The Purpose and Goals of FYC

As I began to write reports of a more technical nature, I realized the skills I acquired in my 101 and 102 classes could only serve to my advantage in areas of research, organization, and even citations. —Godwin Erekaife

Godwin's perspective changed from 101 and 102 as a waste of time to an experience that gave him an advantage because he developed a meta-awareness of writing. This awareness could not have occurred if his FYC course did not have well-articulated goals that were applicable to wider writing situations, that is, applicable to writing assignments or projects outside of FYC. At West Virginia University, all FYC share common goals. These goals come from the *Council of Writing Program Administrator's, Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition* (hereafter the "Outcomes Statement")–a document that paints writing in a broad context. The authors of the "Outcomes Statement" wanted to identify the "knowledge and common skills" that characterized FYC (1). In addition, the authors wanted the statement to emphasize that FYC was a jumping-off point for college writing, and that "learning to write is a lifelong process" (1). Many FYC programs at colleges and universities across the country share these same goals. According to the "Outcomes Statement" by the end of FYC, writers should have an awareness of

- Rhetorical Knowledge
- Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing
- Process
- Conventions
- Composing in Electronic Environments

Each assignment—be it a rhetorical analysis, an argumentative research paper, an interview essay, a personal narrative, etc—is designed to get at the above goals. Below, I include a fairly standard assignment that I've used in my English 101 class. We can use it to turn a critical eye toward the course and examine how such an assignment touches on the WPA goals.

Essay I: Analyzing Arguments

Overview of Essay

We have read and analyzed essays pertaining to the university community (e.g. articles about the value of a university education, students as consumers, and the effects of binge drinking). We have examined these written texts in terms of their purposes, their audiences, their persuasive strategies, and their effectiveness. Your task for this first major essay is to find an article that addresses the issue you have chosen to focus on this semester, and analyze the strategies the author uses in order to argue/persuade and appeal to her/his audience. You will also need to speak to the effectiveness of the article: In your opinion do you think the article is a successful piece of persuasion? You will need to guide your readers (your peers and your professor) through your analysis so that they too recognize the persuasive strategies the writer has used.

- As you brainstorm for this essay, look back at your notes. Recall the key questions from pp. 42–3 of *Everything's an Argument* like, Who is the audience for this argument? How does the audience connect with its audience? What shape does the argument take? How are the arguments presented or arranged? What media does the argument use? Take a look at the full list of questions, and answer as many as you can. I'm not expecting that your paper address all of them, but use questions that are generative—that is, the questions that inspire fruitful, interesting, and complex responses.
- Think about the conversations that we've had in class. We've identified arguments of the heart, arguments based on character, on value, and on logic. Where do you see these arguments in the text you've chosen? Consider how they work in the text to inform, to move the audience to action, to think differently, to consider other perspectives, etc.
- Remember, you are also creating an argument to persuade your reader to accept your point of view. Pay attention to your own persuasive strategies.

Assessment Criteria

Your papers will be assessed based on the following:

- How well you provide context for your readers (peers and professors). We will not have read the article you are analyzing, so you will need to provide a vivid and descriptive summary.
- How clearly and effectively you make your argument. Remember, you too are creating an argument to persuade your reader to accept your point of view. Pay attention to your own rhetorical choices.
- How thoughtfully you have analyzed the choices and strategies the author uses to argue/persuade her or his audience.
- How thoroughly you have provided your readers with relevant and specific examples/details.
- How cohesively and coherently your essay flows. Is it choppy or repetitive?
- How free your paper is of grammatical/punctuation/spelling errors.

Requirements and Due Dates

- Your paper should be between 5 and 6 pages (double-spaced and typed, 12 pt. font).
- You will need to include a works cited page using MLA format.
- See the syllabus for rough and final draft due dates.

My "Analyzing Arguments Assignment" makes both explicit and implicit nods to the "Outcomes Statement." For example, the assignment asks writers to exercise their rhetorical knowledge. According to the "Outcomes Statement," *rhetorical knowledge* consists of an awareness of purpose, audience, rhetorical situation (a concept that refers to: the speaker/writer, audience, the necessity to speak/write, the occasion for speaking/writing, what has already been said on the subject, and the general context for speaking/writing), and an understanding of genre conventions (what kind of text—written, verbal, visual—is appropriate for a given rhetorical situation).

The underlined portion in the first paragraph identifies the purpose of the assignment and asks that writers be mindful of their own audiences (professor and peers) as they compose their essays:

> Your task for this first major essay is to find an article that addresses the issue you have chosen to focus on this semester and **analyze the strategies the author uses in order to argue/persuade and appeal to her/his audience**. You will also need to speak to the effectiveness of the article: **In your opinion, do you think the article is a successful piece of persuasion?** You will need to guide your readers (your peers and your professor) through your analysis so that they too recognize the persuasive strategies the writer has used.

The assignment also asks writers to pay attention to an author's rhetorical situation: who he/she is writing to, the degree to which he/she is attentive to audience needs and concerns, what compelled him/her to write, why is there a need to write, and what has

already been written on the subject.

Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing is the degree to which we understand and use writing and reading as modes for thinking through ideas, for learning, for synthesizing material, and for conveying information. When writers respond to the prompt, they also exercise their *critical thinking, reading, and writing* skills. I ask my students to examine their chosen text and ask probing questions of them. I try prompting them to engage their critical thinking skills at several points:

> Think about the conversations that we've had in class. We've identified arguments of the heart, arguments based on character, on value, and on logic. Where do you see these arguments in the text you've chosen? Consider how they work in the text to inform, to move the audience to action, to think differently, to consider other perspectives, etc.

The above are examples of heuristics: questions posed to help writers think more deeply about the articles they are analyzing.

There are other goals that are more implicit in the assignment. For instance, I require at least two complete drafts of an essay (rough and final). The drafts are one way that I build writing as a *Process* into each assignment. The "Outcomes Statement" emphasizes that writing is recursive, that good writing requires multiple drafts, that we benefit from feedback, and that it is also useful to give feedback to others. I want my students to get feedback from each other and also other people such as the WVU Writing Center peer tutors, so that when they do hand in their final drafts, their papers represent their best effort. In the assignment, I also ask that writers follow a particular format (MLA) and that the paper be "error-free," a nod to *Knowledge of Conventions*. The only goal that isn't immediately apparent is *Technology*, unless we can count that the paper be double-spaced and typed (12 pt font). While *Technology* isn't obvious in the assignment, in my classes we make ample use of message boards, email, and Google Docs as we compose. For example, students share and respond to drafts using Microsoft Word's Track Changes feature, Blackboard, and/or Google Docs.

Even though I've identified the goals for FYC and discussed those goals in relation to an assignment, it might not yet be clear how I can claim that the course teaches us how to learn to write. To further illustrate my point, it might be useful to return to Godwin and his experience. Above, he states that FYC *served to his advantage* later in his academic career. He went on to tell me that in a senior-level, chemical engineering course, he and his classmates "were required to design an ethanol plant and write up a description of [their] model" (Erekiafe). When it came time to write up their plans and their research, they had to take into account their audience and the audience's needs, concerns, and expectations. Godwin identified the professor as the primary audience because the prof was evaluating the collaborative project, but there was a secondary audience as well: chemical engineers. Because Godwin was writing a formal plan, his assignment had to conform to conventions specific to the chemical engineering profession. Godwin was also composing his ethanol plant plan with others. They composed their pieces separately but then had to find ways to bring their individual sections together. According to Godwin, this portion of the project required "drafting and redrafting on multiple occasions."

Learning How to Learn to Write: Outside of FYC

Because of his experience with assignments like the one I shared earlier, Godwin (and his co-authors) had the tools to identify how to write his ethanol plant plan. He understood the things he needed to pay attention to—purpose, audience, and process—in order to successfully write his plan. But Godwin's experience is not unique.

In my Psychology 202 Research Methods class, our last major assignment for the semester was a research proposal. We were asked to pick a topic of interest, develop a research question, and create a hypothetical experience . . . Developing a research question and the experiment required a lot of critical thinking. We had to do research on a broad topic . . . and then think of an original experiment based on the research. This meant we had to have an understanding of the way a successful experiment was done and be creative enough to do something no one else had thought of. —Amanda King

Amanda, a Psychology major slated to graduate in May 2011, talks about an assignment that all Psych majors eventually complete. In her Psych 202 class, she had to identify an appropriate research question, seek out relevant research material, describe a feasible mock experiment, and present her information in a way that was appropriate in her discipline. She asserts that she employed her critical thinking skills—skills that are very discipline-specific. She was practicing discipline-specific problem-solving. According to John Bean, a professor of English, Writing Program Administrator at Seattle University, and author of a resource book on the importance of writing across the disciplines, critical-thinking is "discipline-specific since each discipline poses its own kinds of problems and conducts inquiries, uses data, and makes arguments in its own characteristic fashion" (3). However, he goes on to say that critical thinking is "also generic across disciplines" (4) because all critical thinking involves identifying or exploring a problem, challenge, or question and formulating a response. That response might come in the form of concrete answers or even new questions that need to be asked.

Amanda obtained early experiences in critical thinking when she took FYC and composed essays like the "Argument Analysis." FYC at WVU also includes a persuasive research paper, an essay that required her to identify a research question on a topic of her choosing and to convince her audience to accept her answer/response to that question. Assignments like these are early training, designed to teach writers critical thinking, reading, and writing skills: an understanding of genre conventions and research skills.

Learning How to Learn to Write: The World of Work

When I first began my job, I had a hard time adapting the way I wrote to the tone of the business. I was used to writing 20-page papers for school. —Lauren O'Connor

I make a claim very early in this essay that FYC's efficacy extends into the world of work. However, as Lauren O'Connor points out above, school writing is very different from workplace writing. After Lauren graduated from WVU in May 2008, she took a position as a Global Marketing Communications Manager for Hewlett-Packard (HP). Lauren's job required that she write all the time: emails to her co-workers, memos regarding deliverables, press releases, and corporate announcements for new product launches. She didn't immediately know how to compose these documents, so she had to learn the way the HP community spoke and wrote. She "researched and read hundreds of marketing materials, white papers [reports that offer solutions to business problems], and web pages," before she could begin drafting any of these documents (O'Connor).

She also didn't have anyone guiding her as she was learning the discourse of HP. At the university, you are fortunate to have instructors, peers, and writing center tutors to coach you on how to compose FYC essays and discipline-specific texts. Lauren was on her own. However, because she had been in the habit of writing at the university, had so much experience learning how to write in school, and because of the coaches who modeled good writing for her, she knew what she needed to do when she got to HP—get her hands on as many texts as she could in order to learn the various genres—white papers, memos, web pages, press releases—that she would eventually have a hand in authoring.

Lauren also found that she never authored anything alone (aside from emails or memos). She collaborated on a team where each member would draft sections or portions of a text, circulate drafts among the other team members, comment on drafts, re-draft, and re-circulate. Depending on the size or impact of the project, the process could take weeks (O'Connor). While you might not yet enjoy or fully appreciate the writing process (brainstorming, drafting, receiving feedback, and re-drafting) in your FYC class, Lauren shows you that process extends beyond your college years.

Conclusion

So far, I have spent a lot of time talking about how FYC goals have wide applicability and how they are designed to get you to think about writing in a broader sense—what writing looks like across varying contexts. I have not, however, discussed, to any large extent, the impact of technology on writing in college or in the world of work. Perhaps that's because technology is so embedded in composing, it seems invisible. Few writers draft using anything but Microsoft Word anymore.

Writers also make a habit of emailing drafts to one another. I use the comment feature in Microsoft Word in order to give my students feedback and I encourage them to do the same when they give feedback to each other. Writers in FYC also don't just draft traditional essays anymore—even though all of the examples that I include are more traditional. Your FYC courses might require that you compose blogs, audio essays, or digital stories in lieu of the more traditional texts. I believe the initial goals that I discuss still apply to these texts, but it will be interesting to see how they influence how you learn how to write.

Given what you have learned thus far from Lauren, Amanda, and Godwin—that you will indeed write beyond your FYC courses, that writing becomes increasingly specialized (within our majors and within our workplaces)—you should see how the fundamentals of FYC apply to most writing situations. The more you write and the more aware you are of how, why, when, and where you use writing, the better you will be at writing. It pays to be a good writer. The National Commission on Writing for America's Families, Schools, and Colleges (NCWAFSC) calls writing a "threshold skill [. . .] a ticket to professional opportunity" (qtd in National Writing Project Staff: Web). Their studies show that students who write well are more likely to be hired. This makes sense when you consider that employers get to know an applicant first through her employment documents (i.e. resumes and cover letters), in essence, the writing. By the time you put together resumes and cover letters, you will have consciously employed the multiple goals first established in FYC and then reaffirmed in other coursework. Again according to the NCWAFSC, "Writing is [. . .] a 'marker' of high-skill, high-wage, professional work" (qtd in National Writing Project Staff: Web).

When you are a new first-year student, a senior poised for the job market, or are in the world of work, writing will always be important. First-year composition isn't just the beginning of a new writing awareness; *it's a write of passage*.

Discussion

1. What kind of writing do you do on a day to day basis? Take a few minutes to jot down your list. Record everything you wrote today from morning until night (e.g., to-do list, email, text message, Facebook status update, journal, etc.). How do your purpose and audience inform how you compose each of these texts?
2. How do your school writing assignments compare to Godwin's Ethanol Plant Plan, Amanda's Research Proposal, or the assignment sheet (Analyzing Arguments)?
3. Can you think of any additional goals that your writing assignments touch on? What would you add to the WPA goals?
4. What kind of writing do you think you'll do in your future profession (e.g. business proposals, emails to colleagues, interoffice memos, patient plans of care, etc.)?

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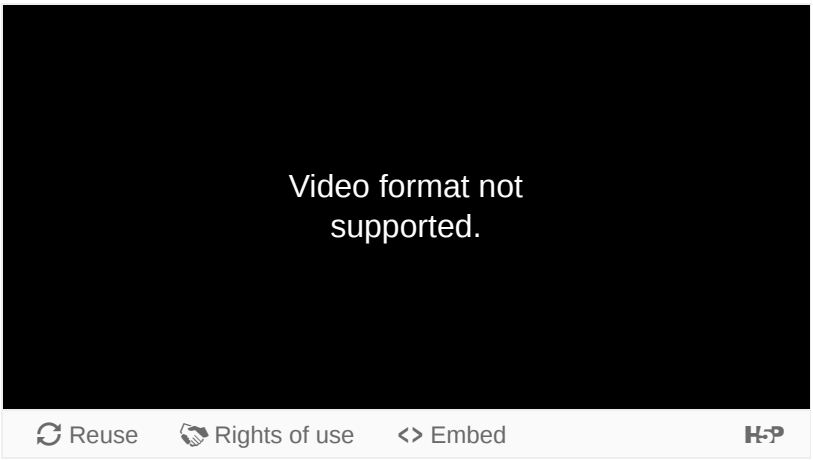
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SECTION OVERVIEW

1.7: Paraphrasing

Learn how paraphrasing is different from quoting and summarizing, and how to paraphrase what you read so that you can check your understanding of what the author says and improve your memory of it.



Video Transcript

0:00 Owl: Welcome to Paraphrasing, an instructional video on reading comprehension brought to you by the Excelsior College Online Writing Lab.

0:14 A helpful way to improve your reading comprehension is by paraphrasing what you read.

0:19 Paraphrasing involves putting an author's ideas into your own words.

0:24 Paraphrasing is helpful for checking your understanding of what you read and remembering what you read.

0:32 Paraphrasing differs from quoting and summarizing in key ways.

0:37 Quoting is about citing an author's ideas exactly as they appear in the text without changing any words.

0:43 Paraphrasing is about putting an author's ideas into your own words.

0:47 Summarizing is about condensing the meaning of a lengthy passage or entire text into a brief statement that reviews the main ideas in your own words.

0:57 Paraphrasing is useful for reading and writing.

1:00 For reading purposes, paraphrasing comes in handy for taking notes or making annotations.

1:06 Paraphrase important information during or after reading by writing the author's ideas in your own words in the margins or in a notebook.

1:15 This will help you check your understanding and improve your memory of what you read.

1:20 For writing purposes, paraphrasing is helpful for writing research papers because it provides an efficient way to incorporate another author's ideas into your own writing without having to use their exact words.

1:34 Paraphrasing is easier if you follow these tips:

1:38 Identify the exact passage you want to paraphrase.

1:43 Look away from the text when paraphrasing so that you don't repeat the author's words.

1:48 Restate the author’s ideas in different words that are equally specific.

1:53 Change the order of ideas and the sentence structure.

1:57 It’s ok to reuse words that can’t be replaced, such as names, titles, and special terminology.

2:05 If you need to repeat exact phrases or special terminology from the original text, place them in quotation marks.

2:14 Provide a citation for the paraphrase and make a note of complete publication info for the source.

2:21 These tips will help you paraphrase accurately and avoid unintentionally plagiarizing the author by repeating his or her own words.

2:30 Finally, keep in mind that your paraphrase may be longer or shorter than the original.

2:37 Let’s practice!

2:38 We’ll paraphrase the highlighted portion in this chapter on the role of the media in American politics.

2:45 First, let’s read the selection:

2:47 “The media also engages in agenda setting, which is the act of choosing which issues or topics deserve public discussion. For example, in the early 1980s, famine in Ethiopia drew worldwide attention, which resulted in increased charitable giving to the country.”

3:05 Now, let’s apply the tips shared earlier to paraphrase the selection with the following sentence:

3:12 One function of the media is “agenda setting”—the selection of topics for public scrutiny and debate: for instance, when the media called attention to the Ethiopian famine it caused a wave of donations (OpenStax, American Government, 292).

3:29 This paraphrase follows the tips shared earlier because it restates the selection in our own words, changes the order of ideas and the sentence structure, places quotation marks around exact phrases or special terminology taken directly from the original text; in this case, the special term “agenda setting” is displayed in quotations, and provides a citation.

3:56 That’s it!

3:57 Remember, paraphrasing what you read is an excellent way to check your understanding and help you remember what you read.

4:05 Visit the Online Writing Lab for more information about paraphrasing.

4:11 Thanks for listening to this instructional video on Paraphrasing!

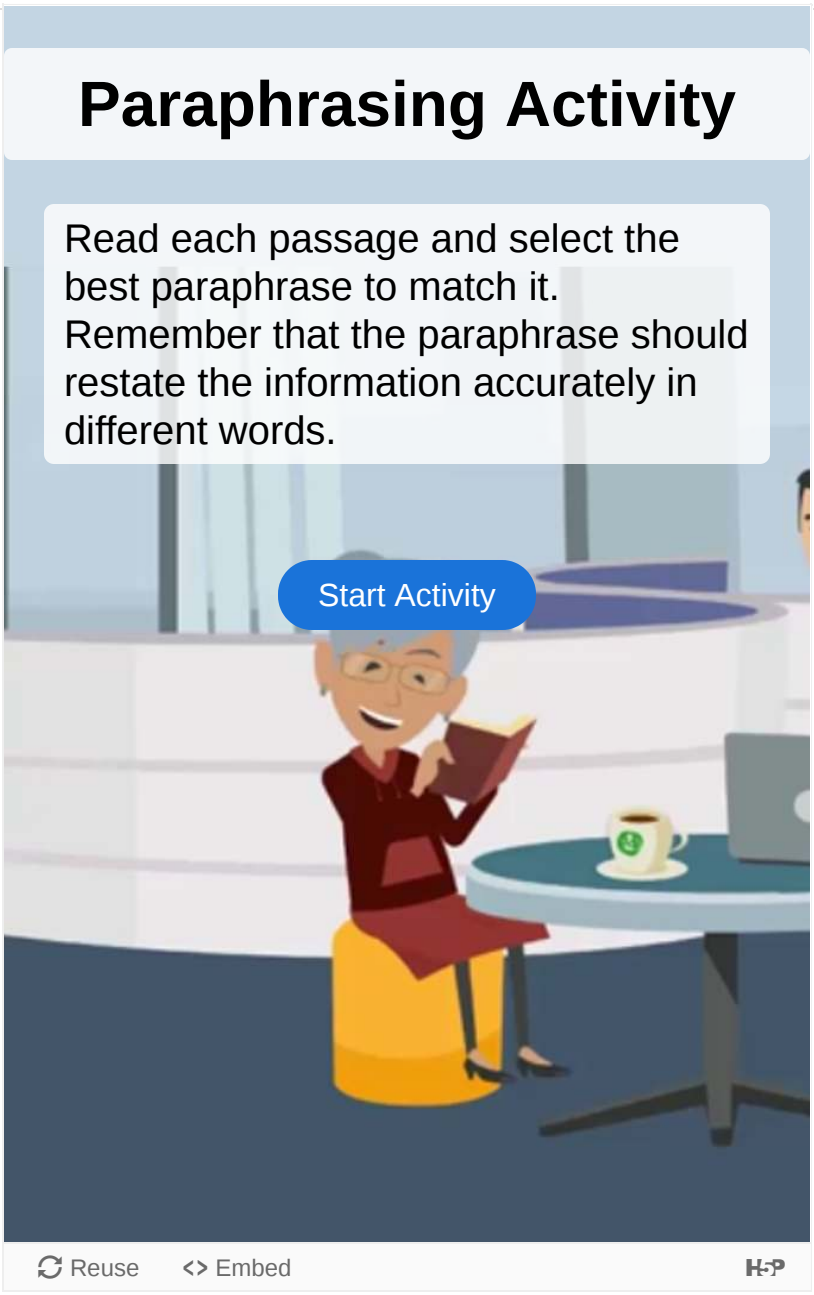
4:17 Visit the Excelsior College Online Writing Lab for more support with reading and writing skills.

1.7.1: Activity

1.7.2: Handouts

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1.7.1: Activity



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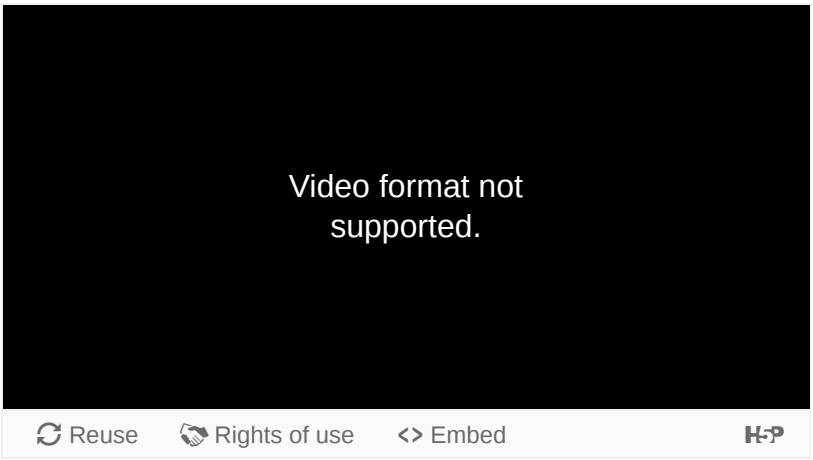


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SECTION OVERVIEW

1.8: Summarizing

Learn how summarizing differs from quoting and paraphrasing, as well as how to apply summarizing to check your understanding of what you read and help you remember the main ideas.



Video Transcript

0:00 Owl: Welcome to Summarizing, an instructional video on reading comprehension brought to you by the Excelsior College Online Writing Lab.

0:13 A helpful way to improve your reading comprehension is by summarizing what you read.

0:19 Summarizing involves writing a brief statement about a longer text that reviews the main ideas in your own words.

0:28 Summarizing is helpful for checking your understanding of a longer text and remembering the author's main ideas.

0:37 Summarizing differs from quoting and paraphrasing in key ways.

0:43 Quoting is about citing an author's ideas exactly as they appear in the text without changing any words.

0:50 Paraphrasing is about putting an author's ideas into your own words.

0:54 Summarizing is about condensing the meaning of a longer text into a brief statement that reviews the main ideas in your own words.

1:03 Summarizing is useful for reading and writing.

1:06 Some specific applications of summarizing are:

1:10 reviewing a long text, speech, or video;

1:14 writing an abstract;

1:17 preparing notes for a study guide;

1:19 creating an annotated bibliography;

1:23 answering an essay question;

1:25 writing a research paper;

1:28 recording the results of an experiment;

1:31 and describing the plot of a fictional text or film.

1:36 Summarizing is easier if you follow these tips:

1:41 Highlight or underline the thesis, topic sentences, and key supporting details as you read

1:48 Construct an outline or concept map to help you identify the main ideas

1:54 Start by writing the main idea

1:57 Review the major supporting ideas

2:00 Paraphrase information by putting it in your own words

2:04 Be brief and succinct so that your summary is accurate, but significantly shorter than the original text by covering only the most important ideas in fewer words

2:15 Consider your purpose and audience: How detailed do you need to be? Do you need to define terms? Are you writing for yourself or for others? If you are writing for yourself, don't worry about sentence structure.

2:29 Present ideas in the same order that the author does

2:34 If the author has a point of view, explain what it is in your summary

2:39 Leave your personal opinion out of the summary unless you are required to include it

2:44 Provide a citation if the summary is included in a formal writing assignment or publication

2:51 Got that?

2:52 Let's practice!

2:54 We'll summarize the passage in this chapter that deals with the role of the media in American politics.

3:00 First, let's read the selection:

3:04 The media exist to fill a number of functions. Whether the medium is a newspaper, a radio, or a television newscast, a corporation behind the scenes must bring in revenue and pay for the cost of the product. Revenue comes from advertising and sponsors, like McDonald's, Ford Motor Company, and other large corporations. But corporations will not pay for advertising if there are no viewers or readers. So all programs and publications need to entertain, inform, or interest the public and maintain a steady stream of consumers. In the end, what attracts viewers and advertisers is what survives.

3:45 The media are also watchdogs of society and of public officials. Some refer to the media as the fourth estate, with the branches of government being the first three estates and the media equally participating as the fourth. This role helps maintain democracy and keeps the government accountable for its actions, even if a branch of government is reluctant to open itself to public scrutiny. As much as social scientists would like citizens to be informed and involved in politics and events, the reality is that we are not. So the media, especially journalists, keep an eye on what is happening and sounds an alarm when the public needs to pay attention.

4:28 The media also engages in agenda setting, which is the act of choosing which issues or topics deserve public discussion. For example, in the early 1980s, famine in Ethiopia drew worldwide attention, which resulted in increased charitable giving to the country. Yet the famine had been going on for a long time before it was discovered by western media. Even after the discovery, it took video footage to gain the attention of the British and U.S. populations and start the aid flowing. Today, numerous examples of agenda setting show how important the media are when trying to prevent further emergencies or humanitarian crises. In the spring of 2015, when the Dominican Republic was preparing to exile Haitians and undocumented (or under documented) residents, major U.S. news outlets remained silent. However, once the story had been covered several times by Al Jazeera, a state-funded broadcast company based in Qatar, ABC, the New York Times, and other network outlets followed. With major network coverage came public pressure for the U.S. government to act on behalf of the Haitians.

5:42 Next, let's highlight the main idea and the major supporting ideas.

5:47 The main idea, or thesis, can usually be found in the first paragraph.

5:51 The major supporting ideas are often found in the first sentence of each following paragraph.

5:57 We call these "topic sentences."

6:00 We will use this information to help us construct our summary.

6:04 Let’s apply the tips shared earlier to write the following summary:

6:09 The media have three functions. First, they bring in revenue from advertisers and sponsors. Second, they act as a public “watchdog” to keep government accountable. In this capacity, they are sometimes called the “fourth estate” or fourth branch of government. Finally, the media engage in “agenda setting”—the selection of topics for public scrutiny and debate.

6:36 This summary follows the tips shared earlier because it begins with the main idea, reviews the major supporting ideas, restates the information in our own words, is significantly shorter than the original text, follows the same order of ideas as the original text, and refrains from adding a personal opinion.

6:59 That’s it!

7:00 Remember, summarizing what you read is an excellent way to check your understanding of long texts and help you remember the author’s main ideas.

7:09 Visit the Online Writing Lab for more information about summarizing.

7:15 Thanks for listening to this instructional video on Summarizing!

7:20 Visit the Excelsior College Online Writing Lab for more support with reading and writing skills.

1.8.1: Activity 1

1.8.2: Activity 2

1.8.3: Activity 3

1.8.4: Handouts

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1.8.1: Activity 1

Read the passage below and write a summary in 100 words or less. Then, rewrite your summary in 50 words or less. Remember that the goal of a summary is to convey the main idea and most important supporting ideas briefly and accurately in your own words.

Finding a Middle Ground

Fishing Regulations

One of the many important things government does is regulate public access to common goods like natural resources. Unlike public goods, which all people may use without charge, common goods are in limited supply. If more public schools are needed, the government can build more. If more firefighters or mail carriers are needed, the government can hire them. Public lands and wildlife, however, are not goods the government can simply multiply if supply falls due to demand. Indeed, if some people take too freely from the supply of common goods, there will not be enough left for others to use.

Fish are one of the many common goods in which the government currently regulates access. It does so to ensure that certain species are not fished into extinction, thus depriving future generations of an important food source and a means to make a living. This idea is known as sustainability. Environmentalists want to set strict fishing limits on a variety of species. Commercial fishers resist these limits, claiming they are unnecessary and, if enforced, would drive them out of business (Figure 8.1.1). Currently, fishing limits are set by a combination of scientists, politicians, local resource managers, and groups representing the interests of fishers.



Figure 1.8.1.1: Fishing provides income, as well as food, for many Americans, However, without government restrictions on the kinds and number of fish that can be caught, the fish population would decline and certain species could become extinct. This would ultimately lead to the loss of jobs and income as well as a valuable source of nourishment. (Credit: Michael L. Baird)

Should the government regulate fishing? Is it right to interfere with people's ability to earn money today in order to protect the access of future generations to the nation's common goods?

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1.8.2: Activity 2

Read the passage below and write a summary in 100 words or less. Then, rewrite your summary in 50 words or less. Remember that the goal of a summary is to convey the main idea and most important supporting ideas briefly and accurately in your own words.

Milestone

Shays' Rebellion: Symbol of Disorder and Impetus to Act

In the summer of 1786, farmers in western Massachusetts were heavily in debt, facing imprisonment and the loss of their lands. They owed taxes that had gone unpaid while they were away fighting the British during the Revolution. The Continental Congress had promised to pay them for their service, but the national government did not have sufficient money. Moreover, the farmers were unable to meet the onerous new tax burden Massachusetts imposed in order to pay its own debts from the Revolution.

Led by Daniel Shays (Figure 8.2.1), the heavily indebted farmers marched to a local courthouse demanding relief. Faced with the refusal of many Massachusetts militiamen to arrest the rebels, with whom they sympathized, Governor James Bowdoin called upon the national government for aid, but none was available. The uprising was finally brought to an end the following year by a privately funded militia after the protestors' unsuccessful attempt to raid the Springfield Armory.



Figure 1.8.2.1: This contemporary depiction of Continental Army veteran Daniel Shays (left) and Job Shattuck (right), who led an uprising of Massachusetts farmers in 1786-1787 that prompted calls for a stronger national government, appeared on the cover of *Bickerstaff's Genuine Boston Almanack for 1787*.

Were Shays and his followers justified in their attacks on the government of Massachusetts? What rights might they have sought to protect?

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1.8.3: Activity 3

Read the passage below and write a summary in 100 words or less. Then, rewrite your summary in 50 words or less. Remember that the goal of a summary is to convey the main idea and most important supporting ideas briefly and accurately in your own words.

Milestone

The Clery Act

The Clery Act of 1990, formally the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act, requires public and private colleges and universities that participate in federal student aid programs to disclose information about campus crime. The Act is named after Jeanne Clery, who in 1986 was raped and murdered by a fellow student in her Lehigh University dorm room.

The U.S Department of Education's Clery Act Compliance Division is responsible for enforcing the 1990 Act. Specifically, to remain eligible for federal financial aid funds and avoid penalties, colleges and universities must comply with the following provisions:

- Publish an annual security report and make it available to current and prospective students and employees;
- Keep a public crime log that documents each crime on campus and is accessible to the public;
- Disclose information about incidents of criminal homicide, sex offenses, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, motor vehicle theft, arson, and hate crimes that occurred on or near campus;
- Issue warnings about Clery Act crimes that pose a threat to students and employees;
- Develop a campus community emergency response and notification strategy that is subject to annual testing;
- Gather and report fire data to the federal government and publish an annual fire safety report;
- Devise procedures to address reports of missing students living in on-campus housing.

For more about the Clery Act, see Clery Center for Security on Campus.

Were you made aware of your campus's annual security report before you enrolled? Do you think reporting about campus security is appropriately regulated at the federal level under the Clery Act? Why or why not?

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1.8.4: Handouts


Summarizing Thumbnail


Black and White Thumbnail Summarizing

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1.9: Why Write?

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1.9.1: Critical Reading and Writing as Complementary Activities, Reading to Write

Reading to Write

Read this article to learn about effective reading, note-taking, and writing strategies. Which of these writing strategies will work best for you?

What This Handout is About

This handout suggests reading, note-taking, and writing strategies for when you need to use reading assignments or sources as the springboard for writing a paper.

Reading Strategies

- Read (or at least skim) all parts of the reading. Sometimes the cover, title, preface, introduction, illustrations, appendices, epilogue, footnotes and "about the author" sections can provide you with valuable information.
- Identify the genre of the reading. What kind of a reading is it? (Journal article? Mass media? Novel? Textbook?) Why was it written? Who does the author assume is going to read this work? (Books about politics written for an audience of political scientists, for example, might be very different from books about politics written for the general public, for historians, or for sociologists.)
- Consider the author. What do you know or what can you learn about this person? Why did he or she write the book? What sources of information and/or methods did he or she use to gather the information presented in the book?
- Guess why your instructor assigned the reading. How does it fit in with other readings, class discussions, major course themes, or the purpose of the class?
- Get out a calendar and plan your reading. Get out a calendar and plan your reading. Plot the number of days or hours that it may take you to complete the reading. Be realistic. It may help to read one chapter of the reading and then revise your calendar – some readings take longer than others of a similar length.
- As you read, record your reactions and questions. Any reaction or question is valid, from the specific ("What's that word mean"?) to the general ("What's her point"?). Write them down now so that you'll remember them later. These reactions and questions can serve as material for class discussion, or they can be the jumping off point for brainstorming a paper.
- Read with a friend. Find someone else who is reading the same book. Set reading goals together and plan to share your reactions to sections of the reading before class, after class, over e-mail, and so on.
- Visit your instructor during office hours to discuss the reading. Your instructor will set aside hours when he or she will be available to meet with students. This is a great time to talk about the reading, ask questions, share your reactions, and get to know your instructor. You can do this with a friend or in a small group as well.
- Think about what is missing in the reading. Issues, events, or ideas that are missing, left out, avoided, or not discussed/addressed in the book might be important. Thinking about these omissions can give you a critical perspective on the reading by showing you what the author (consciously or unconsciously) doesn't want to deal with.
- If you know you will have to answer a particular question in response to the reading, read with that question in mind. Sometimes faculty will give you essay questions in advance. As you read the text, refer back to those questions and think about your emerging answers to them.

Writing Strategies

While Reading

- Write as you read. Record your reactions informally and briefly after you've read for a while. When you're done reading a section, write for five minutes to capture your personal thoughts, reactions, and questions as you go along.
- Keep your notes with your book. Tuck a few sheets of paper or a notepad inside the book to record your ideas as you read.
- Share your informal writing with a friend. Trade notes/questions/reactions to the book. Write five-minute responses to one another about the reading. This can be done by e-mail.
- Draw while you read. Drawing pictures, maps, or diagrams of relationships or important issues that you see emerging from the reading can help you understand them. Be willing to revise or redraw the map as you read.

After You Read

- React to the whole reading. Take twenty minutes to record your reactions to the reading as a whole. (Return to the reading strategies list to get you started if you need to.) Don't be afraid to guess, hypothesize, or follow a tangent.
- Reread the writing assignment.
- Get out a calendar and schedule the time you will need to write your paper. Working backwards from the due date, plot a timeline for producing the paper. Include time for at least one rough draft and one chance to receive feedback from others (a friend, your teaching assistant, your professor, the Writing Center, etc.) before turning it in.
- Plan your research and think about citation. If the assignment requires library research, decide upon a strategy for collecting and citing sources as you research and write. Be sure to cite any quoted information or information that was not generated by your own analysis. Your instructor can answer all of your questions about this important step.
- Write a draft, preferably a few days before the paper is due. Instructors can usually tell the difference between papers that have been carefully drafted and revised and papers that have been hurriedly written the night before they are due. Papers written the night before often receive disappointing grades.
- Get feedback from at least one person, and preferably several people, before you finalize your draft. When possible, give your readers a copy of the assignment, too. E-mail can make this process easier.
- Proofread your paper to catch errors before handing it in. Taking the time to spell-check and proofread will make your paper easier to read and show your reader that you cared about the assignment.

When you Get Your Paper Back

- Read all of your instructor's comments. Assess your strengths and weaknesses in completing this reading/writing assignment. Plan what adjustments you'll make in the process for the next reading/writing assignment you will undertake. It may help to save all of your old papers so that you can refer back to them and look for patterns in your instructor's comments. You may also want to keep a small notebook for your own assessment – writing down that you didn't leave ample time for revision on one paper, for example, may help you remember to schedule your time more effectively for the next paper.

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1.9.2: Critical Reading and Writing as Complementary Activities, Literary Criticism

Literary Criticism

Read this article on reading and interpreting literature, which will help improve your own writing skills.

By reading and discussing literature, we expand our imagination, our sense of what is possible, and our ability to empathize with others. Improve your ability to read critically and interpret texts while gaining appreciation for different literary genres and theories of interpretation. Read samples of literary interpretation. Write a critique of a literary work.

Texts that interpret literary works are usually persuasive texts. Literary critics may conduct a close reading of a literary work, critique a literary work from the stance of a particular literary theory, or debate the soundness of other critics' interpretations. The work of literary critics is similar to the work of authors writing evaluative texts. For example, the skills required to critique films, interpret laws, or evaluate artistic trends are similar to those skills required by literary critics.

Why Write Literary Criticism?

People have been telling stories and sharing responses to stories since the beginning of time. By reading and discussing literature, we expand our imagination, our sense of what is possible, and our ability to empathize with others. Reading and discussing literature can enhance our ability to write. It can sharpen our critical faculties, enabling us to assess works and better understand why literature can have such a powerful effect on our lives.

"Literary texts" include works of fiction and poetry. In school, English instructors ask students to critique literary texts, or works. Literary criticism refers to a genre of writing whereby an author critiques a literary text, either a work of fiction, a play, or poetry. Alternatively, some works of literary criticism address how a particular theory of interpretation informs a reading of a work or refutes some other critics' reading of a work.

Diverse Rhetorical Situations

The genre of literary interpretation is more specialized than most of the other genres addressed in this section, as suggested by the table below. People may discuss their reactions to literary works informally (at coffee houses, book clubs, or the gym) but the lion's share of literary criticism takes place more formally: in college classrooms, professional journals, academic magazines, and Web sites.

Students interpret literary works for English instructors or for students enrolled in English classes. In their interpretations, students may argue for a particular interpretation or they may dispute other critics' interpretations. Alternatively, students may read a text with a particular literary theory in mind, using the theory to explicate a particular point of view. For example, writers could critique The Story of an Hour by Kate Chopin from a feminist theoretical perspective. Thanks to the Internet, some English classes are now publishing students' interpretations on Web sites. In turn, some students and English faculty publish their work in academic literary criticism journals.

Over the years, literary critics have argued about the best ways to interpret literature. Accordingly, many "schools" or "theories of criticism" have emerged. As you can imagine – given that they were developed by sophisticated specialists – some of these theoretical approaches are quite sophisticated and abstract.

Below is a summary of some of the more popular literary theories. Because it is a summary, the following tends to oversimplify the theories. In any case, unless you are enrolled in a literary criticism course, you won't need to learn the particulars of all of these approaches. Instead, your teacher may ask you to take an eclectic approach, pulling interpretative questions from multiple literary theories.

Schools of Literary Criticism

- New Criticism: Focuses on "objectively" evaluating the text, identifying its underlying form. May study, for example, a text's use of imagery, metaphor, or symbolism. Isn't concerned with matters outside the text, such as biographical or contextual information.
- Reader-Response: Criticism focuses on each reader's personal reactions to a text, assuming meaning is created by a reader's or interpretive community's personal interaction with a text. Assumes no single, correct, universal meaning exists because meaning resides in the minds of readers.
- Feminism: Criticism focuses on understanding ways gender roles are reflected or contradicted by texts, how dominance and submission play out in texts, and how gender roles evolve in texts.

- New Historicism: Focuses on understanding texts by viewing texts in the context of other texts. Seeks to understand economic, social, and political influences on texts. Tend to broadly define the term "text", so, for example, the Catholic Church could be defined as a "text". May adopt the perspectives of other interpretive communities – particularly reader-response criticism, feminist criticism, and Marxist approaches – to interpret texts.
- Media Criticism: Focuses on writers' use of multimedia and hypertexts.
- Psychoanalytical Criticism: Focuses on psychological dimensions of the work.
- Marxist Criticism: Focuses on ways texts reflect, reinforce, or challenge the effects of class, power relations, and social roles.
- Archetypal Criticism: Focuses on identifying the underlying myths in stories and archetypes, which reflect what the psychologist Carl Jung called the "collective unconsciousness".
- Postcolonial Criticism: Focuses on how Western culture's (mis)representation of third-world countries and peoples in stories, myths, and stereotypical images encourages repression and domination.
- Structuralism/Semiotics: Focuses on literature as a system of signs where meaning is constructed in a context, where words are inscribed with meaning by being compared to other words and structures.
- Post-Structuralism/Deconstruction: Focuses, along with Structuralism, on viewing literature as a system of signs, yet rejects the Structuralist view that a critic can identify the inherent meaning of a text, suggesting, instead that literature has no center, no single interpretation, that literary language is inherently ambiguous

Powerful works of literature invoke multiple readings. In other words, we can all read the same story or poem (or watch the same movie or listen to the same song) and come up with different, even conflicting, interpretations about what the work means. Who we are reflects how we read texts. Our experiences inspire us to relate to and sympathize with characters and difficult situations. Have we read similar stories? Have we actually faced some of the same challenges the characters in the story face?

In addition, literary theories have unique ways to develop and substantiate arguments. Some theories draw extensively on the work of other critics, while others concentrate on the reader's thoughts and feelings. Some theories analyze a work from an historical perspective, while others focus solely on a close reading of a text.

Accordingly, as with other genres, the following key features need to be read as points of departure as opposed to a comprehensive blueprint:

Focus

Examine a subject from a rhetorical perspective. Identify the intended audience, purpose, context, media, voice, tone, and persona.Distinguish between summarizing the literary work and presenting your argument. Many students fall into the trap of spending too much time summarizing the literature being analyzed as opposed to critiquing it. As a result, it would be wise to check with your teacher regarding how much plot summary is expected. As you approach this project, remember to keep your eye on the ball: What, exactly (in one sentence) is the gist of your interpretation?

Development

You can develop your ideas by researching the work of other literary critics. How do other critics evaluate an author's work? What literary theories do literary critics use to interpret texts or particular moments in history? Reading sample proposals can help you find and adopt an appropriate voice and persona. By reading samples, you can learn how others have prioritized particular criteria.

Below are some of the questions invoked by popular literary theories. Consider these questions as you read a work, perhaps taking notes on your thoughts as you reread. You may focus on using one theory to "read and interpret" text or, more commonly, you may compare the critical concerns of different theories.

New Criticism/Formalism

- Character: How does the character evolve during the story? What is unique or interesting about a character? Is the character a stereotypical action hero, a patriarchal father figure, or Madonna? How does a character interact with other characters?
- Setting: How does the setting enhance tension within the work? Do any elements in the setting foreshadow the conclusion of the piece?
- Plot: What is the conflict? How do scenes lead to a suspenseful resolution? What scenes make the plot unusual, unexpected, suspenseful?
- Point of View: Who is telling the story? Is the narrator omniscient (all-knowing) or does the narrator have a limited understanding?

Reader-Response Criticism

How does the text make you feel? What memories or experiences come to mind when you read? If you were the central protagonist, would you have behaved differently? Why? What values or ethics do you believe are suggested by the story? As your reading of a text progresses, what surprises you, inspires you?

Feminist Criticism

How does the story re-inscribe or contradict traditional gender roles? For example, are the male characters in "power positions" while the women are "dominated"? Are the men prone to action, decisiveness, and leadership while the female characters are passive, subordinate? Do gender roles create tension within the story? Do characters' gender roles evolve over the course of the narrative?

New Historic Criticism

How does the story reflect the aspirations and conditions of the lower classes or upper classes? Is tension created by juxtaposing privileged, powerful positions to subordinated, dominated positions? What information about the historical context of the story helps explain the character's motivations? Who benefits from the outcome of the story or from a given character's motivation?

Media Criticism

How does the medium alter readers' interactions with the text? Has the reader employed multimedia or hypertext? What traditions from print and page design have shaped the structure of the text? In what ways has the author deviated from traditional, deductively organized linear texts?

Cite from the Work

Literary criticism involves close reading of a literary work, regardless of whether you are arguing about a particular interpretation, comparing stories or poems, or using a theory to interpret literature. Do not summarize the story. The purpose of the document is not to inform the readers, but to argue a particular interpretation. You only need to cite parts of the work that support or relate to your argument and follow the citation format required by your instructor (see Using and Citing Sources).

Below is an example from Sample Essays for English 103: Introduction to Fiction, Professor Matthew Hurt. Note how the writer uses block quotes to highlight key elements and paraphrase and summarizes the original works, using quotation marks where necessary.

...Twain offers a long descriptive passage of Huck and Jim's life on the raft that seems, at first glance, to celebrate the idyllic freedom symbolized by the river and nature. . . A close reading of this passage, however, shows that the river is not a privileged natural space outside of and uncontaminated by society, but is inextricably linked to the social world on the shore, which itself has positive value for Huck. Instead of seeking to escape society, Huck wants to escape the dull routines of life.

The passage abounds with lyrical descriptions of the river's natural beauty. For example, Huck's long description of the sunrise over the river captures the peaceful stillness and the visual beauty of the scene:

The first thing to see, looking away over the water, was a kind of dull line – that was the woods on t'other side – you couldn't make nothing else out; then a pale place in the sky; then more paleness, spreading around; then the river softened up, away off, and warn't black any more, but gray; . . . sometimes you could hear a sweep screaking; or jumbled up voices, it was so still, and sounds come so far; and by-and-by you could see a streak on the water which you know by the look of the streak that there's a snag there in the swift current which breaks on it and makes the streak look that way; and you see the mist curl up off of the water, and the east reddens up, and the river, and you make out a log cabin in the edge of the woods, away on the bank on t'other side of the river, . . . then the nice breeze springs up, and comes fanning you from over there, so cool and fresh, and sweet to smell, on account of the woods and the flowers; . . . and next you've got the full day, and everything smiling in the sun, and the song-birds just going at it! (129-130)

Here, Huck celebrates the beauty of the natural world coming to life at the beginning of a new day. The "paleness" gradually spreading across the sky makes new objects visible which he describes in loving detail for the reader. The "nice breeze" is "cool and fresh" and "sweet to smell", and the world seems to be "smiling in the sun" as the song-birds welcome the new day.

However, Huck includes a number of details within this passage that would seem to work against the language of natural beauty. After describing the gradually brightening sky, Huck notes that "you could see little dark spots drifting along, ever so far away – trading scows, and such things; and long black streaks – rafts". The sun rise reveals not only natural objects (the brightening sky,

the "snag", the "mist"), but also brings into view man-made objects ("trading scows" and "rafts") that signify human society's presence in this natural environment. Similarly, Huck speculates that the picturesque "log cabin" on the distant shore is a "woodyard, likely, and piled by them cheats so you can throw a dog through it anywheres". Here the marker of human society takes on a sinister tone of corruption as Huck describes how unscrupulous wood sellers stack wood loosely to cheat their customers. Finally, although the breeze is "sweet to smell", Huck assures the reader that this isn't always the case: "but sometimes not that way, because they've left dead fish laying around, gars, and such, and they do get pretty rank".

These signs of society's presence on the river are largely negative. The woodyard is "piled by cheats" and the stacked fish pollute the "sweet" smell of the breeze. At this point, the opposition between "good nature" and "bad society" remains intact. The signs of human presence suggest a corruption of nature's beauty. In the paragraphs that follow, however, this opposition is subtly reversed. After Huck's account of the sunrise over the river, he describes how he and Jim watch the steamboats "coughing along up stream". But when there are no steamboats or rafts to watch, he describes the scene as "solid lonesomeness" (130). No songbirds, no sweet breezes. Without human activities to watch, the scene suddenly becomes empty and "lonesome", and nothing captures Huck's attention until more rafts and boats pass by and he can watch them chopping wood or listen to them beating pans in the fog.

Cite Other Critics' Interpretations of the Work

Criticism written by advanced English majors, graduate students, and literary critics may be more about what other critics have said than about the actual text. Indeed, many critics spend more time reading criticism and arguing about critical approaches than actually reading original works. However, unless you are enrolled in a literary theory course, your instructor probably wants you to focus more on interpreting the work than discussing other critical interpretations. This does not mean, however, that you should write about a literary work "blindly". Instead, you are wise to find out what other students and critics have said about the work.

Below is a sample passage that illustrates how other critics' works can inspire an author and guide him or her in constructing a counter argument, support an author's interpretation, and provide helpful biographical information.

In her critical biography of Shirley Jackson, Lenemaja Friedman notes that when Shirley Jackson's story "The Lottery" was published in the June 28, 1948 issue of the New Yorker it received a response that "no New Yorker story had ever received": hundreds of letters poured in that were characterized by "bewilderment, speculation, and old-fashioned abuse". It is not hard to account for this response: Jackson's story portrays an "average" New England village with "average" citizens engaged in a deadly rite, the annual selection of a sacrificial victim by means of a public lottery, and does so quite deviously: not until well along in the story do we suspect that the "winner" will be stoned to death by the rest of the villagers.

Organization

The format for literary critiques is fairly standard:

- State your claim(s).
- Forecast your organization.
- Marshal evidence for your claim.
- Reiterate argument and elaborate on its significance.

In English classes, you may be able to assume that your readers are familiar with the work you are critiquing. Perhaps, for example, the entire class is responding to one particular work after some class discussions about it. However, if your instructor asks you to address a broader audience, you may need to provide bibliographical information for the work. In other words, you may need to cite the title, publisher, date, and pages of the work.

Literary critiques are arguments. As such, your instructors expect you to state a claim in your introduction and then provide quotes and paraphrased statements from the text to serve as evidence for your claim. Ideally, your critique will be insightful and interesting. You'll want to come up with an interpretation that isn't immediately obvious. Below are some examples of "thesis statements" or "claims" from literary critiques:

- In "The Yellow Wallpaper", by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, the protagonist is oppressed and represents the effect of the oppression of women in society. This effect is created by the use of complex symbols such as the house, the window, and the wall-paper which facilitate her oppression as well as her self expression. ["'The Yellow Wall-Paper': A Twist on Conventional Symbols" by Liselle Sant]
- "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Gilman is a sad story of the repression that women face in the days of the late 1800's as well as being representative of the turmoil that women face today. [Critique of "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Brandi Mahon]

- "The Yellow Wallpaper", written by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, is a story of a woman, her psychological difficulties and her husband's so-called therapeutic treatment of her aliments during the late 1800s. . . Gilman does well throughout the story to show with descriptive phrases just how easily and effectively the man "seemingly" wields his "maleness" to control the woman. But, with further interpretation and insight I believe Gilman succeeds in nothing more than showing the weakness of women, of the day, as active persons in their own as well as society's decision making processes instead of the strength of men as women dominating machines. "The View from the Inside" by Timothy J. Decker
- In Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Mark Twain creates a strong opposition between the freedom of Huck and Jim's life on the raft drifting down the Mississippi River, which represents "nature", and the confining and restrictive life on the shore, which represents "society". ["'All I wanted was a change': Positive Images of Nature and Society in Chapter 19 of Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" from Professor Matthew Hurt's "Sample Essays for English 103: Introduction to Fiction"]
- In Gabriel Garcia Marquez's short story, "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings", an unexpected visitor comes down from the sky, and seems to test the faith of a community. The villagers have a difficult time figuring out just how the very old man with enormous wings fits into their lives. Because this character does not agree with their conception of what an angel should look like, they try to determine if the aged man could actually be an angel. In trying to prove the origin of their visitor, the villagers lose faith in the possibility of him being an angel because he does not adhere to their ordered world. Marquez keeps the identity of the very old man with enormous wings ambiguous to critique the villagers and, more generally, organized religion for having a lack of faith to believe in miracles that do not comply with their master narrative. ["Prove It: A Critique of the Villagers' Faith in 'A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings'" from Sample Essays for English 103: Introduction to Fiction, Professor Matthew Hurt]

Style

Literary criticism is a fairly specialized kind of writing. Instead of writing to a general lay audience, you are writing to members of a literary community who have read a work and who developed opinions about the work – as well as a vocabulary of interpretation.

Following are some common words used by literary critics. More specialized terms can be learned by reading criticism or by referring to a good encyclopedia for criticism or writing, including the Writer's Encyclopedia:

- Protagonist: The protagonist is the major character of the story; typically the character must overcome significant challenges.
- Antagonist: The protagonist's chief nemesis; in other words, the character whom the protagonist must overcome.
- Symbols: Metaphoric language; see A Catalogue of Symbols in The Awakening by Kate Chopin
- Viewpoint: Stories are told either in the first person or third person point of view. The first person is limited to a single character, although dialog can let you guess at other characters' intentions. The third person allows readers inside the character's mind so you know what the character feels and thinks. Viewpoint can be "limited", where the character knows less than the reader, or "omniscient", where the reader can hear the thoughts and feelings of all characters. Occasionally writers will use multiple character viewpoint, which takes you from one character's perspective to another.
- Plot: Plots are a series of scenes, typically moving from a conflict situation to a resolution. To surprise readers, authors will foreshadow "false plants", which lead readers to anticipate other resolutions. The term "denouement" refers to the unraveling of the plot in the conclusion.

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1.9.3: Learning to Think Critically, Improve Your Writing by Studying Critical Thinking

Improve Your Writing by Studying Critical Thinking

Read this article about the link between writing and critical thinking. As we write critically, we also develop skills to think and interpret more deeply. As you read, consider how you need to rethink topics and issues as you write about them. How does your thinking change as you plan, research, and draft an essay?



In the Education Tips series, education experts offer suggestions about how you can improve your English skills. This week, Babi Kruchin, a lecturer at the American Language Program at Columbia University in New York City, talks about writing and critical thinking.

For Voice of America Learning English, this is the Education Report.

Developing ideas in writing is the greatest problem that students face, says Babi Kruchin.

She serves as a lecturer in the American Language Program at Columbia University in New York City.

Students, she says, can learn language rules, vocabulary words, and even how to structure essays. Learning how to develop ideas in writing is what proves most difficult for them.

Why is Critical Thinking Important?

When Kruchin talks about the development of ideas in writing, she is referring to critical thinking – the ability to think clearly and form a judgment.

Writing, she says, shows how a person thinks. Students who have not learned to think critically often have a hard time developing ideas in writing.

Schools and employers put a high value on critical thinking skills. The importance of critical thinking shows up on standardized tests, such as the SAT with its "Critical Reading" and "Writing and Language" sections.

Such tests measure how well students understand arguments, judge information, and make inferences. These skills are very important for success not only in school, but also in the workplace.

Diane F. Halpern is a professor of psychology emerita at Claremont McKenna College in California. She writes that critical thinking is an important skill to develop in life.

"Critical thinking is using the skills or strategies that are most likely to lead to a desired outcome. It is the sort of thinking we should be engaging in when deciding what and whom to believe, which of two job offers to accept, or whether vaccinations really do cause autism."

Halpern adds that critical thinking is a skill that is important in the modern job market.

"Those who care about the future for today's children understand that the jobs of the future will require the ability to think critically. So let's be sure that our students are ready for college, careers, and citizenship by including deliberate instruction in critical thinking. It is probably the most difficult topic to teach and learn, but it is also the most important."

Critical Thinking is Hard to Teach and Hard to Learn

Babi Kruchin of Columbia agrees that critical thinking is hard to teach and difficult to learn. She says that students can overcome grammar and vocabulary problems. Developing an original idea, then supporting it, is what students find difficult.

"Sometimes the writer might think 'Oh! I have the topic sentence, I have the supporting details.' But there is no depth of thought … How do you really analyze and interpret and explain all these ideas?

You can take care of the grammar, you can take care of the vocabulary, you can take care of the format, but the depth of development – the critical thinking part of writing – is, I think, the greatest issue that any domestic or international student faces ...

It's not articles, it's not conjunctions – because these are all teachable things, and these are all learnable things. And critical thinking is also teachable, and students are able to learn, but it's harder to teach and to learn."

Practical Tips

So, if learning critical thinking is difficult, what can you do?

Kruchin suggests that students can start improving their writing and critical thinking skills by reading.

Students, however, should not read without a goal in mind. Students should be active readers by studying how other writers build their arguments. In other words, they should consider the critical thinking of each author they have read.

Kruchin says that students should consider the writing of an author by asking a few simple questions while reading:

"How is the content organized here? How is the writer connecting these ideas? Look at the quote that the writer used. What comes after this quote? Does the writer just leave it as is, or analyze it and adds his or her own idea?"

The goal of this exercise, Kruchin says, is for students to develop the ability to understand how others think. In addition, it helps students to discover the critical thinking resources that they have inside themselves.

"Because writing is thinking, it is a reflection of how somebody thinks. So it is the constant exercise of seeing how other authors think and then training the students to …

I don't think we teach critical thinking. It is almost a way to get the students to see inside and see that yes, they do think critically – we all have opinions, we all have judgments. But how do we voice them in an academic form?

It is an exercise in using the resources that already exist within the students. I don't believe they are less intelligent; some may not be as well trained in this discourse."

What can you do?

The next time you are reading a book or an opinion piece in a newspaper, try to ask yourself some of the following questions:

- What is the argument that the writer is making?
- What evidence does the writer use?
- How does the writer present their ideas?
- How is the writer connecting their ideas?
- How does the writer evaluate information?

Asking these questions will give you a point to start understanding how other people think. It will also help you to think about how you can write better – and practice your critical thinking skills, too.

Words In This Story

Analysis – *noun.* a careful study of something to learn about its parts, what they do, and how they are related to each other

Analyze – *verb.* to learn the nature and relationship of the parts of (something) by a close and careful examination

Critical thinking – *noun.* actively turning a thought or information over in one's head and following its path to the end and decision; the objective analysis an evaluation of an issue in order to form a judgment

Evaluation – *noun.* a judgment about the value or condition of (someone or something) in a careful and thoughtful way

Inference – *noun.* the act or process of reaching a conclusion about something from known facts or evidence

Objective – *adjective.* based on facts rather than feelings or opinions

Refer – *verb.* to have a direct connection or relationship to (something)

Resource – *noun.* an ability to deal with and find solutions for problems

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1.9.4: Learning to Think Critically, The New Colossus

The New Colossus

This sonnet by Emma Lazarus starts a conversation about the Statue of Liberty. While it and Dan Sanchez's article below discuss same topic, they do so in different ways. The purpose, audience, tone, and context is different in each example. How they use *ethos*, *logos*, *pathos*, and *kairos* differs as well.

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.

"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

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1.9.5: Learning to Think Critically, Mass-Producing Huddled Masses

Mass-Producing Huddled Masses

This article by Dan Sanchez continues the conversation about the Statue of Liberty. The purpose, audience, tone, and context is different than Lazarus' sonnet. How does it use *ethos*, *logos*, *pathos*, and *kairos* differently?

Mass-Producing Huddled Masses

Refugees from the Footfall of the American Colossus

by Dan Sanchez (2015)

Inscribed on a plaque inside the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty is a poem by Emma Lazarus titled "New Colossus". The sonnet waxes lyrical about how different the Green Goddess is from ancient colossal statues, and how that symbolizes the contrast between American ideals and those of empires since antiquity. The Statue of Liberty is: "Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame, With conquering limbs astride from land to land".

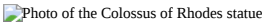


Figure 1.9.5.1

This is a reference to the Colossus of Rhodes, a statue long thought to have straddled a great harbor (although this is now doubted), and which was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.

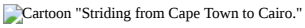


Figure 1.9.5.2

Empires also arrogantly stand "astride from land to land" with "conquering limbs", like the famous editorial cartoon depicting a British colonialist standing over the African continent, "striding from Cape Town to Cairo". In a stroke of great luck for the ironist, the lampooned fellow happened to be named Cecil Rhodes, allowing the clever cartoonist to dub him, "The Rhodes Colossus".

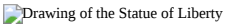


Figure 1.9.5.3

In contrast, according to Lazarus's poem, the Statue of Liberty looked upon the world with "mild eyes". It stands beside the "golden door" of the New World and, on behalf of America, told the "ancient lands" that they can keep their "storied pomp" of imperial greatness. America would have none of it. Instead, America would take in the *victims* of that "greatness": those made "tired" and "poor" by imperial exactions. "Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free…"

The new country would not bestride the world like a colossus, but would, like its great statue, stand straight and stable, holding aloft an illuminating torch: a welcoming beacon of hope and freedom.

Unfortunately, this ideal has never been much more than a distant aspiration. From its earliest days, the American Colossus never hesitated to tread upon the Blacks and Indians it found underfoot.

But at least while it was busy acquiring dominion over its own continent, it was indeed quite benign and welcoming to the civilized peoples of the Old World.

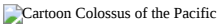


Figure 1.9.5.4

But by the late 19th-century, the American Colossus had its fill of local lands and craved more exotic fare. And so, beginning with the Spanish-American War, Manifest Destiny set out to sea, and the American overseas empire was born. An 1898 cartoon called "Colossus of the Pacific" aptly depicted Uncle Sam striding from the California coast to the Philippine Islands.

Thus a mere 15 years after Lazarus wrote her lovely poem, and 5 years before it actually graced the statue itself, its ideals were fully repudiated by the American regime. And the actual "New Colossus" would eventually bestride more of the globe than any before it.

For the past 14 years, the American Colossus has been on a Godzilla-like rampage, trampling over the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia: squashing people, flattening homes, and demolishing communities.

Now its specialty is not offering refuge, but making refugees. Not welcoming huddled masses, but mass-producing them. The Iraq War displaced millions. The chaos it engendered, including the rise of ISIS (which didn't even exist before the war) displaced millions more.

Many of these displaced persons sought refuge in Syria. At its 2007 peak, Syria had received 1.5 million Iraqi refugees, on top of the 540,000 Palestinian refugees it already hosted.

But the American Colossus followed them even there, heavily funneling weapons and other support into an uprising in Syria, and escalating it into a ruinous civil war. Within a few years, as Farrah Hassen put it, Syria: "…moved from being the world's second-largest host of refugees to the second-largest producer of them".

Now more than 11 million Syrians (more than half its total pre-war population) have been displaced.

The American Colossus also:

- has waged the longest war in its history in Afghanistan,
- sent Libya (370,000 newly displaced in 2014) spiraling into civil war with a regime change operation,
- plunged Somalia into famine with an invasion by its Ethiopian proxy,
- continues its destabilizing drone war in Pakistan (1.8 million displaced), and is now facilitating a Saudi war on Yemen that has pushed six million people to the brink of starvation.
- It has even staggered into eastern Europe, triggering (by sponsoring a coup) and supplying an anti-separatist war in Ukraine that displaced more than four million in 2014.

Due predominantly to this rampage, the number of "internally displaced persons" surged to 38 million in 2014 (4.7 million higher than in 2013). And the total number of refugees in that year swelled to 60 million, the highest number ever recorded.

Tens of millions consigned to utter desperation: severed from their homes, communities, and livelihoods; hunted by armies and militias toting American weapons; striving against all odds to save the lives of their children. And now Europe, whose governments have extensively helped America sow the winds of war, is reaping a whirlwind of refugees.

America has gone from a Beacon of Liberty to a Colossus of Chaos, scattering tens of millions with its footfall. And since all war is the health of domestic tyranny, its boot is stamping on our faces as well, though not (as in Orwell) forever. For its rampage is not only murderously destructive, but colossally expensive. This, after all, was Osama bin Laden's endgame all along: in his words, "bleeding America to the point of bankruptcy" by provoking it into overreaction.



Figure 1.9.5.5

Talos attacking the "Argo" in Jason and the Argonauts (1963).

In the *Argonautika* by Apollonius of (yet again) Rhodes, bleeding to death also happened to be the fate of Talos the living colossus. As Talos hurled boulders at the relatively tiny Argonauts (asymmetrical warfare for the mythic age), the sorceress Medea cast a hex on him, causing him to graze the bronze skin of his ankle on a sharp rock, upon which:

"...the ichor ran out of him like molten lead. He stood there for a short time, high on the jutting cliff. But even his strong legs could not support him long; he began to sway, all power went out of him, and he came down with a resounding crash."



Figure 1.9.5.6

Ruins of colossal statue of Ramses II.

...much as the Colossus of Rhodes itself eventually collapsed in an earthquake. And this was long thought to be due in part to its overextended stance. For ages ancient tourists gaped at its shattered remains, which, like the ruined colossus of Ozymandias in Shelley's poem, revealed the transience and vanity of the imperial "storied pomp" that Lazarus's poem rightly disdained. "Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"

If the American Colossus continues its rampage much longer, it will collapse under its own weight, and bury us all in its rubble. Since it is our own statist ideology that animates it, it is up to us to stop it before that happens. We must take our country off the precarious footing of empire, and place it on the firm foundation of liberty. Then, like the stable statue in New York Harbor, we will truly be a beacon to the world.

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1.9.6: Learning to Think Critically, Compare Rhetorical Appeals

Compare Rhetorical Appeals

In this practice exercise, write an essay of 500 to 750 words that examines the use of the rhetorical appeals in the two sources you read about the Statue of Liberty: Emma Lazarus' "The New Colossus" and Dan Sanchez's "Mass Producing Huddled Masses".

Your essay should address these questions:

1. Which work uses rhetorical strategies more effectively?
2. Which rhetorical strategy is more powerful in terms of supporting the author's claim or main idea?

Support your argument with specific examples from each work.

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2.1: The PWR (Prewrite, Write, and Revise) Method

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2.1.1: Introduction to Writing Processes

Introduction to Writing Processes

Read this article on the writing process from prewriting to publishing. Do you find that you follow these steps when writing essays? Which prewriting activity works best for you?

Writing Processes

Based on scholarship and research in the field of Writing Studies, the term "writing process" refers to a suite of attitudes about composition and literacy practices. Based on this body of work, faculty assume writing processes may differ from person to person and that different projects may affect which composing strategies are employed. Since the early 1980s, writing instructors have tended to restructure their courses so that students have greater opportunities to revise their work in response to instructor and/or peer feedback. Despite this emphasis on "process writing", research in Writing Studies suggests students often submit early drafts for grading.



Thinking rhetorically about one's audience and purpose, collaborating, researching, organizing texts for readers at global and local levels, maintaining focus (such as formulating a thesis, the thesis, working with sources to create a first draft, and positioning yourself in academic writing), practicing diverse invention strategies, designing one's format rhetorically, revising, editing, and publishing – these are some of the dominant activities that characterize what is broadly conceived of as "the writing process".

Believing and Doubting

The Writing Process is bounded by two contrary actions: believing and doubting.

A range of writing activities, behaviors, and attitudes can enhance – or thwart – your ability to write successfully in college or in work-place settings. However, no factor is more important than playing the believing game, which simply means staying positive, ignoring the internal critic, and having faith in the writing process – faith that with revision, lousy first drafts can become effective, maybe even elegant.

As hard as it sometimes is to stay positive while working on a document, give yourself encouraging, energizing messages, such as "I can do this ... I have enough time ... I'm smart enough ..." If you find your thinking/writing process to be undercut by negative, energy-draining messages, pull out a sheet of paper and draw a line down the middle of the page. On the left-hand side, write down the negative message. Then, on the right-hand side, write a more affirming message, one that either contradicts the negative statement or that shows a way around the problem. While ideally it makes sense to play the believing game during the time you're working on the document, you may find it most helpful to emphasize believing during the early stages of a writing project and doubting in the final stages.

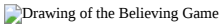


Figure 2.1.1.1

Play the Believing Game

During the early stages of the writing process, you can work more productively by setting aside doubt and playing the believing game, a "game" that is characterized by having faith in the writing process – faith that with additional work, you will develop effective writing habits.

Thinking rhetorically, collaborating, researching, organizing, focusing, and using invention strategies – these are the sorts of activities you need to practice to engage your creative self, to be as productive as possible.

Play the Doubting Game

While playing the believing game is critical to the Writing Process, at times you need to play the doubting game – that is, examining your ideas and drafts in a critical (even hypercritical) manner. On occasion, you need to step back and ask yourself critical questions, such as "Am I providing the narrative that my readers need to find my analysis compelling? Is my evidence truly credible? Jeez, is this wordy? Can I say the same thing in half the word count?"

Organizing, focusing, inventing, formatting, revising, editing, and publishing – these activities are essential to playing the doubting game, a process that is invariably necessary as you work your way toward meaning, significance, and clarity.

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2.1.2: Prewriting, Plan Your Writing

Plan Your Writing

Asking friends and classmates for their opinions can be a helpful step in the writing process. Try the suggestion in this article about using Microsoft Word's tracking and commenting features to help organize your peers' feedback.

As children, many of us heard the classic fable about the tortoise and the hare. The moral of the story is that rushing straight from point A to point B is not always the swiftest way to the destination. Sometimes it makes sense to pause for a few moments and ask yourself: "Do I really want to go there? What obstacles can I expect to encounter? Do I need to take a compass and a map? Is the path well marked? What provisions am I likely to need along the journey?"

Like many children's tales, the tortoise and the hare has implications for adults, too. For even though logic tells us that we can save time by quickly writing a first draft, we in fact might manage our time more effectively by doing some preliminary planning and prewriting.

Be Flexible

Unlike a chef who follows a single recipe for preparing chocolate cheesecake, writers lack a single modus operandi. Sometimes you may need to write 30 drafts and other times a single draft will do. Sometimes you should dictate your ideas; sometimes you should write them on the computer; sometimes you should scratch them out carefully with a pencil.

Instead of expecting yourself to write perfect first drafts or to develop your best ideas before writing, you need to learn to trust the generative nature of composing. By being flexible and open-minded, you will sometimes discover your most innovative ideas in progress, because language generates thought. In fact, what you learn as you write will sometimes contradict your preliminary hunches, so be prepared to revise accordingly.

You also need to be flexible about how you compose documents. You need to be aware that some documents will be more demanding than others. For example, a semester-long research paper or an international corporation's annual report would require a different amount of collaboration, research, and revision than a biography or a memoir.

Collaborate

Sharing your writing with friends and classmates can help motivate you to get the work done and help you judge whether or not your writing successfully communicates your ideas. By collaborating early in the life of a document, you can help focus and enrich the work.

Sometimes inexperienced writers are so inspired by seeing their words in print or published on the Internet that they fail to see the problem in the document. Inexperienced writers are often astonished by the amount of criticism that professional writers receive as part of the pre-publication process. Typically, before publishing an essay or book, a document goes through extensive revisions in light of peer reviews, professional critiques by editors, and copy-editing. Even people who do not write as a career will face evaluation of their writing.

The final writing activity for many people involves submitting their work to clients, co-workers, or supervisors. For students, primary audiences tend to be teachers or other students. Whether you're writing for a teacher or a client, criticism can often be painful so it is understandable that many of us try to avoid hearing or thinking much about our critics' comments. Nevertheless, your growth as a writer is largely dependent on your ability to learn from past mistakes and to improve drafts in response to readers' comments.

Be Organized

Maintaining organized files for all of your classes can be an important time-saver. By keeping lists of ideas or drafts of essays that might be worth developing and by organizing reading notes, you will have less trouble generating subjects to write about.

Use Technology Wisely

Used wisely, technology can literally transform how you write, research, collaborate, and publish. Writing tools, drawing tools, collaboration tools, animation tools – these are just a few of the examples of technologies that are transforming how and what we write.

1. Microsoft's Track Changes or Commenting can help you organize feedback from critics.

2. A wiki facilitates co-authoring and enables you to easily publish your work on the Internet.
3. Charting and graphics tools enable you to use visual language to facilitate invention and creativity.
4. To aid your research, your college or university's library can provide you access to thousands of online journals, books, and databases.
5. Use Google Docs or another collaborative workspace, that you can access from different computer devices.

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2.1.3: Just Write — Freewriting, Freewrite

Freewrite

Read this article on the pre-writing method called freewriting, and watch the linked video. Have you ever suffered from writer's block? Do you think freewriting would be a helpful technique to combat writer's block? Why or why not?

Use Freewriting to avoid Writer's Block, Stimulate Your Thinking on a Subject, and Find Your Voice

Freewriting involves writing without stopping. Your goal is to write whatever ideas occur to you, using a pen or pencil and paper or using a computer with the monitor turned off. When freewriting, your focus is to generate ideas as opposed to writing grammatically correct sentences. Get your thoughts down as fully and quickly as you can without critiquing them.



Freewrite to Avoid Writer's Block

Freewriting is a powerful way to blast through writing blocks. Rather than staring at a blank page, wondering what you have to say about a topic, you can write about the topic, exploring what you know, what you need to research, and what you need to accomplish to finalize the document.

In Writing Without Teachers (Oxford University Press, 1973), Peter Elbow argues that freewriting is "a way to produce bits of writing that are genuinely better than usual: less random, more coherent, more highly organized". Elbow believes that freewriting, when used routinely, helps writers to find their voice, a voice that is smoother than a voice "damped out by all the interruptions, changes, and hesitations".

Different Ways to Use Freewriting

1. Use freewriting to warm up; to identify everything you need to know about a topic.
2. Use freewriting to overcome writer's block.
3. Use freewriting to find your voice.

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2.1.4: Brainstorming Methods, Brainstorming

Brainstorming

Read this article to learn about several methods of brainstorming. Previously, we took a look at freewriting to help combat writer's block. This article reviews the freewriting method and several other techniques, such as creating lists, developing concept maps, thinking of journalistic questions, identifying topic levels, and cubing. Which of these techniques do you feel will be the most helpful when starting an essay?

What This Handout is About

This handout discusses techniques that will help you start writing a paper and continue writing through the challenges of the revising process. Brainstorming can help you choose a topic, develop an approach to a topic, or deepen your understanding of the topic's potential.

Introduction

If you consciously take advantage of your natural thinking processes by gathering your brain's energies into a "storm", you can transform these energies into written words or diagrams that will lead to lively, vibrant writing. Below you will find a brief discussion of what brainstorming is, why you might brainstorm, and suggestions for how you might brainstorm.

Whether you are starting with too much information or not enough, brainstorming can help you to put a new writing task in motion or revive a project that has not reached completion.

Let's Take a Look at Each Case

When you have got nothing: You might need a storm to approach when you feel "blank" about the topic, devoid of inspiration, full of anxiety about the topic, or just too tired to craft an orderly outline. In this case, brainstorming stirs up the dust, whips some air into our stilled pools of thought, and gets the breeze of inspiration moving again.

When you have got too much: There are times when you have too much chaos in your brain and need to bring in some conscious order. In this case, brainstorming forces the mental chaos and random thoughts to rain out onto the page, giving you some concrete words or schemas that you can then arrange according to their logical relations.

Brainstorming Techniques

What follows are great ideas on how to brainstorm – ideas from professional writers, novice writers, people who would rather avoid writing, and people who spend a lot of time brainstorming about… well, how to brainstorm.

Try out several of these options and challenge yourself to vary the techniques you rely on; some techniques might suit a particular writer, academic discipline, or assignment better than others. If the technique you try first does not seem to help you, move right along and try some others.

Freewriting

When you freewrite, you let your thoughts flow as they will, putting pen to paper and writing down whatever comes into your mind. You do not judge the quality of what you write and you do not worry about style or any surface-level issues, like spelling, grammar, or punctuation. If you cannot think of what to say, you write that down – really. The advantage of this technique is that you free up your internal critic and allow yourself to write things you might not write if you were being too self-conscious.

When you freewrite you can set a time limit (I will write for 15 minutes!) and even use a kitchen timer or alarm clock or you can set a space limit (I will write until I fill four full notebook pages, no matter what tries to interrupt me!) and just write until you reach that goal. You might do this on the computer or on paper, and you can even try it with your eyes shut or the monitor off, which encourages speed and freedom of thought.

The crucial point is that you keep on writing even if you believe you are saying nothing. Word must follow word, no matter the relevance. Your freewriting might even look like this:

"This paper is supposed to be on the politics of tobacco production but even though I went to all the lectures and read the book I cannot think of what to say and I have felt this way for four minutes now and I have 11 minutes left and I wonder if I will keep thinking nothing during every minute but I am not sure if it matters that I am babbling and I do not know what else to say about this topic and it is rainy today and I never noticed the number of cracks in that wall before and those cracks remind me of the walls in my grandfather's study and he smoked and he farmed and I wonder why he did not farm tobacco…"

When you are done with your set number of minutes or have reached your page goal, read back over the text. Yes, there will be a lot of filler and unusable thoughts but there also will be little gems, discoveries, and insights. When you find these gems, highlight them or cut and paste them into your draft or onto an "ideas" sheet so you can use them in your paper. Even if you do not find any diamonds in there, you will have either quieted some of the noisy chaos or greased the writing gears so that you can now face the assigned paper topic.

Break Down the Topic into Levels

Once you have a course assignment in front of you, you might brainstorm:

- The general topic such as "The relationship between tropical fruits and colonial powers".
- A specific subtopic or required question such as "How did the availability of multiple tropical fruits influence competition amongst colonial powers trading from the larger Caribbean islands during the 19th century?"
- A single term or phrase that you sense you are overusing in the paper. For example: If you see that you have written "increased the competition" about a dozen times in your "tropical fruits" paper, you could brainstorm variations on the phrase itself or on each of the main terms: "increased" and "competition".

Listing and Bulleting

In this technique, you jot down lists of words or phrases under a particular topic.

You can base your list on:

- The general topic;
- One or more words from your particular thesis claim;
- A word or idea that is the complete opposite of your original word or idea.

For example, if your general assignment is to write about the changes in inventions over time, and your specific thesis claims that "the 20th century presented a large number of inventions to advance US society by improving upon the status of 19th-century society", you could brainstorm two different lists to ensure you are covering the topic thoroughly and that your thesis will be easy to prove.

The first list might be based on your thesis; you would jot down as many 20th-century inventions as you could, as long as you know of their positive effects on society. The second list might be based on the opposite claim, and you would instead jot down inventions that you associate with a decline in that society's quality. You could do the same two lists for 19th-century inventions and then compare the evidence from all four lists.

Using multiple lists will help you to gather more perspective on the topic and ensure that, sure enough, your thesis is solid as a rock, or, …uh oh, your thesis is full of holes and you would better alter your claim to one you can prove.

Three Perspectives

Looking at something from different perspectives helps you see it more completely – or at least in a completely different way, sort of like laying on the floor makes your desk look very different to you. To use this strategy, answer the questions for each of the three perspectives, then look for interesting relationships or mismatches you can explore.

1. Describe it: Describe your subject in detail. What is your topic? What are its components? What are its interesting and distinguishing features? What are its puzzles? Distinguish your subject from those that are similar to it. How is your subject unlike others?
2. Trace it: What is the history of your subject? How has it changed over time? Why? What are the significant events that have influenced your subject?
3. Map it: What is your subject related to? What is it influenced by? How? What does it influence? How? Who has a stake in your topic? Why? What fields do you draw on for the study of your subject? Why? How has your subject been approached by others? How is their work related to yours?

Cubing

Cubing enables you to consider your topic from six different directions; just as a cube is six-sided, your cubing brainstorming will result in six "sides" or approaches to the topic. Take a sheet of paper, consider your topic, and respond to these six commands.

1. Describe it.
2. Compare it.
3. Associate it.
4. Analyze it.
5. Apply it.
6. Argue for and against it.

Look over what you have written. Do any of the responses suggest anything new about your topic? What interactions do you notice among the "sides"? That is, do you see patterns repeating, or a theme emerging that you could use to approach the topic or draft a thesis? Does one side seem particularly fruitful in getting your brain moving? Could that one side help you draft your thesis statement? Use this technique in a way that serves your topic. It should, at least, give you a broader awareness of the topic's complexities, if not a sharper focus on what you will do with it.

Similes

In this technique, complete the following sentence:

_____ is/was/are/were like _____.

In the first blank put one of the terms or concepts your paper centers on. Then try to brainstorm as many answers as possible for the second blank, writing them down as you come up with them.

After you have produced a list of options, look over your ideas. What kinds of ideas come forward? What patterns or associations do you find?

Clustering, Mapping, and Webbing

The General Idea

This technique has three (or more) different names, according to how you describe the activity itself or what the end product looks like. In short, you will write a lot of different terms and phrases onto a sheet of paper in a random fashion and later go back to link the words together into a sort of "map" or "web" that forms groups from the separate parts. Allow yourself to start with chaos. After the chaos subsides, you will be able to create some order out of it.

To really let yourself go in this brainstorming technique, use a large piece of paper or tape two pieces together. You could also use a blackboard if you are working with a group of people. This big vertical space allows all members room to "storm" at the same time, but you might have to copy down the results onto paper later. If you do not have big paper at the moment, do not worry. You can do this on an 8 ½ by 11 as well.

How to Do It

1. Take your sheet(s) of paper and write your main topic in the center, using a word or two or three.
2. Moving out from the center and filling in the open space any way you are driven to fill it, start to write down, fast, as many related concepts or terms as you can associate with the central topic. Jot them quickly, move into another space, jot some more down, move to another blank, and just keep moving around and jotting.

   If you run out of similar concepts, jot down opposites, jot down things that are only slightly related, or jot down your grandfather's name, but try to keep moving and associating. Do not worry about the (lack of) sense of what you write, for you can chose to keep or toss out these ideas when the activity is over.
3. Once the storm has subsided and you are faced with a hail of terms and phrases, you can start to cluster. Circle terms that seem related and then draw a line connecting the circles. Find some more and circle them and draw more lines to connect them with what you think is closely related. When you run out of terms that associate, start with another term.

   Look for concepts and terms that might relate to that term. Circle them and then link them with a connecting line. Continue this process until you have found all the associated terms. Some of the terms might end up uncircled, but these "loners" can also be useful to you. (Note: You can use different colored pens/pencils/chalk for this part, if you like. If that is not possible, try to vary the kind of line you use to encircle the topics; use a wavy line, a straight line, a dashed line, a dotted line, a zig-zaggy line, etc. in order to see what goes with what.)
4. There! When you stand back and survey your work, you should see a set of clusters, or a big web, or a sort of map: hence the names for this activity. At this point you can start to form conclusions about how to approach your topic. There are about as many possible results to this activity as there are stars in the night sky, so what you do from here will depend on your particular results.

   Let's take an example or two in order to illustrate how you might form some logical relationships between the clusters and loners you have decided to keep. At the end of the day, what you do with the particular map or cluster set or web that you produce depends on what you need. What does this map or web tell you to do? Explore an option or two and get your draft going!

Relationship Among the Parts

In this technique, begin by writing the following pairs of terms on opposite margins of one sheet of paper:

Whole	Parts
Part	Parts of Parts
Part	Parts of Parts
Part	Parts of Parts

Looking over these four groups of pairs, start to fill in your ideas below each heading. Keep going down through as many levels as you can. Now, look at the various parts that comprise the parts of your whole concept. What sorts of conclusions can you draw according to the patterns, or lack of patterns, that you see? For a related strategy, watch our short video on drawing relationships.

Six Journalistic Questions

In this technique, you would use the "big six" questions that journalists rely on to thoroughly research a story.

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

Write each question word on a sheet of paper, leaving space between them. Then, write out some sentences or phrases in answer, as they fit your particular topic. You might also answer into a tape recorder if you would rather talk out your ideas.

Now look over your batch of responses. Do you see that you have more to say about one or two of the questions? Or, are your answers for each question pretty well balanced in depth and content? Was there one question that you had absolutely no answer for? How might this awareness help you to decide how to frame your thesis claim or to organize your paper? Or, how might it reveal what you must work on further, doing library research or interviews or further note-taking?

For example, if your answers reveal that you know a lot more about where and why something happened than you know about what and when, how could you use this lack of balance to direct your research or to shape your paper? How might you organize your paper so that it emphasizes the known versus the unknown aspects of evidence in the field of study? What else might you do with your results?

Thinking Outside the Box

Even when you are writing within a particular academic discipline, you can take advantage of your semesters of experience in other courses from other departments. Let's say you are writing a paper for an English course.

You could ask yourself, "Hmmm, if I were writing about this same topic in a biology course or using this term in a history course, how might I see or understand it differently? Are there varying definitions for this concept within, say, philosophy or physics, that might encourage me to think about this term from a new, richer point of view?"

For example, when discussing culture in your English, communications, or cultural studies course, you could incorporate the definition of culture that is frequently used in the biological sciences. Remember those little Petri dishes from your lab experiments in high school? Those dishes are used to "culture" substances for bacterial growth and analysis, right?

How might it help you write your paper if you thought of culture as a medium upon which certain things will grow, will develop in new ways or will even flourish beyond expectations, but upon which the growth of other things might be retarded, significantly altered, or stopped altogether?

Using Charts or Shapes

If you are more visually inclined, you might create charts, graphs, or tables in lieu of word lists or phrases as you try to shape or explore an idea. You could use the same phrases or words that are central to your topic and try different ways to arrange them spatially, say in a graph, on a grid, or in a table or chart. You might even try the trusty old flow chart.

The important thing here is to get out of the realm of words alone and see how different spatial representations might help you see the relationships among your ideas. If you cannot imagine the shape of a chart at first, just put down the words on the page and then draw lines between or around them. Or think of a shape. Do your ideas most easily form a triangle? square? umbrella? Can you put some ideas in parallel formation? In a line?

Consider Purpose and Audience

Think about the parts of communication involved in any writing or speaking event act: purpose and audience.

What is Your Purpose?

- What are you trying to do? What verb captures your intent? Are you trying to inform? Convince? Describe? Each purpose will lead you to a different set of information and help you shape material to include and exclude in a draft. Write about why you are writing this draft in this form.

Who Is Your Audience?

- Who are you communicating with beyond the grader? What does that audience need to know? What do they already know? What information does that audience need first, second, third? Write about who you are writing to and what they need.

Dictionaries, Thesauruses, Encyclopedias

When all else fails … this is a tried and true method, loved for centuries by writers of all stripe. Visit the library reference areas or stop by the Writing Center to browse various dictionaries, thesauruses (or other guide books and reference texts), encyclopedias or surf their online counterparts. Sometimes these basic steps are the best ones. It is almost guaranteed that you will learn several things you did not know.

If you are looking at a hard copy reference, turn to your most important terms and see what sort of variety you find in the definitions. The obscure or archaic definition might help you to appreciate the term's breadth or realize how much its meaning has changed as the language changed. Could that realization be built into your paper somehow?

If you go to online sources, use their own search functions to find your key terms and see what suggestions they offer. For example, if you plug "good" into a thesaurus search, you will be given 14 different entries. Whew! If you were analyzing the film Good Will Hunting, imagine how you could enrich your paper by addressed the six or seven ways that "good" could be interpreted according to how the scenes, lighting, editing, music, etc., emphasized various aspects of "good".

An encyclopedia is sometimes a valuable resource if you need to clarify facts, get quick background, or get a broader context for an event or item. If you are stuck because you have a vague sense of a seemingly important issue, do a quick check with this reference and you may be able to move forward with your ideas.

Closing

Armed with a full quiver of brainstorming techniques and facing sheets of jotted ideas, bulleted subtopics, or spidery webs relating to your paper, what do you do now?

Take the next step and start to write your first draft, or fill in those gaps you have been brainstorming about to complete your "almost ready" paper. If you are a fan of outlining, prepare one that incorporates as much of your brainstorming data as seems logical to you. If you are not a fan, do not make one. Instead, start to write out some larger chunks (large groups of sentences or full paragraphs) to expand upon your smaller clusters and phrases. Keep building from there into larger sections of your paper. You do n0t have to start at the beginning of the draft. Start writing the section that comes together most easily. You can always go back to write the introduction later.

We also have helpful handouts on some of the next steps in your writing process, such as reorganizing drafts and argument.

Remember, once you have begun the paper, you can stop and try another brainstorming technique whenever you feel stuck. Keep the energy moving and try several techniques to find what suits you or the particular project you are working on.

Works Consulted

We consulted these works while writing the original version of this handout. This is not a comprehensive list of resources on the handout's topic, and we encourage you to do your own research to find the latest publications on this topic. Please do not use this list as a model for the format of your own reference list, as it may not match the citation style you are using.

Allen, Roberta, and Marcia Mascolini. *The Process of Writing: Composing through Critical Thinking*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice, 1997.

Cameron, Julia. *The Artist's Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity*. Rev. ed. New York: Putnam, 2002.

Goldberg, Natalie. *Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within*. Rev. ed. Boston: Shambhala, 2005.

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University of Richmond Writing Center. Writer's Web.

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2.1.5: Outlines and Blueprints, Outlining

Outlining

Read this page. Why is outlining important? Try the exercises at the bottom of the page to increase your outlining skills.

Your instructor may make decisions about the form your essay will take, dictating whether you are supposed to write in a particular genre. But if you're given some choice or flexibility about form, just as in the case of voice, audience, and message, you need to make the most of that responsibility. Regardless of who dictates form, you or your instructor, know what form your writing should take and make sure it suits the voice, audience, and message. Some common forms of writing include the following:

- Argument
- Book review
- Case study
- Comparative analysis
- Critique
- Informative essay or report
- Lab report
- Opinion essay
- Personal narrative
- Persuasive essay
- Proposal
- Research report

An outline is another way to visually see the relationships between ideas you are gathering. You can create an outline by hand or on a computer. If you create one by hand, leave a blank space so you can fit additional ideas in within different areas. Using a computer for your outline is preferable since you can easily add ideas and move ideas around.

Start with your core idea as the beginning point of the outline. Then use roman numerals to add the subtopics followed by indented capital letters for the details. If you add finer details, you can use further-indented numbers for the next level and even-further-indented lowercase letters for a level after that. When using a computer, the preset tabs are most likely fine for the indenting.

The outline below relates to the map from the last section. It is simply another way to accomplish the same process of idea gathering. Notice that the writer here has made a sentence outline by writing out each element in a complete sentence. This strategy will help this writer move more easily from outline to essay draft.

The Sturgis Motorcycle Rally as Part of the Identity of Sturgis and the Surrounding Area

1. Bike Week has been going on for more than seventy years.
    1. It is an automatic assumption by locals that Bike Week will be held each year.
    2. Most locals have never known life without Bike Week.
2. Bike Week is a key element of area finances.
    1. Millions of dollars flow into the area economy.
    2. Sturgis and the surrounding cities have invested heavily in the function.
    3. Although the actual Bike Week is a central focus, bikers come here for months on either side of the week to ride the famous routes.
3. The area has grown and developed around Bike Week.
    1. Every small town has a Harley-Davidson store.
    2. Merchants continually create new products to sell to bikers.
    3. The locals are very accepting and supportive of the bikers.
4. People around the world recognize Sturgis for Bike Week.
    1. People attend Bike Week from all fifty states and many other countries.
    2. Although Sturgis has only a few thousand people, the town is known around the world.

As with the mapping process, once you have included all the ideas you have, take a break and return to your outline later. If, in the meantime, a thought comes to you, take a minute to add it. When you are satisfied with your outline, use it to guide your writing

process. However, keep in mind that your outline is only a tool you are using, and you will vary from it when you have other ideas along the way.

Putting Your Outline in Order

Outlining uses roman numerals, numbers, letters, and indenting to visually show how ideas are related.

- You can create an outline by hand, but using a computer gives you much greater flexibility to add ideas and move ideas around.
- Within an outline, the numbering/lettering order is as follows:
  - I.
    - A.
      - 1.
        - a.

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2.1.6: Outlines and Blueprints, Create an Outline

Create an Outline

In this practice exercise, use the prewriting and writing techniques you have just reviewed to create an outline for the essay you will write for Chapter 2:

"What does it take to succeed in an Internet-based college course?"

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2.1.7: Research Writing as a Process

Research Writing as a Process

Writing does not occur in a vacuum. That is to say, writing is a process that involves more than sitting down at a desk and plugging words into a computer. When we write, we brainstorm and prewrite, we draft, we ask for feedback, we revise, we ask for feedback again, and we revise some more.

The process is recursive, meaning that is ongoing and turns back on itself frequently. For example, you may have a great idea for an essay and begin by brainstorming. After a bit of brainstorming you realize your idea is too broad and needs to be narrowed down. Then you do some research into your newly narrowed topic. The research you find makes you go back again and change the way you stated your topic's main idea. As you begin drafting you realize some of your research fits nicely, but other pieces of research are of no use and you need to go back and do more research. And so on...

Read the following chapter and answer the following questions: How does the process approach differ from the product approach? Which do you prefer when writing an essay? Do you find that you follow any of the steps in these chapters when writing essays? Which prewriting activity works best for you?

Introduction

"I work best under pressure." We all have probably heard this statement from someone trying to meet a late deadline. For writers this approach means sitting down to write a paper just hours before it is due, writing only one draft, and submitting it. Such writing is a race against the clock, and there is no time for revision. Writers who believe in this method often say that working fast somehow releases their creative juices and helps them to beat writer's block. Some even say they deliberately put a writing task off to the last minute choosing to race against the clock rather than to work on the assignment gradually and in steps.

Surely, most writers are busy people, and sometimes we feel that there is no time to develop a piece of writing over days or even weeks before it is due. Sometimes we procrastinate, believing that we can produce good quality work just before the deadline. But such a "fast and furious" approach to writing is much more than just a problem of time management or procrastination. While most of us can write something up quickly, will this be our best work and will the resulting paper do justice to our topic and to our audience?

Racing against the clock, are we giving ourselves enough time to let the meaning of our writing to mature, or do we commit to paper the first thoughts that come to mind simply because we don't have time to develop them? When we work under stress of an imminent deadline, we naturally focus on getting the product out, that text which we will submit for a grade or publication. We simply have to have something written down. As we concentrate on getting that something on paper, we forget to give ourselves the opportunity to develop our thoughts and ideas, to let our piece evolve in our minds. In other words, we neglect the writing process.

In this chapter, I explain how to approach writing as a process The process model of writing justifies and endorses an approach to composing as a sequence of thoughtful steps, or quite the opposite to the "work under pressure" model mentioned earlier. Writers who take the process approach treat their work as a sequence of necessary stages. They compose multiple drafts; the seek feedback on those drafts from other readers; the revise the meaning of their writing heavily based on that feedback and on their own evolving thinking about the piece they are working on.

In this chapter, we will explore the main features of the process approach to composing and what makes it radically different from the product one. We will discuss what the process model can help you accomplish as a researcher and a writer. If you are used to the product approach because it has, on some level, worked for you in the past, you may be skeptical towards the process theory.

In order to convince you otherwise, I have decided included in this chapter stories and interviews by students, many of whom were also making the transition from the product to the process approach for the first time as they worked on the research writing projects described in this chapter. These narratives by students are not always all-out-success conversion from product to process stories, nor do they need to be. Some of these writers struggle with trying to be process-oriented as they try to understand and apply this new way of composing.

Product and Process Theories of Writing

In order to become critical writers and researchers capable of adapting to various writing situations, we must know not only the "hows", but also the "whys" of the theories and methods we try to use. Therefore, let us begin with an overview of the differences

between process and product-based writing. This will help us make informed decisions about our writing process and choose the best method for writing given our specific rhetorical situation.

Before we begin, though, I'd like to offer a disclaimer. While having a lot of time for writing, revising, and discussing your work with others if, of course, is good thing, there will be situations in every writer's career when producing one version of a text for an upcoming deadline is all we can do. Such product-based writing can be of high quality, and experienced writers know how to produce such high-quality writing.

Typically, they do that by carefully analyzing their rhetorical situation before and during the writing act. Such writers typically spend more time and effort planning and developing a piece in their mind than on paper. At the same time, process-oriented writing, which allows for multiple revisions, for "stepping back" and considering the text from multiple points of view, and for discussing your work with others, is likely to result in a better-developed message. As you gain experience with writing a variety of texts for a variety of rhetorical situations, you will discover which method, or combination of methods, work for you.

Product-Based Writing

Here, I would like to tell a story from my own writing career. Some years ago, before I became a writing teacher, I worked in a job that required me to write and publish a monthly newsletter that described and promoted the services we offered and try to establish a connection with our customer base.

Writing the newsletter seemed like an easy enough job. After all, I knew well what our organization did and, I thought that I could easily write several pages per week describing that to my readers. So, one afternoon I sat in front of the computer and tried to compose the first issue of our new publication. I had it all in my head: the contents, the style, even the layout of the final draft. I thought I had a vision for this thing, and I really wanted to do a good job with it.

And then, writer's block hit me. I just couldn't write that first sentence. I wrote the beginning of it and wasn't happy with it. So I deleted it and started over again. The next version was no better, so I deleted it, too. After about an hour, I realized that I was in trouble: I had written three sentences out of five or six pages that I had to produce. Even worse, the whole thing was due on my boss's desk the next afternoon.

So, where and how did I get into trouble with my assignment? I thought I knew perfectly well what I wanted to say and how I wanted to say it. My problem was trying to get every word and every sentence "just right" the first time I wrote them. I had a picture of the finished newsletter in my head, but I just didn't know how to get to that picture. Somewhere along the way, I became unable to translate my writing plans into words, sentences and pages. I focused too much on the product of my writing that I had envisioned but that did not yet exist. I was not thinking enough on the process of getting from a blank computer screen to the finished text.

Now I know that I followed the product model of composing that day. As its name suggests, the product approach forces the writer to concentrate on the finished text, or the product of writing, at the expense of the steps and stages necessary to arrive at that product. Finishing the piece quickly, efficiently and in one sitting is what counts. This desire to write everything perfectly the first time can demoralize and incapacitate the writer, especially an inexperienced one.

Here are some of the main features of product-based writing:

- It assumes that writers produce texts in "one sitting", without revising or taking pauses in their work.
- It forces the writer to "think before writing". Product-oriented writers must have a clear plan for writing in our heads before composing.
- Producing only one draft forces them to settle for what came first, which may or may not be their best work.
- In product-oriented writing, there is little or no opportunity for feedback from others.

When someone tells us to "think before we write", we are being asked to believe that meaning can be fully formed in our head before we commit it to paper. It is as if we were forced not only to construct the paper fully in our mind, but also to memorize it. According to the product approach, only then can we begin to write. If this is correct, then writing means only transcribing existing information, ideas, and opinions on to paper.

A writer who follows the product model gets only one opportunity to formulate and express his or her thoughts. Whatever meaning that writer has created in his or her head by thinking about the subject of his or her writing gets transferred on to paper or computer screen as the final version. The quality of such writing (as well as the quality of the ideas which gave birth to it) may be passable, but it is hardly the best this writer can do given the chance to develop and refine these ideas through multiple drafts.

Within the product model, a writer gets only one chance to "get it right". As my story about writing the newsletter illustrates, this can lead to writer's block, fear of the blank page or blank computer screen, or whatever else we can call that feeling of helplessness and despair which we face when a deadline is looming and we have not written anything. This feeling makes us rush, and rushing, in turn, produced bad writing.

Because there are no drafts and revisions in product-based writing, writers get little or no opportunity to ask others for feedback and suggestions to improve the writing. The first and only draft is what gets submitted, usually for a grade, and by that time, it is too late to work on improvements. The very first reader who sees the writing, be it a boss at work or a teacher at school, is its judge and jury. This very first reader of a piece grades it or evaluates it in some other way, returning the verdict to the writer. As you learned from the chapter of this book dedicated to rhetoric, composing is a highly social process and no writer works in a vacuum. Asking anyone to write without feedback and the chance to discuss their ideas and drafts clearly contradicts that.

Process-Based Writing

In order to learn to see writing as a process, it is first important to understand that the meaning of any text is created during the act of writing itself, not before. Here are some basic principles of process-based writing:

- Writing is a process and practice. The meaning of any text is created and evolves during composing and revision.
- In order to develop meaning fully, multiple drafts are necessary. Writing is much more than a transcription tool. It is a means of making knowledge, learning, and critical thinking.
- The writing process can be divided into stages that include but are not limited to invention, revision, and editing.
- Writing is a non-linear process, and its stages often overlap.
- Writers actively seek feedback from readers and judiciously use that feedback in their revisions.
- The process model empowers writers by encouraging them to understand and refine their writing strategies and techniques.

Most writers do not begin a new piece with a set meaning in their minds. We may have an initial idea for a piece of writing, but in order to implement that idea, we have to shape and re-shape it constantly as we write and re-write. The meaning if any text is an ever-evolving entity. Thinking does not precede writing, but happens simultaneously with writing. This shaping and re-shaping of the text's meaning takes place through drafting and revision. For example, I took every chapter in this book through several drafts before it was published. Some parts of this text were rewritten five or six times, as my own thinking about them changed and as I received feedback from reviewers.

Writing is a Non-Linear and Recursive Process

In Lewis Carroll's tale Alice in Wonderland, the following dialog takes place between the King and the White Rabbit. Alice is on trial, and the Rabbit believes that he has a letter that might prove her innocence. He asks the King to allow him to read the letter. After the King agrees, the Rabbit asks: "Where shall I begin, please, your Majesty?" And the King answers: "Begin at the beginning…. And go on till you come to the end: then stop".

Writing, of course, is not the same as reading, but writers who are used to the product-based approach to composing often work on their compositions in a manner similar to the one in which the Rabbit read his letter. As you recall, the product-based approach requires writers to "think before they write".

According to this theory, we have to plan and lay out our whole compositions in our heads before we can begin writing them down. Consequently, a writer who has the whole piece stored in his or her mind, can quite easily write it from the beginning through the middle and to the end. After all, according to this approach nothing should change in the content of the piece during the act of writing itself. According to the product theory, writing is a sequential and orderly process of transcription.

Having studied the process model, however, we know that the content of every piece of writing gets developed during composing and not before. Thus, when we are working on a paper, we are not merely committing to paper or computer screen some pre-determined and pre-planned ideas that existed in our heads before we began composing. Instead, we are formulating and refining those ideas as compose. Such an approach allows us to take care of the content of the piece before be begin to worry about its structure.

Writers who approach composing in a linear way tend to think about their pieces in terms of structure rather than content first. That is, before they even come up with enough to say, they, at least subconsciously, begin to worry about introduction, body, conclusion, and other structural elements of a text that does not yet exist. It is difficult for them to do otherwise because, if writing is linear (and in their minds it is), then you have to create the pieces of the future paper sequentially. According to this method, it is

impossible to write the body of a text before the introduction. Similarly, within this framework, you cannot write a conclusion before the introduction is finished, and so on.

Writing is a non-linear and recursive process. This means that most writers do not "begin at the beginning" of a piece and "end at the end". Instead, composing takes places in chunks, with authors going back and forth between clusters of ideas and writing possibilities, constantly reviewing and revising them, and moving them between the various parts of the prospective text.

So, how might this non-linear approach to writing work in practical terms? To understand, consider one student's composing process.

Melissa Hull was a student in one of my first-year writing classes. One of the assignments in that class required her to find and study a text produced by some oppressed or under-represented ethnic or cultural group and to show how that group had, over time, adjusted its writing and its self-representation in order to survive in a society dominated by other cultures. Melissa decided to study texts produced by Arvanites, an ethnic and linguistic minority in Greece. Melissa's approach to the project is an excellent example of the recursive and non-linearity nature of writing. I interviewed Melissa to gain an insight into her research and writing processes. The following are summaries of parts of our conversation.

Pavel Zemliansky: Could you describe the early stages of the project? How did you begin to make sense of the assignment?

Melissa Hull: I started to take notes and jot down ideas before even finding any texts written by Arvanites. However, I did not want to get too far along into the project without showing it to someone first. I was worried that maybe I was doing something wrong.

Pavel Zemliansky: How did you start your research and why did you choose to write about Arvanites?

Melissa Hull: I did some searches of online databases on the library websites on marginalized cultures. At first, the assignment was a little confusing, though.

Pavel Zemliansky: Could you describe the writing of the first draft?

Melissa Hull: I did some searches and found a lot of materials about Arvanites but none by them. It appears that their language is almost dead, so there aren't many written texts by them. I found some texts on the web that said they were by Arvanites, but they were in Greek, so I could not go with them. I decided to start writing the draft just to make a better sense of the assignment and to go by what I had. I thought things would become clearer as I went. I ended up writing five drafts.

Pavel Zemliansky: I seem to remember that you struggled after you write the very first rough draft? What was difficult and how did you resolve the problems?

Melissa Hull: I knew absolutely nothing about them, but they seemed interesting and wanted to find out.

Pavel Zemliansky: Could you describe the differences between your first and following drafts?

Melissa Hull: After I wrote the first draft and received some feedback from my workshop group, I began to understand that I need a change of direction my approach because I was not going to be able to find enough texts by the Arvanites. So, I looked a bit broader and wondered if I could use other elements of their culture, such as architecture and crafts, as texts. I was also beginning to realize that the point of my paper could be that there weren't enough texts by the Arvanites and that facts showed something about their culture. So, my point of view on the subject changed as I kept writing drafts and researching.

As you can see from these excerpts, Melissa's plans and the direction in which her paper was going change as she conducted additional research, revised, and received responses from her classmates and instructor. She was creating meaning in and through the process of research and writing.

How does the non-linear and the non-sequential nature of the writing process affect you as a writer? It urges you to move away from thinking about your compositions in terms of an introduction, body, and conclusion, that is they are thinking in structural terms. Very often, when students discuss their writing plans with me, they say something like "and then, in this paragraph, I will have idea X. And then in the next paragraph, I will include story Y". Certainly, there comes a time in the writing process when a writer needs to revise for structure and coherence deciding how to organize paragraphs and sentences. But, in my experience, many student writers begin to worry about structure way too early, way before they have fully formed and developed their ideas for writing.

So, as you begin to write your next piece, I invite you to begin by thinking not about the structure of your yet unwritten text but about its content. You will create the structure later, once you know what kind of material you have for your writing. Your content

will determine the structure of your paper, and you will generate that content not by going through some predetermined routine, but by working in a creative, non-linear, and non-sequential way.

Applying the Process Approach to Research Writing

The generic research paper assignment that most of us have been given in school often requires us to come up with a thesis, or position on the subject of our research before we begin researching. The crudest by widely spread example of this approach goes something like this: a student writer is asked to "defend" a position he or she strongly believes in and to "support" that position with researched evidence.

The assumption here is that the writer knows exactly what they want to say before the composing process begins. It is easy to see that, in this case, the purpose of research is to find the kinds of sources, proofs, and theories that confirm the writer's existing opinion. Thus, the definition of the term "research" itself is changed and searching for answers is replaced with a quick fix of facts, statistics, and quotes.

Suppose, for example, that you have been assigned to write a researched argument about the death penalty. Suppose also that you are against the death penalty and that, in your paper, you will try to "prove" that killing someone as a means of administering justice is morally wrong.

By the way, I think that arguing for or against the death penalty, abortion rights, and other similar controversial subject in a research project is very difficult because most people, including you, the writer, have set views on each of these subjects that cannot be changed. But, we will use the example of the death penalty argument anyway because it keeps popping up in traditional research papers.

Armed with the belief that death penalty is wrong, you go to the library or browse the Internet looking for "research" to support your thesis. Of course, because you already have your thesis, it is very tempting to look for and use only those sources that agree with you and to discard or overlook the others. If you are lucky, you find enough such sources and construct a paper that argues for the abolition of the death penalty. Ask yourself the following question, though: what have you found out or investigated during your research? Have you discovered new theories, opinions, or aspects of your subject? Did anything surprise you, intrigue you, or make you look further? If you answered no to these questions, you did not fulfill the purpose of true research, which is to explore, to discover, and to investigate.

The purpose of research is not to look for proofs that would fit the author's pre-existing theories, but to learn about the subject of the investigation as much as possible and then form those theories, opinions, and arguments on the basis of this newly found knowledge and understanding. And what if there is no data that prove your theory? What if, after hours and days of searching, you realize that there is nothing out there that would allow you to make the claim that you wanted to make?

Most likely, this will lead to frustration, a change of the paper's topic, and having to start all over again. Not only will this inconvenience you by making you to race against the clock to meet the deadline and to do lots more busywork than necessary, but it will also be a waste of time because you will not learn anything new. Even if you manage to create a neat and efficient paper, it will be false research, simply jumping through hoops in order to fulfill another meaningless school assignment.

So, should you begin every research project as a disinterested individual without opinions, ideas, and beliefs? Of course, not! There is nothing wrong about having opinions, ideas, and beliefs about your subject before beginning the research process. Good researchers and writers are passionate about their work and want to share their passion with the world. Moreover, pre-existing knowledge can be a powerful research-starter.

But what separates a true researcher from someone who simply looks for "proofs" for a pre-fabricated thesis is that a true researcher is willing to question those pre-existing beliefs and to take his or her understanding of the research topic well beyond what he or she knew at the outset. Speaking in terms of the process theory of writing, a good researcher and writer is willing to create new meaning, a new understanding of his or her subject through research and writing and based on the ideas and beliefs that he or she had entering the research project.

Writing Activity: Examining Past Writing Experiences

Remember a situation in which you chose or were forced to follow the product model, whether consciously or sub-consciously. Consider both school writing tasks and out-of-school ones. Working on your own or with a partner, jot down some answers to the following questions. After you finish, be sure to share your ideas with your classmates.

What was the assignment's purpose, audience, and how much time did you have to complete it?

- Briefly describe your composing process. Talk about the amount of time you spent planning the piece in your head and the amount of time you spent writing it. Try to remember whether you had the opportunity to receive feedback from others before the assignment was due. If not, why?
- If at any point in the assignment, you hit writer's block, what did you do about it? Did you have adequate time, resources, and writing techniques to overcome it?
- Who read and evaluated your writing after it was completed? What criteria was the evaluation based on? Did you feel that you did a good job with the piece?

The Main Stages of the Writing Process

The word "process" itself implies doing things in stages and over time. Applied to writing, this means that as you proceed from the beginning of a writing project through its middle and towards the end, you go through certain definable stages, each of which needs to be completed in order for the whole project to succeed. Composing is very complex intellectual work consisting of many complex mental activities and processes. As we will see in the next section of this chapter, it is often difficult to say when and where one stage of the writing process ends and the next one begins. However, it is generally agreed that the writing process has at least three discreet stages: invention, revision, and editing.

In addition to inventing, revising, and editing, writers who follow the process approach also seek and receive feedback to their drafts from others. It is also important to understand that the writing process is recursive and non-linear. What this means is that a writer may finish initial invention, produce a draft, and then go back to generating more ideas, before revising the text he or she created.

Invention

Invention is what writers do before they produce a first complete draft of their piece. As its name suggests, invention helps writers to come up with material for writing. The process theory states that no writer should be expected to simply sit down and write a complete piece without some kind of preparatory work. The purpose of invention is to explore various directions in which the piece may go and to try different ways to develop material for writing. Note the words "explore" and "try" in the previous sentence. They suggest that not all the material generated during invention final, or even the first draft.

To a writer used to product-based composing, this may seem like a waste of time and energy. Why generate more ideas during invention than you can into the paper, they reason? Remember that your goal during invention is to explore various possibilities for your project. At this point, just about the most dangerous and counter-productive thing you can do as a writer is to "lock in" on one idea, thesis, type of evidence, or detail, and ignore all other possibilities. Such a limited approach is particularly dangerous when applied to research writing. A discussion of that follows in the section of this chapter which is dedicated to the application the process model to research writing. Below, I offer several invention, revision, and editing strategies and activities.

Invention Techniques

These invention strategies invite spontaneity and creativity. Feel free to adjust and modify them as you see fit. They will probably work best for you if you apply them to a specific writing project rather than try them out "for practice's sake". As you try them, don't worry about the shape or even content of your final draft. At this stage, you simply don't know what that draft is going to look like. You are creating its content as you invent. This is not a complete list of all possible invention strategies. Your teacher and classmates may be able to share other invention ideas with you.

Free-writing

As its name suggests, free writing encourages the writer to write freely and without worrying about the content or shape of the writing. When you free-write, your goal is to generate as much material on the page as possible, no matter what you say or how you say it.

Try to write for five, ten, or even 15 minutes without checking, censoring, or editing yourself in any way. You should not put your pen or pencil down, or stop typing on the computer, no matter what. If you run out of things to say, repeat "I have nothing to say" or something similar until the next idea pops into your head. Let your mind go, go with the flow, and don't worry about the end product.
Your objective is to create as much text as possible. Don't even worry about finishing your sentences or separating your paragraphs. You are not writing a draft of your paper. Instead, you are producing raw material for that draft. Later on, you just might find a gem of an idea in that raw material that you can develop into a complete draft. Also, don't worry if anyone will be able to read what you

have written – most likely you will be the only reader of your text. If your teacher asks you to share your free writing with other students, you can explain what you have written to your group mates as you go along.

Brainstorming

When brainstorming, you list as quickly as possible all thoughts and ideas which are connected, however loosely, to the topic of your writing. As with freewriting, you should not worry about the shape or structure of your writing. Your only concern should be to write as long a list of possibilities as you can. As you brainstorm, try not to focus your writing radar too narrowly, on a single aspect of your topic or a single question. The broader you cast your brainstorming net, the better because a large list of possibilities will give you a wealth of choices when time comes to compose your first draft. Your teacher may suggest how many items to have on your brainstorming list. I usually ask my students to come up with at least ten to twelve items in a five to ten-minute long brainstorming session, more if possible.

Mind-Mapping

Mind-mapping, which is also known as webbing or clustering, invites you to create a visual representation of your writing topic or of the problem you are trying to solve through your writing and research. The usefulness of mind mapping as invention techniques has been recognized by professionals in many disciplines, with at least one software company designing a special computer program exclusively for creating elaborate mind maps.

Here is how mind-mapping works. Write your topic or questions in the middle of a blank page, or type it in the middle of a computer screen, and think about any other topics or subtopics related to this main topic or question. Then branch out of the center connecting the central idea of your mind map to the other ones. The result should like a spider's web. The figure is a mind-map I made for the first draft of the chapter of this book dedicated to rhetoric.

Drawing

This invention strategy also asks the writer to create a visual representation of his or topic and is particularly useful for personal writing projects and memoirs. In such projects, memories and recollections, however vague and uncertain, are often starting points for writing. Instead of writing about your memories, this invention strategy invites you to draw them.

The advantage of this strategy is that it allows the writer not only to restore these memories in preparation for writing, but also to reflect upon them. As you know by now, one of the fundamental principles of the process approach to writing is that meaning is created as the writer develops the piece from draft to draft. Drawing elements of your future project may help you create such meaning. I am not particularly good at visual arts, so I will not subject you to looking at my drawings. Instead, I invite you to create your own.

Outlining

Outlining can be a powerful invention tool because it allows writers to generate ideas and to organize them in a systematic manner. In a way, outlining is similar to mind mapping as it allows you to break down main ideas and points into smaller ones. The difference between mind maps and outlines is, of course, the fact that the former provides a visual representation of your topic while the latter gives you a more linear, textual one. If you like to organize your thoughts systematically as you compose, a good outline can be a useful resource when you begin drafting.

However, it is extremely important to observe two conditions when using outlining as your main invention strategy. The first is to treat your outline as a flexible plan for writing and nothing more. The keyword is "flexible". Your outline is not a rigid set of points which you absolutely must cover in your paper, and the structure of your outline, with all its points and sub-points, does not predetermine the structure of your paper.

The second condition follows from the first. If, in the process of writing the paper, you realize that your current outline does not suit you anymore, change it or discard it. Do not follow it devotedly, trying to fit your writing into what your outline wants it to be. So, again, the outline is you flexible plan for writing, not a canon that you have to follow at all cost. It is hard for writers to create a "perfect" or complete outline before writing because the meaning of a piece takes shape during composing, not before. It is difficult, if not impossible, to know what you are going to say in your writing unless and until you begin to say it. Outlining may help you in planning your first draft, but it should not determine it.

Keeping a Journal or a Writer's Notebook

Keeping a journal or a writer's notebook is another powerful invention strategy. Keeping a writer's journal can work regardless of the genre you are working in. Journals and writer's notebooks are popular among writers of fiction and creative non-fiction. But they also have a huge potential for researching writers because keeping a journal allows you not only to record events and details, but also to reflect on them through writing. In the chapter of this book dedicated to researching in academic disciplines, I discuss one particular type of writing journal called the double-entry journal. If you decide to keep a journal or a writer's notebook as an invention strategy, keep in mind the following principles:

- Write in your journal or notebook regularly.
- Keep everything you write – you never know when you may need or want to use it in your writing.
- Write about interesting events, observations, and thoughts.
- Reflect on what you have written. Reflection allows you to make that leap from simple observation to making sense of what you have observed.
- Frequently re-read your entries.

Reading

It is hard to overestimate the importance of reading as an invention strategy. As you can learn from the chapters on rhetoric and on reading, writing is a social process that never occurs in a vacuum. To get ideas for writing of your own, you need to be familiar with ideas of others. Reading is one of the best, if not the best way, to get such material. Reading is especially important for research writing. For a more in-depth discussion of the relationship between reading and writing and for specific activities designed to help you to use reading for writing, see Chapter 3 of this book dedicated to reading.

Examining your Current Knowledge

The best place to start looking for a research project topic is to examine your own interests, passions, and hobbies. What topics, events, people, or natural phenomena, or stories interest, concern you, or make you passionate? What have you always wanted to find out more about or explore in more depth? Looking into the storehouse of your knowledge and life experiences will allow you to choose a topic for your research project in which you are genuinely interested and in which you will, therefore, be willing to invest plenty of time, effort, and enthusiasm.

Simultaneously with being interesting and important to you, your research topic should, of course, interest your readers. As you have learned from the chapter on rhetoric, writers always write with a purpose and for a specific audience. Therefore, whatever topic you choose and whatever argument you will build about it through research should provoke response in your readers. And while almost any topic can be treated in an original and interesting way, simply choosing the topic that interests you, the writer, is not, in itself, a guarantee of success of your research project. Here is some advice on how to select a promising topic for your next research project.

As you think about possible topics for your paper, remember that writing is a conversation between you and your readers. Whatever subject you choose to explore and write about has to be something that is interesting and important to them as well as to you. Remember kairos, or the ability to "be in the right place at the right time, which we discussed earlier in this chapter.

When Selecting Topics for Research, Consider the Following Factors:

- Your existing knowledge about the topic;
- What else you need or want to find out about the topic;
- What questions about or aspects of the topic are important not only for you but for others around you;
- Resources (libraries, internet access, primary research sources, and so on) available to you to conduct a high-quality investigation of your topic.

Read about and "around" various topics that interest you. As I argue later on in this chapter, reading is a powerful invention tool capable of teasing out subjects, questions, and ideas which would not have come to mind otherwise. Reading also allows you to find out what questions, problems, and ideas are circulating among your potential readers, thus enabling you to better and quicker enter the conversation with those readers through research and writing.

Writing Activity: Generating Topics

If you have an idea of the topic or issue you want to study, try asking the following questions:

- Why do I care about this topic?

- What do I already know or believe about this topic?
- How did I receive my knowledge or beliefs (personal experiences, stories of others, reading, and so on)?
- What do I want to find out about this topic?
- Who else cares about or is affected by this topic? In what ways and why?
- What do I know about the kinds of things that my potential readers might want to learn about it?
- Where do my interests about the topic intersect with my readers' potential interests, and where they do not?

Which topic or topics has the most potential to interest not only you, the writer, but also your readers?

Designing Research Questions

Assuming that you were able to select the topic for your next research project, it is now time to design some research questions. Forming specific and relevant research questions will allow you to achieve three important goals:

- Direct your research from the very beginning of the project
- Keep your research focused and on track
- Help you find relevant and interesting sources

Revision Methods

Revision is Essential for Quality Writing and Research

At the heart of the process approach to writing is revision. When writers revise, they assess the strengths and weaknesses of what they have written so far and change the content of the text in an effort to make it more rhetorically effective and interesting for the readers as well as more satisfying for the writer. Again, I repeat, the changes have to be in the content of the writing. Merely making mechanical changes, such as eliminating grammatical errors is not revision. When writers revise, they re-see their message and their approach to the very subject of the piece. A writer committed to revision has no shortcuts around it. Through revision, the text is changed developed, expanded or made more concise, and so on.

Revising a text requires a certain a mindset. Authors who are committed to the idea of revision need to get rid of the popular perception that good writers create their works when struck by genius and in one sitting. They need to understand and get accustomed to the idea that writing is not a "one-shot" activity. It is not a timed contest where you only get one try. Win now or bust. Write one perfect draft or lose the competition. Do your best now, under pressure, or receive a bad grade. But any kind of writing is a creative process, and, like all processes, it implies stages. It allows the writer the opportunity to improve over time, to make changes, to read and re-read what has already been written, think about it, discuss it with others, and improve it.

When writing within the process model, you usually produce only one draft. Once you found your sources, wrote down their summaries on note cards, and gave some thought to ways of arranging your material, you get one chance to write a paper. Writers who approach research as a process constantly evaluate and re-evaluate what they have written and, based on those evaluations, decide how to proceed with their research and writing.

To illustrate how revision might work in a process-based research project, let us return to the example about the death penalty paper. Again, I realize that this example is not perfect, but it is worth using it because of its familiarity to most college students and for convenience's sake. A process-oriented writer is guided by the idea that once the first round of searches and the first draft are completed, the investigation is far from over. Such a writer has only begun to make his or her meaning and there is still much to be done.

As you experiment with the revision strategies below, remember that making changes to the content of your text is the essence of revision. As a writer, you should not get too attached to your current draft. Instead, you should be able to distance yourself from it, evaluate it as critically as possible, and re-imagine it in a new light. These revision techniques are designed to help you do just that.

Ask Focusing Questions

Focus in writing is the issue, or sub-topic that is at the center of a given text. For example, within a general subject, such as "surfing", many different foci are possible. One writer may choose to write about the history of surfing, while another might decide to create an instructional manual teaching the basic techniques of the sport. Yet another may want to write a personal narrative about memorable surfing experiences, and so on. A first draft of a text is not always focused because, in a first draft, most writers explore the possibilities their subject has to offer and test the various directions in which they can take their writing. Therefore, one of the tasks you may face after you write the first rough draft of your work is to revise it for focus.

Searching and (Re)Searching

This method is about not settling for the first set of research sources you found and look for other and better ones between the first and second draft. Because writing is a recursive process, when you begin a research writing project, you never really know what you will find. So, once you have created a first exploratory draft of the project, you will ideally have new questions about your topic. To answer those questions, try to search for new sources, even if that will mean replacing the sources you found previously. To test this technique, try the following writing activity.

Writing Activity: Gaining New Knowledge through Revision

After completing the first draft of your research project that is probably based on your preexisting knowledge about the subject and the first round of your searches, consider the following questions. Apply these questions to any research project you are currently working on. You can complete this activity on your own and with your own draft, or use these questions in a workshop group as a guide for discussion and responding.

- During your first round of searches, what new information, ideas and opinions about your subject have you discovered?
- Which of your research results were expected and which ones puzzled you, surprised you, and intrigued you and why?
- How does your current understanding of your subject differ from the one you had before you began your research?
- Look back at your original research questions. In the light of your new knowledge, can they be revised, clarified, or modified in any way?
- What additional research do you need in order to answer these revised questions?
- Do not commit to a fixed thesis or a fixed point of view at this point. You are still looking, still exploring.

This activity is an example of what Bruce Ballenger (2001) called "writing in the middle" (176). You are likely between the first and the second draft of a research project. You have completed an initial search, and now it is time to evaluate what you know and what else you need to find out. In terms of the process theory, you are well on your way of creating interesting and rhetorically meaning for yourself and for your readers. By researching, writing about your data, and constantly evaluating both your research data and your writing, you are creating that new and original system of beliefs about your subject which Doug Brent talks about and which I mentioned earlier.

Writing Activity: Asking Focusing Questions

In the following activity, work with a rough draft you have recently completed. You can complete this activity on your own and working with your own draft. You can also complete this task in a small workshop group and apply the questions below to your classmates' rough drafts. As you work through the tasks below, remember that your goal is to find focus of your writing and to narrow your subject down to a manageable research question or set of questions that you can then investigate in your piece. Work through the following tasks thoroughly. Take adequate notes and record your answers and ideas. If you are reading someone else's writing, be sure to discuss your findings with the author.

- Read the draft carefully, several times if necessary.
- As you read, underline or highlight words, sentences, ideas, or paragraphs that, for whatever reason, seem important or interesting.
- What ideas, stories or arguments is the draft trying to convey or advance? Does it have a "center of gravity", a central or important point or idea? Perhaps it has several such centers, in which case you will want to take note of them all, as each can later become the paper's focus.
- Which of the ideas, stories, or arguments in the draft are worth developing further and which ones can be discarded? Remember that these ideas and arguments must be interesting and important not only to the writer but also the potential readers of the paper.
- Try to plan for the next draft keeping in mind the focus (or foci) that you found going through the preceding questions.
- As a result of this activity, your piece may take a completely different direction from the one you originally envisioned. Therefore, radical changes in your draft will likely be necessary. You will probably need to rewrite and rearrange whole sections and paragraphs of the paper, add new details, examples, and arguments while discarding some of the old ones.

Writing Activity: "Fat" Draft and Writing between the Lines

I learned these two revision techniques from my mentor and friend Wendy Bishop. Since then, I have used them many times both in my own writing and in my teaching.

In the "fat" draft activity, you are asked to double the length of your current draft. It does not matter where in the draft you add the material as long as the next version of your text is twice as long as the previous one. It does not even matter all that much whether the sentences and paragraphs you are adding are good enough to stay in final version of your paper. Remember that you are making meaning as you revise, and it is important to generate as many options and ideas as possible in the process of revision.

In "Writing between the Lines", you are also required to double the length of your current draft, except here you add a new like underneath every existing one. Computers make this kind of text manipulation easy. The content of every new line you add will, in some way, be related to the line that precedes it. The lines do not need to dovetail into one another smoothly, and the transitions between them do not have to be seamless. Although the organizational decisions you will make about your paper later on may be influenced by what you write now, your primary concern should not be the structure of your paper or transitions between paragraphs and sentences. Instead, you should focus on generating as much material as possible by adding explanations, details, new research, descriptions, and so on.

Writing Activity: Searching in the Middle

This activity will work best if completed between the first and the second drafts of a research project. As in previous exploratory tasks of this chapter, you can apply the questions below to any research project you are currently working on. And, as with previous activities, you can either apply these questions to your own draft or to the drafts of others in a small workshop group. As you work on the questions below, use the notes that you took about your first draft during the previous exploration activity.

- Review your first draft. Get an idea of what it is saying, but try not to look at it as a sum of introduction, body, and conclusion. Instead, evaluate the ideas and concepts presented in it and try to decide how well they answer your research questions.
- Try to make some plans for revision. Use the revision strategies and techniques discussed earlier in this chapter as well as feedback from other readers.
- Now review the research results that you obtained during the first round of searching. What do they do and not do to answer your questions? Revisit your research questions and try to revise them. Next, go back to the library and the Internet and conduct another round of searching, guided by your current, post-first draft vision of your topic and of your project.

Writing Activity: Cut and Paste

Here is another activity invented by Peter Elbow. When I assign this activity to my students, some of them consider it a little unusual at first, but eventually, most of them see its usefulness. The purpose of the cut and paste activity is to radically re-see and re-imagine your draft by rearranging and rewriting its paragraphs. This activity works on the assumption that in order to radically re-imagine and revise their work, writers need to detach themselves as much as possible from the draft in its current form. In order to see your paper in a new light, you need to try to forget what it looks like now.

Elbow's cut and paste technique is likely to help you revise on two levels. It will probably help you focus your writing better by showing which parts of your draft belong there and which ones need to be discarded or rewritten. But it may also help you to revise for development and detail by highlighting those parts of your paper which need additional explanations, descriptions, scenes, stories, and so on.

- With a pair of scissors, cut your draft into paragraphs. In my experience and that of my students, printing and cutting the paper works better than manipulating the paragraphs on the computer screen because it seems to allow the writer to remove him or herself better from the current form of the text.
- Lay the paragraphs out on a table in front of you. Make two piles: in one pile, put the paragraphs which seem to fit in with the focus of your paper the way you currently see that focus. Put all the other paragraphs in the other pile.
- Begin working with the second pile by reading through the paragraphs. Try to decide which of them can be rewritten and improved and which ones can be discarded. Don't be afraid to get rid of the material that does not fit into your design for the paper.
- Now, consider the first pile and decide whether any of the paragraphs in it should be re-written.
- Combine both piles. Try to create a new version (or several versions) of your text by arranging and re-arranging the paragraphs in several different ways. Remember that you will be revising most, if not all of them.
- Notice what is missing in this new version. Do you need to add new arguments, details, descriptions, scenes, and so on?

Completing this activity will not produce a finished next draft for you, but it will help you to make some firm and realistic plans for it. Of course, because you have substantially re-seen and re-imagined your first draft, you will have to do write some new material to add to the existing paragraphs and complete the next draft.

Seeking Feedback from Others and Using It for Revision

Because writing is a social process, it is impossible to compose without getting feedback on your work in progress. The comments and questions you receive from your readers in the process of writing a paper will help you revise and improve your writing. They will also help you to fine tune your writing to your readers' needs and expectations. This is why writers must to actively seek others' feedback on their writing and to use that feedback critically in their revisions.

Basic Principles of Peer Response

A large part of a successful peer response process is the mindset of the participants. Your goal as a writer seeking feedback should be to engage others, your readers, in a conversation about your ideas and your text. Tell your readers about the kinds of problems you are experiencing with the writing and about the questions you have.

As a reader of the writing by others, your goal should be not to criticize, dismantle, and destroy their draft. Your goal is not to fix their grammar mistakes or proofread their paper for them. Instead, your strategic goal as a reader and responder is to help them to take their texts where they, not you, want it to go by giving constructive, thoughtful, and detailed feedback. One of the most accessible guides to peer response for writers has been written by Richard Straub in the essay "Responding--Really Responding – to Other Students' Writing". Straub states:

First, don't set out to seek and destroy all errors and problems in the writing. You are not an editor. You are not a teacher. You are not a cruise missile. And don't rewrite any parts of the paper. You are not the writer; you are a reader – one of many. The paper is not yours; it's the writer's (137).

He recommends the following principles of peer response:

- Play back what you read in the paper to the writer. Ask the writer if the meaning you are getting is the meaning he or she intended.
- Do not take on too much. Select one or two global (or content) problems in the piece and work in them.
- Do not worry about grammar and spelling unless it is an editing workshop.
- Comment in writing. Take notes on the margins and write summative notes at the end of the paper.
- Be polite, but not too polite. If you see a problem in the writing, let the writer know.
- Balance praise and criticism.

Good peer responding strategies and techniques are learned through practice. Neither your teacher nor I will expect you to become an excellent and experienced responder to writing overnight. Use the principles above to begin your learning.

Editing and Proofreading

Any written text can be changed and improved almost indefinitely. However, there comes a time in every writing project when the writer has to polish up the final product by editing and proofreading it. What editing strategies you will choose to employ will depend on the kind of style you want your writing to have. If you want terse and compact language, you will edit for conciseness. If you want an elaborate style, you will want to make sure that every sentence and every phrase is clear and says what you want it to say. In either case, editing is a rhetorical task, and the choice of writing style depends on your rhetorical purpose, the audience for which you are writing, and the context in which you are writing. Becoming a good editor of your own and others' texts takes a lot of practice.

Reading the Paper Backwards

Start reading the paper from the last sentence on the last page. Doing this forces you to pay attention to the mechanics of every sentence and word. By the time when you proofread your paper, you have probably finished revising it, and your main concern now is to make it as error-free as possible.

Reading to the Wall

Sit or stand facing a wall in the classroom or at home. Shut out the outside world. Now, read the paper out loud to yourself, slowly and deliberately. Pay attention to separate words, phrases, and sentences.

Conclusion

I hope that this chapter has given you a foundational understanding of process approach to writing and shown you how to apply the process theory to your writing and research. This chapter will be of any use to you only if you apply the knowledge and writing techniques explained here to your own research projects, whether from this book or from elsewhere. It is not meant to be read as an

abstract work that will indoctrinate you in some inapplicable theory. Instead, I invite you to use and test everything you have read about in this chapter for your own writing.

One of the distinguishing characteristics of the process approach to composing that sets it apart from its product counterpart is the way in which the process model empowers writers. Instead of directing writers towards some set of rigid and inflexible rules about writing, the process theory encourages us become aware of the approaches, strategies, and techniques work best for us. As with any theory, following the process model of writing means adhering to certain guidelines and principles. However, within those principles the process theory allows writers considerable flexibility and independence.

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2.2: Defining the Rhetorical Situation

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2.2.1: Identifying Your Purpose, Purpose

Purpose

The second rhetorical element that influences the rhetorical situation is purpose. You have an audience, but why do you want to write for them? What are you trying to achieve? Purpose determines how you write to your audience, but also how your audience receives your writing. Aside from thinking about your own purpose, think about why the audience may be interested in reading your work. Read this article and think about the different types of purposes you might see in academic writing. How would each of these purposes change the way you write an academic essay?

Purpose

Rhetorically speaking, purpose is about making decisions as a writer about why you are writing and what you want your audience to take from your work.

There are three objectives you may have when writing a research paper.

- To inform – When you write a research paper to inform, you're not making an argument, but you do want to stress the importance of your topic. You might think about your purpose as educating your audience on a particular topic.
- To persuade – When you write a research paper to persuade, your purpose should be to take a stance on your topic. You'll want to develop a thesis statement that makes a clear assertion about some aspect of your topic.
- To analyze – Although all research papers require some analysis, some research papers make analysis a primary purpose. So, your focus wouldn't be to inform or persuade, but to analyze your topic. You will want to synthesize your research and, ideally, reach new, thoughtful conclusions based on your research.

TIPS! Here are a few tips when it comes to thinking about purpose.

You must be able to move beyond the idea that you are writing your research paper only because your professor is making you. While that may be true on some level, you must decide on a purpose based on what topic you're researching and what you want to say about that topic.

You must decide for yourself, within the requirements of your assignment, why you are engaging in the research process and writing a paper. Only when you do this will your writing be engaging for your audience.

Your assignment or project instructions affect purpose. If your professor gives you a formal writing assignment sheet for your research paper, it is especially important to read very carefully through your professor's expectations. If your professor does not provide a formal assignment sheet, be prepared to ask questions about the purpose of the assignment.

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2.2.2: Identifying Your Medium, Consider Your Media

Consider Your Media

An often overlooked element of the rhetorical situation is medium. Medium (or the plural "media") is the means or way an author uses to present a composition to their audience. This can be through a written essay, a video, an email, or a social media post, to name a few. Medium is directly impacted by your audience and purpose, since the medium you select should be the one that best engages your readers and holds their attention.

In your own experience, how do you see media used to engage with an audience and present a purpose? How does changing media impact the rhetorical situation?

Learn How to be More Creative about the Effective Use of Media

Media can refer to how meaning is conveyed. For example, people speak of television and radio as a kind of media – the mass media. They refer to printed documents distributed by newspapers, magazines, and books as print media. Texts such as databases or multimedia published on the Internet are called online media. The term media is broadly defined, yet two definitions are particularly popular:

- Print media: Paper essays and reports, magazines, books, hypertext
- Mass media: Radio, TV, magazines, newspapers
- Digital media: Works produced and distributed via the Internet
- Spoken media: Talk, speeches
- Visual media: Paintings, clip art, animations, interactive media
- Databases: response forums
- Artistic media: Paintings, sculpture, music, movies
- Video conferencing media: NetMeeting, SeeUSeeMe

New technologies are creating new ways of conveying meaning and blurring distinctions across media. The computer is slowly becoming the printing press, the television, the game console, and the music.

Media Analysis Questions

1. Does the text employ multiple media? What is the ratio of visuals to words?
2. Would an alternative medium be more appropriate for the text's purpose and audience?
3. What additional media could be used to enhance the message?

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2.2.3: Research Writing and Argument

Research Writing and Argument

When we write at the college level, we consider more than just the method of writing. The method includes our grammar, punctuation, and vocabulary. Writing in college is rhetorical, which means we consider how the reader will interpret your text. Who will read what you write? Why will he or she read it? What do you hope they gain from reading it? How do you present it to them? All of these elements work together to make up what we call "the rhetorical situation".

Specifically, the rhetorical situation asks you to consider your context. To do this, think about who you are writing for (your audience) and why you are writing to them (your purpose).

All Writing is Argumentative

This section is about rhetoric – the art of persuasion. Every time we write, we engage in argument. Through writing, we try to persuade and influence our readers, either directly or indirectly. We work to get them to change their minds, to do something, or to begin thinking in new ways. Therefore, every writer needs to know and be able to use principles of rhetoric. The first step towards such knowledge is learning to see the argumentative nature of all writing.

I have two goals in this section: to explain the term rhetoric and to give you some historical perspective on its origins and development; and to demonstrate the importance of seeing research writing as a rhetorical, persuasive activity.

As consumers of written texts, we are often tempted to divide writing into two categories: argumentative and non-argumentative. According to this view, in order to be argumentative, writing must have the following qualities. It has to defend a position in a debate between two or more opposing sides; it must be on a controversial topic; and the goal of such writing must be to prove the correctness of one point of view over another.

On the other hand, this view goes, non-argumentative texts include narratives, descriptions, technical reports, news stories, and so on. When deciding to which category a given piece of writing belongs, we sometimes look for familiar traits of argument, such as the presence of a thesis statement, of "factual" evidence, and so on.

Research writing is often categorized as non-argumentative. This happens because of the way in which we learn about research writing. Most of us do that through the traditional research report, the kind which focuses too much on information-gathering and note cards and not enough on constructing engaging and interesting points of view for real audiences. It is the gathering and compiling of information, and not doing something productive and interesting with this information, that become the primary goals of this writing exercise. Generic research papers are also often evaluated on the quantity and accuracy of external information that they gather, rather on the persuasive impact they make and the interest they generate among readers.

Having written countless research reports, we begin to suspect that all research-based writing is non-argumentative. Even when explicitly asked to construct a thesis statement and support it through researched evidence, beginning writers are likely to pay more attention to such mechanics of research as finding the assigned number and kind of sources and documenting them correctly, than to constructing an argument capable of making an impact on the reader.

Arguments Are Not Verbal Fights

We often have narrow concept of the word argument. In everyday life, argument often implies a confrontation, a clash of opinions and personalities, or just a plain verbal fight. It implies a winner and a loser, a right side and a wrong one. Because of this understanding of the word argument, the only kind of writing seen as argumentative is the debate-like position paper, in which the author defends his or her point of view against other, usually opposing points of view.

Such an understanding of argument is narrow because arguments come in all shapes and sizes. I invite you to look at the term argument in a new way. What if we think of argument as an opportunity for conversation, for sharing with others our point of view on something, for showing others our perspective of the world? What if we see it as the opportunity to tell our stories, including our life stories? What if we think of "argument" as an opportunity to connect with the points of view of others rather than defeating those points of view?

Some years ago, I heard a conference speaker define argument as the opposite of "beating your audience into rhetorical submission". I still like that definition because it implies gradual and even gentle explanation and persuasion instead of coercion. It

implies effective use of details, and stories, including emotional ones. It implies the understanding of argument as an explanation of one's world view.

Arguments then, can be explicit and implicit, or implied. Explicit arguments contain noticeable and definable thesis statements and lots of specific proofs. Implicit arguments, on the other hand, work by weaving together facts and narratives, logic and emotion, personal experiences and statistics. Unlike explicit arguments, implicit ones do not have a one-sentence thesis statement. Instead, authors of implicit arguments use evidence of many different kinds in effective and creative ways to build and convey their point of view to their audience. Research is essential for creative effective arguments of both kinds.

Definitions of Rhetoric and the Rhetorical Situation

The art of creating effective arguments is explained and systematized by a discipline called rhetoric. Writing is about making choices, and knowing the principles of rhetoric allows a writer to make informed choices about various aspects of the writing process. Every act of writing takes places in a specific rhetorical situation. The three most basic and important components of a rhetorical situations are:

- Purpose of writing
- Intended audience
- Occasion, or context in which the text will be written and read

These factors help writers select their topics, arrange their material, and make other important decisions about their work.

Before looking closely at different definitions and components of rhetoric, let us try to understand what rhetoric is not. In recent years, the word "rhetoric" has developed a bad reputation in American popular culture. In the popular mind, the term "rhetoric" has come to mean something negative and deceptive. Open a newspaper or turn on the television, and you are likely to hear politicians accusing each other of "too much rhetoric and not enough substance". According to this distorted view, rhetoric is verbal fluff, used to disguise empty or even deceitful arguments.

Examples of this misuse abound. Here are some examples.

A 2013 Washington Post article, "GOP Tries Pushing Back against 'War on Women' Rhetoric", by Nia-Malika Henderson describes a comment made by former Republican presidential candidate and Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee during the Republican National Committee annual winter meeting. Huckabee suggested that some women "believe that they are helpless without Uncle Sugar coming in and providing for them a prescription each month for birth control because they cannot control their libido or their reproductive system without the help of the government". Some Democrats pointed to Huckabee's statement as proof that the Republican party was waging a "war on women". However, in the article, Chelsi Henry, a Republican woman stated, "What war on women? That is just political rhetoric". The word "rhetoric" in this context implies a strategy to deceive or distract.

Another example is the title of the now-defunct political website, Spinsanity: Countering Rhetoric with Reason. The website's authors state that "engaged citizenry, active press and strong network of fact-checking websites and blogs can help turn the tide of deception that we now see". What this statement implies, of course, is that rhetoric is "spin" and that it is the opposite of truth.

Here, perhaps, is the most interesting example. The author of the video below, posted on Youtube, is clearly dissatisfied with the abundance of "rhetoric" in Barack Obama's 2008 campaign for the White House.



What is interesting about this clip is that its author does not seem to realize that she is engaging in rhetoric as she is criticizing the term. She has a purpose, which is to question Obama's credentials; she is addressing an audience which consists of people who are perhaps considering voting for Obama; finally, she is creating her video in a very real context of the heated battle between Senators Obama and Clinton for the Presidential nomination of the Democratic Party.

Rhetoric is not a dirty trick used by politicians to conceal and obscure, but an art, which, for many centuries, has had many definitions. Perhaps the most popular and overreaching definition comes to us from the Ancient Greek thinker Aristotle. Aristotle defined rhetoric as "the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion" (Ch.2). Aristotle saw primarily as a practical tool, indispensable for civic discourse.

Elements of the Rhetorical Situation

When composing, every writer must take into account the conditions under which the writing is produced and will be read. It is customary to represent the three key elements of the rhetorical situation as a triangle of writer, reader, and text, or, as they are represented on this image, as communicator, audience, and message.

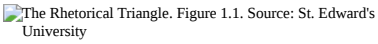

The Rhetorical Triangle. Figure 1.1. Source: St. Edward's University

Figure 2.2.3.1: Source: St. Edward's University

The three elements of the rhetorical situation are in a constant and dynamic interrelation. All three are also necessary for communication through writing to take place. For example, if the writer is taken out of this equation, the text will not be created. Similarly, eliminating the text itself will leave us with the reader and writer, but without any means of conveying ideas between them, and so on.

Moreover, changing on or more characteristics of any of the elements depicted in the figure above will change the other elements as well. For example, with the change in the beliefs and values of the audience, the message will also likely change to

accommodate those new beliefs, and so on.

In his discussion of rhetoric, Aristotle states that writing's primary purpose is persuasion. Other ancient rhetoricians' theories expand the scope of rhetoric by adding new definitions, purposes, and methods. For example, another Greek philosopher and rhetorician Plato saw rhetoric as a means of discovering the truth, including personal truth, through dialog and discussion. According to Plato, rhetoric can be directed outward (at readers or listeners), or inward (at the writer him or herself). In the latter case, the purpose of rhetoric is to help the author discover something important about his or her own experience and life.

The third major rhetorical school of Ancient Greece whose views have profoundly influenced our understanding of rhetoric were the Sophists. The Sophists were teachers of rhetoric for hire. The primary goal of their activities was to teach skills and strategies for effective speaking and writing. Many Sophists claimed that they could make anyone into an effective rhetorician. In their most extreme variety, Sophistic rhetoric claims that virtually anything could be proven if the rhetorician has the right skills. The legacy of Sophistic rhetoric is controversial. Some scholars, including Plato himself, have accused the Sophists of bending ethical standards in order to achieve their goals, while others have praised them for promoting democracy and civic participation through argumentative discourse.

What do these various definitions of rhetoric have to do with research writing? Everything!

If you have ever had trouble with a writing assignment, chances are it was because you could not figure out the assignment's purpose. Or, perhaps you did not understand very well whom your writing was supposed to appeal to. It is hard to commit to purposeless writing done for no one in particular.

Research is not a very useful activity if it is done for its own sake. If you think of a situation in your own life where you had to do any kind of research, you probably had a purpose that the research helped you to accomplish. You could, for example, have been considering buying a car and wanted to know which make and model would suite you best. Or, you could have been looking for an apartment to rent and wanted to get the best deal for your money. Or, perhaps your family was planning a vacation and researched the best deals on hotels, airfares, and rental cars. Even in these simple examples of research that are far simpler than research most writers conduct, you as a researcher were guided by some overriding purpose. You researched because you had a purpose to accomplish.

How to Approach Writing Tasks Rhetorically

The three main elements of rhetorical theory are purpose, audience, and occasion. We will look at these elements primarily through the lens of Classical Rhetoric, the rhetoric of Ancient Greece and Rome. Principles of classical rhetoric (albeit some of them modified) are widely accepted across the modern Western civilization. Classical rhetoric provides a solid framework for analysis and production of effective texts in a variety of situations.

Purpose

Good writing always serves a purpose. Texts are created to persuade, entertain, inform, instruct, and so on. In a real writing situation, these discrete purposes are often combined

Audience

The second key element of the rhetorical approach to writing is audience-awareness. As you saw from the rhetorical triangle earlier in this chapter, readers are an indispensable part of the rhetorical equation, and it is essential for every writer to understand their audience and tailor his or her message to the audience's needs.

The key principles that every writer needs to follow in order to reach and affect his or her audience are as follows:

- Have a clear idea about who your readers will be.
- Understand your readers' previous experiences, knowledge, biases, and expectations and how these factors can influence their reception of your argument.
- When writing, keep in mind not only those readers who are physically present or whom you know (your classmates and instructor), but all readers who would benefit from or be influenced by your argument.
- Choose a style, tone, and medium of presentation appropriate for your intended audience.

Occasion

Occasion is an important part of the rhetorical situation. It is a part of the writing context that was mentioned earlier in the chapter. Writers do not work in a vacuum. Instead, the content, form and reception of their work by readers are heavily influenced by the conditions in society as well as by personal situations of their readers. These conditions in which texts are created and read affect every aspect of writing and every stage of the writing process, from topic selection, to decisions about what kinds of arguments used and their arrangement, to the writing style, voice, and persona which the writer wishes to project in his or her writing.

All elements of the rhetorical situation work together in a dynamic relationship. Therefore, awareness of rhetorical occasion and other elements of the context of your writing will also help you refine your purpose and understand your audience better. Similarly having a clear purpose in mind when writing and knowing your audience will help you understand the context in which you are writing and in which your work will be read better.

One aspect of writing where you can immediately benefit from understanding occasion and using it to your rhetorical advantage is the selection of topics for your compositions. Any topic can be good or bad, and a key factor in deciding on whether it fits the occasion. In order to understand whether a particular topic is suitable for a composition, it is useful to analyze whether the composition would address an issue, or a rhetorical exigency when created. The writing activity below can help you select topics and issues for written arguments.

To understand how writers can study and use occasion in order to make effective arguments, let us examine another ancient rhetorical concept. Kairos is one of the most fascinating terms from Classical rhetoric. It signifies the right, or opportune moment for an argument to be made. It is such a moment or time when the subject of the argument is particularly urgent or important and when audiences are more likely to be persuaded by it. Ancient rhetoricians believed that if the moment for the argument is right, for instance if there are conditions in society which would make the audience more receptive to the argument, the rhetorician would have more success persuading such an audience.


Figure 1.2. Kairos. Source: Ancient Greek Cities (www.sikyon.com)

Figure 2.2.3.2: Kairos. Source: Ancient Greek Cities

For example, as I write this text, a heated debate about the war on terrorism and about the goals and methods of this war is going on in the US. It is also the year of the Presidential Election, and political candidates try to use the war on terrorism to their advantage when they debate each other. These are topics of high public interest, with print media, television, radio, and the Internet constantly discussing them. Because there is an enormous public interest in the topic of terrorism, well-written articles and reports on the subject will not fall on deaf ears. Simply put, the moment, or occasion, for the debate is right, and it will continue until public interest in the subject weakens or disappears.

Rhetorical Appeals

In order to persuade their readers, writers must use three types of proofs or rhetorical appeals. They are *logos*, or logical appeal; *pathos*, or emotional appeal; and *ethos*, or ethical appeal, or appeal based on the character and credibility of the author. It is easy to notice that modern words logical, pathetic, and ethical are derived from those Greek words. In his work Rhetoric, Aristotle writes that the three appeals must be used together in every piece of persuasive discourse. An argument based on the appeal to logic, or emotions alone will not be an effective one.

Understanding how *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos* should work together is important for writers who use research. Often, research writing assignments are written in a way that seems to emphasize logical proofs over emotional or ethical ones. Such logical proofs in research papers typically consist of factual information, statistics, examples, and other similar evidence. According to this view, writers of academic papers need to be unbiased and objective, and using logical proofs will help them to be that way.

Because of this emphasis on logical proofs, you may be less familiar with the kinds of pathetic and ethical proofs available to you.

Pathetic appeals, or appeals to emotions of the audience were considered by ancient rhetoricians as important as logical proofs. Yet, writers are sometimes not easily convinced to use pathetic appeals in their writing. As modern rhetoricians and authors of the influential book Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student (1998), Edward P.J. Corbett and Robert Connors said, "People are rather sheepish about acknowledging that their opinions can be affected by their emotions" (86).

According to Corbett, many of us think that there may be something wrong about using emotions in argument. But, I agree with Corbett and Connors, pathetic proofs are not only admissible in argument, but necessary (86-89). The most basic way of evoking appropriate emotional responses in your audience, according to Corbett, is the use of vivid descriptions (94).

Using ethical appeals, or appeals based on the character of the writer, involves establishing and maintaining your credibility in the eyes of your readers. In other words, when writing, think about how you are presenting yourself to your audience. Do you give your readers enough reasons to trust you and your argument, or do you give them reasons to doubt your authority and your credibility? Consider all the times when your decision about the merits of a given argument was affected by the person or people making the argument. For example, when watching television news, are you predisposed against certain cable networks and more inclined towards others because you trust them more?

So, how can a writer establish a credible persona for his or her audience? One way to do that is through external research. Conducting research and using it well in your writing help with you with the factual proofs (*logos*), but it also shows your readers that you, as the author, have done your homework and know what you are talking about. This knowledge, the sense of your authority that this creates among your readers, will help you be a more effective writer.

The logical, pathetic, and ethical appeals work in a dynamic combination with one another. It is sometimes hard to separate one kind of proof from another and the methods by which the writer achieved the desired rhetorical effect. If your research contains data which is likely to cause your readers to be emotional, it data can enhance the pathetic aspect of your argument. The key to using the three appeals, is to use them in combination with each other, and in moderation. It is impossible to construct a successful argument by relying too much on one or two appeals while neglecting the others.

Consider two recent examples of fairly ineffective use of the three appeals. In the beginning of April 2008, two candidates for the Democratic Party's presidential nomination, Senators Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama began airing campaign television ads in Pennsylvania ahead of their party's primary presidential election in that state. You can see both ads below.



Clinton's ad is called "Scranton" and it is heavy on *pathos*, or emotional appeal. It invokes very warm childhood memories which, the ad's creators hoped, would show Senator Clinton's "softer side" thus persuading more people to vote for her. The purpose of the ad is to stir emotion, and it does it rather well. The problem with this approach is, however, that it does not tell voters much about

the concrete steps and activities Senator Clinton would undertake if elected. The ad is rather thin on the logical appeal, and this, in turn, affects Clinton's *ethos* or credibility.

Barack Obama's ad is called "One Voice", and is calling on his supporters to "change the world".



While this is certainly a worthy cause, it is not clear from this ad how exactly Obama – still a senator at the time – intended to change the world once elected. The reason for this lack of clarity is the heavy emphasis on the pathetic appeal at the expense of *logos*. If you followed the presidential campaign of 2008, you would know that the call for change which is so clear in this ad was Obama's main slogan, a statement that became a large part of his *ethos*, or persona as a politician and as a rhetorician. This ad succeeds in highlighting that part of Obama's political persona once again while, probably intentionally, under-emphasizing *logos*.

Research Writing as Conversation

Writing is a social process. Texts are created to be read by others, and in creating those texts, writers should be aware of not only their personal assumptions, biases, and tastes, but also those of their readers. Writing, therefore, is an interactive process. It is a conversation, a meeting of minds, during which ideas are exchanged, debates and discussions take place and, sometimes, but not always, consensus is reached. You may be familiar with the famous quote by the 20th-century rhetorician Kenneth Burke who compared writing to a conversation at a social event. In his 1974 book "The Philosophy of Literary Form", Burke writes,

Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him, another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment of gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress (110-111).

This passage by Burke is extremely popular among writers because it captures the interactive nature of writing so precisely. Reading Burke's words carefully, we will notice that the interaction between readers and writers is continuous. A writer always enters a conversation in progress. In order to participate in the discussion, just like in real life, you need to know what your interlocutors have been talking about. So you listen (read). Once you feel you have got the drift of the conversation, you say (write) something. Your text is read by others who respond to your ideas, stories, and arguments with their own. This interaction never ends!

To write well, it is important to listen carefully and understand the conversations that are going on around you. Writers who are able to listen to these conversations and pick up important topics, themes, and arguments are generally more effective at reaching and impressing their audiences. It is also important to treat research, writing, and every occasion for these activities as opportunities to participate in the on-going conversation of people interested in the same topics and questions which interest you.

Our knowledge about our world is shaped by the best and most up-to-date theories available to them. Sometimes these theories can be experimentally tested and proven, and sometimes, when obtaining such proof is impossible, they are based on consensus reached as a result of conversation and debate. Even the theories and knowledge that can be experimentally tested (for example in sciences) do not become accepted knowledge until most members of the scientific community accept them. Other members of this community will help them test their theories and hypotheses, give them feedback on their writing, and keep them searching for the best answers to their questions. As Burke says in his famous passage, the interaction between the members of intellectual communities never ends. No piece of writing, no argument, no theory or discover is ever final. Instead, they all are subject to discussion, questioning, and improvement.

A simple but useful example of this process is the evolution of humankind's understanding of their planet Earth and its place in the Universe. As you know, in Medieval Europe, the prevailing theory was that the Earth was the center of the Universe and that all other planets and the Sun rotated around it. This theory was the result of the church's teachings, and thinkers who disagreed with it were pronounced heretics and often burned. In 1543, astronomer Nikolaus Copernicus argued that the Sun was at the center of the solar system and that all planets of the system rotate around the Sun. Later, Galileo experimentally proved Copernicus' theory with the help of a telescope. Of course, the Earth did not begin to rotate around the Sun with this discovery. Yet, Copernicus' and Galileo's theories of the Universe went against the Catholic Church's teachings which dominated the social discourse of Medieval Europe. The Inquisition did not engage in debate with the two scientists. Instead, Copernicus was executed for his views and Galileo was sentenced to house arrest for his views.

Although in the modern world, dissenting thinkers are unlikely to suffer such harsh punishment, the examples of Copernicus and Galileo teach us two valuable lessons about the social nature of knowledge. Firstly, Both Copernicus and Galileo tried to improve on an existing theory of the Universe that placed our planet at the center. They did not work from nothing but used beliefs that already existed in their society and tried to modify and disprove those beliefs. Time and later scientific research proved that they were right. Secondly, even after Galileo was able to prove the structure of the Solar system experimentally, his theory did not become widely accepted until the majority of people in society assimilated it. Therefore, new findings do not become accepted knowledge until they penetrate the fabric of social discourse and until enough people accept them as true.

Conclusions

In this chapter, we have learned the definition of rhetoric and the basic differences between several important rhetorical schools. We have also discussed how to key elements of the rhetorical situation: purpose, audience, and context. As you work on the research writing projects presented throughout this book, be sure to revisit this chapter often.

Everything that you have read about here and every activity you have completed as you worked through this chapter is applicable to all research writing projects in this book and beyond. Most school writing assignments give you direct instructions about your purpose, intended audience, and rhetorical occasion. Truly proficient and independent writers, however, learn to define their purpose, audiences, and contexts of their writing, on their own. The material in this chapter is designed to enable to become better at those tasks.

When you receive a writing assignment, it is tempting to see it as just another hoop to jump through and not as a genuine rhetorical situation, an opportunity to influence others with your writing. It is certainly tempting to see yourself writing only for the teacher, without a real purpose and oblivious of the context of your writing.

The material of this chapter as well as the writing projects presented throughout this book are designed to help you think of writing as a persuasive, rhetorical activity. Conducting research and incorporating its results into your paper is a part of this rhetorical process.

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2.2.4: Think Rhetorically

Think Rhetorically

Read this article. What advantages can you see by approaching a decision with a rhetorical perspective?

Write more effective documents and save time by considering the audience, purpose, context, and media for a document. Adjust your voice, tone, and persona to accommodate your communication situation.

For every writing project, you can best determine what you want to say and how you want to say it by analyzing the components of your rhetorical situation (which is sometimes called your communication situation). Learning to think rhetorically is one of the most important benefits of an education. Successful leaders and decision makers are capable of making good decisions because they have learned to examine problems from a rhetorical perspective. Successful writers have learned they can write a more effective document in less time by thinking rhetorically.

Thinking rhetorically can refer to many mental activities, such as focusing on identifying the needs of a particular audience or context.

Consider Your Context

Identify the circumstances surrounding the writing project. What is going on in the world at large that relates to how you develop and present your project.

Context refers to the occasion, or situation, that informs the reader about why a document was written and how it was written. The way writers shape their texts is dramatically influenced by their context. Writers decide how to shape their sentences by considering their contexts.

For example, the 9/11 terrorist attack on America changed the context for discussions on terrorism. When Americans talk about terrorism post-9/11, they understand the borders of America are threatened, that terrorism can occur in our homes.

Contexts are sometimes described as formal, semi-formal, or informal. Alternatively, contexts for written documents can be described as school-based projects or work-based projects.

Why Is Context Important?

The context for each document strongly affects how you research your topic, how you organize your context, and what media you employ to deliver your message.

Content and Research

What does your reader know about the topic? Will original research be necessary? Will traditional research suffice? Will your audience be persuaded by personal knowledge? Will they require facts and figures?

For example, if you were writing a report on the possibility that Iraq is amassing weapons of mass destruction and your audience were members of the United Nations, you would want to firmly ground your argument in research.

Media and Design

Should the work be published online or transmitted as a printed report? What colors or pictures are appropriate?

Grammar, Mechanics, Usage

The way you structure your sentences is influenced by how formal or informal your context is. Email, for example, tends to be informal. Lots of emoticons and abbreviated expressions can be used. In contrast, an end-of-the-semester research report may require formal diction.

Context Analysis Questions

- What is going on in the world of the readers that will influence the readers' thoughts and feelings about the document?
- Does the intellectual content of the document rest on the shoulders of other authors? Will your readers expect you to mention particular scholars or researchers who did the original, ground-breaking work on the subject you are exploring?
- What background information can you assume your reader is already familiar with?

Consider Your Media

Learn how to be more creative about the effective use of media.

Media can refer to how meaning is conveyed. For example, people speak of TV and radio as a kind of media--the mass media. They refer to printed documents distributed by newspapers, magazines, and books as print media. Texts such as databases or multimedia published on the Internet are called online media.The term media is broadly defined, yet two definitions are particularly popular:

1. - Print Media: Paper essays and reports, magazines, books, hypertext
   - Mass Media: Radio, TV, magazines, newspapers
   - Digital Media: Works produced and distributed via the Internet
   - Spoken Media: Talk, speeches
   - Visual Media: Paintings, clip art, animations, interactive media
   - Databases, response forums
   - Artistic Media: Paintings, sculpture, music, movies
   - Video Conferencing Media: NetMeeting, SeeUSeeMe
2. New technologies are creating new ways of conveying meaning and blurring distinctions across media. The computer is slowly becoming the printing press, the TV, the game console, and the music.

Media Analysis Questions

1. Does the text employ multiple media? What is the ratio of visuals to words?
2. Would an alternative medium be more appropriate for the text's purpose and audience?
3. What additional media could be used to enhance the message?

Consider Your Purpose

Identifying the primary reason for writing provides you with the focus you need to write an effective document in less time.

Like an onion that is peeled, revealing multiple layers, a writing document may have multiple purposes. A persuasive essay, for example, may have paragraphs that inform, paragraphs that persuade, paragraphs that threaten, and paragraphs that request information. However, on a more global level, each document must have one primary purpose.

Until you know your primary purpose for writing, you cannot know what information to leave in or leave out or even how to best organize a document. Of course, some academic documents have multiple purposes.

People write documents for countless reasons:

1. Record: Keep a record of events or information.
2. Reflect/Explore: Write in a journal, attempt to make sense of something or to shape a new idea.
3. Inform: Objectively report an event.
4. Demonstrate Knowledge: Prove, in school, that you've learned course content.
5. Summarize: Report someone else's words, theories, and research in your own words.
6. Explain: Help readers understand a difficult concept, theory, or event.
7. Analyze: Break down a problem into parts.
8. Persuade: Change minds, invoke action.
9. Theorize: Speculate on possible causes and effects.
10. Entertain: Bring joy, amazement, and thrills.

Textbooks, English instructors, and writers occasionally call the purpose statement the thesis sentence. In school contexts, some instructors require students to place the thesis statement in the introductory paragraphs. Likewise, writers of essays appearing in newspapers, magazines, and books present their thesis up front. The advantage of this deductive approach is that readers immediately know what the topic is and the writer's stance toward the subject. In contexts where the subject isn't likely to result in an emotional reaction from readers, explicit statements of purpose make sense.

When Should You Consider Your Purpose?

Because of the generative nature of the writing process, your sense of the primary purpose for a document will often become clearer once you have written a few drafts. Yet because the effectiveness of a document is chiefly determined by how well you focus on addressing a primary purpose, you can save time by identifying your purpose as early as possible.

1. What is your primary purpose for writing? For instance, are you attempting to analyze a subject, to explain a cause-and-effect relationship, or to persuade an audience about your position?
2. Do you have competing or conflicting purposes for writing this document? If so, should the document be separated into two papers?
3. What crucial information should you emphasize to affect your audience? You may want to shock, educate, or persuade your readers, for instance.
4. How can you organize the document to emphasize key information that suits your purpose?

Consider Your Voice, Tone, and Persona

Enhance the likelihood that readers will respond favorably to your document by projecting an effective voice, tone, and persona.

Voice, tone, and persona are slippery terms or concepts. In some instances, these terms can be used interchangeably, yet important differences do exist.

Voice

The term voice may be used to define a writer's stance toward his subject or readers. For example, a writer could say, "I'm using a satirical (or humorous, condescending, patronizing) voice in this editorial".

Alternatively, some writers and English instructors talk about a writer's voice as a representation of the trueness of a document. An accomplished writer is said to have found his or her voice while a beginning writer is said to be searching for his or her voice. When used in this way, voice refers to the trueness, or honesty, or authority, or power of a writer's message. Back in the 1960s, some writing instructors suggested inexperienced writers needed to find their true voice – that each of us has a specific voice that we need to find, that voice is a powerful, mystical force that helps us convey truth or the inner quality of a topic.

Tone

When writers and English instructors talk about tone, they are typically referring to the author's stance toward his or her readers and message. Specific documents or authors can be described as having a condescending, arrogant, pedantic, racist, confident, or satirical tone (or voice). In this way, tone is used interchangeably with voice, although tone does not refer to the "truth" of the writer's message, unlike voice.

Persona

The term persona refers to an author's use of a literary mask to hide his or her true opinion about a matter. For example, if you were writing about how you act while waiting in long lines, you might want to honestly inform your reader that you become a raging lunatic, that your heart rate doubles, and that you can keep calm only by doing sit-ups and push-ups. Yet if you are not proud of this type-A tendency, you might present the persona of a patient person who has mastered the ability to meditate calmly and think deeply about important issues when forced to wait in a seemingly endless line.

Different readers may make different assessments regarding a particular author's voice, tone, and persona. An author may describe his tone as reasoned, thoughtful, and intelligent whereas the reader might dismiss the author's text as biased, underdeveloped, or emotional.

Why Should You Consider Your Voice, Tone, and Persona?

Just as listeners make assumptions about your personality by observing how you dress and act and by listening to the tone of your voice, readers make judgments about your personality and feelings regarding a subject based on what and how you write. When you avoid use of the first person and personal references, readers make judgments about what kind of person you are and about your professional abilities. Readers make assumptions about how clever and fair a thinker you are by noting the quality of your reasoning, the words you choose, and the way you format your text. By noting an author's examples, organization, and word choices, we might say, for instance, that he or she displays an opinionated, logical, or emotional persona. Problems such as spelling and punctuation errors or pronoun agreement errors can turn readers against you, making them consider you to be careless or uneducated.

Consider these questions when revising a document:

- What inferences about my personality do I want my readers to make?
- Given my audience and purpose, is it appropriate to express my feelings about this subject?
- Would it be more appropriate for me to project a strong, passionate tone, or should I try to appear more objective?

- Based on what I have written, what sense about my personality or feelings about the subject will readers be likely to infer?
- Have I used any words or examples that are emotionally charged and likely to alienate my readers?
- What personal examples should I add or delete to help my readers better understand me and my message?

Why Read Your Work Out Loud?

The challenge of juggling apparently unrelated ideas can be so great that you may overlook your voice or tone. When attempting to explain complex ideas and processes, you may understandably focus your critical energies on being coherent and logical. Yet, you might also remember that readers are people too, and they are likely to be swayed as much by their sense of how credible you are as by the logic of your argument. One trick that writers use to gauge the voice in a document is to read a manuscript aloud or to speak it into a tape recorder and then listen to how they sound.

Create an Energetic Voice

The vitality of a writer's voice or persona often has a tremendous influence on readers' responses. Sometimes readers say they enjoy a text because an author seems straightforward and personable. In contrast, sometimes readers dislike a book because the author seems stuffy or cold-hearted. As an example of the latter, note the "computer tone" in the following letter, which I received after the birth of my first child:

Thank you for cooperating with the hospital stay verification component of your Health Insurance Policy. The company has been notified of the patient's emergency admission. The information submitted has been reviewed and a length of stay has been assigned. This emergency stay is certified for two days.

We remind you that the review of your hospital stay was limited to determining the appropriate length of stay for the emergency admitting diagnosis and did not question medical necessity. We further remind you that payment of benefits is still subject to the terms of your Health Insurance Policy.

Surely this is an impersonal, mechanical way to say that my newborn would be covered by my insurance policy--a fact that I already knew. Although the letter was signed by a person, it seems to have been written by a computer. If I had called this person on the phone, she probably would have said something like, "Congratulations on the birth of your baby. As you already know, your insurance covers expenses for two days of hospitalization. Enjoy that little one!" One message, two very different voices.

Trying to communicate your subject in a coherent way can be so overwhelming that you forget to consider the influence of your voice or persona on the reader.

Avoid a Pedantic, Passive Tone

Based on what you say, your readers will make judgments about whether you seem knowledgeable, educated, compassionate, angry, or confused. If you use excessive jargon, write extensively in the passive voice, fail to offer specific examples to illustrate your point, or do not elaborate on essential information, then some readers might consider you to be aloof or pompous, while others might assume that you are reluctant or unable to communicate.

Sometimes people believe they need to sound "academic" when they write; they don't think they can simply be themselves and write naturally. Rather than trying to simplify their prose, they reach for a thesaurus and select the least understood or most impressive-sounding word. Here's a sample of terribly technical language that a colleague of mine wrote to satirize the humorous elements of jargon-ridden prose:

Health is generally benefited by the voluntary ingestion of 4,000 to 5,000 ml of hydrogen hydroxide in each 24-hour period, distributed more or less equally across the time period in 250 to 500 ml units.

When you read this, it may at first seem sophisticated, enshrouded as it is in pseudoscientific garb. Yet, properly translated into readable English, it simply says, "Drink eight glasses of water a day".

Pretentious jargon and obscure language can at first be intimidating because the authors appear to be implying that we should understand the message. However, college-educated, critical readers are rarely impressed by vague, abstract language. For example, what do you think of the following prose, which is excerpted from a draft of a graduate student's essay on language development?

An oral language production system is the first one learned by children. The task of learning a written language production system occurs when children enter school. A noticeable difference between these two systems is the presence of a conversational partner. This difference is significant when you compare speaking and writing at the level of continuous discourse. Conversational partners

provide constant cues, such as to elaborate, to clarify, to keep a goal in mind, to stay on the topic, etc. Evidence of children's dependence on conversational inputs when learning to write comes from observing effects of prompting children to continue, that is to take another conversational turn. Children are dependent to some extent on conversation interchange to develop a text. However, no conversational partner exists in written composition. Learning to write involves a transition from a language introduction system dependent on inputs from a conversational partner to a system capable of functioning autonomously. Without conversational supports, children have problems in thinking what to say, in making choices appropriate to a remote audience, in staying on the topic, and in producing an intelligible whole.

Clearly, this passage is weakened by jargon. A critical reader will wonder, for example, about the need for such terms as "oral language production system", "continuous discourse", or "conversational interchange". More insidious in this example, however, is the abundance of passive constructions and lack of people-oriented references. For example, who is doing the observing in the following sentence: "Evidence of children's dependence on conversational inputs when learning to write comes from observing effects of prompting children to continue, that is to take another conversational turn"?

Also, take a look at the emptiness of the third sentence: "A noticeable difference between these two systems is the presence of a conversational partner". Even with rereading, it is unclear whether the "oral language production system" or the "written language production system" has "the presence of a conversational partner". Of course, the author could argue that everyone knows that conversation usually involves a dialogue between speakers while writing usually lacks such an exchange. Naturally, clever readers will see through the fog with a discerning eye and recognize that the writer's ideas are in fact relatively simple:

Perhaps children do not learn to write until they enter school because writing demands more than speech. Whereas children can easily develop their ideas through dialogue – that is, by listening to queries and comments and suggestions from other speakers – they must conceptualize an audience when they write.

Ultimately, however, if you think about the gist of this writer's message long enough, it becomes so obvious that you wonder about the need to say it at all. Surprisingly, you will often find this to be the case: pedantic, long-winded speakers and writers are often hiding simple concepts behind verbal smoke screens. Thus, when you read, remember to be a critical reader.

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2.2.5: Identifying Your Audience, What to Think About When Writing for a Particular Audience

What to Think About When Writing for a Particular Audience

The first rhetorical element that influences the rhetorical situation is your audience: who are you writing to? Considering your audience impacts everything you write from the tone you use in an email to the sources you integrate into a research paper.

Writers must have a clear sense of to whom they are writing (the audience) and what the audience's values and/or opinions related to the topic are.

Imagine a history professor who opens her lecture on the Victorian era by asking her undergraduate students, "Did you see the Victorian-era furniture on Antiques Roadshow last night?". Can you imagine how many in the class would raise his/her hand? Can you hear the confused silence?

Most of the students in the audience are under the age of thirty, with the majority falling between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five. They do not own property and probably have little interest in antiques. The target audience of Antiques Roadshow, though, reflects middle-aged and older middle class folks who, most likely, own property and, perhaps, antiques of their own. How effective of an opener was this professor's question given her audience? Not very.

To Communicate Effectively and Persuasively

Writers must have a clear sense of to whom they are writing (the audience) and what the audience's values and/or opinions related to the topic are. When in conversation, we often shift our tone and/or language to adapt to our audience.

Consider how you talk differently to young children than you do to your professors. When communicating with a child, you may use simple language and a playful or enthusiastic tone. With your professors, however, you may try out academic language, using bigger words and more complex sentences. Your tone may be more professional than casual and more critical than entertaining.

For Example...

Imagine that you need money. When you craft an email to your parents asking for money, your approach might be different than if you were to ask your roommate for money. Your tone, language, and means of appeal will adapt to who your audience is.



Figure 2.2.5.1

- The tone of your email is casual, conversational, and upbeat ("School is great!").
- The language that you use is simple, easy to read. Sentences are short and rely mostly on action verbs.
- You appeal to your parent first by recalling positive memories of home, as though you know your mom is missing you ("reminds me of home"). This is a tug at the heartstrings (or *pathos* appeal). By offering specific details about the cost of your chemistry textbook, you make a *logos* appeal (to her sense of logic).

You also highlight your responsible nature, which develops an *ethos* appeal: "I study nearly all the time", "I try to sleep", and "books [more than] I budgeted". Telling your mom that books were more expensive than you imagined links your request for

additional cash to your pursuit of an education, something that makes her happy and that adds to your credibility.

- When asking your roommate for cash, the tone may remain casual though it will appear less conversational. I mean, after all, you talk to this person every day. Also, noting "I'm totally okay with" buying two rounds of groceries creates a feeling of generosity rather than resentment.
- The language gets even simpler. Notice how much shorter the sentences are and how quickly the writer gets to the point; there is less need for "window dressing" your appeal. Colloquial language appears here – "could you spot me some cash" – rather than the more formal request the writer made to his mother, "I'm out of funds for groceries and gas. Can you help?"
- Reminding the roommate that you bought the last two rounds of groceries functions as an appeal in two ways: first, it establishes your credibility as a good friend; and second, it appeals to the roommate's sense of logic (of course you need some extra money; you've got a freeloader kind of roommate!).

A Writing Assignment...

Your professor asks you to write an academic argument paper on a topic of your choice. Academic writing is usually directed to an educated audience interested in critical, analytical thinking.

Let's imagine you choose to write about adoption rights within the LGBT community. More specifically, you'll argue that stable LGBT couples deserve the opportunity to adopt children just as stable heterosexual couples are allowed to do.

You will adapt tone, language, and appeals to suit the writing project's

- Audience
- Purpose
- Context
- Medium



Figure 2.2.5.2

Brainstorming and Planning

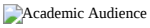


Figure 2.2.5.3

When you write to all readers, you, in fact, write to no one at all.



Figure 2.2.5.4

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2.2.6: Identifying Your Audience, Rhetorical Appeals

Rhetorical Appeals

Study the definitions and reflective questions in this table. Keep in mind that you should consider who you are writing to (your audience) and why you are writing to them (your purpose). How should your tone vary when writing an argumentative essay versus an informal email?

Rhetorical Appeal	Abbreviated Definition	Reflective Questions
Ethos	Appeal to credibility *You may want to think of ethos as related to "ethics", or the moral principles of the writer: ethos is the author's way of establishing trust with their reader.*	• Why should I (the reader) read what the writer has written? • How does the author cite that they have something valid and important for me to read? • Does the author mention his or her education or professional experience, or convince me that they are a valid, educated, and experienced source?
Pathos	Appeal to emotion *You may want to think of pathos as "empathy", which pertains to the experience of or sensitivity toward emotion.*	• How is the writer trying to make me feel, or what have they written that makes me want to do something? • What specific parts of the author's writing make me feel happy, sad, inspired, dejected, and so on?
Logos	Appeal to logic *You may want to think of logos as "logic", because something that is logical "makes sense" – it is reasonable.*	• What evidence does the writer provide that convinces me that his or her argument is logical – that it makes sense? • What proof is the author offering me?
Kairos	Appeal to timeliness *You may want to think of kairos as the type of persuasion that pertains to "the right place and the right time".*	• Does the writer make claims that are particularly important given what is happening right now? • How is the author "making the most of the moment" or attempting to speak to the concern of their audience?

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2.2.7: Identifying Your Audience, Consider Your Audience

Consider Your Audience

Read this article about taking your audience into consideration as you write. Great writers consider their audience first. Ask yourself the audience analysis questions before you begin your next writing assignment.

Determine Your Audience and Adjust Your Writing Accordingly

Ensure your documents meet the needs and expectations of your readers.

"An audience is never wrong. An individual of it may be an imbecile, but a thousand imbeciles in the dark – that is critical genius." — Billy Wilder

To be an effective writer, you must use language that is audience-centered, not writer-centered. In other words, transcend your own perspective and consider the needs and interests of your readers. Ask yourself: What do my readers know about the topic? Are my readers likely to have an emotional response to my work? What do I want my readers to do, think, or feel?

If you do not define words and concepts that your readers need to understand your document, then your writing will be unsuccessful. Transforming a writer-centered draft into an audience-centered draft can be one of the most important challenges you face as a writer. All of us, no matter how educated, can have difficulties getting inside someone else's shoes. Audience awareness is one of the major keys to effective writing.



Examples of Different Audiences

Audiences are characterized by the questions they ask when they read. As a writer, you want to consider your readers' reasons for viewing your text.

Instructors: When instructors are your primary audience, they may ask:

1. Did the student follow instructions?
2. Does the student's writing reflect understanding of central course concepts?
3. Do the student's opening paragraphs explain the purpose, its significance, and forecast the organization?
4. Did the student follow conventions for citing, paraphrasing, and summarizing sources?
5. Is the document written well, following grammatical, mechanical, and punctuation rules?

Technicians/Users: When you are writing as the expert, explaining how to do something, your users are likely to ask:

1. Does the text clarify in a step-by-step order what I am supposed to do?
2. Are warnings and safety precautions clearly presented?
3. Can I skim through the visuals and flow diagrams rather than read the text?
4. Where do I go for additional help?

Decision Makers: When someone is in a position of making decisions, he or she may be harassed by demands on his or her time. As a result, he or she may grow impatient if you don't immediately present your request. Decisions makers may only read your abstract or introduction. Additional questions the reader may ask include:

1. Does the writer provide cogent and persuasive evidence for his or her claim?
2. Who will benefit and who will be hurt by enacting this proposal?
3. Is the author capable of carrying out the proposed work?

Internet Skimmers: Researchers have found that people approach documents published on the Internet with a different set of expectations than they would a traditional text. Although online readers can be motivated to read carefully, they tend to be more likely to skim online documents than printed documents. These readers may ask:

1. Are key points summarized at the top of the browser window?
2. Are visuals, animations, audio clips, and video clips used to illustrate key points?
3. Is the text chunked into minimalist portions? How do I move around in the site?

When Should You Consider Your Audience?

Interestingly, writers and writing teachers do not always agree about exactly when you should consider your audience. It is possible, for example, that thinking about an audience early in the writing process can be intimidating. When addressing a difficult subject, some writers may be so concerned with developing the material for themselves that they don't want to pause or complicate matters by questioning what others would think about the subject. They may even write a few drafts before questioning how their words and ideas will affect readers.

Audience Analysis Questions

Nonetheless, you are wise to consider your audience as early as possible in the writing process. Asking yourself the following questions can help you solidify your sense of audience.

1. Who is your primary audience? a teacher? a parent or loved one? fellow students? a politician? a university committee? a broad, general audience such as subscribers to a weekly magazine like Time or Newsweek? Are they a lay audience, executives, experts, or technicians?
2. Does your document have multiple audiences? Can you discern an important secondary audience? If so, how will you account for the needs of this audience? Should you have separate sections in your document that address the needs of these different audiences?
3. What factors impinge on how your audience will feel about your subject? For instance, are you addressing someone who is overcome by grief or emotional problems?
4. How knowledgeable are your primary and secondary audiences about your subject? What concepts or terms will you need to define for these audiences? What level of education does your primary audience have?

But What If I Do Not Really Know My Audience?

You will face situations when you are unsure about what your audience knows about a topic or how the audience may feel about the topic. You will not always be able to make informed guesses about your audience's level of education, knowledge about the topic, or interest in the topic. As a result, you may need to rely on an internalized, imaginary audience. In other words, you may need to make educated guesses about the needs, education, and likely reactions of the people who are likely to read your work.

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2.2.8: Identifying Your Audience, Writing to an Audience

Writing to an Audience

In this practice exercise, write two brief essays (of around 250 words each) that explain why you want to achieve your dream job: first to a potential employer, and second to a five-year-old.

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2.2.9: Identifying Your Purpose, Consider Your Purpose

Consider Your Purpose

Before you start writing, it is important to determine your purpose. Knowing what you want to achieve will help guide your ideas you draft. Read this article and think about how purpose influences what and how you write.

Identifying the primary reason for writing provides you with the focus you need to write an effective document in less time.

Like an onion that is peeled, revealing multiple layers, a writing document may have multiple purposes. A persuasive essay, for example, may have paragraphs that inform, paragraphs that persuade, paragraphs that threaten, and paragraphs that request information. However, on a more global level, each document must have one primary purpose.

Until you know your primary purpose for writing, you cannot know what information to leave in or leave out or even how to best organize a document. Of course, some academic documents have multiple purposes.

People write documents for countless reasons:

1. Record: Keep a record of events or information.
2. Reflect/Explore: Write in a journal, attempt to make sense of something or to shape a new idea.
3. Inform: Objectively report an event.
4. Demonstrate Knowledge: Prove, in school, that you've learned course content.
5. Summarize: Report someone else's words, theories, and research in your own words.
6. Explain: Help readers understand a difficult concept, theory, or event.
7. Analyze: Break down a problem into parts.
8. Persuade: Change minds, invoke action.
9. Theorize: Speculate on possible causes and effects.
10. Entertain: Bring joy, amazement, and thrills.

Textbooks, English instructors, and writers occasionally call the purpose statement the thesis sentence. In school contexts, some instructors require students to place the thesis statement in the introductory paragraphs. Likewise, writers of essays appearing in newspapers, magazines, and books present their thesis upfront. The advantage of this deductive approach is that readers immediately know what the topic is and the writer's stance toward the subject. In contexts where the subject is not likely to result in an emotional reaction from readers, explicit statements of purpose make sense.

When Should You Consider Your Purpose?

Because of the generative nature of the writing process, your sense of the primary purpose for a document will often become clearer once you have written a few drafts. Yet because the effectiveness of a document is chiefly determined by how well you focus on addressing a primary purpose, you can save time by identifying your purpose as early as possible.

1. What is your primary purpose for writing? For instance, are you attempting to analyze a subject, to explain a cause-and-effect relationship, or to persuade an audience about your position?
2. Do you have competing or conflicting purposes for writing this document? If so, should the document be separated into two papers?
3. What crucial information should you emphasize to affect your audience? You may want to shock, educate, or persuade your readers, for instance.
4. How can you organize the document to emphasize key information that suits your purpose?

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2.3: Organizing Ideas

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2.3.1: Introduction – the Funnel Approach, Introductions

Introductions

Read this article to learn more about the role of introductions and effective strategies for developing your opening paragraph. The introduction is the most important part of an essay because it provides first impressions for your audience. In general, your introduction should provide an overview of your topic and should lead into your thesis statement. Try using one of the "attention grabber" suggestions in the reading for the exercise below.

What This Handout is About

This handout will explain the functions of introductions, offer strategies for writing and revising effective introductions, and provide some examples of less effective introductions to avoid.

The Role of Introductions

Introductions and conclusions can be the most difficult parts of papers to write. Usually, when you sit down to respond to an assignment, you have at least some sense of what you want to say in the body of your paper. You might have chosen a few examples you want to use or have an idea that will help you answer the main question of your assignment; these sections, therefore, are not as hard to write. But these middle parts of the paper can't just come out of thin air; they need to be introduced and concluded in a way that makes sense to your reader.

Your introduction and conclusion act as bridges that transport your readers from their own lives into the "place" of your analysis. If your readers pick up your paper about education in the autobiography of Frederick Douglass, for example, they need a transition to help them leave behind the world of Chapel Hill, television, e-mail, and *The Daily Tar Heel* and to help them temporarily enter the world of nineteenth-century American slavery.

By providing an introduction that helps your readers make a transition between their own world and the issues you will be writing about, you give your readers the tools they need to get into your topic and care about what you are saying. Similarly, once you've hooked your reader with the introduction and offered evidence to prove your thesis, your conclusion can provide a bridge to help your readers make the transition back to their daily lives.

Why Bother Writing a Good Introduction?

You Never Get a Second Chance to Make a First Impression

The opening paragraph of your paper will provide your readers with their initial impressions of your argument, your writing style, and the overall quality of your work. A vague, disorganized, error-filled, off-the-wall, or boring introduction will probably create a negative impression. On the other hand, a concise, engaging, and well-written introduction will start your readers off thinking highly of you, your analytical skills, your writing, and your paper. This impression is especially important when the audience you are trying to reach (your instructor) will be grading your work.

Your Introduction is an Important Roadmap for the Rest of Your Paper

Your introduction conveys a lot of information to your readers. You can let them know what your topic is, why it is important, and how you plan to proceed with your discussion. In most academic disciplines, your introduction should contain a thesis that will assert your main argument. It should also, ideally, give the reader a sense of the kinds of information you will use to make that argument and the general organization of the paragraphs and pages that will follow. After reading your introduction, your readers should not have any major surprises in store when they read the main body of your paper.

Your Introduction Should Make Your Readers Want to Read Your Paper

The introduction should capture your readers' interest, making them want to read the rest of your paper. Opening with a compelling story, a fascinating quotation, an interesting question, or a stirring example can get your readers to see why this topic matters and serve as an invitation for them to join you for an interesting intellectual conversation.

Strategies for Writing an Effective Introduction

Start by thinking about the question (or questions) you are trying to answer. Your entire essay will be a response to this question, and your introduction is the first step toward that end. Your direct answer to the assigned question will be your thesis, and your

thesis will be included in your introduction, so it is a good idea to use the question as a jumping off point. Imagine that you are assigned the following question:

Education has long been considered a major force for American social change, righting the wrongs of our society. Drawing on theNarrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, discuss the relationship between education and slavery in 19th-century America. Consider the following: How did white control of education reinforce slavery? How did Douglass and other enslaved African Americans view education while they endured slavery? And what role did education play in the acquisition of freedom? Most importantly, consider the degree to which education was or was not a major force for social change with regard to slavery.

You will probably refer back to your assignment extensively as you prepare your complete essay, and the prompt itself can also give you some clues about how to approach the introduction. Notice that it starts with a broad statement, that education has been considered a major force for social change, and then narrows to focus on specific questions from the book.

One strategy might be to use a similar model in your own introduction – start off with a big picture sentence or two about the power of education as a force for change as a way of getting your reader interested and then focus in on the details of your argument about Douglass. Of course, a different approach could also be very successful, but looking at the way the professor set up the question can sometimes give you some ideas for how you might answer it.

Decide How General or Broad Your Opening Should Be

Keep in mind that even a "big picture" opening needs to be clearly related to your topic; an opening sentence that said "Human beings, more than any other creatures on earth, are capable of learning" would be too broad for our sample assignment about slavery and education. If you have ever used Google Maps or similar programs, that experience can provide a helpful way of thinking about how broad your opening should be. Imagine that you're researching Chapel Hill. If what you want to find out is whether Chapel Hill is at roughly the same latitude as Rome, it might make sense to hit that little "minus" sign on the online map until it has zoomed all the way out and you can see the whole globe.

If you are trying to figure out how to get from Chapel Hill to Wrightsville Beach, it might make more sense to zoom in to the level where you can see most of North Carolina (but not the rest of the world, or even the rest of the United States). And if you are looking for the intersection of Ridge Road and Manning Drive so that you can find the Writing Center's main office, you may need to zoom all the way in. The question you are asking determines how broad your view should be. In the sample assignment above, the questions are probably at the state or city level of generality. But the introductory sentence about human beings is mismatched – it is definitely at the global level. When writing, you need to place your ideas in context – but that context doesn't generally have to be as big as the whole galaxy!

Try Writing your Introduction Last

You may think that you have to write your introduction first, but that isn't necessarily true, and it isn't always the most effective way to craft a good introduction. You may find that you don't know what you are going to argue at the beginning of the writing process, and only through the experience of writing your paper do you discover your main argument. It is perfectly fine to start out thinking that you want to argue a particular point, but wind up arguing something slightly or even dramatically different by the time you've written most of the paper.

The writing process can be an important way to organize your ideas, think through complicated issues, refine your thoughts, and develop a sophisticated argument. However, an introduction written at the beginning of that discovery process will not necessarily reflect what you wind up with at the end. You will need to revise your paper to make sure that the introduction, all of the evidence, and the conclusion reflect the argument you intend. Sometimes it's easiest to just write up all of your evidence first and then write the introduction last – that way you can be sure that the introduction will match the body of the paper.

Do Not be Afraid to Write a Tentative Introduction First and Change it Later

Some people find that they need to write some kind of introduction in order to get the writing process started. That is fine, but if you are one of those people, be sure to return to your initial introduction later and rewrite if necessary.

Open with an Attention Grabber

Sometimes, especially if the topic of your paper is somewhat dry or technical, opening with something catchy can help. Consider these options:

1. An intriguing example – For example, Douglass writes about a mistress who initially teaches him but then ceases her instruction as she learns more about slavery.

2. A provocative quotation – For example, Douglass writes that "education and slavery were incompatible with each other".
3. A puzzling scenario – For example, Frederick Douglass says of slaves that "[N]othing has been left undone to cripple their intellects, darken their minds, debase their moral nature, obliterate all traces of their relationship to mankind; and yet how wonderfully they have sustained the mighty load of a most frightful bondage, under which they have been groaning for centuries!" Douglass clearly asserts that slave owners went to great lengths to destroy the mental capacities of slaves, yet his own life story proves that these efforts could be unsuccessful.
4. A vivid and perhaps unexpected anecdote – For example: "Learning about slavery in the American history course at Frederick Douglass High School, students studied the work slaves did, the impact of slavery on their families, and the rules that governed their lives. We didn't discuss education, however, until one student, Mary, raised her hand and asked, 'But when did they go to school?' That modern high school students could not conceive of an American childhood devoid of formal education speaks volumes about the centrality of education to American youth today and also suggests the significance of the deprivation of education in past generations."
5. A thought-provoking question – For example, given all of the freedoms that were denied enslaved individuals in the American South, why does Frederick Douglass focus his attentions so squarely on education and literacy?

Pay Special Attention to Your First Sentence

Start off on the right foot with your readers by making sure that the first sentence actually says something useful and that it does so in an interesting and polished way.

Be straightforward and confident. Avoid statements like "In this paper, I will argue that Frederick Douglass valued education". While this sentence points toward your main argument, it isn't especially interesting. It might be more effective to say what you mean in a declarative sentence. It is much more convincing to tell us that "Frederick Douglass valued education" than to tell us that you are going to say that he did. Assert your main argument confidently. After all, you can't expect your reader to believe it if it doesn't sound like you believe it!

How to Evaluate Your Introduction Draft

Ask a friend to read it and then tell you what he or she expects the paper will discuss, what kinds of evidence the paper will use, and what the tone of the paper will be. If your friend is able to predict the rest of your paper accurately, you probably have a good introduction.

Five Kinds of Less Effective Introductions

1. The Place Holder Introduction

When you don't have much to say on a given topic, it is easy to create this kind of introduction. Essentially, this kind of weaker introduction contains several sentences that are vague and don't really say much. They exist just to take up the "introduction space" in your paper. If you had something more effective to say, you would probably say it, but in the meantime, this paragraph is just a place holder.

Example: Slavery was one of the greatest tragedies in American history. There were many different aspects of slavery. Each created different kinds of problems for enslaved people.

2. The Restated Question Introduction

Restating the question can sometimes be an effective strategy, but it can be easy to stop at JUST restating the question instead of offering a more specific, interesting introduction to your paper. The professor or teaching assistant wrote your questions and will be reading ten to seventy essays in response to them – he or she does not need to read a whole paragraph that simply restates the question.

Example: Indeed, education has long been considered a major force for American social change, righting the wrongs of our society. The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass discusses the relationship between education and slavery in 19th century America, showing how white control of education reinforced slavery and how Douglass and other enslaved African Americans viewed education while they endured. Moreover, the book discusses the role that education played in the acquisition of freedom. Education was a major force for social change with regard to slavery.

3. The Webster's Dictionary Introduction

This introduction begins by giving the dictionary definition of one or more of the words in the assigned question. This introduction strategy is on the right track – if you write one of these, you may be trying to establish the important terms of the discussion, and this move builds a bridge to the reader by offering a common, agreed-upon definition for a key idea.

You may also be looking for an authority that will lend credibility to your paper. However, anyone can look a word up in the dictionary and copy down what Webster says – it may be far more interesting for you (and your reader) if you develop your own definition of the term in the specific context of your class and assignment, or if you use a definition from one of the sources you've been reading for class.

Also, recognize that the dictionary is also not a particularly authoritative work – it doesn't take into account the context of your course and doesn't offer particularly detailed information. If you feel that you must seek out an authority, try to find one that is very relevant and specific. Perhaps a quotation from a source reading might prove better? Dictionary introductions are also ineffective simply because they are so overused. Many graders will see twenty or more papers that begin in this way, greatly decreasing the dramatic impact that any one of those papers will have.

Example: Webster's dictionary defines slavery as "the state of being a slave", as "the practice of owning slaves", and as "a condition of hard work and subjection".

4. The "Dawn of Man" Introduction

This kind of introduction generally makes broad, sweeping statements about the relevance of this topic since the beginning of time. It is usually very general (similar to the place holder introduction) and fails to connect to the thesis. You may write this kind of introduction when you don't have much to say – which is precisely why it is ineffective.

Example: Since the dawn of man, slavery has been a problem in human history.

5. The Book Report Introduction

This introduction is what you had to do for your elementary school book reports. It gives the name and author of the book you are writing about, tells what the book is about, and offers other basic facts about the book. You might resort to this sort of introduction when you are trying to fill space because it's a familiar, comfortable format. It is ineffective because it offers details that your reader already knows and that are irrelevant to the thesis.

Example: Frederick Douglass wrote his autobiography, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, in the 1840s. It was published in 1986 by Penguin Books. In it, he tells the story of his life.

Works Consulted

We consulted these works while writing the original version of this handout. This is not a comprehensive list of resources on the handout's topic, and we encourage you to do your own research to find the latest publications on this topic. Please do not use this list as a model for the format of your own reference list, as it may not match the citation style you are using.

All quotations are from Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*, edited and with introduction by Houston A. Baker, Jr., New York: Penguin Books, 1986.

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2.3.2: Introduction – the Funnel Approach, Write an Introduction

Write an Introduction

In this practice exercise, use the prewriting and writing techniques you know from Unit 1 to write an introductory paragraph for your essay for this unit. The topic is:

"How does my selected activity or characteristic affect success in an Internet-based college course?"

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2.3.3: Body – the Skeleton of Your Paper, Using Paragraphs

Using Paragraphs

Read this article, which will help you understand how to organize paragraphs in the body of your essay to help make your paragraphs cohesive and to smoothly transition between one discussion point to the next. Keep in mind that the paragraphs in the body of your essay should work to prove or address your main purpose or argument set out by your thesis statement.

Understand how to organize information in paragraphs so readers can scan your work and better follow your reasoning.

Unlike punctuation, which can be subjected to specific rules, no ironclad guidelines exist for shaping paragraphs. If you presented a text without paragraphs to a dozen writing instructors and asked them to break the document into logical sections, chances are that you would receive different opinions about the best places to break the paragraph.

In part, where paragraphs should be placed is a stylistic choice. Some writers prefer longer paragraphs that compare and contrast several related ideas, whereas others opt for a more linear structure, delineating each subject on a one-point-per-paragraph basis. Newspaper articles or documents published on the Internet tend to have short paragraphs, even one-sentence paragraphs.

If your readers have suggested that you take a hard look at how you organize your ideas, or if you are unsure about when you should begin a paragraph or how you should organize final drafts, then you can benefit by reviewing paragraph structure. The following guidelines can give you some insights about alternative ways to shape paragraphs.

Note: When you are drafting, you need to trust your intuition about where to place paragraphs; you don't want to interrupt the flow of your thoughts as you write to check on whether you are placing them in logical order. Such self-criticism could interfere with creativity or the generation of ideas. Before you submit a document for a grade, however, you should examine the structure of your paragraphs.

Paragraph Transitions

Effective paragraph transitions signal to readers how two consecutive paragraphs relate to each other. The transition signals the relationship between the "new information" and the "old information".

For example, the new paragraph might:

- Elaborate on the idea presented in the preceding paragraph;
- Introduce a related idea;
- Continue a chronological narrative;
- Describe a problem with the idea presented in the preceding paragraph;
- Describe an exception to the idea presented in the preceding paragraph;
- Describe a consequence or implication of the idea presented in the preceding paragraph.

Let's consider a few examples (drawn from published books and articles) of paragraph transitions that work. The examples below reproduce paragraph endings and openings. Pay attention to how each paragraph opening signals to readers how the paragraph relates to the one they have just finished reading. Observe the loss in clarity when transitional signals are removed.

Example 1:

Paragraph ending	Once his system was applied to all acts of manual labor, Taylor assured his followers, it would bring about a restructuring not only of industry but of society, creating a utopia of perfect efficiency.
Paragraph opening with transitional cues	Taylor's system is still very much with us; it remains the ethic of industrial manufacturing.
Paragraph opening *without* transitional cues	Taylor's system is the ethic of present-day industrial manufacturing.

The transitional sentence signals that the new paragraph will seek to demonstrate that the phenomenon described in the preceding paragraph (Taylorism) is ongoing: it is "still" with us and "remains" the dominant workplace ethic. Compare this sentence with the one directly beneath it ("paragraph opening without transitional cues"). With this version, readers are left on their own to infer the connection.

Example 2:

Paragraph ending	"I was a lit major in college, and used to be [a] voracious book reader", he wrote. "What happened?" He speculates on the answer: "What if I do all my reading on the web not so much because the way I read has changed, i.e. I'm just seeking convenience, but because the way I THINK has changed?"
Paragraph opening with transitional cues	Bruce Friedman, who blogs regularly about the use of computers in medicine, also has described how the Internet has altered his mental habits.
Paragraph opening *without* transitional cues	Bruce Friedman, who blogs regularly about the use of computers in medicine, has described how the Internet has altered his mental habits.

The transitional sentence signals that the new paragraph will provide another example of the phenomenon (changed mental habits) described in the preceding paragraph. In this example, the word also serves an important function. Notice that without this transitional cue the relationship between the two paragraphs becomes less clear.

Example 3:

Paragraph ending	The camera-as-narrator is the usual viewpoint in film. It can be used continuously, appearing to reflect reality, and making few mental demands on the viewer. The passive camera seems to be a trustworthy witness, and so the viewer relies upon its apparent omniscience.
Paragraph opening with transitional cues	But the illusion of objectivity is a rhetorical device exploited by the filmmaker.
Paragraph opening *without* transitional cues	The illusion of objectivity is a rhetorical device exploited by the filmmaker.

The transitional sentence signals that the new paragraph will challenge the assumption described in the preceding paragraph. The single transitional term "but" signals this relationship. Notice the drop-off in clarity when the transitional term is omitted.

Example 4:

Paragraph Ending	If the story concerns social crisis or disorder, more frequently than not this response will come from sources of official authority: the police quell the rioting, labor and management leaders reach an agreement, the State Department approves or condemns the latest coup d'état in South America. The press in this way establishes a subtle relation between narrative order and the perception or representation of political order.
Paragraph opening with transitional cues	Todd Gitlin makes a similar point in commenting on the orderliness of television news.
Paragraph opening *without* transitional cues	Todd Gitlin comments on the orderliness of television news.

The transitional sentence signals that the new paragraph will further explore the idea expressed in the preceding paragraph. The phrase "makes a similar point" signals this relationship. Without this transitional phrase, the connection between the two paragraphs can still be inferred, but it is now much less clear.

As the above examples illustrate, effective paragraph transitions signal relationships between paragraphs.

Below are some terms that are often helpful for signaling relationships among ideas.

Chronology	before, next, earlier, later, during, after, meanwhile, while, until, then, first, second
Comparison	also, similarly, likewise, in the same way, in the same manner
Contrast	however, but, in contrast, still, yet, nevertheless, even though, although
Clarity	for example, for instance, in other words
Continuation	and, also, moreover, additionally, furthermore, another, too
Consequence	as a result, therefore, for this reason, thus, consequently
Conclusion	in conclusion, in summary, to sum up

The examples of transitional sentences are from:

1. Parker, Ian. "Absolute Powerpoint". New Yorker. 28 May 2001: 76-87.
2. Carr, Nicholas. "Is Google Making Us Stupid?" Atlantic Monthly. Jul/Aug2008: 56-63.

3. Harrington, John. The Rhetoric of Film. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973.
4. Spurr, David. The Rhetoric of Empire. Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1993.

Paragraphs Often Follow Deductive Organization

Your goals for the opening sentences of your paragraphs are similar to your goals for writing an introduction to a document. In the beginning of a paragraph, clarify the purpose. Most paragraphs in academic and technical discourse move deductively--that is, the first or second sentence presents the topic or theme of the paragraph and the subsequent sentences illustrate and explicate this theme. Notice, in particular, how Chris Goodrich cues readers to the purpose of his paragraph (and article) in the first sentence of his essay "Crossover Dreams":

Norman Cantor, New York University history professor and author, most recently, of Inventing the Middle Ages, created a stir this spring when he wrote a letter to the newsletter of the American Historical Association declaring that "no historian who can write English prose should publish more than two books with a university press – one for tenure, and one for full professor after that (or preferably long before) work only in the trade market". Cantor urged his fellow scholars to seek literary agents to represent any work with crossover potential. And he did not stop there: As if to be sure of offending the entire academic community, Cantor added, "If you are already a full professor, your agent should be much more important to you than the department chair or the dean".

Paragraphs Use Inductive Structure for Dramatic Conclusions or Varied Style

While you generally want to move from the known to the new, from the thesis to its illustration or restriction, you sometimes want to violate this pattern. Educated readers in particular can be bored by texts that always present information in the same way.

For example, how Valerie Steele's anecdotal tone and dialogue in the opening sentences of her essay on fashion in academia prepare the reader for her thesis:

Once, when I was a graduate student at Yale, a history professor asked me about my dissertation. "I'm writing about fashion", I said.

"That's interesting. Italian or German?"

It took me a couple of minutes, as thoughts of Armani flashed through my mind, but finally, I realized what he meant. "Not fascism", I said. "Fashion. As in Paris."

"Oh." There was a long silence, and then, without another word, he turned and walked away.

Fashion still has the power to reduce many academics to embarrassed or indignant silence. Some of those to whom I spoke while preparing this article requested anonymity or even refused to address the subject. ("The F-Word". Lingua Franca April 1991: 17–18.)

Paragraphs Are Unified by a Single Purpose or Theme

Regardless of whether a paragraph is deductively or inductively structured, readers can generally follow the logic of a discussion better when a paragraph is unified by a single purpose. Paragraphs that lack a central idea and that wander from subject to subject are apt to confuse readers, making them wonder what they should pay attention to and why.

To ensure that each paragraph is unified by a single idea, Francis Christensen, in Notes Toward a New Rhetoric (NY: Harper & Row, 1967), has suggested that we number sentences according to their level of generality. According to Christensen, we would assign a 1 to the most general sentence and then a 2 to the second most general sentence, and so on.

Christensen considers the following paragraph, which he excerpted from Jacob Bronowski's The Common Sense of Science, to be an example of a subordinate pattern because the sentences become increasingly more specific as the reader progresses through the paragraph:

1. The process of learning is essential to our lives.
2. All higher animals seek it deliberately.
3. They are inquisitive and they experiment.
4. An experiment is a sort of harmless trial run of some action which we shall have to make in the real world; and this, whether it is made in the laboratory by scientists or by fox-cubs outside their earth.
5. The scientist experiments and the cub plays; both are learning to correct their errors of judgment in a setting in which errors are not fatal.
6. Perhaps this is what gives them both their air of happiness and freedom in these activities.

Christensen is quick to point out that not all paragraphs have a subordinate structure. The following one, which he took from Bergen Evans's Comfortable Words, is an example of what Christensen considers a coordinate sequence:

1. He [the native speaker] may, of course, speak a form of English that marks him as coming from a rural or an unread group.
2. But if he doesn't mind being so marked, there's no reason why he should change.
3. Samuel Johnson kept a Staffordshire burr in his speech all his life.
4. In Burns' mouth the despised lowland Scots dialect served just as well as the "correct" English spoken by ten million of his southern contemporaries.
5. Lincoln's vocabulary and his way of pronouncing certain words were sneered at by many better educated people at the time, but he seemed to be able to use the English language as effectively as his critics.

Paragraphs Must Logically Relate to the Previous Paragraph(s)

Readers also expect paragraphs to relate to each other as well as to the overall purpose of a text. Establishing transitional sentences for paragraphs can be one of the most difficult challenges you face as a writer because you need to guide the reader with a light hand. When you are too blatant about your transitions, your readers may feel patronized.

To highlight the connections between your ideas, you can provide transitional sentences at the end of each paragraph that look forward to the substance of the next paragraph. Or, you can place the transition at the beginning of a paragraph looking backward, as Valerie Steele does in the following example:

Can a style of dress hurt one's professional career? True to form most academics deny that it makes any difference whatsoever. But a few stories may indicate otherwise: When a gay male professor was denied tenure at an Ivy League university, some people felt that he was punished, in part, for his dress. It was "not that he wore multiple earrings" or anything like that, but he did wear "beautiful, expensive, colorful clothes that stood out" on campus.

At the design department on one of the campuses of the University of California system, a job applicant appeared for her interview wearing a navy blue suit. The style was perfect for most departments, of course, but in this case, she was told – to her face – that she "didn't fit in, she didn't look arty enough".

Another bit of evidence that suggests dress is of career significance for academics is the fact that some universities (such as Harvard) now offer graduate students counseling on how to outfit themselves for job interviews. The tone apparently is patronizing ("You will need to think about an interview suit and a white blouse"), but the advice is perceived as necessary.

The phrase "another bit of evidence" beginning the second paragraph refers back to the topic sentence that began the first paragraph, "Can a style of dress hurt one's professional career?"

When evaluating your transitions from paragraph to paragraph, question whether the transitions appear too obtrusive, thereby undercutting your credibility. At best, when transitions are unnecessary, readers perceive explicit transitional sentences to be wordy; at worst, they perceive such sentences as insulting. (After all, they imply that the readers are too inept to follow the discussion.)

Vary the length of paragraphs to reflect the complexity and importance of the ideas expressed in them. Different ideas, arguments, and chronologies warrant their own paragraph lengths, so the form of your text should emerge in response to your thoughts. To emphasize a transition in your argument or to highlight an important point, you may want to place critical information in a one- or two-sentence paragraph.

Paragraphs Are Influenced by the Media of Writing

As much as any of the above guidelines, you should consider the media and genre where your text will appear. For as much as paragraphs are shaped by the ideas being expressed, they are also influenced by the genre of the discourse.

For instance, newspapers and magazines produced for high-school educated readers tend to require much shorter paragraphs than those published in academic journals. When evaluating how you have structured your ideas, however, pay attention to whether you have varied the length of your paragraphs. Long chunks of text without paragraph breaks tend to make ideas seem complicated, perhaps even inaccessible to less educated audiences. In turn, short paragraphs can create a list-like style, which intrudes on clarity and persuasive appeal. Because long paragraphs tend to make a document more complicated than short paragraphs, you should question how patient and educated your readers are.

Paragraphs Flow When Information Is Logical

Paragraphs provide a visual representation of your ideas. When revising your work, evaluate the logic behind how you have organized the paragraphs.

Question whether your presentation would appear more logical and persuasive if you rearranged the sequence of the paragraphs. Next, question the structure of each paragraph to see if sentences need to be reordered. Determine whether you are organizing information deductively or according to chronology or according to some sense of what is most and least important. Ask yourself these five questions:

1. How is each paragraph organized? Do I place my general statement or topic sentence near the beginning or the end of each paragraph? Do I need any transitional paragraphs or transitional sentences?
2. As I move from one idea to another, will my reader understand how subsequent paragraphs relate to my main idea as well as to previous paragraphs? Should any paragraphs be shifted in their order in the text? Should a later paragraph be combined with the introductory paragraph?
3. Should the existing paragraphs be cut into smaller segments or merged into longer ones? If I have a concluding paragraph, do I really need it?
4. Will readers understand the logical connections between paragraphs? Do any sentences need to be added to clarify the logical relationship between ideas? Have I provided the necessary forecasting and summarizing sentences that readers will need to understand how the different ideas relate to each other?
5. Have I been too blatant about transitions? Are all of the transitional sentences and paragraphs really necessary or can the reader follow my thoughts without them?

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2.3.4: Body – the Skeleton of Your Paper, Point, Illustration, Explanation

Point, Illustration, Explanation

Read this article about the PIE method of structuring and organizing body paragraphs. This method breaks a paragraph into three parts: the point, the illustration, and the explanation. By using this method, you can keep your paragraphs focused and connected to your thesis.

How Does the Structure of a Body Paragraph Support a Thesis?

Many authors use the PIE format to structure their essays: PIE = point, illustration, explanation.

The point furthers a thesis or claim, the illustration provides support for the point, and the explanation tells the audience why the evidence provided furthers the point and/or the thesis.

For example, in his argument against the +/- grading system at Radford, student-writer Tareq Hajj makes the point that "without the A+, students with high grades in the class would be less motivated to work even harder in order to increase their grades".

He illustrates with a quote from a professor who argues, "'(students) have less incentive to try'" (Fesheraki, 2013).

Hajj then explains that "not providing [the most motivated students] with additional motivation of a higher grade … is inequitable".

Through his explanation, Hajj links back to his claim that "A plus-minus grading scale … should not be used at Radford University "because, as he explains, it is "inequitable".

The PIE structure of his paragraph has served to support his thesis.

All Claims Need Evidence

Ever heard the phrase "everyone is entitled to his opinion"? It is indeed true that people are free to believe whatever they wish. However, the mere fact that a person believes something is not an argument in support of a position. If a text's goal is to communicate effectively, it must provide valid explanations and sufficient and relevant evidence to convince its audience to accept that position. In other words, "every author is entitled to his opinion, but no author is entitled to have his opinion go unchallenged".

What are the Types of Evidence?

Any text should provide illustrations for each of its points, but it is especially important to provide reliable evidence in an academic argument. This evidence can be based on primary source material or data (the author's own experience and/or interviews, surveys, polls, experiments, that they may have created and administered). Evidence can also stem from secondary source material or data (books, journals, newspapers, magazines, websites or surveys, experiments, statistics, polls, and other data collected by others).

Let's say, for example, that you are reading an argument that college instructors should let students use cell phones in class. Primary source material might include a survey the author administered that asks students if policies forbidding cell phone usage actually stop them from using their phones in class. Secondary sources might include articles about the issue from *Faculty Focus* or *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

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2.3.5: Conclusion – What is in the Conclusion, and What is Not? Conclusions

Conclusions

Read this article on how to write a conclusion. Conclusions can be just as important as introductions. A conclusion provides the last opportunity to make your point to your audience. Which of the strategies provided in the reading do you feel would make the strongest conclusion? Which strategy would be best for an argumentative essay and why?

What This Handout is About

This handout will explain the functions of conclusions, offer strategies for writing effective ones, help you evaluate your drafted conclusions, and suggest conclusion strategies to avoid.

About Conclusions

Introductions and conclusions can be the most difficult parts of papers to write. While the body is often easier to write, it needs a frame around it. An introduction and conclusion frame your thoughts and bridge your ideas for the reader.

Just as your introduction acts as a bridge that transports your readers from their own lives into the "place" of your analysis, your conclusion can provide a bridge to help your readers make the transition back to their daily lives. Such a conclusion will help them see why all your analysis and information should matter to them after they put the paper down.

Your conclusion is your chance to have the last word on the subject. The conclusion allows you to have the final say on the issues you have raised in your paper, to synthesize your thoughts, to demonstrate the importance of your ideas, and to propel your reader to a new view of the subject. It is also your opportunity to make a good final impression and to end on a positive note.

Your conclusion can go beyond the confines of the assignment. The conclusion pushes beyond the boundaries of the prompt and allows you to consider broader issues, make new connections, and elaborate on the significance of your findings.

Your conclusion should make your readers glad they read your paper. Your conclusion gives your reader something to take away that will help them see things differently or appreciate your topic in personally relevant ways. It can suggest broader implications that will not only interest your reader, but also enrich your reader's life in some way. It is your gift to the reader.

Strategies for Writing an Effective Conclusion

One or more of the following strategies may help you write an effective conclusion.

- Play the So What Game. If you are stuck and feel like your conclusion is not saying anything new or interesting, ask a friend to read it with you. Whenever you make a statement from your conclusion, ask the friend to say, "So what?" or "Why should anybody care?" Then ponder that question and answer it. Here's how it might go:

  You: *Basically, I'm just saying that education was important to Douglass.*

  Friend: *So what?*

  You: *Well, it was important because it was a key to him feeling like a free and equal citizen.*

  Friend: *Why should anybody care?*

  You: *That's important because plantation owners tried to keep slaves from being educated so that they could maintain control. When Douglass obtained an education, he undermined that control personally.*

  You can also use this strategy on your own, asking yourself "So What?" as you develop your ideas or your draft.
- Return to the theme or themes in the introduction. This strategy brings the reader full circle. For example, if you begin by describing a scenario, you can end with the same scenario as proof that your essay is helpful in creating a new understanding. You may also refer to the introductory paragraph by using key words or parallel concepts and images that you also used in the introduction.
- Synthesize, do not summarize: Include a brief summary of the paper's main points, but don't simply repeat things that were in your paper. Instead, show your reader how the points you made and the support and examples you used fit together. Pull it all together.

- Include a provocative insight or quotation from the research or reading you did for your paper.
- Propose a course of action, a solution to an issue, or questions for further study. This can redirect your reader's thought process and help her to apply your info and ideas to her own life or to see the broader implications.
- Point to broader implications. For example, if your paper examines the Greensboro sit-ins or another event in the Civil Rights Movement, you could point out its impact on the Civil Rights Movement as a whole. A paper about the style of writer Virginia Woolf could point to her influence on other writers or on later feminists.

Strategies to Avoid

- Beginning with an unnecessary, overused phrase such as "in conclusion", "in summary", or "in closing". Although these phrases can work in speeches, they come across as wooden and trite in writing.
- Stating the thesis for the very first time in the conclusion.
- Introducing a new idea or subtopic in your conclusion.
- Ending with a rephrased thesis statement without any substantive changes.
- Making sentimental, emotional appeals that are out of character with the rest of an analytical paper.
- Including evidence (quotations, statistics, etc.) that should be in the body of the paper.

Four Kinds of Ineffective Conclusions

1. The "That's My Story and I'm Sticking to It" Conclusion.

   This conclusion just restates the thesis and is usually painfully short. It does not push the ideas forward. People write this kind of conclusion when they can't think of anything else to say.

   Example: In conclusion, Frederick Douglass was, as we have seen, a pioneer in American education, proving that education was a major force for social change with regard to slavery.

2. The "Sherlock Holmes" Conclusion.

   Sometimes writers will state the thesis for the very first time in the conclusion. You might be tempted to use this strategy if you don't want to give everything away too early in your paper. You may think it would be more dramatic to keep the reader in the dark until the end and then "wow" him with your main idea, as in a Sherlock Holmes mystery. The reader, however, does not expect a mystery, but an analytical discussion of your topic in an academic style, with the main argument (thesis) stated up front.

   Example: (After a paper that lists numerous incidents from the book but never says what these incidents reveal about Douglass and his views on education): So, as the evidence above demonstrates, Douglass saw education as a way to undermine the slaveholders' power and also an important step toward freedom.

3. The "America the Beautiful", "I Am Woman", "We Shall Overcome" Conclusion.

   This kind of conclusion usually draws on emotion to make its appeal, but while this emotion and even sentimentality may be very heartfelt, it is usually out of character with the rest of an analytical paper. A more sophisticated commentary, rather than emotional praise, would be a more fitting tribute to the topic.

   Example: Because of the efforts of fine Americans like Frederick Douglass, countless others have seen the shining beacon of light that is education. His example was a torch that lit the way for others. Frederick Douglass was truly an American hero.

4. The "Grab Bag" Conclusion.

   This kind of conclusion includes extra information that the writer found or thought of but couldn't integrate into the main paper. You may find it hard to leave out details that you discovered after hours of research and thought, but adding random facts and bits of evidence at the end of an otherwise-well-organized essay can just create confusion.

   Example: In addition to being an educational pioneer, Frederick Douglass provides an interesting case study for masculinity in the American South. He also offers historians an interesting glimpse into slave resistance when he confronts Covey, the overseer. His relationships with female relatives reveal the importance of family in the slave community.

Works Consulted

We consulted these works while writing the original version of this handout. This is not a comprehensive list of resources on the handout's topic, and we encourage you to do your own research to find the latest publications on this topic. Please do not use this list as a model for the format of your own reference list, as it may not match the citation style you are using.

All quotations are from:

Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, edited and with introduction by Houston A. Baker, Jr., New York: Penguin Books, 1986.

"Strategies for Writing a Conclusion". Literacy Education Online, St. Cloud State University. 18 May 2005.

"Conclusions". Nesbitt-Johnston Writing Center, Hamilton College. 17 May 2005.

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2.3.6: Conclusion – What is in the Conclusion, and What is Not? Write a Conclusion

Write a Conclusion

In this practice exercise, use the prewriting and writing techniques you know from Chapter 2 to write a concluding paragraph for your essay for this unit. The topic is:

"How does my selected activity or characteristic affect success in an Internet-based college course?"

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2.4: Structuring Your Essay (SNHU Academic Support Services)



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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

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3.1: Academic Writing

Academic Writing

Read this article and review the list of academic genres you could be expected to write in.

Academic writing and publishing is conducted in several sets of forms and genres. This article provides a short summary of the full spectrum of critical and academic writing and lists the genres of academic writing. It does *not* cover the variety of critical approaches that can be applied when one writes about a subject. However, as Harwood and Hadley (2004) and Hyland (2004) have pointed out, the amount of variation that exists between different disciplines may mean that we cannot refer to a single academic literacy.

Writing in these forms or styles is usually written in an impersonal and dispassionate tone, targeted for a critical and informed audience, based on closely investigated knowledge, and intended to reinforce or challenge concepts or arguments. It usually circulates within the academic world ('the academy'), but the academic writer may also find an audience outside via journalism, speeches, pamphlets, etc.

Typically, scholarly writing has an objective stance, clearly states the significance of the topic, and is organized with adequate detail so that other scholars may try to replicate the results. Strong papers are not overly general and correctly utilize formal academic rhetoric.

While academic writing consists of a number of text types and genres, what they have in common, the conventions that academic writers traditionally follow, has been a subject of debate Many writers have called for conventions to be challenged, for example Pennycook (1997) and Ivanic (1998), while others suggest that some conventions should be maintained, for example Clark (1997, p136).

Discourse Community

A discourse community is essentially a group of people that shares mutual interests and beliefs. "It establishes limits and regularities...who may speak, what may be spoken, and how it is to be said; in addition [rules] prescribe what is true and false, what is reasonable and what foolish, and what is meant and what not." (Porter, 39).

People are generally involved in a variety of discourse communities within their private, social, and professional lives. Some discourse communities are very formal with well established boundaries, while others may have a looser construction with greater freedom. Additionally, discourse communities have approved channels of communication in which members write or speak through. These channels can be a web page, a journal, a blog, or any medium people use to communicate through.

Examples of discourse communities may include but certainly not limited to: medicine, law, psychology, films (movies), general forums, technology, sociology, philosophy, chemistry, physics, mathematics, writing, rhetoric, and composition.

The concept of discourse community is vital to academic writers across nearly all disciplines, for the academic writer's purpose is to influence a discourse community to think differently. At the same time the discourse community does not expect to see any writing that appears too foreign. For this reason the academic writer must follow the constraints set by the discourse community so his or her ideas earn approval and respect.

Discourse Community Constraints

Constraints are the discourse community's written and unwritten conventions about what a writer can say and how he or she can say it. They define what is an acceptable argument. Each discourse community expects to see a writer construct his or her argument using their conventional style of language and vocabulary, and they expect a writer to use the established intertext within the discourse community as the building blocks for his or her argument.

Writing for a Discourse Community

In order for a writer to become familiar with some of the constraints of the discourse community they are writing for, a useful tool for the academic writer is to analyze prior work from the discourse community. The writer should look at the textual 'moves' in these papers, focusing on how they are constructed. Across most discourses communities, writers will:

- Identify the novelty of their position;
- Make a claim, or thesis;

- Acknowledge prior work and situate their claim in a disciplinary context;
- Offer warrants for one's view based on community-specific arguments and procedures (Hyland).

Each of the moves listed above are constructed differently depending on the discourse community the writer is in. For example, the way a claim is made in a high school paper would look very different from the way a claim is made in a college composition class. It is important for the academic writer to familiarize himself or herself with the conventions of the discourse community by reading and analyzing other works, so that the writer is best able to communicate his or her ideas. (Porter) Contrary to some beliefs, this is by no means plagiarism.

Writers should also be aware of other ways in which the discourse community shapes their writing. Other functions of the discourse community include determining what makes a novel argument and what a fact is. The following sections elaborate on these functions.

Misconceptions Regarding Fact and Opinion in the Discourse Community

It is important for any writer to distinguish between what is accepted as 'fact' and what is accepted as 'opinion'. Wikipedia's article Fact misguides writers in their interpretation of what a fact actually is. The article states that "A fact is something that has really occurred or is actually the case". But this is not how writers think of facts. Writing professionals hold that, "In a rhetorical argument, a fact is a claim that an audience will accept as being true without requiring proof".

Facts can be thought of merely as claims. The audience can be thought of as a discourse community, and a fact can suddenly change to become an opinion if stated in a different discourse community. This is how writers within discourse communities manage to present new ideas to their communities. Any new opinion would need to be proven by making a rhetorical argument, in which the writer would weave together what his or her intended audience will accept as 'facts' in a way that supports his or her idea. Therefore, knowing the intended discourse community is a very important part of writing.

Across discourse communities, what is considered factual may fluctuate across each community. As Elizabeth Wardle and Douglas Downs wrote in their book *Writing about Writing*, in reference to Margaret Kantz's article "Helping students use textual sources persuasively":

> *A key concept in this change is learning to recognize that facts aren't so much inherently true statements as they are claims-that is, assertions that most of a given audience has agreed are true because for that audience sufficient proof has already been given. You, like most people, would probably classify the statement "the Earth is round" as a "fact". Its status as a fact, however, depends on our mutual agreement that "round" is an adequate description of the Earth's actual, imperfectly spherical shape.*
>
> *What Kantz wants us to see is that what makes the statement a fact is not how "true" the statement is but that most people have agreed that it's true and treat it as true. Statements about which we haven't reached this consensus remain claims, statements that people argue about. Kantz's work here demonstrates why it's so important to read texts-even "factual" works like textbooks and encyclopedias-as consisting of claims, not facts.*

Misconceptions Regarding Making a Novel Argument

Within discourse communities, writers build on top of the ideas established by previous writers. One of the most common misconceptions about writing is the idea of the 'lonely writer'; that great writers' papers are filled almost entirely with original ideas and messages. But this is simply not the case. Discourse communities introduce new ideas and claims, and from these, writers expand on them. James Porter, a scholar of Rhetoric at Indiana University, uses The Declaration of Independence as an example to illustrate this point. Porter points out that Jefferson merely pulled the phrase "That all men are created equal" straight from his commonplace book he made as a boy.

Porter also points out that, "'Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness' was a cliche of the times, appearing in numerous political documents". In fact, according to Porter, almost nothing in the Declaration of Independence was written originally by Jefferson. Jefferson wrote this great work by weaving together the intertext of his discourse community.

As Greene describes in his article, "Argument as Conversation", academic writing can be thought of metaphorically as a conversation between those in the discourse community. "The metaphor of conversation emphasizes the social nature of writing" (Greene). Just like in a conversation when you listen to the ideas of the others who are involved and formulate your own opinion on the topic, a writer may be reading a paper done by another writer in the discourse community and from this paper, the scholar may obtain inspiration to expand the claims expressed in the paper or address them from other angles.

"Like the verbal conversations you have with others,' effective arguments never take place in a vacuum; they take into account previous conversations that have taken place about the subject under discussion" (Greene). Good academic writers know the importance of researching previous work from within the discourse community and using this work to build their own claims. By taking these ideas and expanding upon them or applying them in a new way, a writer is able to make their novel argument.

Intertextuality in Academic Writing

Intertextuality is the combining of past writings into original, new pieces of text. The term intertextuality was coined in 1966 by Julia Kristeva. All texts are necessarily related to prior texts through a network of links, writers (often unwittingly) make use of what has previously been written and thus some degree of borrowing is inevitable. This generally occurs within a specific discourse community.

Conversation

Factoring in intertextuality, the goal of academic writing is not simply creating new ideas, but to offer a new perspective and link between already established ideas. This is why gathering background information and having past knowledge is so important in academic writing. A common metaphor used to describe academic writing is "entering the conversation", a conversation that began long before you got there and will continue long after you leave. A quote from Kenneth Burke encapsulates this metaphor:

> *"Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending on the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress."*

Intertextuality plays into this because without it there would be no conversations, just hundreds of thousands of writings not connected or able to build on each other. The listening until you can join the conversation can be seen as doing research. All of the research you read, is built on research instead of self-knowledge. This can be connected to the part of the metaphor where no one in the parlor is qualified to bring you up to speed, just as the papers your researched were researched also.

Types of Intertextuality

There are two distinct types of intertextuality as defined by Porter: iterability and presupposition.

Iterability is the capability of a text to be reiterated and repeated in various contexts. Iterability is explicitly seen in texts, as opposed to presupposition, which refers to assumptions a text makes. One such example of this concept from Porter is the Declaration of Independence. Many texts and ideas of different centuries were integrated into the one document. Jefferson took the idea of John Locke's social contract theory, the Declaration of Rights for Virginia by George Mason, and the form of the English Bill of Rights in 1689 into the Declaration of Independence.

Some claimed that this was blatant plagiarism but others say it was iterability. He used the form of a list of grievances as used in the English Bill of Rights and this example proves that not only direct quotes can be reiterated but also the form of a text. When Thomas Jefferson proposed the Declaration to congress, they made 86 changes to his actual original ideas because they were so farfetched from the current discourse community. This is an example of the constraint a discourse community can place on a text.

Presupposition is the process by which implications are made without being specifically stated or explained within text. These assumptions are usually extremely basic thoughts made by a vast majority of the audience; such thoughts may be considered "common sense" or otherwise obvious to anyone who reads the text.

Example: "Rodrigo rode his bike to his friend's house". This simple statement implies several facts that the reader automatically assumes. Rodrigo owns a bike, he has a friend, his friend has a house, his house is within biking distance, and Rodrigo has the ability to ride a bike. Details can be added or removed by an author to give more or less creative license to the readers themselves; in this case, one reader could imagine the bike being colored red, while another may believe it to be blue.

Because the assumptions made by different readers can be drastically different from one another, it is important that the framework the author provides is sufficient to keep the assumptions that are crucial to the story itself constant between readers. Example: "It was dark and stormy night". This statement is iterated as a cliché opening to a story. The statement provides an opening for a fictional narrative while simultaneously implying an ominous, foreboding setting. When opening a story with this line, the author is able to instantly set a mood and tone before the story truly begins, giving the reader a sense that the story is already in progress.

Examples of Intertextuality

1. Ulysses: Ulysses, a novel written by James Joyce in 1918, is an example of intertextuality because the themes largely shadow those of Homer's Odyssey (an ancient Greek epic poem). Ulysses uses the plot line from The Odyssey and retells it with a new character in a new setting, thus using past writings to create a new, original one.

2. Aladdin: The classic Disney movie Aladdin has many distinct examples of intertextuality throughout. For example, one scene depicts the Genie that comes out of Aladdin's lamp being pinched by a crab – the same crab from another popular Disney movie, The Little Mermaid. In another scene, the two main characters are flying through the sky on a magic carpet and, for a moment, Zeus's temple from the movie Hercules can be seen in the background. These are examples of intertextuality because they pull from past Disney works and use them to create something new and original.

3. West Side Story: West Side Story is an example of intertextuality in that it is the modern retelling of Shakespeare's tragedy of Romeo & Juliet. Tony (Romeo) and Maria (Juliet) are both in love. However, their families and the rival groups with which their loyalty lies forbid their love. West Side Story uses themes from Romeo and Juliet (such as forbidden love and a tragic ending) to create a new, original story.

Academic Framework

Frame

A frame is the section in an academic paper in which a perspective that has already been accepted by a specific discourse community is presented in order to blatantly explain to the reader the point of view from which the rest of the essay will be analyzed. Because of the established framework, the reader will logically understand the progression of the writer's argument because the writer has legitimized his or her claim by citing an accepted theory (framework) and thus the reader will be directed towards a particular conclusion. When one uses an academic concept that has been accepted by the discourse community as a frame, this frame "forces you to offer both a definition and description of the principle around which your argument develops" (Greene).

As Stuart Greene explains, "Framing is a metaphor for describing the lens, or perspective, from which writers present their arguments". One can think of a frame as metaphorical glasses that are put on in order to see a topic in a new way. For example, if one is trying to analyze a situation from a psychological perspective, one may put on the "glasses" of Sigmund Freud and approach said topic from his "psychoanalytical" point of view. This frame has allowed the writer to see a topic from a particular angle.

This means that one may be disregarding the socioeconomic, biological, or other lenses from which one could view a particular topic. You are using the one frame of "psychoanalysis" to shape your argument and make an impression on the reader. An academic frame does not give the topic a bias *per se*, as the argument is not presented in a false way. The frame does however allow the writer to focus the reader's attention in one specific direction in order to reach a specific conclusion.

Framing in the Discourse Community / Intertextuality

Establishing a Place in the Conversation

A frame also establishes credibility for the author in a certain field of study, or "discourse community". A discourse community can be composed of medical professionals, historians, or even the individuals that make up the readership of Wikipedia. When

establishing a frame, the author is telling the discourse community that he or she is aware of what is current in the discourse and that the paper being presented has something relevant to add. Without a frame, a paper is not grounded in any particular community and thus has no academic relevance, or any legitimate importance to an academic audience.

The framing concept that one chooses to use has already been accepted by the community and is thus a part of their intertextual matrix. A well-developed frame is the doorway into an academic conversation that has been going on for quite some time before one's arrival and is "still vigorously in progress" after the new argument has been established (Burke qtd. in Greene). If one guides the members of a specific discourse through a paper using an idea that the community already holds as true, the new argument is more likely to gain acceptance from the audience as they understand where it is coming from.

Establishing a Novel Idea

A paper is not about the frame itself. The purpose of an academic paper is not to rehash the concept used to frame it, but rather to use the frame as a tool (a pair of glasses) to "see" a unique claim as molded in a certain light. No text stands alone as "the individual writer's work is part of a web, part of a community search for truth and meaning" (Porter). In essence, a writer does not randomly come up with "new" ideas, but writes about already established concepts in novel ways.

This is where the frame comes in. Without a frame, an author is simply making a statement; one which has most likely already been made throughout the history of the topic or within the discourse. However, a frame gives you a way to look at your statement, an explanation for phenomena, and therefore questions to ask and research. It is the frame that allows one to establish the argument because it gives a tired topic new life or novelty.

Warning: Do not get lost in the scholar's voice

Many people have trouble creating a new claim out of a topic, as "many students… misunderstand sources because they read them as stories" (Kantz). By doing so, one could accidentally wind up regurgitating information that a scholarly article explains instead of using the information or concepts read as a frame to further develop one's own argument.

Make sure to relate the framework back to your original claim, the issue that you are addressing. Again, the frame is not the central focus of a paper, but rather a point of view from which to examine a topic. By incorporating this scholarly information into your paper and relating it to your own claim, you are maintaining the novelty of your argument.

Examples of Framework and Analysis

This section will guide one through an example of framework as it is being used in a published academic paper. One will observe how the sections on framework written above apply to a real-world example.

The following excerpt is from an essay by first-year writing student Shannon Baldo entitled "Elves and Extremism: The Use of Fantasy in the Radical Environmentalist Movement". This essay was written for publication in the *Young Scholars in Writing Journal* under the section entitled "First Year Writing". All articles in the *Young Scholars in Writing Journal* focus on some aspect of rhetoric, or the art of persuasion in speaking and writing.

In Shannon Baldo's essay, the frame of "fantasy-themed criticism" is immediately defined in the introduction of her essay. Baldo quickly explains Ernest G. Bormann's academically accepted idea of fantasy-themed criticism to include "first, that a person's reality is created by communication and language, and second, that this communication can create a "shared reality" among many participants…[that allows them to] see themselves as heroes or villains and their actions as just or unjust" (Foss qtd. in Baldo).

> *"With just this initial piece of rhetoric, the authors of the movement transform their followers into mysterious and fantastical creatures. By repeatedly calling activists "elves" rather than humans, this artifact links the movement to fantasy, and on at least a subconscious level, the protesters begin to identify themselves as participants in this new reality.*

> *When protesters begin to operate as "elves" rather than "environmentalists", they can shed conventions that constrain their choices and behaviors…the organization's name evokes this fantasy theme, the movement forming a new world in which violence is no longer a matter of moral or legal consequences but a "craft" that functions to protect a fantastical world that includes the protesters themselves."*

When observing the extreme environmentalist movement on a whole, one may conclude that environmental extremists are naturally insane, driven to rage as they were not given enough attention as children, etc. By choosing the framework of fantasy-themed criticism, Baldo is narrowing this field of frames down to one way of viewing the movement. She then uses specifics about the movement, such as the fact that participants actually call themselves "elves" as seen in their literature, to explain that it is fantasy rhetoric that affects the environmentalist movement specifically.

As observed in the selected paragraph above, Baldo uses the framework of fantasy-themed criticism to argue her own topic: it is the fantasy-themed rhetoric of the environmental movement that allows environmentalists to justify their radical actions. Baldo does not focus her paper on fantasy-themed criticism in general, but uses it as a skeleton upon which to mold her argument about environmentalism specifically. Without Bormann's concept being accepted within the discourse community, Baldo would not have had the credibility with which to speak to an academic audience or a way in which to argue her point, instead she would have only been able to state her opinion.

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3.2: An Overview of Academic Genres

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3.2.1: Personal Narrative, In The Moment

In the Moment

Read this article, which looks at an example of a personal narrative. How does this type of writing differ from literary analysis or a research paper? When is this type of writing appropriate?

Assignment Description and Example Assignment Response

This assignment asks you to craft a story based on personal experience. This is different from literary analysis or research paper assignments which ask you to open with a thesis to continually reference and support. Stories are constructed differently. Successful stories describe events in such a way that readers get to experience the story as if they were directly observing events. Consider the following when drafting, writing, and revising:

Place your readers into a significant moment you've experienced. Narrow your focus from the start. Select a story out of one, tiny, narrow corner of your life and avoid expanding on all the details around the story. Do not give us an introduction that explains everything before it happens. Let the story speak for itself and trust your readers work at discovering what your story is about. Try to drop your readers into the action of your story to create immediacy.

A large disk of snow lifted in the wind from the top of the semi-truck in front of me. I took hold of the steering wheel with both hands as the sheet of snow fell and burst onto my windshield. I had successfully resisted the instinctive pull to turn the wheel sharply to the right or left and now, with the snow melting on the windshield, I turned on my wipers to clear my line of sight behind the truck. "Slow and easy", I tell myself, and concentrate on keeping the car balanced between tracks of snow in the road.

Context should be embedded into your story throughout, not provided as a separate section of your story.

Not until I had pulled into the parking lot of the indoor soccer arena, found a parking spot, and turned off the car did I let my arms relax their grip on the steering wheel. I reached back and pulled my soccer bag from the backseat before opening the door and leaning into the wind, jogging cautiously to the front door of the arena. Once inside, the sights, sounds, and smells were all familiar. I had been playing indoor co-ed soccer for years with the same group of friends. We met in front of court three where we were scheduled to be playing tonight.

Pay particular attention to character development by asking yourself what actions best represent the people you plan to include into your story.

The first person to greet me was Rob.

"So you made it through the blizzard – too bad", Rob said with a wide grin. He was always sarcastic in his humor. Rob was born in England and had moved to the U.S. for college. He was our captain on what he called "the pitch", always shouting for us to get back on defense. "Stupid Americans", he would say after a loss, "always wanting to score instead of play good defense". He pronounced it de-FENSE as opposed to the American pronunciation of DE-fense. We always laughed at him berating Americans before bringing up our successful revolution and the fact that here he was living in America by choice.

Try experimenting with dialogue as dialogue always brings your story into active, present tense which is enlivening for your readers. On a related note, successful dialogue on the page is not merely an accurate representation of what people say in real life, it is oftentimes pared down to the most important, well-stated things that people say.

I can't remember if the game was an important one or not, whether we were playing one of our heated rivalry games against the team from Bell's Brewery that usually ended in a shoving match or if our shot at the championship was swinging in the balance. What I do remember is joking with Rob at halftime. He said he was done telling me to get back on defense since I never listened anyway.

"The best defense is offense", I told him.

"I'm really starting to dislike you", he said. Again with that smile to tell me he was joking along with me. He wrapped his arm around my shoulders and said, "You've got a lot to learn from me".

Relate your story in a way that reveals its significance to you. If the story is revealing itself to you as you write then your readers will experience it as a revelation also. In other words, don't simply write about the event; show us how you experienced it as opposed to what it means to you or what you learned from the experience. This is very tricky to pull off successfully. On the one

hand, you don't want to over-tell the story in such a way that gives your readers nothing to make sense of on their own. On the other hand, you don't want to alienate your readers by confusing them with not enough information to comprehend your moment.

At the start of the second half, I was on the field when something happened. Something I still don't quite understand. It came upon all of us, a type of twilight wherein time seemed sticky and disjointed. We collectively knew something was wrong. Rob had collapsed onto the turf and we all stood there, staring. The ball silently rolled into a corner and stopped with no one in pursuit.

Use concrete and specific detail to represent your point of view and your situation. Avoid direct explanation in favor of concrete details that show the reader what you mean, rather than tell the reader. Attach your ideas to visible things. In general, you want to dramatize your situation so that your readers experience it as though it were happening before their eyes, so that the readers are in the position of an observer at the scene. This is different than a narrative in which you offer a synopsis, in effect telling the reader about something which has happened to you instead of allowing the reader to witness the event for themselves.

Rather than the usual flow of time that moves on undetected, the next ten minutes occurred like quick photographs blurred at their edges. There was a scramble to get inside bags for a cell phone. A call to 911. Shouts to the administrator's office in the center of the arena. The color purple rising to the surface of Rob's cheeks. Questions: "What happened?" "Does anyone know CPR?" The thick black boots with reflective yellow trim of the firefighters that came through the door. The relief that everything would be OK now that they were here followed by a reinvigorated sense of fear once I realized that they were moving too slowly. The scratch of artificial turf beneath the rubber soles of my soccer shoes. Ripping the goal from the wall so that Rob could be carried to an ambulance on a stretcher. The smell of his urine and shit as they carried him through the opening of the goal and into the blinking ambulance. The crunch and grind of ice beneath the tires of the ambulance as it finally drove off.

Avoid explanatory, epilogue conclusions that try to sum up everything for your readers. Trust your readers to draw their own conclusions from the moment you've crafted for them to experience.

I was reckless on my drive home – weaving in-and-out of traffic, feeling the car slip several times from my control as the snow and ice disconnected what should have been a firm line from my hands to the steering wheel to the tires to the road. Later that evening I thought of the soccer ball, how it had rolled into the corner with no one running after it. With so many lights strung to the ceiling of the arena it cast a strange shadow sitting there in the corner of the field. I wondered if anyone had walked over to retrieve it before turning out the lights and locking the doors.

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3.2.2: Comparison and Contrast

Comparison and Contrast

Read this article to learn about compare and contrast essays. How is this form of writing important beyond the classroom? Attempt the exercises to test your understanding.

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 example, Red Delicious apples are sweet, while Granny Smiths are tart and acidic. Drawing distinctions between elements in a similar category will increase the audience's understanding of that category, which is the purpose of the compare-and-contrast essay.

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

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.

The Structure of a Comparison and Contrast Essay

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

Thesis statement: Organic vegetables may cost more than those that are conventionally grown, but when put to the test, they are definitely worth every extra penny.

Here the thesis sets up the two subjects to be compared and contrasted (organic versus conventional vegetables), and it makes a claim about the results that might prove useful to the reader.

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

1. According to the subjects themselves, discussing one then the other
2. According to individual points, discussing each subject in relation to each point

Figure Comparison and Contrast Diagram diagrams the ways to organize our organic versus conventional vegetables thesis.

Figure 10.1 Comparison and Contrast Diagram

Figure 3.2.2.1

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

Given that compare-and-contrast essays analyze the relationship between two subjects, it is helpful to have some phrases on hand that will cue the reader to such analysis.

Table "Phrases of Comparison and Contrast" offers examples:

Comparison	Contrast
one similarity	one difference
another similarity	another difference
both	conversely
like	in contrast
likewise	unlike
similarly	while

Comparison	Contrast
in as similar	whereas

Writing a Comparison and Contrast Essay

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

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

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.

Key Takeaways

- A compare-and-contrast essay analyzes two subjects by either comparing them, contrasting them, or both.
- The purpose of writing a comparison or contrast essay is not to state the obvious but rather to illuminate subtle differences or unexpected similarities between two subjects.
- The thesis should clearly state the subjects that are to be compared, contrasted, or both, and it should state what is to be learned from doing so.
- There are two main organizing strategies for compare-and-contrast essays.
    1. Organize by the subjects themselves, one then the other.
    2. Organize by individual points, in which you discuss each subject in relation to each point.
- Use phrases of comparison or phrases of contrast to signal to readers how exactly the two subjects are being analyzed.

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3.2.3: Comparison and Contrast, Create a Comparison Outline

Create a Comparison Outline

In this practice exercise, sketch a comparison outline for your essay topic from the perspective of a comparison essay. The topic is:

"How does my selected activity or characteristic affect success in an Internet-based college course?"

What topics would you be comparing, and why? Think also about how you would adapt your claim according to these comparisons.

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3.2.4: Cause and Effect Analysis, Causes and Effects

Causes and Effects

Read this article to learn about cause and effect and how it compares to correlation. How can type of writing help you beyond the classroom? What professions rely on cause and effect reasoning?

Why are things like this? What is the effect, or result, of this? What causes this?

These questions guide authors as they analyze or argue about causal relationships, such as "What is the effect of a college education on income?" View fascinating reports on various cause/effect topics and then explore your own causal relationship. Improve your critical thinking skills.

Unlike explanations of processes, which follow a chronological order of events, cause and effect texts are deeply speculative and tentative, relying on causal reasoning and argument. Your purpose is to answer

1. Why are things like this?
2. What is the effect, or result, of this?
3. What is the cause of this?

Analyzing cause-and-effect relationships requires you to question how different parts and sequences interact with each other over time, which is often more difficult than reporting a chronological order of events, as you do when describing a process.

Why Write about Causes and Effects?

Human beings ask why perhaps more than any other question. When we listen to the nightly news and hear about the atrocities of war, we wonder, "What causes the hatred?" When we read about the violence plaguing our country, we ask, "Why does the United States lead the world in violent crimes?" When we read studies that indicate that 28 percent of women in America have been raped and that the occurrence of date rape is rising on college campuses, we ask, "Why is this happening?" When we read about environmental problems such as the depletion of the ozone layer, we wonder, "Why don't we do something about it?" Whenever we make decisions in our daily lives, we ask ourselves, "Why should I do this?"

On a daily basis, we seek to understand why events occurred by identifying the factors that led up to them. For example, if you were not doing well in school and on homework assignments, you might ask:

- Did my high school class(es) sufficiently prepare me for this class?
- Am I studying long enough?
- Am I taking effective lecture notes?
- Am I paying too much attention to the course texts and too little to the instructor's lectures?
- How is my attendance?
- Is my part-time job interfering too much with my school work?
- Am I using my time to study effectively?
- Are some of my friends having a negative influence on my study habits?
- Am I taking too many courses or putting too much time into another course?
- What can I do to improve my memory or study skills?

After asking these and other questions, you would eventually be able to identify a variety of causes for your poor performance, and once you recognize the causal relationship, you can set about realistically to improve your grade.

Cause-and-effect assignments are among the most interesting writing projects that you will tackle in school and in professional life. In school, teachers frequently assign process assignments. For example, humanities professors may ask for an analysis of what causes particular music genres or artistic genres to capture the imagination of popular culture; history professors, the impact of cultures on world history; social science professors, the effects of inventions on culture or the effect of gun control laws on violent homicide rates; business professors, the effects of changes in the interest rates on the economy.

Cause-and-effect texts are extremely common in professions--particularly the sciences, where researchers employ the scientific method to seek out cause-and-effect relationships. Writers commonly focus on analyzing causes or effects. A medical writer, for example, might explore the effects of a poor diet or the causes of a disease. A lawyer might argue the effect of an accident on his client. A sports writer might analyze why a team continues its losing or winning streak.

Diverse Rhetorical Situations

The purpose of many cause-and-effect texts is to explain the effects or causes of something. And the tone of these texts tends to be dispassionate and objective. In complex situations, however, the writer's purpose may shift from explaining to speculating or even arguing about an interpretation. Sometimes writers argue about a particular cause or effect because they want to sell you something or because they want to change your mind on a policy or interpretation.

People write about causes and effects for a variety of communication situations, and they employ a variety of media. The shape and content of cause-and-effect reports tend to be more diverse than the shape and content of texts that explain subjects, concepts, or processes, as suggested in the table below.

Purposes	Audiences	Voices	Media
• Speculate • Explain • Satirize • Argue • Sell	• Mass market audience • Decision makers • Researchers • Individuals • Consumers	• First person • Passionate • Objective • Academic	• Advertisem • Listserv me • Essays • Newspapers • Magazines • Editorials • Web sites • Videos

Rhetorical Analysis of Cause and Effect Texts

Consider the context, audience, purpose, and media invoked by the following readings. Also examine how ideas are developed in these texts. Are assertions grounded in personal experience, interviews with authorities, questionnaires, Internet and library research, or empirical research?

1. GHB on Campus: A subtext of a larger Web site created to educate readers about the dangers of GHB (the dangerous drug gamma hydroxy butyrate), this page summarizes the deadly effects of GHB on college campuses and urges readers to forward a listserv message to their friends, which reveals the deadly effects of GHB. Interestingly, a sidebar seeks readers' input to a survey on GHB usage on college campuses. On the Project GHB home page, the authors explain that Mr. and Mrs. Shortridges began the site following the death of their son to a GHB overdose: This GHB website started out as a quick project with the sole purpose of getting some truth about GHB on the Internet. In doing their original searches for GHB on the Internet, the Shortridges found that most websites advocate its use, etc. Some Internet pages about GHB have seemingly educated reports about GHB. They offer recipes, kits for sale, and tips for "safe" experiences.
2. Rewards for Justice Program: Prevention of Terrorism Advertising Campaign: The U.S. government summarizes the successful effects of its rewards program for preventing terrorism. Its purpose appears to be to defend the program, advertise its effectiveness, and outline future rewards.
3. College graduation rate below 50 percent: Written by a reporter for CNN.com, this texts summarizes academic research conducted by the Council for Aid to Education. The research analyzed why 52 percent of students in public colleges and 45 percent of students in private colleges failed to graduate in 2000.

   The researcher focused on greater access to college as the cause for the high dropout rate, suggesting that students who are being accepted into college are not prepared and that colleges need to do

more to help these students succeed. The author's tone/voice is impersonal and objective. The audience for the original research study was universities, while this report is written for a broader audience – readers of CNN's online education pages.

4. The Impact of Arts Education on Workforce Preparation. Sponsored by the National Governors Association, this report's primary audience is US governors. The purpose of this summary appears to be to encourage governors to fund arts education. This summary highlights conclusions found in a lengthier review of research: The Impact of Arts Education on Workforce Preparation. This brief summary seems to present the other study's results as fact as opposed to speculation or argument based on empirical research:

   The arts provide one alternative for states looking to build the workforce of tomorrow -- a choice growing in popularity and esteem. The arts can provide effective learning opportunities to the general student population, yielding increased academic performance, reduced absenteeism, and better skill-building. An even more compelling advantage is the striking success of arts-based educational programs among disadvantaged populations, especially at-risk and incarcerated youth.
5. The Mayo Clinic discusses the causes of HIV infection, and symptoms experienced after HIV infection, to provide initial information to individuals with little education on HIV/AIDS.
6. The State of the World's Children by UNICEF: Mixing evocative pictures with extremely detailed analyses of the effects of poor nutrition on the world's children, UNICEF offers an informative and persuasive account of how countries and communities can and should help their children.
7. The Dead Grandmother/Exam Syndrome and the Potential Downfall of American Society by Mike Adams: Written for a university audience, Mike Adams pokes fun at social science methods and students' "grandmother" problems: Overall, a student who is failing a class and has a final coming up is more than 50 times more likely to lose a family member than an A student not facing any exams.

Focus

When dealing with causes and effects, it is important to keep to a narrow topic. Time constraints and resources should always be kept in mind when pursuing a topic. Example: To find the reasons for world hunger would take years of research and/or tons of hours, so focus on a specific entity of a broad topic. Perhaps you could identify one country's efforts over the past few years.

Writers often bring focus to their work by claiming cause-and-effect relationships upfront, in their introductions. These "thesis statements" guide the writer and reader throughout the document. And they also offer clues as to the writer's voice, tone, and persona. Consider, for example, this tongue-in-cheek analysis of the The Dead Grandmother/Exam Syndrome and the Potential Downfall of American Society.

The basic problem can be stated very simply: A student's grandmother is far more likely to die suddenly just before the student takes an exam, than at any other time of year.

While this idea has long been a matter of conjecture or merely a part of the folklore of college teaching, I can now confirm that the phenomenon is real. For over twenty years I have collected data on this supposed relationship, and have not only confirmed what most faculty had suspected, but also found some additional aspects of this process that are of potential importance to the future of the country. The results presented in this report provide a chilling picture and should waken the profession and the general public to a serious health and sociological problem before it is too late.

Development

Critical readers such as your instructors are quick to recognize shallow reasoning. College instructors expect you to cite multiple causes or effects when you are addressing a complex phenomenon.

For example, if you were exploring the effects of TV on children, your readers would most likely expect you to do more than attack the violence as being unethical or immoral. Likewise, if you were analyzing the causes of our nation's high divorce rates, your instructors would expect you to do more than cite troubles with finances as the cause of divorces.

To help you develop a stronger sense of the level of detail your readers need to understand a particular cause-and-effect relationship, consider conducting research. What have others reported about the particular cause-and-effect relationship you are exploring? Read about what others have speculated or reported about your topic.

Below are some additional suggestions for developing your cause-and-effect report.

Check for Post Hoc Fallacies

Critical readers will expect you to develop the reasoning that demonstrates the cause and effect relationship isn't due to chance. Academic readers are reluctant to assume causality between two actions because they are trained to identify post hoc ("after this") fallacies. Essentially a post hoc fallacy occurs when an author assumes Event B was caused by Event A simply because it followed Event A; the connection is false because it is equally possible that Event B was caused by some other factor. For example, let us suppose that Bill has been jilted by his girlfriend Laura.

Because Laura argued with Bill last Friday night that he never spent any money on her and that she always has to pay for their dates, Bill might assume that she left him because he was cheap. However, this might not be the true reason for Laura's dumping Bill. In fact, it could be that Laura was tired of Bill's negative view of life. Perhaps she truly left Bill because she found him to be insensitive, boring, and uncommunicative.

Identify Sufficient and Necessary Causes

In some instances, you may be able to explain an effect by identifying sufficient causes and necessary causes.

A sufficient cause is one that can cause the effect to take place. By itself, a sufficient cause can explain a phenomenon or trend. For instance, according to the Mayo Clinic resource above, in order for someone to contract the HIV virus, any of the following forms of contact is a sufficient cause:

- Having sex
- Blood transfusions
- Sharing needles
- Pregnancy, delivery, or breastfeeding

However, frequently more than one sufficient cause is necessary to explain a phenomenon or trend. Three or four causes, for example, may be necessary to explain an effect. You cannot say, for example, that all one needs is a match to start a fire. You also need oxygen and something to burn. When describing physical phenomena such as how acid rain is produced, you may have little difficulty identifying sufficient causes. Explaining human behavior is rarely so simple, of course.

Identify Remote and Speculative Causes

When we face complicated questions and problems, we often are unable to identify sufficient causes so we must speculate about necessary causes – those causes that can result in the effect. For instance, no single cause precipitated the collapse of the Soviet Union, yet we could speculate that hunger, poor economic conditions, alienation from communism, and political corruption were all remote causes.

Because academic readers are sensitive to the complexity of most issues, they generally do not expect you to offer sufficient causes for complex problems. Instead, they expect you to speculate about possible causes and effects, while limiting the scope of your claims with qualifiers such as "usually", "may", "possible", "sometimes" or "most". No simple answer, no sufficient cause, can explain, for example, why some people become violent criminals or serial killers while others devote themselves to feeding the hungry or serving the helpless.

Establish an Appropriate Voice

You can choose from a range of tones, personas and voices. Some writers choose a contentious, argumentative tone. Alternatively, sometimes writers will soften their tone, perhaps assuming a milder persona than they actually feel, because they fear providing the information in a more straightforward, argumentative way would cause readers to look elsewhere. For example, in Tropical Forests and Climate Change, the Canadian Development Agency offers a terrifying, well-researched analysis of global warming, yet softens its message with this caveat in the introduction:

> *Climate change predictions are difficult because of the complexity of the atmosphere and the interaction of the many variables involved.*

Humanize Abstract Issues

No matter how technical your subject is, you should keep in mind that you are writing to other people. When you sense that the human story is being lost in abstract figures or academic jargon, consider adding an anecdote of how the problem you are discussing affects particular people. For example, Melissa Henderson, a student writer, began her report on the effect of crack on babies with the following portrayal of a newborn, which she composed after reading numerous essays about the effect of crack cocaine on human fetuses:

> *Lying restlessly under the warm lights like a McDonald's Big Mac, Baby Doe fights with all of his three pounds of strength to stay alive. Because he was born prematurely, Baby Doe has an array of tubes and wires extending from his frail body which constantly monitor his heartbeat, drain excess fluid from his lungs and alert hospital personnel in the event he stops breathing. As he lies in the aseptic incubator his rigid little arms and legs twitch and jerk as though a steady current of electricity coursed through his veins. Suddenly, without warning or provocation, he begins to cry a mournful, inconsolable wail that continues steadily without an end in sight. As the nurses try to comfort the tiny infant with loving touches and soothing whispers, Baby Doe's over-wrought nervous system can no longer cope. Suffering from sensory overload, he withdraws into the security offered in a long, deep slumber. Welcome to the world, Baby Doe, your mother is a crack cocaine addict.*

As you write drafts of your causal report, consider incorporating an anecdote – that is, a brief story about how people are influenced by your subject. For example, if you are researching the effects of a sluggish economy on our nation's poor, you might want to flesh out your statistics by depicting the story of how one homeless family lost their jobs, income, medical benefits, house, community, and hope.

Use Visuals

Although visuals are not required – in fact, many cause-and-effect texts do not use visuals – readers appreciate visuals, particularly ones that explain the cause-and-effect relationship being addressed. Consider, for example, this visual from the United States Environmental Protection Agency's Web site on Global Warming:

Readers particularly appreciate tables and graphs. Critical readers will often skim through a document's tables before reading the text:

Visuals can be used to influence readers at an emotional level. For example, at Project GHB's Tragedy Page, each picture links to an obituary, which tells the personal story of how these young people overdosed on GHB.

Organization

When analyzing causal relationships, you must reveal to readers how different parts and sequences interact with each other over time. Rather than merely reporting the order of events in chronological fashion as we do when describing a process, you need to identify the specific reasons behind the effects or causes. Your organization needs to reflect the logic of your analysis. This is often difficult because a single cause can result in many different effects. Likewise, an effect can have multiple causes.

For example, even a simple effect such as a minor car accident can have multiple causes. Yes, we could say that John D. caused the accident because he was driving while intoxicated. Yet if we knew more about John D.'s state of mind – if we knew, for instance, that he wasn't watching where he was going because he was thinking about his wife's threat to leave him – then we could identify additional causes for the accident. It could very well be that he was exhausted after a sleepless night. Or perhaps his personal predicament had nothing to do with the accident: Maybe the loss of his job that morning or his failure to have faulty brakes replaced is a more significant cause for the accident.

If we get really carried away with our reasoning, we could say that his former employers were responsible. After all, John D. would not have lost his job if the automobile manufacturer he worked for had not closed three of its American plants and moved manufacturing of some parts to plants in Mexico, Hong Kong, and Japan. In addition, we could also find potential causes for the accident by considering the other driver, Susan K. Maybe she rushed into the busy intersection expecting everyone else to make room for her because she was already late for an in-class exam. Perhaps if Susan K. had not consumed four pots of coffee, she would have been more mellow, more cautious, and less willing to risk her life to get to school on time.

Use Formatting to Highlight Your Organization

You can emphasize the most emphatic elements of your analysis by using headings and subheadings. A quick scan of any of the cause-and-effect readings highlights the popularity of headings. For example, below are the headings used by the Canadian International Development Agency for their essay on Tropical Forests and Climate Change

- Is the world's climate changing?
- How are we causing climate change?
- Impact of climate change on forests
- Climate change convention and the Kyoto protocol
- Forestry's role in mitigating climate change
- Carbon trading markets
- Conclusions

You may also want to play with the formatting of your text to highlight the reasoning behind your causal analysis. Consider, for example, the Canadian International Development Agency's Tropical Forests and Climate Change. These authors used callouts to define climate change terms that readers may not understand and they used call out boxes to emphasize important points in their essay:

The Sustainable Forest Management Project in Cameroon, Trees for Tomorrow in Jamaica, and the Arenal Conservation and Development Project are CIDA-supported projects that work towards enhancing forest management in developing countries.

Expanding the area of forest cover by establishing tree plantations, agroforestry plantings, or analog forests enlarges the capacity of the terrestrial carbon sink. Trees are composed of approximately 50 percent carbon which they extract from the atmosphere during photosynthesis. The rate of carbon sequestration depends on the growth characteristics of the species, the conditions for growth where the tree is planted, and the density of the tree's wood.

It is greatest in the younger stages of tree growth, between 20 to 50 years. Growth rates on commercial plantations in the tropics have been improving steadily as the results of tree improvement research have been applied. The technology to establish fast-growing plantations exists, as does the global expertise for establishing them. Growth rates of more than 30 cubic meters/hectare/year are now commonplace for intensive industrial pulp plantations in the tropics and FAO estimates that there are between 1.5 million and 2.0 million hectares of tree plantations established every year.

You may find it helpful to visually represent the structure of your argument, perhaps even including your organizational map as a visual for readers. For example, consider the following screenshot from the EPA's site on global warming. From this image, you understand four topics are being addressed and you understand the questions that guide the EPA's causal analysis:

Introduce the Topic: Typically, texts that explore cause-and-effect relationships summarize the author's position upfront, in the introduction (see General to the Specific Strategies).

For example, back in 1985, Joseph K. Skinner began his influential essay "Big Mac and the Tropical Forests" with this dramatic opening--two sentences that immediately focus your attention on the causal connection he explicates throughout his essay: Hello, fast-food chains. Goodbye, tropical forests. However, you may want to avoid explicit thesis sentences and forecasting statements if your subject is likely to threaten the beliefs of your audience or if it is an inherently emotional subject. You may occasionally find it important to establish a credible persona first by reviewing what your readers are likely to believe about a causal relationship and then by stating your own opinion.

For example, assume you are writing an essay against spanking children. Now if your audience believes that spanking children is the proper way to discipline them, and if you claim in the introduction of the essay that spanking children may result in their becoming criminals, then your readers might assume you are an oddball and dismiss your essay. Yet if you intelligently discuss some of the reasons why parents and psychologists recommend spanking and then introduce extensive research from prominent journals and reports that all violent criminals were spanked as children, your readers might be more willing to listen to your reasoning

Style: When grappling with difficult issues and concepts, your prose can understandably become unclear, dull, or cluttered. Eventually, though, as you continue to revise your drafts and further refine your message, you need to cut away the superfluous words, redundancies, and needless abstractions. You can make your language more interesting and more understandable by eliminating needless jargon; passive voice; lengthy, redundant sentences; or pompous and archaic language.

Provide Descriptive, Sensory Language: You can help your readers imagine your subject better by appealing to their senses. Whenever possible, describe how an object looks, sounds, tastes, feels, or smells.

For example, in this excerpt from Carl Sagan's powerful essay on the effects of a nuclear war, "The Nuclear Winter", notice how Sagan appeals to our visual sense in his description of the effect of a single nuclear bomb on a city:

In a two megaton explosion over a fairly large city, buildings would be vaporized, people reduced to atoms and shadows, outlying structures blown down like matchsticks and raging fires ignited. And if the bomb exploded on the ground, an enormous crater, like those that can be seen through a telescope on the surface of the Moon, would be all that remained where midtown once had been.

The lifeblood of effective writing is concrete and sensory language. A word, properly placed, can create a tone that angers or inspires a reader. Knowing the power of language to promote change, effective writers are selective in their use of concrete words – words that represent actual physical things like "chair" and "house" – and sensory words – words that appeal to our five senses. Selecting the right word or group of words is a crucial step in drawing your readers into your work so that they can fully understand your vision and ideas.

Note the masterful use of concrete and sensory words in this passage from a Newsweek essay, "Don't Go in the Water":

"Black mayonnaise": The problem for most landlubbers, of course, is that most of the effects of coastal pollution are hard to see. Bays and estuaries that are now in jeopardy – Boston Harbor, for example, or even San Francisco Bay – are still delightful to look at from shore. What is happening underwater is quite another matter, and it is not for the squeamish. Scuba divers talk of swimming through clouds of toilet paper and half-dissolved feces, of bay bottoms covered by a foul and toxic combination of sediment, sewage and petrochemical waste appropriately known as "black mayonnaise". Fishermen haul in lobsters and crab [sic] covered with mysterious "burn holes" and fish whose fins are rotting off. Offshore, marine biologists track massive tides of algae blooms fed by nitrate and phosphate pollution – colonies of floating microorganisms that, once dead, strangle fish by stripping the water of its life giving oxygen.

In addition to selecting an abundance of distinctive concrete words (such as sediment, sewage, and nitrate) and sensory words (foul, burn holes, feces), the authors have used powerful images and metaphors. Note, for example, the clouds of toilet paper. Even more potent is the image of "black mayonnaise". Can you imagine biting into a sandwich spread with such poison?

When Speculating, Use Qualifying Language: When addressing complex issues and processes, you adopt an appropriate speculative voice by using words like "may cause" or "could also". *Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet consectetuer*.

Useful Qualifying Words and Phrases: may, might, usually typically, perhaps, can, I believe it seems likely. As an example of carefully chosen qualifying words, consider the following passage from the US EPA's Web site on global warming impacts:

- Rising global temperatures are expected to raise sea level, and change precipitation and other local climate conditions. Changing regional climate could alter forests, crop yields, and water supplies. It could also affect human health, animals, and many types of ecosystems. Deserts may expand into existing rangelands, and features of some of our National Parks may be permanently altered.
- Most of the United States is expected to warm, although sulfates may limit warming in some areas. Scientists currently are unable to determine which parts of the United States will become wetter or drier, but there is likely to be an overall trend toward increased precipitation and evaporation, more intense rainstorms, and drier soils.
- Unfortunately, many of the potentially most important impacts depend upon whether rainfall increases or decreases, which can not be reliably projected for specific areas .

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

Given that compare-and-contrast essays analyze the relationship between two subjects, it is helpful to have some phrases on hand that will cue the reader to such analysis.

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Comparison	Contrast
like	in contrast
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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.

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- There are two main organizing strategies for compare-and-contrast essays.
  1. Organize by the subjects themselves, one then the other.
  2. Organize by individual points, in which you discuss each subject in relation to each point.
- Use phrases of comparison or phrases of contrast to signal to readers how exactly the two subjects are being analyzed.

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3.2.5: Cause and Effect Analysis, Using Cause and Effect

Using Cause and Effect

Read this article to learn how cause and effect can influence your writing.

The Purpose of Cause and Effect in Writing

It is often considered human nature to ask "why" and "how". We want to know how our child got sick so we can better prevent it from happening in the future, or why our colleague a pay raise because we want one as well. We want to know how much money we will save over the long term if we buy a hybrid car. These examples identify only a few of the relationships we think about in our lives, but each shows the importance of understanding cause and effect.

A cause is something that produces an event or condition; an effect is what results from an event or condition. The purpose of the cause-and-effect essay is to determine how various phenomena relate in terms of origins and results. Sometimes the connection between cause and effect is clear, but often determining the exact relationship between the two is very difficult.

For example, the following effects of a cold may be easily identifiable: a sore throat, runny nose, and a cough. But determining the cause of the sickness can be far more difficult. A number of causes are possible, and to complicate matters, these possible causes could have combined to cause the sickness. That is, more than one cause may be responsible for any given effect. Therefore, cause-and-effect discussions are often complicated and frequently lead to debates and arguments.

> **Tip**
>
> Use the complex nature of cause and effect to your advantage. Often it is not necessary, or even possible, to find the exact cause of an event or to name the exact effect. So, when formulating a thesis, you can claim one of a number of causes or effects to be the primary, or main, cause or effect. As soon as you claim that one cause or one effect is more crucial than the others, you have developed a thesis.

The Structure of a Cause-and-Effect Essay

The cause-and-effect essay opens with a general introduction to the topic, which then leads to a thesis that states the main cause, main effect, or various causes and effects of a condition or event.

The cause-and-effect essay can be organized in one of the following two primary ways:

- Start with the cause and then talk about the effects.
- Start with the effect and then talk about the causes.

For example, if your essay were on childhood obesity, you could start by talking about the effect of childhood obesity and then discuss the cause or you could start the same essay by talking about the cause of childhood obesity and then move to the effect.

Regardless of which structure you choose, be sure to explain each element of the essay fully and completely. Explaining complex relationships requires the full use of evidence, such as scientific studies, expert testimony, statistics, and anecdotes.

Because cause-and-effect essays determine how phenomena are linked, they make frequent use of certain words and phrases that denote such linkage. See Table "Phrases of Causation" for examples of such terms.

Table "Phrases of Causation"

c o a n s e q u e n t l y	due to
b e c a u s e	therefore

The conclusion should wrap up the discussion and reinforce the thesis, leaving the reader with a clear understanding of the relationship that was analyzed.

> **Tip**
>
> Be careful of resorting to empty speculation. In writing, speculation amounts to unsubstantiated guessing. Writers are particularly prone to such trappings in cause-and-effect arguments due to the complex nature of finding links between phenomena. Be sure to have clear evidence to support the claims that you make.

Writing a Cause-and-Effect Essay

Choose an event or condition that you think has an interesting cause-and-effect relationship. Introduce your topic in an engaging way. End your introduction with a thesis that states the main cause, the main effect, or both.

Organize your essay by starting with either the cause-then-effect structure or the effect-then-cause structure. Within each section, you should clearly explain and support the causes and effects using a full range of evidence. If you are writing about multiple causes or multiple effects, you may choose to sequence either in terms of order of importance. In other words, order the causes from least to most important (or vice versa), or order the effects from least important to most important (or vice versa).

Use the phrases of causation when trying to forge connections between various events or conditions. This will help organize your ideas and orient the reader. End your essay with a conclusion that summarizes your main points and reinforces your thesis.

Key Takeaways

- The purpose of the cause-and-effect essay is to determine how various phenomena are related.
- The thesis states what the writer sees as the main cause, main effect, or various causes and effects of a condition or event.
- The cause-and-effect essay can be organized in one of these two primary ways:
- Start with the cause and then talk about the effect.
- Start with the effect and then talk about the cause.
- Strong evidence is particularly important in the cause-and-effect essay due to the complexity of determining connections between phenomena.
- Phrases of causation are helpful in signaling links between various elements in the essay.

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3.2.6: Cause and Effect Analysis, Create a Causation Outline

Create a Causation Outline

In this practice exercise, sketch an outline for your essay topic from the perspective of a causation essay. The topic is:

"How does my selected activity or characteristic affect success in an Internet-based college course?"

What would be the causes of your claim? What would be the effects of the claim? Adapt your claim accordingly.

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3.2.7: Academic Tone, Use Appropriate Academic Language

Use Appropriate Academic Language

Read this article on using an academic tone in your writing. Why is it important to use appropriate academic language in college-level writing?

Why Is It Important to Use Appropriate Academic Language?

The words writers choose reflect the formality or informality of the rhetorical situation. Academic writing often calls for the use of formal diction, in contrast to the less formal language of everyday conversation.

The use of conversational language and informal tone – writing as we speak – in academic papers is often too casual and may weaken the credibility of the writer. On the other hand, the use of language that is pompous or stuffy can make the writing sound overly complex. Utilizing language appropriate to the academic context can help to create balanced communication between writer and reader.

How to Revise Informal or Overly-Formal Language

- Replace slang or colloquial (conversational) terms with precise, conventional language.
- Replace informal conversational language with academically-focused language; the use of third-person point of view and appropriate terminology can often help with this process.
- Simplify language that may come across as pompous or stuffy.

Let's Look at an Example:

- Informal: When he talked about the BP Oil Spill, President Obama dropped names to impress his audience. (casual, conversational language)
- Pompous: Communicating with the municipal group concerning the petrol company's misfortunate escape of emollient, President Obama alludes to erudite scientific scholars and research communities so as to institute a sense of trust amongst his supporters. (pompous, stuffy
- Formal: In his speech regarding the BP Oil Spill, President Obama referenced knowledgeable scientists and research groups in order to establish credibility with his audience. (appropriate academic language)

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3.2.8: Academic Tone, Analyze an Article

Analyze an Article

In this practice exercise, read an article, either online or in print, that discusses a current event. Identify the author's claim, audience, purpose, and tone.

In three to five paragraphs, explain your reaction to the article. For example, you might consider the following questions:

- Do you agree with the author's claim?
- Do you think you are a member of the intended audience?
- Does the tone of the article seem appropriate to the intended audience and purpose?
- If not, what would you change to better accomplish the author's purpose?

After you complete this activity, identify the audience of your own argumentative essay. The topic is:

"How does my selected activity or characteristic impact success in an Internet-based college course?"

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3.3: Argument and Thesis

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3.3.1: Argument Requirements

Argument Requirements

How will you inform or persuade your audience? For example, is your purpose of your research paper to offer background information or to frame an argument so your audience will render a judgment regarding an historical event or current practice? Perhaps you are writing to persuade your audience to change its previous beliefs or to act in a certain way to improve their lives or help them avoid a certain danger.

What information does your audience need to know to make a decision or render a point of view? What opinions do they already have about your topic? How will you persuade them – do you want them to simply agree with your argument, or are you trying to provoke them to act in a certain way?

These study materials review how you can present your argument to your readers. You may also wish to review Research Writing and Argument from Chapter 2.

Argument Requirements

Argument

According to rhetoricians Timothy W. Crusius and Carolyn E. Channell, "Argument is the process of making what we think clear to ourselves and to others. It takes us from a vague, private viewpoint to a clearly stated position that we can defend publicly in speech or writing". They add, "Argument in this sense of seeking clarity has a two-part form or structure: (1) the statement of an opinion and (2) the statement of one or more reasons for holding that opinion" (3). In other words, they say, "Argument is not in itself an end or purpose of communication, It is rather a means of discourse, developing what we have to say".

Audience

When you don't know your audience personally, assume that:

- They are thoughtful people of good will who might be persuaded by clear and cogent arguments.
- They are not as familiar with the material as you, so you will need to explain concepts and terms as well as what the problem/issue is.
- They have not read the texts you have in class, so you need to provide background information and establish context for what you say.
- They do not know your thesis, so you must tell them your thesis early in the essay so they will know how to interpret what you say.
- Some of your readers are skeptical about your thesis before they read your essay.
- Some of your readers are undecided about the issue.
- Because some of your readers do not know you personally, you must prove to them that you are a thoughtful, intelligent person who has carefully considered all sides of the issue before writing the essay.
- You must explain your opponents' major arguments and then demonstrate that their arguments are flawed (in other words, refute them).
- If an opponents' point is not flawed, you must concede the point explicitly and then try, if possible, to minimize the importance of that point.
- You must treat your opponents and readers with respect, showing that you realize that they too are intelligent people of good will.
- You must explain your reasons and evidence fully, always giving the credentials of authorities that you quote.
- At least one of your readers is your professor, and he/she probably has particular goals for any writing assignment – for example, he/she probably wants you to demonstrate knowledge of some particular material, the ability to analysis and interpret that material, the ability to manipulate that material into a convincing argument. To accomplish these tasks, you need to explain concepts and show your logical thought processes (how you got from point A to point R); think of it as analogous to doing a math problem – the professor wants to see your "work" (the process you used to get to the answer), not simply the answer itself.

Goal

Your ultimate goal is to win belief rather than simply win the argument. So your argument's primary goal is always to persuade readers that your position is the most viable, logical, moral, and practical. This can be accomplished:

- by accommodating your readers (some of whom are always skeptical).
- by exploring both sides of the argument.
- by revealing the flaws in the assumptions, reasons, and evidence of the opposition (for example, by refuting the opposition's main points).
- by explicitly stating and exploring your own assumptions and major reasons for adopting your position.
- by supporting and proving your reasons with explicit evidence.
- by using various types of evidence including expert testimony, statistics, logical demonstration, personal experiences, real life examples (from current affairs or history), fictional examples (from novels, plays, movies, TV), hypothetical examples, legal documents and concepts, codes of conduct.
- by using logical, ethical, and emotional appeals.
- by using all the resources of rhetoric.

Content

Your topic must be a thorny one, one that is complicated and for which there is no easy solution. If you cannot see the value of arguments on both sides of the issue, select another issue. If you are not personally conflicted about the issue, select another topic. Writing this essay should help you clarify your ideas and to recognize the difficulties of finding any answer to the issue: Do not select a topic about which you believe you already know the truth and "have the answer"- such a topic will result in a high-school-level essay. Ideas must be developed, explored, examined, analyzed, and prodded.

- You must engage with the opposition.
- You should "stay with" each idea beyond your mere assertion of it.
- You need to consider and explore the implications of your idea and see at what point you might no longer support that idea (for example, "turn the other cheek" is a saintly idea, but does it have a limit? Does it mean, for instance, that if Q murders someone, we should "turn the other cheek" and not punish him and, in fact, should offer ourselves as his next victim?).
- You also need to consider what opponents to your thesis would say about your idea, what objections they would raise to it, and then you need to answer those objections – do all this within your argument so your readers can follow the process.
- You need to prove your assertions with evidence (for example, expert testimony, statistics, facts, hypothetical and real life examples, logical demonstration).
- Part of accommodating your audience is explaining all relevant concepts (for example, if you invoke a concept such as utilitarianism, you must summarize explain the concept to your readers).
- Your essay must have a clear and explicit thesis (your position on the issue) and must demonstrate a clear awareness of the opposition's counter-thesis.
- In a full-fledged argument, your argument must explain both sides of the issue, building a case for your position by refuting and conceding the major points of the opposition as well as by giving your reasons and the evidence that supports them. In other words, you are making a claim (your position, your thesis) and arguing that it is true; conversely, you are producing reasons for the advocates of a competing claim (the counter-thesis) to abandon it in favor of yours. In yet other words, you must understand both positions well enough to appreciate the strengths and shortcomings of each.
- If it helps, think of yourself as a defense attorney. You and the prosecutor have the same information (for example, eyewitness accounts, forensic evidence) and know that there are conflicts (for example, various accounts of where the accused was at the time of the crime). Yet each of you creates a different interpretation – you draw different inferences and conclusions from the same data.
- Your essay must be logical and must effectively use various types of evidence.
- The ideas must be well developed- there must be evidence to support them and your exploration of the implications and limitations of your ideas.
- Your essay should cause us to think about the issue more deeply than we ever have before.
- Your essay must be interesting.
- It must consider nuances of the issue, not merely trot out the same old arguments that you encountered in high school. It needs to display your critical thinking and analytical skills.

Your Position/Thesis

Most of us begin the argument process about a topic with our minds already made up, our position in mind (perhaps we are even totally committed to that position). Almost inevitably, that initial position is based on our core beliefs, upon unproven assertions

and assumptions, and our position is rather general and sweeping. For example, we might feel that "all welfare should be abolished immediately". That is a very sweeping generalization. What can we do to deepen and refine that thesis?

- One of the major purposes of doing research is to test our thesis against the best arguments of the opposition. For instance, our anti-welfare position might be based on the unproven belief that anyone receiving welfare is a lazy bum who doesn't want to work.
- When our library research reveals evidence that some people on welfare are mentally incapable of holding a job, we might alter our position slightly to "We should abolish all welfare except that given to mentally incompetent people who have no one else to help them". Then, of course, we need to define the concept of "no one else to help them"- does that refer only to immediate family members? To charity groups?
- But then we discover that many of the people that we assumed were "lazy bums" are actually holding full-time jobs but still cannot afford even to feed their families. They do not have the education or training to get jobs that pay above minimum wage. Perhaps our thesis is modified again to be "Welfare payments should go only to poor people who hold full-time jobs and those who are mentally incapable of working and have no one else to help them".
- And then we learn that many of the biggest American corporations receive huge subsidies called "corporate welfare" and that the companies receive such gifts basically because they are already rich and hence have a great deal of political power. How does this new information impact on our thesis?
- This active engagement with the opposition refines and deepens our thesis. Now our thesis might be metamorphosed into "People or companies should receive welfare payments only when they can prove serious need". And we would have to suggest ways that "serious need" could be "proven".

Research

Research has three primary purposes in writing: provide factual information, provide arguments for your position, and provide arguments against your position.

- Crucial, but least important, is research intended to provide background information (the current situation, pending proposals or laws, suggested solutions, statistics).
- Research that locates the logic behind your position and the reasons and extrinsic evidence (for example, testimony, data) for your position is very important. Rarely can any one person think of all the reasons for supporting a position or find all the relevant evidence supporting those reasons. Even more rarely can only one person think of all the different strategies for approaching an issue or for attacking counter-theses and counter-positions.
- Similarly, research is crucial that locates not only your opposition's arguments (for example, major points, the moral and practical reasons for supporting it, evidence) but also the opposition's underlying assumptions.
- Your essay must use appropriate research. Consult the reference librarian for help in locating sources.
- Your essay must use all the resources available to you – not only extrinsic proof (statistics, expert testimony, legal documents and concepts) but also intrinsic proof (for example, hypothetical examples, historical and fictional examples, probabilities, analogies, maxims, commonplaces, logical demonstration).
- Use the MLA in-text citation format and a Works Cited page.
- Internet sources must be evaluated very carefully. There are five criteria for evaluating all sources: authority, accuracy, objectivity, currency, and coverage.

Arrangement

The essay must have an effective, clear, and logical structure. It must use transitional words, phrases, and devices to make explicit connections between ideas and between paragraphs. The organization exists to present your ideas in the most effective manner possible to your readers.

- All academic essays have a beginning, middle, and end – but that fact is not particularly useful in helping us organize our ideas.
- It helps if we think in terms of sections.
- In ancient rhetorical terms, your essay should have the following sections (in specific cases, some might be omitted or combined, depending upon your topic and audience). Unless you have a good reason for altering the order, however, you should probably follow this basic rhetorical structure developed by Cicero and Quintilian (the ancient rhetorical scheme is explained in HISTORY, 109):
    - Exordium (Introduction): The exordium is intended to make the audience willing to listen. Modern rhetorical theory says that, if possible, the introduction should do several things:

- It should establish some connection between audience and rhetor (in other words, it should "predispose" audience to listen via ethos).
- It establishes a sense of kairos for the readers (urgency).
- It should hook the readers' attention.
- It should announce your topic (the question your essay will answer or the issue that it will explore).
- It should reveal what your approach to the topic will be.
- It should establish what your primary tone will be.
- It should usually start very close to your thesis (never start with "Since the beginning of recorded history...").
- It often establishes the nature of the larger issue (your topic is an example of this larger issue – for example, the larger issue for the topic of abortion might "What are the limits of government intervention in our private decisions?" or it might be "How do we decide whose rights are more important when there is a conflict between the rights of different individuals?" or it might be "Do the ends always justify the means?"). When you establish this in the introduction, you will return to this larger issue in your conclusion.
- It often forecasts what the organization of the essay will be.

- Narratio (Background of the Issue) – this section:
  - It gives your readers the relevant background information that they will need in order to understand the issue before you start the argument.
  - It includes up-to-date information about the current situation (for example, pending legislation, proposed solutions).
  - It defines key terms that you will use and that readers might not know.
  - It explains why this situation/issue is a problem and for whom, explains any key concepts that are needed to understand the complexity of the issue, and it defines any key terms your readers might not know.
  - It states your position (thesis/claim).

- Confirmatio (Proof) – This section gives evidence to prove the claims made in the narratio:
  - It states your reasons for supporting your position.
  - It gives your evidence for each reason.
  - It anticipates your opponents' objections to your reasons and respond to those objections.

- Confutatio or Refutatio (Refutation) – This section answers the opposition's counter arguments:
  - It explains your opponents' main reasons and evidence for supporting that position.
  - It refutes (or occasionally concedes) those reasons and evidence.
  - Some modern rhetoricians advocate a dramatic, back-and-forth presentation of pros and cons rather than saving all the refutation for the last major body section.

- Peroratio (Conclusion) – This section demonstrates again the "full strength" of your argument. Modern rhetorical theory suggests that your conclusion should never be only a summary or repetition of your major points, although often you might touch on the major points you've made.

  Your conclusion should always include a "discovery", an opening up toward the world beyond the limits of your argument essay:
  - an explanation of some interesting implication of your position/thesis that you haven't yet discussed explicitly.
  - and/or an indication of what future thinking must be done.
  - and/or a suggestion of what new issues arise if your solution/position is adopted.
  - and/or an exploration of the implications of your argument and thesis for the larger issue that you mentioned in the introduction.

Rhetoric

The essay must demonstrate a grasp of the basic concepts and uses of rhetoric (for example, audience accommodation, stasis, kairos, the commonplaces, logos, pathos, ethos, urgency, stylistic devices).

Style Guidelines

1. Write all college papers in academic English (assume that your readers are thoughtful professionals or pre-professionals).
2. Write reader-friendly prose (for example, make connections between ideas explicit).

3. Make your prose concise, precise, accurate. clear, explicit, and interesting.
4. Use vivid and figurative language, particularly when developing pathetic proofs.
5. Display a sense of craft by varying sentence structures, sentence lengths, and First Elements.
6. Read your prose aloud to hear its rhythm.
7. Use memorable phrasings to state key ideas.
8. Use the stylistic resources of rhetoric and display a literary impulse.
9. Use correct grammar and mechanics.

Essay Level

On the essay level, academic prose tries to remain relatively objective. For example, "Avoid the first-person singular – I, me, my – and related phrases – in my opinion, I think, I believe; they are rarely used, and, in much academic prose, they are actively avoided (exception: you should use first-person singular when you are discussing an experience that happened to you or when you are writing a persuasive personal essay)

- Use the first-person plural: we, our, us – these words are often preferred to the more formal and more distancing third person impersonal one (which should be avoided unless a professor or journal editor specifically requests that you use it). Using first-person pronouns has at least two added benefits- it connects you and the reader and it helps you avoid excessive use of the passive voice.
- Avoid the second person you whenever possible- it drags your readers into your essay and thus, paradoxically, often pushes them away from your idea (for example, by assigning ideas to your readers that they really don't believe – "Although you see abortion as murder, ..."). It is always better to be more specific: say either "Pro-life advocates see abortion as murder" or "Opponents of abortion see it as murder".

Paragraph Level

On the paragraph level, academic prose requires that each paragraph develop one idea fully. In addition,

- Give every paragraph an explicit topic sentence (95 percent of the time this is the first sentence in the paragraph). At times, however, there may be reasons for making it the last sentence in your paragraph.
- Make sure that every sentence in that paragraph directly explains, supports, proves, illustrates, or qualifies the idea in the topic sentence. Nothing else belongs in that particular paragraph. Putting tangential material in a paragraph destroys coherence.
- Develop each paragraph fully – in other words, a paragraph that contains only two or three sentences is probably under-developed (unless it is a transitional paragraph or is summarizing ideas that came in earlier paragraphs).

Sentence Level

On the sentence level, academic prose requires complete sentences at least 98 percent of the time.

- Use variety in sentence length (some sentences should be short, some medium, some long).
- Use variety in sentence structure (there should be a mixture of simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences).
- Use variety in First Elements.

Word Level

On the word choice level (diction), academic prose should sound professional but not pompous.

- Use the "invisible contractions" (for example, those contractions that contain not, such as don't and can't).
- Avoid other contractions (for example, use I am and we could have, not I'm or we could've).
- Avoid slang or catch-phrases from advertisements or songs.
- Avoid jargon whenever possible (if you must use the specialized terminology of your discipline for an audience that may include non-specialists, always define the terms).
- Never use a word found in a thesaurus without first checking the nuances of its meanings in a good dictionary.

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3.3.2: Creating an Argument, Understanding Arguments

Understanding Arguments

Read this article about how to craft an argument.

As a reader, developing writer, and informed student and citizen, it is extremely important to be able to locate, understand, and critically analyze others' purposes in communicating information. Being able to identify and articulate the meaning of other writers' arguments and theses enables you to engage in intelligent, meaningful, and critical knowledge exchanges.

Ultimately, regardless of the discipline you choose to participate in, textual analysis – the summary, contextualization, and interpretation of a writer's effective or ineffective delivery of his or her perspective on a topic, statement of thesis, and development of an argument – will be an invaluable skill. Your ability to critically engage in knowledge exchanges – through the analysis of others' communication – is integral to your success as a student and as a citizen.

Textual Analysis: The Thesis

A foundational skill of textual analysis is the ability to identify a writer's thesis – the component of an argument that communicates their position on a particular topic. In order to learn how to better recognize a thesis in a written text, let's consider the following argument:

So far, [Google+] does seem better than Facebook, though I am still a rookie and do not know how to do even some basic things. It is better in design terms, and also much better with its "circles" allowing you to target posts to various groups.

Example: following that high school reunion, the overwhelming majority of my Facebook friends list (which I am barely rebuilding after my rejoin) are people from my own hometown. None of these people are going to care too much when my new book comes out from Edinburgh. Likewise, not too many of you would care to hear inside jokes about our old high school teachers, or whatever it is we banter about.

Another example: people I know only from exchanging a couple of professional emails with them ask to be Facebook friends. I have never met these people and have no idea what they're really like, even if they seem nice enough on email. Do I really want to add them to my friends list on the same level as my closest friends, brothers, valued colleagues, etc.? Not yet. But then there's the risk of offending people if you don't add them.

On Google+ you can just drop them in the acquaintances circle, and they'll never know how they're classified. But they won't be getting any highly treasured personal information there, which is exactly the restriction you probably want for someone you have never met before.

I also do not like too many family members on my Facebook friends list, because frankly they don't need to know everything I'm doing or chatting about with people. But on Google+ this problem will be easily manageable. (Harman)

The first sentence, "[Google+] does seem better than Facebook" (Harman), does not communicate the writer's position on the topic; it is merely an observation. A position, also called a claim, often includes the conjunction because, providing a reason why the writer's observation is unique, meaningful, and critical.

Therefore, if the writer's sentence, "[Google+] does seem better than Facebook" (Harman), is simply an observation, then in order to identify the writer's position, we must find the answer to "because, why?" One such answer can be found in the author's rhetorical question/answer, "Do I really want to add them to my friends list on the same level as my closest friends, brothers, valued colleagues, etc.? Not yet" (Harman).

The writer's because, why? could be "because Google+ allows me to manage old, new, and potential friends and acquaintances using separate circles, so that I am targeting posts to various, separate groups". Therefore, the writer's thesis – his position – could be something like, "Google+ is better than Facebook because its design enables me to manage my friends using separate circles, so that I'm targeting posts to various, separate groups instead of posting the same information for everyone I've added to my network".

In addition to communicating a position on a particular topic, a writer's thesis outlines what aspects of the topic he or she will address. Outlining intentions within a thesis is not only acceptable, but also one of a writer's primary obligations, since the thesis relates his or her general argument. In a sense, you could think of the thesis as a responsibility to answer the question, "What will you/won't you be claiming and why?"

To explain this further, let's consider another example. If someone were to ask you what change you want to see in the world, you probably would not readily answer world peace, even though you (and many others) may want that. Why wouldn't you answer that way? Because such an answer is far too broad and ambiguous to be logically argued. Although world peace may be your goal, for logic's sake, you would be better off articulating your answer as "a peaceful solution to the violence currently occurring on the border of southern Texas and Mexico", or something similarly specific.

The distinction between the two answers should be clear: the first answer, "world peace", is broad, ambiguous, and not a fully developed claim (there wouldn't be many, if any, people who would disagree with this statement); the second answer is narrower, more specific, and a fully developed claim. It confines the argument to a particular example of violence, but still allows you to address what you want, "world peace", on a smaller, more manageable, and more logical scale.

Since a writer's thesis functions as an outline of what he or she will address in an argument, it is often organized in the same manner as the argument itself. Let's return to the argument about Google+ for an example.

If the author stated his position as suggested – "Google+ is better than Facebook because its design enables me to manage my friends using separate circles, so that I am targeting posts to various, separate groups instead of posting the same information I have added to my network" – we would expect him to first address the similarities and differences between the designs of Google+ and Facebook, and then the reasons why he believes Google+ is a more effective way of sharing information.

The organization of his thesis should reflect the overall order of his argument. Such a well-organized thesis builds the foundation for a cohesive and persuasive argument.

A Thesis Should

- Communicate a writer's position on a particular topic;
- Identify the writer's intentions for his or her particular argument, including subtopics to be addressed; and
- Be organized in a manner that is critical, logical, and consistent with the order of the writer's argument.

Textual Analysis: The Argument

Textual analysis is the term writers use to describe a reader's written explanation of a text. The reader's textual analysis ought to include a summary of the author's topic, an analysis or explanation of how the author's perspective relates to the ongoing conversation about that particular topic, an interpretation of the effectiveness of the author's argument and thesis, and references to specific components of the text that support his or her analysis or explanation.

An effective argument generally consists of the following components:

- A thesis. Communicates the writer's position on a particular topic.
- Acknowledgement of opposition. Explains existing objections to the writer's position.
- Clearly defined premises outlining reasoning. Details the logic of the writer's position.
- Evidence of validating premises. Proves the writer's thorough research of the topic.
- A conclusion convincing the audience of the argument's soundness/persuasiveness. Argues the writer's position is relevant, logical, and thoroughly researched and communicated.

An effective argument also is specifically concerned with the components involved in researching, framing, and communicating evidence:

- The credibility and breadth of the writer's research;
- The techniques (like rhetorical appeals) used to communicate the evidence;
- The relevance of the evidence as it reflects the concerns and interests of the author's targeted audience.

To identify and analyze a writer's argument, you must critically read and understand the text in question. Focus and take notes as you read, highlighting what you believe are keywords or important phrases. Once you are confident in your general understanding of the text, you'll need to explain the author's argument in a condensed summary. One way of accomplishing this is to ask yourself the following questions:

- What topic has the author written about? (Explain in as few words as possible.)
- What is the author's point of view concerning his or her topic?
- What has the author written about the opposing point of view? (Where does it appear as though the author is "giving credit" to the opposition?)

- Does the author offer proof (either in reference to another published source or from personal experience) supporting his or her stance on the topic?
- As a reader, would you say that the argument is persuasive? Can you think of ways to strengthen the argument? Using which evidence or techniques?

Your articulation of the author's argument will most likely derive from your answers to these questions. Let's reconsider the argument about Google+ and answer the reflection questions listed above:

- What topic has the author written about? (Explain in as few words as possible.)

The author's topic is two social networks – Google+ and Facebook.

- What is the author's point of view concerning his or her topic?

The author is "for" the new social network Google+.

- What has the author written about the opposing point of view? (Where does it appear as though the author is "giving credit" to the opposition?)

The author makes a loose allusion to the opposing point of view in the explanation, "I'm still a rookie and don't know how to do even some basic things" (Harman). (The author alludes to his inexperience and, therefore, the potential for the opposing argument to have more merit.)

- Does the author offer proof (either in reference to another published source or from personal experience) supporting his or her stance on the topic?

Yes, the author offers proof from personal experience, particularly through his first example: "following that high school reunion, the overwhelming majority of my Facebook friends list (which I'm barely rebuilding after my rejoin) are people from my hometown" (Harman). In his second example, he cites that "[o]n Google+ you can just drop [individuals] in the 'acquaintances' circle, and they'll never even know how they're classified" (Harman) in order to offer even more credible proof, based on the way Google+ operates instead of personal experience.

- As a reader, would you say that the argument is persuasive? Can you think of ways to strengthen the argument? Using which evidence or techniques?

Yes, I would say that this argument is persuasive, although if I wanted to make it even stronger, I would include more detailed information about the opposing point of view. A balanced argument – one that fairly and thoroughly articulates both sides – is often more respected and better received because it proves to the audience that the writer has thoroughly researched the topic prior to making a judgment in favor of one perspective or another.

Summary

Textual analysis is the term used to describe the process of critical reading, examining, understanding, and articulating a writer's argument. An effective argument communicates the writer's position on a particular topic; explains existing objections to the writer's position; details the logic of the writer's position; proves the writer's research is thorough; and concludes with summative statements pertaining to the relevance, logic, and confidence of the writer's position.

Work Cited: Harman, Graham. Object-Oriented Philosophy. WordPress, n.d. Web. 15 May 2012.

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3.3.3: Creating an Argument, The Guiding Idea and Argumentative Thesis Statement

The Guiding Idea and Argumentative Thesis Statement

Read this article and complete the exercises to learn about crafting a guiding idea or a thesis statement, depending on the genre of writing. Every essay needs a main point, regardless of the genre. How are the guiding idea and the thesis statement different?

Two Types of Essays

Your composition professor has given you an assignment, requiring you to write an essay in which you identify your favorite book and explain why you like it best. Later she assigns an essay in which you take a stand either for or against homeschooling. Both assignments require you to write a paper, yet the essays called for are in two different genres. Thus, you will need to present your views in two different ways.

Two Types of Main Point

Although these genres are different, they are similar in that both require your essay to have a main point. In fact, it is crucial that you have a central idea in both types of essay. Neither paper will be successful without it. *It's that important.*

It is also highly recommended that you present your main idea toward the end of your first paragraph, so readers will know at the onset what point you plan to make in your essay. It also should be around one-to-two sentences long. However, that's where the similarity ends. As you will see, you need to present a guiding idea when discussing your favorite book; however, when taking a position on the controversial issue of homeschooling, you will have to present your point of view in an argumentative thesis statement. Let's take a closer look at both ways of presenting the main point of an essay to get a better idea of why and how each is used.

The Guiding Idea

Purpose

It may seem that papers in which you state your favorite book, relate your most cherished memory, or describe your little sister don't need a central idea. After all, you aren't trying to convince anyone to vote for a certain political candidate or to ban smoking in public places. However, without a main point even these types of essays will have no coherence. The *guiding idea* provides this crucial ingredient. Without this expressly written main point, the paper will be unclear and unfocused, and readers will often be confused about the idea you are trying to get across.

Criteria

For the guiding idea to be effective it must be:

1. Clear: If readers can't understand it, it is as if your paper doesn't have one.
    1. Example of a good guiding idea: *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* is my favorite book because it includes a wide variety of characters. *Note: The sentence is clear and leaves no question in the reader's mind regarding what the student wants to say in the essay.*
    2. Example of an unclear guiding idea: Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone is good, so I like it. *Note: The sentence is unclear because the reader doesn't know if this is the student's favorite book or why the student thinks it is "good".*
2. Specific: If it contains vague words such as "good" and "things", it will not be effective in getting your point across.
    1. Example of a specific guiding idea: During the summer of my thirteenth year, I developed a passion for British Romantic poetry due to its celebration of nature. *Note: This makes clear what the writer's main idea is. It is also likely to make the reader want to read on.*
    2. Example of a vague guiding idea: During the summer of my thirteenth year, I learned that there are a lot of good things about Romantic poetry. *Note: The words "good things" are too vague to give the reader a clear understanding of the writer's main point. The vague terms may also make the statement a little boring for the reader and may not entice him or her to read on.*
3. Simple to support. In other words, if it is presented unclearly, vaguely, or in an overly complex way, it will be very difficult to back it up effectively in the rest of the essay.

1. Example of a supportable guiding idea: If you follow these five easy steps, you will soon be enjoying a delicious piece of chocolate cake with your friends. *Note: Here the student only has to explain in detail each of these steps in order to support the central point of the essay.*
2. Example of an unsupportable guiding idea: Nobody likes baking cakes. *Note: There is nowhere to go in this paper. The writer doesn't know everyone, so it would be impossible to prove this in the essay.*

The Argumentative Thesis Statement

Purpose

On the other hand, if you want to convince your reader that your position on the issue of homeschooling or capital punishment is valid, you will need to present your point of view in an argumentative thesis statement. With this statement, you not only tell readers what you think about an issue, but you also let them know what you intend to prove in your paper. For this reason, there is no need to explain to readers that you will back up your thesis in your essay. Setting out to prove the validity of your point of view as your paper continues marks the difference between stating an opinion and presenting an argument.

Criteria

Although the thesis statement's purpose is different from that of the guiding idea, the two are similar in some very important ways. Both express the writer's central idea or main point and, thus, need to be clear and specific. In addition, the two need to be written in a way that makes it possible for the writer to support them effectively. However, because the thesis statement presents an argument that must be convincing to readers, it needs to have some important characteristics of its own:

1. It must be logical and reasonable. Clearly, if you want to your reader to listen to what you have to say, you need to show that you have thought out your argument from all angles.
    1. Example of a reasonable thesis: The habit of bullying is caused by parental neglect. *Note: Whether or not the reader agrees, it seems like a reasonable claim and one that could be supported in the essay.*
    2. Example of an unreasonable thesis: All Democrats should be thrown out of the country. *Note: This thesis suggests an impossible solution to an unknown problem and, thus, cannot be supported.*
2. It must be controversial. This is often difficult for students who are used to writing reports on various subjects in high school. However, presenting a controversial main argument is crucial. If you don't need to convince your readers that your main point is valid, then you don't have any reason to write a persuasion paper.
    1. Example of a controversial thesis: The Health Care Reform Act threatens our civil liberties. *Note: If you have watched the news lately, you know that many liberals and conservatives battle over this issue. Thus, no matter what position you choose, half of your readers will probably disagree with your stance, and you will definitely need to convince them that your view is valid.*
    2. Example of a non-controversial thesis: War is bad. *Note: Most readers would agree. Thus, the writer has no need to prove anything in the paper, and it will be boring to write and to read. Also, many times students who present this type of thesis find it very hard to fill the assigned number of pages.*
3. It must be provable. For your thesis statement to be effective, you must be able to prove its validity with supporting arguments and logical evidence. However, there are times when the thesis statement's soundness cannot be proven.
    1. Example of a provable thesis: The laws surrounding legalized physician-assisted suicide don't go far enough in protecting doctors from prosecution. *Note: This writer here can present case studies, quotes from experts, and strong supporting arguments to convince the reader that this argument is valid.*
    2. Example of an unsupportable thesis: Euthanasia is wrong. *Note: There is no way to back up this thesis. It is impossible to prove the validity of statements that include value judgments such as right, wrong, immoral, moral, etc.*
4. It must be an opinion. This rule may seem obvious, but is sometimes difficult for students used to writing facts-based papers. Often they are convinced that putting an opinion in a paper constitutes bias and, thus, it should be avoided. However, hopefully, by now it has become clear that all effective arguments are based on opinions.
    1. For an example of the effective opinion-based thesis, review the logical, controversial, and provable thesis statements given above. *Note: Each one presents a personal viewpoint that will need to be backed up through supporting arguments and evidence in order to be convincing to readers.*
    2. Example of a fact-based thesis: There are many types of dogs. *Note: This thesis presents a fact rather than an opinion; thus, the writer will simply report data concerning various dogs. There is no personal viewpoint that needs to be backed up by*

supportive evidence.

Other Requirements of the Argumentative Thesis

While the list above provides many crucial criteria for the thesis, there are others that need to be mentioned briefly as well. Your thesis statement should never be in the form of a question, and it should always present *your* view and not someone else's. Thus, always avoid quoting or paraphrasing someone in your thesis.

Exercise

Read each thesis statement below and determine if it is effective. If it isn't state, identify which of the characteristics discussed above that it violates.

Example: *It is important to spay or neuter pets.* Answer: *This thesis is not controversial.*

1. Students who cheat on tests should be shot.
2. The Internet makes it easy to learn a lot of facts.
3. Cheating on income taxes is wrong.
4. Many people assign stereotypes to homosexuals out of fear.
5. Penguins mostly live on the North Pole.

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3.3.4: Warrant – How Do Your Reasons Support Your Claim? Five Essential Parts of an Argument

Five Essential Parts of an Argument

Read article on the parts of an argument, especially warrants. How do warrants differ from reasons and evidence?

Why Does Little Red Schoolhouse (LRS) View Writing as Argument?

When we disagree about an issue, care deeply about an outcome, or try to convince others of the validity of our approach, we often resort to argument. Argument as it is depicted on television and experienced in times of stress or conflict carries with it many negative connotations of anger, high emotion, and even irrationality. But each of us also makes arguments every day, and in settings that help us become more rational, better informed, and more clearly understood.

Arguments help us to gather information from our own experience and that of others, to make judgments based on evidence, and to marshal information toward sound conclusions. Argument is appropriate when we seek understanding or agreement, when we want to solve a problem or answer a question, and when we want others to act or think in ways we deem beneficial, suitable, or necessary. Argument also comes in handy when we seek to convince, persuade, or produce change in our audience, and when circumstances require trust, respect, belief in our evidence or agreement with our reasoning.

Argument is everywhere – on television and radio, in politics and publications, and also in our day-to-day decisions about what to have for dinner, when to schedule the next meeting, and who should walk the family dog. As Colomb and Williams point out, the common notion that argument must be combative is built into our very language: opposing sides attack, defend, hold off, triumph, struggle, crush objections and slaughter competitors. On the other hand, in order to use argument as productive and collaborative communication, we must certainly find a way to transcend the vocabulary of argument-as-war. We must negotiate the audience's needs along with the speaker's agenda.

Argument is also about conversation. Although sometimes we forget, the best arguments are a forum for:

- Obtaining and expressing information;
- Airing and sharing assumptions and reasons;
- Establishing common ground;
- Coming to mutual agreement.

Productive argumentation starts with a problem. It makes us realize why we have an interest in seeing that problem solved. It also claims a solution, convincing its audience of the validity of that solution with evidence and reasons that it will accept.

Writing and Argument

The Little Red Schoolhouse (LRS) focus on argumentation raises writers' and readers' awareness of:

- The importance of audience;
- The intersecting languages of information and persuasion; and
- The reading process through which we share the tasks of critical thinking and decision-making.

Argument structure also helps writers to avoid:

- The formulaic "five paragraph essay" that is often assigned in high school ("Scientific progress is good. Here are several reasons why scientific progress is good. In conclusion, scientific progress is good.");
- The default structure of chronological order (First I set up the lab, then I opened my notebook, then performed the first step in my experiment…);
- Simple summary with no so what; and
- Binary structures where two issues or ideas are described without connection to each other.

Preparing Your Argument

To prepare to make an effective argument you must first:

- Translate your topic into a problem statement;
- Frame a situation that is debatable or contestable;
- Formulate a question about which reasonable people might disagree; and

- Find a claim your analysis has led you to assert.

Now you can begin to imagine what it will take to convince your audience. What evidence, methods, or models do they expect? What conventions must you follow to win approval?

Sketch Your Approach

- What do you want to show?
- Why should readers agree?
- Based on what evidence?
- What are some possible alternatives or objections?
- What conclusion will you offer, and why should your readers accept it as valuable?

The Five Parts of Argument

The questions that lead to your topic, broadly conceived, also steer you toward what *The Craft of Argument* formalizes in the five parts of argument.

1. Claim;
2. Reason;
3. Evidence;
4. Warrant;
5. Acknowledgment and Response.

These Correspond to the Williams' and Colomb's Five Questions of Argument:

- What are you claiming?
- What reasons do you have for believing your claim?
- What evidence do you base those reasons on?
- What principle connects or makes your reasons relevant to your claims?
- What about such-and-such potential disagreement/difficulty?

Constructing Claims

We learn that, at bottom, an argument is just a claim and its support:

> *Reason therefore Claim*
>
> *or*
>
> *Claim because of Reason.*

Your claim is your main point. It should either be clearly conceptual (seeking to change how we think) or clearly pragmatic (seeking to change how we act). Claims should, by definition, require good reasons. Audiences should be able to disagree with your claim and, by extension, to be convinced and converted by your evidence.

More about Claims

- Make sure your readers can recognize why your claim is significant.
- Ensure that your claim is clear and concise. Readers should be able to tell what is at stake and what principles you intend to use to argue your point.
- Confirm that the claim accurately describes the main tenets of the argument to follow.
- Moderate your claim with appropriate qualifiers like "many", "most", "often", in place of "all", "always", etc.

Evaluating Good Claims

- Your solution is possible.
- Your solution is ethical (moral, legal, fair, etc.).
- Your solution is prudent – it takes into consideration both the problem you seek to resolve and the possible ramifications of your proposal.

Reasons and Evidence

Most arguers know from experience that reasons and evidence help to convince audiences. In the simplest terms, reasons answer the question: "Why are you making that claim?" Evidence offers tangible support for reasons.

When stating reasons, always be aware of your audience. You will need to choose the reasons that support your evidence that are also the most likely to convince your specific readers or listeners. Knowing the general values and priorities of your readers will help you to determine what they will count as compelling reasons.

Knowing what kind of arguments and evidence they will expect from you will guide you in choosing reasons that meet those expectations.

Tailor your appeal to the specific needs and acknowledged concerns of your reading community, because arguments are always audience specific.

Evidence should be reliable and based upon authoritative and trustworthy research and sources. It should be appropriately cited, and ample enough to convince. Evidence should also be designed to appeal to your target audience's values and priorities.

When Arguing through Evidence

- Present evidence from general to specific.
- Build on what readers know.
- Do not rehearse your own work process; instead, support your conclusions.
- Use diagrams, graphs, and other visuals.
- Keep support appropriate and simple.
- Make sure data is authoritative/expert.
- Help the audience to know what is important.

Warrants

The words reason and evidence are much more familiar to most students of written and oral argument than the term warrant. But reasons and evidence are most powerful when they are utilized within the structure of argument we have been discussing.

To be convincing, the reasons and evidence you present in support of your claim need to be connected through warrants. Warrants express a general belief or principle in a way that influences or explains our judgments in specific cases.

Take, for example, the old saying: "Measure twice, cut once".

Expressing as it does a general belief or principle – that when you take the time to do a thing properly, you don't make mistakes – the saying provides a viable warrant for an argument like:

> *"It is never a good idea to hurry a task. [Reason] [Connected by the beliefs and assumptions expressed by the warrant to the supporting evidence that] Careless mistakes take longer to fix than it would to do things right the first time." [Evidence]*

Warrants express justifying principles, shared beliefs, or general assumptions. They are the spoken or unspoken logic that connects your reasons to your evidence. Warrants take many forms, but Williams and Colomb emphasize that they always have or imply two parts:

- One articulating a general belief or circumstance.
- One stating a conclusion we can infer from applying that circumstance to a specific situation.

Warrants often take the form: Whenever X, then Y. For example, take the commonly held belief expressed by the old saying "When it rains, it pours". The same sentiment and set of assumptions could be described by the general truism "If one thing goes wrong, everything goes wrong". Whether implied or explicit, and whether it takes the form of a general observation or a cultural belief, a warrant states a broader principle that can be applied in a particular case to justify the thinking behind an argument.

More on Clear Warrants

Warrants connect your reasons to your claim in logical ways. Whether a warrant is assumed or implied, it is still crucial that the audience be able to recognize your warrant and be able to determine that they agree with or accept your warrant.

Questions for Determining Good Warrants

- Do readers know the warrant already?
- Will all readers think it is true?
- Will they see its connection to this circumstance or situation?
- If they think it is both valid and appropriate, will they think it applies to their family, corporation, or community?

Warranting: A Specific Case

Consider a case when an audience might not accept your argument unless it first accepts your warrant. Take, for example, the following discussion between a mother and her child.

> *Child (to mother): "I need new shoes."*
> *Mother: "But why, what are your reasons?"*
> *Child: "Because all the other kids have them." X*
> *Child: "Because red is 'in' this season and my shoes are blue." X*
> *Mother: "Sorry, but I don't accept your argument that you need new shoes."*

Above all, warrants require common ground. In the example above, the success of the child's argument depends upon his mother's sharing the values and assumptions upon which the argument for new shoes is based.

Productive argument will require that the child find, and address, some common belief or assumption about what constitutes "need". While his mother might not be influenced by peer pressure or style trends, she probably does share a set of values that would ultimately lead to agreement (Common Ground).

Consider a situation in which the child's previous reasons had not convinced his mother to accept his argument, and we can see how compelling reasons and evidence can be developed alongside shared warrants.

> *Child: "I need new shoes because these ones have holes in them and it's the rainy season." √*
> *Mother: "Well why didn't you say so?! I agree that you shouldn't be walking around with wet feet!"*

We are most likely to accept an argument when we share a warrant. In this case, it is unstated, but implied:

> *Warrant = When shoes no longer protect the feet from stones and weather, it is time to buy new ones.*

There is another way to look at warrants that don't necessarily fit a certain mold. If you believe in a general principle stated about general circumstances (for example, "People who fall asleep at work probably aren't getting enough sleep at home".), then you are likely to link a specific instance (of nodding off at your computer) with a specific conclusion (that you haven't gotten adequate rest). Warrants here can be defined as general truths that lead us to accepted conclusions.

Acknowledgment and Response

Acknowledgment and response can be included in your argument in order to:

- Produce trust;
- Mediate or moderate objections;
- Limit the scope of your claim;
- Demonstrate experience or immersion in a wider field or discipline.

Brainstorm useful concessions to potential dissenters by thinking about the difficulties or questions your argument is likely to produce. Within your argument, acknowledgements and responses often begin with: To be sure, admittedly, some have claimed, etc.

Concessions allow the writer to predict problems that might weaken an argument and respond with rebuttals and reassessments. Acknowledgement and response frequently employs terms like but, however, on the other hand, etc.

Using the Five Parts of Argument

After you have sketched out your full argument, and even after you have drafted the entire piece of writing, you should revisit your claim. Ask yourself: Does the claim still introduce and frame the discussion that follows? Are there elements of the claim that need to be revised? Built upon? Eliminated? Explained?

Think:

- Is your claim clear and concise?
- Is it contestable?
- Is there good evidence for your solution?
- Will your audience agree?

Evaluate and Revise Reasons

Consider the specific needs and perspectives of your audience and select reasons that will connect to their priorities and motivations. Make sure that you provide ample reasons for each claim or subclaim you assert. Order your reasons in a way that is logical and compelling: Depending on your argument, you may want to lead with your best reason or save your strongest reason for last. Finally, ask yourself whether any essential evidence is missing from your discussion of the problem.

Think:

- Do your reasons make a strong case for the validity of your claim?
- Can you imagine other reasons that would appeal more strongly to your audience?

Assess and Improve Evidence

If there are authorities to appeal to, experts who agree, or compelling facts that support your argument, make sure you have included them in full. Whether you are speaking from experience, research, or reading, make sure to situate yourself firmly in your field. Create confidence in your authority and establish the trustworthiness of your account.

- Have you consulted reputable sources?
- Have you conducted your research and formatted your findings according to accepted standards?

Think:

- What does your audience need to know to appreciate the solution you propose?
- What makes it easy or difficult to accept?
- What further support might you offer?

Scrutinize Your Warrants

If you can't articulate the connection between what you claim and why you believe the audience should accept your assertion, your readers probably can't either! Good warrants often take the form of assumptions shared by individuals, communities or organizations. They stem from a shared culture, experience, or perspective. If understanding your claim means sharing a particular set of beliefs or establishing common ground with your reader, make sure your argument takes time to do so.

Think:

- Can your audience easily connect your claim to your reasons?
- Are your warrants shared? Explicit? Implied?
- What unspoken agreements do your conclusions depend upon?

Concede and Explain

Gracefully acknowledge potential objections when it can produce trust and reinforce the fairness and authority of your perspective. Try to anticipate the difficulties that different types of readers might have with your evidence or reasoning

Think:

- Where are my readers most likely to object or feel unsettled?
- How can I concede potential problems while still advancing the authority of my claim?

Assessing and Revising Your Argument

By way of conclusion, we can revisit the issue of method. Little Red Schoolhouse (LRS) encourages thinking about the parts of argument in order to produce logic that is

- Easy to understand, and
- Easy to acknowledge or accept.

Argument structures comprehension by giving readers a framework within which to understand a given discussion. Argument supplies criteria for judgment, and connects reasons with claims through implicit or explicit warrants. Sometimes, crafting a good argument is as simple as asking yourself three basic questions:

- What do you want to say?
- Why should readers care?
- Why should readers agree?

When you set about answering these questions using the five parts of argument, you will hone introductions and thesis statements to make clear and precise claims, make relevant costs and benefits explicit, and connect reasons and evidence through shared and compelling warrants.

Examples taken or adapted from:

- Williams, J. (2005). Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace. (8th ed.). New York: Pearson.
- Williams, J., Colomb, G. (2003). The Craft of Argument. (Concise ed.). New York: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.

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3.3.5: Warrant – How Do Your Reasons Support Your Claim? Create a Warrant

Create a Warrant

In this practice exercise, create a warrant you might use to help make your case in the argumentative essay you will write for this unit:

"How does my selected activity or characteristic affect success in an Internet-based college course?"

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3.3.6: Qualify Your Claim, Argumentation and the Toulmin Method

Argumentation and the Toulmin Method

Read this article to review the Toulmin method and qualifiers. Do you need to qualify your claim to avoid overgeneralization (assertions that are too broad)?

Argumentation

When teaching argumentation, it is important to show practical methods, as this is often an area that confuses students. By showing pragmatic approaches to structuring an argument, students can better articulate their thoughts. Moreover, the skill of argumentation can be applied to other assignments as well, such as the research paper, cause and effect, and compare and contrast.

The Toulmin Method

1. Claim

This is the statement the arguer wants the audience to believe. Claims such as "abortion should be protected by the constitution", "marijuana should be legal for medicinal purposes", and "the drinking age should be lowered", are examples of often over-used freshmen argument claims. The claim can serve as a thesis, and it is an essential starting point for any argument paper.

2. Grounds

The grounds, or data, of an argument emphasizes the arguer's ethos (or credibility). It is imperative to an argument that the grounds be well founded, noncontroversial, and supportive. Claims supported with solid grounds become much stronger. For example, in an argument about lowering the drinking age, saying "my parents told me drinking is bad for you", is much less effective than saying, "scientists predict .5 percent of one's brain cells are lost every time he/she binge drinks".

3. Warrant

This links the two previous steps. It creates the bridge between the claim and the grounds. Sometimes the warrant is implicit, unstated, or combined with the grounds.

4. Qualifier

This modifies the strength of an argument. Based on what kind of qualifier you choose, your argument becomes more or less believable. For example, the qualifier, "all people who drink become alcoholics", is so strong of a claim that it becomes unbelievable. Here, if the qualifier is toned-down, the statement becomes more believable: "Some people who drink become alcoholics".

5. Rebuttal

It is often important to include and possibly debunk rebuttal arguments. For example, saying "despite scientists claim about the effects of drinking on the brain, it has been shown to be no less damaging than using a cell phone", shows that you can anticipate your critics.

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3.3.7: Qualify Your Claim, Develop a Claim

Develop a Claim

In this practice exercise, write an introductory paragraph in which you develop a claim that will later be the basis for your Unit 2 essay:

"How does my selected activity or characteristic affect success in an Internet-based college course?"

Remember to include a strong thesis statement, which is a one-sentence claim or argument of the position you will take in your essay. Try to go beyond simply announcing your topic and listing the discussion points you plan to make in the body of your paper; keep in mind that you will work to prove your thesis in the body of your essay.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4: Research Methods and Documentation

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4.1: Purdue OWL- MLA Formatting - The Basics



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4.2: Integrating Sources

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4.2.1: Evidence

Evidence

Read this article. You can incorporate evidence into your essays in a number of ways. Try using various types of evidence in your writing including quotations, summaries, paraphrases, data, illustrations, and photographs.

What This Handout is About

This handout will provide a broad overview of gathering and using evidence. It will help you decide what counts as evidence, put evidence to work in your writing, and determine whether you have enough evidence. It will also offer links to additional resources.

Introduction

Many papers that you write in college will require you to make an argument; this means that you must take a position on the subject you are discussing and support that position with evidence. It's important that you use the right kind of evidence, that you use it effectively, and that you have an appropriate amount of it. If, for example, your philosophy professor didn't like it that you used a survey of public opinion as your primary evidence in your ethics paper, you need to find out more about what philosophers count as good evidence.

If your instructor has told you that you need more analysis, suggested that you are "just listing" points or giving a "laundry list", or asked you how certain points are related to your argument, it may mean that you can do more to fully incorporate your evidence into your argument. Comments like "for example?", "proof?", "go deeper", or "expand" in the margins of your graded paper suggest that you may need more evidence. Let's take a look at each of these issues – understanding what counts as evidence, using evidence in your argument, and deciding whether you need more evidence.

What Counts as Evidence?

Before you begin gathering information for possible use as evidence in your argument, you need to be sure that you understand the purpose of your assignment. If you are working on a project for a class, look carefully at the assignment prompt. It may give you clues about what sorts of evidence you will need. Does the instructor mention any particular books you should use in writing your paper or the names of any authors who have written about your topic? How long should your paper be (longer works may require more, or more varied, evidence)? What themes or topics come up in the text of the prompt?

What Matters to Instructors?

Instructors in different academic fields expect different kinds of arguments and evidence – your chemistry paper might include graphs, charts, statistics, and other quantitative data as evidence, whereas your English paper might include passages from a novel, examples of recurring symbols, or discussions of characterization in the novel. Consider what kinds of sources and evidence you have seen in course readings and lectures. You may wish to see whether the Writing Center has a handout regarding the specific academic field you're working in – for example, literature, sociology, or history.

What are Primary and Secondary Sources?

A note on terminology: many researchers distinguish between primary and secondary sources of evidence (in this case, "primary" means "first" or "original", not "most important"). Primary sources include original documents, photographs, interviews, and so forth. Secondary sources present information that has already been processed or interpreted by someone else.

For example, if you are writing a paper about the movie "The Matrix", the movie itself, an interview with the director, and production photos could serve as primary sources of evidence. A movie review from a magazine or a collection of essays about the film would be secondary sources. Depending on the context, the same item could be either a primary or a secondary source: if I am writing about people's relationships with animals, a collection of stories about animals might be a secondary source; if I am writing about how editors gather diverse stories into collections, the same book might now function as a primary source.

Where Can I Find Evidence?

Here are some examples of sources of information and tips about how to use them in gathering evidence. Ask your instructor if you aren't sure whether a certain source would be appropriate for your paper.

Print and Electronic Sources

Books, journals, websites, newspapers, magazines, and documentary films are some of the most common sources of evidence for academic writing. Our handout on evaluating print sources will help you choose your print sources wisely, and the library has a tutorial on evaluating both print sources and websites. A librarian can help you find sources that are appropriate for the type of assignment you are completing.

Observation

Sometimes you can directly observe the thing you are interested in, by watching, listening to, touching, tasting, or smelling it. For example, if you were asked to write about Mozart's music, you could listen to it; if your topic was how businesses attract traffic, you might go and look at window displays at the mall.

Interviews

An interview is a good way to collect information that you can't find through any other type of research. An interview can provide an expert's opinion, biographical or first-hand experiences, and suggestions for further research.

Surveys

Surveys allow you to find out some of what a group of people thinks about a topic. Designing an effective survey and interpreting the data you get can be challenging, so it's a good idea to check with your instructor before creating or administering a survey.

Experiments

Experimental data serve as the primary form of scientific evidence. For scientific experiments, you should follow the specific guidelines of the discipline you are studying. For writing in other fields, more informal experiments might be acceptable as evidence.

For example, if you want to prove that food choices in a cafeteria are affected by gender norms, you might ask classmates to undermine those norms on purpose and observe how others react. What would happen if a football player were eating dinner with his teammates and he brought a small salad and diet drink to the table, all the while murmuring about his waistline and wondering how many fat grams the salad dressing contained?

Personal Experience

Using your own experiences can be a powerful way to appeal to your readers. You should, however, use personal experience only when it is appropriate to your topic, your writing goals, and your audience. Personal experience should not be your only form of evidence in most papers, and some disciplines frown on using personal experience at all. For example, a story about the microscope you received as a Christmas gift when you were nine years old is probably not applicable to your biology lab report.

Using Evidence in an Argument

Does Evidence Speak for Itself?

Absolutely not. After you introduce evidence into your writing, you must say why and how this evidence supports your argument. In other words, you have to explain the significance of the evidence and its function in your paper. What turns a fact or piece of information into evidence is the connection it has with a larger claim or argument: evidence is always evidence *for* or *against* something, and you have to make that link clear.

As writers, we sometimes assume that our readers already know what we are talking about; we may be wary of elaborating too much because we think the point is obvious. But readers can't read our minds: although they may be familiar with many of the ideas we are discussing, they do not know what we are trying to do with those ideas unless we indicate it through explanations, organization, transitions, and so forth. Try to spell out the connections that you were making in your mind when you chose your evidence, decided where to place it in your paper, and drew conclusions based on it. Remember, you can always cut prose from your paper later if you decide that you are stating the obvious.

Here are some questions you can ask yourself about a particular bit of evidence:

1. O.k., I've just stated this point, but so what? Why is it interesting? Why should anyone care?
2. What does this information imply?
3. What are the consequences of thinking this way or looking at a problem this way?
4. I have just described what something is like or how I see it, but why is it like that?

5. I have just said that something happens-so how does it happen? How does it come to be the way it is?
6. Why is this information important? Why does it matter?
7. How is this idea related to my thesis? What connections exist between them? Does it support my thesis? If so, how does it do that?
8. Can I give an example to illustrate this point?

Answering these questions may help you explain how your evidence is related to your overall argument.

How Can I Incorporate Evidence into my Paper?

There are many ways to present your evidence. Often, your evidence will be included as text in the body of your paper, as a quotation, paraphrase, or summary. Sometimes you might include graphs, charts, or tables; excerpts from an interview; or photographs or illustrations with accompanying captions.

Quotations

When you quote, you are reproducing another writer's words exactly as they appear on the page. Here are some tips to help you decide when to use quotations:

1. Quote if you cannot say it any better and the author's words are particularly brilliant, witty, edgy, distinctive, a good illustration of a point you are making, or otherwise interesting.
2. Quote if you are using a particularly authoritative source and you need the author's expertise to back up your point.
3. Quote if you are analyzing diction, tone, or a writer's use of a specific word or phrase.
4. Quote if you are taking a position that relies on the reader's understanding exactly what another writer says about the topic.

Be sure to introduce each quotation you use, and always cite your sources.

Like all pieces of evidence, a quotation can't speak for itself. If you end a paragraph with a quotation, that may be a sign that you have neglected to discuss the importance of the quotation in terms of your argument. It's important to avoid "plop quotations", that is, quotations that are just dropped into your paper without any introduction, discussion, or follow-up.

Paraphrasing

When you paraphrase, you take a specific section of a text and put it into your own words. Putting it into your own words doesn't mean just changing or rearranging a few of the author's words: to paraphrase well and avoid plagiarism, try setting your source aside and restating the sentence or paragraph you have just read, as though you were describing it to another person. Paraphrasing is different than summary because a paraphrase focuses on a particular, fairly short bit of text (like a phrase, sentence, or paragraph). You'll need to indicate when you are paraphrasing someone else's text by citing your source correctly, just as you would with a quotation.

When might you want to paraphrase?

1. Paraphrase when you want to introduce a writer's position, but his or her original words aren't special enough to quote.
2. Paraphrase when you are supporting a particular point and need to draw on a certain place in a text that supports your point – for example, when one paragraph in a source is especially relevant.
3. Paraphrase when you want to present a writer's view on a topic that differs from your position or that of another writer; you can then refute writer's specific points in your own words after you paraphrase.
4. Paraphrase when you want to comment on a particular example that another writer uses.
5. Paraphrase when you need to present information that's unlikely to be questioned.

Summary

When you summarize, you are offering an overview of an entire text, or at least a lengthy section of a text. Summary is useful when you are providing background information, grounding your own argument, or mentioning a source as a counter-argument. A summary is less nuanced than paraphrased material. It can be the most effective way to incorporate a large number of sources when you don't have a lot of space. When you are summarizing someone else's argument or ideas, be sure this is clear to the reader and cite your source appropriately.

Statistics, Data, Charts, Graphs, Photographs, Illustrations

Sometimes the best evidence for your argument is a hard fact or visual representation of a fact. This type of evidence can be a solid backbone for your argument, but you still need to create context for your reader and draw the connections you want him or her to

make. Remember that statistics, data, charts, graph, photographs, and illustrations are all open to interpretation. Guide the reader through the interpretation process. Again, always, cite the origin of your evidence if you didn't produce the material you are using yourself.

Do I Need More Evidence?

Let's say that you have identified some appropriate sources, found some evidence, explained to the reader how it fits into your overall argument, incorporated it into your draft effectively, and cited your sources. How do you tell whether you've got enough evidence and whether it's working well in the service of a strong argument or analysis? Here are some techniques you can use to review your draft and assess your use of evidence.

Make a Reverse Outline

A reverse outline is a great technique for helping you see how each paragraph contributes to proving your thesis. When you make a reverse outline, you record the main ideas in each paragraph in a shorter (outline-like) form so that you can see at a glance what is in your paper. The reverse outline is helpful in at least three ways.

First, it lets you see where you have dealt with too many topics in one paragraph (in general, you should have one main idea per paragraph). Second, the reverse outline can help you see where you need more evidence to prove your point or more analysis of that evidence. Third, the reverse outline can help you write your topic sentences: once you have decided what you want each paragraph to be about, you can write topic sentences that explain the topics of the paragraphs and state the relationship of each topic to the overall thesis of the paper.

Color Code Your Paper

You will need three highlighters or colored pencils for this exercise. Use one color to highlight general assertions. These will typically be the topic sentences in your paper. Next, use another color to highlight the specific evidence you provide for each assertion (including quotations, paraphrased or summarized material, statistics, examples, and your own ideas). Lastly, use another color to highlight analysis of your evidence.

Which assertions are key to your overall argument? Which ones are especially contestable? How much evidence do you have for each assertion? How much analysis? In general, you should have at least as much analysis as you do evidence, or your paper runs the risk of being more summary than argument. The more controversial an assertion is, the more evidence you may need to provide in order to persuade your reader.

Play Devil's Advocate, Act Like a Child, or Doubt Everything

This technique may be easiest to use with a partner. Ask your friend to take on one of the roles above, then read your paper aloud to him/her. After each section, pause and let your friend interrogate you. If your friend is playing devil's advocate, he or she will always take the opposing viewpoint and force you to keep defending yourself. If your friend is acting like a child, he or she will question every sentence, even seemingly self-explanatory ones. If your friend is a doubter, he or she won't believe anything you say. Justifying your position verbally or explaining yourself will force you to strengthen the evidence in your paper. If you already have enough evidence but haven't connected it clearly enough to your main argument, explaining to your friend how the evidence is relevant or what it proves may help you to do so.

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4.2.2: Annoying Ways People Use Sources

Annoying Ways People Use Sources

Read this chapter and take note of how sources can be used poorly. How can you avoid this in your own writing?

How Slow Driving Is Like Sloppy Writing

I hate slow drivers. When I am driving in the fast lane, maintaining the speed limit exactly, and I find myself behind someone who thinks the fast lane is for people who drive ten miles per hour *below* the speed limit, I get an annoyed feeling in my chest like hot water filling a heavy bucket. I wave my arms around and yell, "What . . . ? But, hey. . . oh come *on!*" There are at least two explanations for why some slow drivers fail to move out of the way:

1. They do not know that the generally accepted practice of highway driving in the U.S. is to move to the right if an upcoming car wants to pass.
2. They know the guidelines but do not care.

But here is the thing: writers can forget that their readers are sometimes just as annoyed at writing that fails to follow conventions as drivers are when stuck behind a car that fails to move over. In other words, there is something similar between these two people: the knowledgeable driver who thinks, "I thought all drivers *knew* that the left lane is for the fastest cars", and the reader who thinks, "I thought all writers *knew* that outside sources should be introduced, punctuated, and cited according to a set of standards".

One day, you may discover that something you have written has just been read by a reader who, unfortunately, was annoyed at some of the ways you integrated sources. She was reading along and then suddenly exclaimed, "What . . . ? But, hey . . . oh come *on!*" If you are lucky, this reader will try to imagine why you typed things the way you did, giving you the benefit of the doubt. But sometimes you will be slotted into positions that might not really be accurate. When this frustrated reader walks away from your work, trying to figure out, say, why you used so many quotations, or why you kept starting and ending paragraphs with them, she may come to the same conclusions I do about slow drivers:

1. You do not know the generally accepted practices of using sources (especially in academic writing) in the United States. or,
2. You know the guidelines but do not care.

And it will be a lot harder for readers to take you seriously if they think you are ignorant or rude.

This judgment, of course, will often be unfair. These readers might completely ignore the merits of your insightful, stylistically beautiful, or revolutionarily important language – just as my anger at another driver makes me fail to admire his custom paint job. But readers and writers do not always see eye to eye on the same text. In fact, some things I write about in this essay will only bother your pickiest readers (some teachers, some editors, some snobby friends), while many other readers might zoom past how you use sources without blinking.

But in my experience, I find that teachers do a disservice when we fail to alert students to the kind of things that some readers might be annoyed at – however illogical these things sometimes seem. People are often unreasonably picky, and writers have to deal with that – which they do by trying to anticipate and preemptively fix whatever might annoy a broad range of readers. Plus, the more effectively you anticipate that pickiness, the more likely it is that readers will interpret your quotations and paraphrases in the way you want them to – critically or acceptingly, depending on your writing context.

It helps me to remember that the conventions of writing have a fundamentally *rhetorical* nature. That is, I follow different conventions depending on the purpose and audience of my writing, because I know that I will come across differently to different people depending on how well I follow the conventions expected in any particular writing space. In a blog, I cite a source by hyperlinking; in an academic essay, I use a parenthetical citation that refers to a list of references at the end of the essay.

One of the fundamental ideas of rhetoric is that speakers/writers/composers shape what they say/write/create based on what they want it to do, where they are publishing it, and what they know about their audience/readers. And those decisions include nitty-gritty things like introducing quotations and citing paraphrases clearly: not everyone in the entire world approaches these things the same way, but when I strategically learn the expectations of my U.S. academic audience, what I really want to say comes across smoothly, without little annoying blips in my readers' experience.

Notice that I am not saying that there is a particular *right* or *wrong* way to use conventions in my writing – if the modern U.S. academic system had evolved from a primarily African or Asian or Latin American cultural consciousness instead of a European one, conventions for writing would probably be very different. That is why they are *conventions* and not *rules*.

The Annoyances

Because I am not here to tell you *rules*, *decrees*, or *laws*, it makes sense to call my classifications *annoyances*. In the examples that follow, I wrote all of the annoying examples myself, but all the examples I use of good writing come from actual student papers in first year composition classes at my university; I have their permission to quote them.

Armadillo Roadkill: Dropping in a Quotation Without Introducing It First

Everyone in the car hears it: buh-BUMP. The driver insists to the passengers, "But that armadillo – I did not see it! It just came out of nowhere!"

Sadly, a poorly introduced quotation can lead readers to a similar exclamation: "It just came out of nowhere!" And though readers probably will not experience the same level of grief and regret when surprised by a quotation as opposed to an armadillo, I submit that there is a kinship between the experiences: both involve a normal, pleasant activity (driving; reading) stopped suddenly short by an unexpected barrier (a sudden armadillo; a sudden quotation).

Here is an example of what I am talking about:

We should all be prepared with a backup plan if a zombie invasion occurs. "Unlike its human counterparts, an army of zombies is completely independent of support" (Brooks 155). Preparations should be made in the following areas. . . .

Did you notice how the quotation is dropped in without any kind of warning? (Buh-BUMP.)

The Fix: The easiest way to effectively massage in quotations is by purposefully returning to each one in your draft to see if you set the stage for your readers – often, by signaling that a quote is about to come, stating who the quote came from, and showing how your readers should interpret it. In the above example, that could be done by introducing the quotation with something like this (new text bolded):

We should all be prepared with a backup plan if a zombie invasion occurs. Max Brooks suggests a number of ways to prepare for zombies' particular traits, though he underestimates the ability of humans to survive in harsh environments. For example, he writes, "Unlike its human counterparts, an army of zombies is completely independent of support" (155). His shortsightedness could have a number of consequences. . . .

In this version, I know a quotation is coming ("For example"), I know it is going to be written by Max Brooks, and I know I am being asked to read the quote rather skeptically ("he underestimates"). The sentence with the quotation itself also now begins with a "tag" that eases us into it ("he writes").

Here is an actual example from Alexsandra. Notice the way she builds up to the quotation and then explains it:

In the first two paragraphs, the author takes a defensive position when explaining the perception that the public has about scientists by saying that "there is anxiety that scientists lack both wisdom and social responsibility and are so motivated by ambition . . ." and "scientists are repeatedly referred to as 'playing God'" (Wolpert 345).

With this last sentence especially, his tone seems to demonstrate how he uses the ethos appeal to initially set a tone of someone that is tired of being misunderstood.

Alexsandra prepares us for the quotation, quotes, and then analyzes it. I love it. This is not a hard and fast rule – I have seen it broken by the best of writers, I admit – but it is a wise standard to hold yourself to unless you have a reason not to.

Dating Spider-Man: Starting or Ending a Paragraph with a Quotation

An annoyance that is closely connected to Armadillo Roadkill is the tendency writers sometimes have of starting or ending paragraphs with quotations. This is not technically *wrong*, and there are situations when the effect of surprise is what you are going for. But often, a paragraph-beginning or paragraph-closing quotation feels rushed, unexplained, disjointed.

It is like dating Spider-Man. You are walking along with him and he says something remarkably interesting – but then he tilts his head, hearing something far away, and suddenly shoots a web onto the nearest building and *zooms* away through the air. As if you had just read an interesting quotation dangling at the end of a paragraph, you wanted to hear more of his opinion, but it is too late – he is already moved on.

Later, he suddenly jumps off a balcony and is by your side again, and he starts talking about something you do not understand. You are confused because he just dropped in and expected you to understand the context of what was on his mind at that moment, much like when readers step into a paragraph that begins with a quotation. Here is an example:

[End of a preceding paragraph:] . . . Therefore, the evidence clearly suggests that we should be exceptionally careful about deciding when and where to rest.

"When taking a nap, always rest your elbow on your desk and keep your arm perpendicular to your desktop" (Piven and Borgenicht 98). After all, consider the following scenario. . . .

There is a perfectly good reason why this feels odd – which should feel familiar after reading about the Armadillo Roadkill annoyance above. When you got to the quotation in the second paragraph, you did not know what you were supposed to think about it; there was no guidance.

The Fix is the same: in the majority of situations, readers appreciate being guided to and led away from a quotation by the writer doing the quoting. Readers get a sense of pleasure from the safe flow of hearing how to read an upcoming quotation, reading it, and then being told one way to interpret it. Prepare, quote, analyze.

I mentioned above that there can be situations where starting a paragraph with a quotation can have a strong effect. Personally, I usually enjoy this most at the beginning of essays or the beginning of sections – like in this example from the very beginning of Jennifer's essay:

"Nothing is ever simple: Racism and nobility can exist in the same man, hate and love in the same woman, fear and loyalty, compromise and idealism, all the yin-yang dichotomies that make the human species so utterly confounding, yet so utterly fascinating" (Hunter). The hypocrisy and complexity that Stephen Hunter from the *Washington Post* describes is the basis of the movie *Crash* (2004).

Instantly, her quotation hooks me. It does not feel thoughtless, like it would feel if I continued to be whisked to quotations without preparation throughout the essay. But please do not overdo it; any quotation that opens an essay or section ought to be integrally related to your topic (as is Jennifer's), not just a cheap gimmick.

Uncle Barry and his Encyclopedia of Useless Information: Using too Many Quotations in a Row

You probably know someone like this: a person (for me, my Uncle Barry) who constantly tries to impress me with how much he knows about just about everything. I might casually bring up something in the news ("Wow, these health care debates are getting really heated, aren't they?") and then find myself barraged by all of Uncle Barry's ideas on government- sponsored health care – which *then* drifts into a story about how his cousin Maxine died in an underfunded hospice center, which had a parking lot that he could have designed better, which reminds him of how good he is at fixing things, just like the garage door at my parents' house, which probably only needs a little. . . . You get the idea. I might even think to myself, "Wait, I want to know more about that topic, but you are zooming on before you contextualize your information at all".

This is something like reading an essay that relies too much on quotations. Readers get the feeling that they are moving from one quotation to the next without ever quite getting to hear the *real* point of what the author wants to say, never getting any time to form an opinion about the claims. In fact, this often makes it sound as if the author has almost no authority at all. You may have been annoyed by paragraphs like this before:

Addressing this issue, David M. Potter comments, "Whether Seward meant this literally or not, it was in fact a singularly accurate forecast for territorial Kansas" (199). Of course, Potter's view is contested, even though he claims, "Soon, the Missourians began to perceive the advantages of operating without publicity" (200). Interestingly, "The election was bound to be irregular in any case" (201).

Wait – huh? This author feels like Uncle Barry to me: grabbing right and left for topics (or quotes) in an effort to sound authoritative.

The Fix is to return to each quotation and decide why it is there and then massage it in accordingly. If you just want to use a quote to cite a *fact*, then consider paraphrasing or summarizing the source material (which I find is usually harder than it sounds but is usually worth it for the smoothness my paragraph gains). But if you quoted because you want to draw attention to the source's particular phrasing, or if you want to respond to something you agree with or disagree with in the source, then consider taking the time to surround *each* quotation with guidance to your readers about what you want them to think about that quote.

In the following passage, I think Jessica demonstrates a balance between source and analysis well. Notice that she only uses a single quotation, even though she surely could have chosen more. But instead, Jessica relies on her instincts and remains the primary voice of authority in the passage:

Robin Toner's article, "Feminist Pitch by a Democrat named Obama", was written a week after the video became public and is partially a response to it. She writes, "The Obama campaign is, in some ways, subtly marketing its candidate as a post-feminist man, a generation beyond the gender conflicts of the boomers". Subtly is the key word. Obama is a passive character throughout the video, never directly addressing the camera. Rather, he is shown indirectly through speeches, intimate conversations with supporters and candid interaction with family. This creates a sense of intimacy, which in turn creates a feeling of trust.

Toner's response to the Obama video is like a diving board that Jessica bounces off of before she gets to the really interesting stuff: the pool (her own observations). A bunch of diving boards lined up without a pool (tons of quotes with no analysis) would not please anyone – except maybe Uncle Barry.

Am I in the Right Movie? Failing to Integrate a Quotation into the Grammar of the Preceding Sentence

When reading drafts of my writing, this is a common experience: I start to read a sentence that seems interesting and normal, with everything going just the way I expect it to. But then the unexpected happens: a quotation blurts itself into the sentence in a way that does not fit with the grammar that built up to quotation. It feels like sitting in a movie theater, everything going as expected, when suddenly the opening credits start for a movie I did not plan to see. Here are two examples of what I am talking about. Read them out loud, and you will see how suddenly wrong they feel.

1. Therefore, the author warns that a zombie's vision "are no different than those of a normal human" (Brooks 6).
2. Sheila Anne Barry advises that "Have you ever wondered what it is like to walk on a tightrope – many feet up in the air?" (50)

In the first example, the quoter's build-up to the quotation uses a singular subject – *a zombie's vision* – which, when paired with the quotation, is annoyingly matched with the plural verb *are*. It would be much less jolting to write, "a zombie's vision *is*," which makes the subject and verb agree. In the second example, the quoter builds up to the quotation with a third-person, declarative independent clause: *Sheila Anne Barry advises.* But then the quotation switches into second person – *you* – and unexpectedly asks a question – completely different from the expectation that was built up by the first part of the sentence.

The Fix is usually easy: you read your essay out loud to someone else, and if you stumble as you enter a quotation, there is probably something you can adjust in your lead-in sentence to make the two fit together well. Maybe you will need to choose a different subject to make it fit with the quote's verb (*reader* instead of *readers; each* instead of *all*), or maybe you will have to scrap what you first wrote and start over.

On occasion you will even feel the need to transparently modify the quotation by adding an [s] to one of its verbs, always being certain to use square brackets to show that you adjusted something in the quotation. Maybe you will even find a way to quote a shorter part of the quotation and squeeze it into the context of a sentence that is mostly your own, a trick that can have a positive effect on readers, who like smooth water slides more than they like bumpy slip-and-slides. Jennifer does this well in the following sentence, for example:

In *Crash*, no character was allowed to "escape his own hypocrisy" (Muller), and the film itself emphasized that the reason there is so much racial tension among strangers is because of the personal issues one cannot deal with alone.

She saw a phrase that she liked in Muller's article, so she found a way to work it in smoothly, without the need for a major break in her thought. Let's put ourselves in Jennifer's shoes for a moment: it is possible that she started drafting this sentence using the plural subject *characters*, writing "In *Crash*, no characters were allowed. . . ". But then, imagine she looked back at the quote from Muller and saw that it said "escape *his* own hypocrisy", which was a clue that she had to change the first part of her sentence to match the singular construction of the quote.

I Cannot Find the Stupid Link: No Connection Between the First Letter of a Parenthetical Citation and the First Letter of a Works Cited Entry

You have been in this situation: you are on a website that seems like it might be interesting and you want to learn more about it. But the home page does not tell you much, so you look for an "About Us" or "More Information" or "FAQ" link. But no matter where you search – Top of page? Bottom? Left menu? – you cannot find the stupid link. This is usually the fault of web designers, who do not always take the time to test their sites as much as they should with actual users. The communication failure here is simple: you are used to finding certain kinds of basic information in the places people usually put it. If it is not there, you are annoyed.

Similarly, a reader might see a citation and have a quick internal question about it: *What journal was this published in? When was it published? Is this an article I could find online to skim myself? This author has a sexy last name – I wonder what his first name is?* Just like when you look for a link to more information, this reader has a simple, quick question that he or she expects to answer easily.

And the most basic way for readers to answer those questions (when they are reading a work written in APA or MLA style) is (1) to look at the information in the citation, and (2) skim the references or works cited section alphabetically, looking for the first letter in the citation. There is an assumption that the first letter of a citation will be the letter to look for in the list of works cited.

In short, the following may annoy readers who want to quickly learn more about the citation:

[Essay Text:] A respected guide on the subject suggests, "If possible, always take the high ground and hold it" (*The Zombie Survival Guide* 135).

[Works Cited Page:] Brooks, Max. *The Zombie Survival Guide: Complete Protection from the Living Dead.* New York: Three Rivers, 2003. Print.

The reader may wonder when *The Zombie Survival Guide* was published and flip back to the works cited page, but the parenthetical citation sends her straight to the *Z*'s in the works cited list (because initial *A*'s and *The*'s are ignored when alphabetizing). However, the complete works cited entry is actually with the *B*'s (where it belongs).

The Fix is to make sure that the first word of the works cited entry is the word you use in your in-text citation, every time. If the works cited entry starts with Brooks, use (Brooks) in the essay text.

Citations not including last names may seem to complicate this advice, but they all follow the same basic concept. For instance, you might have:

- A citation that only lists a title. For instance, your citation might read ("Gray Wolf General Information"). In this case, the assumption is that the citation can be found under the *G* section of the works cited page. Leah cites her paraphrase of a source with no author in the following way, indicating that I should head to the *G*'s if I want to learn more about her source:

Alaska is the only refuge that is left for the wolves in the United States, and once that is gone, they will more than likely become extinct in this country ("Gray Wolf General Information").

- A citation that only lists a page number. Maybe the citation simply says (25). That implies that somewhere in the surrounding text, the essay writer must have made it stupendously clear what name or title to look up in the works cited list. This happens a lot, since it is common to introduce a quotation by naming the person it came from, in which case it would be repetitive to name that author again in the citation.
- A quotation without a citation at all. This happens when you cite a work that is both A) from a web page that does not number the pages or paragraphs and B) is named in the text surrounding the quotation. Readers will assume that the author is named nearby. Stephanie wisely leaves off any citation in the example below, where it is already clear that I should head to the *O*'s on the works cited page to find information about this source, a web page written by Opotow:

To further this point, Opotow notes, "Do not imagine you will be unscathed by the methods you use. The end may justify the means. . . . But there is a price to pay, and the price does tend to be oneself".

I Swear I Did Some Research: Dropping in a Citation Without Making it Clear What Information Came from That Source

Let's look in-depth at this potentially annoying passage from a hypothetical student paper:

It is possible that a multidisciplinary approach to understanding the universe will open new doors of understanding. If theories from sociology, communication, and philosophy joined with physics, the possibilities would be boundless. This would inspire new research, much like in the 1970s when scientists changed their focus from grand-scale theories of the universe to the small concerns of quantum physics (Hawking 51).

In at least two ways, this is stellar material. First, the author is actually voicing a point of view; she sounds knowledgeable, strong. Second, and more to the point of this chapter, the author includes a citation, showing that she knows that ethical citation standards ask authors to cite paraphrases and summaries – not just quotations.

But on the other hand, which of these three sentences, exactly, came from Hawking's book? Did *Hawking* claim that physics experts should join up with folks in other academic disciplines, or is that the student writer? In other words, at which point does the author's point of view meld into material taken specifically from Hawking?

I recognize that there often are not clean answers to a question like that. What we read and what we know sometimes meld together so unnoticeably that we do not know which ideas and pieces of information are "ours" and which are not. Discussing "patchwriting", a term used to describe writing that blends words and phrases from sources with words and phrases we came up

with ourselves, scholar Rebecca Moore Howard writes, "When I believe I am not patchwriting, I am simply doing it so expertly that the seams are no longer visible – or I am doing it so unwittingly that I cannot cite my sources" (91).

In other words, *all* the moves we make when writing came from somewhere else at some point, whether we realize it or not. Yikes. But remember our main purpose here: to not look annoying when using sources. And most of your instructors are not going to say, "I understand that I could n0t tell the difference between your ideas and your source's because we quite naturally patchwrite all the time. That's fine with me. Party on!" They are much more likely to imagine that you plopped in a few extra citations as a way of defensively saying, "I swear I did some research! See? Here is a citation right here! Doesn't that prove I worked really hard?"

The Fix: Write the sentences preceding the citation with *specific words and phrases that will tell readers what information came from where.* Like this (bolded words are new):

It is possible that a multidisciplinary approach to understanding the universe will open new doors of understanding. I believe that if theories from sociology, communication, and philosophy joined with physics, the possibilities would be boundless. This would inspire new research, much like the changes Stephen Hawking describes happening in the 1970s when scientists changed their focus from grand-scale theories of the universe to the small concerns of quantum physics (51).

Perhaps these additions could still use some stylistic editing for wordiness and flow, but the source-related job is done: readers know exactly which claims the essay writer is making and which ones Hawking made in his book. The last sentence and only the last sentence summarizes the ideas Hawking describes on page 51 of his book.

One warning: you will find that scholars in some disciplines (especially in the sciences and social sciences) use citations in the way I just warned you to avoid. You might see sentences like this one, from page 64 of Glenn Gordon Smith, Ana T. Torres-Ayala, and Allen J. Heindel's article in the *Journal of Distance Education:*

Some researchers have suggested "curriculum" as a key element in the design of web-based courses (Berge, 1998; Driscoll, 1998; Meyen, Tangen, & Lian, 1999; Wiens & Gunter, 1998).

Whoa – that is a lot of citations. Remember how the writer of my earlier example cited Stephen Hawking because she summarized his ideas? Well, a number of essays describing the results of experiments, like this one, use citations with a different purpose, citing previous studies whose general conclusions support the study described in this new paper, like building blocks.

It is like saying to your potentially skeptical readers, "Look, you might be wondering if I am a quack. But I can prove I am not! See, all these other people published in similar areas! Are you going to pick fights with all of *them* too?" You might have noticed as well that these citations are in APA format, reflecting the standards of the social sciences journal this passage was published in. Well, in this kind of context APA's requirement to cite the year of a study makes a lot of sense too – after all, the older a study, the less likely it is to still be relevant.

Conclusion: Use Your Turn Signals

You may have guessed the biggest weakness in an essay like this: what is annoying varies from person to person, with some readers happily skimming past awkward introductions to quotations without a blink, while others see a paragraph-opening quotation as something to complain about on Facebook. All I have given you here – all I *can* give you unless I actually get to know you and your various writing contexts – are the basics that will apply in a number of academic writing contexts.

Think of these as signals to your readers about your intentions, much as wise drivers rely on their turn signals to communicate their intentions to other drivers. In some cases when driving, signaling is an almost artistic decision, relying on the gut reaction of the driver to interpret what is best in times when the law does not mandate use one way or the other. I hope your writing is full of similar signals. Now if I could only convince the guy driving in front of me to use *his* blinker. . . .

Discussion

1. Because so many of these guidelines depend on the writer's purpose, publication space, and audience, it can be difficult to know when to follow them strictly and when to bend them. What are some specific writing situations where a writer is justified to bend the standards of how to incorporate sources?
2. Choose one of the annoyances. Then, look through a number of different pieces of writing from different genres and collect two examples of writers who followed your chosen guideline perfectly and two who did not. For each source you found, jot a sentence or two describing the context of that source and why you think its writer did or did not follow the guideline.
3. Rank the annoyances in order of most annoying to least annoying, pretending that you are a college professor. Now, rank them from the point of view of a newspaper editor, a popular blogger, and another college student. What changes did you make in

your rankings?

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4.2.3: Evidence Part 2

Evidence

Read this article and watch the video. Is it possible to quote too much? How do you know if you are choosing the best information for your essay?

To be convincing, a writer needs evidence for their claims. Evidence includes traditional sources, such as books and journal articles, but may also include anecdotes, photographs, web sources and videos. The kinds of evidence that are appropriate in a particular context depend on the writer's purpose. Academic culture is an evidence-based culture. Good scholarship requires claims supported by facts, theories, and research. Finding the evidence is not enough, though, as it needs to be successfully integrated into texts.

When composers call on the ideas or authority of a book, article, website, primary source, or other outside information, they should be practiced in choosing the best possible information and integrating it effectively into their own prose.

Research in composition and rhetoric reminds us that students struggling to understand new material often use sources in immature ways – perhaps by overquoting, failing to introduce outside sources with skill, or patch writing. Evidence can make or break a paper, depending on how it is used. In order to score highly on this section of the rubric, students will need to develop an understanding of the purpose of research, including credible and appropriate evidence in their papers so as to further their arguments.



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4.2.4: Distinguishing Between Main Points and Sub-claims

Distinguishing Between Main Points and Sub-claims

Read this article on main points and sub-claims. How do main points differ from sub-claims? How can you support sub-claims in your writing?

An effective argument contains a thesis, supporting claims, and evidence to support those claims. The thesis is the writer's central argument, or claim, and the supporting claims reinforce the validity of the thesis. When reading another writer's argument, it is important to be able to distinguish between main points and sub-claims; being able to recognize the difference between the two will prove incredibly useful when composing your own thesis-driven essays.

As you may know, a writer's thesis articulates the direction he or she will take with his or her argument. For example, let's say that my thesis is as follows: "smoking should be banned on campus because of its health and environmental repercussions". At least two things are clear from this statement: my central claim is that smoking should be banned on campus, and I will move from discussing the health impact of allowing smoking on campus to covering the environmental impact of allowing smoking on campus. These latter two ideas (the health and the environmental repercussions of allowing smoking on campus) are the author's main points, which function as support for the author's central claim (thesis), and they will likely comprise one or more body paragraphs of the writer's thesis-driven essay.

Let's take a look at the following diagram:

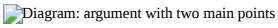


Figure 4.2.4.1

This diagram translates into the following organizational plan:

1. I argue that smoking should be banned on campus.
    1. Smoking should be banned on campus because of the health repercussions.
    2. Smoking should be banned on campus because of the environmental repercussions.

Points (A) and (B) will be explored in body paragraphs, will likely form the topic sentences of those body paragraphs, and will be supported by more claims specific to each point, or sub-claims. Let's return to the previous diagram and see what happens when we include sub-claims:

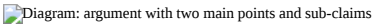


Figure 4.2.4.2

This diagram translates into the following organizational plan:

I. I argue that smoking should be banned on campus.

A. Smoking should be banned on campus because of the health repercussions.

1. Smoking affects students with allergies.

2. Smoking affects students suffering from asthma.

B. Smoking should be banned on campus because of the environmental repercussions.

1. The cigarette butts are harming animals on campus.

2. The cigarette ash is killing the grass in the campus green areas.

Assertions (1) and (2) listed under each main point are the writer's sub-claims, statements that reinforce the validity of his or her main points. Think about it this way: every time a writer presents a claim, the reader likely asks, "What support do you have for that claim?"

So, when the writer argues, "Smoking should be banned on campus", the reader asks, "What support do you have for that claim?" And the writer responds with, "Because I've found that there are health and environmental repercussions". Then, when the reader asks, "What support do you have for your claim that there are health and environmental repercussions to smoking on campus?" the writer can say, "Well, smoking negatively affects students suffering from asthma as well as those who have allergies, and the pollution caused by cigarettes is harming animals and killing the grass". Each major claim bolsters the writer's thesis, and each sub-claim bolsters one of the writer's major claims; additionally, the claims get increasingly specific as they move from main points to sub-claims.

Then, the writer includes evidence to support each sub-claim. For instance, if I assert that "smoking affects students with allergies", the reader would ask, "What support do you have for that claim?" And the writer might cite a poll taken on campus proving that students with allergies have suffered more when walking through smoky areas.

To support the sub-claim that "smoking affects students suffering from asthma", the writer might cite a report released by Student Health Services connecting the increase of on-campus asthma attacks to on-campus smoking. Those studies function as evidence to support two of the author's sub-claims. Other evidence would be necessary to prove the validity of the writer's other sub-claims.

Whenever you, as a reader, come across an assertion in a thesis-driven text, ask yourself, "What support is the writer offering to back this claim?" You can then chart the points made by the writer by filling in the answers you locate when reading the text. If a point is missing, take note of that, because the point's absence might very well undermine the author's argument. Similarly, as a writer, whenever you make an assertion, ask yourself, "What support can I offer to back this claim?" Then bolster your argument by adding supporting claims and evidence as needed.

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4.2.5: Provide Additional Support for This Point

Provide Additional Support for This Point

Read this article about supporting claims in your writing. Why is it important to provide support for every point or claim in your writing? Where can you find additional support?

Why Is It Important to Provide Reliable Support for a Point?

When a writer makes a point or claim, his or her position should be supported by evidence from one or more reliable sources. Evidence from reliable sources can make an argument more convincing and build the credibility of the writer. In contrast, unsupported points or points supported by unreliable sources can compromise the integrity of the paper and the writer.

What Kind of Additional Support Can be Added?

- Quantitative data, such as statistics
  - Example: Present the percentage of a specific ethnic population in low-income housing units when making a claim related to racial poverty.
- Empirical evidence from scientific research
  - Example: Provide data from qualitative research when comparing the effectiveness of different methods for teaching young children to read.
- Quotes, paraphrases, and summaries from experts and specialists
  - Example: Use a quote from General Petraeus of the U.S. Army when discussing the withdrawal of troops from Iraq and Afghanistan.
- Anecdotal evidence and relevant narrative
  - Example: Interview a health food store owner to learn more about his or her experience with vegetarian food choices; include relevant narrative about personal experience with choosing a vegetarian lifestyle.

What Actions Can Be Taken to Locate Additional Support?

- Search reputable academic databases: These databases, such as *Academic Search Premier* and *JSTOR*, include searchable collections of scholarly works, academic journals, online encyclopedias, and helpful bibliographies that can usually be accessed through a college library website.
- Search credible news sources: Databases, such as *Access World News*, can be used to locate news articles from around the world. Articles from reputable news sources may also be found through careful Internet searches.
- Search academic peer-reviewed journals: Journal articles that have been peer-reviewed are generally considered reliable because they have been examined by experts in their field for accuracy and quality.
- Search Google scholar: This Internet search engine helps the user locate scholarly literature in the form of articles and books, professional societies' websites, online academic websites, and more.
- Ask for help at the library research desk: Library staff can provide useful services, such as assistance with the use of library research tools, guidance with identifying credible and non-credible sources, and personalized assistance with the selection of reliable sources.

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4.2.6: Evaluating Sources, Evaluating Information

Evaluating Information

Read this article about selecting good sources. Why is it important to evaluate your sources before using them in an essay? What problems may arise if you do not evaluate your sources for currency, relevance, authority, accuracy, and purpose?

When you search for information, you're going to find plenty... but is it accurate and reliable? You will have to determine this for yourself, and the CRAAP Test can help.

The CRAAP Test is a list of questions to help determine if the information you find is good quality. Your information source may not meet every criterion on this list; different criteria will be more or less important depending on your situation or need. So why guess? Is your source giving you truly credible and useful information, or just a lot of...?!

Currency: The timeliness of the information

- When was the information published or posted?
- Has the information been revised or updated?
- Is the information current or too out-of-date for my topic?
- For web links, are all the links functional or are there dead links?

Relevance: The importance of the information for your needs

- Does the information relate to my topic or answer my question?
- Who is the intended audience?
- Is the information at an appropriate level (i.e. not too simple or advanced) for my needs?
- Did I look at a variety of sources before deciding to use this one?
- Would I be comfortable using this source for my college research paper?

Authority: The source of the information

- Who is the author/publisher/source/sponsor?
- Are the author's credentials or organizational affiliations given?
- What are the author's credentials or organizational affiliations?
- What are the author's qualifications to write on the topic?
- Is there contact information, such as a publisher or e-mail address?
- Does the URL reveal anything about the author or source? Examples: .com .edu .gov .org .net

Accuracy: The reliability, truthfulness, and correctness of the information

- Where does the information come from?
- Is the information supported by evidence?
- Has the information been reviewed by anyone else?
- Can I verify any of the information in another source or from personal knowledge?
- Does the language or tone seem biased? Or is it free of emotion?
- Are there spelling, grammar, typographical, or other errors?

Purpose: The reason the information exists

- What is the purpose of the information? to inform? teach? sell? entertain? persuade?
- Do the authors/sponsors make their intentions or purpose clear?
- Is the information fact? opinion? propaganda?
- Does the point of view appear objective and impartial?
- Are there political, ideological, cultural, religious, institutional, or personal biases?

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4.2.7: Engaging Strong Counterarguments

Counterarguments

It may sound strange, but an important element of argument writing is anticipating what people who disagree with you might say. By acknowledging that there is an alternate opinion and then refuting that opinion, you build your *ethos* as a writer. When we show the reader that we understand the full conversation surrounding a topic and can hold our ground in a debate, the reader is more inclined to trust our argument.

Read this article about the reasons we use counterarguments and strategies for integrating them into your own writing.

Introduction

In public, argumentative writing situations, it is important to display an awareness of the fact that there is more than one legitimate way to approach serious social issues. Writers do this by employing "counterargument", sometimes referred to as "anticipating objections". This allows writers to acknowledge the complexity of their topic while still maintaining a strong perspective of their own. This strengthens readers' sense of the writer's ethos (credibility/reliability) and provides key support for the writer's thesis.

Counterargument should occur early in a paper. In shorter college essays, it should ideally come in the first or second body paragraph. Doing its job of "anticipating objections", a counterargument that occurs right after the thesis statement addresses common objections to the writer's perspective before they are fully formed in the reader's mind. For topics that need more explanation and context than others, counterargument can be effective placed after that background information. If counterargument occurs late in the paper – especially in the last paragraph or two, it has the effect of saying, "I just made all these great points, but I could be wrong". Never end an argument with the notion that it might not be valid.

Definitions

There are three main strategies for addressing counterargument:

Acknowledgement: This acknowledges the importance of a particular alternative perspective but argues that it is irrelevant to the writer's thesis/topic. When using this strategy, the writer agrees that the alternative perspective is important, but shows how it is outside of their focus.

Accommodation: This acknowledges the validity of a potential objection to the writer's thesis and how on the surface the objection and and thesis might seem contradictory. When using this strategy, the writer goes on to argue that, however, the ideal expressed in the objection is actually consistent with the writer's own goals if one digs deeper into the issue.

Refutation: This acknowledges that a contrary perspective is reasonable and understandable. It does not attack differing points of view. When using this strategy, the writer responds with strong, research-based evidence showing how that other perspective is incorrect or unfounded.

Note that all three methods involve acknowledging the existence and reasonableness of contrary perspectives on the writer's topics.

Examples

Let's see how these three strategies could work in practice by considering the thesis statement "Utah public schools need to invest more money in arts education".

Acknowledgement: One possible objection to the thesis could be: "Athletics are also an important part of students' educational experience". The writer could acknowledge that athletics are indeed important, but no more important than the arts. A responsible school budget should be able to include both.

Accommodation: Another possible objection to this thesis could be: "Students need a strong foundation in STEM subjects in order to get into college and get a good career". The writer could acknowledge that STEM education is indeed crucial to students' education. They could go on to argue, however, that arts education helps students be stronger in STEM classes through teaching creative problem-solving. So, if someone values STEM education, they need to value the arts as well.

Refutation: The most common objection to education budget proposals is that there is simply not enough money. Given limited resources, schools have to prioritize where money is spent. To argue against this, the writer will have to do some research. Direct refutation must be backed up with verifiable facts. In terms of research required, refutation takes the most work of these three

methods. To argue that schools do have enough resources to support arts education, the writer would need to look at current budget allocations.

They could Google "Salt Lake City school district budget" to find a current budget report. In this report, they would find that the total budget for administrative roles in the 2014–15 school year totaled $10,443,596 (Roberts and Kearsley). Then they could argue that through administrative reforms, a small portion of this money could be freed up to make a big difference in funding arts education.

Conclusion

Too often, writers employ counterargument in a way that makes them sound contradictory or unsure of themselves. Employing one of these three strategies to address possible objections, however, makes counterargument serve as powerful evidence that helps prove the thesis statement. When used correctly, counterargument strengthens both the writer's logos (logic) as well as ethos (credibility/reliability). Effective use of counterargument leaves readers with the impression that the writer is a fair-minded, thoughtful participant in public, argumentative writing – one who readers are likely to trust.

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4.3: Why Cite?

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4.3.1: Citing Sources- An Overview

Citing Sources: An Overview

Citing in academic writing serves a variety of purposes. First, it holds you accountable to your research and clarifies what you wrote and what someone else wrote. This avoids the problem of plagiarism, because you've given credit to those whose research you used. Second, proper citation differentiates where your sources leave off and your own ideas begin. Writing is a lot of work, and you've thought long and hard about your topic – make sure you get credit for your ideas and connections. Third, it builds your *ethos* as a writer.

When a reader knows that the writer conducted research into a subject, the reader can be confident that they're reading credible information. Read this overview about the reasons we cite and the different types of citation styles used in academic writing.

Why Citing is Important

It is important to cite sources you used in your research for several reasons:

- To show your reader you've done proper research by listing sources you used to get your information
- To be a responsible scholar by giving credit to other researchers and acknowledging their ideas
- To avoid plagiarism by quoting words and ideas used by other authors
- To allow your reader to track down the sources you used by citing them accurately in your paper by way of footnotes, a bibliography or reference list

About Citations

Citing a source means that you show, within the body of your text, that you took words, ideas, figures, images, etc. from another place.

Citations are a short way to uniquely identify a published work (e.g. book, article, chapter, web site). They are found in bibliographies and reference lists and are also collected in article and book databases.

Citations consist of standard elements, and contain all the information necessary to identify and track down publications, including:

- author name(s)
- titles of books, articles, and journals
- date of publication
- page numbers
- volume and issue numbers (for articles)

Citations may look different, depending on what is being cited and which style was used to create them. Choose an appropriate style guide for your needs. Here is an example of an article citation using four different citation styles. Notice the common elements as mentioned above:

Author - R. Langer

Article Title - New Methods of Drug Delivery

Source Title - Science

Volume and issue - Vol 249, issue 4976

Publication Date - 1990

Page numbers - 1527-1533

American Chemical Society (ACS) style:

Langer, R. New Methods of Drug Delivery. *Science* 1990, *249*, 1527-1533.

IEEE Style:

Langer",New Methods of Drug Delivery",*Science*, vol. 249, pp. 1527-1533, SEP 28, 1990.

American Psychological Association (APA) style:

Langer, R. (1990). New methods of drug delivery. *Science*, *249* (4976), 1527-1533.

Modern Language Association (MLA) style:

Langer, R. "New Methods of Drug Delivery". Science 249.4976 (1990): 1527-33.

What to Cite

You must cite:

- Facts, figures, ideas, or other information that is not common knowledge
- Ideas, words, theories, or exact language that another person used in other publications
- Publications that must be cited include: books, book chapters, articles, web pages, theses, etc.
- Another person's exact words should be quoted and cited to show proper credit

When in doubt, be safe and cite your source!

Avoiding Plagiarism

Plagiarism occurs when you borrow another's words (or ideas) and do not acknowledge that you have done so. In this culture, we consider our words and ideas intellectual property; like a car or any other possession, we believe our words belong to us and cannot be used without our permission.

Plagiarism is a very serious offense. If it is found that you have plagiarized – deliberately or inadvertently – you may face serious consequences. In some instances, plagiarism has meant that students have had to leave the institutions where they were studying.

The best way to avoid plagiarism is to cite your sources – both within the body of your paper and in a bibliography of sources you used at the end of your paper.

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4.3.2: Avoiding Plagiarism

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is when a writer uses the words and ideas of someone else and passes them off as his or her own. Put simply, plagiarism is stealing the work of others. Properly integrating source material and citing allows writers to use ideas while still giving appropriate credit to the original author. When does paraphrasing turn into plagiarism? How can you avoid plagiarism when incorporating the works of others into your writing?

What This Handout is About

This handout explains what plagiarism is and outlines steps students can follow to avoid plagiarizing.

What is Plagiarism?

The University of North Carolina defines plagiarism as "the deliberate or reckless representation of another's words, thoughts, or ideas as one's own without attribution in connection with submission of academic work, whether graded or otherwise". Because it is considered a form of cheating, the Office of the Dean of Students can punish students who plagiarize with course failure and suspension.

Why are My Instructors so Concerned about Plagiarism?

In order to understand plagiarism, it helps to understand the process of sharing and creating ideas in the university. All knowledge is built from previous knowledge. As we read, study, perform experiments, and gather perspectives, we are drawing on other people's ideas. Building on their ideas and experiences, we create our own. When you put your ideas on paper, your instructors want to distinguish between the building block ideas borrowed from other people and your own newly reasoned perspectives or conclusions.

You make these distinctions in a written paper by citing the sources for your building block ideas. Providing appropriate citations will also help readers who are interested in your topic find additional, related material to read – in this way, they will be able to build on the work you have done to find sources.

Think of it this way: in the vast majority of assignments you'll get in college, your instructors will ask you to *read* something (think of this material as the building blocks) and then write a paper in which you *analyze* one or more aspects of what you have read (think of this as the new structure you build). Essentially, your instructors are asking you to do three things:

- Show that you have a clear understanding of the material you've read.
- Refer to your sources to support the ideas you have developed.
- Distinguish *your* analysis of what you've read from the authors' analyses.

When you cite a source, you are using an expert's ideas as proof or evidence of a new idea that you are trying to communicate to the reader.

What about Common Knowledge?

In every professional field, experts consider some ideas "common knowledge", but remember that you're not a professional (yet). In fact, you're just learning about those concepts in the course you're taking, so the material you are reading may not yet be "common knowledge" to you. In order to decide if the material you want to use in your paper constitutes "common knowledge", you may find it helpful to ask yourself the following questions:

- Did I know this information before I took this course?
- Did this information/idea come from my own brain?

If you answer "no" to either or both of these questions, then the information is not "common knowledge" to you. In these cases, you need to cite your source(s) and indicate where you first learned this bit of what may be "common knowledge" in the field.

What about Paraphrasing?

Paraphrasing means taking another person's ideas and putting those ideas in your own words. Paraphrasing does NOT mean changing a word or two in someone else's sentence, changing the sentence structure while maintaining the original words, or changing a few words to synonyms. If you are tempted to rearrange a sentence in any of these ways, you are writing too close to the original. That's plagiarizing, not paraphrasing.

Paraphrasing is a fine way to use another person's ideas to support your argument as long as you attribute the material to the author and cite the source in the text at the end of the sentence. In order to make sure you are paraphrasing in the first place, take notes from your reading *with the book closed*. Doing so will make it easier to put the ideas in your own words. When you are unsure if you are writing too close to the original, check with your instructor BEFORE you turn in the paper for a grade. So, just to be clear – do you need to cite when you paraphrase? Yes, you do!

How Can I Avoid Plagiarizing?

Now that you understand what plagiarism is, you're ready to employ the following three simple steps to avoid plagiarizing in your written work.

Step 1: Accentuate the Positive. Change Your Attitude about Using Citations

Do you feel that you use too many citations? Too few? Many students worry that if they use too many citations their instructors will think that they're relying too heavily on the source material and therefore not thinking for themselves. In fact, however, using citations allows you to demonstrate clearly how well you understand the course material while *also* making clear distinctions between what the authors have to say and your analysis of their ideas.

Thus, rather than making your paper look less intellectually sophisticated, using citations allows you to show off your understanding of the material and the assignment. And instead of showing what you *do not* know, citing your sources provides evidence of what you *do* know and of the *authority* behind your knowledge. Just make sure that your paper has a point, main idea, or thesis that is your own and that you organize the source material around that point.

Are you worried that you have too few citations? Double-check your assignment to see if you have been given any indication of the number or kind of source materials expected. Then share your writing with another reader. Do you have enough evidence or proof to support the ideas you put forward? Why should the reader believe the points you have made? Would adding another, expert voice strengthen your argument? Who else agrees or disagrees with the ideas you have written? Have you paraphrased ideas that you have read or heard? If so, you need to cite them. Have you referred to or relied on course material to develop your ideas? If so, you need to cite it as well.

Step 2: How Can I Keep Track of All This Information? Improve Your Note-taking Skills

Once you have reconsidered your position on using citations, you need to rethink your note-taking practices. Taking careful notes is simply the best way to avoid plagiarism. And improving your note-taking skills will also allow you to refine your critical thinking skills. Here's how the process works:

(1) Start by carefully noting all the bibliographic information you will need for your works cited page. (See #3 for more details on how to determine exactly what information you will need for different kinds of sources.) If you're photocopying an article or section out of a book or journal, why not photocopy the front pages of the source as well? That way you will have the bibliographic information if you need it later. If you forget to gather the information for a book, you can usually get it from the library's online card catalogue. Simply pull up the entry for the book you used to see the bibliographic information on that source. If you are working on an article from a journal, you can return to the database from which you got the original citation to find the bibliographic information.

(2) Next, try thinking about your notes as a kind of transitional space between what you have read and what you are preparing to write. Imagine yourself having a conversation with the author of the story/novel/play/poem/article/book you are reading, in which you repeatedly ask yourself the following questions:

- *What* is the author trying to explain?
- *Why* do they think these points are important?
- *How* do they decided to construct the argument?
- *How* does the structure of the argument affect the reader's response to the author's ideas?
- How *effective* is the author's argument?

Adopting this "conversational" approach to note-taking will improve your analysis of the material by leading you to notice not just what the author says, but also *how* and *why* the author communicates his or her ideas. This strategy will also help you avoid the very common temptation of thinking that the author's way of explaining something is much better than anything you could write. If you are tempted to borrow the author's language, write your notes *with the book closed* to ensure that you are putting the ideas into

your own words. If you have already taken a step away from the author's words in your notes, you will find it easier to use your own words in the paper you write.

(3) Finally, be careful to use quotation marks to distinguish the exact words used by the author from your own words so that when you return to your notes later in the writing process, you will not have to guess which ideas are yours and which ones came directly from the text. You will have to experiment with different note-taking techniques until you find the one that works best for you, but here is one example of how your notes might look:

James Leoni, trans. Ten Books on Architecture by Leone Battista Alberti. London: Alec Tirani, Ltd., 1955.

BOOK I, CHAPTER X: "Of the Columns and Walls, and Some Observations Relating to the Columns"

- (p. 14) Alberti begins by talking about walls, and then says a row of columns is simply "a Wall open and discontinued in several Places;" he says the column supports the roof, and that columns are the most beautiful of the architectural elements; here, he will address what columns have in common, and later he will discuss their differences.
- (p. 14) all columns rest on a plinth (or dye), which supports a base, which supports the column, which is topped by a capital; columns are usually widest at the base, and taper toward the top; Alberti says the column was invented simply to hold up the roof, but men sought to make their buildings "immortal and eternal", so they embellished columns with architraves, entablatures, etc.

Notice that you can adapt this note-taking strategy to any format – whether you prefer to take notes by hand, on note cards, on your computer, or some other way. For more information on developing an effective note-taking technique, you can consult any grammar handbook. Here are a few particularly helpful ones:

- Leonard J. Rosen and Laurence Behren. The Allyn & Bacon Handbook. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2000. OR Allyn & Bacon online at: www.abacon.com
- Joseph Gibaldi. MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2003.
- Kate L. Turabian. A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Step 3: So Many Details, So Little Time! Locate the Appropriate Style Manual

Do not worry – no one can remember all the different citation conventions used in all the different university disciplines! Citing your sources appropriately is a matter of:

1. Determining which style your instructor wants you to use,
2. Finding the appropriate style manual, and
3. Copying the "formula" it gives for each type of source you use.

First, carefully read the assignment to determine what citation style your instructor wants you to use (APA, MLA, Chicago, and CSE are the most common). If s/he does not specify a citation style in the assignment, check your syllabus, coursepack, and/or Blackboard site. If you cannot find the citation style in any of those places, ask your instructor what style s/he prefers.

Second, academic citation styles follow specific formats, so making an educated guess about how to structure your citations and works cited page is usually not a good idea. Instead, find the specified style manual in the reference section of the library, on the reference shelf in the Writing Center, or online.

Finally, style manuals provide easy-to-follow formulas for your citations. For example, the MLA handbook provides the following format for citing a book by a single author:

Author's name. *Title of the book*. Publication information.

You can use this formula for your own citation by simply plugging in the information called for, following the format of the formula itself. Here is an example of how that might look:

Berlage, Gai Ingham. *Women in Baseball: The Forgotten History.* Westport: Greenwood, 1994.

How Can I Tell Whether I have Plagiarized?

If you have followed the above guidelines but still are not sure whether you have plagiarized, you can double-check your work using the checklist below.

You need to cite your source, even if:

1. You put all direct quotes in quotation marks.
2. You changed the words used by the author into synonyms.
3. You completely paraphrased the ideas to which you referred.
4. Your sentence is mostly made up of your own thoughts, but contains a reference to the author's ideas.
5. You mention the author's name in the sentence.

The Moral of this Handout: When in Doubt, Give a Citation

Works Consulted and Cited

We consulted these works while writing the original version of this handout. This is not a comprehensive list of resources on the handout's topic, and we encourage you to do your own research to find the latest publications on this topic. Please do not use this list as a model for the format of your own reference list, as it may not match the citation style you are using.

Alberti, Leone Battista. *Ten Books on Architecture*. James Leoni, trans. London: Alec Tirani, Ltd., 1955.

Leonard J. Rosen and Laurence Behren. The Allyn & Bacon Handbook. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2000. OR Allyn & Bacon online at: www.abacon.com

Joseph Gibaldi. MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2003.

Kate L. Turabian. A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

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4.3.3: Avoiding Plagiarism, Use Solely Your Own Words to Paraphrase

Use Solely Your Own Words to Paraphrase

This article explains how writers can paraphrase properly without accidentally committing plagiarism. This skill takes some practice, but can be accomplished by using your own words even when describing someone else's ideas. As you read, think about the best ways to integrate source material into your own writing. How will you use your sources appropriately in your essay?

What Does It Mean to Paraphrase?

When paraphrasing, a writer uses his or her own words to restate someone else's ideas. Paraphrasing does not mean simply changing a few of the original words, rearranging the structure of the sentence, or replacing some words with synonyms. A paraphrase should explain a borrowed idea in the writer's own voice but must also remain true to the message of the original text.

Why is it Important to Paraphrase Using Only Your Own Words?

- To avoid plagiarism: If you are presenting an idea other than your own and you haven't cited the source, this act could be considered plagiarism. Remember, however, that even when you paraphrase using your own words, you must still cite the original source since the idea has been borrowed.
- To simplify or clarify complex ideas found in the original passage: Sometimes an author has explained an idea or concept in a way that is difficult to follow, or an idea may be particularly perplexing. By using your own words, you not only illustrate to readers that you understand this concept, but also help readers understand the idea more clearly. This clarification is especially important if the idea you're paraphrasing is vital to developing and supporting your own argument.
- To report the essential information of the idea: A lengthy direct quote may provide details that are not clearly relevant to your purpose or argument. By using your own words to paraphrase the idea, you can eliminate information that might distract your reader from the main message.

Let's Look at an Example of a Paraphrase

Direct quote: "[The new laws] would also help ensure that companies like BP that are responsible for oil spills are the ones that pay for the harm caused by these oil spills, not the taxpayers. This is in addition to the low-interest loans that we've made available to small businesses that are suffering financial losses from the spill" (Obama). [1]

Paraphrase: According to the President, the proposed legislation would hold oil companies accountable for damages caused by oil spills and provide affordable loans to businesses whose profits have been affected by such incidents (Obama).

[1] Obama, Barack. "Remarks on the Oil Spill in the Gulf of Mexico". The White House. Washington, D.C. 14 May 2010. Address. Web. 30 Apr. 2012.

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4.3.4: Quoting, Follow MLA Guidelines for Block Quotations

Follow MLA Guidelines for Block Quotations

While it's best to use your own words whenever possible, there are times when it becomes necessary to include large amounts of cited material. For example, when an author defines a specific term, or a well-known expert made an important statement. To cite large amounts of material, use a block quotation to set it apart from your own words. Read the following article for instructions on how to format a block quotation in MLA format.

When to Use a Block Quotation

When a writer chooses to include a long quotation – one that takes up four or more lines of text – it must be set off as a free-standing block. As with any quotation a writer employs as evidence, the original text should contain relevant and compelling ideas that are expressed in vivid and concise language.

Block quotations should be used sparingly in longer essays and articles (multiple pages) and rarely in shorter works (1,500 words or less). Lengthy, wordy quotations should never be used simply to fill pages when the writer has little to say about the topic or issue.

How to Format a Block Quotation

- A block quotation is introduced with an informative, full-sentence signal phrase that ends with a colon.
- The entire free-standing block of the quoted material is indented 1" from the left margin (10 spaces) and is double-spaced throughout.
- The first line of the quotation is not indented more than the following lines, unless two or more paragraphs are quoted.
- Quotation marks are not added at the beginning or end of the quotation.
- The end punctuation appears at the end of the last sentence in the quotation, not after the page number; no additional punctuation appears after the parenthesis.
    - Example: These results deserve further investigation. (23)
- Add a concluding sentence or sentences after the block quotation to complete the paragraph.

Let's Look at an Example

In their investigation of the way the human mind deals with multitasking, Salvucci and Taatgen determined that driving is an act that requires drivers to engage in a variety of simultaneous subtasks; when drivers choose to add interaction with an electronic device to an already complex activity, the new demands on their minds can distract them from their primary task:

The heavy cognitive workload of driving suggests that any secondary task has the potential to affect driver behavior. Any concurrent task would necessarily involve procedural steps and thus, whether large or small, create additional cognitive workload. At the same time, not all secondary tasks are created equal, and we would expect some tasks to interfere with driving more than others. Not surprisingly, tasks involving significant visual demand have the greatest potential for negative effects on driver performance. (108) [1]

Thus, the researchers determined that the use of electronic devices – such as cell phones – while driving can possibly place enough additional demands on the drivers' mental capacity to compromise their ability to operate a vehicle safely.

[1] Salvucci, Dario D., and Niels A. Taatgen. *Multitasking Mind.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011. *eBook Collection (EBSCOhost)*. Web. 20 Feb. 2012.

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4.3.5: Quoting, Block Quotations (APA)

Block Quotations (APA)

Read this article to learn about formatting longer quotations as block quotes in APA format.

When Should a Block Quotation be Used?

A block quotation is an extract consisting of more than 40 words from another author's work. Block quotations should be used in moderation, typically when using another writer's words is a more effective way of illustrating an idea. Avoid using block quotations excessively as this practice gives the reader the impression that you are inexperienced in the subject or are simply filling pages to meet a word count requirement.

How Should a Block Quotation be Formatted?

While a short quotation is enclosed in quotation marks and integrated into the surrounding paragraph, a block quotation is an independent paragraph that is indented five spaces from the left margin. This type of quotation should be double-spaced like the rest of the paper, but it should not be enclosed in quotation marks. In a block quotation, the parenthetical in-text citation should follow directly after the end punctuation of the final sentence. Note the placement order of the quotation marks, parentheses, and period.

Let's Look at Two Examples:

- One researcher outlines the viewpoints of both parties:

Freedom of research is undoubtedly a cherished ideal in our society. In that respect, research has an interest in being free, independent, and unrestricted. Such interests weigh against regulations. On the other hand, research should also be valid, verifiable, and unbiased, to attain the overarching goal of gaining obtaining [sic] generalisable knowledge. (Simonsen, 2012, p. 46) [1]

Note that although the block quotation is formatted as a separate block of text, it is preceded by an introductory phrase or sentence(s) followed by a colon. If the author's name and the year of publication appear in the introductory sentence, the parenthetical in-text citation at the end of the paragraph should simply include the page number(s) of the original text, as shown in this example:

- Simonsen (2012) outlines the two opposing viewpoints:

Freedom of research is undoubtedly a cherished ideal in our society. In that respect research has an interest in being free, independent and unrestricted. Such interests weigh against regulations. On the other hand, research should also be valid, verifiable, and unbiased, to attain the overarching goal of gaining obtaining [sic] generalisable knowledge. (p. 46)

[1] Simonsen, S. (2012). *Acceptable risk in biomedical research*. New York, NY: Springer

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4.3.6: Quoting, Short Quotations (APA)

Short Quotations (APA)

Read this article to learn how to format shorter quotations.

When to Use a Short Quotation

Whether they are used to provide evidence, support for an argument, or to illustrate an idea using another writer's words, short quotations are valuable tools that can enhance any essay. Because short quotations contain fewer than 40 words, they should be integrated into the surrounding paragraph using introductory phrases that provide some context for the quoted material.

How to Format a Short Quotation

The formatting of a short quotation contrasts with that of a block quotation in several ways. A short quotation should be surrounded by quotation marks and followed by a parenthetical in-text citation. The final punctuation of the sentence is then typed after the in-text citation, outside of the parentheses. Note the placement order of the quotation marks, parentheses, and period following a short quotation.

Let's Look at an Example:

However, as one researcher points out, "science can be seen as an ideal and altruistic activity conducted for the best of mankind, where knowledge is in itself a value" (Simonsen, 2012, p. 46). [1]

An alternate method of formatting a short quotation is to include the author(s) and year of publication in the introductory clause, while the original page number remains in parentheses at the end of the sentence. Consider the placement of the author's name and year of publication as the quotation is introduced.

Let's Look at Two More Examples:

As Simonsen (2012) goes on to explain, "science can be seen as an ideal and altruistic activity conducted for the best of mankind, where knowledge is in itself a value" (p. 46). [1]

In a work published in 2012, Simonsen suggested that "science can be seen as an ideal and altruistic activity conducted for the best of mankind, where knowledge is in itself a value" (p. 46). [1]

[1] Simonsen, S. (2012). *Acceptable risk in biomedical research*. New York, NY: Springer.

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4.3.7: Paraphrasing and Summarizing, When to Quote and When to Paraphrase

When to Quote and When to Paraphrase

Read this article to learn when to paraphrase and when to quote. What is the difference between quoting and paraphrasing? When should you choose one over the other?

Academic writing requires authors to connect information from outside sources to their own ideas in order to establish credibility and produce an effective argument.

Sometimes, the rules surrounding source integration and plagiarism may seem confusing, so many new writers err on the side of caution by using the simplest form of integration: direct quotation. However, using direct quotes is not always the best way to use a source. Paraphrasing or summarizing a text is sometimes a more effective means of supporting a writer's argument than directly quoting. Taking into consideration the purpose of their own writing and the purpose of utilizing the outside source, authors should seek to vary the ways in which they work sources into their own writing.

Paraphrasing and quoting are two of the three ways an author can integrate sources. The two methods are closely related, and therefore, can sometimes be confused with one another. Quoting borrows the exact wording used in a source and is indicated by placing quotes around the borrowed material. Paraphrasing, on the other hand, borrows an idea found in a shorter passage but communicates this idea using different words and word order. While it is acceptable to loosely follow a similar structure, paraphrasing requires more than simply changing a few of the original words to synonyms. Both paraphrasing and directly quoting have their merit, but they should be used at different times for different purposes. An author chooses to use one of these strategies depending on why the source is being used and what information the source provides.

When to Paraphrase

Paraphrasing provides an author the opportunity to tailor the passage for the purpose of his or her own essay, which cannot always be done when using a direct quote. Paraphrasing should be used to

- Further explain or simplify a passage that may be difficult to understand. It could be that the topic, such as the process of extracting stem cells, is particularly difficult to follow, or that the author has used language that further complicates the topic. In such situations, paraphrasing allows an author to clarify or simplify a passage so the audience can better understand the idea.
- Establish the credibility of the author. In connection to the above point, paraphrasing a complicated passage can help the author establish trust with his or her audience. If an author directly quotes a difficult passage without analysis or further explanation, it may appear that he or she does not understand the idea. Paraphrasing not only clarifies the idea in the passage but also illustrates that the writer, since he or she can articulate this difficult message to the reader, is knowledgeable about the topic and should be trusted.
- Maintain the flow of the writing. Each author has a unique voice, and using direct quotes can interrupt this voice. Too many quotes can make an essay sound choppy and difficult to follow. Paraphrasing can help communicate an important idea in a passage or source without interrupting the flow of the essay.
- Eliminate less relevant information. Since paraphrasing is written using the author's own words, he or she can be more selective in what information from a passage should be included or omitted. While an author should not manipulate a passage unnecessarily, paraphrasing allows an author to leave out unrelated details that would have been part of a direct quote.
- Communicate relevant statistics and numerical data. A lot of times, sources offer statistical information about a topic that an author may find necessary to developing his or her own argument. For example, statistics about the percentage of mothers who work more than one job may be useful to explaining how the economy has affected children rearing practices. Directly quoting statistics such as this should be avoided.

When to Quote

Direct quotes should be used sparingly, but when they are used, they can be a powerful rhetorical tool. As a rule, avoid using long quotes when possible, especially those longer than three lines. When quotes are employed, they should be used to

- Provide indisputable evidence of an incredible claim. Directly quoting a source can show the audience exactly what the source says so there is not suspicion of misinterpretation on the author's part.
- Communicate an idea that is stated in a particularly striking or unique way. A passage should be quoted if the source explains an idea in the best way possible or in a way that cannot be reworded. Additionally, quoting should be used when the original passage is particularly moving or striking.

- Serve as a passage for analysis. If an author is going to analyze the quote or passage, the exact words should be included in the essay either before or following the author's analysis.
- Provide direct evidence for or proof of an author's own claim. An author can use a direct quote as evidence for a claim he or she makes. The direct quote should follow the author's claim and a colon, which indicates that the following passage is evidence of the statement that precedes it.
- Support or clarify information you've already reported from a source. Similar to the above principle, an author can use a direct quote as further evidence or to emphasize a claim found in the source. This strategy should be used when an idea from a source is particularly important to an author's own work.
- Provide a definition of a new or unfamiliar term or phrase. When using a term that is used or coined by the source's author or that is unfamiliar to most people, use direct quotes to show the exact meaning of the phrase or word according to the original source.

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4.3.8: Paraphrasing and Summarizing, Mix Quotes with Paraphrasing

Mix Quotes with Paraphrasing

There are times when you will want to paraphrase a source, but you still need to quote some parts of it. This is done by mixing quotes with paraphrasing. Read this article for instructions on how to do this and how to correctly format the citation that follows.

As with most other skills, practice is the best way to become effective at paraphrasing. Also, you may need to write several drafts before developing one that accurately reports the author's intentions in your own words.

Note also that if you cite three or more words from the original or even one word that was coined by the author, you should acknowledge your indebtedness by placing quotation marks around the borrowed terms.

To give you a sample of how writers mix direct quotes with paraphrase, take a look at a short excerpt from Stephen North's influential book, *The Making of Knowledge in Composition*. As you read the passage, note how North intermixes his own opinions about ethnography along with an occasional direct quote from the work of Clifford Geertz. Note also that North is careful to show readers how Geertz quoted from the work of Paul Ricoeur. Finally, North cues readers that he has not emphasized Geertz's words by italicizing them; he does so by writing "his emphasis" in parentheses. When he felt the need to clarify Ricouer's terms, he placed his clarification in brackets.

Ethnographic inquiry produces stories, fictions. Ethnographic investigators go into a community, observe (by whatever variety of means) what happens there, and then produce an account – which they will try to verify or ground in a variety of ways – of what happened. The phenomena observed are gone, will not occur again, and therefore cannot be investigated again. What remains, then, is whatever the investigators have managed to turn into words.

Clifford Geertz perhaps put it best in Chapter 1 of his *The Interpretation of Cultures*: "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture": "The ethnographer 'inscribes' social discourse, he writes it down. In so doing, he turns it from a passing event, which exists only in its own moment of occurrence into an account, which exists in its inscription and can be reconsulted" (p. 19, his emphasis).

This is not to say, as Geertz is careful to explain that the ethnographer transcribes, literally, all of what a community's members say. Rather, the inscribing is an effort to capture what he calls, borrowing from Paul Ricoeur, the "said": "'the noema ["thought", "content", "gist"] of the speaking. It is the meaning of the speech event, not the event.'" (p. 19)

4.3.8: Paraphrasing and Summarizing, Mix Quotes with Paraphrasing is shared under a CC BY-NC-ND license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by LibreTexts.

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4.4: How to Cite

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4.4.1: Selecting a Citation Style, Citation and Documentation

Citation and Documentation

Citation styles serve different purposes and have different emphasis. APA, for example, requires writers to include dates, so the reader is aware of the currency of information. MLA emphasizes page numbers for easy look-up. Chicago style uses footnotes so that in-text citations don't distract the reader. Read this overview on locating reference information to familiarize yourself with the different types of citation styles used in academic writing.

Research papers at the college level will require some kind of documentation style. Documentation styles provide students, teachers, and researchers standards and specifications to follow for paper set up, in-text documentation, and references. They also will have recommendations for writing style, word choice, and in some cases, organization.

The most common documentation styles are APA (from the American Psychological Association) and MLA (from the Modern Language Association), and some fields require Chicago Style (from the University of Chicago Press).

While it may feel tedious learning the different aspects of a documentation style, it's important to remember following style guidelines helps add credibility to your writing by providing you with a structured method for sharing your research with your audience.

Having Trouble Locating Reference Information?

As you'll learn in this section of Citation & Documentation, part of writing within a particular documentation style, such as APA or MLA, is building a References or a Works Cited list with full publication information. But what happens when you're looking at your sources and just are not sure where to find all the necessary information like publication dates, volume numbers for journal articles, edition numbers, and the like?

The following images link to PDFs which include helpful information about locating publication information you'll need to build your References or Works Cited lists.

Print Book (Title, Author, and Publisher)

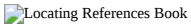


Figure 4.4.1.1

Print Book (Date of Publication)

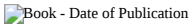


Figure 4.4.1.2

Journal Article from a Database

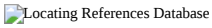


Figure 4.4.1.3

Online Journal Article

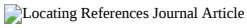


Figure 4.4.1.4

Website



Figure 4.4.1.5

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4.4.2: MLA Citation, Formatting In-text Citations (MLA)

Formatting In-text Citations (MLA)

Read this article to learn the correct way to format in-text citations using MLA style. MLA (Modern Language Association) style is one way to format an essay and document sources. MLA is commonly used in the humanities. Each citation style values something different and MLA values location (for example, what book was referenced and where you may find a quote in that book). What kind of essay would you write that would use MLA style?

How might you format your in-text citations so that they're more compliant with MLA guidelines?

You already know why MLA formatting guidelines are an important part of an academic paper, but let's face it – who can remember all those rules about when and where certain citation information is requisite and when and where particular punctuation is appropriate? Thankfully, memorizing all of MLA's formatting guidelines is not necessary! MLA style guides can be found easily online or in texts like *The MLA Handbook*, and writers can refer to these resources when they are unclear about a particular MLA style guideline.

Nonetheless, as you create multiple drafts of your composition papers, there are some MLA conventions that you will need to call on time and time again. In particular, as you integrate source material masterfully into your work, you will be required to call on proper in-text citation guidelines repeatedly. It is therefore important that you take the time to memorize the MLA guidelines for in-text citations.

Because the use of in-text citations will be so integral to your writing processes, being able to instantly craft correct citations and identify incorrect citations will save you time during writing and will help you avoid having unnecessary points taken off for citation errors.

Here is the standard correct in-text citation style according to MLA guidelines:

"Quotation" (Author's Last Name Page Number).

Take a moment to carefully consider the placement of the parts and punctuation of this in-text citation. Note that there is no punctuation indicating the end of a sentence inside of the quotation marks – closing punctuation should instead follow the parentheses. There is also no punctuation between the author's last name and the page number inside of the parentheses. The misplacement of these simple punctuation marks is one of the most common errors students make when crafting in-text citations.

So, let's say we have the following quote, which comes from page 100 of Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South*: "Margaret had never spoken of Helstone since she left it." [1]

The following examples show incorrect MLA formatting:

"Margaret had never spoken of Helstone since she left it." (Gaskell 100)	*Incorrect because the period falls within the quotation marks*
"Margaret had never spoken of Helstone since she left it" (Gaskell, 100).	*Incorrect because of the comma separating the author's last name and the page number*
"Margaret had never spoken of Helstone since she left it" (Elizabeth Gaskell 100).	*Incorrect because the author's full name is used instead of just her last name*
"Margaret had never spoken of Helstone since she left it" (*North and South* 100).	*Incorrect because the title of the work appears, rather than the author's last name; the title should only be used if no author name is provided*

The following example shows correct MLA formatting:

"Margaret had never spoken of Helstone since she left it" (Gaskell 100).

However, there are exceptions to the above citation guideline. Consider the following format of an in-text citation, which is also formed correctly.

Elizabeth Gaskell's narrator makes it clear that "Margaret had never spoken of Helstone since she left it" (100).

Do you notice the difference between this citation format and the format of the first example? Unlike the first example, this citation does not list the author's last name inside the parentheses. This is because the last name is included in quotation's introduction, which makes the identity of the author clear to the reader. Including the author's last name again inside of the parenthesis would be thus redundant and is not required for MLA citation.

The same rule about inclusion of the author's last name applies for paraphrased information, as well, as shown in the following example:

Elizabeth Gaskell's narrator makes it clear that her protagonist does not speak of her home once she is in Milton (100).

In this paraphrase, the author's last name precedes the paraphrased material, but as in the case of quotation integration, if the author's last name is not described in the paraphrase then it is required inside of the parentheses before the page number.

Being more compliant with MLA in-text citation guidelines will become easier if you review these examples and the citation rules on which they rely.

[1] Gaskell, Elizabeth. *North and South*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1973. Print.

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4.4.3: MLA Citation, Formatting the Works Cited Page (MLA)

Formatting the Works Cited Page (MLA)

Read this article on the correct way to format your Works Cited pages using MLA citation.

Whenever you incorporate outside sources into your own writing, you must provide both in-text citations (within the body of the paper) and full citations (in the works cited page). The in-text citations point your reader toward the full citations in the works cited page.

That's why the first bit of information in your in-text citation (generally, the author's name; if no name is provided, the title of the article/book/webpage) should directly match up with the beginning of your works cited entry for that source.

For example, let's say I have a quote from Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* in my research paper. Within the body of the paper, following the quote, I include the following in-text citation: (Anderson 56). This information points to the book's entry in my works cited page:

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 2006. Print.

When your reader sees the in-text citation in your essay, they may decide that the source might be valuable for their own research. When they look at the works cited page, they can easily locate the source (because the works cited page is alphabetized and because they have the in-text citation as their reference) and then can use the full citation to retrieve a copy of the source for their own research. But aside from providing the reader with resources for their own research, the works cited page serves another function: it establishes the writer's credibility.

If a writer fails to include in-text citations and/or a works cited page, that writer has plagiarized because he or she has neglected to provide the publication information of the source. In addition, when a reader locates undocumented information in an essay, she will likely think that the information was made up by the writer or that the information was stolen from a source, or plagiarized.

And when a reader peruses a writer's works cited page, they can see the types of sources used by the writer, assessing those sources in terms of their credibility. For instance, if a reader reads my works cited page and sees I cite sources from university presses such as Oxford UP and Cambridge UP, they will know that I have incorporated credible sources into my research paper. Thus, including both in-text citations and a works cited page in a research paper provides the writer with *ethos*, or credibility.

Now let's take a look at how to properly format a works cited page according to MLA guidelines:

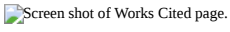


Figure 4.4.3.1

Placement

According to MLA style guidelines, the works cited page should appear after the body of your paper and any accompanying endnotes. It should begin on a new page, and the pagination should continue from the body of the paper. In the above example, the works cited page begins on page 38, which means that the essay concluded on page 37.

General Format

The works cited page should be double-spaced throughout. The first line of each entry should be flush with the left margin; if the entry extends more than one line, ensuing lines should be indented 1/2 inch from the left margin. The first page of the works cited list should have the title "Works Cited", not "Bibliography". The works cited title should appear in the same manner as the paper's title: capitalized and centered – not bolded, within quotation marks, italicized, underlined, or in a larger font.

Entries

The entries should be alphabetized based on the author's last name. According to MLA guidelines, author names come first in an entry, then titles, then the publication information (city of publication, publisher, and date of publication), and then the type of media – the details for different types of sources vary, but this is the general structure followed. Note that if the city is not "well-known" and there is more than one city with that name, unlike New York and London, then the state or territory should be included after the city, e.g., "Roswell, GA: 2006".

If no name is provided for a given source, the title of the work/webpage will take the place of the author's last name and should still be placed in its proper alphabetical location. Also, note that "university" and "press" are always abbreviated "U" and "P" in works cited entries.

Here are some guidelines for commonly used sources:

Single-Authored Book

Last Name, First Name. *Title of Book*. Place of Publication: Publisher, Date of Publication. Type of media.

Example:

Bratlinger, Patrick. *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830–1914*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1988. Print.

Book with Multiple Authors

Last Name, First Name (of first author listed), and First Name Last Name (of second author, etc.). *Title of Book*. Place of Publication: Publisher, Date of Publication. Type of media.

Example:

Sabherhagen, Fred, and James V. Hart. Bram Stoker's Dracula: *A Francis Ford Coppola Film*. New York: Signet, 1992. Print.

Article or Chapter in an Edited Collection (or Textbook)

Last Name, First Name. "Article Title." *Title of Book*. Ed. First Name Last Name (of Editor). Place of Publication: Publisher, Date of Publication. Page Range of Article. Type of Media.

Example:

Vieregge, Quentin. "Writing as Process." *Negotiating Writing Spaces*. Ed. Jennifer Yirinec and Lauren Cutlip. Plymouth, MI: Hayden-McNeil, 2011. 57–59. Print.

Article in a Print Journal

Last Name, First Name. "Article Title." *Title of Journal*. Volume #. Issue # (Date of publication): Page Range of Article. Print.

Example:

Rogers, Pat. "Crusoe's Home." *Essays in Criticism* 24.4 (Oct. 1974): 375–90. Print.

Journal Article Accessed Using an Electronic Database

Last Name, First Name. "Article Title." *Journal Name* Volume #. Issue # (Date of publication): Page Range of Article. *Database*. Web. Date of Access.

Example:

Lamont, Rose C. "Coma versus Comma: John Donne's Holy Sonnets in Edson's *WIT*." *The Massachusetts Review* 40.4 (Winter 1999–2000): 569–75. *JSTOR*. Web. 30 April 2012.

Article Accessed from an Online Journal

Last Name, First Name. "Article Title." *Journal Name* Volume #. Issue # (Date of publication): n.pag. Web. Date of Access.

Example:

Haynsworth, Leslie. "All the Detective's Men: Binary Coding of Masculine Identity in the Sherlock Holmes Stories." *Victorians Institute Journal* 38 (2010): n.pag. Web. 16 May 2012.

Article from a Webpage

Last Name, First Name (if given). "Title of Webpage." *Website Title*. Publisher of website (often found at the bottom of the page), date of last update. Web. Date of Access. See (URL is only necessary if you think your reader won't easily be able to locate the webpage).

Example:

"Opening Night: *Wit* Starring Cynthia Nixon." *Broadway.com*. Broadway.com, Inc., 2012. Web. 12 Feb. 2012.

Entire Website

Website Title. Publisher of website, date of last update. Date of Access. See (URL is only necessary if you think your reader won't easily be able to locate the webpage).

Example:

Broadway.com. Broadway.com, Inc., 2012. Web. 12 Feb. 2012.
For information about how to format the works cited entries for different sources, consult *The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (7th edition).*

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4.4.4: MLA Citation, Format Using MLA

Format Using MLA

In this practice exercise, proofread and finalize the essay you prepared in Unit 1 following the MLA style guidelines. The topic for that essay is:

"What does it take to succeed in an Internet-based college course?"

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4.4.5: APA Citation, APA Style

APA Style

APA style is commonly used in education, social science, and psychology. Each citation style values something different, and APA values the currency of information (when it was written or produced). When do you think APA style would be useful for you?

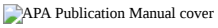


Figure 4.4.5.1

APA Style, 6th Edition

APA stands for the American Psychological Association. Most papers that use APA formatting and citation style are those written in the Social Sciences: Psychology, History, Political Science, Economics, Geography, and Sociology.

In addition to the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association,* 6th edition, the APA maintains its own website with multiple examples of how to format your paper and cite your sources. If you're unable to find the answer to your question here, check the APA Manual 6th edition or the APA website. Look in particular at APA's list of Frequently Asked Questions.

Papers constructed according to APA guidelines generally include the following elements:

- Title Page
- Abstract
- Body
- Subsections within the body, with headings
- Tables and Figures
- References

In most cases, each of these elements will begin on a separate page.

For specific types of reports, your subsections may need to be named with headings that reflect the type of report you are writing. For example, in reports on experiments or studies, you'll usually need to follow the IMRAD structure with Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion sections. Be sure to check with your instructor to determine what the expectations are for your paper.

The APA style demos in this section will provide you with more information regarding APA basic formatting, in-text citations, and the references list. Detailed information regarding in-text citation and reference formatting can be found in the section that follows. This information follows the 6th edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. It's important to remember that APA guidelines change over time, so it's essential to stay current with the latest information.

Attributions: VandenBos, G. R. (Ed). (2010). Publication manual of the American Psychological Association (6th ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

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4.4.6: APA Citation, Formatting In-Text Citation (APA)

Formatting In-Text Citation (APA)

Read this article to learn the correct way to format in-text citations using APA style.

How to Format a Parenthetical In-text Citation

An essential component of a research paper, in-text citations are a way of acknowledging the ideas of the author(s) of a particular work.

Each source that appears as an in-text citation should have a corresponding detailed entry in the References list at the end of the paper. Including the required elements in every citation allows other researchers to easily track the references used in a paper and locate those resources themselves.

There are three pieces of information that should be included in a citation after quoting another writer's work: the author's last name, the year of publication, and the page number(s) of the quoted material, all of which are separated by commas. The page number should follow a lower-case letter *'p'* and a period.

- Basic structure: (Author, Year of Publication, p. 142)
  - Example: (Kutner, 2003, p. 451) [1]

If the quoted material was taken from more than one page, use two lower-case letter '*p'* s.

- Basic structure: (Author, Year, of Publication, pp. 194-196)
  - Example: (Kutner, 2003, pp. 451-452) [1]

How to Cite Multiple Authors of a Single Source

There are a few guidelines to follow when citing multiple authors for a single source. Separate the names of the source's authors by using commas. Depending on the location and instance of the citation, an ampersand (&), the word *and*, or the term *et al*. may also need to be used.

When to Use an Ampersand

Ampersands (&) should only be used in parenthetical in-text citations. An ampersand separates the last and second to last author of a cited work.

- Example: Research has demonstrated that "synesthesia appears quite stable over time, and synesthetes are typically surprised to discover that other people do not share their experiences" (Niccolai, Jennes, Stoerig, & Van Leeuwen, 2012, p. 81). [1]

When to Use the Word *and*

The word and should only be used in a sentence or paragraph; do not use it in a parenthetical in-text citation. The last and second to last author of a cited work are separated by the word *and*.

- Example: Niccolai, Jennes, Stoerig, and Van Leeuwen (2012) observed that "synesthesia appears quite stable over time, and synesthetes are typically surprised to discover that other people do not share their experiences" (p. 81). [1]

When to Use the term *et al.*

When citing a single work with many authors, you may need to substitute some of the authors' names with the term *et al*. The term *et al*. should not be italicized in your paper, and a period should be placed after the word *al* as it is an abbreviated term. Follow these guidelines regarding the usage of *et al*.:

Use *et al*.

- The first time and every time you cite a source with at least six authors.
  - Example: The in-text citation of *Zoonoses: Infectious diseases transmissible from animals to humans*, a book authored by Krauss, Weber, Appel, Enders, Isenberg, Schiefer, Slenczka, von Graevenitz, and Zahner, would appear as follows: [2]
    - (Krauss et al., 2003, p. 91)
    - As Krauss et al. (2003) observed, …
- Every following time (after the first instance) that you cite a source with at least three authors.

- Example: Citing the article "Modality and variability of synesthetic experience" by Niccolai, Jennes, Stoerig, & Van Leeuwen would appear as follows: [1]
  - The first instance: (Niccolai, Jennes, Stoerig, & Van Leeuwen, 2012, p. 81)
  - Every following instance: (Niccolai et al., 2012)

Avoid using *et al*.

- The first time you cite a source with up to five authors.
  - Instead, list all of the authors at their first mentioning.
- To cite a work that only has two authors.
  - Instead, always list the two authors' names in every citation (separated by either an ampersand or the word and, depending on the location)

[1] Niccolai, V., Jennes, J., Stoerig, P., & Van Leeuwen, T. M. (2012). Modality and variability of synesthetic experience. *The American Journal of Psychology*, 125(1), 81-94. Retrieved from JSTOR database

[2] Krauss, H., Weber, A., Appel, M., Enders, B., Isenberg, H. D., Schiefer, H. G., . . . Zahner, H. (2003). *Zoonoses: Infectious diseases transmissible from animals to humans*. Washington, DC: ASM Press

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4.4.7: APA Citation, Formatting the References Page (APA)

Formatting the References Page (APA)

Read these guidelines on APA formatting.

Placement

The References page is located at the end of the main body of the paper and begins at the top of a new page. Appendices, footnotes, and additional materials should follow after the References page.

General Format

Like the rest of the paper, the References page should be double-spaced and typed in Times New Roman, 12 pt. The running head should appear flush with the upper left-hand corner of the page, and the page number should appear at the upper right-hand corner of the page. The title of the References page is capitalized and centered at the top of the page without any formatting, including bold, italics, underlining, or quotation marks. Avoid mislabeling the References page as "Works Cited", "Sources", or "Bibliography".

Entries

Each entry should be formatted as a hanging indentation: the first line of each citation should be flush with the left margin while each subsequent line of the citation is indented five spaces from the left margin. Alphabetize the entries in the References page based on the authors' last names (or the first word of a work's title, if a work does not name any authors). Though it will vary from source to source, the general structure of a print book citation is as follows:

Author Last Name, Initials. (Year of publication). *Title of the work.* Publication city: Publishing Company.

Electronic sources generally require more information than print sources, such as a uniform resource locator (URL), a digital object identifier (DOI), or the date the source material was accessed.

When a source released by an organization does not include the names of the authors involved, simply cite the name of the organization in place of the author's name. However, if the name of the sponsoring organization is unavailable, the title of the work appears in place of the author's name. When citing a source authored by seven or more individuals, use ellipsis points between the sixth author's name and the last author's name; the ellipsis points should replace the omitted names of the authors between the sixth and last author.

Following is a list of sample citations for commonly used sources. Consult the current edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.) for a complete list of guidelines for formatting entries on the references page.

Print Examples

Single-Authored Book

Hoppensteadt, F. C. (1997). *An introduction to the mathematics of neurons: Modeling in the frequency domain.* New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Book with Multiple Authors

Two or more authors:

Pandi-Perumal, S. R., Cardinali, D. P., & Chrousos, G. (2007). *Neuroimmunology of sleep*. New York, NY: Springer.

Seven or more authors:

Krauss, H., Weber, A., Appel, M., Enders, B., Isenberg, H. D., Schiefer, H. G., . . . Zahner, H. (2003). *Zoonoses: Infectious diseases transmissible from animals to humans.* Washington, DC: ASM Press.

Book by an Association or Organization

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Article or Chapter in an Edited Collection

Riding, R. (2001). The nature and effects of cognitive style. In Sternberg, R. J., & Zhang, L.-F. (Eds.), *Perspectives on thinking, learning, and cognitive styles* (pp. 47-72). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Collected Content in an Edited Book

Single editor:

Gray, W. D. (Ed.). (2007). Integrated models of cognition systems. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Multiple editors:

Reynolds, W. M., & Johnston, H. F. (Eds.). (1994). *Handbook of depression in children and adolescents*. New York, NY: Plenum Press.

Article in Print Periodical

With DOI:

Marsh, J. K., & Ahn, W. (2012). Memory for patient information as a function of experience in mental health. *Journal of Applied Cognitive Psychology*, *26*(3), 462-474. doi:10.1002/acp.2832

Without DOI:

Murphy, V. M. (1960). Anxiety: Common ground for psychology and sociology. *The American Catholic Sociological Review*, *21*(3), 213-220.

Electronic Examples

Book in Electronic Form

Levitin, D. J. (2002). *Foundations of cognitive psychology: Core readings*. Retrieved from http://ehis.ebscohost.com

Article in Online Periodical

With DOI:

Oruç, I., Krigolson, O., Dalrymple, K., Nagamatsu, L. S., Handy, T. C., & Barton, J. S. (2011). Bootstrap analysis of the single subject with event related potentials. *Journal of Cognitive Neuropsychology, 28*(5), 322-337. doi: 10.1080/02643294.2011.648176

Without DOI:

Niccolai, V., Jennes, J., Stoerig, P., & Van Leeuwen, T. M. (2012). Modality and variability of synesthetic experience. *The American Journal of Psychology*, *125*(1), 81-94. Retrieved from JSTOR database at http://www.jstor.org/

Article from a Webpage

By Multiple Authors:

Vorvick, L. J., Longstreth, G. F., & Zieve, D. (2011, January 10). E. coli enteritis. Retrieved from http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/e...cle/000296.htm

By an Organization/Group:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2012). Lead. Retrieved from http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/lead/

Unknown Author, Unknown Date:

Water, carbon and nitrogen cycle. (n.d.) Retrieved from http://www.etap.org/demo/biology_fil...ion4tutor.html

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Figure 4.4.8.1

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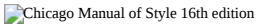


Figure 4.4.9.1

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Chicago Notes and Bibliography

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The first entry shown below is the first note for a source. The second entry shown is for subsequent notes for a source. The third entry is the bibliographic entry for the note. This will be found in the bibliography at the end of the work.

Print Book

1. Antony Penrose, *The Lives of Lee Miller* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985), 191.

2. Penrose, *Lives of Lee Miller*, 198.

Penrose, Antony *The Lives of Lee Miller*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1985.

Two to Three Authors

1. Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb, *The Hidden Injuries of Class* (New York Vintage Books, 1973), 102-7.

2. Sennett and Cobb, *Hidden Injuries*, 10.

Sennett, Richard, and Jonathan Cobb. *The Hidden Injuries of Class*. New York: Vintage Books, 1973.

Four or More Authors

Note: List all of the authors in the bibliography. In the notes, list only the first author followed by et al. (meaning "and others").

1. Henry Beard et al., *Rationalizations to Live By* (New York: Workman Publishing, 2000), 74.

2. Beard et al., *Rationalizations*, 11.

Beard, Henry, Andy Borowitz, and John Boswell. *Rationalizations to Live By*. New York: Workman Publishing, 2000.

Unknown Author

Note: Alphabetize the bibliographic entry by the first word of the title (ignoring articles such as A, An, and The).

1. *A Cypher's Guide to Staying Under the Radar* (London, 2002), 10.

2. *Cypher's Guide*, 133.

A Cypher's Guide to Staying Under the Radar. London, 2002.

Edited Work without an Author

1. Edmund V. Gillon, ed., *Cartouches and Decorative Small Frames* (New York: Dover Publications, 1975), 55.

2. Gillon, *Cartouches and Decorative*, 3.

Gillon, Edmund V., ed. *Cartouches and Decorative Frames*. New York: Dover Publications, 1975.

Edited Work with an Author

1. Tallulah Marie Osborn, *Tall Tales and Little Conies*, ed. Mattie M. Sable (Burlington, VT: Parrish Publishing, 1999), 23.

2. Osborn, *Tall Tales*, 147.

Osborn, Tallulah Marie, *Tall Tales and Little Conies*. Edited by Mattie M. Sable. Burlington, VT: Parrish Publishing, 1999.

Translated Work

1. Dimitri Topher, *Munch's Scream*, trans. Peter Sussan (Madrid: Madman Publishing, 1987), 21.

2. Topher, *Munch's Scream*, 32.

Topher, Dimitri. *Munch's Scream*. Translated by Peter Sussan. Madrid: Madman Publishing, 1987.

Edition Other Than the First

1. Brenda Ueland, *If You Want to Write*, 2nd ed. (Saint Paul, MN: Gray Wolf Press, 1987), 16.

2. Ueland, *Write*, 24.

Ueland, Brenda. *If You Want to Write*. 2nd ed. Saint Paul, MN: Gray Wolf Press, 1987.

Volume in a Multivolume Work

1. Diane Englert, ed., *History of World Theatre*, vol. 3 of *Theatre as Revolution* (New York: Wayward Publishing, 1988), 51.

2. Englert, *World Theatre*, 45.

Englert, Diane, ed. *History of World Theatre*. Vol. 3 of Theatre as Revolution. New York: Wayward Publishing, 1988.

Work in an Anthology

1. Julian Huxley, "An Essay on Bird-Mind," in *Great Essays in Science*, ed. Martin Gardner (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1994), 247.

2. Huxley, "Bird-Mind," 188.

Huxley, Julian. "An Essay on Bird-Mind." In *Great Essays in Science*, edited by Martin Gardner, 247. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1994.

Letter in a Published Collection

Note: If the letter writer's name is part of the collection title, then begin the note with only their last name but use their full name in the bibliography entry.

1. Tolkien to Sir Stanley Unwin, 9 May 1947, in *The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien*, ed. Humphrey Carpenter (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981), 119-120.

2. Tolkien, *The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien*, 120.

Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien*. Edited by Humphrey Carpenter. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981.

Work in a Series

1. Mark LaPierre, *Contemporary Musicians' Guide to Turn of the Century Sheet Music*, Contemporary Musicians' Guide to American Music (New York: Pokenstein Press, 2002), 117.

2. LaPierre, *Contemporary Musicians' Guide*, 119.

LaPierre, Mark. *Contemporary Musicians' Guide to Turn of the Century Sheet Music*. Contemporary Musicians' Guide to American Music. New York: Pokenstein Press, 2002.

Ebooks with Page Numbers

Note: Cite the version you consulted, e.g. Kindle edition, or list the URL for books available online (only include the date accessed if it is required by your publisher).

1. Gail Peay, *Me, Myself, and I: A Fascinating Glimpse into the World of Narcissism* (Pasadena, CA: Vanity Press, 2002), 828-29, http://vanity.nap.edu/books/10519389...tml/index.html.

2. Peay, *Me, Myself, and I*, 44.

Peay, Gail. *Me, Myself, and I: A Fascinating Glimpse into the World of Narcissism*. Pasadena, CA: Vanity Press, 2002. http://vanity.nap.edu/books/10519389...tml/index.html.

Ebooks without Page Numbers

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1. Khaled Hosseini, *The Kite Runner* (New York: Penguin, 2004), chap. 5, Kindle edition.

2. Hosseini, *Kite Runner*, chap. 2.

Hosseini, Khaled. *The Kite Runner*. New York: Penguin, 2004. Kindle edition.

Print Journal Article

Note: For journal articles the note should only include the pages you are quoting or summarizing, but include the page range for the entire article in the bibliography.

1. Harvey G. Cox, "Moral Reasoning and the Humanities," *Liberal Education* 71, no. 3 (1985): 199.

2. Cox, "Moral Reasoning," 194.

Cox, Harvey G. "Moral Reasoning and the Humanities." *Liberal Education* 71, no. 3 (1985): 195-204.

Online Journal Article

Note: For journal articles the note should only include the pages you are quoting / summarizing, but include the page range for the entire article in the bibliography. If the article has no page numbers, then you can include a locator, such as a paragraph number (with the abbreviation par.) or section heading, in the note.

1. Lana Hysell, "The Bone of Contention," *Anthropomorphic Digest 7*, no. 2 (2004): par. 8, http://www.aao.oakey.net/pcc/text-on.../9.2hysell.txt.

2. Hysell, "The Bone of Contention," par. 9.

Hysell, Lana. "The Bone of Contention." *Anthropomorphic Digest 7*, no. 2 (2004). http://www.aao.oakey.net/pcc/text-on.../9.2hysell.txt.

Print Magazine Article

Note: For magazine articles the note should only include the pages you are quoting / summarizing, but include the page range for the entire article in the bibliography.

1. Judith Thurman, "The Candidate's Wife," *The New Yorker*, September 2004, 132.

2. Thurman, "The Candidate's Wife," 126-128.

Thurman, Judith. "The Candidate's Wife." *The New Yorker*, September 2004, 124-135.

Online Magazine Article

Note: For magazine articles the note should only include the pages you are quoting / summarizing, but include the page range for the entire article in the bibliography. If the article has no page numbers, then you can include a locator, such as a paragraph number (with the abbreviation par.) or section heading, in the note.

1. Lisa M. Budreau, "The Politics of Remembrance: The Gold Star Mothers' Pilgrimage and America's Fading Memory of the Real War," *Military History*, April 3, 2008, http://www.smh-hq.org/jmh/volumes/jmh722.toc722.html.

2. Budreau, "The Politics of Remembrance."

Budreau, Lisa M. "The Politics of Remembrance." *Military History*, April 3, 2008. http://www.smh-hq.org/jmh/volumes/jmh722/toc722.html.

Article from a Database

Note: For journal articles the note should only include the pages you are quoting or summarizing, but include the page range for the entire article in the bibliography. End the citation with the article's DOI number or a persistent link (permalink) to the article.

1. Mike J. Crawford, et al., "Selecting Outcome Measures in Mental Health: The Views of Service Users," *Journal of Mental Health* 20, no. 4 (2011): 340, doi: 10.3109/09638237.2011.577114.

2. Crawford, "Selecting Outcome Measures," 343.

Crawford, Mike J., et al. "Selecting Outcome Measures in Mental Health: The Views of Service Users." *Journal of Mental Health* 20, no. 4 (2011): 336-346. doi: 10.3109/09638237.2011.577114.

Print Newspaper

Note: Newspaper articles, whether in print or online, do not receive page numbers; if available, use a section letter or number.

1. Jeff Mapes, "State's Ad Slogan Highlights Idealism," *Oregonian*, December 9, 2003, sec. TW.

2. Mapes, "State's Ad Slogan," sec. TW.

Mapes, Jeff. "State's Ad Slogan Highlights Idealism." *Oregonian*, December 9, 2003, sec. TW.

Unsigned Article

Note: For unsigned articles, in your bibliography, put the name of the paper first and then the headline.

1. "Media Flea Circus," *Tattler*, August 29, 2002, sec. A.

2. "Media Flea Circus," *Tattler*.

Tattler. "Media Flea Circus." August 29, 2002, sec. A.

Web Page

Note: Include the author if available, the title of the site, the sponsor, the publication date or date last modified, and the site's URL. Do not italicize the title of the website unless the site is an online book or periodical. If a website does not have a publication date or date last modified, then give the date you accessed it. For example: http://www.historychannel.com/today (accessed June 4, 2013).

1. "Air Pollutants," Environmental Protection Agency, last modified August 22, 2012, http://www.epa.gov/oar/airpollutants.html.

2. Environmental Protection Agency, "Air Pollutants."

"Air Pollutants." Environmental Protection Agency. Last modified August 22, 2012. http://www.epa.gov/oar/airpollutants.html.

Dissertation

1. Kristin Sauter, "Playwriting as Process" (PhD diss., University of Portland, 2005), 221, Proquest (AAT 6655426).

2. Sauter, "Playwriting as Process."

Sauter, Kristin. "Playwriting as Process." PhD diss., University of Portland, 2005. Proquest (AAT 6655426).

Book Review

1. Evan Thomas, "The Gray Man," review of *Shadow Warrior*, by Randall B. Woods, *New York Times Book Review*, May 3, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/05/bo...l-b-woods.html.

2. Thomas, "The Gray Man."

Thomas, Evan. "The Gray Man." Review of *Shadow Warrior*, by Randall B. Woods. *New York Times Book Review*, May 3, 2013. http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/05/bo...l-b-woods.html.

Paper from a Meeting or Conference

1. Chris Semansky, "Contemporary Poetry as Postmodern Commodity" (paper presented at the Northeastern Modern Language Association, New Haven, CT, April 12-14, 1991).

2. Semansky, "Contemporary Poetry."

Semansky, Chris. "Contemporary Poetry as Postmodern Commodity." Paper presented at the Northeastern Modern Language Association, New Haven, CT, April 12-14, 1991.

Government Document

1. U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, *Nutritional Guidelines for Children in State Subsidized Daycare*. (Washington, DC: GPO, 1978), 119.

2. U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, *Nutritional Guidelines*, 125.

U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. *Nutritional Guidelines for Children in State Subsidized Daycare*. Washington, DC: GPO, 1978, 103-144.

Personal Communication

Note: Personal communications do not get a bibliographic entry.

1. Lyndsay Hogland, e-mail message to author, November 17, 2012.

2. Hogland, e-mail.

Published or Broadcast Interview

1. Will Ferrell, interview by David Letterman, *The David Letterman Show*, CBS, July 21, 2008.

2. Ferrell.

Ferrell, Will. Interview by David Letterman. *The David Letterman Show*. CBS, July 21, 2008.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

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5.5: How to Save the Middle Class When Jobs Don’t Pay (Barnes)
5.6: Ending the Secrecy of the Student Debt Crisis (Senderowicz)
5.7: Must the President Be a Moral Leader? (Blake)
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5.13: Why Rituals Are Good for Your Health (Honarvar)
5.14: Why Native Americans Do Not Separate Religion from Science (LaPier)
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5.16: Juneteenth - Freedom’s Promise Is Still Denied to Thousands of Blacks Unable to Make Bail (Larson)
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5.1: The Danger of a Single Story (Adichie)

By Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie



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I'm a storyteller. And I would like to tell you a few personal stories about what I like to call "the danger of the single story." I grew up on a university campus in eastern Nigeria. My mother says that I started reading at the age of two, although I think four is probably close to the truth. So I was an early reader, and what I read were British and American children's books.

I was also an early writer, and when I began to write, at about the age of seven, stories in pencil with crayon illustrations that my poor mother was obligated to read, I wrote exactly the kinds of stories I was reading: All my characters were white and blue-eyed, they played in the snow, they ate apples, and they talked a lot about the weather, how lovely it was that the sun had come out.

Now, this despite the fact that I lived in Nigeria. I had never been outside Nigeria. We didn't have snow, we ate mangoes, and we never talked about the weather, because there was no need to.

My characters also drank a lot of ginger beer, because the characters in the British books I read drank ginger beer. Never mind that I had no idea what ginger beer was.

And for many years afterwards, I would have a desperate desire to taste ginger beer. But that is another story.

What this demonstrates, I think, is how impressionable and vulnerable we are in the face of a story, particularly as children. Because all I had read were books in which characters were foreign, I had become convinced that books by their very nature had to have foreigners in them and had to be about things with which I could not personally identify. Now, things changed when I discovered African books. There weren't many of them available, and they weren't quite as easy to find as the foreign books.

But because of writers like Chinua Achebe and Camara Laye, I went through a mental shift in my perception of literature. I realized that people like me, girls with skin the color of chocolate, whose kinky hair could not form ponytails, could also exist in literature. I started to write about things I recognized.

Now, I loved those American and British books I read. They stirred my imagination. They opened up new worlds for me. But the unintended consequence was that I did not know that people like me could exist in literature. So what the discovery of African writers did for me was this: It saved me from having a single story of what books are.

I come from a conventional, middle-class Nigerian family. My father was a professor. My mother was an administrator. And so we had, as was the norm, live-in domestic help, who would often come from nearby rural villages. So, the year I turned eight, we got a new house boy. His name was Fide. The only thing my mother told us about him was that his family was very poor. My mother sent yams and rice, and our old clothes, to his family. And when I didn't finish my dinner, my mother would say, "Finish your food! Don't you know? People like Fide's family have nothing." So I felt enormous pity for Fide's family.

Then one Saturday, we went to his village to visit, and his mother showed us a beautifully patterned basket made of dyed raffia that his brother had made. I was startled. It had not occurred to me that anybody in his family could actually make something. All I had heard about them was how poor they were, so that it had become impossible for me to see them as anything else but poor. Their poverty was my single story of them.

Years later, I thought about this when I left Nigeria to go to university in the United States. I was 19. My American roommate was shocked by me. She asked where I had learned to speak English so well, and was confused when I said that Nigeria happened to have English as its official language. She asked if she could listen to what she called my "tribal music," and was consequently very disappointed when I produced my tape of Mariah Carey.

She assumed that I did not know how to use a stove.

What struck me was this: She had felt sorry for me even before she saw me. Her default position toward me, as an African, was a kind of patronizing, well-meaning pity. My roommate had a single story of Africa: a single story of catastrophe. In this single story, there was no possibility of Africans being similar to her in any way, no possibility of feelings more complex than pity, no possibility of a connection as human equals.

I must say that before I went to the U.S., I didn't consciously identify as African. But in the U.S., whenever Africa came up, people turned to me. Never mind that I knew nothing about places like Namibia. But I did come to embrace this new identity, and in many ways I think of myself now as African. Although I still get quite irritable when Africa is referred to as a country, the most recent example being my otherwise wonderful flight from Lagos two days ago, in which there was an announcement on the Virgin flight about the charity work in "India, Africa and other countries."

So, after I had spent some years in the U.S. as an African, I began to understand my roommate's response to me. If I had not grown up in Nigeria, and if all I knew about Africa were from popular images, I too would think that Africa was a place of beautiful landscapes, beautiful animals, and incomprehensible people, fighting senseless wars, dying of poverty and AIDS, unable to speak for themselves and waiting to be saved by a kind, white foreigner. I would see Africans in the same way that I, as a child, had seen Fide's family.

This single story of Africa ultimately comes, I think, from Western literature. Now, here is a quote from the writing of a London merchant called John Lok, who sailed to west Africa in 1561 and kept a fascinating account of his voyage. After referring to the black Africans as "beasts who have no houses," he writes, "They are also people without heads, having their mouth and eyes in their breasts."

Now, I've laughed every time I've read this. And one must admire the imagination of John Lok. But what is important about his writing is that it represents the beginning of a tradition of telling African stories in the West: A tradition of Sub-Saharan Africa as a place of negatives, of difference, of darkness, of people who, in the words of the wonderful poet Rudyard Kipling, are "half devil, half child."

And so, I began to realize that my American roommate must have throughout her life seen and heard different versions of this single story, as had a professor, who once told me that my novel was not "authentically African." Now, I was quite willing to contend that there were a number of things wrong with the novel, that it had failed in a number of places, but I had not quite imagined that it had failed at achieving something called African authenticity. In fact, I did not know what African authenticity was. The professor told me that my characters were too much like him, an educated and middle-class man. My characters drove cars. They were not starving. Therefore they were not authentically African.

But I must quickly add that I too am just as guilty in the question of the single story. A few years ago, I visited Mexico from the U.S. The political climate in the U.S. at the time was tense, and there were debates going on about immigration. And, as often happens in America, immigration became synonymous with Mexicans. There were endless stories of Mexicans as people who were fleecing the healthcare system, sneaking across the border, being arrested at the border, that sort of thing.

I remember walking around on my first day in Guadalajara, watching the people going to work, rolling up tortillas in the marketplace, smoking, laughing. I remember first feeling slight surprise. And then, I was overwhelmed with shame. I realized that I had been so immersed in the media coverage of Mexicans that they had become one thing in my mind, the abject immigrant. I had bought into the single story of Mexicans and I could not have been more ashamed of myself.

So that is how to create a single story, show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become.

It is impossible to talk about the single story without talking about power. There is a word, an Igbo word, that I think about whenever I think about the power structures of the world, and it is "nkali." It's a noun that loosely translates to "to be greater than another." Like our economic and political worlds, stories too are defined by the principle of nkali: How they are told, who tells them, when they're told, how many stories are told, are really dependent on power.

Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person. The Palestinian poet Mourid Barghouti writes that if you want to dispossess a people, the simplest way to do it is to tell their story and to start with, "secondly." Start the story with the arrows of the Native Americans, and not with the arrival of the British, and you have an entirely different story. Start the story with the failure of the African state, and not with the colonial creation of the African state, and you have an entirely different story.

I recently spoke at a university where a student told me that it was such a shame that Nigerian men were physical abusers like the father character in my novel. I told him that I had just read a novel called "American Psycho" --

-- and that it was such a shame that young Americans were serial murderers.

Now, obviously I said this in a fit of mild irritation.

But it would never have occurred to me to think that just because I had read a novel in which a character was a serial killer that he was somehow representative of all Americans. This is not because I am a better person than that student, but because of America's cultural and economic power, I had many stories of America. I had read Tyler and Updike and Steinbeck and Gaitskill. I did not have a single story of America.

When I learned, some years ago, that writers were expected to have had really unhappy childhoods to be successful, I began to think about how I could invent horrible things my parents had done to me.

But the truth is that I had a very happy childhood, full of laughter and love, in a very close-knit family.

But I also had grandfathers who died in refugee camps. My cousin Polle died because he could not get adequate healthcare. One of my closest friends, Okoloma, died in a plane crash because our fire trucks did not have water. I grew up under repressive military governments that devalued education, so that sometimes, my parents were not paid their salaries. And so, as a child, I saw jam disappear from the breakfast table, then margarine disappeared, then bread became too expensive, then milk became rationed. And most of all, a kind of normalized political fear invaded our lives.

All of these stories make me who I am. But to insist on only these negative stories is to flatten my experience and to overlook the many other stories that formed me. The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story.

Of course, Africa is a continent full of catastrophes: There are immense ones, such as the horrific rapes in Congo and depressing ones, such as the fact that 5,000 people apply for one job vacancy in Nigeria. But there are other stories that are not about catastrophe, and it is very important, it is just as important, to talk about them.

I've always felt that it is impossible to engage properly with a place or a person without engaging with all of the stories of that place and that person. The consequence of the single story is this: It robs people of dignity. It makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult. It emphasizes how we are different rather than how we are similar.

So what if before my Mexican trip, I had followed the immigration debate from both sides, the U.S. and the Mexican? What if my mother had told us that Fide's family was poor and hardworking? What if we had an African television network that broadcast diverse African stories all over the world? What the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe calls "a balance of stories."

What if my roommate knew about my Nigerian publisher, Muhtar Bakare, a remarkable man who left his job in a bank to follow his dream and start a publishing house? Now, the conventional wisdom was that Nigerians don't read literature. He disagreed. He felt that people who could read, would read, if you made literature affordable and available to them.

Shortly after he published my first novel, I went to a TV station in Lagos to do an interview, and a woman who worked there as a messenger came up to me and said, "I really liked your novel. I didn't like the ending. Now, you must write a sequel, and this is what will happen ..."

And she went on to tell me what to write in the sequel. I was not only charmed, I was very moved. Here was a woman, part of the ordinary masses of Nigerians, who were not supposed to be readers. She had not only read the book, but she had taken ownership of it and felt justified in telling me what to write in the sequel.

Now, what if my roommate knew about my friend Funmi Iyanda, a fearless woman who hosts a TV show in Lagos, and is determined to tell the stories that we prefer to forget? What if my roommate knew about the heart procedure that was performed in the Lagos hospital last week? What if my roommate knew about contemporary Nigerian music, talented people singing in English and Pidgin, and Igbo and Yoruba and Ijo, mixing influences from Jay-Z to Fela to Bob Marley to their grandfathers.

What if my roommate knew about the female lawyer who recently went to court in Nigeria to challenge a ridiculous law that required women to get their husband's consent before renewing their passports? What if my roommate knew about Nollywood, full of innovative people making films despite great technical odds, films so popular that they really are the best example of Nigerians consuming what they produce? What if my roommate knew about my wonderfully ambitious hair braider, who has just started her own business selling hair extensions? Or about the millions of other Nigerians who start businesses and sometimes fail, but continue to nurse ambition?

Every time I am home I am confronted with the usual sources of irritation for most Nigerians: our failed infrastructure, our failed government, but also by the incredible resilience of people who thrive despite the government, rather than because of it. I teach writing workshops in Lagos every summer, and it is amazing to me how many people apply, how many people are eager to write, to tell stories.

My Nigerian publisher and I have just started a non-profit called Farafina Trust, and we have big dreams of building libraries and refurbishing libraries that already exist and providing books for state schools that don't have anything in their libraries, and also of organizing lots and lots of workshops, in reading and writing, for all the people who are eager to tell our many stories.

Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity.

The American writer Alice Walker wrote this about her Southern relatives who had moved to the North. She introduced them to a book about the Southern life that they had left behind. "They sat around, reading the book themselves, listening to me read the book, and a kind of paradise was regained."

I would like to end with this thought: That 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.

Thank you.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie grew up in Nigeria.

She is the author of the novels *Purple Hibiscus*, *Half of a Yellow Sun*,and *Americanah*, which won the National Book Critics Circle Award and was named one of The New York Times Top Ten Best Books of 2013. Her 2009 TED Talk, The Danger of A Single Story, is now one of the most-viewed TED Talks of all time.

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5.2: Education in the (Dis)Information Age (Shaffer)

Education in the (Dis)Information Age

Kris Shaffer

#education #analysis #argument #technology #advice #logos #disinformation #cognitivebias



"Cause I'd Rather Pretend I'll Still Be There At The End" by Bethan Phillips on Flickr; CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

We are all on the front lines in the war against disinformation.

I recently visited a seminar course for history majors at University of Mary Washington. In that course, students are digging into the differences between primary and secondary sources (a letter written *by* someone vs. a book written *about* them), learning the different means of evaluating each, and exploring ways to filter through the bias inherent in *every* source. I was there specifically to help them as they work through how to communicate their findings to a public, non-academic audience on the open web.

As we worked through some of the technical details, we also talked about the importance of what they were doing in that course in terms of the modern information landscape. After all, "fake news" has everyone talking about the reliability and bias of all kinds of information sources. Of all the things we could have talked about, though — Twitter bots, AI-generated video, memes, mainstream vs. partisan news media, Wikipedia, Wikileaks… — we spent most of our time on the hyperlink.

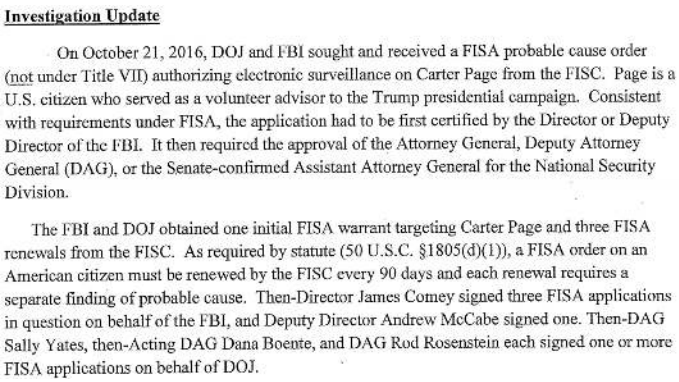
The hyperlink.

The oldest and simplest of internet technologies, the hyperlink and the "new" kind of text it affords — hypertext — is the foundational language of the internet, HyperText Markup Language (HTML). Hypertext connects all the disparate pieces of the web together. And it's Sci-Fi name isn't an accident. It's hyperdrive for the internet, bending information space so that any user can travel galaxy-scale information distances with a small movement of a finger. The hyperlink still remains one of the most powerful elements of the web. In fact, I'd argue that *the hyperlink is our most potent weapon in the fight against disinformation*.

Now, I'm not talking about URLs, or "web addresses." Yes, I can go anywhere on the internet if I know, and type, the right URL into the box at the top of my web browser. But a hyperlink is more than that. My site's URL is pushpullfork.com, and colloquially many of us would call that the "link" to my site. But this is a hyperlink to my site — a tiny bit of colorful, underlined text that has the power to bend space and move information. That simple idea of text "marked up" with hyperlinks is the revolutionary idea of the internet. And it's not just "marked up" as in highlighted, underlined, or even digitally annotated — it's more than just what we'd write in the margins of our physical books. Clicking (or, most likely these days, tapping) on a link can take you to a whole other dimension of the internet. With one pull of the muscles in your finger, you can transform an artifact that looks very much like the artifacts we engaged in our pre-internet world of *information poverty* — a body of text that we can hold in our hands — into a portal to the world of *information abundance*.

But what does this have to do with history majors and evaluating information sources?

Think about what a digital historian (or musicologist or journalist or physicist or lawyer) can do with the hyperlink. Let's take a primary source — an original document produced by people we are studying in the course of events we want to know more about — and see just what it can do.



Investigation Update

On October 21, 2016, DOJ and FBI sought and received a FISA probable cause order (not under Title VII) authorizing electronic surveillance on Carter Page from the FISC. Page is a U.S. citizen who served as a volunteer advisor to the Trump presidential campaign. Consistent with requirements under FISA, the application had to be first certified by the Director or Deputy Director of the FBI. It then required the approval of the Attorney General, Deputy Attorney General (DAG), or the Senate-confirmed Assistant Attorney General for the National Security Division.

The FBI and DOJ obtained one initial FISA warrant targeting Carter Page and three FISA renewals from the FISC. As required by statute (50 U.S.C. §1805(d)(1)), a FISA order on an American citizen must be renewed by the FISC every 90 days and each renewal requires a separate finding of probable cause. Then-Director James Comey signed three FISA applications in question on behalf of the FBI, and Deputy Director Andrew McCabe signed one. Then-DAG Sally Yates, then-Acting DAG Dana Boente, and DAG Rod Rosenstein each signed one or more FISA applications on behalf of DOJ.

This is an excerpt from the recently declassified and publicized memo about the FBI investigation into possible collusion between the Trump U.S. presidential campaign and the Russian government. This memo is presented in its original form: a scanned image of a typed and printed paper document. (To be fair, the "original" memo was printed, and before that lived on someone's computer. But the scanned image is the form it was in when first released to the public as a declassified document.) Here's the text of that excerpt:

Investigation Update

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By selecting and retyping that excerpt, I've already done some significant things. First, I've honed in on a particular passage for a particular reason — in this case, one I can use to illustrate my point about hyperlinks. This choice leaves things out, though, and readers who engage it for different purposes may be (mis)led in certain directions because of what was included and what was left out. More digital-specific, I've made the text searchable and accessible — the original PDF from which I extracted that image had no embedded text, it was just a scan of a printed document. That means it was inaccessible to people with visual impairments, and was not able to be indexed by search engines. (No doubt there are searchable-text versions floating around by now, but for the sake of our discussion, it is important to note that most primary sources *are* simple images/scans like this one, which is, after all, the version linked by the New York Times.)

I've also added some structure, based on my interpretation. The heading "Investigation Update" was simply underlined in the original, but I know that is an older, typrewriter-based practice that denotes a section heading. So I replaced the underline with an HTML tag (<h3>) that gives it a place in the hierarchy that every web app understands and renders consistently — including screen readers and other text-to-speech apps. (I've similarly converted the typewriter-based underlined text to the *italics* that we're more used to seeing in books and on the web. Some purists may balk at both of these changes, but based on my expertise in publishing and the web, I'm considering the typewriter and book/web versions equivalent, and "translating" the document from one domain into another.)

But let's do something a little more dynamic:

Investigation Update

On October 21, 2016, DOJ and FBI sought and received a FISA probable cause order (*not* under Title VII) authorizing electronic surveillance on Carter Page from the FISC. Page is a U.S. citizen who served as a volunteer advisor to the Trump presidential campaign. Consistent with requirements under FISA, the application had to be first certified by the Director or Deputy Director of the FBI. It then required the approval of the Attorney General, Deputy Attorney General (DAG), or the Senate-confirmed Assistant Attorney General for the National Security Division.

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I've added links, obviously. But look more closely at what I've added. In the first paragraph, I've added links to Wikipedia — a generally reliable source with active checks against overt bias and disinformation, and with its own curated links to other sources. Likewise, the first link in the second paragraph is to the referenced legal code on an informational site hosted by Cornell University. By adding these links, I can provide context that provides balanced, in-depth information to help someone reading this memo for the first time to understand the background and make more informed, nuanced judgments about its content.

But look at the last two links. One is to FoxNews, and the other to FiveThirtyEight. The FoxNews link isn't *really* about Andrew McCabe. But it does mention him in the context of a discussion of the top brass at Comey's FBI … now leaving, and in McCabe's case "stepping down amid questions about his handling of the Clinton email case," according to Fox. The FiveThirtyEight piece is about the impact of the release of the Comey letter, and its negative impact on Clinton's campaign.

While both of these articles present facts, there are clear biases presented as well. Fox's article attempts to discredit McCabe, where the presence of a link to FiveThirtyEight can betray, or invoke, pro-Clinton and anti-Trump-administration emotions. By linking to either, I can trigger memories and emotions that exert some influence over the reader's interpretation of what follows in the memo.

And that's where the history major (or, really, any individual whose mind is tuned to think critically about sources in context) comes in. With experience in evaluating and distinguishing various kinds of sources, the critically minded student can parse these links and filter bias to pull nuanced meaning from these various texts. More importantly in our current information landscape, the student/professor/researcher-as-public-scholar/educated-graduate-as-mindful-citizen can curate the best primary and secondary sources as links, and use the opportunity not simply to prove their credentials and bolster their argument, but to educate the public, bringing more light than heat to whatever issue they are unpacking.

Think about it this way. If I'm the first person to take a primary source, transcribe (or translate) it, and annotate it with hyperlinks, and my public, digital writing gains traction, it will fast become the go-to source at the top of the search results. My hyperlinks and commentary will become the portal to the resources that people engage to gain context, background, and nuance. It's a tremendous responsibility, but also a tremendous opportunity, to connect my skills as an academic and a humanist to the issues of the day, in an attempt to bring nuance and truth to the public consciousness.

On the flip side, if no one does this, or if they wait too long, the clickbait and conspiracy theories will win out.

Now, some might think that all of this would go without saying. This is the twenty-first century, digital natives, and all that. But there are two huge barriers to this kind of action being the default for educated users of the web.

First, academic work — both for students and faculty — still tends to be centered around traditional, pre-web conventions of writing. The printed book/article/essay, with footnotes and a bibliography, does not speak the language of the web, and footnotes/endnotes on a website do not encourage an audience to engage with more material more deeply. Putting an academic paper *on the web* is nothing like writing *for the web*. Until more faculty help their students learn to do the latter (and until faculty promotion and retention policies encourage faculty *themselves* to be fluent in writing for a public audience on the web), we'll continue to raise up future generations of graduates (including the next generation of professors) who aren't ready for their role in the fight against disinformation.

Second, *social-media platforms have worked hard to kill the hyperlink*. Sure, there are plenty of links to click on, but *they aren't generated by users*. Remember the difference between a link and a URL. I can paste a URL into a tweet or a Facebook post and it becomes clickable, but *I cannot write in hypertext*. I cannot *annotate* and *link* my writing with that of others. And including multiple URLs confuses the platforms! (It would be ironic that platforms whose financial well being is determined by clicks would have this problem — if we didn't know better.) Social media are designed to share text, images, video, and articles, but not to write in hypertext — the language of the web. After all, if I actually click on all those links, I leave the platform… and take my ad-revenue-generating clicks with me. And so I notice more and more that while the students and faculty I work with know what it means to *read* the language of the web (including clicking on links), they have been conditioned against *writing* the language of the web (including inserting properly functioning links into their text). It takes a conscious effort to resist this conditioning — conditioning which, in many ways, feels very similar to and is reinforced by traditional, hyperlink-less academic writing.

The internet was created by and for universities and government researchers. It's not surprising that when researchers first started networking together digitally, they created a language based around a digital form of citation — hypertext. It's also not surprising that as the internet has become commercialized, the language of open information discovery and sharing has been supplanted by platforms that limit the forms our discourse may take, in order to serve their own profit-driven agendas. As propagandists and perpetrators of (dis)information operations find those social-media limitations amenable to their aims, we need to resist. And we resist not only with better information, and better interpretation, but in recovering the language of the internet — the language of (digital) scholarship.

It's time we brought back the hyperlink and learned how to really use it. It's time we used information abundance to our advantage. And it's time we disentangled our communications from platforms tuned for the spread of disinformation. The health of our democracies just might depend on it.

Kris Shaffer (@krisshaffer) is a computational musicologist, digital media specialist, author, and coder. He currently works as an Instructional Technology Specialist at the University of Mary Washington and Contributing Editor for *Hybrid Pedagogy*. He is also the lead author of *Open Music Theory*. Kris's work can be found on the open web at pushpullfork.com and on GitHub at github.com/kshaffer.



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5.3: Time Wasn't Always Money- Decolonizing Time in Diaspora (Villaseñor)

Irene Villaseñor

#education #technology #selfdiscovery #language #systemanalysis #sharedvalues #global



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As Indigenous people living in diaspora, my family participates in capitalist institutions instilled with European values, such as punctuality and discipline, that dictate our experience of time. When I adhere to the schedule of my graduate program in New York, for instance, time is compressed and accelerated. I long for more time to savor readings, conduct research, and compose multiple drafts of assignments, regardless of how much I accomplish each week. When I am in creative flow, on the other hand, time expands, decelerates. I can spend hours at home working on creative projects with no awareness that time has passed at all. The dissonance I feel as I shift between these two time worlds echoes the internal split felt by all of my family members as they navigate life in the West.

I'm Tornatrás Mestizx. That's the simplest way to acknowledge my multiracial heritage: Indigenous Filipinx, East Asian, Native North American, African, and European. But I'm full of disclaimers about this identity; "mestizx" is a loaded term. For thousands of years (and into the present) it has implied a position of superiority legitimized by proximity to whiteness. It also underlies the utopian vision of La Raza Cósmica, 20th century Mexican philosopher José Vasconcelos' term for the belief that an increasingly multiracial population would eradicate racial divisions, unify humanity, and produce harmonious new civilizations—a far cry from the racial hierarchies, nationalized borders, and fascistic violence we see around the world today.

But I continue to call myself "Tornatrás Mestizx" because the term, like my background, reflects how colonial legacies insinuate themselves throughout the world. My heritage also complicates the question of whether I should rebel against or conform to the temporal orientation of capitalist institutions by which I am marginalized by my gender, sexual orientation, and racial identities. Most often, conforming would entail short-term, self-involved thinking at the expense of long-standing communal practices and ways of being. Anthropologist Michael French Smith summarizes this dilemma when he describes the case of Papua New Guineans adjusting to life after colonization: "Succeeding in such institutions as schools, government service, or private business in an urban setting [...] [requires] adapting to the Yuropian time world, and long immersion in such institutions is likely to lead people to internalise the habits and values of that time world." Papua New Guineans, Smith explains, experienced intense anxiety in the 1970s while becoming an independent nation after being a colony of Australia. Many still organized themselves by concrete events (like the amount of daylight available or cycles of the moon) or the type and quantity of work to be accomplished in a day. The process of incorporation into a capitalist political economy entailed the adoption of a new belief in the scarcity of time; framed as a finite resource, time was imbued with "magico-religious significance." As a result, Papua Villaseñor-1 New Guineans began to berate themselves and others for failing to live up to capitalist time values, accusing those who did not schedule their activities by a clock of "wasting time."

I'm often overwhelmed by how fast time moves, especially when it's infinitesimally measured. I felt it even as a child, groomed to serve as an intermediary between my parents and the white world. I had to help relatives fill out forms, draft business correspondence, pay taxes, and confront others at work, school, the hospital, or offices in the town hall if they treated any of my family members unfairly. These duties exposed me to the costly consequences of absent documentation, late payments, and acquiescence to abusive behavior. I learned early that capitalist time, like nearly everything else in Western culture, is curt and adversarial, especially to outsiders.

Adapting to capitalist time is largely a question of adapting to speed. French philosopher Paul Virilio devised the term 'dromology' to describe the logic, science, and impact of speed, and applied it to his examination of the pace of modern culture, from images and technology to politics and war. Virilio describes dromology as "a question of rhythm, of the variety of rhythms, of chronodiversity," concluding that "our societies have become arrhythmic. Or they only know one rhythm: constant acceleration. Until the crash and systemic failure." Virilio's interest in speed began as a child of World War II, which led him to realize that "the determining element in violence, of whatever kind, was speed." Virilio sees the violence of speed in the ongoing dispersal of news in the 21st century, which he calls an "informational bomb" resulting from instantaneous means of communication:

"[Instantaneous communication] plays a prominent role in establishing fear as a global environment, because it allows the synchronization of emotion on a global scale. Because of the absolute speed of electromagnetic waves, the same feeling of terror can be felt in all corners of the world at the same time. It is not a localized bomb: it explodes each second, with the news of an attack, a natural disaster, a health scare, a malicious rumor."

As one of the first children in my family to be raised with access to the internet, I try to shield myself from the "informational bomb" Virilio describes by going online specifically to study traumas that have bedeviled my family for generations, such as violence against women, homophobia, the devaluing of artistic activity, and, of course, shifting experiences of time in different cultures and epochs. Studying Western capitalist and Indigenous time worlds, past and present, has helped me negotiate my own experiences of time. When I need to manage myself and others by completing tasks as efficiently as possible, which reminds me of the role plantation overseers undertook in Papua New Guinea, I schedule my day in hour-long intervals. But when I need to create something of lasting value, I focus on the one task at hand by measuring time like Papua New Guineans in the Kragur village often do, in units of half a day at least. My father Villaseñor-2 engaged with Western institutions to accrue financial capital for our family and community, ensuring a degree of stability for the next generation; the question of how I will balance Western capitalist and Indigenous modes of being in time depends on the degree to which I do the same.

Irene Villaseñor is a multidisciplinary artist and writer based in New York. Her essay is reprinted from PLEXUS, a project of the Los Angeles Review of Books.

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5.4: The Story We Tell about Millennials — and Who We Leave Out (Allen)

By Reniqua Allen



Photo by unknown. CC 0 via pxhere.

So on the surface, Troy is the kind of millennial that think pieces are made of. He's arrogant, self-centered and convinced that he is smarter than people give him credit for. His favorite topics of conversation are girls, sneakers and cars -- not a surprise for someone who was a teenager just a few years ago. But Troy's mannerisms -- they reveal the patterns of someone who is scared, troubled and unsure of the future.

Now Troy also embodies the many positive qualities his generation is known for. An entrepreneurial spirit, an independent streak and a dedication to his parents. He believes in hard work and has tried gigs in both the licit and underground economies, but he hasn't had any luck and is just trying to find his way and still dances between both worlds.

When I met Troy a few years ago, he had been employed as a golf caddy at a local country club, carrying bags for rich men and women who often never even acknowledged his existence. Before that, he sold sneakers on Facebook. He even tried selling candy bars and water bottles, but he wasn't making enough money to help his parents out or save up for a car any time soon. So Troy saw how hard his immigrant mother from Jamaica worked and how little she got back in return, and he vowed -- Troy vowed to take a different path. So he ended up selling drugs. And then he got caught, and right now, he's trying to figure out his next steps.

In a country where money equals power, quick money, at least for a while, gives young men and women like him a sense of control over their lives, though he said he mainly did it because he wanted stability. "I wanted a good life," he told me. "I got greedy and I got caught." Yet the amazing thing about Troy is that he still believes in the American dream. He still believes that with hard work, despite being arrested, that he can move on up. Now, I don't know if Troy's dreams came true. He disappeared from the program for troubled youth that he was involved in and slipped through the cracks, but on that day that we spoke, I could tell that more than anything, Troy was happy that someone listened to his dreams and asked him about his future.

So I think about Troy and his optimism when I think of the reality that so many young, black millennials face when it comes to realizing their dreams. I think about all the challenges that so many black millennials have to endure in a world that tells them they can be anything they want to be if they work hard, but actually doesn't sit down to listen to their dreams or hear stories about their struggle. And we really need to listen to this generation if we hope to have a healthy and civil society going forward, because millennials of color, they make up a fair chunk of the US and the world population.

Now when we talk about millennials, a group that is often labeled as entitled, lazy, overeducated, noncommittal and narcissistic, the conversations often swirl around avocado toast, overpriced lattes and fancy jobs abroad -- you probably have heard all these things before. But millennials are not a monolith. Actress Lena Dunham may be the media's representation of this generation, but Troy and other voices like his are also part of the story. In fact, millennials are the largest and most diverse adult population in this country. 44 percent of all American millennials are nonwhite, but often, you wouldn't even know it at all.

Now sure, there are similarities within this population born between 1981 and 1996. Perhaps many of us do love avocado toast and lattes -- I know I do, right? But there are also extreme differences, often between millennials of color and white millennials. In fact, all too often, it seems as though we're virtually living in different worlds.

Now black millennials, a group that I have researched for a book I recently wrote, are the perfect example of the blind spot that we have when it comes to this group. For example, we have lower rates of homeownership, we have higher student debt, we get ID'd more at voter registration booths, we are incarcerated at higher rates ... we make less money, we have higher numbers of

unemployment -- even when we do go to college, I should say -- and we get married at lower rates. And honestly, that's really just the beginning.

Now, none of these struggles are particularly new, right? Young black people in America have been fighting, really fighting hard to get their stories told for centuries. After the Civil War in the 1800s, Reconstruction failed to deliver the equality that the end of slavery should have heralded, so young people moved to the North and the West to escape discriminatory Jim Crow policies. Then, as segregation raged in much of the country, young black people helped spearhead civil rights campaigns in the 1950s and 1960s. After that, some people embraced black power and then became Black Panthers and then the next generation, they turned to hip-hop to make sure their voices were heard. And then Barack Obama, hopeful that he, too, may bring about change. And when that failed, when we realized we were still brutalized and battered, we had to let the world know that our lives still mattered. Now, when technology allows more video of our pain and struggle to be broadcast to the world, we wonder, like, what is next?

Our country feels more polarized than ever, yet we are still being told to pull up our pants, be respectable, be less angry, smile more and work harder. Even the attitudes of millennials themselves are overdue for an update. Research done by the Washington Post in 2015 about this supposedly "woke" group found that 31 percent of white millennials think that blacks are lazier than whites, and 23 percent say they're not as intelligent. These are, like, surprising things to me, and shocking. And these responses are not that much different than generations in the past, and it shows that unfortunately, this generation is repeating the same old stereotypes and tropes of the past. Now, a study conducted by David Binder Research and MTV in 2014 -- it found that 84 percent of young millennials were taught by their families that everyone should be equal. This is a really great thing, a really positive step. But only 37 percent in that group actually talked about race with their families.

So I could understand why things may be confusing to some. There are definitely black millennials who are succeeding. Marvel's "Black Panther," directed by black millennial Ryan Coogler and showcasing many others, broke all sorts of records. There's a crop of television shows by creatives like Donald Glover, Lena Waithe and Issa Rae. Beyoncé is, like, the queen, right? She is, like, everything. Young black authors are winning awards, Serena Williams is still dominating on the tennis court despite all her haters, and there's a crop of new politicians and activists running for office. So I don't want to, like, kill these moments of black joy that I too revel in, but I want to make it clear that these wins are too few and far between for a people that's been here for over 400 years. Like, that's insane, right?

And most people still don't really understand the full picture, right? Our stories are still misunderstood, our bodies are still taken advantage of, and our voices? Our voices are silenced in a world that still shows little concern for our everyday struggles. So our stories need to be told in a multitude of ways by a range of voices talking about diverse and nuanced topics, and they really need to be listened to.

And it is not just here in America, right? It's all around the world. Millennials make up 27 percent of the world's population. That's around two billion people. And with countries like India, China, Indonesia and Brazil, along with the United States, accounting for 50 percent of the world's millennials, it's clear that the white, often male, heterosexual narrative of the millennial is only telling half the story. Now, there's many people trying to broaden the palette. They're fighting to get their stories told and bust the millennial stereotype. Whether it's students in South Africa protesting statues of Cecil Rhodes, Michaela Coel making us laugh from the UK, or Uche Eze, who's framing views about Nigerian life, online. But I want to make it clear -- I want to make it really clear to everyone that just because things look more equal than they did in the 20th century, doesn't mean that things are equitable at all. It doesn't mean our experiences are equitable, and it certainly doesn't mean that a post-racial society, that thing that we talked about so much, ever became close to being a reality.

I think of Joelle, a middle-class 20-something who did everything the "right way," but she couldn't go to her dream school, because it was simply too expensive. Or Jalessa, who knows she can't be mediocre at her job the same way that her white peers can. Or Trina, who knows that people judge her unconventional family choices in a different way than if she were a white woman. Or actor AB, who knows that the roles he takes and gets in Hollywood are different because of his skin color. And then there's Simon. So Simon, by all means, would be an example of someone who's made it. He's a CFO at a tech company in San Francisco, he has a degree from MIT and he's worked at some of the hottest tech companies in the world.

But when I asked Simon if he had achieved the American dream, it took him a while to respond. While acknowledging that he had a really comfortable life, he admitted that under different circumstances, he might have chosen a different path. Simon really loves photography, but that was never a real option for him. "My parents weren't able to subsidize me through that sort of thing," Simon said. "Maybe that's something my children could do." So it's these kinds of stories -- the quieter, more subtle ones -- that reveal the often unique and untold stories of black millennials that show how even dreaming may differ between communities.

So we really need to listen and hear the stories of this generation, now more than ever, as the baby boomers age and millennials come to prominence. We can talk all we want to about pickling businesses in Brooklyn or avocado toast, but leaving out the stories and the voices of black millennials, large swaths of the population -- it will only increase divisions. So stories of black millennials, brown millennials and all millennials of color really need to be told, and they also need to be listened to. We'd be a far better-off country and world.

Thank you.

Reniqua Allen is a journalist who produces and writes for various outlets on issues of race, opportunity, politics and popular culture. She is the author of *It Was All a Dream: A New Generation Confronts the Broken Promise to Black America.* This essay is a transcript of her TED Talk.

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5.5: How to Save the Middle Class When Jobs Don't Pay (Barnes)

By Peter Barnes

#argument, #sharedvalues, #reportinginformation, #logos, #ethos, #pathos, #kairos, #currentevents, #causalargument, #proposal, #finances #advice



Photo by Laity Lodge Family Camp under a CC license.

There's long been a notion that, because money is a prerequisite for survival and security, everyone should be assured some income just for being alive. The notion has been advanced by liberals such as James Tobin, John Kenneth Galbraith, and George McGovern, and by conservatives like Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman, and Richard Nixon. It's embedded in the board game Monopoly, in which all players get equal payments when they pass Go.

And yet, with one exception, Americans have been unable to agree on any plan that guarantees some income to everyone. The reasons lie mostly in the stories that surround such income. Is it welfare? Is it redistribution? Does it require higher taxes and bigger government? Americans think dimly of all these things.

But then, there's the exception. Jay Hammond, the Republican governor of Alaska from 1974 to 1982, was an independent thinker who conceived of, and then persuaded Alaska's legislators to adopt, the world's first system for paying equal dividends to everyone. In Hammond's model, the money comes not from taxes but from a common resource: North Slope oil. Using proceeds from that gift of nature, the Alaska Permanent Fund has paid equal yearly dividends to every resident, including children, ranging from about $1,000 to over $3,000. (Bear in mind that a family of four collects four same-sized dividends.) While this isn't enough to live on, it nicely supplements Alaskans' other earnings. And paying such dividends regularly for more than thirty years has bolstered the state's economy, reduced poverty, and made Alaska one of the least unequal states in America.

The question Americans in the lower 48 should now ask is: Did Alaska find the right formula? If it can convert part of its common wealth into equal dividends for everyone, can the rest of America do the same?

There are many good reasons to ask this question. One is that America's middle class is in steady decline. In the heyday of our middle class, jobs at IBM and General Motors were often jobs for life. Employers offered decent wages, health insurance, paid vacations and defined pensions. Nowadays, such jobs are rare.

It's also unlikely that the jobs of the future will pay more (adjusted for inflation) than today's. In unionized industries like autos and airlines, two-tier contracts are now the norm, with younger workers paid substantially less than older ones for doing the same work. Nor is the picture brighter in other industries. In the Labor Department's latest list of occupations with the greatest projected job growth, only one out of six pays more than $60,000 a year. The implication is clear: without some form of supplementary non-labor income, we can kiss our middle class goodbye.

The second reason to ponder Alaska's dividends is climate change. It might seem odd that dividends based on oil could presage a remedy for climate change, but such is the case. Imagine if we charged companies for using another common resource—our air—and distributed the revenue equally to all. If we did this, two things would follow. First, higher air pollution costs would lead to less fossil fuel burning and more investment in renewables. And second, households that used less dirty energy would gain (their dividends would exceed their higher costs) while households that used a lot of dirty energy would pay. This would spur both companies and households to do the right thing.

A third reason for considering Alaska's model is our long-lasting economic stagnation. Not counting asset bubbles, our economy hasn't sparkled for decades, and neither fiscal nor monetary policies have helped much. Tax cuts for the rich have benefited no one but the rich, and as Mark Blyth and Eric Lonergan recently wrote in Foreign Affairs, pumping trillions of dollars into banks hasn't stimulated our economy either. What's needed is a system that continually refreshes consumer demand from the middle out—something like periodic dividends to everyone that can be spent immediately.

One further reason for looking north to Alaska is the current stalemate in American politics. Solutions to all major problems are trapped in a tug-of-war between advocates of smaller and larger government. But dividends from common wealth bypass that bitter war. They require no new taxes or government programs; once set up, they're purely market based. And because they send legitimate property income to everyone, they can't be derided as welfare.

In this regard, it's worth noting that Alaska's dividends are immensely popular. Politicians in both parties sing their praises, as do the state's voters. One attempt in 1999 to transfer money from the Permanent Fund to the state treasury was trounced in a referendum by 83 percent. Nationally, Alaska's model has been lauded by Fox News commentators Bill O'Reilly and Lou Dobbs as well as liberals like Robert Reich.

The reasons for this popularity are pretty clear. Alaskans don't see their dividends as welfare or redistribution. According to several surveys, most Alaskans consider their dividends to be their rightful share of their state's natural wealth. There's no stigma attached to them, and any attempt by politicians to reduce them is seen as an encroachment on legitimate property income.

Moreover, because the dividends are universal rather than means-tested, they unite, rather than divide, Alaskans. If only "losers" got them, "winners" would be resentful. Universality puts everyone in the same boat. No one is demonized and a broad constituency protects the dividends from political attack.

How Would It Work Nationally?

How might a common wealth dividend system work at the national level? The easy part is distributing the dividends. As in Alaska, enrollment could be done online and payments could wired electronically at a cost of pennies per transaction. The Social Security Administration could set that up in a jiffy.

The harder part is collecting the revenue. In my latest book, With Liberty and Dividends For All, I show how, over time, we could generate enough revenue to pay dividends of up to $5,000 per person per year. Initially, a sizable chunk would come from selling a declining number of permits to dump carbon into our air. Later, more revenue could flow from our monetary infrastructure, our patent and copyright systems, and our electromagnetic airwaves.

Consider what $5,000 per person per year would mean. If a child's dividends were saved and invested starting from birth, they'd yield enough to pay for a debt-free college education at a public university. In midlife, $5,000 per person would add 25 percent to the income of a family of four earning $80,000 a year. In late life, it would boost the average retiree's Social Security benefit by about 30 percent. Thus, dividends from common wealth would provide a badly-needed boost for poor and middle class families during what promises to be a lasting shortage of good-paying jobs.

Surprisingly, the core idea behind Alaska's dividends is over two centuries old. In his 1796 essay "Agrarian Justice," American patriot Thomas Paine distinguished between two kinds of property: "natural property, or that which comes to us from the Creator of the universe—such as the earth, air, water … [and] artificial or acquired property, the invention of men." The second kind of property, Paine argued, must necessarily be distributed unequally, but the first kind belongs to everyone equally. It is the "legitimate birthright" of every man and woman, "not charity but a right."

And Paine went further. He proposed a practical way to implement that right: create a "National Fund" to pay every man and woman a lump sum (roughly $17,000 in today's money) at age twenty-one, and a stipend of about $1,000 a month after age fifty-five. Revenue would come from what Paine called "ground rent" paid by landowners. He even showed mathematically how this could work. Presciently, Paine recognized that land, air, and water could be monetized not just for the benefit of a few but for the good of all. Further, he saw that this could be done at a national level. This was a remarkable feat of analysis and imagination, and it's time to apply it broadly.

Today, Paine's core idea—that everyone has a right to equal income from common wealth—can be applied not just to natural resources but also to the creations of society. Consider, for example, the immense value created by our legal, intellectual, and financial infrastructures, the Internet, and our economy as a whole. This value isn't created by single individuals or corporations; it's created collectively and hence belongs equally to all. In a fairer economy some of it would actually be distributed to all. The

ideal mechanism for doing this would be common wealth dividends—simple, transparent, direct (not trickle down), built on co-ownership rather than redistribution, and politically appealing.

And here's the best part. If Paine's idea and Alaska's model were applied at sufficient scale, the implications would be vast. The current tendencies of capitalism to widen inequality and devour nature would be self-corrected. Instead of plutocracy and climate change, our market economy would generate widely-shared, earth-friendly prosperity. And it would achieve these goals automatically, without much need for government intervention.

Is this wild-eyed dreaming? Possibly, but no more so than universal suffrage or Social Security once were. Common wealth dividends could be the next step in America's long march toward equal rights—and the game-changer that leads to a new version of capitalism. But first, we have to see the opportunity and demand it.

Peter Barnes, co-founder of *On the Commons*, has written numerous books and articles and co-founded several socially responsible businesses (including Working Assets/Credo). This article includes material adapted and excerpted by the author from his new book *With Liberty and Dividends For All*, and other writing by the author.



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5.6: Ending the Secrecy of the Student Debt Crisis (Senderowicz)

Daniela Senderowicz

#proposal, #systemanalysis, #sharedvalues, #finances, #currentevents, #logos, #ethos, #kairos, #reportinginformation #policy



Fear of facing society's ostracism for failure to pay them back has left borrowers alienated and trapped in a lending system that is engulfing them in debt bondage. "Face in the Dark" by Elijah Hiett via Unsplash

Gamblers and reality TV stars can claim bankruptcy protections when in financial trouble, but 44 million student loan borrowers can't. Unemployed, underpaid, destitute, sick, or struggling borrowers simply aren't able to start anew.

With a default rate approaching 40 percent, one would expect armies of distressed borrowers marching in the streets demanding relief from a system that has singled out their financial anguish. Distressed student debtors, however, seem to be terror-struck about coming forward to a society that, they say, ostracizes them for their inability to keep up with their finances.

When we spoke to several student borrowers, almost none were willing to share their names. "I can't tell anyone how much I'm struggling," says a 39-year-old Oregon physician who went into student loan default after his wife's illness drained their finances. He is terrified of losing his patients and reputation if he speaks out about his financial problems.

"If I shared this with anyone they will look down upon me as some kind of fool," explains a North Carolina psychologist who is now beyond retirement age. He explains that his student debt balance soared after losing a well-paying position during the financial crisis, and that he is struggling to pay it back.

Financial shame alienates struggling borrowers. Debtors blame themselves and self-loathe when they can't make their payments, explains Colette Simone, a Michigan psychologist. "There is so much fear of sharing the reality of their financial situation and the devastation it is causing in every facet of their lives," she says. "The consequences of coming forward can result in social pushback and possible job–related complications, which only deepen their suffering."

Debtors are isolated, anxious, and in the worst cases have taken their own lives. Simone confirms that she has "worked with debtors who were suicidal or had psychological breakdowns requiring psychiatric hospitalization."

With an average debt of just over $37,000 per borrower for the class of 2016, and given that incomes have been flat since the 1970s, it's not surprising that borrowers are struggling to pay. Student loans have a squeaky-clean reputation, and society tends to view them as a noble symbol of the taxpayers' generosity to the working poor. Fear of facing society's ostracism for failure to pay them back has left borrowers alienated and trapped in a lending system that is engulfing them in debt bondage.

"Alienation impacts mental health issues," says New York mental health counselor Harriet Fraad. "As long as they blame themselves within the system, they're lost."

Student debtors can counter despair by fighting back through activism and political engagement, she says. "Connection is the antidote to alienation, and engaging in activism, along with therapy, is a way to recovery."

Despite the fear of coming forward, some activists are building a social movement in which meaningful connections among borrowers can counter the taboo of openly admitting financial ruin.

Student Loan Justice, a national grassroots lobby group, is attempting to build this movement by pushing for robust legislation to return bankruptcy protections to borrowers. The group has active chapters in almost every state, with members directly lobbying their local representatives to sign on as co-sponsors to HR 2366. Activists are building a supportive community for struggling borrowers through political agitation, local engagement, storytelling, and by spreading a courageous message of hope that may embolden traumatized borrowers to come forward and unite.

Julie Margetaa Morgan, a fellow at The Roosevelt Institute, recently noted that student debt servicers like Navient have a powerful influence on lawmakers. “Student loan borrowers may not have millions to spend on lobbying, but they have something equally, if not more, powerful: millions of voices,” she says.

A recent manifesto by activist and recent graduate Eli Campbell calls for radical unity among borrowers. “Young people live in constant fear that they’ll never be able to pay off their debt. We’re not buying houses or able to afford the hallmarks of the American dream,” he explains.

In his call for a unified national boycott of student loan payments, inevitably leading to a mass default on this debt, Campbell hopes to expose this crisis and instigate radical change. In a recent interview he explained that the conditions for borrowers are so bad already that debtors may not join the boycott willingly. Instead, participation may simply happen by default given the lack of proper work opportunities that lead to borrowers’ inability to pay.

While a large-scale default may not happen through willful and supportive collective action, ending the secrecy of the crisis through massive national attention may destigmatize the shame of financial defeat and finally bring debtors out of the isolation that causes them so much despair.

Activists are calling for a significant conversation about the commodification of educating our youth, shifting our focus toward investing into the promise of the young and able, rather than the guarantee of their perpetual debt bondage. In calling for collective action they soothe the hurt of so many alienated debtors, breaking the taboos that allow them to say, “Me, too” and admit openly that in this financial climate we all need each other to move forward.

Daniela Senderowicz is a Northwest activist and writer. This essay is reprinted from Yes! Magazine.

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5.7: Must the President Be a Moral Leader? (Blake)

By Michael Blake

#sharedvalues #analysis #currentevents #proposalargument #systemanalysis #argument #logos #ethos #kairos #cognitivebias #heroes #politics



"August 28, 2013" by Chuck Kennedy, The Obama White House Archives is in the Public Domain

The best presidents – including figures such as Abraham Lincoln and George Washington – are celebrated not only as good leaders, but as good men. They embody not simply political skill, but personal virtue.

Why, though, should anyone expect a president to demonstrate that sort of virtue? If someone is good at the difficult job of political leadership, must they demonstrate exceptional moral character as well?

Character and democracy

Voters disagree about the extent to which the president must demonstrate moral leadership. Scholars who study political ethics disagree as well.

Those who insist that the president must be virtuous often begin with the thought that a person in that office will face new and unanticipated problems during his or her term. A president whose decision-making is informed by a consistent character, will, in the face of new challenges, rely upon the lessons that have built that character.

As scholar James David Barber wrote, the best way to understand a president's likely responses to a crisis is to understand what that president values most highly.

Abraham Lincoln, for instance, consistently and publicly referred to the same set of moral values throughout his life – values centered on a deep, while imperfect, belief in the moral equality of people. These principles provided him with guidance throughout the horrors of the Civil War.

A president whose decisions are not grounded in the right sort of ethical values may be less well-equipped to respond well – and, more importantly, might be frighteningly unpredictable in his or her responses.

Other political ethicists have emphasized the ways in which democracies can fall apart in the absence of personal virtue. Conservative thinkers, in particular, have argued that political institutions can only function when all those who participate within them are capable of compromise and of self-government. Rules, to put it simply, don't work unless people governed by those rules care about them and voluntarily choose to abide by them.

If this is true of citizens, it is even more true of the president, whose opportunities to damage the system through unprincipled actions are so much greater.

Vice and efficiency

Niccolò Machiavelli believed that political life demands certain characters that could be understood as vices. Italy in US/Flickr.com, CC BY-ND

These arguments have been met with powerful objections. Political philosophers – including, most prominently, Niccolò Machiavelli – have argued that the nature of political life requires a willingness to demonstrate habits of character that would ordinarily be understood as vices. The good leader, insisted Machiavelli, is morally right to do what is usually taken as wrong. He or she must be cruel, deceptive and often violent.

The philosopher Arthur Applbaum refers to this as role morality. What a person is right to do, argues Applbaum, often depends upon the job that person is doing. The good lawyer, for instance, may have to bully, browbeat or humiliate hostile witnesses. That is what a zealous defense might require. Machiavelli notes simply that, in a hostile and brutal world, political leaders might have similar reasons to do what is usually forbidden.

Modern philosophers such as Michael Walzer have continued this line of reasoning. If the world is imperfect, and requires a politician to lie, cheat or otherwise do wrong in the name of doing good, then there is sometimes a moral reason for the politician to do that wrong.

George Washington, for example, was quite happy to engage in deception, if that deception would help protect the United States. He consistently sought to deceive his adversaries about his intentions and his resources – and, importantly, sought to deceive his own subordinates, reasoning that a lie must be believed at home for it to be useful abroad.

A president who refused to engage in this sort of deception, argues Walzer, would be choosing to keep his or her conscience clear, instead of providing some genuine and concrete help to others. Walzer's conclusion is that a good political agent must often refuse to be a good person. It is only by sometimes doing what is ordinarily wrong, that the politician can make the world better for all.

Virtue, vice and the presidency

These ideas have, of course, been a part of many long-standing debates about presidential morality. Henry Kissinger, for instance, defended the Nixon administration's decision to seek the firing of the special prosecutor, based upon the need for that administration to present itself to the Soviet Union as both powerful and unified.

It was not necessary, Kissinger wrote later, that the American leadership displayed personal virtue. It was enough that their decisions enabled a society in which the American people were capable of demonstrating that virtue.

More recently, many evangelical supporters of President Trump have used the Biblical story of Cyrus the Great, an ancient Persian king, to explain their continued support for the president. Although Cyrus was not himself Jewish, he chose to free the Jews held as slaves in Babylon. Evangelical leader Mike Evans noted that Cyrus, like Donald Trump, was an "imperfect vessel," whose decisions nevertheless made it possible for others to live as God wished them to.

Some evangelicals have used the Biblical story of Cyrus the Great, to explain their continued support for the President Trump. AP Photo/ Evan Vucci

So, too, some evangelicals argue that President Trump's own seeming lapses of virtue might not disqualify him from the presidency – so long as his decisions enable others to lead lives exemplifying the virtues he does not always show himself.

Effective vice

These debates – between those who seek a president who models ethical virtue, and those who would regard that desire as misguided at best – are likely to continue.

One thing that must be acknowledged, however, is that even the best defenses of presidential vice cannot be taken to excuse all forms of moral failure.

Machiavelli, and those who follow him, can at most be used to defend a president whose vices are effectively able to create a more ethical world for others. Not all sorts of wrongdoing, though, can plausibly be thought to have these effects.

Some vices, such as an outsized confidence, or the will to use violence in the name of justice, may be defended with reference to the ideas of Machiavelli or Walzer.

Other ethical failings, however – such as a vindictive desire to punish perceived enemies – often seem less likely to lead to good results. This sort of failure, however, appears to be common among those who have sought the presidency. It is a failure, moreover, that does not depend upon party affiliation.

In recent years, for example, both Lyndon Baines Johnson and Richard Nixon took particular delight in humiliating and degrading their political adversaries. Both, perhaps, might have been better leaders, had they been more reflective about when and how to

wrong.

In presidential politics, all parties might at least agree on this much: If there is sometimes a reason to seek an ethically flawed president, it does not follow that all ethical flaws are equally worth defending.

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5.8: Concerning the Way in Which Princes Should Keep Faith - The Prince, Chapter 18 (Machiavelli)

Niccolò Machiavelli

#analysis #proposalargument #systemanalysis #argument #logos #ethos #kairos #politics #sharedvalues



"Machiavelli" by StaneStane is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

Every one admits how praiseworthy it is in a prince to keep faith, and to live with integrity and not with craft. Nevertheless, our experience has been that those princes who have done great things have held good faith of little account, and have known how to circumvent the intellect of men by craft, and in the end have overcome those who have relied on their word. You must know there are two ways of contesting, the one by the law, the other by force; the first method is proper to men, the second to beasts; but because the first is frequently not sufficient, it is necessary to have recourse to the second. Therefore it is necessary for a prince to understand how to avail himself of the beast and the man. This has been figuratively taught to princes by ancient writers, who describe how Achilles and many other princes of old were given to the Centaur Chiron to nurse, who brought them up in his discipline; which means solely that, as they had for a teacher one who was half beast and half man, so it is necessary for a prince to know how to make use of both natures, and that one without the other is not durable. A prince, therefore, being compelled knowingly to adopt the beast, ought to choose the fox and the lion; because the lion cannot defend himself against snares and the fox cannot defend himself against wolves. Therefore, it is necessary to be a fox to discover the snares and a lion to terrify the wolves. Those who rely simply on the lion do not understand what they are about. Therefore a wise lord cannot, nor ought he to, keep faith when such observance may be turned against him, and when the reasons that caused him to pledge it exist no longer. If men were entirely good this precept would not hold, but because they are bad, and will not keep faith with you, you too are not bound to observe it with them. Nor will there ever be wanting to a prince legitimate reasons to excuse this non-observance. Of this endless modern examples could be given, showing how many treaties and engagements have been made void and of no effect through the faithlessness of princes; and he who has known best how to employ the fox has succeeded best.

But it is necessary to know well how to disguise this characteristic, and to be a great pretender and dissembler; and men are so simple, and so subject to present necessities, that he who seeks to deceive will always find someone who will allow himself to be deceived. One recent example I cannot pass over in silence. Alexander the Sixth did nothing else but deceive men, nor ever thought of doing otherwise, and he always found victims; for there never was a man who had greater power in asserting, or who with greater oaths would affirm a thing, yet would observe it less; nevertheless his deceits always succeeded according to his wishes,because he well understood this side of mankind.

Therefore it is unnecessary for a prince to have all the good qualities I have enumerated, but it is very necessary to appear to have them. And I shall dare to say this also, that to have them and always to observe them is injurious, and that to appear to have them is useful; to appear merciful, faithful, humane, religious, upright, and to be so, but with a mind so framed that should you require not to be so, you may be able and know how to change to the opposite.

And you have to understand this, that a prince, especially a new one, cannot observe all those things for which men are esteemed, being often forced, in order to maintain the state, to act contrary to fidelity, friendship, humanity, and religion. Therefore it is necessary for him to have a mind ready to turn itself accordingly as the winds and variations of fortune force it, yet, as I have said above, not to diverge from the good if he can avoid doing so, but, if compelled, then to know how to set about it.

For this reason a prince ought to take care that he never lets anything slip from his lips that is not replete with the above-named five qualities, that he may appear to him who sees and hears him altogether merciful, faithful, humane, upright, and religious. There is nothing more necessary to appear to have than this last quality, inasmuch as men judge generally more by the eye than by the hand, because it belongs to everybody to see you, to few to come in touch with you. Every one sees what you appear to be, few really know what you are, and those few dare not oppose themselves to the opinion of the many, who have the majesty of the state to defend them; and in the actions of all men, and especially of princes, which it is not prudent to challenge, one judges by the result.

For that reason, let a prince have the credit of conquering and holding his state, the means will always be considered honest, and he will be praised by everybody; because the vulgar are always taken by what a thing seems to be and by what comes of it; and in the world there are only the vulgar, for the few find a place there only when the many have no ground to rest on.

One prince of the present time, whom it is not well to name, never preaches anything else but peace and good faith, and to both he is most hostile, and either, if he had kept it, would have deprived him of reputation and kingdom many a time.

Niccolò di Bernardo dei Machiavelli (1469-1527) was an Italian diplomat, politician, historian, philosopher, writer, playwright and poet of the Renaissance period. He wrote his best-known work *The Prince* (*Il Principe*) in 1513.

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5.9: The Politics of Fear- How It Manipulates Us to Tribalism (Javanbakht)

By Arash Javanbakht



President Barack Obama walks away from the lectern with Vice President Joe Biden after making a statement about the mass shooting in Orlando, Fla., June 16, 2016. (Official White House Photo by Pete Souza) Public Domain

The cruel murder of 50 people in New Zealand was another tragic reminder of how humans are capable of heartlessly killing their own kind just based on what they believe, how they worship, and what race or nationality they belong to. There is a longstanding history of the fear of "the others" turning humans into illogical ruthless weapons, in service to an ideology.

Fear is arguably as old as life. It is deeply ingrained in the living organisms that have survived extinction through billions of years of evolution. Its roots are deep in our core psychological and biological being, and it is one of our most intimate feelings. Danger and war are as old as human history, and so are politics and religion.

Demagogues have always used fear for intimidation of the subordinates or enemies, and shepherding the tribe by the leaders. Fear is a very strong tool that can blur humans' logic and change their behavior.

I am a psychiatrist and neuroscientist specializing in fear and trauma, and I have some evidence-based thoughts on how fear is abused in politics.

We learn fear from tribe mates

Like other animals, we humans can learn fear from experience, such as being attacked by a predator. We also learn from observation, such as witnessing a predator attacking another human. And, we learn by instructions, such as being told there is a predator nearby.

Learning from our conspecifics – members of the same species – is an evolutionary advantage that has prevented us from repeating dangerous experiences of other humans. We have a tendency to trust our tribe mates and authorities, especially when it comes to danger. It is adaptive: Parents and wise old men told us not to eat a special plant, or not to go to an area in the woods, or we would be hurt. By trusting them, we would not die like a great-grandfather who died eating that plant. This way we accumulated knowledge.

Tribalism has been an inherent part of the human history. There has always been competition between groups of humans in different ways and with different faces, from brutal wartime nationalism to a strong loyalty to a football team. Evidence from cultural neuroscience shows that our brains even respond differently at an unconscious level simply to the view of faces from other races or cultures.

At a tribal level, people are more emotional and consequently less logical: Fans of both teams pray for their team to win, hoping God will take sides in a game. On the other hand, we regress to tribalism when afraid. This is an evolutionary advantage that would lead to the group cohesion and help us fight the other tribes to survive.

Tribalism is the biological loophole that many politicians have banked on for a long time: tapping into our fears and tribal instincts. Some examples are Nazism, the Ku Klux Klan, religious wars and the Dark Ages. The typical pattern is to give the other humans a different label than us, and say they are going to harm us or our resources, and to turn the other group into a concept. It does not

have to necessarily be race or nationality, which are used very often. It can be any real or imaginary difference: liberals, conservatives, Middle Easterners, white men, the right, the left, Muslims, Jews, Christians, Sikhs. The list goes on and on.

When building tribal boundaries between “us” and “them,” some politicians have managed very well to create virtual groups of people that do not communicate and hate without even knowing each other: This is the human animal in action!

Fear is uninformed

A soldier once told me: “It is much easier to kill someone you have never met, from distance. When you look through the scope, you just see a red dot, not a human.” The less you know about them, the easier to fear them, and to hate them.

This human tendency and ability of destruction of what is unknown and unfamiliar is meat to the politicians who want to exploit fear: If you grew up only around people who look like you, only listened to one media outlet and heard from the old uncle that those who look or think differently hate you and are dangerous, the inherent fear and hatred toward those unseen people is an understandable (but flawed) result.

To win us, politicians, sometimes with the media’s help, do their best to keep us separated, to keep the real or imaginary “others” just a “concept.” Because if we spend time with others, talk to them and eat with them, we will learn that they are like us: humans with all the strengths and weaknesses that we possess. Some are strong, some are weak, some are funny, some are dumb, some are nice and some not too nice.

Fear is illogical and often dumb

Very often my patients with phobias start with: “I know it is stupid, but I am afraid of spiders.” Or it may be dogs or cats, or something else. And I always reply: “It is not stupid, it is illogical.” We humans have different functions in the brain, and fear oftentimes bypasses logic. There are several reasons. One is that logic is slow; fear is fast. In situations of danger, we ought to be fast: First run or kill, then think.



Some people are afraid of spiders, others of snakes or even cats and dogs. "Spider orb weaver" by kmousky is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

Politicians and the media very often use fear to circumvent our logic. I always say the U.S. media are disaster pornographers – they work too much on triggering their audiences’ emotions. They are kind of political reality shows, surprising to many from outside the U.S.

When one person kills a few others in a city of millions, which is of course a tragedy, major networks’ coverage could lead one to perceive the whole city is under siege and unsafe. If one undocumented illegal immigrant murders a U.S. citizen, some politicians use fear with the hope that few will ask: “This is terrible, but how many people were murdered in this country by U.S. citizens just today?” Or: “I know several murders happen every week in this town, but why am I so scared nowthat this one is being showcased by the media?”

We do not ask these questions, because fear bypasses logic.

Fear can turn violent

There is a reason that the response to fear is called the “fight or flight” response. That response has helped us survive the predators and other tribes that have wanted to kill us. But again, it is another loophole in our biology to be abused to turn on our aggression toward “the others,” whether in the form of vandalizing their temples or harassing them on the social media.



"Desecrated Graves in the Old Jewish Section of the Cemetery, Vienna" by Scott Rettberg is licensed under CC BY 2.0

When ideologies manage to get hold of our fear circuitry, we often regress to illogical, tribal and aggressive human animals, becoming weapons ourselves – weapons that politicians use for their own agenda.

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5.10: Hope and Mourning in the Anthropocene- Understanding Ecological Grief (Ellis and Cunsolo)

By Neville Ellis & Ashlee Cunsolo



"Midwest drought" by jackoscage is licensed under CC BY 2.0

We are living in a time of extraordinary ecological loss. Not only are human actions destabilising the very conditions that sustain life, but it is also increasingly clear that we are pushing the Earth into an entirely new geological era, often described as the Anthropocene.

Research shows that people increasingly feel the effects of these planetary changes and associated ecological losses in their daily lives, and that these changes present significant direct and indirect threats to mental health and well-being. Climate change, and the associated impacts to land and environment, for example, have recently been linked to a range of negative mental health impacts, including depression, suicidal ideation, post-traumatic stress, as well as feelings of anger, hopelessness, distress, and despair.

Not well represented in the literature, however, is an emotional response we term ‘ecological grief,’ which we have defined in a recent Nature Climate Change article: “The grief felt in relation to experienced or anticipated ecological losses, including the loss of species, ecosystems, and meaningful landscapes due to acute or chronic environmental change.”

We believe ecological grief is a natural, though overlooked, response to ecological loss, and one that is likely to affect more of us into the future.

Understanding ecological grief

Grief takes many forms and differs greatly between individuals and cultures. Although grief is well understood in relation to human losses, ‘to grieve’ is rarely considered something that we do in relation to losses in the natural world.

The eminent American naturalist Aldo Leopold was among the first to describe the emotional toll of ecological loss in his 1949 book, A Sand County Almanac: “One of the penalties of an ecological education,” he wrote, “is to live alone in a world of wounds.”

More recently, many respected ecologists and climate scientists have expressed their feelings of grief and distress in response to climate change and the environmental destruction it entails in places like: “Climate scientists feel weight of the world on their shoulders” and “Is this how you feel?”

Ecological grief is also a significant theme in our own work. In different research projects working with Inuit in Inuit Nunangat in Arctic Canada and farmers in the Western Australian Wheatbelt, both of us have spent a combined total of almost 20 years working with people living in areas experiencing significant climatic changes and environmental shifts.

Despite very different geographical and cultural contexts, our research revealed a surprising degree of commonality between Inuit and family farming communities as they struggled to cope, both emotionally and psychologically, with mounting ecological losses and the prospect of an uncertain future.

Voices of ecological grief

Our research shows that climate-related ecological losses can trigger grief experiences in several ways. Foremost, people grieve for lost landscapes, ecosystems, species, or places that carry personal or collective meaning.

For Inuit communities in the Inuit Land Claim Settlement Area of Nunatsiavut, Labrador, Canada, the land is foundational to mental health. In recent years, melting sea ice prevented travel to significant cultural sites and engagement in traditional cultural activities, such as hunting and fishing. These disruptions to an Inuit sense of place was accompanied by strong emotional reactions, including grief, anger, sadness, frustration and despair.

One male who grew up hunting and trapping on the land in the community of Rigolet, Nunatsiavut explained:

“People are not who they are. They’re not comfortable and can’t do the same things. If something is taken away from you, you don’t have it. If a way of life is taken away because of circumstances you have no control over, you lose control over your life.”

Chronic drought conditions in the Western Australian Wheatbelt elicited similar emotional reactions for some family farmers. As one long-time farmer described:

“There’s probably nothing worse than seeing your farm go in a dust storm. I reckon it’s probably one of the worst feelings […] I find that one of the most depressing things of the lot, seeing the farm blow away in a dust storm. That really gets up my nose, and a long way up too. If its blowing dust I come inside - I just come inside here. I can’t stand to watch it.”

In both cases, such experiences resonate strongly with the concept of “solastagia,” described both as a form of homesickness while still in place, and as a type of grief over the loss of a healthy place or a thriving ecosystem.

People also grieve for lost environmental knowledge and associated identities. In these cases, people mourn the part of self-identity that is lost when the land upon which it is based changes or disappears.

For Australian family farmers, the inability to maintain a healthy landscape in the context of worsening seasonal variability and chronic dryness often elicited feelings of self-blame and shame:

“Farmers just hate seeing their farm lift; it somehow says to them ‘I’m a bad farmer’. And I think all farmers are good farmers. They all try their hardest to be. They all love their land.”

For older Inuit in Nunatsiavut, changes to weather and landscape are invalidating long-standing and multi-generational ecological knowledge, and with it, a coherent sense of culture and self. As one well-respected hunter shared:

“It’s hurting in a way. It’s hurting in a lot of ways. Because I kinda thinks I’m not going to show my grandkids the way we used to do it. It’s hurting me. It’s hurting me big time. And I just keep that to myself.”

Many Inuit and family farmers also worry about their futures, and express grief in anticipation of worsening ecological losses. As one woman explained from Rigolet, Nunatsiavut:

“I think that [the changes] will have an impact maybe on mental health, because it’s a depressing feeling when you’re stuck. I mean for us to go off [on the land] is just a part of life. If you don’t have it, then that part of your life is gone, and I think that’s very depressing.”

Similarly, a farmer in Australia worried about the future shared their thoughts on the possibility of losing their family farm:

“[It] would be like a death. Yeah, there would be a grieving process because the farm embodies everything that the family farm is … And I think if we were to lose it, it would be like losing a person … but it would be sadder than losing a person … I don’t know, it would be hard definitely.”

Ecological grief in a climate-changed future

Ecological grief reminds us that climate change is not just some abstract scientific concept or a distant environmental problem. Rather, it draws our attention to the personally experienced emotional and psychological losses suffered when there are changes or deaths in the natural world. In doing so, ecological grief also illuminates the ways in which more-than-humans are integral to our mental wellness, our communities, our cultures, and for our ability to thrive in a human-dominated world.

From what we have seen in our own research, although this type of grief is already being experienced, it often lacks an appropriate avenue for expression or for healing. Indeed, not only do we lack the rituals and practices to help address feelings of ecological grief, until recently we did not even have the language to give such feelings voice. And it is for these reasons that grief over losses in the natural world can feel, as American ecologist Phyllis Windle put it, ‘irrational, inappropriate, anthropomorphic.’

We argue that recognising ecological grief as a legitimate response to ecological loss is an important first step for humanising climate change and its related impacts, and for expanding our understanding of what it means to be human in the Anthropocene. How to grieve ecological losses well — particularly when they are ambiguous, cumulative and ongoing — is a question currently without answer. However, it is a question that we expect will become more pressing as further impacts from climate change, including loss, are experienced.

We do not see ecological grief as submitting to despair, and neither does it justify 'switching off' from the many environmental problems that confront humanity. Instead, we find great hope in the responses ecological grief is likely to invoke. Just as grief over the loss of a loved person puts into perspective what matters in our lives, collective experiences of ecological grief may coalesce into a strengthened sense of love and commitment to the places, ecosystems and species that inspire, nurture and sustain us. There is much grief work to be done, and much of it will be hard. However, being open to the pain of ecological loss may be what is needed to prevent such losses from occurring in the first place.

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5.11: To Seek Common Ground on Life's Big Questions, We Need Science Literacy (Garlick)

By Jonathan Garlick



Get your head around some science basics and you're ready for the big questions. David Yu, CC BY-NC-ND

Science isn't important only to scientists or those who profess an interest in it. Whether you find fascinating every new discovery reported or you stopped taking science in school as soon as you could, a base level understanding is crucial for modern citizens to ground their engagement in the national conversation about science-related issues.

We need to look no further than the Ebola crisis to appreciate the importance of science literacy. A recently elected senator has linked sealing the US-Mexican border with keeping Ebola out of the US, even though the disease is nonexistent in Mexico. Four out of 10 Americans believe there will be a large scale Ebola epidemic here, even though there have been just four cases in the US and only one fatality. Flu, on the other hand, which killed over 100 children here last winter, barely registers in the public consciousness.

Increasingly we must grapple with highly-charged and politicized science-based issues ranging from infectious diseases and human cloning to reproductive choices and climate change. Yet many – perhaps even the majority – of Americans aren't sufficiently scientifically literate to make sense of these complicated issues. For instance, on one recent survey of public attitudes and understanding of science and technology, Americans barely got a passing grade, answering only 5.8 out of 9 factual knowledge questions correctly.

Without a solid understanding of the underlying science and its implications for our daily lives, we can neither respond intelligently on a personal level nor hold our public officials accountable for sound policy decisions. Moreover, we risk falling prey to the tremendous power of fear and partisan political rhetoric. By grounding our understanding of issues in knowledge, we can gain the confidence to participate in the science conversation in a thoughtful way. Science literacy is a path to that knowledge.

What's needed to be scientifically literate?

Science literacy is a foundational knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts and processes. For example, scientifically literate people should know that science is reproducible, evidence-based information that is fact and not opinion. They should have a working knowledge of the basic terminology needed to interpret the processes and outcomes of science. With this vocabulary in hand, they can engage in the critical thinking needed to apply healthy skepticism and to discern the grey areas and uncertainties inherent in science-based information.

As a stem cell scientist, I have spent my life tackling elusive questions such as "what is personhood" or "when does life begin." Recently, my interest has shifted to helping the public engage in open-minded discussions about these types of questions.

The goal isn't to move public opinion towards one side or another of the stem cell or any other debate, but rather to create a forum in which all sides are armed with basic scientific knowledge and have a legitimate voice in the conversation.

How to get literate

I teach a freshman seminar class at Tufts University called “Science and the Human Experience” that is largely populated with students whose interests are in the humanities and social sciences. The curriculum encourages these not-necessarily-science-lovers to explore the ways science affects their everyday lives. We talk about stem cells and abortion, right-to-die and drug treatment. We question when does life begin? What can our genome tell us? How do we experience pain? What does it mean to grow old? Students confront the emotional and personal consequences of science and its relationship to their lives.

Grappling with these issues is empowering. One student understood, for the first time, that her personal investment in science was connected to a loved one’s struggle with addiction. Another freshman planning on an English major discovered that she was, to her own surprise, “just as capable as anyone else of understanding and applying scientific material to my life.” Students uncover their own, personal rationales for engaging in these issues and then, most importantly, ask themselves, “Why does this matter to me?" They report that to learn the value of science, and to engage deeply in it, is to learn what it means to be human.

While knowledge is fundamental to addressing civic, science-based questions, our beliefs and values play an equally important role. As Yale law professor Dan Kahan, who studies science and civic engagement, says"What people ‘believe’ about global warming doesn’t reflect what they know; it expresses who they are.” In fact, understanding the science is perhaps the easier part of the equation. The greater struggle is for people with diverse views on science-related issues to wrestle with these conflicting values. This is a messy but necessary part of a healthy civic dialogue. Therefore, any program to increase science literacy must equally embrace the goals of promoting a respectful, civic conversation that will work towards shared understanding.

Informed citizens = productive dialogue

So what’s a responsible citizen to do? First, become sufficiently science literate to understand the nuances of the important science-based issues of our day. Next, be prepared to engage in difficult conversations with fellow citizens with different opinions so that dialogue is valued over doctrine, as we work together to balance self-interest with compassion.

If everyone comes to the table with a base level of information and a willingness to listen to each other’s concerns, we can replace the polarization of our current public discourse with productive public problem solving. We can then approach each other with a genuine curiosity to build a science conversation that is enlivened by a search for mutual understanding regardless of a position held on an issue. We need not hold the same beliefs or values to find common ground on the important science-based issues that face us today and will only become more urgent in the years ahead.

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5.12: Getting a Scientific Message Across Means Taking Human Nature into Account (Hendricks)

Rose Hendricks

#reportinginformation, #cognitivebias, #logos, #ethos, #kairos, #pathos, #currentevents, #science



"Hear no evil. Speak no evil. See no evil" by smileham is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0

We humans have collectively accumulated a lot of science knowledge. We've developed vaccines that can eradicate some of the most devastating diseases. We've engineered bridges and cities and the internet. We've created massive metal vehicles that rise tens of thousands of feet and then safely set down on the other side of the globe. And this is just the tip of the iceberg (which, by the way, we've discovered is melting). While this shared knowledge is impressive, it's not distributed evenly. Not even close. There are too many important issues that science has reached a consensus on that the public has not.

Scientists and the media need to communicate more science and communicate it better. Good communication ensures that scientific progress benefits society, bolsters democracy, weakens the potency of fake news and misinformation and fulfills researchers' responsibility to engage with the public. Such beliefs have motivated training programs, workshops and a research agenda from the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine on learning more about science communication. A resounding question remains for science communicators: What can we do better?

A common intuition is that the main goal of science communication is to present facts; once people encounter those facts, they will think and behave accordingly. The National Academies' recent report refers to this as the "deficit model."

But in reality, just knowing facts doesn't necessarily guarantee that one's opinions and behaviors will be consistent with them. For example, many people "know" that recycling is beneficial but still throw plastic bottles in the trash. Or they read an online article by a scientist about the necessity of vaccines, but leave comments expressing outrage that doctors are trying to further a pro-vaccine agenda. Convincing people that scientific evidence has merit and should guide behavior may be the greatest science communication challenge, particularly in our "post-truth" era.

Luckily, we know a lot about human psychology – how people perceive, reason and learn about the world – and many lessons from psychology can be applied to science communication endeavors.

Consider human nature

Regardless of your religious affiliation, imagine that you've always learned that God created human beings just as we are today. Your parents, teachers and books all told you so. You've also noticed throughout your life that science is pretty useful – you especially love heating up a frozen dinner in the microwave while browsing Snapchat on your iPhone.

One day you read that scientists have evidence for human evolution. You feel uncomfortable: Were your parents, teachers and books wrong about where people originally came from? Are these scientists wrong? You experience cognitive dissonance – the uneasiness that results from entertaining two conflicting ideas.

Psychologist Leon Festinger first articulated the theory of cognitive dissonance in 1957, noting that it's human nature to be uncomfortable with maintaining two conflicting beliefs at the same time. That discomfort leads us to try to reconcile the competing ideas we come across. Regardless of political leaning, we're hesitant to accept new information that contradicts our existing worldviews.

One way we subconsciously avoid cognitive dissonance is through confirmation bias – a tendency to seek information that confirms what we already believe and discard information that doesn't.

This human tendency was first exposed by psychologist Peter Wason in the 1960s in a simple logic experiment. He found that people tend to seek confirmatory information and avoid information that would potentially disprove their beliefs.

The concept of confirmation bias scales up to larger issues, too. For example, psychologists John Cook and Stephen Lewandowsky asked people about their beliefs concerning global warming and then gave them information stating that 97 percent of scientists agree that human activity causes climate change. The researchers measured whether the information about the scientific consensus influenced people's beliefs about global warming.

Those who initially opposed the idea of human-caused global warming became even less accepting after reading about the scientific consensus on the issue. People who had already believed that human actions cause global warming supported their position even more strongly after learning about the scientific consensus. Presenting these participants with factual information ended up further polarizing their views, strengthening everyone's resolve in their initial positions. It was a case of confirmation bias at work: New information consistent with prior beliefs strengthened those beliefs; new information conflicting with existing beliefs led people to discredit the message as a way to hold on to their original position.



Just shouting louder isn't going to help. Photo by Maritime Union of New Zealand is licensed under CC BY 2.0

Overcoming cognitive biases

How can science communicators share their messages in a way that leads people to change their beliefs and actions about important science issues, given our natural cognitive biases?

The first step is to acknowledge that every audience has preexisting beliefs about the world. Expect those beliefs to color the way they receive your message. Anticipate that people will accept information that is consistent with their prior beliefs and discredit information that is not.

Then, focus on framing. No message can contain all the information available on a topic, so any communication will emphasize some aspects while downplaying others. While it's unhelpful to cherry-pick and present only evidence in your favor – which can backfire anyway – it is helpful to focus on what an audience cares about.

For example, these University of California researchers point out that the idea of climate change causing rising sea levels may not alarm an inland farmer dealing with drought as much as it does someone living on the coast. Referring to the impact our actions today may have for our grandchildren might be more compelling to those who actually have grandchildren than to those who don't. By anticipating what an audience believes and what's important to them, communicators can choose more effective frames for their messages – focusing on the most compelling aspects of the issue for their audience and presenting it in a way the audience can identify with.

In addition to the ideas expressed in a frame, the specific words used matter. Psychologists Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman first showedwhen numerical information is presented in different ways, people think about it differently. Here's an example from their 1981 study:

Imagine that the U.S. is preparing for the outbreak of an unusual Asian disease, which is expected to kill 600 people. Two alternative programs to combat the disease have been proposed. Assume that the exact scientific estimate of the consequences of the programs are as follows: If Program A is adopted, 200 people will be saved. If Program B is adopted, there is ⅓ probability that 600 people will be saved, and ⅔ probability that no people will be saved.

Both programs have an expected value of 200 lives saved. But 72 percent of participants chose Program A. We reason about mathematically equivalent options differently when they're framed differently: Our intuitions are often not consistent with probabilities and other math concepts.

Metaphors can also act as linguistic frames. Psychologists Paul Thibodeau and Lera Boroditsky found that people who read that crime is a beast proposed different solutions than those who read that crime is a virus – even if they had no memory of reading the metaphor. The metaphors guided people's reasoning, encouraging them to transfer solutions they'd propose for real beasts (cage them) or viruses (find the source) to dealing with crime (harsher law enforcement or more social programs).

The words we use to package our ideas can drastically influence how people think about those ideas.

What's next?

We have a lot to learn. Quantitative research on the efficacy of science communication strategies is in its infancy but becoming an increasing priority. As we continue to untangle more about what works and why, it's important for science communicators to be conscious of the biases they and their audiences bring to their exchanges and the frames they select to share their messages.

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5.13: Why Rituals Are Good for Your Health (Honarvar)

Ari Honarvar

#sharedvalues, #descriptive, #narrative, #pathos, #currentevents, #argument, #valuesbasedargument, #research, #kairos #global #religion #health



"Buddhist Ritual" by sasint is in the Public Domain, CC0

I don't know if I could have survived seven years of my childhood without the soul-saving rituals of my Persian culture. I grew up amid the Iran-Iraq War, which killed a million people. Besides the horrors of the war, freedom of thought and expression were severely restricted in Iran after the Islamic revolution. Women bore the brunt of this as, in a matter of months, we were forced to ditch our previous lifestyle and observe a strict Islamic attire, which covered our bodies and hair. We lost the right to jog, ride a bicycle, or sing in public. Life seemed unbearable at times, but we learned to bring meaning into uncertainty and chaos by maintaining grounding practices and developing new ones.

It helped that in Persian culture we had ceremonies to turn to. We clung to 3,500-year-old Zoroastrian ceremonies that correspond to the seasons. Several of these rituals take place during the spring because the equinox marks the Persian New Year. Besides a thorough spring cleaning, we jump over a bonfire to cleanse our inner landscape and give our maladies to fire and gain vitality from it. On the longest night of the year, winter solstice, we stay up all night eating fruits and nuts, reciting poetry, playing music, and dancing. This is to symbolize survival and celebration during dark times.

Rituals, which are a series of actions performed in a specific way, have been part of human existence for thousands of years. They are not habits. According to research psychologist Nick Hobson, a habit's inherent goal is different from a ritual's. With habit, the actions and behaviors are causally tied to the desired outcome; for example, brushing our teeth to prevent cavities and gum disease and exercising to keep healthy. Rituals, on the other hand, are "goal demoted," which means that their actions have no instrumental connection to the outcome. For example, we sing "Happy Birthday" to the same melody even though it isn't tied to a specific external result.

Cristine Legare, a researcher and psychology professor at the University of Texas at Austin, says, "Rituals signify transition points in the individual life span and provide psychologically meaningful ways to participate in the beliefs and practices of the community." They have been instrumental in building community, promoting cooperation, and marking transition points in a community member's life. And as strange as rituals might be from a logical perspective, they have evolved as distinct features of human culture.

While it's not clear exactly how they help, rituals reduce anxiety, improve performance and confidence, and even work on people who don't believe in them, research shows. In a University of Toronto study, participants who performed a ritual before completing a task exhibited less anxiety and sensitivity to personal failure than when they completed the task without first performing the ritual.

Additionally, rituals benefit our physical well-being and immune system. According to Andrew Newberg, the associate director of research at the Marcus Institute of Integrative Health, rituals lower cortisol, which in turn lowers heart rate and blood pressure and increases immune system function.

We live amid a loneliness epidemic where the lack of belonging and community has been linked to high suicide rates and an increased sense of despair. The United States has one of the worst work-life balance scores in the world, while more Americans

have become disillusioned with organized religion, as a broad and rapidly rising demographic consider themselves spiritual but not religious. Perhaps with fewer opportunities for people to be in community, many shared cultural rituals are falling away and with them a grounding source for connection and mental health.

In Iran during the war, we found uses for rituals when we were faced with food rations. We gathered family and friends, reciting the ancient story of the poor abused girl who had run away from home and had a vision of being visited by three celestial bibis (matrons). The bibis instructed her to make a sweet halva and donate it to the poor. The girl said she didn't have any money, and the bibis told her to borrow or work for the ingredients. This worked well with food rations as each guest brought a few ingredients to make the halva. Like the girl in the story, each participant made a wish and took a bite of the halva. I walked away feeling calmer and more supported.

Stories, such as those told during the Jewish ceremony of Passover Seder, have become ritualized because they are recited in the same way each time. Rhythm and music play a similar role in ritual. Whether we're chanting in Sanskrit or singing the national anthem, "our brains tend to resonate with those around us, so if everyone is doing the same dance, hymn, or prayer, all of those brains are working in the same way," Newberg explains. "This can engender a powerful feeling of connectedness. It also reduces stress and depression through a combination of effects on the autonomic nervous system, which is ultimately connected to the emotional areas of the brain—the limbic system." According to one study, chanting the Sanskrit syllable "om" deactivates the limbic system, softening the edge of fear, anxiety, and depression.

Psychologist Hobson confirms that rituals aren't just a benefit to our mental health—they're actually essential. "We are an intensely social and ritualistic species," he says. "Take this piece out of our modern human narrative and you lose a piece of our history and our humanity."

I moved to the U.S. when I was 14. After living here for two decades, I became a mother and was confronted with the phrase, "It takes a village to raise a child." But where was that mythical village and the rituals that made it sane? For example, a pregnant woman in Iran had a rotating menu of dishes made for her by friends and family. A new mother was surrounded by people who took turns assisting with daily tasks. But in the U.S., she was expected to fend for herself and her baby immediately after childbirth. I observed that besides standard holiday traditions, community-building practices were lacking.

So after 20 years of living in the U.S., I decided to create my own community rituals.

I started with my family. At dinners we banned books and devices, lit candles, and discussed set topics of conversation. We held weekly family meetings with opening and closing ceremonies and used a talking stick to enforce respectful communication. At birthday dinners, we took turns saying, "I love you because …"

Candlelit dinners were no longer saved for a special occasion. Using a talking stick helped me listen more attentively and choose my words more carefully. Huddling together at the end of each family meeting provided me with a sense of accomplishment. Each ritual, no matter how small, anchored me in something bigger and provided a sense of belonging.

Then we began to build rituals within the larger community. First, we hosted a multigenerational Sunday potluck with friends and family. Each week, five to 10 of us gathered, shared food, and recounted what made us grateful. During each meal, I noticed I was lighter, more engaged with others, and laughed more.

Later, we built more community rituals into the week. I posted on Nextdoor, asking our neighbors to join us on Monday evening walks to the neighborhood park and back.

In this age of isolation, we need nourishing and uplifting means of creating community by bringing together members of different generations as our ancestors did. From my experience in Iran, rituals can be particularly valuable during hard times. In the U.S., we don't have to worry about bombs and food rations, but we still have challenges to our security that affect our mental and physical health. Rituals can help us, though, by offering our communities opportunities for healing and support.

Ari Honarvar is an award-winning writer, speaker, and performer. In her work, she explores poetry, parenting, rituals, and the plight of refugees and asylum seekers. Her website is rumiwithaview.com. This work was previously published in Yes! Magazine.

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5.14: Why Native Americans Do Not Separate Religion from Science (LaPier)

By Rosalyn R. LaPier



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Last year five Native American tribes in Washington state managed to repatriate the remains of the “Ancient One,” as they called him, or “Kennewick Man,” as scientists called him.

For the tribes, the Ancient One is to be revered as a human ancestor. But for the scientists, the rare specimen of a 9,000-year-old Kennewick Man was important to understanding the history of North America. After a 20-year court battle, the tribes finally reburied the Ancient One. However, this could be done only after scientists had created his multi-dimensional model for future study.

For a long time, the relationship between Native Americans and scientists has been a contentious one. It would appear from this case that what matters most to Native Americans are religious beliefs and not science.

While this might be the case with human remains, which are a sensitive issue with most tribes, scientific endeavors are very important to Native Americans.

That is why indigenous scientists and scholars including myself supported the March for Science on April 22.

Sacred ecology

Scientists began thinking and writing about how Native Americans understand the natural world in the 20th century. Instead of seeing a conflict between Western science and Native American knowledge, they started thinking about ways to learn how Native Americans addressed environmental and ecological issues differently.

Ecologist Fikret Berkes pointed out these distinctions in his seminal book “Sacred Ecology,” where he noted that both Western and indigenous science can be regarded as “the same general intellectual process of creating order out of disorder.”

Native American traditions blend science and religion. Carling Hale, CC BY-NC-ND

He provided his own research as an example. He stated that the Native Americans he worked with knew far more than he did about aquatic ecological systems, even though he had academic training. He noted their knowledge was both scientific and viewed through a religious lens.

“One important point of difference is that many systems of indigenous knowledge include spiritual or religious dimensions (beliefs) that do not make sense to science…. This is ‘sacred ecology’ in the most expansive, rather than in the scientifically restrictive, sense of the word ‘ecology.’”

Traditional knowledge

Native American scholars are now writing about this blending of science and religion.

Native American scientist Robin Kimmerer, for example, tells her story as a trained botanist learning about Native American worldview in her book *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*. She describes

how she learned words in her native language, Anishinaabe, that explained biological processes better than Western science could in English.

As a Native American scholar, I, too, have spent the past year at the intersection of science and religion at Harvard Divinity School, researching “ethnobotany” and “ethnopharmacology” – the scientific study of the medicinal qualities of plants and Native American belief.

I learned from my grandmother, Annie Mad Plume Wall, who was regarded as a “doctor” on the Blackfeet reservation in Montana, that certain plants were medicine. She understood the ethnopharmacology of plants that were used as analgesics, antibacterials or anti-inflammatory agents. She knew which plants to use when one of her patients was ill.

The knowledge of the medicinal qualities of these plants clearly grew out of a process of observation and experimentation. She learned how to distill the essential elements of a plant to create an extract of its medicinal properties. In fact, her refrigerator was filled with bottles of extracts.



"Inipi" by Monica Mendoza, U.S. Air Force is in the Public Domain

Native Americans believe in a sacred ecology. Here, tribal elder Gordon Yellowman shows several of the tools that he uses in rituals. Nick Oxford/Reuters

However, some of these plants also had mythological stories that spoke of their origin in the supernatural realm. These stories instructed the Blackfeet how to communicate with the plant, to care for it, how to protect its ecosystem, restrict knowledge of the plant and its over-harvesting.

My grandmother believed that a powerful supernatural being, “Ko’komíki’somm,” gave humans certain plants to use as medicine. She also understood, based on their scientific properties, that a plant was indeed a medicine.

Alternative paradigm

It is true that Western science and Native Americans have a complicated history, as the struggle over the Ancient One attests. Anthropologist Chip Colwell discusses in “Plundered Skulls and Stolen Spirits: Inside the Fight to Reclaim Native America’s Culture” that the problem is that the items scientists consider “objects” for study, such as human remains, Native Americans would view through their own worldview, their own belief system.

More recently, there has been a better recognition of the role of indigenous sciences. In 2016, a U.S.-Canada joint statement on Climate, Energy, and Arctic Leadership recognized the importance of both Western science and indigenous science to help solve global issues. It urged that both “science-based approaches” and “indigenous science and traditional knowledge” be incorporated in efforts to both address commercial interests in the Arctic, such as oil and gas development and shipping lanes, and protect the Arctic and its people.

Native American scientists and scholars have also weighed in on this debate. For the March of Science, many Native American scholars, including Kimmerer and myself, have written a declaration of support that states:

“Let us remember that long before western science came to these shores, there were scientists here….Western science is a powerful approach, but it is not the only one. Indigenous science provides a wealth of knowledge and a powerful alternative paradigm.”

For many Native Americans, like my grandmother, myth and medicine, religion and science, are not viewed as separate, but are interwoven into the fabric of our lives.

Rosalyn R. LaPier is Associate Professor of Environmental Studies at the University of Montana who studies the intersection of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) learned from elders and the academic study of environmental history and religion. Rosalyn is an enrolled member of the Blackfeet Tribe in Montana and Métis. Her essay originally appeared in *The Conversation*.

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5.15: Taking the Native American Narrative Beyond Reservations (Vizcarra)

Natasha Vizcarra

#nativeamerican #language #artsandculture ##history #review



"Sisters of War". Jolene Nenibah Yazzie

Who in the U.S. could tell if a man sitting in a coffeeshop was Native American? At the comic book store, the two young women who were obviously into each other – who could tell they were Diné? Who would even know the Diné was another name for the Navajo Native American tribe, or consider the fact that Native Americans might be active members of society beyond casinos and reservations?

"Tiger Lily," Jolene Nenibah Yazzie says, referring to a supporting character in J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*. "Don't forget Tiger Lily." Yazzie, a Denver-based artist and photographer, is Diné. Princess Tiger Lily lives in Neverland with her tribe, the Piccaninny.

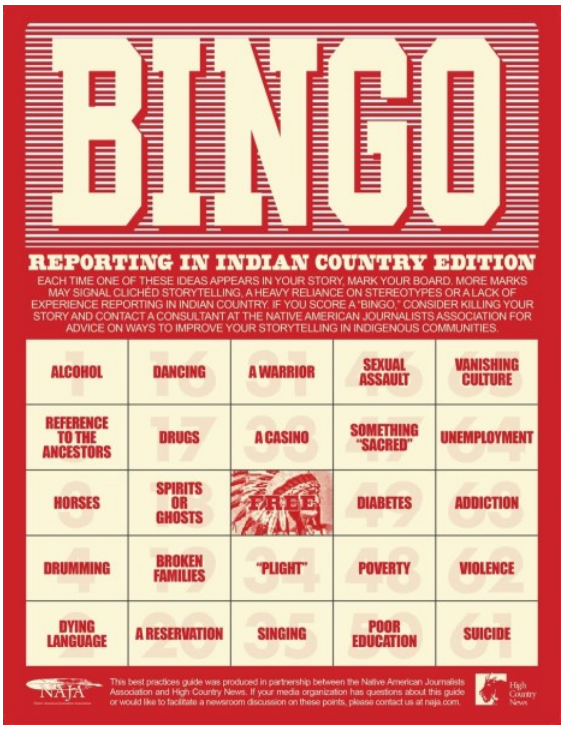
Why Barrie, who wrote the story as a play in 1904, chose a racial slur for dark-skinned children of African descent to name her tribe is telling. And Disney's depiction of Tiger Lily 50 years after Barrie wrote the original play is even more so.

"That feather in the headband, a feather sticking out," Yazzie says. "I don't know any tribe who wears feathers like that, especially in our ancestral stories." Sixty years after the Disney film's release, Tiger Lily still wasn't right and was played by Rooney Mara in the 2015 film *Pan*. (Most Native American characters have been played by white actors in Hollywood films).

This flippant and racist disregard to accuracy is typical of Native American stereotypes propagated by U.S. history, pop culture and mass media. The Native American is either the noble savage, the bloodthirsty savage, the despairing Indian on a reservation or simply invisible.

"There were always these stereotypes of what a Native American was, and it was always a bad guy," says Yazzie, who devoured comics in her youth growing up on the Diné reservation in Tse Si Ani, also known as Lupton, Arizona. Known for its magnificent sandstone cliffs, the small town straddles the border between New Mexico and Arizona. "I just don't like those types of characters, and they're all men too," she adds.

Decades older than Yazzie, writer Sherman Alexie of the Spokane-Coeur d'Alene tribe felt the same. In his 1998 Los Angeles Times essay "I Hated Tonto (Still Do)," he wrote: "In the movies, Indians are always accompanied by ominous music. And I've seen so many Indian movies that I feel like I'm constantly accompanied by ominous music. I always feel that something bad is about to happen."



To raise awareness among media about reporting Native American stories, Ahtone helped in the gamification of words to approach with caution. Photo courtesy of NAJA and High Country News

These stereotypes not only negatively affect Native Americans' self-esteem, but they also radiate outward and influence institutions, such as mass media. Tristan Ahtone, a journalist and citizen of the Kiowa Nation, is exasperated by mainstream media's sloppy and stereotypical coverage of issues involving Native Americans and Indigenous peoples worldwide.

"The point about challenging stereotypes about Native people is you just have to write about a real person," he says. "It's not that hard. It's an incredibly low bar to write about somebody as a normal person, instead of, 'Oh my God we've never seen anything like this!' "

Why has this status quo been living for so long? Ahtone thinks it stems from an avoidance that has deep racial roots. "When it comes to these sorts of colonial practices in the U.S., we're incredibly inconvenient to have around," he says. "U.S. history provides ample evidence of genocidal policies. So by having us around and talking about surviving, for instance, that's a big issue."

But while Alexie was coy about fighting stereotypes ("We Indians became so numb to the possibility of dissent," he wrote), Ahtone and Yazzie are among many Native Americans unequivocally committed to changing their own narratives – and Native American narratives as a whole.



Yazzie uses graphic art to address gender and Indigenous issues in the U.S. Photo courtesy of Jolene Nenibah Yazzie

Too Many Feathers for a Woman

When Yazzie was only 4 years old, she already knew she was different. “My parents knew it too. I always wanted to be with the boys and do things better than the boys,” she says. “Being gay and being a person of color – being Diné – it questions a lot of things.”

Of course, the inevitable happened. “I started competing against boys in powwows,” she recounts.

This was one of the first things Yazzie did to claim her narrative, and she did it despite being seen as disrespectful to their traditions. “People said to me, ‘You can’t dance in the boys’ category because you’re a girl.’ I have questioned that ever since.”

Yazzie was even bullied in the powwow circle. But because her parents were always supportive, she has danced in boys’ and now men’s’ powwows ever since. She has met several men who dance in the women’s category, and she’s seen other women dance in the men’s category. “I don’t know if they’re still doing it,” she says. “I hope they are.”

Yazzie has also asserted a more authentic portrayal of Native American women through her paintings. Her comic book–style portraits of Native American women warriors raise elders’ eyebrows. In her mural “Sisters of War,” three women warriors wear hats adorned with feathers.

“Some of my own people question me because these hats are only worn by men. They say, ‘Women aren’t supposed to be warriors. They have too many feathers on their hats. That’s too many feathers for a woman.’

“But that was my interpretation of me stepping into gender,” she says. “I know there were women warriors, and there still are women warriors. They just face different wars, like domestic violence, rape, that kind of stuff.”

Over the past few years, Yazzie has added photojournalism to her storytelling tools. She has freelanced for *Al Jazeera America*, is currently finishing a journalism degree at the Metropolitan State University of Denver and will join *High Country News* as a photographer in July.

Yazzie is excited about a current project with a professor at Oklahoma State University. “She wants me to take photos of lesbians who have families,” Yazzie says. “I think it’s important because there is a lack of images of lesbian women, especially Diné or any other tribe, raising their own families.”

The project is close to Yazzie’s heart as she and her partner, who is part Diné, want to get married in a tribal ceremony. But, the Diné medicine men they have approached have all turned them away. Her desire for kids is difficult for her and her partner to imagine.

“I want to make [these images] more normal for other people, so they won’t look at [gay women] like that anymore,” Yazzie says. “Because even those little weird glances make you uncomfortable. It doesn’t make you feel that you’re a part of something. I want them to feel they are not alone, that there is a community for them.”

Every Space a Revolution

It’s been about six years since Ahtone left general news reporting and to focus primarily on tribal affairs and Indigenous stories. He has worked for news outlets including *NPR, Al Jazeera America, PBS NewsHour, Frontline and National Native News* and won a few awards for his work. Now an associate editor for tribal affairs at *High Country News*, Ahtone works hard at making space for Native American voices in the national conversation.

“There is no Indigenous voice in mainstream or legacy media,” Ahtone says. He feels these outlets just don’t hire enough Native reporters or editors, if they hire any at all. Their coverage of Indigenous issues also leaves much to be desired. “Some places will have a marijuana beat but they don’t have a beat covering the 567 tribal nations across the U.S.,” Ahtone says.

So, after several years of sticking it out in mainstream outlets, he left. He says, “It’s incredibly tiring to have to continue to try to convince an industry that prides itself on being very democratic and open to underrepresented voices that our voices matter.”

Ahtone was drawn to *High Country News* because they devoted resources and time to producing multi-faceted, high-quality coverage of Native Americans and their lands. Ahtone also worked for cable news channel *Al Jazeera America,* which was aiming to be the go-to network for underrepresented voices. Unfortunately it shut down in 2016 after only three years on the airwaves.

Most legacy outlets, Ahtone says, only want one-off reports or occasional ‘Indigenous Voices’ series. “These outlets routinely screw things up with Indigenous communities but also with most communities of color,” Ahtone says.

He attributes this to an underpinning concept of ownership: “The commodification of Native people – be it through land or through image – often plays a role in reporters thinking that they can do whatever they want in these communities.”

Ahtone thinks that journalists in legacy outlets might not even be conscious of this, and that this lack of self-awareness in turn keeps them from recognizing their reporting and correcting their behavior.

For Ahtone, publications such as *The New York Times* and *Washington Post* are most culpable as their influence and strong digital presence ensures they dominate news coverage and “take up a lot more space in the national conversation.”

As Ahtone digs into more investigative pieces for *High Country News* and builds his team of reporters and correspondents, he also keeps his eye on young Native American writers keen on becoming journalists.

Working with the Native American Journalists Association (NAJA), Ahtone and his colleagues advocate to get more Native people into newsrooms, “because Indigenous peoples holding space is revolutionary,” he says. “We need to be holding these spaces.

“If you’re at a tribal outlet, if you’re in a mainstream outlet, it doesn’t matter. We need your voice. No matter where you are, we want you there.”

The community of journalists such as himself might be small, but it is strong, he says. Experienced Native American journalists are eager to mentor those who are younger and equip future generations with the skills to continue changing the narrative.

“My hope is by starting to seed more people into news organizations early, with a different way of thinking, then in the future they will do a better job.”

Natasha Vizcarra is a science writer based in Boulder, Colorado. She is the editor of *Sensing Our Planet: NASA Earth Science Research Features*, a freelance writer, and the author of several children’s books.

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5.16: Juneteenth - Freedom's Promise Is Still Denied to Thousands of Blacks Unable to Make Bail (Larson)

By Matthew Larson



Freed Woman and Freed Man Sculptures by Adrienne Rison Isom at the Juneteenth Memorial Monument at The George Washington Carver Museum, Culture, and Genealogy Center representing how the news of freedom spread. "Freedom Sun" by Jennifer Rangubphai is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0

June 19 marks Juneteenth, a celebration of the de facto end of slavery in the United States.

For hundreds of thousands of African-Americans stuck in pretrial detention – accused but not convicted of a crime, and unable to leave because of bail – that promise remains unfulfilled. And coming immediately after Father's Day, it's also a reminder of the loss associated with the forced separation of families.

On a very personal level, I know how this separation feels. Every Father's Day since 2011, I've been reminded of the unexpected death of my dad at the age of 48. But also on a professional level, as a criminologist who has been researching mass incarceration for the past decade, I understand the disproportionate impact it's had on African-Americans, destabilizing black families in the process.

Blacks behind bars

Juneteenth is a celebration of African-Americans' triumph over slavery and access to freedom in the U.S., which occurred in Galveston, Texas, in June of 1865, over two and a half years after President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation.



"_6233175.jpg" by Julie, Dave & Family is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

While Juneteenth is a momentous day in U.S. history, it is important to appreciate that the civil rights and liberties promised to African-Americans have yet to be fully realized. As legal scholar Michelle Alexander forcefully explains, this is a consequence of Jim Crow laws and the proliferation of incarceration that began in the 1970s, including the increase of people placed in pretrial detention and other criminal justice policies.

There are 2.3 million people currently incarcerated in American prisons and jails – including those not convicted of any crime. Black people comprise 40 percent of them, even though they represent just 13 percent of the U.S. population.

Not yet guilty but not free

More troubling is the number of incarcerated individuals currently held in jail for crimes of which they have not yet been convicted.

The Prison Policy Initiative, a nonpartisan think tank that focuses on mass incarceration, has reported that over a half million citizens are languishing in pretrial detention. And like most criminal justice outcomes, the burden of this disproportionately falls on minorities, especially black men and women.

In local jails alone, over 300,000 people are awaiting trial for property, drug or public order crimes. And again, these disproportionately black defendants are confined and separated from their families, friends and jobs simply because they lack the means to post cash bail – the only reason they can't get out.

Toll on families

It should be no surprise, then, that 1 in 9 black children now has a parent behind bars, compared with the national rate of 1 in 28.

And many of these children are at an increased likelihood of experiencing physical and mental health issues, academic struggles and a range of other behavioral problems. Children of incarcerated mothers are also at heightened odds of ending up in foster care and being exposed to other traumas.

Being the partner of an incarcerated individual is another often stressful experience that also falls disproportionately on black citizens, particularly women.

Some good news

The good news is that such injustices are receiving growing attention nationwide.

Just City, a nonprofit organization working to reduce the harms of the criminal justice system, has campaigned to raise funds and promote awareness of its Memphis Community Bail Fund project for Father's Day – in part because nearly half a million of the black men behind bars are dads.

The aim of the project is to provide both financial and legal support for defendants lacking resources to independently secure their pretrial release, with the goal of the campaign being the release of jailed fathers so that they could be with their kids for the holiday.

Bail funds similar to Just City's have proliferated throughout the U.S.

On one hand, the multiplication of these organizations is encouraging and reason for optimism. On the other, their growth is another reminder that many of the freedoms celebrated on Juneteenth remain unrealized.

A long road continues

In cities like Detroit, where 1 in 7 adult males is under some form of correctional control in some communities, it is a monumental task to make sense of the short- and long-term impacts of incarceration for black families.

Children suffer. Parents struggle. Relationships deteriorate. And as a result, so too do so many African-American communities. Lost wages matter to families, but they also matter to communities. The lower tax base that results makes it more difficult for struggling public institutions, like schools, to progress. And with such a large share of individuals removed from some communities due to incarceration, and branded as felons upon their release, these communities lose potential voters and the political capital they carry. They are too often disenfranchised and stripped of their full power and potential.

Juneteenth celebrates the freedom of black Americans and the long, hard road they were forced to traverse to gain that freedom. But as criminologists like me have maintained time and again, the U.S. criminal justice system remains biased, albeit implicitly, against them.

Matthew Larson is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Criminal Justice at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan and a graduate of Arizona State University's School of Criminology and Criminal Justice. His essay was originally published in *The Conversation.*



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5.17: On Reparations, the Question Isn't If, but When and How (Warfield)

By Zenobia Jeffries Warfield



"Family of slaves in Georgia, circa 1850" by Unknown, New York Historical Society is in the Public Domain

"We will never achieve racial justice in America if this country does not examine the impact and legacy of slavery—and make strides toward achieving reparatory justice."

—Jeffery Robinson, deputy legal director, ACLU

For nearly 250 years, enslaved Africans and their descendants toiled on the land and in the homes of White enslavers in the United States.

They planted, fed, weeded, mowed, and harvested crops that were not theirs; cared for and fed children they did not birth; and cleaned homes and tended lands they did not own.

We're all familiar with this uncomfortable but sanitized image of U.S. slavery.

The harsh reality is that too many of the more than 300,000 African men, women, and children who were brought to this land for the sole purpose of providing *free* labor—and their children and their children's children, and so on—were brutalized and terrorized to continue the cycle for centuries to come.

It's estimated that over 4 million Africans and their descendants free-labored under the legal institution of slavery—and not just in the South, but also in the North, East, and West.

Having no agency over their own bodies or minds—not to mention not owning land or having property—*they were property*. Many lived in the most inhumane conditions. They were beaten, raped, starved, and in some cases worked to death—literally. They were forced to breed children to increase the numbers of the enslaved. Their children were often stolen from them and sold away. Furthering the torment, many of the women were forced to nurse their enslavers' children, care for them, tend to them, raise them.

It is that 250 years of "sun-up to sun-down" menial free labor that this country was built upon. It is the 200-plus years of free labor that is the foundation of this country's wealth and the capitalist system that has prospered globally, exploiting us all.

And it didn't end there

If slavery is the foundation, then Black Codes and Jim Crow laws that followed emancipation are the walls; housing discrimination and redlining the roof, and mass incarceration the windows of the house America built.

A house that is starting to crumble.

This year we observe the 400th anniversary of the first captive Africans brought to what is now the United States of America, and this month we observe Juneteenth, the celebration of freedom for all U.S. enslaved Black people.

But we will also observe another monumental moment in U.S. history.

On June 19, Juneteenth, the House Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Civil Liberties will hold a slavery reparations hearing. It is the first of its kind in decades. And the first time ever the issue has garnered as much attention and support, including a declaration from the United Nations. The purpose of the hearing is "to examine, through open and constructive discourse, the legacy of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, its continuing impact on the community and the path to restorative justice."

While the topic of reparations has made its way to the forefront of mainstream discourse, this hearing is the result of centuries of work. The push for reparations did not just come into being with current presidential candidates purporting their support of some kind of reparations. It didn't just come about as a reaction to the divisive leadership of Donald Trump. And it didn't come into being, as some have reported, with the excellent reporting of Ta-Nehisi Coates' 2014 piece in The Atlantic, "The Case for Reparations."



""A deeper black: Race in America" with Ta-Nehisi Coates" by Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, University of Michiganis licensed under CC BY-ND 2.0

In the late 1800s to early 1900s, a formerly enslaved Black woman named Callie House, who was head of the National Ex-Slave Mutual Relief, Bounty and Pension Association, led a movement to secure reparations for formerly enslaved U.S. Blacks—specifically pensions to older freed men and women who'd worked without pay—to no avail.

House was jailed for her efforts.

Other movements for reparations to those enslaved, and later their descendants, would wax and wane with no success for the next 150 years. Although reparations were given to enslavers for loss of their "property."

In 1989, former Congressman John Conyers introduced the first reparations legislation. Created with the help of N'Cobra (National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America), bill HR 40 would establish the Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African American Act, designed to examine the institution of slavery, investigate its impact, and make recommendations for reparations to Congress. Every congressional year for almost 30 years until he was forced to resign in 2017, under allegations of sexual harassment, Conyers introduced this bill.

This year Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee sponsored the bill, and presidential candidate Sen. Cory Booker is sponsoring its companion in the Senate, the only reparations bill ever to be introduced in the post-Reconstruction U.S. Senate. Booker along with Coates and actor-activist Danny Glover (honorary board member of YES! Magazine) will testify at the hearing.

It's important to know that as we listen to the testimonies—and even if some of us choose not to listen—that the purpose of this hearing (or the legislation, period) is not to determine whether reparations are warranted or should be dispersed.

The purpose is to convene a group of accountable specialists who can determine *how* reparations will be given.

In his article, Coates estimated the cost of reparations to be nearly a trillion dollars, paying out annually for the next 10 to 20 years the $34 billion estimated by researchers in the 1970s. A more recent tally given by University of Connecticut researcher Thomas Craemer puts the cost of reparations between $5.9 trillion and $14.2 trillion.

It's unlikely that checks will be cut and given to every American Descendant of Slavery. In fact, it's not practical nor expected, I would imagine.

But there are very practical implementations that could be made. To name a few: funds (or loans forgiven) for housing, education, health care, those institutions where descendants were systemically and systematically cut off or exploited. Funds (or loans forgiven) for Black farmers and growers. Coates described a “claims system” for Black veterans who were denied the benefits of the GI Bill.

Direct intentional harm was done to those 388,000 Africans who made it to this land and to their millions of descendants. One hundred-fifty years of so-called freedom where intentional harm continues, contrary to what some like Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell say, does not erase that.

McConnell and his ilk—those before him and his contemporaries—have benefited mightily from the free labor and continued oppression of Black people in this country. They all are just as responsible for the harm and wrongdoing as their ancestors.

There is a debt owed to the the American Descendants of Slavery.

And it’s time for the U.S. to pay up.

Zenobia Jeffries Warfield is a senior editor at YES! She covers racial justice. Her essay was published in YES! Magazine.

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5.18: Recent Attempts at Reparations Show that World War II Is Not Over (Webster)

By Timothy Webster



"Consolation women in Myitkyina , Myanmar , after their liberation by US soldiers, August 14, 1944" by US Army is in the Public Domain

World War II ended in 1945.

But the world has never stopped debating its legacy and how to make restitution for the damage done to the war's victims. Consider some recent events.

In February, the Holocaust Deportation Claims Program, which compensates Jewish survivors of Nazi death camps transported on French trains, doubled its compensation payments, from US$200,000 to nearly $400,000. This makes it the most generous of any of the recent compensatory programs worked out by U.S. and European governments. This one is paid for by the French government, but administered by the U.S. State Department.

In March, a South Korean trial court ordered the seizure of property owned by the Mitsubishi Corporation in South Korea. Such efforts are apparently needed to enforce a November judgment by the South Korean Supreme Court, ordering Mitsubishi to pay $100,000 to each of five Koreans who performed forced labor during the war.

Whether the Koreans will ever see that money, or die before the forfeiture action is completed, remains up in the air.

These are among the latest manifestations of global efforts to review, revise, repair and remember the war – akin to the Nuremberg or Tokyo War Crimes Trials - but for the 21st century.

Restoring human dignity

In the 1990s, a renewed interest in human rights, greater access to historical materials and a less polarized international political environment converged to spur reflection on World War II.

In the United States, civil lawsuits emerged as one tool, among many, to probe wartime human rights violations.

Federal courts in New Jersey, New York and California presided over cases against Swiss banks, French insurers, German corporations and even the Austrian government.

Plaintiffs sought wages for unpaid labor, return of looted art, restitution of bank accounts and other assets, and the restoration of their human dignity.

Two cases ended up in the United States Supreme Court. One, in which an elderly refugee mounted a lawsuit to recover family artwork seized by the Nazis, got a Hollywood ending. In "Woman in Gold," Ryan Reynolds helps Helen Mirren sue Austria to recover a painting by Gustav Klimt.

Most cases did not follow the Hollywood script. Plaintiffs generally lost, either because the claims were too old or already resolved by postwar treaties.



"Deportation of Polish Jews to Treblinka extermination camp from the ghetto in Siedlce, 1942, Poland during German occupation." by Unknown, Institute of National Remembrance is in the Public Domain

Selective leadership

But that did not dispel the pressure from Jewish organizations or human rights activists to provide reparations.

During President Bill Clinton's second term (1996-2000), the U.S. government, led by Ambassador Stuart Eizenstat, worked with European allies to craft international agreements and reparations mechanisms.

Germany set up a $5 billion fund to compensate wartime forced laborers and slave laborers, and to support projects on history and human rights.

Later, the State Department set up additional programs, including the 2016 Holocaust Deportation Claims Program. The French government still runs the Commission for Reparations of Victims of Spoliation, established in 1999 to process claims about seized property and art.

In East Asia, survivors of World War II human rights abuses have had their day (decades, actually) in court.

Chinese victims of wartime medical experimentation, Korean forced laborers and Filipina "comfort women," among others, have sued Japan and the Japanese government throughout the Asia-Pacific, including the United States.

But instead of using these lawsuits to reevaluate Japan's role in World War II – as other programs did for European countries – the U.S. government has either absented itself from these discussions, or challenged the lawsuits on various grounds.

The moral leadership that yielded transatlantic solutions to war responsibility issues in Europe dissolved when the topic emerged in East Asia.

Whereas the Clinton administration, especially Stuart Eizenstat, worked with European officials to set up compensation mechanisms in France, Germany and Switzerland, the administration of President George W. Bush asked U.S. courts to dismiss the East Asian cases.

US security interests

South Korea and Japan are America's closest and most important allies in a region simmering with geopolitical tension, from trade wars with China to nuclear proliferation on the Korean peninsula. U.S. regional security interests hinge upon the successful coordination of relations among Japan, Korea and the United States.

As an international legal scholar with a background in Asian legal systems, international human rights and international economic law, I believe the United States ignores the Asian tensions over World War II at its peril.

The Obama administration understood this, and tried to persuade both Japan and South Korea to resolve their "difficult historical issues." Chief among those issues is, of course, making reparations for injuries that Japan visited upon Koreans during the war: from the comfort women system to the forced mobilization of Korean laborers.

But the Trump administration seems unconcerned. It has exhibited indifference or hostility to human rights matters generally, refusing to respond to U.N. investigations about U.S. abuses along the Mexican border, and withdrawing from the U.N. Human Rights Council. Nor does the administration place much stock in international relations or diplomacy, with its attempts to starve the State Department of funding, and belatedly appointing an ambassador to South Korea.

In Asia, civil litigation has emerged as the key method to seek war reparations, though the track record is spotty.

Japanese courts have largely dismissed these suits, although a small handful of Japanese corporations decided to settle the cases and to pay modest amounts of compensation.

That state of affairs changed with recent decisions from the South Korean Supreme Court. The November judgment against Mitsubishi suggests compensation is still possible, at least in certain jurisdictions. Henceforth, Korean courts will almost certainly order other Japanese companies to pay compensation.

But even if plaintiffs win, they might still encounter difficulties enforcing the judgment. Losing Japanese companies may refuse to pay the Korean judgments, requiring Korean courts to seize Japanese assets located in South Korea.

Transforming the tragic past

The agreements reached in the 1990s and early 2000s by the United States with Germany, France, Switzerland and Austria to provide war reparations are not perfect, but each aspires to transform and repair a tragically forgotten past.

The United States' failure to do the same in Asia perpetuates a pernicious double standard set after the war.

The United States has the experience, leverage and opportunity to resolve simmering animosities between its allies in Asia, as it did in Europe.

But does it have the ambition?

Tim Webster is Associate Professor of Transnational Law and Director of Asian Legal Studies at Case Western Reserve University. His article originally appeared in *The Conversation*.

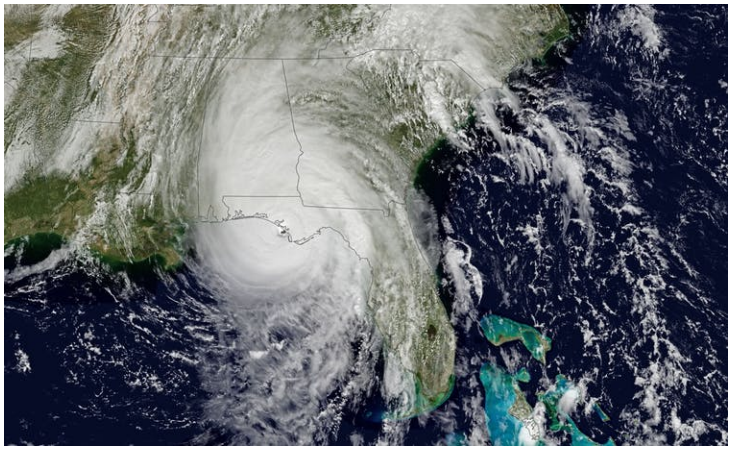
Recent attempts at reparations show that World War II is not over by Tim Webster is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.

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5.19: How Rural Areas Like Florida's Panhandle Can Become More Hurricane-Ready (Ozguven)

Eren Erman Ozguven

#science #environment #climatechange #nature #naturaldisasters #systemanalysis #argument #logos #rural



"Hurricane Michael moves over Florida on Oct. 10, 2018." by NASA Earth Observatory is in the Public Domain

When Hurricane Michael roared onto northwest Florida's Gulf Coast in October 2018, its 160 mile-per-hour winds made it the strongest storm ever to hit the region. It was only the fourth Category 5 storm on record to make landfall in the United States.

Thousands of residents, from the coast to 100 miles inland, were left without housing, power, food or water. Schools, stores, businesses and many government buildings shut down for weeks. Hospitals had to temporarily stop services.

Months later, many locals were still trying to survive in battered, tarp-covered homes or living in tents, relying on local food banks for survival. Lacking customers, some business owners shuttered their doors and left town.

In Michael's aftermath, it gradually became apparent that Florida's Panhandle experienced more severe damage than many urban areas around the state that are relatively better prepared for behemoth storms. I have seen firsthand how this was due to lack of preparedness and infrastructure that was aging, limited and substandard.

I have studied hurricane resilience for the past 13 years and know that better preparation can help make communities more resilient in the face of major disasters. As the high-risk months approach, I and other Florida State University scholars from many different fields are working with local communities to help them get ready and improve their response plans.

Lost homes and livelihoods

After Hurricane Michael passed through, I drove to Panama City – one of the hardest-hit areas – with fellow FAMU-FSU College of Engineeringprofessors Juyeong Choi and Tarek Abichou. We made the trip to observe infrastructure and community damage and meet with local emergency management officials as part of a project supported by the federally funded Natural Hazards Center, which works to reduce harm from natural disasters.

To get there from Tallahassee, we drove west on State Road 20, an inland route that took us through ravaged rural areas. We returned along U.S. Highway 98, a scenic road that hugs the Gulf of Mexico, stopping at Mexico Beach – a small coastal tourist town that was nearly wiped awayby Hurricane Michael's winds and storm surge.

The damage we saw was beyond anything we had imagined. There were hundreds of thousands of downed trees and hundreds of blocked roadways. Numerous houses and farms were completely destroyed, along with extensive timber plantations – the region's big money-producing crop.

FSU planner-in-residence Dennis Smith, who has worked for decades in emergency management in the public and private sectors, was just as stunned. "The damage, both the magnitude and the geographic extent and intensity, was some of the worst I had ever seen," he told me. "There are extensive housing losses (far inland) and the damage to woodlands is like nothing I've ever seen."

The social impacts were equally daunting. "We were especially not prepared for the numbers of homeless," said Ellen Piekalkiewicz, who directs a center focusing on the needs of communities, families and children at FSU's College of Social Work.

In the schools, she said, “there have been a number of kids having psychological problems.”

Planning for the next big storm

It is extremely challenging to prepare for very fast Category 5 hurricanes like Hurricane Michael. Storms of this size generate extreme winds and storm surge that knock out communications – including cellphone towers – and transportation routes. But proactive planning and community-level decision making can ensure that no one is left without assistance.

One essential step is identifying critical escape and emergency response routes, which are at high risk of disruption during these disasters. Pinpointing these routes in advance provides time to improve roadway infrastructure and develop alternative public evacuation plans in case primary routes are blocked.

It also is important to assess which demographic and socioeconomic groups will be most affected by damage to power lines and roadways – for example, aging populations. Studying power outages and roadway closures during hurricanes, together with a region’s physical features, reveals vulnerable locations that will be at high risk in future events.

My engineering colleagues and I also are studying how uncertainty about storm tracks affects evacuation planning and how wind damage to buildings varies with different types of terrain. These are crucial questions for storm preparedness.

#HurricaneMichael just hours away from a catastrophic, unprecedented #Florida Panhandle, Big Bend Cat. 4 landfall. *Last chance* to get to a safe place, if told to evacuate. No long-time resident of the area has ever experienced a #hurricane this intense.

Another high priority is identifying and supporting at-risk populations. Especially in rural areas like Florida’s Panhandle, planners need good information on population size, location and composition. The most effective way to collect it is by working with nonprofit agencies, volunteer groups, faith-based organizations, community-based centers, neighborhood-level groups, hospitals and governmental organizations.

“Involving these entities in hurricane training exercises is also important to build trust,” FSU public administration professor Richard Feiock told me. “That makes communities stronger and more durable when a hurricane hits.”

One promising strategy we have identified through focusing on the needs of vulnerable groups is repurposing existing hurricane shelters to serve evacuees with pets or other special needs. Experience has shown that some people will remain in harm’s way instead of evacuating if they think leaving means abandoning their pets.



National Guard members distribute food and water in Miller County, Georgia, Oct. 12, 2018, during Hurricane Michael relief efforts. "Photo" by Sgt. Amber Williams, Georgia National Guard is licensed under CC BY 2.0

Getting the word out

Communities also need to develop systems for alerting residents about hurricane risks and getting accurate information to them as quickly as possible when a storm threatens. Such networks can include radio, TV, phone and even door-to-door notification. In rural areas it is especially important to design strong community training programs, and to foster strong social networks that draw on neighbor-to-neighbor ties and other personal connections.

Hurricane warning information should include locations and types of shelters, along with dates, times and locations for pickups if transportation is available, and should explain what people can bring with them. Our research indicates that with these improvements, Panhandle communities and others like them can develop better emergency plans that reduce the stress of evacuations, provide safe shelter and ultimately save lives.

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5.20: California Knew the Carr Wildfire Could Happen. It Failed to Prevent it. (Schneider)

Keith Schneider

#reportinginformation #research #nature #sharedvalues #descriptive #analysis #ethos #logos #kairos #currentevents #systemanalysis #environment #global



"180726-FS-Shasta-Trinity-CJ-EG-8079" by Forest Service Photography is licensed under CC PDM 1.0

On the afternoon of July 23, a tire on a recreational trailer blew apart on the pavement of State Route 299 about 15 miles northwest of Redding, California. The couple towing the Grey Wolf Select trailer couldn't immediately pull it out of traffic. As they dragged it to a safe turnout, sparks arced from the tire's steel rim. Three reached the nearby grass and shrubs; two along the highway's south shoulder, the third on the north. Each of the sparks ignited what at first seemed like commonplace brush fires.

But if the sparking of the brush fires was an unpredictable accident, what happened next was not. Fire jumped from the roadside into the Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, a 42,000-acre unit of the National Park Service. There, it gained size and velocity, and took off for the outskirts of Redding. The fire burned for 39 days and charred over 229,000 acres, and when the last embers died on Aug. 30, the fight to contain it had cost $162 million, an average of $4.15 million a day. Almost 1,100 homes were lost. Eight people died, four of them first responders.

Dozens of interviews and a review of local, state and federal records show that virtually every aspect of what came to be known as the Carr Fire — where it ignited; how and where it exploded in dimension and ferocity; the toll in private property — had been forecast and worried over for years. Every level of government understood the dangers and took few, if any, of the steps needed to prevent catastrophe. This account of how much was left undone, and why, comes at a moment of serious reassessment in California about how to protect millions of people living in vulnerable areas from a new phenomenon: Firestorms whose speed and ferocity surpass any feasible evacuation plans.

The government failure that gave the Carr Fire its first, crucial foothold traces to differences in how California and the federal National Park Service manage brush along state highways. Transportation officials responsible for upgrading Route 299 had appealed to Whiskeytown officials to clear the grass, shrubs and trees lining the often superheated roadway, but to no avail.

At the federal level, the park service official responsible for fire prevention across Whiskeytown's 39,000 acres of forest had been left to work with a fraction of the money and staffing he knew he needed to safeguard against an epic fire. What steps the local parks team managed to undertake — setting controlled fires as a hedge against uncontrollable ones — were severely limited by state and local air pollution regulations.

And both the residents and elected officials of Redding had chosen not to adopt or enforce the kind of development regulations other municipalities had in their efforts to keep homes and businesses safe even in the face of a monstrous wildfire.

The inaction in and around Redding took place as the specter of unprecedented fires grew ever more ominous, with climate change worsening droughts and heating the California landscape into a vast tinderbox.

The story of the Carr Fire — how it happened and what might have been done to limit the scope of its damage — is, of course, just one chapter in a larger narrative of peril for California. It was the third of four immense and deadly fires that ignited over a 13-month period that started in October 2017. Altogether they killed 118 people, destroyed nearly 27,000 properties and torched 700,000 acres. The Camp Fire, the last of those horrific fires, was the deadliest in California history. It roared through the Sierra foothill town of Paradise, killing 86 people.

More than a century ago, cities confronted the risk of huge fires by reimaging how they would be built: substituting brick, concrete and steel for wood. Conditions are more complicated today, to say the least. But it does seem that the latest spasm of spectacular fires has prompted some direct steps for protecting the state into the future.

In September, California lawmakers added $200 million annually to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, or Cal Fire, budget over the next five years for fire prevention, up from $84.5 million in the current fiscal year. It's enough to finance bush clearing and lighting deliberate fires — so-called "fuels reduction" and "prescribed fire" — on 500,000 acres of open space, wildlands and forest.

The U.S. Forest Service and the U.S. Department of the Interior also are putting more emphasis and money into prevention. This year, federal and state agencies set prescribed fires to 85,000 acres of open lands, an increase of 35,000 acres over previous years and likely a record, said Barnie Gyant, the Forest Service's deputy regional forester in California.

In Redding, city officials have agreed to rethink how they will manage the several thousand acres of open land within the city limits.

But if these sorts of solutions are well understood, they have yet to attain widespread acceptance. An examination of the Carr Fire, including interviews with climate scientists, firefighters, policymakers and residents, makes clear that the task of adequately combating the real and present danger of fires in California is immense. And it's a task made only more urgent by a novel feature of the Carr Fire: its explosion into a rampaging tornado of heat and flames. The blaze is further evidence that the decisions made at every level of government to address the fire threat are not only not working, but they have turned wildfires into an ongoing statewide emergency.

Success will require government agencies at every level to better coordinate their resources and efforts, and to reconcile often competing missions. It will require both a strategic and budgetary shift to invest adequately in fire prevention methods, even as the cost of fighting fires that are all but inevitable in the coming years continues to soar. And it will require residents to temper their desires for their dream homes with their responsibility to the safety of their neighbors and communities.

"We repeatedly have this discussion," said Stephen Pyne, a fire historian at Arizona State University and the author of well-regarded books on wildfires in the West. "It has more relevance now. California has wildfire fighting capability unlike any place in the world. The fact they can't control the fires suggests that continuing that model will not produce different results. It's not working. It hasn't worked for a long time."

A Thin Strip of Land, but a Matchstick for Mayhem

State Route 299, where the Carr Fire began outside Redding, is owned and managed by the California Department of Transportation, or Caltrans. For two decades, it has been working to straighten and widen the mountain highway where it slips past 1,000-foot ridges and curves by the Whiskeytown National Recreation Area.

In 2016, Caltrans spent a week on Route 299 pruning trees and clearing vegetation along the narrow state right of way. And as they typically do with highways that cross national forest and parkland, Caltrans vegetation managers let the Whiskeytown leadership know they would like to do the same thing on federal land outside the right of way. The idea was to prevent fires by removing trees that could fall onto the highway, stabilizing hillsides and building new drainage capacity to slow erosion.

"The preferred practices are a clear fire strip from the edge of the pavement to 4 feet," said Lance Brown, a senior Caltrans engineer in Redding who oversees emergency operations, "and an aggressive brush and tree pruning, cutting and clearing from 4 feet to 30 feet."

But the transportation agency's proposal to clear fire fuel from a strip of federal land along the highway ran into some of the numerous environmental hurdles that complicate fire prevention in California and other states.

Whiskeytown's mission is to protect natural resources and "scenic values," including the natural corridor along Route 299. Clearing the roadside would have been classified as a "major federal action" subject to a lengthy review under the National Environmental Policy Act. Whiskeytown would have been obligated to conduct a thorough environmental assessment of risks, benefits and alternatives.

Public hearings also are mandated by law, and such a proposal almost certainly would have prompted opposition from residents devoted to protecting trees and natural beauty. And so the basic fire prevention strategy of clearing brush and trees along a state highway never got traction with Whiskeytown's supervisors.

Brown said the risks of leaving the trees and brush were clear. But he said Caltrans had no way to force the park to do anything.

Whiskeytown officials are "very restrictive," Brown said. "They don't want us to cut anything. They like that brush. They like that beauty. Our right of way is basically in their right of way."



USDA Forest Service officials and land owners discuss sharing stewardship of forests and future forest treatment strategies to recover lands. "Fire" by Pacific Southwest Region 5 is licensed under CC BY 4.0

Tom Garcia, the recreation area's fire manager, disputed the view that Whiskeytown opposed any kind of brush and tree clearing. "We most likely would not agree with a clear-cut type of fuel treatment," he said, "but most certainly would have very likely supported a thin-from-below type of treatment activity that reduced the shrub and brush undergrowth and thinned some of trees as opposed to mowing everything down to the ground level."

The threat posed by issues such as brush along the highway had drawn the worry of a local conservation group, as well.

The Western Shasta Resource Conservation District, devoted since the 1950s to safeguarding the region's land and water, prepared a report in 2016 that called for more than 150 urgent fire prevention projects around Redding. They included clearing roadsides of trees and flammable grass and brush, constructing wide clearings in the forest, and scrubbing brush from public and private lands.

Just two of the projects were funded, neither of them in the Carr Fire's path.

Rich in Fire Fuel; Starved for Money

The fire fed greedily on the dry roadside fuel left along Route 299 that day in late July. In minutes, it jumped from the state right of way into the federal park's thick stands of brush and small trees, and then up the steep ridge of chaparral, pine and oak.

It was the sort of scenario Garcia had been worrying about for years. A 28-year firefighting veteran, Garcia was known in California for being an aggressive member of the school of fire prevention. He advocated brush and tree clearing and lighting deliberate fires to keep small burns from turning into uncontrollable wildfires.

What he lacked was money. Garcia's budget for clearing, set by senior federal officials, provided just $500,000 a year for clearing brush and small trees, enough for about 600 acres annually. It was far, far less than needed. Garcia estimated that he should be clearing 5,000 acres a year. Given the budget constraints, he decided to focus on what he viewed as the highest risk area: the park's eastern boundary closest to Redding's expanding subdivisions and outlying communities. Garcia took a chance; he left Whiskeytown's northern region, the forest farthest from Redding, largely untouched.

The risk was significant. A decade earlier, a fire had burned 9,000 acres in much the same area. By July 2018, the land had recovered and supported a new fire feast: Manzanita, oak, small conifers and decaying timber, a dry mass of fuel ready to burn.

Garcia was deeply frustrated. Clearing fuels works, he said. The 600 acres of Whiskeytown that Garcia had treated on a rotating schedule easily survived the Carr Fire. Clearly visible lines ran up the ridges, like a photograph divided into black-and-white and full-color panels. On one side stood tree skeletons charred by the blaze. On the other, healthy groves of green trees.

But despite such proven effectiveness, fuels reduction has never attained mainstream acceptance or funding in Sacramento, the state capital, or in Washington, D.C. Half of Garcia's annual $1 million fire management budget pays for a crew of firefighters and a garage full of equipment to respond to and put out fires. The other half is devoted to clearing brush and small trees.

Garcia said it would cost about $3.5 million to treat 5,000 to 6,000 acres annually. A seven-year rotation would treat the entire park, he said. The risk of fires bounding out of Whiskeytown would be substantially reduced, Garcia said, because they would be much easier to control.

In Garcia's mind, the price paid for starving his budget was enormous: The Carr Fire incurred $120 million in federal disaster relief, $788 million in property insurance claims, $130 million in cleanup costs, $50 million in timber industry damage, $31 million in highway repair and erosion control costs, $2 million annually in lost property tax revenue and millions more in lost business revenue.

"For $3.5 million a year, you could buy a lot more opportunity to prevent a lot of heartache and a lot of destruction," Garcia said. "You'd make inroads, that's for sure. Prevention is absolutely where our program needs to go. It's where California needs to go."

Stoked by the land Garcia had been unable to clear, the Carr Fire raged, despite the grueling work of almost 1,400 firefighters, supported by 100 fire engines, 10 helicopters, 22 bulldozers and six air tankers. The firefighters were trying to set a perimeter around the angry fire, which was heading north. In two days it burned over 6,000 acres and incinerated homes in French Gulch, a Gold Rush mining town set between two steep ridges.

Late on July 25, the fire changed course. The hot Central Valley began sucking cold air from the Pacific Coast. By evening, strong gusts were pushing the fire east toward Redding at astonishing speed. By midnight, the Carr Fire, now 60 hours old, had charged across 10 miles and 20,000 acres of largely unsettled ground.

The fire raced across southwest Shasta County. By early evening on July 26, it burned through 20,000 more acres of brush and trees and reached the Sacramento River, which flows through Redding. From a rise at the edge of his Land Park subdivision, Charley Fitch saw flames 30 feet tall. A diabolical rain of red embers was pelting the brush below him, sparking new fires. He jumped into his vehicle, drove back to the house and alerted his wife, Susan, it was time to leave.

"Do You Like the Brush or Do You Want Your Home to Burn?"

On the outskirts of Redding, the Carr Fire encountered even more prodigious quantities of fuel: the homes and plastic furniture, fences, shrub and trees of exurban Shasta County.

Two hours past midnight on July 26, Jeff Coon was startled awake by his dogs. Through the curtain he saw the flashing blue lights of a passing county sheriff cruiser. He heard evacuation orders sternly issued over bullhorns. Coon, a retired investment adviser, smelled smoke. The sky east of his home on Walker Terrace, in the brush and woodlands 5 miles west of Redding, was red with wildfire.

Almost every other wildfire Coon experienced in Redding started far from the city and headed away from town. The Carr Fire was behaving in surprising ways. It was bearing down on Walker Terrace, which is where the ring of thickly settled development in the brush and woods outside Redding begins. Coon's Spanish tile ranch home at the end of the street would be the first to encounter the flames.

“I jumped into my truck and caught up with the sheriff down the road,” Coon recalled. He said: ‘Evacuate immediately! Like now!’ My wife and I didn’t pack much. She grabbed the dogs and some food. I grabbed some shirts.”

In the terrible and deadly attack over the next 20 hours, the Carr Fire killed six people — four residents and two firefighters — and turned nearly 1,100 houses into smoking rubble, including all but two of the more than 100 homes in Keswick, a 19th-century mining-era town outside Redding. Two more first responders died after the fire burned through Redding.

The horrific consequences were entirely anticipated by city and county authorities. Both local governments prepared comprehensive emergency planning reports that identified wildfire as the highest public safety threat in their jurisdictions. Redding sits at the eastern edge of thousands of acres of brushy woodlands, known as the wildland urban interface, now thick with homes built over the past two decades and classified by the state and county as a “very high fire hazard severity zone.” Nearly 40 percent of the city is a very high hazard severity zone.

To reduce the threat, the county plan calls for a “commitment of resources” to initiate “an aggressive hazardous fuels management program,” and “property standards that provide defensible space.” In effect, keeping residents safe demands that residents and authorities starve fires.

The Redding emergency plan noted that from 1999 to 2015, nine big fires had burned in the forests surrounding Redding and 150 small vegetation fires ignited annually in the city. The city plan called for measures nearly identical to the county’s to reduce fuel loads. And it predicted what would happen if those measures weren’t taken. “The City of Redding recently ran a fire scenario on the west side, which was derived from an actual fire occurrence in the area,” wrote the report’s authors. “As a result of the fire-scenario information, it was discovered that 17 percent of all structures in the city could be affected by this fire.”

The planning reports were mostly greeted by a big civic yawn. City and county building departments are enforcing state regulations that require contractors to “harden” homes in new subdivisions with fireproof roofs, fire-resistant siding, sprinkler systems and fire-resistant windows and eaves. But the other safety recommendations achieved scant attention. The reason is not bureaucratic mismanagement. It’s civic indifference to fire risk. In interview after interview, Redding residents expressed an astonishing tolerance to the threat of wildfires.

Despite numerous fires that regularly ignite outside the city, including one that touched Redding’s boundary in 1999, residents never expected a catastrophe like the Carr Fire. In public opinion polls and election results, county and city residents expressed a clear consensus that other issues — crime, rising housing prices, homelessness and vagrancy — were much higher priorities.

Given such attitudes, fire authorities in and outside the city treated the fire prevention rules for private homeowners as voluntary. State regulations require homeowners in the fire hazard zones to establish “defensible spaces.” The rules call for homeowners to reduce fuels within 100 feet of their houses or face fines of up to $500. Cal Fire managers say they conduct 5,000 defensible space inspections annually in Shasta County and neighboring Trinity County. Craig Wittner, Redding’s fire marshal, said he and his team also conduct regular inspections.

State records show not a single citation for violators was issued in Shasta County in 2017 or this year.

Wittner explained how public indifference works in his city. Each year his budget for brush clearing amounts to about $15,000. Yet even with his small program, residents complain when crews cut small trees and brush. “They like living close to nature,” he said. “They like the privacy. I put it to them this way: Do you like the brush or do you want your home to burn down?”

Redding owns and manages more than 2,000 acres of public open space, about a quarter of the heavily vegetated land within city boundaries. The city’s program to clear brush from public lands averages 50 acres annually. Brush and clearing on private land is virtually nonexistent. Whether or not that changes could hinge on a lawsuit filed in mid-September and a new property tax program being prepared by city officials.

Jaxon Baker, the developer of Land Park and Stanford Hills, two major residential complexes, filed the suit. In it he argued that the city anticipated the deadly consequences of a big fire in west Redding, but did not adequately follow its own directives to clear brush from city-owned open spaces. Redding’s Open Space Master Plan, completed in August, sets out goals for future land and recreational investments. It does not mention fire as a potential threat. Baker’s suit called for rescinding that plan and writing a new one that identifies fire as a higher priority in municipal open space management. “It makes sense,” Baker said. “We have a lot of city-owned land that burns. We just learned that.”

On Nov. 6, the Redding City Council acknowledged that Baker was right and rescinded the Open Space Master Plan, thereby resolving the lawsuit. Preparations for writing a new one have not yet been addressed by the council. Barry Tippin, Redding’s city manager, said that city officials are preparing a proposal to establish a citywide defensible space district and a new property tax to

sharply increase public spending for fuels reduction on public and private land. “This is a city that is leery of new taxes,” Tippin said. “But after what happened here in the summer, people may be ready for this kind of program.”

Coon, who had evacuated his neighborhood as fire engulfed it, returned to find his home standing. He wasn’t surprised. Prevention, he said, works, and he invested in it, even without any local requirements that he do so.

Though his home was built in 1973 and remodeled in 1993, it met almost all of the requirements of Shasta County’s latest fire safe building codes. The mansard roof was fire resistant, as were the brick walls. Coon paid attention, too, to the eaves, which he kept protected from blowing leaves. And he didn’t have a wooden fence.

Prompted by his son, a firefighter with Cal Fire, and his own understanding of fire risk, Coon had also established a big perimeter of light vegetation around his house, a safe zone of defensible space. He worked with the Bureau of Land Management to gain a permit to clear a 100-foot zone of thick brush and small trees from the federal land that surrounded his house. He trimmed his shrubs, kept the yard clear of leaves and branches, cleaned out the gutters and discarded plastic items that could serve as fuel. On days designated for burning, he incinerated debris piles.

The project took two summers to complete. When he was finished, his home stood amid a big open space of closely cut grass, rock and small shrubs. In effect, Coon had set his home in a savanna, a fire-safe setting that looked much different from the shaded, grassy, shrub and leafy yards of neighbors who clearly liked mimicking the federal woodlands that surrounded them.

When Coon returned to Walker Terrace days after the fire passed through Redding, his yard was covered in ash and charred tree limbs. But his house remained. So did the garage where he kept his prized 1968 Camaro.

“How Do You Want Your Smoke?”

A warming planet, conflicting government aims, human indifference or indolence — all are serious impediments to controlling the threat of wildfires in California. But they are not the only ones.

Add worries about air pollution and carbon emissions.

The California air quality law, enforced by county districts, requires fire managers interested in conducting controlled burns as a way of managing fire risk to submit their plans for review in order to gain the required permits. County air quality boards also set out specific temperature, moisture, wind, land, barometric, personnel and emergency response conditions for lighting prescribed fires.

The limits are so specific that Tom Garcia in the Whiskeytown National Recreation Area said only about six to 10 days a year are suitable for managed burns in Shasta County.

John Waldrop, the manager of the Shasta County Air Quality District, said he’s sympathetic to Garcia’s frustration but determined to meet his obligations to protect the public’s health. Waldrop said that federal and state agencies and private timber operators lit prescribed burns on an average of 3,600 acres annually in Shasta County over the last decade. Most burns are less than 100 acres, which fits his agency’s goal of keeping the air clean and fine particulate levels below 35 micrograms per cubic meter, the limit that safeguards public health.

Waldrop said it would take 50,000 acres of prescribed fire annually to clear sufficient amounts of brush from the county’s timberlands to reduce the threat of big wildfires. That means approving burns that span thousands of acres and pour thousands of tons of smoke into the air.

“From an air quality standpoint, that is a harder pill for us to swallow,” Waldrop said.

Balancing the threat of wildfires against the risk of more smoke is a choice that Shasta residents may be more prepared to make. During and after the Carr Fire, Redding residents breathed air for almost a month with particulate concentrations over 150 micrograms per cubic meter. That is comparable to the air in Beijing.

“We’re at a point where society has to decide,” Waldrop said, “how do you want your smoke? Do you want it at 150 micrograms per cubic meter from big fires all summer long, or a little bit every now and again from prescribed burning?”

Another air pollution challenge Californians face is the troubling connection between wildfires and carbon emissions. Two years ago, California passed legislation to reduce carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases to 258.6 million metric tons annually by 2030. That is a 40 percent reduction from levels today of about 429 million metric tons a year.

Reaching that goal, a stretch already, will be far more difficult because of runaway wildfires. Last year, wildfires poured 37 million metric tons of carbon dioxide into California’s atmosphere, according to a state report made public this year. Even higher totals are

anticipated for 2018.

Efforts to quell the fires with more prescribed burns will add, at least for a number of years, more carbon dioxide. Prescribed fires produce an average of 6 tons of carbon per acre, according to scientific studies. Burning half a million acres annually would produce 3 million more metric tons of greenhouse gases.

A Matter of Priorities and Focus

For now, California can seem locked in a vicious and unwinnable cycle: Surprised anew every year by the number and severity of its wildfires, the state winds up pouring escalating amounts of money into fighting them. It's all for a good, if exhausting, cause: saving lives and property.

But such effort and expenditure drains the state's ability to do what almost everyone agrees is required for its long-term survival: investing way more money in prevention policies and tactics.

"It's the law of diminishing returns," Garcia said. "The more money we put into suppression is not buying a lot more safety. We are putting our money in the wrong place. There has to be a better investment strategy."

Just as drying Southwest conditions forced Las Vegas homeowners to switch from green lawns to desert landscaping to conserve water, fire specialists insist that Californians must quickly embrace a different landscaping aesthetic to respond to the state's fire emergency. Defensible spaces need to become the norm for the millions of residents who live in the 40 percent of California classified as a high fire-threat zone.

Residents need to reacquaint themselves with how wicked a wildfire can be. Counties need to much more vigorously enforce defensive space regulations. Sierra foothill towns need to establish belts of heavily thinned woodland and forest 1,000 feet wide or more, where big fires can be knocked down and extinguished. Property values that now are predicated on proximity to sylvan settings need to be reset by how safe they are from wildfire as they are in San Diego and a select group of other cities.

"We solved this problem in the urban environment," said Timothy Ingalsbee, executive director of Firefighters United for Safety, Ethics, and Ecology, a national wildfire research and policy group in Oregon. "Towns were all once made of wood. The Great Chicago Fire. The San Francisco fire. We figured out they can't make cities out of flammable materials. They hardened them with brick and mortar and building codes and ordinances for maintaining properties.

"This is a really solvable problem with the technology we have today. Making homes and communities that don't burn up is very solvable. It's a matter of priorities and focus."

In a select group of towns in and outside California, residents have gotten that message. Boulder, Colorado, invested in an expansive ring of open space that surrounds the city. It doubles as a popular recreation area and as a fuel break for runaway fires that head to the city.

San Diego is another example. After big and deadly fires burned in San Diego in 2003 and 2007, residents, local authorities and San Diego Electric and Gas sharply raised their fire prevention efforts. Thirty-eight volunteer community fire prevention councils were formed and now educate residents, provide yard-clearing services and hold regular drives to clear brush and trees. SDE&G has spent $1 billion over the last decade to bury 10,000 miles of transmission lines, replace wooden poles with steel poles, clear brush along its transmission corridors and establish a systemwide digital network of 177 weather stations and 15 cameras.

The system pinpoints weather and moisture conditions that lead to fire outbreaks. Firefighting agencies have been considerably quicker to respond to ignitions than a decade ago. SDE&G also operates an Erickson air tanker helicopter to assist fire agencies in quickly extinguishing blazes.

The area's experience with wildfire improved significantly.

"We haven't gone through anything like what we had here in 2003 and 2007," said Sheryl Landrum, the vice president of the Fire Safe Council of San Diego County, a nonprofit fire prevention and public education group. "We've had to work hard here to educate people and to convince people to be proactive and clear defensible spaces. People are aware of what they need to do. Our firefighting capabilities are much more coordinated and much stronger."

Keith Schneider, a former national correspondent and a contributor to the *New York Times*, is the senior editor and producer at Circle of Blue, which covers the global freshwater crisis from its newsroom in Traverse City, Michigan. This article was originally published by ProPublica.

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6.1: Grammar Essentials

Why is it important to know about grammar, usage, and punctuation?

This is a great question you might be asking yourself, and if you're not asking it, you probably should be. If you are a native speaker of English, you don't even have to think about it to use grammar correctly, at least for the most part. If you have ever watched a child develop language, you know that, at a very young age, children know what is necessary for language to make sense.

But sometimes, when it comes to formal speaking and writing, we're not familiar with the conventions or the "rules" for correctness. This is where the following pages can be really helpful.

Being correct goes beyond the basic grammar that language needs in order to function. Being correct means knowing the rules that a given culture has established to judge the language of individuals. Think about it: many years ago, ain't was not considered incorrect. How might you react to someone using that word today? We speak of this as usage. There are far more usage rules than grammar rules, and they are far more difficult to master. Many of them you just have to learn; and, after you learn them, you have to use them over and over and over in order to incorporate them into your language.

It is important to remember that correctness is always relative to a particular situation and the "rules" for usage will always be changing. Sometimes, it can be tough to keep up with all that change!

This is why a native speaker of English will find the following pages in Grammar Essentials helpful. And, if you are not a native speaker of English, learning or reviewing things like parts of speech, punctuation, and common errors can be helpful in your efforts to learn and feel comfortable with the English language.

The Grammar Essentials area of the Excelsior OWL will provide you with a thorough overview of punctuation, grammar and usage, and some of the most common errors students in the United States struggle with. And, by using a little humor, we hope that this introduction into grammar and punctuation (using zombies, memes, and funny stories) will be a little less painful than when you were in junior high and had to do things like memorize prepositions or diagram sentences.

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SECTION OVERVIEW

6.1.1: Punctuation

Maybe you have heard the story about how punctuation saves lives. Clearly, there is a difference between:

- Let’s eat, Grandma!

and

- Let’s eat Grandma!

In addition to saving lives, using punctuation properly will help your writing be clean and clear and help you build your credibility as a writer.

The following sections will provide you with an overview of the basic rules regarding punctuation and will give you a chance to practice using the information you have learned.

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6.1.1.1: Apostrophes

Apostrophes

Do we really need apostrophes?

When you send a text message, you probably do not bother with apostrophes right? It makes sense that we might not worry about properly punctuating possessives and contractions in a text message, but it's very important to remember that we do need to use apostrophes correctly in other writing situations.

Academics frequently debate about whether or not text messaging is going to kill the poor apostrophe. In his essay "Dear Apostrophe: C Ya," Rob Jenkins (2012) writes, "[O]ne of my professors, talking about the way language evolves over time, predicted that the next evolutionary stage would involve common punctuation marks. Specifically, he said, the apostrophe would eventually cease to exist" (para. 1).

This may be true, but the apostrophe is not dead yet!

So if you have been text messaging so long that you forgot what the apostrophe is for, the following pages should be helpful.

Possessives

Using Apostrophes to Make Words Possessive

Beginning writers sometimes mistakenly add apostrophes to make words plural, but this is not how the apostrophe is used; the apostrophe is used to show possession or ownership.

Examples:

- Sam's game plan
- My friend's DVD
- Beth's zombie

Here's a test you can use to determine whether an apostrophe is needed—we call it the "of" test. In other words, can you reword the sentence and substitute the apostrophe with "of"?

Using an Apostrophe	Using "of" test
my friend's DVD	the DVD of my friend
Beth's zombie plan	the zombie plan of Beth

James's canned goods*

the canned goods of James

*James's is also acceptable

If you just mean to make a word plural, you should not add an apostrophe. Here is an example of incorrect usage:

The student's planned to buy their books but played Xbox instead.

Here, you would not use an apostrophe because there is no ownership being established. You can double-check this example and see that this use of the apostrophe would not pass the "of" test.

The planned of the students just does not make sense.

The sentence above would not pass the test and should read as follows:

The students planned to buy their books but played Xbox instead.

Plural Possessives

Making plural words possessive can be confusing at times because we so often add an s to a noun to make it plural. All of those s's can be a little overwhelming.

But the rules are pretty clear on this issue.

To make plural nouns that do not end in s possessive, add 's.

- The children's scary books
- The mice's tiny tails

To make plural nouns that end in s possessive, add just the '.

- My cats' treasures
- Our zombie fortresses' weaknesses

Contractions

Using Apostrophes to Create Contractions

Apostrophes are also used in contractions where the apostrophe takes the place of letters that are omitted when you join two words. Here are some examples:

- I am = I'm
- You are = you're
- It is = it's
- Did not = didn't

You can also use an apostrophe to stand in for omitted numbers.

- I was born in '75, and I'm feeling old.

It's important to note that contractions and using apostrophes to stand in for omitted numbers are generally considered too informal for formal, academic writing.

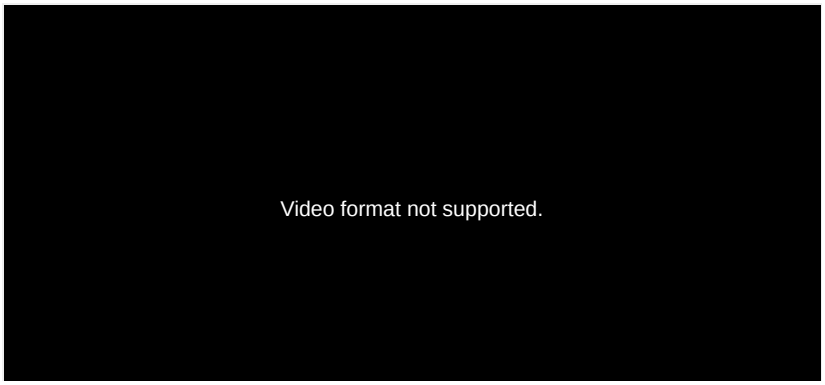
Some students wonder why they should bother learning these rules, then. The answer is that there are plenty of writing situations where contractions are appropriate. It's just that contractions are too informal for most of the formal papers you write for college and should be avoided in those situations.

Tips from the Professor

While most of the rules regarding apostrophes are pretty straightforward, there are some situations related to apostrophes that seem to give a lot of people a lot of trouble. Here are some helpful tips:

- It's is a contraction for it is. If you need to make it possessive, as in its creepy eyes, you shouldn't use an apostrophe. Because of the contraction, the possessive its goes against the normal rules.
- Sometimes, you'll see writers use an apostrophe when referring to decades like the 1980's. However, it's standard now to write the 1980s without the apostrophe.
- To make a compound word such as mother-in-law possessive, just add an 's to the last word. Here is an example:
  - My mother-in-law's weekly phone calls make me really nervous.
- If you need to show joint possession, only the last word should be made possessive, as illustrated in this example:
  - Alex and Megan's zombie-proof fence is certainly admirable.

Watch this video of the grammar professor, as she helps her student understand how to use apostrophes correctly.



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6.1.1.2: Brackets

Brackets

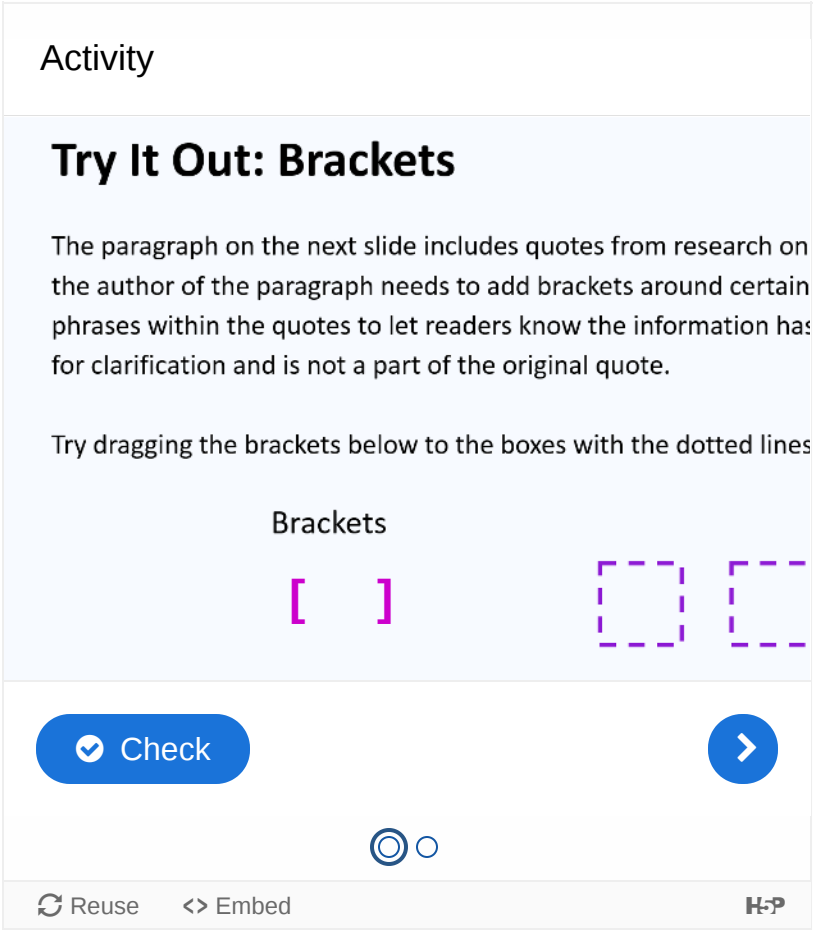
Using Brackets for Clarity

You may not use brackets often, but they can become helpful punctuation in academic writing as you integrate quotes into your essays. You should use brackets when you have to alter text within a quote to make something clear for your readers.

The brackets let your readers know you have made changes to the quote in some way. The material inside the brackets is your addition.

For example, if you need to add information to a quote for clarity, you would use brackets.

- She said, “They [the vampire hunters] were after me, but it was all a big mistake.”
  - Here, your readers would know the vampire hunters were not a part of that particular quote and you added the words for clarity.



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6.1.1.3: Colons

Colons

When do you use the colon?

Many writers think the colon is such a confusing piece of punctuation that they simply avoid it altogether, but it can be fun to use a colon every now and then. Plus, the colon can add some important variety and excitement to your writing. So why not review this list of uses for the colon and give it a try?

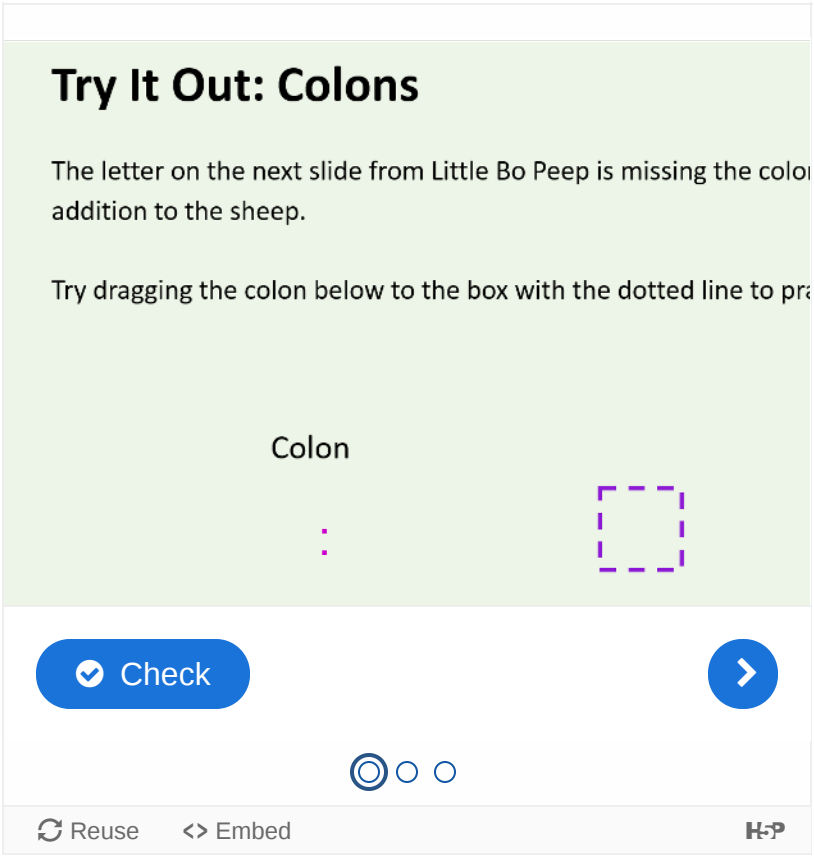
In most cases, essentially, a colon signals “anticipation”—the reader knows that what follows the colon will define, illustrate, or explain what preceded it. This is certainly the case in the colon’s first three uses, as described below:

- Use a colon to separate two independent clauses (complete thoughts) when you want to emphasize the second independent clause.
  - Road construction in New York City might pose a problem if there is a zombie attack: It is best to know which streets are closed, as you do not want to end up lost during a dire situation.
- Use a colon to separate an independent clause from a list that follows the independent clause.
  - I have collected a wide variety of important items in case there is a zombie attack: canned food, bottled water, and wood for boarding my windows.

TIP! You shouldn’t use a colon when the introductory portion of the sentence is a dependent clause (incomplete thought). The first part of the sentence must be an independent clause or a complete sentence. So the following would NOT work:

I have collected: canned food, bottled water, and wood for boarding my windows.

- Use a colon to separate an independent clause from an appositive (a noun or noun phrase that renames or identifies a noun or noun phrase right next to it) that follows the independent clause.
  - I have the perfect solution to your problems with bullies at work: Chuck Norris.
- You should also use a colon at the end of a formal, business letter greeting.
  - To Whom It May Concern:
- And, of course, you should use a colon to separate the hour from the minutes when writing numerical time.
  - 3:00 a.m.



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6.1.1.4: Commas

Commas

The Comma: Tricky, Mysterious, and Subjective?

People often think commas are tricky and mysterious, and while they may be tricky if we aren't familiar with the rules, they are not mysterious at all. They are not subjective, and no matter what your third-grade teacher told you, it's probably not a good idea to place a comma wherever you feel the need to take a breath. What happens if you have a stuffy nose from a cold? Your essay might be littered with unnecessary commas.

There are actually some pretty clear-cut rules regarding commas, and while some rules seem to be clearer than others, at least in terms of how much most people understand, there are some basic comma rules that can help you know when and when not to use a comma.

With Coordinating Conjunctions

Use a comma with a coordinating conjunction when combining two independent clauses.

An independent clause is a term for a complete thought or sentence with both a subject and a verb. A coordinating conjunction is a conjunction that combines two equal elements and can combine two complete sentences. We have seven coordinating conjunctions in American English:

- For
- And
- Nor
- But
- Or
- Yet
- So

You may have heard of these referred to as the FANBOYS, which is a great way to help you remember all seven of the coordinating conjunctions.

Coordinating conjunctions can connect all kinds of words and phrases, but when they are used to connect independent clauses, we must place a comma before the coordinating conjunction, as illustrated in the following example:

I am preparing for a zombie invasion, and I am building a strong zombie fort around my home.

TIP! If the coordinating conjunction does not connect two independent clauses, you would not need a comma before the coordinating conjunction, as illustrated in the following example:

- I am preparing for a zombie invasion and am building a strong zombie fort around my home.

In a Series

Use a comma to separate items in a series (three or more things).

You should even place a comma between the last two, although some writing style guidelines now omit this comma. In academic culture, we still use the serial or "Oxford" comma, so even punctuation rules have a rhetorical context. In some situations, you may not use the serial comma, but in academic writing, you should, as illustrated in these examples:

- She stayed up all night watching scary movies and ate popcorn, peanuts, and chocolate.
- She ran into the house, shut the door, and locked all of the locks because she thought a werewolf was behind her.

With Introductory Phrases

Use commas after introductory words or phrases.

Subordinating conjunctions are words that connect, but unlike coordinating conjunctions, which connect equal parts, subordinating conjunctions connect dependent clauses (incomplete thoughts) to independent clauses. When you see a subordinating conjunction

at the beginning of a sentence, this signals an introductory phrase, and you know a comma is coming at the end of that subordinate phrase, as illustrated in these examples:

Because his favorite team lost the Super Bowl, he would not speak to anyone about the game for two years.

Although they have stored a lot of food in their basement, I am not sure if they have enough for a zombie apocalypse.

Some of the most common subordinating conjunctions include the following:

- Because
- Although
- After
- While
- Since

TIP! When these same phrases appear at the end of a sentence, they are not set off by commas, except in cases of strong contrast—for instance, in the case of the word although.

He would not speak to anyone about the game for two years because his favorite team lost the Super Bowl.

I am not sure if they have enough for a zombie apocalypse, although they have stored a lot of food in their basement.

You should also place a comma after introductory words, as illustrated in this example:

- However, video games make great presents for a teenager.

Essential & Nonessential Information

Use commas in the middle of a sentence to set off words or phrases that are not essential to the meaning of the sentence.

- The New York Yankees, who happen to be my favorite team, have won more World Series than any other team in baseball.
- The Boston Red Sox, however, have won the World Series only seven times.

This rule can be a little tricky because of some misinformation we may have received at some point in elementary school. Were you ever taught that the trick to determining whether or not you need commas around information in the middle of a sentence was to pull out that information and see if the sentence was still complete? If the sentence was still complete, then you would know you needed a comma around that extra information.

Well, that doesn't always work so well.

The best tip is to think about how meaning would be affected if you pulled out the word or phrase. If the meaning is not really affected, the word or phrase is not essential and should be placed inside a set of commas.

Conversely, it's important to remember that essential words or phrases should not be set off with commas.

- Her copy of Skyrim that I borrowed last week was the best game I have ever played and probably the best video game in the history of the world.

With Adjectives

Use a comma to separate coordinate adjectives describing the same noun.

An adjective is a word that describes a noun, and when we have two coordinate or "equal" adjectives describing the same noun, we need to place a comma between those adjectives, as illustrated in this example:

- It was a stressful, sleepless night because I stayed up too late playing Dead Space.

If the adjectives aren't coordinate, or "equal," you should not separate them with a comma, as illustrated in this example:

- Everyone knows the white frame house on Third Street is haunted.

A good trick to help you determine whether or not adjectives are coordinate is to try reading the sentence with the adjectives in reverse order or to add the word and between them. If the sentence would still make sense to you, the adjectives are coordinate, and you would need to separate them with a comma if they are describing a single noun.

Shifts at the End

Use a comma to separate coordinate elements at the end of a sentence or to indicate a distinct shift at the end of a sentence.

This comma rule is pretty straightforward. If you have a distinct shift at the end in content or a shift at the end for emphasis, you should set off that shift at the end with a comma.

- You want me to fight Chuck Norris for you? I am brave, not crazy.
- You are going to stand in line for the new Halo 4, aren't you?

With Quotes

Use a comma between the main discourse and a quote.

Whether you are writing dialog or setting up a quote from a source in your research essay, you should use a comma to separate the main discourse from your quote.

- As Bilbo Baggins said, "I like half of you half as well as I should like, and like less than half of you half as well as you deserve!"
- My favorite line in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is when the witches say, "Double, double, toil and trouble; fire, burn; and cauldron, bubble."

Places & Dates

Use commas to set apart geographical names and to separate items in dates, except for between the month and the day.

- When I heard zombies had been located in New York, New York, I knew it was time to move to Los Angeles, California.
- It is a good thing that letter made it to 4 Privet Drive, Little Whinging, Surrey, England.
- I know the Mayan calendar indicates the end of the world on December 21, 2012, but I am going to stick with Nostradamus because he gave us until 3797.

Comma Abuse

Finally, don't abuse the poor comma. It hasn't done anything to you. Well, it may have caused you some stress from time to time, but you should not abuse it. You should *definitely* not use a comma in the following instances:

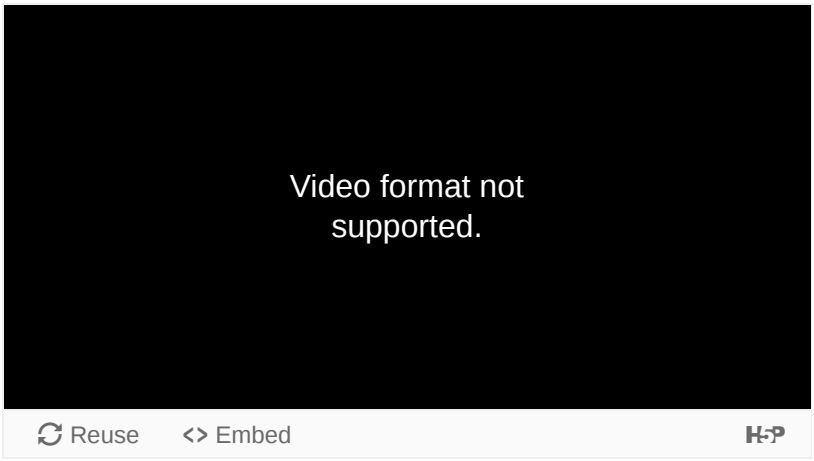
- To separate a subject from a verb.
  - My zombie plan, involves the complete and utter failure of your zombie plan.
- Between two verbs or verb phrases in a compound predicate.
  - Do those vampires really sparkle in the sunlight, and drink only animal blood?
- Between two nouns or noun phrases in a compound subject.
  - Aggressive newbies, and campers are ruining the gaming experiences for me.
- To set off a dependent clauses at the end of a sentence, except in cases of strong contrast.
  - My gaming confidence is at an all-time low, because I got pawned ten times by a second-grader.

Tips from the Professor

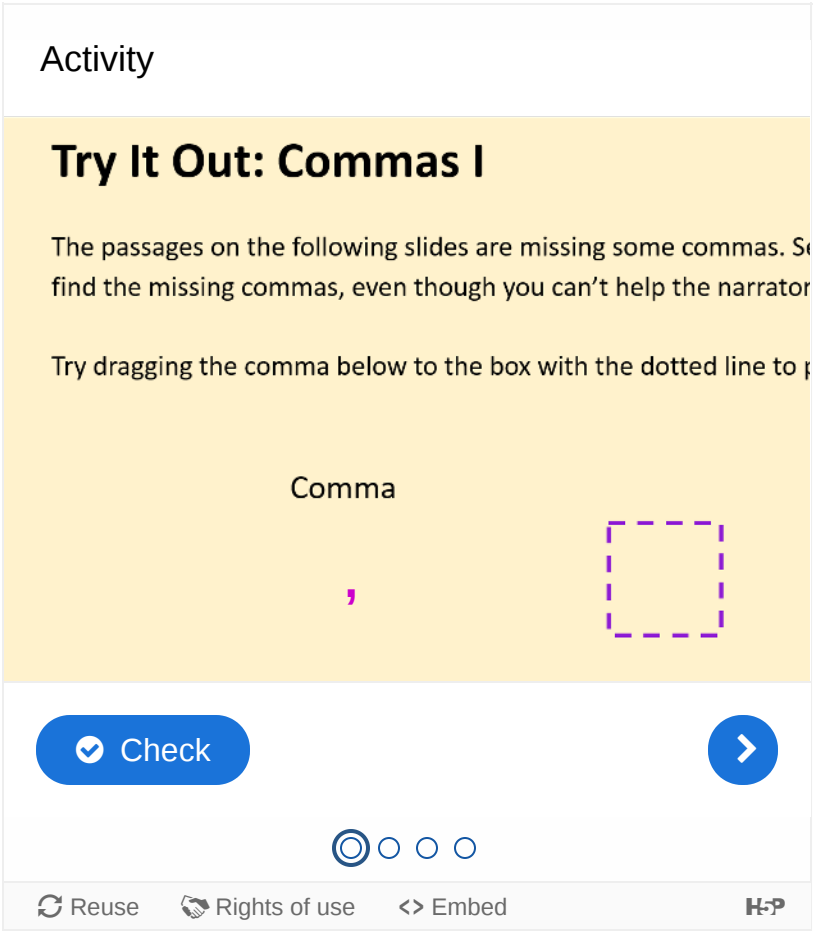
Students often struggle with commas when it comes to using them correctly with the coordinating conjunctions—and, but, or, for, nor, so, and yet.

The important thing to remember is that you have to keep in mind what else is around that conjunction. You can't assume that every time you use and you'll need a comma. Sometimes, you will, and, sometimes, you won't.

In the following interactive video, the Grammar Professor will explain more about why you have to think about what surrounds your coordinating conjunction before you can decide whether or not you need that comma.


Video format not
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Activity


Try It Out: Commas I
The passages on the following slides are missing some commas. S
find the missing commas, even though you can't help the narrator
Try dragging the comma below to the box with the dotted line to p
Comma
,
Check
Reuse
Rights of use
Embed

Activity

Try It Out: Commas II

In this second round of comma practice, the passage is missing some commas. See if you can find the missing commas in this passage as you learn all about Egyptian mummies.

Try dragging the comma below to the box with the dotted line to practice.

Comma

,



Check

Reuse <> Embed H5P

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6.1.1.5: Dashes

Dashes

What is that dash for anyway?

The dash is kind of like the superhero of punctuation. Not only does it have a cool, sleek name, it's often referred to as the "super comma." But you can't just go around using dashes because you want super commas. There are some rules you should follow, and you don't want to overuse any one type of punctuation.

The following two rules should help you make good decisions regarding that dashing dash:

- You use dashes to set apart or emphasize the content that is within the dashes or after a dash. The content within the dashes or after the dash gets more emphasis than it would if you just used commas or parentheses.

His ideas regarding an evacuation in case of a zombie attack are certainly controversial—even radical.

I think the reason those books became so popular—so much so that they became a cultural phenomenon—is that the world was ready for a little bit of magic.

- You can also use dashes to set apart an appositive phrase or extra information that contains commas.

The changes that came with the arrival of the eleventh doctor—the screwdriver, the TARDIS, and all of the side characters—certainly surprised many fans.

Of course, while the rules related to using dashes are relatively simple, there seems to be great confusion over how the dash is actually created in word processing programs.

To be sure, the dash is no hyphen. The hyphen is smaller and comes between words like mother-in-law. The dash is longer and is created by placing two hyphens in a row. Then, after you space after the word after the dash, most word processing programs will turn those two little hyphens — into a dash—like so.

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6.1.1.6: Ellipses

Ellipses

What are those three little dots for?

A lot of people seem to use an ellipsis to show a pause or hint at the future in informal writing. Ellipses appear this way frequently in Facebook messages and emails. Interestingly, although this use of an ellipsis was technically incorrect at one time, it's becoming "more" correct over time with some style manuals suggesting you can use an ellipsis in this manner if you use it sparingly.

Still, in formal writing, it's probably not a good idea to use an ellipsis to show a pause or to create anticipation of some kind. Generally, academic style guides recommend using an ellipsis to show that you have omitted words in quotes. Here is an example of how to use ellipses in a formal, academic writing situation.

Quote:

"Often, a school is your best bet—perhaps not for education but certainly for protection from an undead attack."
— Max Brooks, *The Zombie Survival Guide*

With an ellipsis:

"Often, a school is your best bet . . . for protection from an undead attack."

The key is that you shouldn't change the meaning of the quote. The second quote here isn't nearly so witty, but the basic idea hasn't been changed. When you have long quotes and you need to eliminate some unnecessary information from those quotes, an ellipsis can be very helpful.

Making the Ellipsis

Of course, now that you know when to use an ellipsis you may be wondering how to make one. An ellipsis is three periods or dots, and most style guides call for a space between each dot. So, you would type period, space, period, space, and period. You also need a space before and after the ellipsis. One tip is to make sure your ellipsis does not stretch to the next line. It must be all on one line. If you are ending a sentence with an ellipsis, it may look like you have a four-dot ellipsis, but there is really no such thing. The first dot is your period. Then, you have your ellipsis. In this situation, you will also put a space between each period.

Example:

According to Jones (2012), "*The Walking Dead* series has added to the new popularity of zombies. . . . However, several movies are responsible for the initial interest" (p. 31).

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6.1.1.7: Exclamation Marks

Exclamation Marks

When should you use an exclamation mark?

Honestly, you won't use a lot of exclamation marks in academic writing. The exclamation mark is kind of the equivalent of yelling, and most academic writing situations don't call for much yelling, though you may feel like yelling about some of your assignments.

However, exclamation marks do serve an important function by adding emphasis to commands or other phrases, and you may find yourself needing the exclamation mark when you write dialog for certain narrative assignments.

You can certainly see the difference between a sentence punctuated with a period and one punctuated with an exclamation mark.

Watch out.
Watch out!

Zombies are coming.
Zombies are coming!

In most cases, you should be careful with exclamation marks and make sure the situation calls for them. They are generally considered pretty informal, and a particularly famous writer had this to say about them:

"Cut out all these exclamation points. An exclamation point is like laughing at your own joke."
— F. Scott Fitzgerald, author of *The Great Gatsby*

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6.1.1.8: Hyphens

Hyphens

Hyphenating Words

“The basic rule of hyphens . . . is that they’re used to form compound modifiers, that is, to link two or more words that are acting as adjectives or sometimes adverbs.” (Casagrande, 2006, p. 62)

Okay, what? What are compound modifiers?

The rule is actually simpler than it seems. Essentially, when you have two or more words that modify or describe a noun that follows, you should hyphenate those words. But a word of caution: you shouldn’t hyphenate the same words if they come after the noun.

Examples:

I thought we were in a long-term relationship.
Everyone knew that relationship was not long term.

I really need a fuel-efficient car to save money for more video games.
To save money for video games, I bought a car with better fuel efficiency.

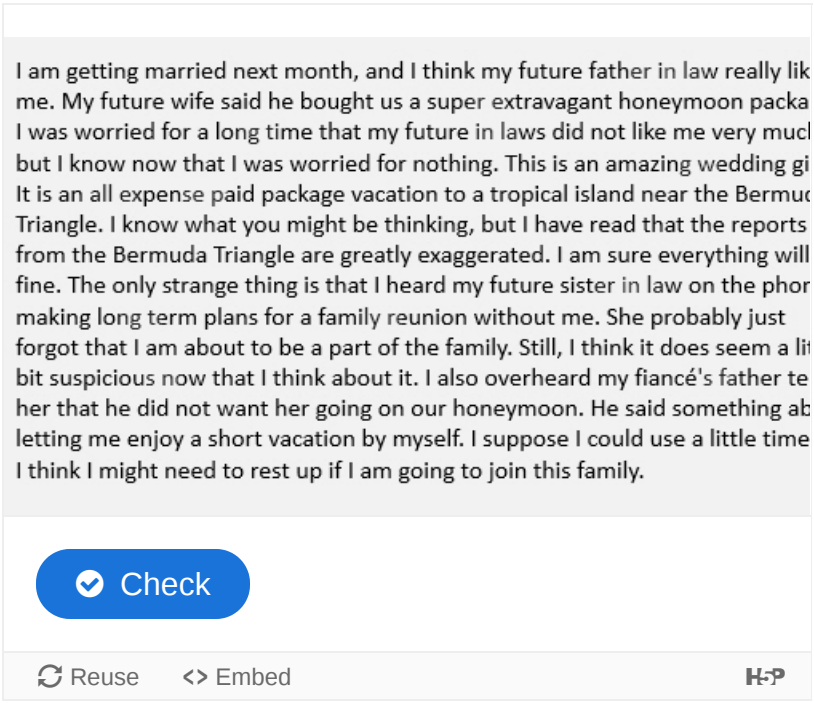
I have a three-year-old son who mimics every word you say.
I have a son who mimics every word you say; he is three years old.

Hyphens also have other uses including acting with prefixes, suffixes, nouns, letters, and numbers, and clarifying the meaning of words. Generally, you will hyphenate words that begin with self, all, ex, and words that begin with a capital letter or number. Here are some examples:

- Ex-husband
- All-inclusive
- Self-help
- The A-team

Of course, we should also hyphenate compound numbers like twenty-five or thirty-seven.

Finally, it’s important to note that hyphen “rules” are more like the Pirate Code in that they are really more like guidelines. Even the “experts” will disagree about whether or not some words or groups of words should be hyphenated. It’s definitely a good idea to double-check with the style manual you are using, such as the APA or MLA manuals, and for tricky words, you can consult a good dictionary.



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6.1.1.9: Parentheses

Parentheses

Parentheses: More Than Helpful Emoticon Tools

Interestingly, parentheses can do more than make smiley faces :) and sad faces :(like these. Although they are quite handy for these important emoticons, they serve an important function in formal writing, as well.

Parentheses are used to set off information in a sentence that is important but not really a part of the main message. It's important to remember that your sentence should make sense if you eliminate the parentheses and all that is contained between them.

The Headless Horseman (as the old legend goes) eliminated the disruption Ichabod Crane brought to Sleepy Hollow.

You'll probably use parentheses most often in your research papers because both APA and MLA formatting require in-text citations using parentheses. So right after a quote or any other borrowed information, you should include an in-text citation in parentheses, as illustrated in these examples:

APA (Jones, 2011, p.131).
MLA (Jones 131).

TIP: The period comes after the parenthesis in both APA and MLA format. The exception to this rule is with block quotes. When using block quotes, in both APA and MLA format, the period comes before the in-text citation.

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6.1.1.10: Periods

Periods

Periods: We Go Way Back!

The period seems pretty straightforward. After all, for most of us, this was the first punctuation we learned when we were learning to read. See Jane run. To our first-grader selves, that meant, See Jane run, stop, take a break, keep going. You can do this thing.

Periods are certainly important punctuation because they are what we most often use to separate complete thoughts or independent clauses. Periods are how we end our sentences most of the time.

However, periods do serve another important function in the world of punctuation: You should use a period with abbreviations.

- Dr.
- Mr.
- Mrs.
- Ms.
- a.m.
- p.m.

Then, of course, there is the question about how many spaces should come after a period. If you learned to type on those things called typewriters, you learned to double space after all periods at the ends of sentences. However, this isn't always the case anymore. Generally, we just single space after all periods, though you should consult the style guide you are using. APA style now requires a single space after a period at the end of a sentence, after requiring a double space in the sixth edition.

The lesson here is clear. The "rules" change all the time and are dependent upon your style guide. It's important to stay up to date.

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6.1.1.11: Question Marks

Question Marks

The Question Mark: It Raises Some Good Questions

Question marks are pretty simple. You should use a question mark at the end of a question like this:

- When did our professor say that essay was due?

However, there is one situation involving question marks that seems to give people a lot of trouble. What about when you have a sentence that is part statement and part question? What do you do then? You have a couple of options, depending upon the situation. You might have a sentence like this:

- The question I have is, how are we going to get out of here?

In this case, the statement before the question isn't complete, so you can simply use a comma to separate the statement from the question.

Of course, the sample sentence is a bit awkward, so it might be preferable to rewrite the sentence. You could change the sentence so the first part, the statement part, is a complete sentence. In this situation, you might have a sentence like the following:

- One question remains: How are we going to get out of here?

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6.1.1.12: Quotation Marks

Quotation Marks

Don’t Forget the Quotation Marks

Quotation marks are how we tell our readers we are including words that aren't our own. Whether we're using dialog or quote material from our research, quotation marks are important punctuation. The reality is that punctuation marks can really make a difference in whether or not you are breaking the law. After all, if you use someone’s words and don't let your readers know you are using someone else’s words, that constitutes plagiarism, which is most certainly illegal.

So, if you have doubts about this whole quotation thing, the following pages will be extremely helpful. This super-cool video can help as well.



Dialog

Quotation Marks with Dialog

You may not find yourself needing to use dialog very often in academic writing, but you may be asked to write narrative essays in some classes, which often contain dialog.

When you use dialog, it’s important to use quotation marks to set apart the speech from the rest of your text. Otherwise, separating the dialog from the rest of the writing can be very confusing for readers.

- This time, my basketball coach said, “I know you can do it.” It turned out he did not really know what he was talking about.

Quoting Sources

Quotation Marks with Quoted Material

You should use quotation marks any time you use words directly from another source. Sometimes, students think putting a citation or reference at the end “covers it,” but you must use quotation marks to indicate borrowed words.

- “Quotation marks serve primarily to tell the reader the exact words someone used” (Hope, 2010, p. 21).

If you paraphrase a source, this means you have put the information in your own words, and you don’t need to use quotation marks. You should still cite with an in-text citation, but you shouldn’t use quotation marks.

The key to borrowing information from sources is to remember that any words appearing inside quotation marks belong to someone else. Words that do not appear inside quotation marks are assumed to be yours.

Single Quotes

What are those single quotes for?

Now that you know what quotation marks are used for, you may wonder about the single quotation marks—the one that look like ‘this.’

Single quotation marks are used for quotes within quotes, as illustrated in the following example:

The article read, “When the quarterback for the Green Bay Packers was interviewed, he said he was ‘upset’ about the call that affected the game.”

You may even encounter situations where you’ll close single quotation marks and double quotation marks at the same time, leaving you with “something like ‘this.’” Don’t worry if this happens. It is correct. It just means the quote within the quote ended at the same time the main quote ended.

Try It Out: Quotation Marks

The paragraphs on the next few slides share some interesting information about the famous author, Edgar Allan Poe, but the author of the paragraph needs to place quotation marks around titles and quoted material.

After reviewing the passages, drag the quotation marks from the top right, and then place them in the correct places in the paragraph.

Start Activity

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6.1.1.13: Semicolons

Semicolons

The Semicolon: It's Not a Strong Comma

It's true. The semicolon is used for more things than just winking in text. ;)

One of the main uses of a semicolon is to separate two independent clauses.

The semicolon isn't like a comma; it's really more like a period. Using a semicolon like a comma can definitely create some trouble.

First, let's take a step back and explain the difference between an independent clause and a dependent clause. An independent clause expresses a complete thought. An independent clause is usually called a sentence. Conversely, a dependent clause is a group of words that may contain a subject and verb but does not express a complete thought.

Examples:

Independent clause:
I ran quickly to escape the zombie I encountered on Main Street.

Dependent clause:
Although I ran quickly to escape the zombie I encountered on Main Street,

Can you see the difference?

The first example is a complete sentence, and the second example isn't. Of course, we also know the first one has a happy ending, and we aren't so sure about the second one.

So now that you understand what an independent clause is and that a semicolon connects two independent clauses, we can begin to look at how the semicolon can be used.

Joining Clauses

Semicolons to Join Clauses

You should use a semicolon when you're joining two independent clauses without a connecting word. The semicolon functions, structurally, just like a period. The difference is that the semicolon between the two independent clauses shows they are connected, as illustrated in the following examples:

If you want me to vote for you, you are going to need to tell me what I want to hear; if you are lying, I guess I will worry about that later.

I am so tired of spending so much money on canned food for my zombie apocalypse hoard; I am pretty sure the grocery store clerks are laughing at me behind my back.

In Lists

Using Semicolons in Lists

So right after telling you that semicolons shouldn't be used like commas, we should discuss one situation where the semicolon does function more like a comma. However, this is a very particular situation, so you'll want to pay close attention.

You should use semicolons when you are separating items in a list that contain commas. Here is an example:

At the Comicon conference, I met Jeanne, from Dallas, Texas; James, from Bend, Oregon; and Stacey, from Bangor, Maine.

Because the items in the series contain commas themselves, it would be confusing to add more commas to the situation. In this particular instance, the semicolon separates the items in a series.

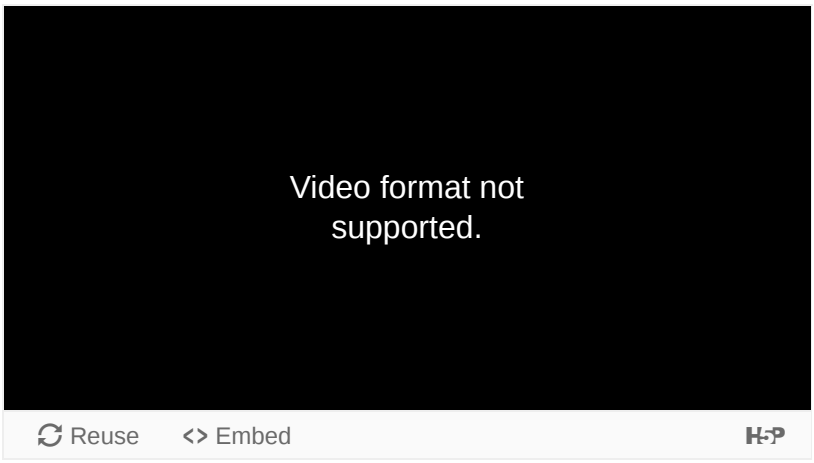
Tips from the Professor

Semicolons can feel a little confusing because sometimes they're used to separate items in a series, as mentioned on the previous page, but they are really nothing like a comma. In terms of sentence structure, they can separate independent clauses, just like a

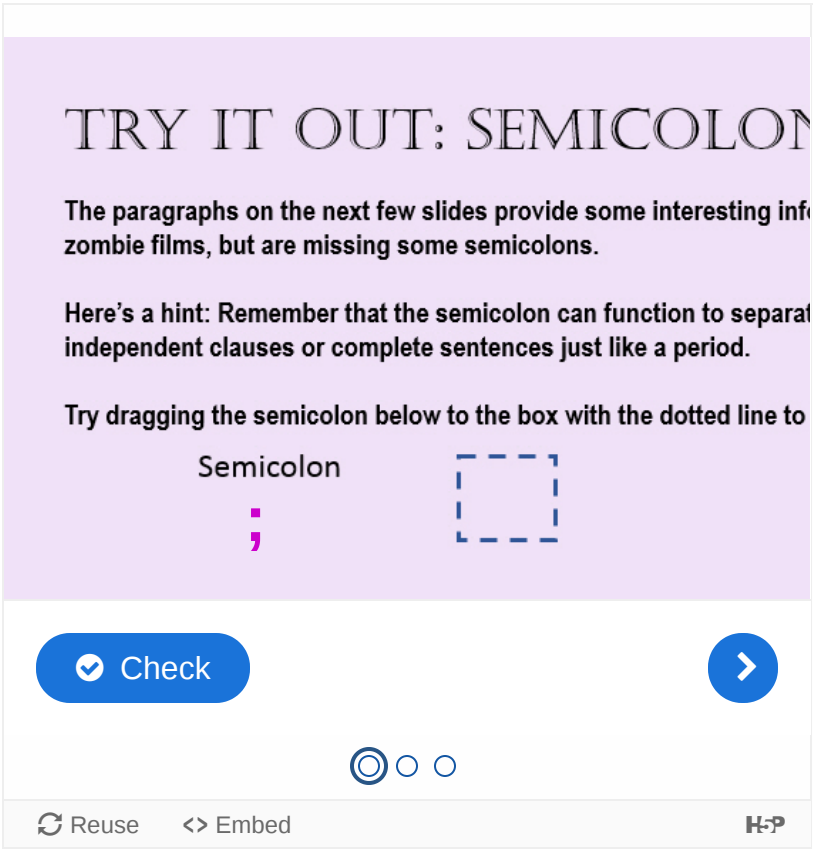
period.

If you have the habit of using a semicolon like a comma, it's important to work to break that habit. When you edit your writing, it's a good idea to circle all of the semicolons you have used. Then, ask yourself why each semicolon is there. If you're using it like a strong comma, you'll need to revise.

The following video from the Grammar Professor can help you if you continue to struggle with semicolons.



Try It Out

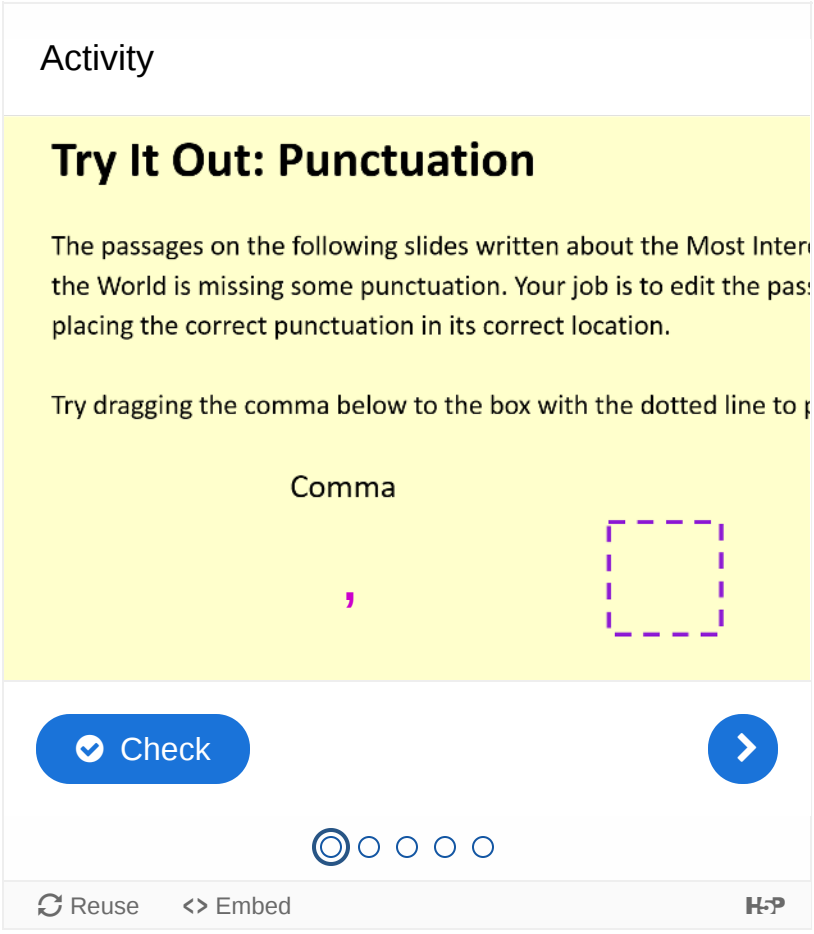


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6.1.1.14: Try It Out

Try It Out



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6.1.1.15: Putting It All Together

Putting It All Together

You have certainly had a lot to take in as you considered each type of punctuation. To help you review, watch and listen to the presentation below, which provides a basic overview of what you have learned about punctuation.

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6.1.1.16: Time to Write

Time to Write

Now that you have a stronger understanding of the punctuation rules, it’s time to think about how these rules might apply to your own writing. One key strategy is to think about the areas in which you struggle. If you don’t have problems with apostrophes, then you shouldn’t worry too much about apostrophes.

However, it’s important to keep punctuation in general in mind when you edit. It’s important to edit your writing in several passes; you can’t catch every issue in one sweeping edit. So, with that in mind, it’s a good idea to devote one edit to simply looking for punctuation issues. It’s most helpful to review the rules right before you edit, especially the rules for the types of punctuation you have had struggles with, perhaps commas or semicolons.

It’s your turn now, and knowing more about the rules of punctuation is a helpful part of a good editing process!

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SECTION OVERVIEW

6.1.2: Parts of Speech

6.1.2.1: Nouns

6.1.2.2: Pronouns

6.1.2.3: Verbs

6.1.2.4: Adjectives

6.1.2.5: Adverbs

6.1.2.6: Propositions

6.1.2.7: Articles

6.1.2.8: Conjunctions

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6.1.2.11: Putting It All Together

6.1.2.12: Time to Write

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6.1.2.1: Nouns

Nouns

A noun is a person, place, object, idea, or event. “The word *noun*, in fact, comes from *nomen*, the Latin word for *name*” (Kolln, 1994, p. 276). Nouns are the first words you learned as a child, and you probably have a really strong sense of what a noun is. After all, how could we possibly talk about anything if we’re unable to give it a name?

So you may be wondering why in the world we have to complicate something as simple as nouns by discussing so many different types of nouns. The answer is that it’s important to learn about the different types of nouns as you work to ensure proper structures and agreements in your sentences.

Proper Nouns

A proper noun refers to a specific person, place, organization, etc. Proper nouns are capitalized because they are specific nouns.

Some examples of proper nouns are Steven, Apple (the company), New York, and the Seattle Seahawks.

Common Nouns

A common noun refers to a general group or class of people, places, objects, etc. One way to identify a common noun is called the “the” test. If you can use the noun with the article the (or another article like a or an) in front of it, the word is likely a common noun.

Some examples are the *game*, the *movie*, and the *ghost*.

Of course, it’s important to remember that the “the” test does not work all the time. It’s just a good guideline.

Some exceptions to the “the” test would be with proper nouns (discussed on the previous page) like the Dallas Cowboys and the Boston Red Sox. Even though they would pass the “the” test, they are proper nouns, not common nouns.

Collective Nouns

Nouns can get a little tricky when it comes to a discussion of collective nouns. Collective nouns are nouns such as family, team, and majority. The tricky part comes when we have to make a decision about whether these nouns are singular or plural because we have to choose verbs that will agree with these nouns.

And, now, here’s the really tricky part: There are no hard and fast rules. The verb you choose to agree with the collective noun actually depends upon how you want your readers to perceive the noun. Is it a single unit or a group of individuals? Even then, it depends upon context. Take the collective noun family, for example.

- The family have all gone their separate ways since Grandma died.

Here, because each member went his or her separate way, you would see the collective noun family as a group of individuals; therefore, you would use a plural verb instead of a singular verb.

But let’s look at another example.

- The whole family is coming to my house for Thanksgiving this year. I had better learn to cook a turkey.

Here, the family is seen as a single unit, so you would need a singular verb to agree with the collective noun.

In her book, *Rhetorical Grammar*, Martha Kolln (1991) says “[collective nouns] can be treated as either singular or plural, depending on context and meaning” (p. 47). So, it really does depend on the situation.

You may be wondering how this information is helpful. The key is to think about how you might perceive the collective noun and then, of course, to consider how it’s used in the sentence.

And, after all, there are only about 200 collective nouns in the English language, so you really only have to worry about 200 of these. Okay, that’s a lot. But this is a great example of how, very often, there are no hard and fast rules for grammar.

Verbal Nouns

A verbal noun is a type of noun that is derived from a verb. It looks like a verb but actually functions in a sentence like a noun. Here are some examples:

- Running from zombies is hard work.
- Jogging is a good exercise that will help you prepare, but you have to do it every day.
- We had a meeting to compare our zombie action plans.

Verbal nouns and something called gerunds (a form of a verb or verb phrase that functions as a noun phrase and subject in a sentence) are very similar. In fact, the first two examples above are examples of verbal nouns that are also gerunds. But, a verbal noun can be more than a gerund. In the last example, the word "meeting" is functioning like a noun but isn't a noun phrase that's the subject of a sentence.

It can certainly get a little confusing, and even the grammar experts disagree sometimes about the differences between verbal nouns and gerunds.

The key thing for you to remember is that, when we are talking about nouns, verbs can sometimes function in your sentences like nouns.

Compound Nouns

A compound noun is a noun made up of two or more words. Sometimes, compound nouns are hyphenated, but there are plenty of examples of compound nouns that are not hyphenated. There are also compound nouns that are written as one word. Here are some examples:

- Mother-in-law
- Waste-paper basket
- Full moon
- Blackboard

Some compound nouns that used to be hyphenated are no longer hyphenated, and some compound nouns that used to be two words became one word. The "rules" change based upon common usage.

Paper-clip is now just paperclip.

And healthcare is now generally considered just one word, but some people still say it should be two words, health care.

"Rules" of correctness change constantly, and rules related to compound nouns change rather quickly. If you're in doubt about how to write a compound noun, be sure to check a good online dictionary.

Try It Out

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6.1.2.2: Pronouns

Pronouns

Pronouns are actually just another type of noun, but because they're such an important noun type and so commonly used, they're usually classified as a separate part of speech. A pronoun is a noun that takes the place of a noun or groups of nouns, and because pronouns are "standing in" for nouns, you have to be sure that the pronoun you choose to "stand in" agrees in number, person, and gender.

The menu on the left will take you to the different pronoun types, and there are quite a few: personal, definite, indefinite, singular, plural, possessive, relative, demonstrative, reflexive, subjective, and objective. That's a long list, right?

The pronouns discussed in the following pages will probably not cause any trouble for native speakers, but you may find it interesting to realize how complicated this all is and, yet, how easily most of us can usually use pronouns without a problem. Still, issues with pronoun agreement (making the pronouns agree with the nouns they define) and pronoun reference (making sure it is clear what noun a pronoun is replacing) often appear in the writing of beginning writers. If you have ever had a pronoun issue marked on one of your essays, you are in the right place!

Personal Pronouns

Personal pronouns are pronouns that take the place of common and proper nouns and refer to people and things. Essentially, they "stand in" for people and things when you want to make sure you are not repeating yourself by having to rename people and things all the time. Let's look at an example.

My brother is staying up late to watch a "Walking Dead" marathon. He is going to have nightmares!

In this example, the author doesn't have to repeat my brother, thanks to the personal pronoun he.

Personal pronouns can be singular and plural, and there are first, second, and third-person personal pronouns.

Personal (Definite) Pronouns

	Singular	Plural
First Person	I, me	we, us
Second Person	you	you
Third Person	she, her, he, him, it	they, them

Definite & Indefinite Pronouns

What is the difference between definite and indefinite pronouns? A definite pronoun would be a pronoun that refers to something specific, so a personal pronoun would also be a definite pronoun. (Refer back to the Personal Pronouns page to see examples.)

Indefinite pronouns do not refer to anything specific, so words like someone and everybody are indefinite pronouns. Indefinite pronouns can also be singular or plural.

While any pronoun that refers to a specific person or thing would be a definite pronoun, it can be helpful to refer to a list of indefinite pronouns if you need to use pronouns that refer to people or things in general and do not refer to anyone or anything specific. The list below can help.

Indefinite Pronouns

Singular	anybody, anyone, anything, each, either, everybody, everyone, everything, neither, nobody, no one, nothing, one, somebody, someone, something
Plural	both, few, many, several
Singular or Plural	all, any, most, none, some

Singular & Plural Pronouns

Singular pronouns are simply pronouns that refer to singular nouns. But it can get a little tricky when you think about the fact that singular pronouns can be personal pronouns, which, as you have learned, refer to a person or thing. They will also be definite or indefinite, which means they can refer to someone or something specific (definite) or not (indefinite).

So words like "he" and "she" are singular, personal, definite pronouns, and words like "anybody" and "anyone" are singular, indefinite pronouns.

Plural pronouns are simply pronouns that refer to plural nouns. But, like singular pronouns, plural pronouns can also be personal and definite or indefinite, and they refer to plural nouns or groups of nouns.

For example, words like "they" and "we" are plural, personal, definite pronouns, and words like "many" and "both" are plural, indefinite pronouns.

TIP! Don't worry if you feel a little confused about the fact that singular and plural pronouns can also be personal pronouns. They are definite or indefinite as well. However, most likely, you won't find yourself in situations where you have to label pronoun types. What you do need to know is that, when you choose a singular or plural pronoun, you have to make sure it agrees with the noun you're replacing. So, if you're replacing a singular noun, be sure to use a singular pronoun.

Possessive Pronouns

Possessive pronouns are pronouns that show ownership. Some possessive pronouns can be used before nouns and function as adjectives (words that describe nouns). Examples would be pronouns like "my, her", or "his" because you would say things like "*my* books, *her* computer", and "*his* zombie plan".

Other possessive pronouns stand alone. These are pronouns like "mine, yours, hers", and "his". An example would be "That book is *hers"*.

Relative & Demonstrative Pronouns

Relative pronouns relate subordinate clauses (clauses that cannot stand alone) to the rest of a sentence. Words like "that, which, who", and "whom" are examples of relative pronouns.

Demonstrative pronouns stand in for a thing or things, and we choose these words based on how close these things are to us. For things that are nearby, we use the pronouns "this" and "these". For things that are far away, we use the pronouns "that" and "those".

Reflexive Pronouns

Reflexive pronouns end in self or selves, and they're used when a pronoun is both the subject and the object of a sentence.

- She is going to can all of those beans for her zombie storage room herself.
- I am going to treat myself to a little vacation from all of this worry about a zombie apocalypse and spend the day playing Halo on my Xbox.

Reflexive pronouns can also be used to show emphasis in a sentence, as illustrated in this example:

- I myself had to go through all of those web pages to find the one that would be the most helpful for our escape plan.

Subjective & Objective Pronouns

Subjective and objective pronouns are simply pronouns that occur in either the subject or the object of the sentence. Subjective pronouns tell us who or what the sentence is about. Objective pronouns receive the action in the sentence.

There are some pronouns that are always subjective and others that are always objective.

	Singular	Plural
Subjective	I, you, he, she, it	we, you, they
Objective	me, you, her, him, it	us, you, them

Sometimes, determining which pronoun we should use in a sentence can be a little confusing, especially when it comes to "I" and "me". You might want to write:

- My mother bought my brother and I new clothes for the first day of school, even though we insisted we did not want to go.

The pronoun I in this sentence is actually incorrect because it appears in the object of the sentence. The sentence should read something like this:

- My mother bought my brother and me new clothes for the first day of school, even though we insisted we did not want to go.

The trick is to take out the other person in the sentence to see if you would use I or me. For example:

Incorrect: “My mother bought I new clothes for school.”

Correct: “My mother bought me new clothes for school.”

Pronoun Agreement & Reference

Issues with pronoun agreement and pronoun references are common struggles for many beginning writers, but these problems are easy to correct once you realize the issue and just pay close attention to the pronouns you’re using in your writing.

Pronoun Agreement Errors

Pronoun agreement errors occur when the pronoun you are using to “stand in” for a noun does not agree with that noun in number, place, or gender.

- Clara needs to pick up her book.

Using the singular pronoun her does agree with Clara. It does not feel natural for a native speaker to say the following:

- Clara needs to pick up their book.

In the above sentence, "Clara" is the noun and "her" is the pronoun that agrees with Clara.

A common pronoun agreement error occurs when a writer uses a singular noun like "student" to represent students in general. Then, later, the writer may use "they" as a pronoun to replace "student" because the writer means students in general. This often occurs when people try to avoid that structure and use cumbersome word choices such as he/she, he or she, or (wo)men as there is no gender-neutral singular pronoun in the English language. Using these variations is not preferred, and rewriting the sentence is a better option.

How to rewrite the sentence will depend on which style guide you are using. Both the MLA 8th edition and the APA 7th edition support using the singular they. On the other hand, The Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) 17th edition does not support using the singular they in formal writing unless the person being discussed prefers they. CMOS recommends rewriting the sentence so that the noun and pronoun both agree.

For example, you may see something like this:

- If a student really thinks about how much they are paying for college, they are likely to be more focused in class.

According to the most recent MLA and APA style guidelines, this is correct. However, according to CMOS, the sentence should be rewritten.

You could rewrite it like this:

- If students really think about how much they are likely to be more focused in class.

Here is another example.

- When a chef adds a recipe to his or her Facebook page, he or she will often get many likes seemingly instantaneously.

Rewritten with the singular they:

- When a chef adds a recipe to their Facebook page, they will often get many likes seemingly instantaneously.

Rewritten with a plural subject and plural pronoun:

- When chefs add a recipe to their individual Facebook page, they will often get many likes seemingly instantaneously.

Rewritten without pronouns:

- When a chef adds a recipe to Facebook, likes appear seemingly instantaneously.

When in doubt, it is always safe to choose a plural subject so that the pronoun "they" flows more smoothly (and will be correct in number according to all style guides).

Pronoun Reference Errors

Pronoun reference errors can also be problems for beginning writers because it's so easy to get in a hurry when you write and forget that you need to think about how clear your writing will be for your audience.

A common pronoun reference error occurs when students write about several different people or things and then use a pronoun later like "she" or "it", but the audience has no idea what "she" or "it" refers to.

Here is a simple example to give you an idea about what a pronoun reference error looks like:

- My mother and my aunt told me I should consider going to college, and she was right.

Here, the audience wouldn't be sure which person the writer is referring to. Is it the mother or the aunt?

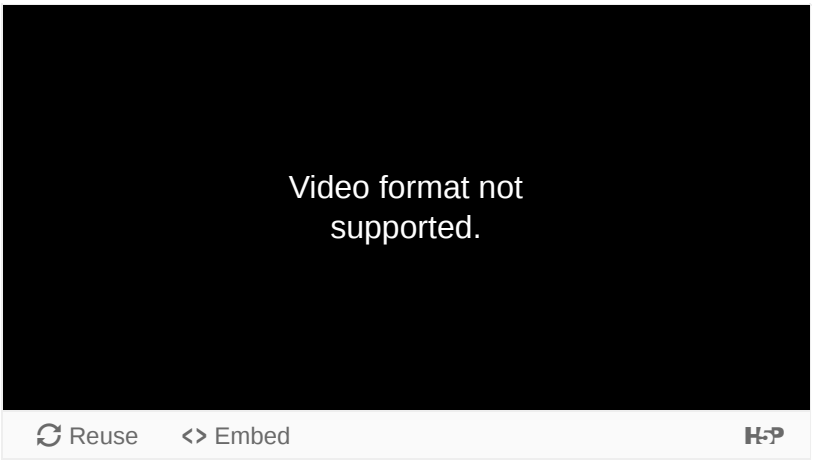
You want to be careful with your writing and make sure you're clear and correct with your pronouns. Most of the time, slowing yourself down and working on some careful editing will reveal problems like these which can be easily corrected.

Tips from the Professor

Most beginning writers have a pretty good sense of correct pronoun usage, but a good editing strategy will help you make sure you have not missed any issues with pronoun agreement or pronoun reference.

One strategy is to edit your writing one time, just looking at pronouns, in addition to other editing passes. If you have had trouble with pronouns in the past, you should circle all of your pronouns and ask yourself questions about their purpose and what they refer to.

In this video, the Grammar Professor will review common issues writers have with pronouns.



NOTE: Because the use of the singular they is new, you may find some people who disagree, but most academics now agree that the singular they is correct. Please always refer to your style guide, as some style guides still recommend not using the singular they.

Try It Out

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6.1.2.3: Verbs

Verbs

Verbs are the parts of speech that show action or indicate a state of being. We put them with nouns, and we create complete sentences. Like nouns, verbs are foundational in our vocabulary, and we learned verbs as children shortly after we learned nouns. The following pages will help you learn more about verbs, as there really is a lot to consider when it comes to verbs, such as making our subjects and verbs agree, using active versus passive voice, and keeping our verbs in the same tenses.

We'll explain the types of verbs first, to give you context and help you establish some "verb vocabulary," but most writers will want to pay close attention to issues of tense, subject-verb agreement, and active versus passive voice in the pages that follow.

Auxiliary Verbs

Auxiliary verbs are sometimes called the helping verbs because they work with the main verb in a sentence and "help it out". Together, the auxiliary verb and the main verb form a unit. Here are some examples of sentences containing auxiliary verbs:

- Steven is leaving and taking his football with him. How are we going to play now?
- Her favorite team has finished at the top of the conference, so she is going to buy a team jersey. I hope she buys me one, too.

Common Auxiliary Verbs

- am
- are
- be
- can
- could
- did
- do
- does
- had
- have
- is
- was
- were
- will
- would

Linking Verbs

Linking verbs join or "link" the subject of a sentence with the rest of the sentence. They make a statement by linking things, as opposed to showing any kind of action.

Common linking verbs are any of the to be verbs: am, is, are, was, were, be, been, and being. However, become and seem are also common, and other verbs have the potential to be linking verbs. It really depends upon the sentence. Here is an example of a common linking verb used in a sentence:

- My environmental biology class is interesting because our teacher thinks Bigfoot might exist.

Here are some examples of how other verbs can become linking verbs:

- That house looks haunted.
- Those old shoes smell funny.

Because linking verbs and auxiliary verbs are often the same words, you may wonder how you can tell the difference between a linking verb and an auxiliary verb. The key is that linking verbs join the subject and the predicate of a sentence, and in some ways, allow the predicate to rename the subject; auxiliary verbs will be used with other verbs.

Action Verbs

Action verbs are the verbs you can probably identify as verbs quickly and easily. These are the words that show action, words like jump, run, and eat.

There are two main classes of action verbs: transitive and intransitive, and there aren't separate lists for each class. Action verbs can be both transitive and intransitive because it all depends on the structure of the sentence.

A transitive verb expresses action toward a person or thing named in the sentence. An intransitive verb expresses action without making any reference to an object.

Transitive:

The college freshman ate Ramen noodles.

Intransitive:

The college freshman complained loudly.

Transitive:

Sophia speaks French.

Intransitive:

She speaks fluently.

Tenses

Verbs can be in the present tense, present progressive tense, past tense, past progressive, present perfect, or past perfect. According to Martha Kolln, author of *Rhetorical Grammar*, there are two grammatical features of verbs that are especially useful: tense and agency, which will be discussed later in the pages on passive voice.

It's important to understand tense because you want to be consistent with your verb tenses in your writing. It's a common mistake to shift tenses without realizing it. This discussion of tenses can increase your "tense awareness," which will lead to fewer errors.

Let's take the verb to eat as an example and see how it looks in the different tenses with the subject I.

Tense	Example
present tense (present point in time)	I eat dinner.
present progressive (present action of limited duration)	I am eating dinner.
past tense (specific point in the past)	I ate dinner yesterday.
past progressive (past action of limited duration)	I was eating.
present perfect (completed action from a point in the past ending at or near present)	I have eaten dinner.
past perfect (past action completed before another action also in the past)	I had just eaten dinner when the phone rang.

When it comes to verb tenses, it's important to be consistent and to be aware of any shifts. If you shift, there needs to be a reason for the shift. Also, APA will often require past tense in your essays, while MLA requires present tense, even if the words have been written in the past. For example, to set up a quote in APA, you might write something like this:

- Smith (2009) wrote, "This verb stuff is really confusing" (p. 10).

In MLA, you would set up the same quote with a present tense verb, like this:

- Smith writes, "This verb stuff is really confusing" (10).

For a more in-depth explanation of APA recommendations for verb tense usage in literature reviews and research papers, go to: Verb Tense Shift.

Subject-Verb Agreement

"The basic rule of sentence agreement is simple: A subject must agree with its verb in number. Number means singular or plural." (Rozakis, 2003, p. 62) The subject may be either singular or plural, and the verb selection should match the subject. The task sounds simple, but it's not always easy to make the subject and verb match without some thought. Subject-verb agreement errors are common errors many beginning writers make, and they are highly-stigmatized errors, which means people will judge you for them.

Here are some tips to help you avoid subject-verb agreement errors.

- When the subject of a sentence is composed of two or more nouns or pronouns connected by and, use a plural verb.
  - Suzy and her friend are missing the best movie ever!
- When the subject of a sentence is composed of two or more nouns or pronouns connected by or, use a singular verb.
  - The pen or the pencil is in the drawer, my purse, my book bag, or perhaps, my pencil pouch.
- Do not be confused by a phrase that comes between your subject and your verb.
  - Russell Wilson, as well as the rest of the Seattle Seahawks, is ready for the game against the Green Bay Packers.
- Collective nouns can be tricky. Sometimes, they take a singular verb, and sometimes they take a plural verb. It depends upon how they are being used. Be sure to refer to the Collective Nouns page for more information and examples.
- Fractions can be especially tricky, but the rule is that fractions should be treated as singular or plural, depending upon the noun they are referring to.
  - Two-thirds of the zombies in "The Walking Dead" move slowly. The rest can apparently sprint.
  - Two-thirds of your cake was eaten before you got home.

Active Versus Passive Verbs

As mentioned earlier, grammarian Martha Kolln mentions agency as one of the most important aspects of verb you should know about. Agency involves understanding the relationship between the subject and the verb in a sentence and whether or not the subject is the agent in the sentence.

Take a moment to read the following two sentences.

- Amy grabbed the zombie survival guide.
- The zombie survival guide was grabbed by Amy.

Can you see how these sentences are different?

In the first sentence, the verb grabbed is active because its subject, Amy is the doer or agent. Amy did the grabbing.

In the second sentence, was grabbed is passive because it describes an action done to its subject, guide. The doer of the action, Amy, is now the object of the preposition by.

We want to use active verbs whenever possible as they allow us to express ourselves clearly, succinctly, and strongly. Active verbs imply that we're confident with what we're saying; we believe in our words. Looking back at the two sentences, we can see that the first one uses fewer words and makes no mistake as to who did the action. The latter sentence is wordy and does not directly address Amy.

TIP! A little strategy you can use to test to see if you're using passive voice is to see if you can add by zombies after the verb. If you can, then you likely have passive voice and may want to restructure your sentence. In the example above, you could certainly say, was grabbed by zombies, so you know this is passive voice.

Purposeful Passive Voice

There are occasions when we might want to use passive verbs, such as when we don't want to mention the doer, the result of the action is more important than the doer, or the doer is unknown. Let's take the following scenario and apply it to all three reasons for using a passive verb.

Tom and Mark, two brothers, are preparing their home for the zombie apocalypse. Tom is throwing canned goods across the room to Mark, who is stacking them on a shelf. They continue to throw canned goods across the room, despite knowing that it's against their mother's wishes. Tom throws a can of creamy corn to Mark and accidentally hits a vase. The vase breaks into pieces. Their mother asks what happened.

The responses could go as follows:

- Tom threw the creamy corn and broke the vase.
- The vase was broken when the creamy corn was thrown at it.

The first sentence uses the active verbs "threw" and "broke". It simply tells what happened and squarely blames Tom. The second sentence uses the passive verbs "was broken" and "was thrown". It doesn't mention who threw the can of corn, keeping the doer unknown. Also, it might be reasonable to believe that Tom thinks letting his mother know that the vase is broken is more important than identifying who broke the vase.

Of course, in the grand scheme of things, what is a vase in the face of a zombie apocalypse, but you get the idea!

TIP! There are some situations when passive voice can be useful, so it's not the case that passive voice is "wrong." It's just that, in most college-level essays, your professors will want you to use active voice because it makes for lively, more engaging writing. A good way to spot passive voice is to look for to be verbs. You will want to limit those as well.

Try It Out

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6.1.2.4: Adjectives

Adjectives

An adjective modifies (describes or distinguishes) nouns and pronouns. In other words, adjectives change nouns or pronouns in some way. So "movie" is a noun, and a scary movie has been changed by the adjective "scary".

It's important to remember, too, adjectives, as in the case of a *scary* movie, give you a way to inject your point of view into your writing. You might also describe a *loveable* book, a *beautiful* dress, or an *ominous* sky. There's a certain amount of subjectivity, of course, in all of these words, so you'll want to work to keep your audience in mind when choosing your adjectives and do your best to make sure your adjectives (or descriptors) are specific, concrete, and will make sense to both you and your audience.

Order of Adjectives

Adjectives need to be placed in a particular order. What information do you post first? If you're a native English speaker, you can probably figure out the order without any thought. That's because you understand English grammar—even if it's only because you know what "sounds" right. And, if you're a non-native English speaker, you've probably been schooled in the order.

Below, you'll find a table illustrating the royal order of adjectives. Again, native English speakers follow the order—but we don't always know WHY. Think about it. Why would we automatically write four gorgeous, long-stemmed, red, silk roses rather than four silk, long-stemmed, gorgeous, red roses? What drives the order in our description? The first example leads us down a logical path; the second example doesn't let us know which details are most important.

The Royal Order of Adjectives

Determiner	Observation	Physical Description				Origin	Material	Qualifier
		Size	Shape	Age	Color			
a	beautiful			old		Italian		touring
an	expensive			antique			silver	
four	gorgeous		stemmed		red		silk	
her			short		black			
our		big		old		English		
those			square				wooden	hat
that	dilapidated	little						hunting
several		giant		young		American		basketball
some	delicious					Chinese		

Adapted from Adjectives. (n.d.) Capital Community College Foundation. Retrieved from grammar.ccc.commnet.edu.

There are some rules, though. Here is the specific order for English language adjectives—intensifier, quality, size, age, color. Look at the two sentences again.

"Four gorgeous" provides the intensifier and quality; "long-stemmed" provides the size; "red" provides the color; and "silk" provides an additional detail. Now look at the order of the adjectives in one of your own sentences and see if it makes sense to you.

Types of Adjectives

Comparatives and superlatives are types of adjectives, but one (comparatives) provides a relative distinction while the other (superlatives) signifies the most extreme.

Comparative adjectives often end in -er, and superlative adjectives often end in -est.

Comparative:

- My World of Warcraft mage is tougher than your character.

Superlative:

- My World of Warcraft mage is the toughest character ever.

There are also some adjectives that are irregular when you turn them into the comparative and superlative, and some, usually adjectives with two syllables, require that you simply add more or most in front of them.

The following examples are of some regular and some irregular adjectives.

Adjective:

- Kind
- Strong
- Good
- Bad
- Careful
- Awesome

Comparative:

- Kinder
- Stronger
- Better
- Worse
- More careful
- More awesome

Superlative:

- Kindest
- Strongest
- Best
- Worst
- Most careful
- Most awesome (as in "This is the *most awesome* OWL ever!")

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6.1.2.5: Adverbs

Adverbs

Adverbs are words that modify or describe a verb, adjective, or another adverb. Just as an adjective changes a noun, an adverb changes a verb, adjective, or adverb. Adverbs are easily identified because they often end in -ly, but this is certainly not always the case.

Descriptions make our writing rich and specific, so we shouldn't be afraid of using adjectives and adverbs in our sentences.

Look at these three sentences:

- Jon walked to the store to get canned goods for his zombie stash.
- Jon walked to the large store to get canned goods for his zombie stash.
- Jon walked urgently to the massively large store to get canned goods for his zombie stash.

As you can see, the last sentence is the most descriptive and informative. The use of adverbs and adjectives helps our writing come alive. The following page on adverbs will provide helpful tips on how to correctly use adverbs and give you examples of how adverbs can add descriptive detail to your writing.

Order of Adverbs

Adverbs most commonly describe how, but below is a more comprehensive list of the most common types of adverbs.

Type of Adverb	Example
Adverbs of manner (or how)	Christine sang the song atrociously. No more karaoke for her!
Adverbs of time	Michelle did her homework yesterday, but she did the wrong assignment.
Adverbs of place	I met my friend at the coffee shop, and that's where we saw the first signs of the outbreak.
Adverbs of degree	It's too quiet in here.
Adverbs of frequency	Michael Jordan rarely misses a free throw, but Shaq frequently does.
Adverbs of purpose	I clean the litter box every day to keep the house from smelling.

And like adjectives, adverbs have a "royal order." While you may already have an innate sense of this order, it can be helpful to review the rules.

The Royal Order of Adverbs

Verb	Manner	Place	Frequency	Time	Purpose
Beth swims	enthusiastically	in the pool	every evening	before dusk	to keep in shape.
Dad walks	impatiently	into town	every morning	before work	to get a newspaper.
Joe naps		in his room	every afternoon	after lunch.	

Adapted from Adverbs. (n.d.) Capital Community College Foundation. Retrieved from grammar.ccc.commnet.edu

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6.1.2.6: Propositions

Prepositions

Perhaps you had to memorize every preposition (there are well over 100) when you were in junior high school, but have you ever thought about the importance of these “little” words? Prepositions are little words with a big purpose: they show relationships of time, place, and space.

We might call them “glue” words because they bring other words together in ways that create meaning. Look at something you’ve read recently and take out the prepositions. Here is an example of a sentence written with and without prepositions:

With prepositions: As soon as I closed the door, the turkeys that had been waiting at the wood line ran to eat the corn I had just put out for the squirrels.

Without prepositions: As soon I closed the door, the turkeys that had been waiting the wood line ran eat the corn I had just put out the squirrels.

They may be generally small in letters, but prepositions are important words that give great meaning for time and place relationships among actions, objects, and ideas. It’s important to distinguish if you are throwing a ball to someone or at someone. Did you want your sandwich with or without onions? Do you need that zombie fort built at the end of summer or before the end of summer?

Even though they are small words, prepositions can be difficult—particularly for someone learning English—because their use isn’t always logical. As an example, most mid-Westerners speak of standing *in* line, but many on the East coast speak of standing *on* line. It would be a lot of fun and quite enlightening to write some sentences using some of the prepositions on the following page and then comparing those sentences with a friend from a different part of the country.

Common Prepositions

Although you no longer have to memorize the preposition list, it can be helpful to review the list of some of the most common prepositions and think about the meaning for each one.

Of course, it’s important to remember that many of these words can also be different parts of speech. English is fun, right?

Common Prepositions

- aboard
- about
- above
- across
- after
- against
- along
- amid
- among
- around
- as
- at
- before
- behind
- below
- beneath
- beside
- between
- beyond
- but
- by
- considering
- despite

- down
- during
- except
- excluding
- following
- for
- from
- in
- inside
- into
- like
- near
- of
- off
- on
- onto
- outside
- over
- past
- regarding
- since
- than
- though
- to
- toward
- under
- underneath
- until
- up
- upon
- verses
- with
- within
- without

Preposition Tips

As you work to make good decisions about your preposition choices, you should consider the following preposition tips:

- It’s actually acceptable to end a sentence with a preposition. Contemporary scholars and writing style guides acknowledge the acceptability of ending a sentence with a preposition (Casagrande, 2006). It’s natural and conversational to write short sentences that end with prepositions.
  - Did you find what you were looking for?

However, you should be aware that some professors prefer that you don’t end a sentence with a preposition. See how correctness is relative?

- You should avoid unnecessary prepositions because using prepositions unnecessarily can make your writing wordy and even confusing.
  - I am not [for] sure I have the answer.
  - Frank apparently fell off [of] his horse while doing a stunt for a YouTube video.
- The difference between "beside" and "besides" can be confusing. Beside means next to. Besides means in addition to.
- The difference between "between" and "among" can also be confusing. You should use between when referring to two people or things, and you should use among when referring to more than two people or things.

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6.1.2.7: Articles

Articles

Well, if you thought prepositions were “little” words, wait until we consider the part of speech called articles. Articles are similar to adjectives in that they modify nouns, but unlike adjectives, they don’t really describe a noun; they just identify a noun.

Articles are the smallest of the small but still serve an important function. We have three articles in the English language: "a, an" and "the".

"The" is the definite article, which means it refers to a specific noun in a group.

"A" or "an" is the indefinite article, which means it refers to any member of a group. You would use the indefinite article when you aren’t trying to distinguish a particular noun.

Whether you use "a" or "an" depends on the noun that follows it. In general, you would use "a" if the noun begins with a consonant and "an" if the noun begins with a vowel.

- a game
- an opportunity

Then, as always in English grammar, there are a few tricky exceptions. If a noun begins with h, you should think about the sound it makes.

- an hour
- a horse

And if a noun starts with a vowel, but it makes a y sound, you should use "a" instead of "an".

- a university
- a user
- an umbrella

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6.1.2.8: Conjunctions

Conjunctions

If words are the building blocks for our writing, then good transitions are the cement that holds them together. To make these transitions in our writing we need to turn to conjunctions. A conjunction is a word or words used to show the connection between ideas.

The following pages will provide you with details about what conjunctions are and what they do. But, this classic Conjunction Junction from 1973 will provide you with a fun overview before you learn more.



Disney Educational Productions. (2011, December 8). *Schoolhouse rock: Grammar - conjunction junction music video*. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RPoBE-E8VOc

Coordinating Conjunctions

Coordinating conjunctions coordinate or join two equal parts. They are particularly important because, when used with a comma, they can actually connect complete sentences.

Of course, they don't always have to connect complete sentences. Coordinating conjunctions can also connect smaller, equal parts of a sentence.

The key to using coordinating conjunctions is to think about what they are coordinating. This will help you make decisions about which one to use and how to punctuate.

First, however, we should look at the list of coordinating conjunctions. There are only seven, and you may have heard of them as the FANBOYS.

- For
- And
- Nor
- But
- Or
- Yet
- So

If you are using a coordinating conjunction to connect two complete sentences, you must also use a comma.

- I knew that phrase from the debate would be a meme, but I am surprised at how quickly it happened.

If you aren't connecting two complete sentences and are just connecting smaller, equal parts of a sentence, you should not use a comma.

- I knew that phrase from the debate would be a meme but am surprised at how quickly it happened.

You will notice there is no comma because we no longer have two complete sentences (or independent clauses)—one before and after the coordinating conjunction. In the second sentence, the conjunction is simply coordinating a compound predicate.

Coordinating conjunctions can also coordinate smaller words and phrases. The idea is that they coordinate equal parts:

- Apples and oranges
- Running for office or staying home to relax
- Werewolves and vampires
- Small but powerful

Subordinating Conjunctions

Subordinating conjunctions connect parts that aren't equal. In fact, you can tell by their name that they make a phrase subordinate to the main phrase or clause.

Common subordinating conjunctions are "after, although, because, before, even though, since, though", and "when".

The key to using subordinating conjunctions correctly is to remember that a subordinating conjunction sets off a phrase, so there should always be words with it.

When a subordinating conjunction appears at the beginning of a sentence, the subordinating phrase is always set off with a comma. When a subordinating conjunction appears at the end of a sentence, the subordinating phrase is not usually set off with commas.

The exceptions (and there are always exceptions, right?) are when you use words like "although" or "even though" at the end of a sentence. Because these set-off phrases show contrast, they still get a comma, even when they are used at the end of the sentence.

Examples:

- Although I tried, I could not outrun the werewolf.
- I could not outrun the werewolf, although I tried.
- Because my alarm clock did not go off, I missed the full moon and will now have to wait until next month to go out and play.
- I missed the full moon and will now have to wait until next month to go out and play because my alarm clock did not go off.

You will notice the comma with the "although" phrase, no matter where it appears in the sentence, but the "because" phrase follows the standard "rule."

It's also important to note that "although" cannot stand alone like a conjunctive adverb, which will be discussed on the next page.

- Although, I tried to outrun the werewolf.

The above example is a common, incorrect usage of "although" and actually makes a sentence fragment, which is a serious grammatical error.

Conjunctive Adverbs

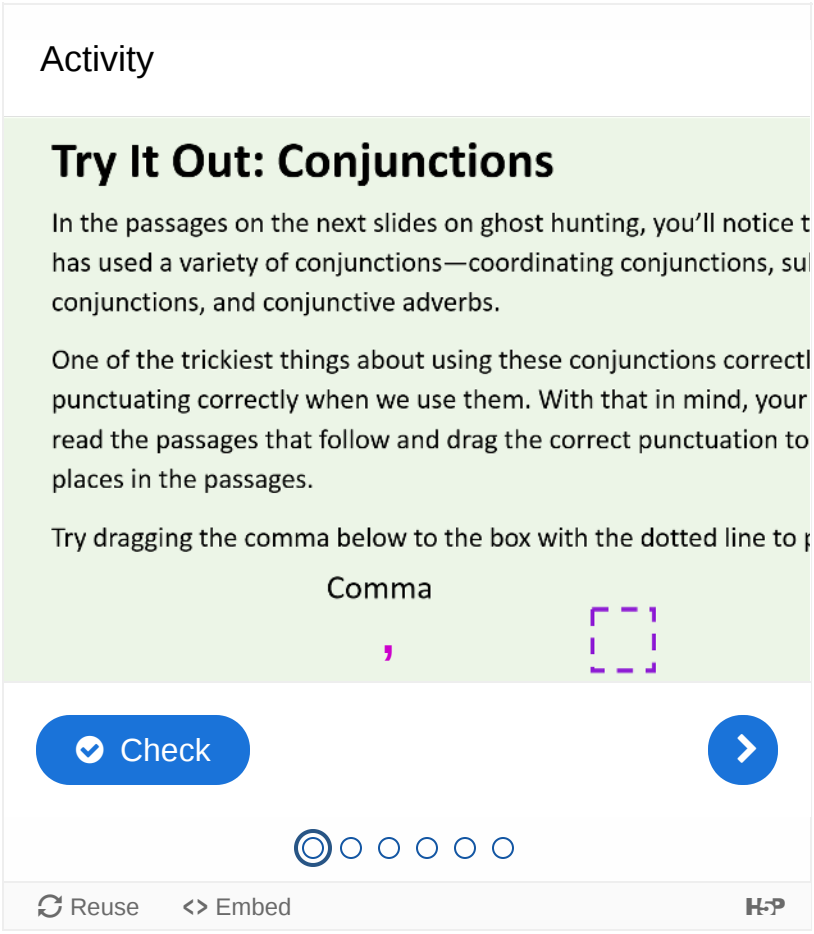
The conjunctions that are not exactly conjunctions are conjunctive adverbs. "Conjunctive adverbs are used to connect other words. Therefore, conjunctive adverbs act like conjunctions even though they are not technically considered to be conjunctions…. Conjunctive adverbs are also called transitions because they link ideas." (Rozarkis, 1997, p. 55)

Conjunctive adverbs are words like "however, moreover, therefore", and "furthermore".

They provide important transitions between ideas and are commonly used to help create a nice, flowing work. Often, you'll see a conjunctive adverb used after a semicolon to start a new independent clause, as illustrated in this example:

- I have several back-up zombie plans in place; however, I am sure my first plan is the best plan.

However, it's also important to note that you don't have to use a conjunctive adverb every time you use a semicolon, and you don't have to use a semicolon to use a conjunctive adverb. Conjunctive adverbs work well after periods, too.



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6.1.2.9: Interjections

Interjections

“Interjections are short exclamations like "Oh!, Um" or "Ah!" They have no real grammatical value but we use them quite often, usually more in speaking than in writing” (Interjections, 2001, para. 1).

While interjections are very short, they communicate a great deal because they are typically used to express emotion. “While any word that shows strong feelings can be an interjection, look for the usual suspects: Wow!, Zap!, Pop!, and the rest of the family” (Rozakis, 1997, p. 59).

- “Ouch! That hurts!” I said to the vampire.
- Whoops! Did I forget to include you in the zombie plan?

Because interjections communicate strong emotions, they should not be over-used. “With interjections, a little goes a long way. Use these marks of punctuation as you would hot pepper or hysterics, because they are strong and edgy” (Rozakis, 1997, p. 59).

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6.1.2.10: Try It Out

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6.1.2.11: Putting It All Together

You have learned about many different parts of speech and some basic guidelines to correct usage. This is a lot to take in for sure! To help you review, go through the presentation below, which provides a basic overview of what you have learned about the parts of speech.

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6.1.2.12: Time to Write

If you're a native speaker of English, most of the information in the Parts of Speech chapter comes pretty naturally for you, but all of us have trouble with some aspects of grammar and usage from time to time.

As you edit, you should not worry about every single part of speech or what its function is. Instead, you should consider any struggles you have in your writing, review those guidelines, and keep that in mind as you edit. For example, if you have trouble with pronoun agreement, you should review the section on pronouns before you edit, so the guidelines for correctness will be fresh in your mind.

It's your turn now, and knowing more about correctness can help you as you edit your work and get it ready to submit to your professor.

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6.1.3.1: Wrong Word

Wrong Word

Wrong word errors are really common and are number one on the list. Sometimes, we make a wrong word error when we are using the thesaurus and trying to find the biggest word we can find in order to make ourselves sound really smart. This isn't the greatest strategy. Sometimes, it's better just to be simple, and it's always better just to be clear.

We also have to be careful of the spell checker. Sometimes, we misspell words, and then the spell checker makes a change to a word we don't want. Of course, we may be in a hurry and never even notice. Take a look at this sentence to see the problems wrong word errors can create:

- Sometimes, I will just sit and watch strangers in the crowd, but it is defiantly awful when I accidentally make eye contact with one of them.

In this sentence, writing "defiantly" when we mean "definitely", *definitely* changes the meaning in the sentence.

Here is the sentence again with the correct word:

- Sometimes, I will just sit and watch strangers in the crowd, but it is definitely awful when I accidentally make eye contact with one of them.

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6.1.3.2: Comma After Introductory Element

Comma After Introductory Element

It’s important to remember that introductory words and phrases—any words or phrases that come before the main clause in a sentence—should be set off with a comma. Here is an example of a sentence that does not include the required comma and then the correction:

- (Missing Comma) In case you were wondering I never allow myself to be exposed to direct sunlight unless I have my scarf, my sunglasses, and a large umbrella.
- In case you were wondering, I never allow myself to be exposed to direct sunlight unless I have my scarf, my sunglasses, and a large umbrella.

For more information on this comma rule, be sure to check out the Comma section in the Punctuation chapter.

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6.1.3.3: Documentation Common Error

Documentation Common Error

Incomplete or Missing Documentation

The third most common error on the list relates to proper documentation. It's so important to remember to cite all borrowed information. No matter your documentation style, whether it is APA format, MLA format, or Chicago Style, all require some kind of citation for quoted, paraphrased, and summarized material.

REMEMBER: You must not only cite people's words, but you must also cite their ideas. Errors of this nature can get you into a lot of trouble because incomplete or missing documentation is plagiarism.

For more information on proper documentation in APA, MLA, or Chicago Style, be sure to check out the Citation & Documentation area of the Excelsior OWL.

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6.1.3.4: Pronoun Reference

Pronoun Reference

Pronoun reference errors also make the list because pronouns seem to give a lot of beginning writers some trouble. A pronoun reference error occurs when you use a pronoun like "he" or "she", and it’s not clear what that pronoun refers to. Here is an example:

- When Darth Vader and Luke Skywalker were battling with their light sabers, he became angry.

Who does "he" refer to? It isn’t clear. A pronoun should clearly refer to its antecedent (the word it replaces), so if the antecedent is not clear, you need to revise. Here’s an example of how you might correct the pronoun reference error:

- When Darth Vader and Luke Skywalker were battling with their light sabers, Luke became angry.

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6.1.3.5: Spelling

Spelling

In the age of spell checkers, it's hard to imagine that spelling errors would top the most common error list, but they do. First, it's important to remember to run the spell checker. Even though you have to remember to check your spell checker, spell checkers are a good place to start when it comes to spelling errors.

Still, there are plenty of spelling errors the spell checker won't catch. In addition to possibly creating wrong-word errors, as discussed earlier, spell checkers also miss misspelled words like names and other proper nouns, as illustrated in the following example:

- On my vacation to France, I went to Pares and visited the Eifel Tower, the Louvre museum, and Jim Morrison's grave.

The spell checker missed these errors. Here is the corrected version of the sentence:

- On my vacation to France, I went to Paris and visited the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre museum, and Jim Morrison's grave.

So, be sure to run your spell checker, but, then, don't forget to double and triple check your writing. Spell checkers do not catch everything.

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6.1.3.6: Quotation Error

Quotation Error

Using quotation marks correctly can be a little tricky, especially when you need to use other types of punctuation with them. Mechanical errors related to quotation marks make the most-common error list because beginning writers often forget that commas and periods go inside the quotation marks. Here is an example:

- “When you are courting a nice girl, an hour seems like a second. When you sit on a red-hot cinder, a second seems like an hour. That’s relativity”, said Einstein.

In this case, the comma placed outside the quotation marks is incorrect. The comma should be placed inside the quotation marks like this:

- “When you are courting a nice girl, an hour seems like a second. When you sit on a red-hot cinder, a second seems like an hour. That’s relativity,” said Einstein.

It’s important to note, however, that not all punctuation automatically goes inside the quotation marks. Question marks are a little trickier. If the only part in quotations is a question, then the question mark should go inside the quotation marks; otherwise, the question mark actually goes outside of the quotation marks. Tricky for sure!

Also, beginning writers often forget that titles of shorter works, like essays and short stories, should be placed inside quotation marks. Longer works, like books and magazines, should be placed in italics.

- I read the essay “The Marginal World” by Rachel Carson in the book *Best American Essays of the Century*.

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6.1.3.7: Unnecessary Comma

Unnecessary Comma

When beginning writers are first learning comma rules, they have a tendency to forget that the rules all depend upon the situation. So, when you learn to place a comma before a coordinating conjunction like "and, but," or "so" when you join two independent clauses, you might have an urge to place a comma before "and, but," or "so" every time you use these words. You should avoid this urge!

Just because you need to use commas with coordinating conjunctions sometimes doesn't mean you'll use them all the time.

- I have a wide variety of supernatural powers, but wish I had the power to go out in the daylight.

In this example, you don't need a comma before the "but" because you aren't combining two independent clauses. Here is a corrected version of the sentence:

- I have a wide variety of supernatural powers but wish I had the power to go out in the daylight.

You should also be careful that you aren't using commas unnecessarily around information that is essential to the sentence. The comma rule is that non-essential information should be set off with commas, but essential information should not.

- I find that a little fear is the best seasoning, for my food, so I often sneak up on my husband while he cooks and frighten him.

In this example, "for my food" is not extra information that should be set off with commas. But, you do need a comma before the "so" to separate the two independent clauses. Here is a corrected version of the sentence:

- I find that a little fear is the best seasoning for my food, so I often sneak up on my husband while he cooks and frighten him.

For more information on these comma rules, be sure to check out the Comma section in the Punctuation chapter.

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6.1.3.8: Capitalization

Capitalization

Some teachers blame text messaging. After all, how many times have you written out a quick text message, not worrying about where you need to capitalize? You, like many others, have probably done this quite often.

Interestingly, capitalization errors appeared on the most-common error list even before everyone was walking around with their heads over their cell phones text messaging every other minute.

Of course, the reality is that teachers now often complain that students don’t even capitalize "I" in a sentence. That could likely be related to text messaging. Still, other capitalization errors may not be.

Whatever the reasons behind the errors, it’s important to be aware of capitalization rules. Be careful to capitalize words that should be capitalized, such as proper nouns, and not capitalize words that should not be capitalized.

But, how can you know what should and shouldn’t be capitalized? If you are unsure, review the differences between proper nouns and common nouns in the Parts of Speech chapter.

Capitalization errors can really have a negative impact on the impressions your readers have of your writing. Take a look at the following sentence:

- i took a walk in central park and saw a Mime, who was pretending to be a Policeman, get sprayed with mace by an elderly woman because she thought he was trying to steal her purse.

Now, take a look at the sentence with correct capitalization:

- I took a walk in Central Park and saw a mime, who was pretending to be a policeman, get sprayed with mace by an elderly woman because she thought he was trying to steal her purse.

It’s important to edit carefully and review the rules if necessary!

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6.1.3.9: Missing Word

Missing Word

Missing word errors make this list because we are too often in a hurry when we edit. Our brains are great. We can read right through sentences and put in the words that need to be there even if words are missing. Of course, others might quickly notice the error, so we have to find ways to slow ourselves down and edit carefully. You don't want to write a sentence like the following example that is missing a small word with big meaning:

- I enjoy walking alone in the woods at night because I never what I will meet while I am out there in the dark.

Did you see the error? Look at the revised sentence below:

- I enjoy walking alone in the woods at night because I never know what I will meet while I am out there in the dark.

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6.1.3.10: Faulty Sentence Structure

Faulty Sentence Structure

Have you ever had a teacher say, “That sentence starts one way and ends another”? If you have, don’t feel badly. Others make this same mistake all the time. Sometimes, we simply lose our train of thought when we write, and we literally start a sentence one way and end it another, as illustrated in the following example:

- I occasionally get the urge to study late at night for instance my exams are going to take me longer than usual to study for because this works.

It’s tough to make sense of this sentence, right?

Of course, this is not the only faulty sentence structure error you might make. It’s important to pay close attention to your sentence structure to make sure you have both a subject and a verb. And, if you are listing items or phrases in a sentence, make sure you keep the items in your list in the same form. Doing so keeps your sentences “parallel,” which is a good thing.

Here is an example of a sentence without parallel structure:

- I start my day with breakfast, exercising, and checking out the latest blogs.

In the sentence above, "breakfast" is a noun, and "exercising" and "checking" begin verb phrases. The items on the list are not in the same form. Here is a correction where the items listed are in the same form:

- I start my day by eating breakfast, exercising, and checking out the latest blogs.

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6.1.3.11: Missing Comma with Nonrestrictive Element

Missing Comma with Nonrestrictive Element

Just as you should not put commas around essential or restrictive information in a sentence, you must remember to put commas around information that is non-essential or nonrestrictive.

If the information is not essential to the meaning of the sentence, you need to be sure to set it off with commas. Here is an example of a sentence without proper commas around the nonrestrictive element:

- Moving into a cave especially one that is already occupied is not a decision one should make without considerable forethought.

Here is the corrected version:

- Moving into a cave, especially one that is already occupied, is not a decision one should make without considerable forethought.

If you have trouble deciding whether or not you need commas around “extra” information in your sentences, be sure to review the comma rules in the Punctuation chapter.

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6.1.3.12: Verb Tense Shift

Verb Tense Shift

You want to be sure that you are always consistent with your verb tense. When you shift verb tenses for no reason, and this is an easy mistake to make, you can really confuse your readers.

If you're writing in the present tense, be sure you stay in the present tense. If you're writing in the past tense, be sure you stay in the past tense. The exception would be if you need to shift tenses to tell a story, but that would be purposeful shifting. It's the random, accidental shifting that causes the problems, as illustrated in this example:

She grabs my hand then flipped me like I weighed nothing. This showed what a good self-defense course has done.

Here is what a corrected version of the sentence looks like:

She grabbed my hand then flipped me like I weighed nothing. This showed what a good self-defense course has done.

You should also be aware that certain types of writing require either past or present tense. For example, research in APA format often needs to be presented in the past tense, but a literary analysis written in MLA format needs to be presented using present tense verbs. It's called the literary present tense. Below is a table of APA 7th edition verb tense recommendations for literature reviews and research papers.

If you're ever unsure about tense requirements, be sure to ask your professor.

Paper Section	Recommended tense	Example
Literature review (or whenever discussing other researchers' work)	Past	Quinn (2020) presented
	Present Perfect	Since then, many investigators have used
Method Description of procedure	Past	Participants completed a survey
	Present Perfect	Others have used similar approaches
Reporting of results	Past	Results were nonsignificant Scores increased Hypotheses were supported
Discussion of implications of results	Present	The results indicate
Presentation of conclusions, limitations, future directions, and so forth	Present	We conclude Limitations of the study are

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6.1.3.13: Missing Comma in Compound Sentence

Missing Comma in Compound Sentence

When you join two independent clauses (complete sentences) with a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet—also known as the FANBOYS), you must place a comma before the coordinating conjunction.

The rule is very clear, here. The comma before the coordinating conjunction works *with* the coordinating conjunction to help make a proper boundary between the two independent clauses.

- I understand that vampires and ghouls need love but I don't think they really understand just how attached I am to my vital, bodily fluids.

In this example, the sentence is missing the comma before the but because the but joins two complete thoughts. Leaving out this necessary comma creates an error because you have two sentences connected without a proper boundary between those sentences.

Here is a correction for the sentence:

- I understand that vampires and ghouls need love, but I don't think they really understand just how attached I am to my vital, bodily fluids.

For more information on this comma rule, be sure to check out the Comma section in the Punctuation chapter.

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6.1.3.14: Apostrophe Errors

Apostrophe Errors

Apostrophes give many writers a lot of trouble. Sometimes, you might be tempted to put an apostrophe where it does not belong, such as when you are simply making a word plural. Other times, you need to make a word possessive, but you might forget to use the apostrophe.

Then, of course, there is that whole "its" / "it's" thing that confuses most everyone.

Remember, the rule is to use an apostrophe when you need to show possession or ownership. The exception is with its.

"Its" shows ownership because "it's" means "it is". So, it's like "it's" is already taken, so "its" gets to be an ownership exception. To make sure you are using "it's" correctly, just say "it is" when you read it. If it makes sense, you're fine. However, if you're trying to show ownership, and it is would not work in the sentence, you need to make the change to "its".

For more information on the apostrophe, be sure to check out the Apostrophe section in the Punctuation chapter (or if you just need to brush up your skills, visit the Apostrophe Refresher). Otherwise, you might end up with a sentence like this:

- Its abundantly clear, to me, that creature's of the night are just misunderstood and misguided beings who sometimes err in judgment and eat their neighbors' as well as their neighbors families.

And, you would want a sentence like this:

- It's abundantly clear, to me, that creatures of the night are just misunderstood and misguided beings who sometimes err in judgment and eat their neighbors as well as their neighbors' families.

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6.1.3.15: Run-On Sentences

Run-On Sentences

Fused or Run-On Sentence

A fused sentence is sometimes called a run-on sentence. The concept is simple. If your teacher marks fused sentence or run-on on your paper, it's because you have put two complete thoughts or independent clauses together without the proper punctuation or any kind of sentence boundary. Here is an example:

- There were a thousand zombies cheering for the home team when I walked onto the field I don't think even one of them noticed me.

And, here is the corrected sentence:

- There were a thousand zombies cheering for the home team when I walked onto the field; I don't think even one of them noticed me.

The key is to remember that you must have some kind of boundary between your independent clauses. You can use punctuation, such as the period or the semicolon, or you can use a comma *with* a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, for, nor, so, yet).

NOTE: A comma alone cannot separate independent clauses. Using a comma to separate independent clauses actually creates a comma splice.

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6.1.3.16: Comma Splice

Comma Splice

Many students think a comma splice is just any kind of comma error, but a comma splice is a very specific type of comma error.

A comma splice occurs when you use a comma to separate two independent clauses. A comma is not strong enough to perform this function, which causes the problem. It’s important to remember to use proper punctuation to separate your independent clauses; otherwise, you end up with a sentence like this:

He promised me, if I didn’t report him, he would never do it again, however, the next night, he was back, playing his bagpipes under my balcony.

Here, you should notice the only comma error is the one between "again" and "however". The reason this is a comma splice is because "the" actually begins a new sentence or independent clause, but there is not a proper boundary between these two sentences. Here is how the sentence could be corrected:

He promised me, if I didn’t report him, he would never do it again; however, the next night, he was back, playing his bagpipes under my balcony.

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6.1.3.17: Pronoun Agreement

Pronoun Agreement

Pronoun agreement can be trickier than it might seem on the surface. The rule is that we must make sure our pronouns agree in number and gender with the nouns they are replacing. For example, when we write a sentence about a girl named Sophia, we would use "she" as the pronoun to refer to her.

But things get a little more confusing when we are talking about a kind of abstract person, and the “rule” on this subject has recently changed in most circles. In the recent past, to avoid sexist language, we couldn’t write "he" or "she". Instead, we had to write "he or she".

But, because most people would just end up writing "they", which technically does not agree in number, the “rule” began to change. This is a great example of how living languages, like English, change, and the change happens when people make a change happen. It’s really pretty exciting!

It used to be incorrect to use what we now call “the singular they.” Here is an example:

- If you want a child to learn, it is helpful if you make learning fun for them.

Now, many style guides accept the use of "they" or "them" to refer to a singular noun.

So, now, this would be considered correct:

- If you want a child to learn, it is helpful if you make learning fun for them.

When in doubt, using a plural noun is safest:

- If you want children to learn, it is helpful if you make learning fun for them.

This way, you avoid any awkwardness of the singular "them", and your pronoun is now also in agreement with "children".

NOTE: Because the use of the singular "they" is new, you may find some people who disagree, but most academics now agree that the singular "they" is correct. Please always refer to your style guide, as some style guides still recommend not using the singular "they".

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6.1.3.18: Poorly Integrated Quote

Poorly Integrated Quote

Any teacher who has ever assigned and graded writing has probably complained about this error. Too often, beginning writers will simply “plop” a quote into a paragraph without any setup or context. This is incredibly confusing for your readers, so it’s important to make sure you smoothly integrate your quotes into the sentences around the quote.

Although there are no “rules” for such things, it’s always a good idea to provide a phrase of some kind to set up your quote and some commentary after your quote to make sure your readers understand the relevance of the quote. Otherwise, you may end up with a quote like this:

Albert Einstein was a great man and a great scientist. He was one of the most advanced thinkers of our age. “The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing” (Einstein Quotes, 2012).

Here, it feels like the quote is just dropped in without a clear context. If you struggle with quote integration, you’ll want to check out lessons on effective source integration.

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6.1.3.19: Hyphens

Hyphens

Hyphens can be a little tricky, but they are important. For example, there is a world of difference between a dirty-movie theater and a dirty movie theater. You probably wouldn't want to go to either one, but there *is* a big difference between the two.

Hyphens are tricky because location is also very important in determining whether or not you need to hyphenate words.

The rule is pretty clear, however. Most of us just need a reminder. When you have two or more words that modify or describe a noun that follows, you should hyphenate those words. You should not hyphenate the same words if they come after the noun.

Take a look at the following example where hyphenation errors exist in several places:

- It was clear that, after his two dollar hair-cut, Bertram began suffering from low self esteem.

Here is what the correction should look like:

- It was clear that, after his two-dollar haircut, Bertram began suffering from low self-esteem.

If you need help figuring out where hyphens should and should not be, be sure to check out the Hyphen section in Punctuation chapter.

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6.1.3.20: Sentence Fragment

Sentence Fragment

Sentence fragments always make the list of the most common errors, and they are among the most seriously stigmatizing errors we can make. To put it simply, a sentence fragment is an incomplete sentence that you have punctuated as if it is a complete sentence.

Sometimes, fragments are missing a verb. Sometimes, fragments are missing a subject. Sometimes, a fragment is simply a dependent clause punctuated like a complete sentence. Here are some examples:

- The haunting of the house on the craggy hill just outside of town.
- Because they are hairy and frightening with large, pointed fangs and shiny, yellow eyes.

You'll notice that each of these so-called sentences is not a complete sentence. They are both missing parts that would make them complete.

You always have options about how you correct a sentence fragment, but here are some possible corrections for our two sample sentence fragments:

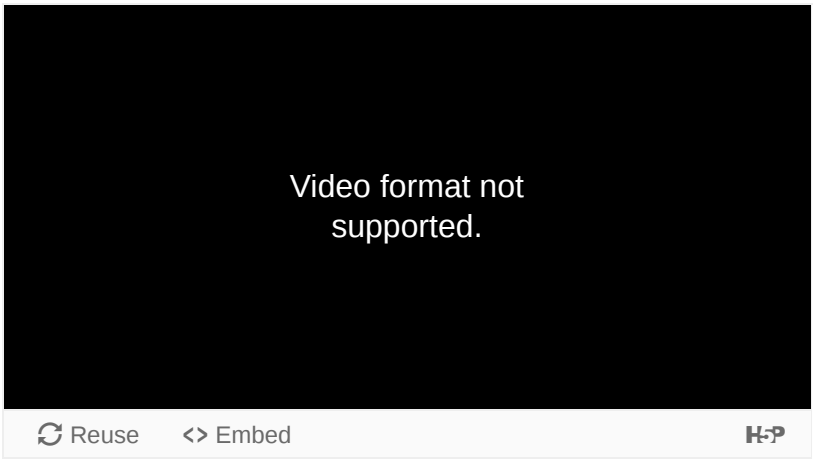
- The haunting of the house on the craggy hill just outside of town was the subject of a recent documentary.
- I am afraid of those spiders because they are hairy and frightening with large, pointed fangs and shiny, yellow eyes.

Tips from the Professor

Fragments are among the most serious errors in academic writing. While you may read fiction and informal prose that contain sentence fragments, in academic writing, fragments are generally frowned upon. In fact, research on how errors are perceived by people indicates that fragments are what we call "status marking" errors, which means people will make negative assumptions about the intelligence of the writer when they see fragments in writing.

Of course, making a sentence fragment error has nothing to do with your intelligence. Usually, for native speakers of English, making a sentence fragment error is more about not editing carefully or just not being practiced in the rules.

In this video, the Grammar Professor will review what a fragment is and how you can avoid fragments in your academic writing.



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6.1.3.21: Try It Out

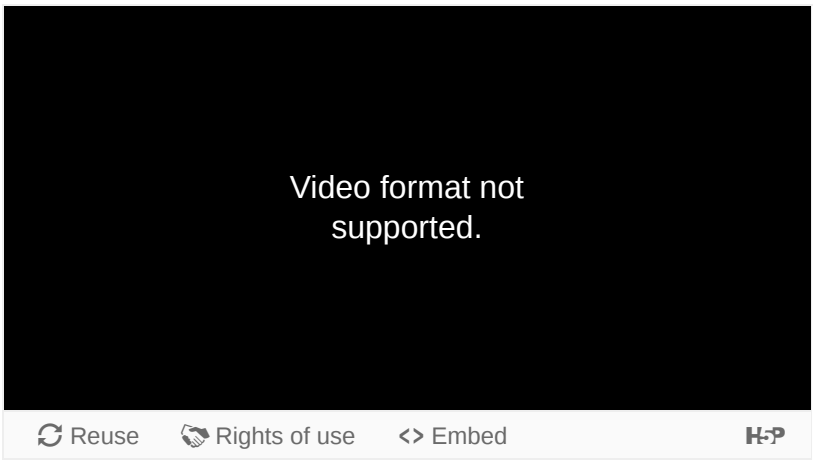
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6.1.3.22: Putting It All Together

Putting It All Together

In this section of Grammar Essentials, you have learned about the 20 most common errors students make and how you can avoid them. Hopefully, you have also learned that, if you have had these errors marked on your papers, you aren't alone. The key is having awareness, as this can help you when you edit.

To help you review, check out the video below, which provides a basic overview of what you have learned about the 20 most common errors students in the United States make.



NOTE: Because the use of the singular "they" is new, you may find some people who disagree, but most academics now agree that the singular "they" is correct. Please always refer to your style guide, as some style guides still recommend not using the singular "they".

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6.1.3.23: Time to Write

Time to Write

Now that you have the knowledge about the most common errors students in the U.S. make, think about your own writing. Which of these errors have you struggled with?

The next step is to be considerate of these errors as you edit. Review the most common errors list, paying close attention to issues you have had marked by teachers. Which ones stand out to you?

It's your turn now. Understanding these common errors can lead to better editing strategies, which helps you have cleaner, clearer writing.

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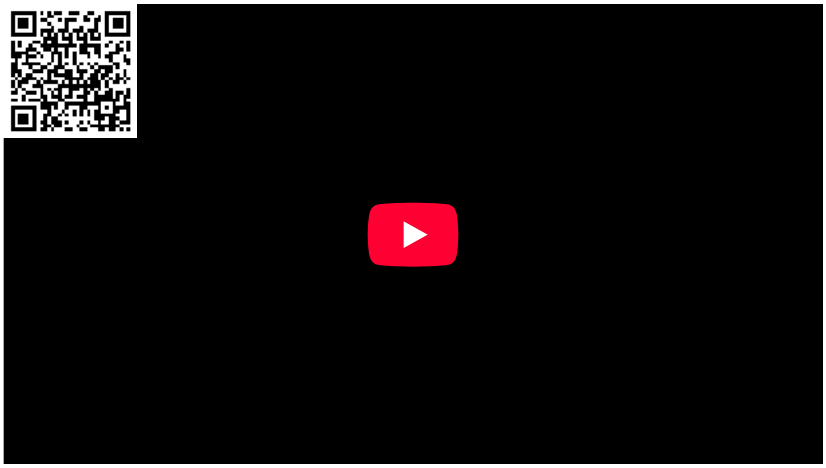
6.2: The Anatomy of a Sentence

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6.2.1: Subjects and Predicates, Finding the Subject

Finding the Subject

Read this article to learn about the components that make a complete sentence. Every sentence needs a subject (noun or pronoun) and a predicate (verb). What is the subject of an imperative sentence? Pick a literary work, article, or one of your own essays, and try to identify the subject and predicate in 5–10 different sentences.



Introduction

Figuring out what the subject of a sentence is can be surprisingly difficult. Take a complex sentence like the following:

Starting in 2011, the civil war in Syria has led to sustained conflict between the forces of President Bashar al-Assad and various militia groups (including Isis).

How do you even begin to find the subject of the sentence? What if the sentence contains more than one clause? Why should I care about the subject of the sentence?

Let's see if we can answer these questions and provide enough practice to let you find the subject with confidence.

(As for our difficult example, the subject is "the civil war", and soon you will know exactly why).

Subject and Predicate

Every sentence consists of least a subject and a predicate. A complex sentence with multiple clauses may have more than one subject and predicate.

The subject is what the sentence is about; the predicate describes the subject:

subject	predicate
I	love strawberries.
He	laughed his head off.
The tornado	has crossed the state border.

As an aside, it's a curious fact that back in the Middle Ages some scholars argued that the subject and predicate are analogous to feminine and masculine gender roles. The predicate was said to be masculine because it contains the verb (the action) and because it modifies and fixes the meaning of the feminine subject. So there you go – even grammar has its battle of the sexes!

Defining the Subject

In the previous section we gave a simple definition of the subject: it's what the sentence is about. In practice, that definition is too vague.

A more precise definition is as follows: the subject is the part of the sentence that is doing the action of the main verb. The subject is usually a noun or pronoun, but it can also be a longer phrase.

Let's look at an example:

The students represented Kiribati at the Model United Nations Conference in New York.

Step 1: Find the main verb: *represented*.

Step 2: Ask the right question: *who or what is doing the action of the verb*?

Step 3: Apply this question to the sentence: *who or what represented Kiribati?*

Step 4: Answer the question: The students.

The subject of the sentence is therefore *the students*.

If you follow this procedure rigorously you will be much more successful. There are just a few tricky cases (described below) where you need to know some extra rules.

Simple and Complete Subject

We can make a useful distinction between the simple and the complete subject. The complete subject is the subject and all its modifiers. The simple subject is the core idea without all the description:

Hans Zimmer's dramatic soundtrack to the movie *Inception* remains one of my favorite compositions.

Complete subject: Hans Zimmer's dramatic soundtrack to the movie *Inception*.

Simple subject: soundtrack.

If you are having trouble seeing the difference, it may help to break down the subject further:

Hans Zimmer's	dramatic	soundtrack	to the movie Inception
noun acting as adjective	adjective	noun	prepositional phrase

Being able to spot the simple subject will help you take apart sentences more easily.

Multiple Clauses

So far we've looked only at sentences that contain a single subject. Yet if the sentence has multiple clauses it will also have multiple subjects. That's because every clause has its own subject (and verb).

Here's an example of two independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction (*and*):

Reginald blew the whistle and the game was over.

In this case, each independent clause could be its own sentence. But even dependent clauses contain a subject and a verb:

Though the woolly mammoth is extinct, it remains a beloved subject of cartoonists.

Dependent clause: Though the woolly mammoth is extinct.

Subjects: the woolly mammoth, it.

And if we want to get really fancy we can have numerous clauses (and subjects) in a single sentence:

When I was younger, my family doctor, who struggled with back pain herself, suggested that I make an appointment with a chiropractor.

Subjects: I (was), my family doctor (suggested), who (struggled), I (make).

For now, we will ignore these more complex sentences, but when you've mastered subjects you can go on to study clauses in more detail.

Tricky Subjects

If you want to be an expert at finding the subject then you may want to familiarize yourself with some instances where the subject is harder to spot.

Linking Verbs

Linking verbs are not traditional action verbs, and so it's easy to overlook them when you're trying to find the main verb.

The most common linking verb is *to be* in all its many forms (*is, are, were,* etc.). A linking verb is followed by a noun or an adjective that describes the subject:

Martha is sick.

Jason was goalie.

Linking verbs also follow more complex subjects:

The day before Christmas is my birthday too!

The global shift to renewable energy is inevitable.

In both examples the linking verb is *is* and the subject is highlighted.

Verbals

When you're looking for the main verb of the sentence, watch out for verbals (especially present participles and infinitives). They may look like action words, but they will never be the main verb unless they're part of a verb phrase.

In fact, verbals are often part of the subject of the sentence:

Signing your child up for every last sport may be detrimental to your own health.

To think kind thoughts shouldn't be so hard.

For the sake of clarity, we've highlighted the complete subjects. The main verbs are *may be* and *shouldn't be*.

Expletives

Be careful with sentences that start with *there is* or *there are*. These are called expletives and they don't contain the subject of the sentence:

There are three burgers left.

There is a strange man at the door.

To find the subject you should ask "who or what is/are there?" The answers are *three burgers* and *a strange man*.

Imperatives

When a sentence is a command (and imperative), the subject is implied:

Show me the money!

Question: who or what will show me (the money)?

Answer: you.

The subject is therefore a person who may not be named in the sentence.

The Passive Voice

Don't be fooled by the passive voice. Take the following sentence:

The accident was caused by the bus driver's son.

If you ask "who or what was caused?" you will get the correct subject (*the accident*), even though in reality it was the son who caused the accident. In other words, if the verb is passive then the action happens *to* the subject.

Reverse Order

In English, most sentences follow a particular order, with the subject coming before the main verb. Occasionally the order is reversed:

Among the ingredients is stardust.

In this case, the subject is "stardust".

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6.2.2: Parsing the Constituents of a Sentence, Sentence Construction

Sentence Construction

Read this article. Varying sentence structure in your writing helps your writing flow for your audience and can help keep your readers' interest.

Why Is It Important to Vary Sentence Structure?

Too many simple and compound sentences can make writing sound choppy, but too many complex and compound-complex sentences can make writing difficult to follow. Strive for a balance by combining sentences of various structures and lengths throughout your paper.

What Are Some Common Ways to Structure a Sentence?

- Simple sentence: Contains a single subject and verb.
  - Example: The cell phone rang right before class.
- Compound sentence: Contains two complete sentences (independent clauses) joined by a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so).
  - Example: The cell phone rang right before class, so the student quickly turned off her phone's ringer.
- Complex sentence: Contains an independent clause joined by one or more dependent clauses.
  - Example: To avoid an interruption during class, the student turned off her phone's ringer.
- Compound-complex sentence: Contains a combination of a compound sentence and a complex sentence.
  - Example: In order to keep her attention focused on class activities, the student turned off her phone's ringer, and she put her ear buds in her backpack.

Use Parallel Structure

What is Parallel Structure?

Parallel structure is established when words within a sentence are united by consistent use of grammatical forms. This stylistic element is also referred to as parallelism or parallel construction.

Why Is It Important to Use Parallel Structure?

Lack of parallel structure can disrupt the rhythm of a sentence, leaving it grammatically unbalanced. Proper parallel structure helps to establish balance and flow in a well-constructed sentence; the alignment of related ideas supports readability and clarity.

Let's Look at an Example

- Not Parallel: The President traveled to several cities meeting voters, to give speeches, and ask for campaign funds.
- Parallel: The President traveled to several cities meeting voters, giving speeches, and asking for campaign funds.

How to Revise a Sentence to Reflect Parallel Structure

1. Find a list within a sentence: Look for words or phrases of equal importance that are separated by commas and joined by a conjunction

Not parallel: Dr. Kall challenged his students to initiate their own learning, be creative problem-solvers, and think independently. (In this sentence, Dr. Kall wants his students to do or be three things, but the items in this list are not parallel in structure.)

2. Evaluate the word forms within the list.

1. Do the verbs appear as infinitives (*to + verb*), or gerunds (*–ing words*)? As present tense or past tense? (Choose the voice and tense of the verb that is consistent with surrounding sentences.)
2. Do the nouns or pronouns and their modifiers appear in consistent form?

3. Alter the words in the list to create proper parallel structure.

Parallel: Dr. Kall challenged his students to become self-motivated learners, creative problem-solvers, and independent thinkers. (In this sentence, Dr. Kall wants his students to be three things instead of a combination of being and doing. Additionally, the list follows a pattern since the nouns and adjectives all appear in parallel form.)

Avoid Primer-Style Sentences

How to Combine Short Sentences Effectively

A primer-style sentence is a short and simple sentence that usually includes a single subject and verb. While short and simplistic sentences can be used effectively to emphasize a point or clarify a confusing statement, frequent use of them can make a paper sound choppy and interrupt the flow of the paper. Primer-style sentences can be combined into a more complex sentence.

Let's Look at Some Examples

Revision of primer-style sentences:

- Primer-style sentences: President Kennedy was shot on Nov. 22, 1963. It happened in Dallas, Texas. This event greatly impacted the nation.
- Revised: The assassination of President Kennedy on Nov. 22, 1963, in Dallas, Texas, greatly impacted the nation.

Revision of short, related sentences:

Simple sentences about a single topic may also be combined by using coordinating conjunctions (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) and/or modifying clauses.

- Series of related sentences: Central Park is an urban park that is 843 acres. It is located in New York City. The park has several attractions including a zoo.
  - Note that the subject of all of these sentences is Central Park. The sentences can be combined into one sentence using a coordinating conjunction and a modifying clause since all three ideas are of equal importance.
- Revised: Central Park, an urban park in New York City, is 843 acres and has several attractions, including a zoo.

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6.2.3: Identifying Fragments and Run-On Sentences, Avoid Sentence Fragments

Avoid Sentence Fragments

Read this article on sentence fragments.

What is a Sentence Fragment?

A sentence fragment is a word, phrase, or dependent clause that is punctuated as a sentence, but the subject, verb, or both may be missing. Though sentence fragments may be used for effect in certain types of writing, fragments are generally not used in academic or professional writing.

How to Revise a Sentence Fragment to Create a Complete Sentence

- Look for misplaced periods that may incorrectly separate words into incomplete sentences.
  - Series of fragments: The student's paper. So late. Should have started on it sooner.
- Add the missing subject or verb to create a complete sentence.
  - The student's paper was turned in late.
- Join two or more fragments into a complete sentence (subject and predicate must both be included), using appropriate punctuation.
  - The student's paper was turned in late; she should have started working on it sooner.
- Combine the fragment with a nearby complete sentence, using appropriate punctuation.
  - If she had not turned her paper in late, the student could have avoided the penalty to her grade.

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6.2.4: Identifying Fragments and Run-On Sentences, Avoid Run-on Sentences

Avoid Run-on Sentences

Read this article on run-on sentences.

What is a Run-on Sentence?

A run-on (or fused) sentence consists of two or more independent clauses that have been joined without appropriate punctuation or coordinating words. Dividing a run-on sentence into concise, meaningful units can help to clarify your message.

How to Divide a Run-on Sentence

- Locate the fused independent clauses; it may help to underline the subject-verb pairs.
- Draw a vertical line (or lines) on your paper to separate the independent clauses.
- Use an end mark and proper capitalization to separate the independent clauses into two (or more) complete sentences.
- Use a comma followed by a coordinating conjunction (fanboys: *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*) to separate related independent clauses.
- Use a semicolon (;), colon (:), or dash (–) to separate related independent clauses.
- Change one independent clause into a dependent clause and join the two clauses, using appropriate punctuation.
- Rewrite two fused independent clauses as one cohesive independent clause.

Let's Look at an Example:

Incorrect: One way to confront a problem is to seek advice it can come from someone with more life experience.

Correction A: One way to confront a problem is to seek advice; it can come from someone with more life experience.

Correction B: One way to confront a problem is to seek advice. Frequently, guidance can come from someone with more life experience.

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6.2.5: Identifying Fragments and Run-On Sentences, Fragments and Run-ons

Fragments and Run-ons

If you feel you need additional help with fragments and run-ons, read this guide.

What This Handout is About

If instructors have ever returned your papers with "frag", "S.F.", "R.O.", or "run-on" written in the margin, you may find this handout useful. It will help you locate and correct sentence fragments and run-ons.

The Basics

Before we get to the problems and how to fix them, let's take a minute to review some information that is so basic you have probably forgotten it.

What is a complete sentence? A complete sentence is not merely a group of words with a capital letter at the beginning and a period or question mark at the end. A complete sentence has three components:

1. Some sentences can be short, with only two or three words expressing a complete thought, like this:

   John waited.

   This sentence has a subject (*John*) and a verb (*waited*), and it expresses a complete thought. We can understand the idea completely with just those two words, so again, it's independent – an independent clause. But independent clauses (i.e., complete sentences) can be expanded to contain a lot more information, like this:

   John waited for the bus all morning.

   John waited for the bus all morning in the rain last Tuesday.

   Wishing he'd brought his umbrella, John waited for the bus all morning in the rain last Tuesday.

   Wishing he had brought his umbrella and dreaming of his nice warm bed, John waited for the bus all morning in the rain last Tuesday because his car was in the shop.

   As your sentences grow more complicated, it gets harder to spot and stay focused on the basic elements of a complete sentence, but if you look carefully at the examples above, you'll see that the main thought is still that *John waited* – one main subject and one main verb. No matter how long or short the other sentence parts are, none of them can stand alone and make sense.

   Being able to find the main subject, the main verb, and the complete thought is the first trick to learn for identifying fragments and run-ons.

Sentence Fragments

A sentence fragment is an incomplete sentence. Some fragments are incomplete because they lack either a subject or a verb, or both. The fragments that most students have trouble with, however, are dependent clauses – they have a subject and a verb, so they look like complete sentences, but they don't express a complete thought. They're called "dependent" because they can't stand on their own (just like some people you might know who are SO dependent!). Look at these dependent clauses. They're just begging for more information to make the thoughts complete:

Because his car was in the shop (…What did he do?)

After the rain stops (…What then?)

When you finally take the test (…What will happen?)

Since you asked (…Will you get the answer?)

If you want to go with me (…What should you do?)

Does each of these examples have a subject? Yes. Does each have a verb? Yes. So what makes the thought incomplete? It is the first word (because, after, when, since, if).

These words belong to a special class of words called subordinators or subordinating conjunctions. If you know something about subordinating conjunctions, you can probably eliminate 90 percent of your fragments.

First, you need to know that subordinating conjunctions do three things:

1. Join two sentences together;
2. Make one of the sentences dependent on the other for a complete thought (make one a dependent clause);
3. Indicate a logical relationship.

Second, you need to recognize the subordinators when you see them. Here is a list of common subordinating conjunctions and the relationships they indicate:

Cause and Effect: because, since, so that.

Comparison and Contrast: although, even though, though, whereas, while.

Place and Manner: how, however, where, wherever.

Possibility and Conditions: if, whether, unless.

Relation: that, which, who.

Time: after, as, before, since, when, whenever, while, until.

Third, you need to know that the subordinator (and the whole dependent clause) doesn't have to be at the beginning of the sentence. The dependent clause and the independent clause can switch places, but the whole clause moves as one big chunk. Look at how these clauses switched places in the sentence:

Because his car was in the shop,

- John took the bus.
- John took the bus

because his car was in the shop.

Finally, you need to know that every dependent clause needs to be attached to an independent clause (remember, the independent clause can stand on its own).

How do you find and fix your fragments? Remember the basics: subject, verb, and complete thought. If you can recognize those things, you're halfway there. Then, scan your sentences for subordinating conjunctions. If you find one, first identify the whole chunk of the dependent clause (the subject and verb that go with the subordinator), and then make sure they're attached to an independent clause.

John took the bus. (Independent clause. So far, all is well!) Because his car was in the shop. (Dependent clause all by itself. Uh oh! Fragment!)

John took the bus because his car was in the shop.

Run-ons

These are also called fused sentences. You are making a run-on when you put two complete sentences (a subject and its predicate and another subject and its predicate) together in one sentence without separating them properly. Here's an example of a run-on:

My favorite Mediterranean spread is hummus it is garlicky.

This one sentence actually contains two complete sentences. But in the rush to get that idea out, I made it into one incorrect sentence. Luckily, there are many ways to correct this run-on sentence.

You could use a semicolon:

My favorite Mediterranean spread is hummus; it is garlicky.

You could use a comma and a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so):

My favorite Mediterranean spread is hummus, for it is garlicky. -OR- My favorite Mediterranean spread is hummus, and it is garlicky.

You could use a subordinating conjunction (see above):

My favorite Mediterranean spread is hummus because it is garlicky. -OR- Because it is so garlicky, my favorite Mediterranean spread is hummus.

You could make it into two separate sentences with a period in between:

My favorite Mediterranean spread is humus. It is garlicky.

You could use an em-dash (a long dash) for emphasis:

My favorite Mediterranean spread is hummus – it is garlicky.

You CANNOT simply add a comma between the two sentences, or you will end up with what is called a "comma splice". Here is an example of a comma splice:

My favorite Mediterranean spread is hummus, it is garlicky.

You can fix a comma splice the same way you fix a run-on – either change the punctuation or add a conjunction. The good news is that writers tend to be either comma splicers or run-on artists, but almost never both. Which one are you?

Finding Run-ons

As you can see, fixing run-ons is pretty easy once you see them – but how do you find out if a sentence is a run-on if you are not sure? Rei R. Noguchi, in his book *Grammar and the Teaching of Writing*, recommends two methods for testing your sentences.

Try these two tests:

1. Turn your sentences into yes or no questions.
2. Turn your sentences into tag questions (sentences that end with a questioning phrase at the very end – look at our examples below).

These are two things that nearly everyone can do easily if the sentence is not a run-on, but they become next to impossible if it is.

Look at the following sentence:

My favorite Mediterranean spread is hummus.

If you turn it into a question that someone could answer with a yes or no, it looks like this:

Is my favorite Mediterranean spread hummus?

If you turn it into a tag question, it looks like this:

My favorite Mediterranean spread is hummus, isn't it?

The first sentence is complete and not a run-on, because our test worked.

Now, look again at the original run-on sentence:

My favorite Mediterranean spread is hummus it is garlicky.

The yes or no question can only be made with each separate thought, not the sentence as a whole:

Is my favorite Mediterranean spread hummus? Is it garlicky?

But not:

Is my favorite Mediterranean spread hummus is it garlicky?

The tag question can also only be made with each separate thought, rather than the whole:

My favorite Mediterranean spread is hummus, isn't it? It's garlicky, isn't it?

But never:

My favorite Mediterranean spread is hummus it is very garlicky, isn't it?

Unlike the complete sentence, the run-on sentence does not pass these tests. When you try to turn the run-on sentence into a single question, you immediately see that the sentence has more than one complete concept. Make sure you try both tests with each of your problem sentences, because you may trick yourself by just putting a tag on the last part and not noticing that it

doesn't work on the first. Some people might not notice that "My favorite Mediterranean spread is hummus it is very garlicky isn't it?" is wrong, but most people will spot the yes/no question problem right away.

Every once in a while, you or your instructor will see a really long sentence and think it is a run-on when it is not. Really long sentences can be tiring but not necessarily wrong – just make sure that yours are not wrong by using the tests above.

Works Consulted

We consulted these works while writing the original version of this handout. This is not a comprehensive list of resources on the handout's topic, and we encourage you to do your own research to find the latest publications on this topic. Please do not use this list as a model for the format of your own reference list, as it may not match the citation style you are using.

Hacker, Diana. *A Writer's Reference*. 5th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2003.

Hairston, Maxine, John Ruszkiewicz and Christy Friend. *The Scott, Foresman Handbook for Writers*. 6th ed. New York: Longman, 2002.

Lunsford, Andrea A. and Robert Connors. *St. Martin's Handbook*. 5th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2003. (specifically Chapter 7)

Noguchi, Rei R. *Grammar and the Teaching of Writing: Limits and Possibilities*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1991.

6.2.5: Identifying Fragments and Run-On Sentences, Fragments and Run-ons is shared under a CC BY-NC-ND license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by LibreTexts.

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6.2.6: Subject-Verb Agreement, Subject-Verb Agreement

Subject-Verb Agreement

Subject-verb disagreement, where the conjugation of the verb does not match the point of view (first, second, or third) and number (singular or plural) of the subject, is a common error in writing.

A single relationship lies at the heart of every sentence in the English language. Like an indivisible nucleus at the center of an atom, the subject-verb pair unifies the sentence. It can be surrounded by any number of modifying words, taking on new shades of meaning, but no matter how many adjectives, adverbs, and independent clauses become attached, the basic unit remains. The subject-verb pair guarantees that the sentence means something. Without this core, a sentence fragments and loses its power to speak. Indeed, a sentence only becomes complete when it contains at least a subject and a verb.

A verb denotes action, existence, or occurrence. A subject denotes the person or thing that performs the action, the person or thing that exists, or the incident that occurs. For example:

- Samantha *drove*.
- He *was*.
- Mistakes *were made*.

In English, subjects and verbs must also agree with one another. That is, the form of the verb has to match the number of things in the subject. A singular subject takes a singular verb, while a plural subject takes a plural verb. For example:

- She *talks*. (Singular)
- They *talk*. (Plural)

Notice that, unlike nouns, regular verbs in the present tense become plural by subtracting the letter s from the end. In the past tense, verbs usually don't change at all:

- I watched. (Singular)
- They watched. (Plural)

No matter what kind of verb you're using, the trick to making your subjects and verbs agree with one another is to first identify the quantity of the subject and then use the appropriate verb form. Usually, the writer makes these calculations without effort. However, certain words and phrases defy such common sense evaluations. The following sections explore the most frequent areas of confusion.

Indefinite Pronouns

The indefinite pronouns *anyone*, *everyone*, *someone*, *no one*, *everybody*, and *nobody* are always singular, and require singular verbs.

- No one *comes* to the party.
- Everyone *tips* the waiter.
- Someone *saves* the day.

It is tempting to think that a word like *everybody* is plural (after all, it seems to refer to a group of people). But *everybody* is a shorthand way of saying "each person in the group", and therefore remains a singular word.

Some indefinite pronouns, such as *some* or *all*, can be either singular or plural, depending on the quantity of the things they refer to. For example, particulate things, like marbles or slices of bread, are countable, and therefore take plural verbs:

- All of the marbles *roll* away.
- Some of the slices of bread *were* eaten.

Non-particulate things, such as loyalty or air, are not countable, and therefore take singular verbs:

- All of my loyalty *vanishes*.
- Some of the air *is* gone.

Collective and Plural Nouns

Many nouns masquerade as plural nouns, but like some indefinite pronouns, actually count as singular nouns. Words such as *audience*, *dozen*, *jury*, *group*, and *team* imply a plurality of members, but when those members act as one, the noun is singular, and takes a singular verb.

- The audience *claps* at the end of the guitar player's solo.
- A jury of his peers *convicts* the man for fraud.

However, if the members of the collective noun are not acting as a group, then the noun becomes plural and takes a plural verb.

- After the play, the audience *grab* their coats, *exit* the building and *head* for the parking garage. (The individual audience members do not grab the same coats or exit at the exact same time, nor do they take the same route to the parking garage.)
- The jury *are* divided on the subject of the plaintiff's guilt. (Since the jury members do not agree unanimously, the noun jury becomes plural and takes a plural verb).

Note that a collective noun also becomes plural when more than one of the same kind of group described by the noun appears in the sentence.

- Dozens of petitioners *attend*. (In this case, the collective noun "dozen" has become plural; there is more than one dozen in the sentence, and so the verb becomes a plural verb).
- The teams *march* onto the field. (More than one team exists in this sentence, so the verb becomes plural.)

When you are in doubt about whether a collective noun is plural or singular in your sentence, you can do one of two things:

- Add a modifying word, like "members" to the collective noun. (The members of the audience *exit* the building and *head* for the parking garage.)
- Use a different word entirely. (The concertgoers *exit* the building and *head* for the parking garage.)

Amounts and Fractions

Nouns that express amounts of concepts like time, money, and distance are singular.

- Twenty-four hours *feels* longer when you're stuck on a plane.
- Seven hundred dollars *is* more than I can afford.
- Fifty miles *seems* like a long distance to walk, but it's not if you're in good shape.

Fractions are singular if they modify singular nouns and plural if they modify plural nouns.

- Half of the voters *have* cast their ballots. ("Voters" is plural, so "half" takes a plural verb.)
- Forty percent of the newspaper *is* devoted to advertisements. ("Newspaper" is singular, so "forty percent" takes a singular verb.)

Phrases of Inclusion

Certain phrases, such as *along with*, *including*, *as well as*, and *together with* do not operate on the subject in the same way that the word *and* does. The word *and*, used to connect two nouns or pronouns, compounds them into a plural subject. But the phrases listed above only interrupt the link between subject and verb, leaving the subject's quantity unchanged:

- You and I *are* always together. (*You and I* is a plural subject)
- The actor, together with his entourage, *arrives* at the award ceremony. (*The actor* is the subject; *his entourage* is not included in the quantity of the subject)

Neither and *Either*

When these pronouns appear by themselves, they are singular, even though their use connects two things:

- Neither of these movies *is* very entertaining.
- Either restaurant *is* fine with me.

However, when they appear with the conjoining words *nor* (for *neither*) and *or* (for *either*), the quantity of the subject closest to the verb determines the quantity of the verb:

- Neither you nor your friends *are* welcome at my party.
- Either the democratic candidates or the republican candidate *is* going to be elected in November.

(Note that the last sentence sounds a little strange. While grammatically correct, the move from plural to singular in the subject feels awkward. When faced with a situation like this, simply switch the order of the terms so that the plural element of the subject appears closest to the verb, and use the plural form of the verb.)

Other Interruptions

In the same way, phrases that come between the subject and the verb (usually set off with commas, parentheses, or dashes) do not contribute to the quantity of the verb:

- The weather in April, although periodically broken by afternoon thunderstorms, *was* generally quite pleasant.
- My grades (taken as an overall barometer of my conduct at the university) *show* that I am an exemplary student.

Here and There as Expletive Constructions

Even though these words often appear at the beginning of a sentence (the traditional position for subjects), when they do so, they do not necessarily operate as a subject. In cases where *here* and *there* function in tandem with the verb *to be* (or one of its conjugates), they are part of the verb phrase rather than part of the subject:

- *There were* five books on the shelf.
- *Here are* my sweaters.

In these cases, the subject of the sentence follows the verb, but still determines the quantity of the verb.

The rules listed above by no means exhaust every possible problem you'll encounter when paring subjects with verbs. They address only the most common areas of confusion. If, after consulting this article, you don't find a solution to the issue your sentence is facing, you could do some additional research, consulting websites or grammar/style textbooks. But you might also consider re-composing the sentence according to a different pattern.

Often, developing writers try to make their sentences do too much work, a tendency that can cause problems with subject-verb agreement. Before going through a lengthy research process, ask yourself if the sentence in question might be written in a more straightforward manner. In academic writing, your *ideas* should be complex. Your *sentences*, however, don't necessarily have to be. The strongest sentences are often the simplest.

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6.3: Other Sentence-Level Issues

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6.3.1: Misplaced Modifiers, Avoid Misplaced Modifiers

Avoid Misplaced Modifiers

Read this article. Placing modifiers properly makes your writing more clear.

What is a Modifier?

A modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that describes, strengthens, or clarifies another word (or group of words) in a sentence. When a modifier is placed in its proper position in a sentence, a sense of clarity is established for the reader.

What is a Misplaced Modifier?

A modifier may be considered misplaced when it is not in the correct position in the sentence in relation to the word (or words) being modified. Misplaced modifiers can weaken or twist the intended meaning of a sentence, thus creating a sense of ambiguity or absurdity.

Typical Placement of Modifiers:

- Place the modifier as close as possible to the word (or words) being modified.
- Place adjectives that modify nouns in front of the word (or words) being modified.
- Place adverbs that modify a verb or verb phrase:
  - right before or just after the verb being modified, OR
  - at the beginning or end of the sentence.
- Place words such as *almost, even, just, nearly, only, or simply* in front of the word (or words) being modified.
- Do not create a split infinitive by placing a modifier between *to + a verb.* (e. g., replace *to quickly move* with *to move quickly*)
- Do not place a modifier between the verb and the object being acted upon. (e. g., replace *The dog ate quickly his food* with *The dog quickly ate his food*.)

How to Replace a Misplaced Modifier Correctly

- Identify the modifiers by circling them.
- Draw an arrow to the word or words being modified.
- Move the modifier closer to the word being modified.
- Read the sentence aloud to check word flow and clarity of meaning.

Let's Look at an Example:

Sentence with a misplaced modifier: The kitten took a nap in a padded basket with a collar around its neck.

- To avoid the absurd implication that the basket has a neck with a collar around it, move the modifying phrase closer to *kitten*.

Sentence with a properly-placed modifier: The kitten with a collar around its neck took a nap in a padded basket.

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6.3.2: Pronoun-Antecedent Disagreement, Subject-Pronoun Agreement

Subject-Pronoun Agreement

Read this article. Pronouns and their antecedents must agree in number and gender.

As a student embarking on your academic career, most papers that you will be asked to write will be academic papers. These academic papers include clear and direct language with a purpose to communicate to your readers your intended message. Clear and direct language should be used to avoid any confusion.

Readers do not want to have to play guessing games with your paper to figure out your main points and arguments, and readers should not have to work hard to figure out what you mean. While much of the success of a well-written essay has to do with having an insightful thesis that is well supported with a cogent synthesis of evidence or sources with appropriate transitions and a logical progression, style and grammar should not be overlooked.

Not many people are grammar aficionados, but effective writers still consider themselves to be knowledgeable of the rules and conventions of grammar. Not everyone is as great at identifying grammatical errors as he or she may think, but being aware of the rules and conventions of grammar inevitably improves the clarity of papers. Not only that, but the "grammar check" function on some word processors does not catch all grammatical problems, especially pronoun-antecedent agreement issues.

Case in point, a word processor may not mark the following sentence as an error: *If an engineering student fails the midterm, they have to receive an A on the final for a passing grade*. The pronoun and antecedent in the sentence do not agree. Let's take a closer look.

Careful proofreading of this sentence reveals that "an engineering student" is singular; therefore, the pronoun *they* should be replaced with *he* or *she* in the above sentence. To help identify pronoun-antecedent agreement, we first should define what a pronoun is. Simply put, pronouns are words that replace nouns. Rather than using the same nouns over and over again (which can become cumbersome), pronouns allow for a more interesting and concise paper as long as pronouns and antecedents agree in person, number, and gender.

What is an antecedent? Good question! An antecedent is the word to which a pronoun refers. Both the pronoun and the antecedent need to be either singular or plural. In other words, the pronoun and antecedent need to agree – either both are plural or both are singular. There can be no disagreement between them. It sounds more confusing than it really is.

To clarify, if we take a look at this sentence again, but this time with a pronoun and antecedent that agree – *If an engineering student fails the midterm, he or she has to receive an A on the final for a passing grade* – we see that the "engineering student" is the antecedent of the pronoun *he* or *she*, in which both pronoun and antecedent agree with one another because they are both singular. Also keep in mind that the verb that follows the pronoun or pronouns must also agree (he or she *has* to receive and A on the final for a passing grade).

Pronouns and Antecedents Must Agree in Number

Singular: The teacher began her lesson. (The antecedent of the pronoun *her* is "teacher". Both her and "teacher" are singular, and so the pronoun and antecedent agree in number.)

Plural: The teachers began their lessons. (The antecedent of the pronoun *their* is "teachers". Both *their* and "teachers" are plural, and so the pronoun and antecedent agree in number.)

Pronouns and Antecedents Must Agree in Gender

In addition to making sure that pronouns and their antecedents agree in number, you should ensure that the pronouns and their antecedents agree in gender as well.

Incorrect: Uncle Henry traveled overseas to buy vases for her collection.

Correct: Uncle Henry traveled overseas to buy vases for his collection.

Since Uncle Henry is not a woman, the pronoun *her* is not in agreement with the antecedent. Therefore, the *her* must be changed to *his*.

You may be asking, *how do you approach pronouns that are not gendered, such as the gender-neutral pronoun "it"*? For example: *When Joey set it on the counter, the glass fell over*. This example might be a little bit trickier as the sentence construction begins

with a subordinate adverbial clause, "When Joey set it on the counter", and so we might wonder, *where is the antecedent that comes before (and refers to) the pronoun "it"*?

If the sentence were constructed this way – *the glass fell over when Joey set it on the counter* – then we could easily see that the pronoun *it* refers to the antecedent *glass*. Whether the sentence is a simple construction or is more complex (for instance, beginning with a dependent clause), the *glass* is what was set on the counter and what fell over. We can see that the gender-neutral pronoun it and the antecedent *glass* agree.

Things begin to get more complex when we're dealing with indefinite pronouns, which are pronouns that do not refer to a specific thing or person. *Anybody*, *everybody*, *everything*, *somebody*, *no one*, etc., all seem to be plural, but they actually are singular. However, there are also plural indefinite pronouns like *some* and *both*.

Incorrect: Everybody should bring their books to class next week.

Correct: Everybody should bring his or her books to class next week.

The first sentence is incorrect because *everybody* really equates to *every person*, which is singular; thus, the indefinite pronoun *everybody* requires a singular pronoun, or pronouns to be gender sensitive.

Collective Nouns

Examples of collective nouns include words such as *team*, *jury*, *audience*, and *class*. These collective nouns typically refer to a class or group. Identifying collective nouns as singular or plural can be tricky as the singularity or plurality depends on how the collective noun functions. An antecedent can either refer to the pronoun as a single unit or the different parts of the whole. For example: *The finance committee will present its findings tomorrow at the Marshall Center*. This sentence shows the committee being treated as a single unit/group.

On the other hand, *The finance committee could not agree on their findings* reflects the idea that the committee is made up of *members* (plural) who, in this case, are not presenting findings as a collective unit/group. This why you will see the term *audience* (used frequently throughout this textbook) with either plural or singular pronouns following or preceding it: the sentence can either be reflecting the collectivity of the group (*the audience* – singular) or the individuality of its members (*the audience [members]* – plural).

As parts/individuals of the whole: The audience fixed their attention on the presenter

Single unit: The audience fixed its attention on the presenter.

Compound Antecedents

Compound antecedents are joined by the conjunction *and* and require pronouns to be plural. For example: *My dad and his older brother are going to their family reunion next week*. (Both are going to their family reunion.)

However, when the word *each* or *every* appear before a compound antecedent, the pronoun needs to be singular. For example: *Every athlete or musician has his or her own method of training*. (Consider that *each* or *every* means each *individual* athlete or each *individual* musician has his or her own method of training. Or, every *single* athlete or every *single* musician has his or her method of training.)

There will be times when *and* will not be used to join a compound antecedent; rather, *nor* or *or* will be used. When this occurs, the pronoun must agree in number with the closest antecedent. For example: *Neither Joseph nor his brothers got their job application in on time*. Because *brothers* is a plural noun and is the antecedent that is closest to the pronoun nor, the pronoun that follows their needs to be plural as well.

If the compound antecedents were reversed in this sentence, we the sentence would (correctly) be structured like this: *Neither Joseph's brothers nor Joseph got his application in on time*. *Joseph* (a singular noun) is the antecedent that is closest to the pronoun *nor*, so the pronoun that follows (*his*) needs to be singular as well.

There are a couple of additional things to keep in mind when checking for issues with pronoun references. Indefinite pronouns like *everyone* or *somebody* could be either male or female, but many writers assume the pronoun to be masculine, which excludes females. Readers may consider this position to be sexist, so you'll want to consider your audience when you're deciding on pronoun use when indefinite pronouns function as antecedents. Also, keep in mind that ambiguous pronoun usage, which occurs when a pronoun can have more than one antecedent, confuses readers.

For example: *Christopher visited Andrew after his graduation*. Here, we are unsure of who his is referring to: Whose graduation was it – Christopher's graduation or Andrew's graduation? In such an instance, it's necessary to restructure the sentence (*After his graduation, Christopher visited Andrew*) for the sake of clarity, because repeating the noun would make the sentence awkward (*Christopher visited Andrew after Christopher's graduation*).

Pronoun-antecedent disagreement is an easy mistake to make, but fortunately, it is quite easy to remedy. Remember that spell check and grammar check functions in your word processor probably will not catch all the errors in a paper. Only by identifying the grammatical mistakes that you have a tendency to make and then carefully proofreading with those issues in mind will you ensure a polished final product.

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SECTION OVERVIEW

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6.4.14: Reviewing, Revising, and Editing Drafts, Read Your Paper Aloud to Check for Cohesiveness

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6.4.1: Unit Activities, Revise Your Unit Essay

In this practice exercise, read the essay you drafted in Chapter 2 aloud, taking time to make notes about any areas that seem weak, poorly constructed, illogical, or that just do not "sound right". Then, edit your essay one more time for structure, clarity, and style. Try to use the strategies you learned about editing in Chapter 5.

The topic of that essay was:

"What does it take to succeed in an Internet-based college course?"

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6.4.2: Unit Activities, Format Your Unit Essay Using MLA

In this practice exercise, review the essay you wrote for Chapter 4 on "Hetch, Hetchy Valley, Yosemite" by John Muir and demonstrate you know how to use MLA style by reformatting your paper according to MLA standards. Be sure to convert all citations and bibliographic entries to MLA style.

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6.4.3: Unit Essay, Unit Essay

Write an essay (1,000 to 1,300 words) in which you explain how online tools and social media affect Internet-based learning. Consider the claims you made in your other essays to determine how students in Internet-based programs can be successful. Do online tools and social media help or hinder an Internet-based college student? Think about how rhetorical strategies you've seen before can help you develop your argument. What audience are you writing to and what is your purpose?

Use the prewriting techniques you learned in Chapter 2 to focus your topic and refine your thesis. Use research where necessary to bolster your argument and respond to any counterarguments. Be sure to cite and document your research in accordance with MLA style standards.

After you have completed your first draft, use the Toulmin method to evaluate your argument (claim, grounds, warrant, qualifier, and rebuttal). Revise your essay as needed. After you have completed your second draft, read your essay aloud to someone else. Revise and edit your work to address any relevant suggestions and questions. As always, remember to properly cite the authors or copyright holders of any material you reference or paraphrase. It can be especially useful to read your work aloud, to yourself or to a friend. As you read, pay attention to anything that seems illogical or sounds incorrect.

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6.4.4: Academic Writing Style, Sentence Patterns

Sentence Patterns

Read this article, which reviews how to use different sentence patterns in your writing.

What This Handout is About

This handout gives an overview of English sentence patterns. It will help you identify subjects, verbs, and clause connectors so you can analyze your writing style and improve it by using a variety of sentence patterns.

Subjects, Verbs, and Clauses

In its simplest form, an English sentence has two parts: a subject and a verb that express a complete thought when they are together.

- The subject shows who or what is doing the action. It is always some form of noun or pronoun.
- The verb shows the action or the state of being. It can be an action verb, like "run", or a state verb, like "seem".

Examples of simple two-word sentences include:

Marvin slept.

Dogs bark.

Isotopes react.

Real sentences are rarely so short. We usually want to convey much more information, so we modify the main subject and verb with other words and phrases, as in the sentences below:

Unfortunately, Marvin slept fitfully.

Dogs bark louder after midnight.

Heavy isotopes react more slowly than light isotopes of the same element.

Despite the extra information, each of these sentences has one subject and one verb, so it's still just one clause. What's a clause?

A clause is the combination of a subject and a verb. When you have a subject and verb, you have a clause. Pretty easy, isn't it? We're going to concentrate on clauses in this handout, with emphasis on these two in particular:

1. Independent clause: a subject and verb that make a complete thought. Independent clauses are called independent because they can stand on their own and make sense.
2. Dependent clause: a subject and verb that don't make a complete thought. Dependent clauses always need to be attached to an independent clause (they're too weak to stand alone).

Something Tricky

Before we move on to the sentence types, you should know a little trick of subjects and verbs: they can double up in the same clause. These are called "compound" subjects or verbs because there are two or more of them in the same clause.

Compound subject (two subjects related to the same verb):

Javier and his colleagues collaborated on the research article.

Compound verb (two verbs related to the same subject):

Javier conducted the experiment and documented the results.

Compound subject with compound verb:

Javier, his colleagues, and their advisor drafted and revised the article several times.

Notice that they don't overlap. You can tell that it's only one clause because all of the subjects in one clause come before all of the verbs in the same clause.

Four Basic Patterns

Every sentence pattern below describes a different way to combine clauses. When you are drafting your own papers or when you're revising them for sentence variety, try to determine how many of these patterns you use. If you favor one particular pattern, your

writing might be kind of boring if every sentence has exactly the same pattern. If you find this is true, try to revise a few sentences using a different pattern.

NOTE: Because nouns can fill so many positions in a sentence, it's easier to analyze sentence patterns if you find the verbs and find the connectors. The most common connectors are listed below with the sentence patterns that use them.

In the descriptions below, S=Subject and V=Verb, and options for arranging the clauses in each sentence pattern given in parentheses. Connecting words and the associated punctuation are highlighted in brown. Notice how the punctuation changes with each arrangement.

Pattern 1: Simple Sentence

One independent clause (SV.)

Mr. Potato Head eats monkeys.

I refuse.

Try this: Look for sentences in your own text that have only one clause. Mark them with a certain color so they stand out.

Pattern 2: Compound Sentence

Two or more independent clauses. They can be arranged in these ways: (SV, and SV.) or (SV; however, SV.)

Connectors with a comma, the FANBOYS: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so

Connectors with a semicolon and comma: however, moreover, nevertheless, nonetheless, therefore

Example compound sentences:

Mr. Potato Head eats them for breakfast every day, but I don't see the attraction.

Eating them makes him happy; however, he can't persuade me.

Try this:

- Scan your own text to find the compound connectors listed above. Circle them.
- Find the verb and the subject of the clauses on both sides of the connectors.
- Highlight your compound sentences with a color that's different from the one you used to mark your simple sentences.

Pattern 3: Complex Sentence

One independent clause PLUS one or more dependent clauses. They can be arranged in these ways: (SV because SV.) or (Because SV, SV.) or (S, because SV, V.)

Connectors are always at the beginning of the dependent clause. They show how the dependent clause is related to the independent clause. This list shows different types of relationships along with the connectors that indicate those relationships:

Cause/Effect: because, since, so that

Comparison/Contrast: although, even though, though, whereas, while

Place/Manner: where, wherever, how, however

Possibility/Conditions: if, whether, unless

Relation: that, which, who, whom

Time: after, as, before, since, when, whenever, while, until

Examples of complex sentences:

He recommends them highly because they taste like chicken when they are hot.

Although chicken always appeals to me, I still feel skeptical about monkey.

Mrs. Potato Head, because she loves us so much, has offered to make her special monkey souffle for us.

She can cook it however she wants.

Although I am curious, I am still skeptical.

Try this:

- Scan your own text to find the complex connectors listed above. Circle them.
- Find the verb and the subject of the clauses that goes with each connector, remembering that the dependent clause might be in between the subject and verb of the independent clause, as shown in the arrangement options above.
- Highlight your complex sentences with a color that's different from the one you used to mark your simple sentences.

Pattern 4: Compound-Complex Sentence

Two or more independent clauses PLUS one or more dependent clauses. They can be arranged in these ways: (SV, and SV because SV.) or (Because SV, SV, but SV.)

Connectors: Connectors listed under Patterns 2 & 3 are used here. Find the connectors, then find the verbs and subjects that are part of each clause.

Mr. Potato Head said that he would share the secret recipe; however, if he does, Mrs. Potato Head will feed him to the piranhas, so we are both safer and happier if I don't eat monkeys or steal recipes.

Try this: Use a fourth color to highlight the compound-complex sentences in your text (the ones with at least two independent and at least one dependent clauses).

Look at the balance of the four different colors. Do you see one color standing out? Do you notice one missing entirely? If so, examine your text carefully while you ask these questions:

- Could you separate some of the more complex sentences?
- Could you combine some of the shorter sentences?
- Can you use different arrangement options for each of the sentence patterns?
- Can you use different connectors if you change the order of the clauses?

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6.4.5: Academic Writing Style, Wordiness and Concision

Word Choice

Read this article about word choice.

What This Handout is About

This handout can help you revise your papers for word-level clarity, eliminate wordiness and avoid clichés, find the words that best express your ideas, and choose words that suit an academic audience.

Introduction

Writing is a series of choices. As you work on a paper, you choose your topic, your approach, your sources, and your thesis; when it is time to write, you have to choose the words you will use to express your ideas and decide how you will arrange those words into sentences and paragraphs. As you revise your draft, you make more choices.

You might ask yourself, "Is this really what I mean?" or "Will readers understand this?" or "Does this sound good?" Finding words that capture your meaning and convey that meaning to your readers is challenging. When your instructors write things like "awkward", vague", or "wordy" on your draft, they are letting you know that they want you to work on word choice. This handout will explain some common issues related to word choice and give you strategies for choosing the best words as you revise your drafts.

As you read further into the handout, keep in mind that it can sometimes take more time to "save" words from your original sentence than to write a brand new sentence to convey the same meaning or idea. Do not be too attached to what you have already written; if you are willing to start a sentence fresh, you may be able to choose words with greater clarity.

Awkward, Vague and Unclear Word Choice

So: you write a paper that makes perfect sense to you, but it comes back with "awkward" scribbled throughout the margins. Why, you wonder, are instructors so fond of terms like "awkward"? Most instructors use terms like this to draw your attention to sentences they had trouble understanding and to encourage you to rewrite those sentences more clearly.

Difficulties with word choice are not the only cause of awkwardness, vagueness, or other problems with clarity. Sometimes a sentence is hard to follow because there is a grammatical problem with it or because of the syntax (the way the words and phrases are put together). Here is an example: "Having finished with studying, the pizza was quickly eaten."

This sentence is not hard to understand because of the words I chose – everybody knows what studying, pizza, and eating are. The problem here is that readers will naturally assume that first bit of the sentence "(Having finished with studying") goes with the next noun that follows it – which, in this case, is "the pizza"! It does not make a lot of sense to imply that the pizza was studying. What I was actually trying to express was something more like this: "Having finished with studying, the students quickly ate the pizza." If you have a sentence that has been marked "awkward", "vague", or "unclear", try to think about it from a reader's point of view – see if you can tell where it changes direction or leaves out important information.

Sometimes, though, problems with clarity *are* a matter of word choice. See if you recognize any of these issues:

- Misused words – the word does not actually mean what the writer thinks it does.

  Example: Cree Indians were a *monotonous* culture until French and British settlers arrived.
  Revision: Cree Indians were a homogenous culture.
- Words with unwanted connotations or meanings.

  Example: I sprayed the ants in their private places.
  Revision: I sprayed the ants in their hiding places.
- Using a pronoun when readers cannot tell whom/what it refers to.

  Example: My cousin Jake hugged my brother Trey, even though he did not like him very much.
  Revision: My cousin Jake hugged my brother Trey, even though Jake does not like Trey very much.
- Jargon or technical terms that make readers work unnecessarily hard. Maybe you need to use some of these words because they are important terms in your field, but do not throw them in just to "sound smart".

  Example: The dialectical interface between neo-Platonists and anti-disestablishment Catholics offers an algorithm for deontological thought.
  Revision: The dialogue between neo-Platonists and certain Catholic thinkers is a model for deontological thought.
- Loaded language. Sometimes we as writers know what we mean by a certain word, but we have not ever spelled that out for readers. We rely too heavily on that word, perhaps repeating it often, without clarifying what we are talking about.

  Example: Society teaches young girls that beauty is their most important quality. In order to prevent eating disorders and other health problems, we must change society.
  Revision: Contemporary American popular media, like magazines and movies, teach young girls that beauty is their most important quality. In order to prevent eating disorders and other health problems, we must change the images and role models girls are offered.

Wordiness

Sometimes the problem is not choosing exactly the right word to express an idea – it is being "wordy", or using words that your reader may regard as "extra" or inefficient. Take a look at the following list for some examples. On the left are some phrases that use three, four, or more words where fewer will do; on the right are some shorter substitutes:

I came to the realization that	I realized that
She is of the opinion that	She thinks that
Concerning the matter of	About
During the course of	During
In the event that	If
In the process of	During, while
Regardless of the fact that	Although
Due to the fact that	Because
In all cases	Always
At that point in time	Then
Prior to	Before

Keep an eye out for wordy constructions in your writing and see if you can replace them with more concise words or phrases.

Clichés

In academic writing, it is a good idea to limit your use of clichés. Clichés are catchy little phrases so frequently used that they have become trite, corny, or annoying. They are problematic because their overuse has diminished their impact and because they require several words where just one would do.

The main way to avoid clichés is first to recognize them and then to create shorter, fresher equivalents. Ask yourself if there is one word that means the same thing as the cliché. If there is not, can you use two or three words to state the idea your own way? Below you will see five common clichés, with some alternatives to their right. As a challenge, see how many alternatives you can create for the final two examples.

Agree to disagree	Disagree
Dead as a doornail	Dead
Last but not least	Last
Pushing the envelope	Approaching the limit
Up in the air	Unknown/undecided

Try these yourself:

Play it by ear	_____?_____
Let the cat out of the bag	_____?_____

Writing for an Academic Audience

When you choose words to express your ideas, you have to think not only about what makes sense and sounds best to you, but what will make sense and sound best to your readers. Thinking about your audience and their expectations will help you make decisions about word choice.

Some writers think that academic audiences expect them to "sound smart" by using big or technical words. But the most important goal of academic writing is not to sound smart – it is to communicate an argument or information clearly and convincingly. It is true that academic writing has a certain style of its own and that you, as a student, are beginning to learn to read and write in that style.

You may find yourself using words and grammatical constructions that you did not use in your high school writing. The danger is that if you consciously set out to "sound smart" and use words or structures that are very unfamiliar to you, you may produce sentences that your readers cannot understand.

When writing for your professors, think simplicity. Using simple words does not indicate simple thoughts. In an academic argument paper, what makes the thesis and argument sophisticated are the connections presented in simple, clear language.

Keep in mind, though, that simple and clear does not necessarily mean casual. Most instructors will not be pleased if your paper looks like an instant message or an email to a friend. It is usually best to avoid slang and colloquialisms. Take a look at this example and ask yourself how a professor would probably respond to it if it were the thesis statement of a paper: "*Moulin Rouge* really bit because the singing sucked and the costume colors were nasty, KWIM?"

Selecting and Using Key Terms

When writing academic papers, it is often helpful to find key terms and use them within your paper as well as in your thesis. This section comments on the crucial difference between repetition and redundancy of terms and works through an example of using key terms in a thesis statement.

Repetition vs. Redundancy

These two phenomena are not necessarily the same. Repetition can be a good thing. Sometimes we have to use our key terms several times within a paper, especially in topic sentences. Sometimes there is simply no substitute for the key terms, and selecting a weaker term as a synonym can do more harm than good. Repeating key terms emphasizes important points and signals to the reader that the argument is still being supported. This kind of repetition can give your paper cohesion and is done by conscious choice.

In contrast, if you find yourself frustrated, tiredly repeating the same nouns, verbs, or adjectives, or making the same point over and over, you are probably being redundant. In this case, you are swimming aimlessly around the same points because you have not decided what your argument really is or because you are truly fatigued and clarity escapes you. Refer to the "Strategies" section below for ideas on revising for redundancy.

Building Clear Thesis Statements

Writing clear sentences is important throughout your writing. For the purposes of this handout, let's focus on the thesis statement – one of the most important sentences in academic argument papers. You can apply these ideas to other sentences in your papers.

A common problem with writing good thesis statements is finding the words that best capture both the important elements and the significance of the essay's argument. It is not always easy to condense several paragraphs or several pages into concise key terms that, when combined in one sentence, can effectively describe the argument.

However, taking the time to find the right words offers writers a significant edge. Concise and appropriate terms will help both the writer and the reader keep track of what the essay will show and how it will show it. Graders, in particular, like to see clearly stated thesis statements.

Example: You have been assigned to write an essay that contrasts the river and shore scenes in Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*. You work on it for several days, producing three versions of your thesis:

Version 1:*There are many important river and shore scenes in Huckleberry Finn.* Version 2:*The contrasting river and shore scenes in Huckleberry Finn suggest a return to nature.* Version 3:*Through its contrasting river and shore scenes, Twain's Huckleberry Finn suggests that to find the true expression of American democratic ideals, one must leave "civilized" society and go back to nature.*

Let's consider the word choice issues in these statements. In Version 1, the word "important" – like "interesting" – is both overused and vague; it suggests that the author has an opinion but gives very little indication about the framework of that opinion. As a result, your reader knows only that you are going to talk about river and shore scenes, but not what you are going to say. Version 2 is an improvement: the words "return to nature" give your reader a better idea where the paper is headed. On the other hand, she still does not know how this return to nature is crucial to your understanding of the novel.

Finally, you come up with Version 3, which is a stronger thesis because it offers a sophisticated argument and the key terms used to make this argument are clear. At least three key terms or concepts are evident: the contrast between river and shore scenes, a return to nature, and American democratic ideals.

By itself, a key term is merely a topic – an element of the argument but not the argument itself. The argument, then, becomes clear to the reader through the way in which you combine key terms.

Strategies for Successful Word Choice

1. Be careful when using words you are unfamiliar with. Look at how they are used in context and check their dictionary definitions.
2. Be careful when using the thesaurus. Each word listed as a synonym for the word you are looking up may have its own unique connotations or shades of meaning. Use a dictionary to be sure the synonym you are considering really fits what you are trying to say.
3. Do not try to impress your reader or sound unduly authoritative. For example, which sentence is clearer to you: "a" or "b"?
   a. *Under the present conditions of our society, marriage practices generally demonstrate a high degree of homogeneity.*
   b. *In our culture, people tend to marry others who are like themselves.* (Longman, p. 452)

4. Before you revise for accurate and strong adjectives, make sure you are first using accurate and strong nouns and verbs. For example, if you were revising the sentence "This is a good book that tells about the Civil War", think about whether "book" and "tells" are as strong as they could be before you worry about "good". (A stronger sentence might read "The novel describes the experiences of a Confederate soldier during the Civil War." "Novel" tells us what kind of book it is, and "describes" tells us more about how the book communicates information.)
5. Try the slash/option technique, which is like brainstorming as you write. When you get stuck, write out two or more choices for a questionable word or a confusing sentence, e.g., "questionable/inaccurate/vague/inappropriate". Pick the word that best indicates your meaning or combine different terms to say what you mean.
6. Look for repetition. When you find it, decide if it is "good" repetition (using key terms that are crucial and helpful to meaning) or "bad" repetition (redundancy or laziness in reusing words).
7. Write your thesis in five different ways. Make five different versions of your thesis sentence. Compose five sentences that express your argument. Try to come up with four alternatives to the thesis sentence you have already written. Find five possible ways to communicate your argument in one sentence to your reader. (We have just used this technique – which of the last five sentences do you prefer?)

   Whenever we write a sentence we make choices. Some are less obvious than others, so that it can often feel like we have written the sentence the only way we know how. By writing out five different versions of your thesis, you can begin to see your range of choices. The final version may be a combination of phrasings and words from all five versions, or the one version that says it best. By literally spelling out some possibilities for yourself, you will be able to make better decisions.
8. Read your paper out loud and at… a… slow… pace. You can do this alone or with a friend, roommate, TA, etc. When read out loud, your written words should make sense to both you and other listeners. If a sentence seems confusing, rewrite it to make the meaning clear.
9. Instead of reading the paper itself, put it down and just talk through your argument as concisely as you can. If your listener quickly and easily comprehends your essay's main point and significance, you should then make sure that your written words are as clear as your oral presentation was. If, on the other hand, your listener keeps asking for clarification, you will need to work on finding the right terms for your essay. If you do this in exchange with a friend or classmate, rest assured that whether you are the talker or the listener, your articulation skills will develop.
10. Have someone not familiar with the issue read the paper and point out words or sentences he/she finds confusing. Do not brush off this reader's confusion by assuming he or she simply does not know enough about the topic. Instead, rewrite the sentences so that your "outsider" reader can follow along at all times.

Questions to Ask Yourself

- Am I sure what each word I use really means? Am I positive, or should I look it up?
- Have I found the best word or just settled for the most obvious, or the easiest, one?
- Am I trying too hard to impress my reader?
- What is the easiest way to write this sentence? (Sometimes it helps to answer this question by trying it out loud. How would you say it to someone?)
- What are the key terms of my argument?
- Can I outline out my argument using only these key terms? What others do I need? Which do I not need?
- Have I created my own terms, or have I simply borrowed what looked like key ones from the assignment? If I have borrowed the terms, can I find better ones in my own vocabulary, the texts, my notes, the dictionary, or the thesaurus to make myself clearer?
- Are my key terms too specific? (Do they cover the entire range of my argument?) Can I think of specific examples from my sources that fall under the key term?
- Are my key terms too vague? (Do they cover more than the range of my argument?)

Works Consulted and Additional Resources

We consulted these works while writing the original version of this handout. This is not a comprehensive list of resources on the handout's topic, and we encourage you to do your own research to find the latest publications on this topic. Please do not use this list as a model for the format of your own reference list, as it may not match the citation style you are using.

The American Heritage Book of English Usage: A Practical and Authoritative Guide to Contemporary English (Boston: Houghton, 1996).

Anson, Chris M. and Robert A. Schwegler. *The Longman Handbook for Writers and Readers, 2nd ed.* (New York: Addison, 2001).

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O'Conner, Patricia C. *Woe is I: The Grammar Phobe's Guide to Better English in Plain English* (New York: Putnam, 1996).

Tarshis, Barry. *How to be Your Own Best Editor The Toolkit for Everyone Who Writes* (New York: Three Rivers P, 1998).

Williams, Joseph. *Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace, 6th ed.* (New York, Addison, 2001).

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6.4.6: Academic Writing Style, Parallel Structure

Use Parallel Structure

Read this article. Why is parallel structure important?

What is Parallel Structure?

Parallel structure is established when words within a sentence are united by consistent use of grammatical forms. This stylistic element is also referred to as parallelism or parallel construction.

Why is it Important to use Parallel Structure?

Lack of parallel structure can disrupt the rhythm of a sentence, leaving it grammatically unbalanced. Proper parallel structure helps to establish balance and flow in a well-constructed sentence; the alignment of related ideas supports readability and clarity.

Let's Look at an Example:

- Not Parallel: The President traveled to several cities meeting voters, to give speeches, and ask for campaign funds.
- Parallel: The President traveled to several cities meeting voters, giving speeches, and asking for campaign funds.

How to Revise a Sentence to Reflect Parallel Structure

1. Find a List Within a Sentence

Look for words or phrases of equal importance that are separated by commas and joined by a conjunction

Not parallel: Dr. Kall challenged his students to initiate their own learning, be creative problem-solvers, and think independently. (In this sentence, Dr. Kall wants his students to do or be three things, but the items in this list are not parallel in structure.)

2. Evaluate the Word Forms Within the List

1. Do the verbs appear as infinitives (*to + verb*), or gerunds (*-ing words*)? As present tense or past tense? (Choose the voice and tense of the verb that is consistent with surrounding sentences.)
2. Do the nouns or pronouns and their modifiers appear in consistent form?

3. Alter the Words in the List to Create Proper Parallel Structure

Parallel: Dr. Kall challenged his students to become self-motivated learners, creative problem-solvers, and independent thinkers. (In this sentence, Dr. Kall wants his students to be three things instead of a combination of being and doing. Additionally, the list follows a pattern since the nouns and adjectives all appear in parallel form.)

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6.4.7: Active vs. Passive Voice, Passive Voice

Passive Voice

Read this article about passive voice. When is passive voice an appropriate choice for writing? When should you use active voice?

What This Handout is About

This handout will help you understand what the passive voice is, why many professors and writing instructors frown upon it, and how you can revise your paper to achieve greater clarity. Some things here may surprise you. We hope this handout will help you to understand the passive voice and allow you to make more informed choices as you write.

Myths

So what is the passive voice? First, let's be clear on what the passive voice is not. Here are some common myths about the passive voice:

1. Use of the passive voice constitutes a grammatical error.

Use of the passive voice is not a grammatical error. It is a stylistic issue that pertains to clarity – that is, there are times when using the passive voice can prevent a reader from understanding what you mean.

2. Any use of "to be" (in any form) constitutes the passive voice.

The passive voice entails more than just using a being verb. Using "to be" can weaken the impact of your writing, but it is occasionally necessary and does not *by itself* constitute the passive voice.

3. The passive voice always avoids the first person; if something is in first person ("I" or "we") it's also in the active voice.

On the contrary, you can very easily use the passive voice in the first person. Here is an example: "I was hit by the dodgeball".

4. You should never use the passive voice.

While the passive voice can weaken the clarity of your writing, there are times when the passive voice is OK and even preferable.

5. I can rely on my grammar checker to catch the passive voice.

See Myth #1. Since the passive voice isn't a grammar error, it's not always caught. Typically, grammar checkers catch only a fraction of passive voice usage.

Do any of these misunderstandings sound familiar? If so, you are not alone. That is why we wrote this handout. It discusses how to recognize the passive voice, when you should avoid it, and when it's OK.

Defining the Passive Voice

A passive construction occurs when you make the object of an action into the subject of a sentence. That is, whoever or whatever is performing the action is not the grammatical subject of the sentence. Take a look at this passive rephrasing of a familiar joke:

Why was the road crossed by the chicken?

Who is doing the action in this sentence? The *chicken* is the one doing the action in this sentence, but the chicken is not in the spot where you would expect the grammatical subject to be. Instead, the road is the grammatical subject. The more familiar phrasing (why did the chicken cross the road?) puts the actor in the subject position, the position of doing something – the chicken (the actor/doer) crosses the road (the object). We use active verbs to represent that "doing", whether it be crossing roads, proposing ideas, making arguments, or invading houses (more on that shortly).

Once you know what to look for, passive constructions are easy to spot. Look for a form of "to be" (*is, are, am , was, were, has been, have been, had been, will be, will have been, being*) followed by a past participle. (The past participle is a form of the verb that typically, but not always, ends in "–ed". Some exceptions to the "–ed" rule are words like "paid" (not "payed") and "driven" (not "drived").

Here's a sure-fire formula for identifying the passive voice:

form of "to be" + past participle = passive voice

For example:

The metropolis has been scorched by the dragon's fiery breath.When her house was invaded, Penelope had to think of ways to delay her remarriage.

Not every sentence that contains a form of "have" or "be" is passive! Forms of the word "have" can do several different things in English. For example, in the sentence "John has to study all afternoon", "has" is not part of a past-tense verb. It's a modal verb, like "must", "can", or "may" – these verbs tell how necessary it is to do something (compare "I have to study" versus "I may study"). And forms of "be" are not always passive, either – "be" can be the main verb of a sentence that describes a state of being, rather than an action. For example, the sentence "John is a good student" is not passive; "is" is simply describing John's state of being. The moral of the story: don't assume that any time you see a form of "have" and a form of "to be" together, you are looking at a passive sentence.

Need more help deciding whether a sentence is passive? Ask yourself whether there is an action going on in the sentence. If so, what is at the front of the sentence? Is it the person or thing that does the action? Or is it the person or thing that has the action done to it? In a passive sentence, the object of the action will be in the subject position at the front of the sentence. As discussed above, the sentence will also contain a form of be and a past participle. If the subject appears at all, it will usually be at the end of the sentence, often in a phrase that starts with "by". Take a look at this example:

The fish was caught by the seagull.

If we ask ourselves whether there is an action, the answer is yes: a fish is being caught. If we ask what is at the front of the sentence, the actor or the object of the action, it's the object: the fish, unfortunately for it, got caught, and there it is at the front of the sentence. The thing that did the catching – the seagull – is at the end, after "by". There is a form of be (was) and a past participle (caught). This sentence is passive.

Let's briefly look at how to change passive constructions into active ones. You can usually just switch the word order, making the actor and subject one by putting the actor up front:

The metropolis has been scorched by the dragon's fiery breath.

becomes

The dragon scorched the metropolis with his fiery breath.When her house was invaded, Penelope had to think of ways to delay her remarriage.

becomes

After suitors invaded her house, Penelope had to think of ways to delay her remarriage.

To repeat, the key to identifying the passive voice is to look for *both* a form of "to be" *and* a past participle, which usually, but not always, ends in "-ed".

Clarity and Meaning

The primary reason why your instructors frown on the passive voice is that they often have to guess what you mean. Sometimes, the confusion is minor. Let's look again at that sentence from a student's paper on Homer's *The Odyssey*:

When her house was invaded, Penelope had to think of ways to delay her remarriage.

Like many passive constructions, this sentence lacks explicit reference to the actor – it does not tell the reader *who* or *what* invaded Penelope's house. The active voice clarifies things:

After suitors invaded Penelope's house, she had to think of ways to fend them off.

Thus many instructors – the readers making sense of your writing – prefer that you use the active voice. They want you to specify who or what is doing the action. Compare the following two examples from an anthropology paper on a Laotian village to see if you agree.

- (passive) *A new system of drug control laws was set up.* (by whom?)
- (active) *The Lao People's Revolutionary Party set up a new system of drug control laws.*

Here's another example, from the same paper, that illustrates the lack of precision that can accompany the passive voice:

Gender training was conducted in six villages, thus affecting social relationships.

And a few pages later:

Plus, marketing links were being established.

In both paragraphs, the writer never specifies the actors for those two actions (*Who* did the gender training? *Who* established marketing links?). Thus the reader has trouble appreciating the dynamics of these social interactions, which depend upon the actors conducting and establishing these things.

The following example, once again from that paper on *The Odyssey*, typifies another instance where an instructor might desire more precision and clarity:

Although Penelope shares heroic characteristics with her husband, Odysseus, she is not considered a hero.

Who does not consider Penelope a hero? It's difficult to tell, but the rest of that paragraph suggests that the *student* does not consider Penelope a hero (the topic of the paper). The reader might also conceivably think that the student is referring to critics, scholars, or modern readers of *The Odyssey*. One might argue that the meaning comes through here – the problem is merely stylistic. Yet style affects how your reader understands your argument and content.

Awkward or unclear style prevents your reader from appreciating the ideas that are so clear to *you* when you write. Thus knowing how your reader might react enables you to make more effective choices when you revise. So after you identify instances of the passive, you should consider whether your use of the passive inhibits clear understanding of what you mean.

Summarizing History or Literary Plots with the Passive Voice: Do not be a Lazy Thinker or Writer!

With the previous section in mind, you should also know that some instructors proclaim that the passive voice signals sloppy, lazy thinking. These instructors argue that writers who overuse the passive voice have not fully thought through what they are discussing and that this makes for imprecise arguments. Consider these sentences from papers on American history:

The working class was marginalized. African Americans were discriminated against. Women were not treated as equals.

Such sentences lack the precision and connection to context and causes that mark rigorous thinking. The reader learns little about the systems, conditions, human decisions, and contradictions that produced these groups' experiences of oppression. And so the reader – the instructor – questions the writer's understanding of these things.

It is especially important to be sure that your thesis statement is clear and precise, so think twice before using the passive voice in your thesis.

In papers where you discuss the work of an author – e.g., a historian or writer of literature – you can also strengthen your writing by not relying on the passive as a crutch when summarizing plots or arguments. Instead of writing:

It is argued that…

or

Tom and Huck are portrayed as…

or

And then the link between X and Y is made, showing that…

you can heighten the level of your analysis by explicitly connecting an author with these statements:

Anderson argues that…

Twain portrays Tom and Huck as…

Ishiguro draws a link between X and Y to show that…

By avoiding passive constructions in these situations, you can demonstrate a more thorough understanding of the material you discuss.

Scientific Writing

All this advice works for papers in the humanities, you might note – but what about technical or scientific papers, including lab reports? Many instructors recommend or even require the passive voice in such writing. The rationale for using the passive voice in scientific writing is that it achieves "an objective tone" – for example, by avoiding the first person. To consider scientific writing, let's break it up into two main types: lab reports and writing about a scientific topic or literature.

Lab reports

Although more and more scientific journals accept or even prefer first-person active voice (e.g., "then we sequenced the human genome"), some of your instructors may want you to remove yourself from your lab report by using the passive voice (e.g., "then the human genome was sequenced" rather than "then we sequenced the human genome"). Such advice particularly applies to the section on Materials and Methods, where a procedure "is followed". (For a fuller discussion on writing lab reports, see our handout on writing lab reports.)

While you might employ the passive voice to retain objectivity, you can still use active constructions in some instances and retain your objective stance. Thus it's useful to keep in mind the sort of active verbs you might use in lab reports. Examples include: support, indicate, suggest, correspond, challenge, yield, show.

Thus instead of writing:

A number of things are indicated by these results.

you could write:

These results indicate a number of things.

or

Further analysis showed/suggested/yielded…

Ultimately, you should find out your instructor's preference regarding your use of the passive in lab reports.

Writing about scientific topics

In some assignments, rather than reporting the results of your own scientific work, you will be writing about the work of other scientists. Such assignments might include literature reviews and research reports on scientific topics. You have two main possible tasks in these assignments: reporting what other people have done (their research or experiments) or indicating general scientific knowledge (the body of knowledge coming out of others' research). Often the two go together. In both instances, you can easily use active constructions even though you might be tempted by the passive – especially if you're used to writing your own lab reports in the passive.

You decide: Which of these two examples is clearer?

- (passive) *Heart disease is considered the leading cause of death in the United States.*
- (active) *Research points to heart disease as the leading cause of death in the United States.*

Alternatively, you could write this sentence with human actors:

Researchers have concluded that heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States.

The last two sentences illustrate a relationship that the first one lacks. The first example does not tell who or what leads us to accept this conclusion about heart disease.

Here's one last example from a report that describes angioplasty. Which sounds better to you?

The balloon is positioned in an area of blockage and is inflated.

or

The surgeon positions the balloon in an area of blockage and inflates it.

You can improve your scientific writing by relying less on the passive. The advice we've given for papers on history or literature equally applies to papers in more "scientific" courses. No matter what field you're writing in, when you use the passive voice, you risk conveying to your reader a sense of uncertainty and imprecision regarding your writing and thinking. The key is to know when your instructor wants you to use the passive voice.

Swindles and Perversions

Before we discuss a few instances when the passive might be preferable, we should mention one of the more political uses of the passive: to hide blame or obscure responsibility. *You* wouldn't do this, but you can learn how to become a critic of those who exhibit what George Orwell included among the "swindles and perversions" of writing. For example:

Mistakes were made. The Exxon Company accepts that a few gallons might have been spilled.

By becoming critically aware of how others use language to shape clarity and meaning, you can learn how better to revise your own work. Keep Orwell's swindles and perversions in mind as you read other writers. Because it's easy to leave the actor out of passive sentences, some people use the passive voice to avoid mentioning who is responsible for certain actions.

So When is it Okay to Use the Passive?

Sometimes the passive voice is the best choice. Here are a few instances when the passive voice is quite useful:

1. To emphasize an object. Take a look at this example:

100 votes are required to pass the bill.

This passive sentence emphasizes the number of votes required. An active version of the sentence ("The bill requires 100 votes to pass") would put the emphasis on the bill, which may be less dramatic.

2. To de-emphasize an unknown subject/actor. Consider this example:

Over 120 different contaminants have been dumped into the river.

If you do not know who the actor is – in this case, if you don't actually know who dumped all of those contaminants in the river – then you may need to write in the passive. But remember, if you do know the actor, and if the clarity and meaning of your writing would benefit from indicating him/her/it/them, then use an active construction. Yet consider the third case.

3. If your readers don't need to know who's responsible for the action.

Here's where your choice can be difficult; some instances are less clear than others. Try to put yourself in your reader's position to anticipate how he/she will react to the way you have phrased your thoughts. Here are two examples:

- (passive) *Baby Sophia was delivered at 3:30 a.m. yesterday.*
- (active) *Dr. Susan Jones delivered baby Sophia at 3:30 a.m. yesterday.*

The first sentence might be more appropriate in a birth announcement sent to family and friends – they are not likely to know Dr. Jones and are much more interested in the "object"(the baby) than in the actor (the doctor). A hospital report of yesterday's events might be more likely to focus on Dr. Jones' role.

Summary of Strategies

Identify

- Look for the passive voice: "to be" + a past participle (usually, but not always, ending in "–ed")
- If you don't see both components, move on.
- Does the sentence describe an action? If so, where is the actor? Is he/she/it in the grammatical subject position (at the front of the sentence) or in the object position (at the end of the sentence, or missing entirely)?
- Does the sentence end with "by…"? Many passive sentences include the actor at the end of the sentence in a "by" phrase, like "The ball was hit by the player" or "The shoe was chewed up by the dog". "By" by itself isn't a conclusive sign of the passive voice, but it can prompt you to take a closer look.

Evaluate

- Is the doer/actor indicated? Should you indicate him/her/it?
- Does it really matter who's responsible for the action?
- Would your reader ask you to clarify a sentence because of an issue related to your use of the passive?
- Do you use a passive construction in your thesis statement?
- Do you use the passive as a crutch in summarizing a plot or history, or in describing something?
- Do you want to emphasize the object?

Revise

- If you decide that your sentence would be clearer in the active voice, switch the sentence around to make the subject and actor one. Put the actor (the one doing the action of the sentence) in front of the verb.

Toward Active Thinking and Writing

We encourage you to keep these tips in mind as you revise. While you may be able to employ this advice as you write your first draft, that's not necessarily always possible. In writing, clarity often comes when you revise, not on your first try. Don't worry about

the passive if that stress inhibits you in getting your ideas down on paper. But do look for it when you revise. Actively make choices about its proper place in your writing. There is nothing grammatically or otherwise "wrong" about using the passive voice. The key is to recognize when you should, when you shouldn't, and when your instructor just doesn't want you to. These choices are yours. We hope this handout helps you to make them.

Works Consulted and Suggested Reading

We consulted these works while writing the original version of this handout. This is not a comprehensive list of resources on the handout's topic, and we encourage you to do your own research to find the latest publications on this topic. Please do not use this list as a model for the format of your own reference list, as it may not match the citation style you are using.

Anson, Chris M. and Robert A. Schwegler. *The Longman Handbook for Writers and Readers*. Second edition. (2000). Pages 118–120; 270–272; 262–64; 369–71; 448.

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Rosen, Leonard J. and Laurence Behrens. *The Allyn & Bacon Handbook*. Third edition. (1997). Pages 240–243; 326–327; 340–344.

Strunk and White. *The Elements of Style*. Third edition. (1979). Pages 18–19.

Trimble, John R. *Writing with Style*. Upper Saddle River, N.J. : Prentice Hall. (2000). Pages 55–58.

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6.4.8: Active vs. Passive Voice, Avoid Unnecessary "to be" Verbs

Avoid Unnecessary "to be" Verbs

Read this article. How can using stronger verbs in your writing keep your audience interested?

Why Eliminate Unnecessary "to be" Verbs?

When a writer consistently uses unnecessary "to be" verbs, the writing can sound dull and lifeless. Flat, wordy writing may cause the reader to lose interest. As a writer learns to substitute stronger, more expressive verbs for "to be" verbs, the enlivened writing is likely to hold the reader's interest more effectively.

How to Revise Your Sentences to Eliminate Unnecessary "to be" Verbs

- Circle or highlight forms of "to be" verbs in your sentences and paragraphs: *is, am, was, were, being, been*
- Look for the "doer" in your sentences: Who is performing the action?
- Make the "doer" the subject of your sentence.
- Substitute more expressive words for the "to be" verbs to enliven the action performed by the "doer".
- Avoid beginning sentences with *It is, There is, or There are.*
- Avoid the use of present progressive verb forms such as *is happening, is going, and is deciding.*

Let's Look at Some Examples:

Weak: He is a student who is intelligent and confident. He is always completing assignments on time.

Stronger: The intelligent, confident student always completes assignments on time.

Weak: It was difficult to get out of bed at 6:00 a.m. each morning.

Stronger: The student faced the difficulty and got out of bed at 6:00 a.m. each morning.

Weak: Bill is going to start bringing all of his books to the group session for studying.

Stronger: Bill decided to bring all of his books to the group study session.

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6.4.9: Word Use, What Word Would Be More Appropriate Here?

What Word Would Be More Appropriate Here?

Read this article to learn how to improve your diction (that is, your word choice) in your writing. Choosing appropriate words in your writing gives your readers a sense of harmony and makes it easier for them to understand your ideas.

Why is it Important to Choose Appropriate Words?

The words writers choose are shaped (and sometimes limited) by the rhetorical situation – the audience, purpose, context, genre, and media of a piece of writing.

Skillful writers choose words that create a pleasing sense of harmony between the boundaries set by the rhetorical situation and their own style of writing. When writers choose words that fall outside those defining factors, or mistakenly choose wrong words, they are faced with the task of finding appropriate words to restore satisfying harmony.

What Reference Works Can Make Word Choice Easier?

- Dictionary (electronic or paper): Each entry provides the word's definition(s) and an explanation of the word's usage. Careful consideration of a word's meaning (its semantic connotation) and its context should guide decisions about the word's appropriateness.
- Thesaurus (electronic or paper): Each entry provides a list of synonyms – words that have similar meanings. When a word does not fit the context as well as it should, but the general meaning should be preserved, a thesaurus can provide a synonym with a shade of meaning that is more suitable.

How to Replace Inappropriate with Appropriate Words

- Determine which word or words are not appropriate, such as those that:
  - are not in harmony with the rhetorical situation;
  - interfere with the meaning of the sentence;
  - may offend the reader;
  - have been chosen incorrectly following a spell check.
- Evaluate the factor(s) that makes the word(s) inappropriate.
- If a slight change of meaning is needed, use a synonym that better suits the context.
- If the wrong word has been chosen, use the language, message, and tone of the surrounding sentences to guide the choice of a completely new word.
- Reread the sentence or passage in which a word or words have been replaced to check for proper meaning and word flow.
- Instructors, peers, writing center consultants, or librarians may be able to provide guidance with appropriate word choice, and they can often provide assistance with the use of suitable reference works.

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6.4.10: Reviewing, Revising, and Editing Drafts, Editing

Editing

Editing and revising are very different practices. When we revise we look at the big issues in our writing (often referred to as "global concerns"). These may include the strength of the thesis statement, the validity and relevance of the supporting evidence, and the logical structure of the organization. Editing looks at lower-level concerns, such as sentence clarity, grammar, punctuation, and word use. Editing is the final step in the writing process before publication.

This article gives tips on proofreading and editing your paper to enhance your style of writing, make your writing more concise, and ensure that you are using proper punctuation. How are revision, proofreading, and editing similar? How are they different?

Make your prose more precise, economical, and jargon-free by knowing how and when to edit.

Editing is an important part of the writing process. Once your document is fairly well-developed, you need to edit. While your instructors may prize thoughtful argument, rich description, and thorough research, they are also likely to value careful editing.

Editing involves making "local" changes – that is, changes at the sentence and word level as opposed to "global" or large-scale changes, such as deleting the first three pages of a four-page document. Editors typically reread their texts word-by-word and sentence-by-sentence, while considering stylistic principles as well as grammatical, punctuation, and mechanical errors. When editing, writers trim down overblown phrases and replace inexact words, among other things.

Proofreading

When we proofread a document, we are looking for small errors such as misspellings or accidental omissions.

Have you ever sent off an email message or submitted a school paper only to later discover that it was full of typographical errors? How could you have missed all of these errors?

The answer seems to have something to do with how our brains work. Our brains recognize patterns. This is part of the reason why people who read frequently tend to read faster than infrequent readers: their brains more speedily recognize and process patterns of words on the page.

Texts that we write ourselves are the texts that we can read fastest of all, because our brains are already deeply familiar with the patterns of our words.

But what helps us as readers can hurt us as writers. When we read our own work, our brains tend to quickly see the patterns that we put on the page rather than the individual words. We see what we *meant* to write, and not necessarily what we actually wrote.

To our readers, however, who are not as familiar with our words, the errors are more apparent – and they detract from our credibility as authors. To proofread effectively, we need to distance ourselves from the text and see it as our readers will see it.

Toward this end, consider the following proofreading strategies:

- Allow as much time as possible between when you complete a document and when you proofread it. For example, if you finish writing in the evening, wait until morning to proofread.
- Print out the document before attempting to proofread it. If this isn't an option, try enlarging the text size on your screen. This larger view will make errors somewhat easier to see.
- Read the document aloud. Read slowly. Make sure you are reading the text itself rather than reading from memory.
- Read the document backwards – not word-by-word, but sentence-by-sentence. Again, read slowly.
- Ask a friend or family member to read your paper out loud to you while you silently read along on a second copy of the paper. (This two-reader method is used by many professional proofreaders.)
- Run your paper through a text-to-speech converter, and have a computer read it to you. The computer voice defamiliarizes your words and sets a steady pace that prevents you from skimming over sections of text that you know well.

Make Your Sentences Pack a Punch. Eliminate Unnecessary "to be" Verbs.

In our daily speech and in rough drafts, we tend to rely heavily on the various forms of the verb *to be*.

The verb *to be* is unlike any other verb because it is inert – that is, it doesn't show any action. For example, in the sentence "The researcher is a professor at Duke" the verb is merely connects the subject with what grammarians call the subject complement. We could just as easily say "The professor at Duke is a researcher" without changing the meaning of the sentence.

It would be nearly impossible to draft documents without some linking verbs. Because you diminish the vigor of a document by using an excessive number of *is* and *are* constructions, you should try to limit their frequency. Finally, note that the progressive form of a linking verb – which involves using to be as an auxiliary verb with a participle – is much more acceptable. The advantage of the progressive form is that it illustrates action progressing over time, enabling us to shape concise sentences that indicate something is currently happening: "The coauthors are disagreeing about the order in which their names should be listed when the book is published".

It is and *there are* constructions often lead to sluggish, passive sentences, so you should limit their frequency, as illustrated below.

Sample: While it is crucial for us to speak out on behalf of education, it is important that we do so in a manner consistent with statute and administrative rules.

Revision: We need to speak out on behalf of education while observing statute and administrative rules.

Sample: According to the certification theory, there is no intrinsic relation between creativity and IQ.

Revision: Certification theory posits no intrinsic relation between creativity and IQ.

However, some *it is* and *there are* constructions allow you to be more succinct and avoid repetition of a subject rather than placing the true subject at the beginning of the sentence, so you should not attempt to eliminate *all* such constructions.

Eliminate choppy writing by avoiding unnecessary prepositions.

When used in moderation, prepositions are invaluable: they work as connecting words, linking the object of the preposition to a word that appears earlier in the sentence. Like linking verbs, however, prepositions do not convey action, nor do they subordinate one thought to another. Instead, they merely link chunks of meaning that readers must gather together in order to understand the sentence.

Prepositional Phrases Create a Choppy Style

When used excessively, as demonstrated by the following example, prepositional phrases create a choppy, list-like style:

Sample: The major objective of this study was to determine the perceived effects of the union on monetary and on non-monetary aspects of compensation over the period in which respondents to the survey had been union members.

Because this sentence occurs in the conclusion of a five-page published essay, a careful editor should probably have eliminated this sentence altogether. Let's face it: If the readers still do not have the point after five pages, there is little hope for them. Nevertheless, the editor and author could have improved the sentence by reducing the number of prepositions:

Sample: This study examines how the union affects monetary and non-monetary aspects of compensation.

To help identify and eliminate prepositions, isolate them by putting slashes between prepositional phrases and other basic sentence parts as illustrated here:

/Furthermore,/ /in response/ /to the increased pressure/ /to publish/ /in academia/ /the past decade/ /and the growing complexity/ /of the academic areas and research tools/, /one should expect/ /to find/ /increased emphasis/ /on cost-cutting techniques/ //by academic writers/. /An increase/ /in cost/ /can probably be observed/ /by investigating/ /the changing trends/ /in the multiple authorship/ /of articles/ /over time./

Edit for Economy

Be concise. Once you have written a solid draft, a document that has been well researched, take a step back and question whether or not you can delete half of the words. In a world where billions of instant messages and emails are sent daily, brevity is a virtue. People love conciseness. They respect writers and leaders who can explain difficult matters simply.

Tips for Pruning Your Sentences

The following paragraph hurts the eyes and ears of a successful writer:

> *"Writing that is redundant and states the obvious and says the same thing over and over again is irritating for readers who want writers to get to the point right away. On the other hand, as I am sure you can understand, it is equally important for writers to avoid confusion when they write and to put down as much information – that is, as many words – as the reader needs in order to understand what the writer means when he or she says what he or she says. Also, of course, when you are writing, it is important for you to remember that readers are reading your words and that you need to be somewhat entertaining – even when the subject is technical when conveying information, so that your readers will keep reading and not go off and do something else like play ice hockey."*

Writers abhor wordiness. All of the empty phrases in the above can be translated into one sentence:

"Balance conciseness with the reader's need for information and voice"

No matter how much you appreciate the sounds of the words you have used, editing for economy may mean cutting the length of your document in half! By using the editing strategies already discussed, you have begun to chip away needless abstractions, unnecessary jargon, awkward passive constructions, weak verbs, tangled sentence patterns, unnecessary nouns, and strings of prepositional phrases.

Yet by evaluating the content in light of your audience and the tone that you hope to establish, you can still find ways to eliminate unnecessary transitions, definitions, references, and examples. In your search for precision and persuasive appeal, you should also delete unnecessary repetitions – redundant adjectives, repeated phrases, and synonyms. Remember, you add clarity and grace by presenting an idea simply. Cutting away unnecessary "deadwood" can eliminate much that interferes with communication.

Semicolons

Use a semicolon to join two sentences or to punctuate a series or list of appositives that already includes commas.

The semicolon offers a "higher" form of punctuation than the comma or dash. Unlike commas or dashes, the semicolon can correctly be used to separate sentences. If readers tend to pause for a half-second when they come to a comma, they pause for three-quarters of a second when they reach a semicolon. Writers use semicolons two major ways.

Use a Semicolon to Join Two Sentences

You can show that ideas are closely related by using a semicolon rather than a period between them.

- The secretary's fingers burned across the typewriter; the financial statements would be picked up by the client in one hour.
- The question, though, is not economics; it is professional objectivity.
- Breast cancer used to be the biggest killer for women; now it is lung cancer.

Use a Semicolon to Punctuate a Series or List of Appositives That Already Includes Commas

When elements in a series require internal commas to ensure clarity, then semicolons must be used to separate those elements:

- A perfect vacation would be long, relaxing, and cheap; include personable, sweet, flexible people; and make everything else seem trivial.
- The delegates were from Sacramento, California; Jacksonville, Florida; Providence, Rhode Island; and Ann Arbor, Michigan.
- A good proofreader must have good grammar, punctuation, and spelling skills; must like to read; and must have patience.

Note, however, that you are wise to avoid using unnecessary semicolons. Experienced writers and readers would prefer the second sentence because it avoids self-conscious punctuation.

- He was dressed in white pants; a white, Mexican wedding shirt; and sandals.
- He was dressed in a white, Mexican wedding shirt, white pants, and sandals.

Dashes and Parentheses

Create emphasis and define terms by interrupting the flow of a sentence by using a dash; know when the dash must be used as opposed to the comma.

Some stylists view the dash with great suspicion – the sort of suspicion that a man in the 1990s who wears a plaid leisure suit to work would arouse. Some people erroneously believe that the dash is acceptable only in informal discourse. However, the dash can provide you with subtle ways to repeat modifiers and dramatic ways to emphasize your point.

Use a Dash after a Series or List of Appositives

When you introduce a long series or list of appositives before the subject and verb, you are placing high demands on the reader's short-term memory. Therefore, use this pattern rarely and only for emphasis. This pattern is particularly appropriate in conclusions, when you are bringing together the major threads of your discussion or argument. Finally, you should place a summary word after the dash and preferably before the subject of the sentence, as indicated by the following examples. The most common summary words that writers use are *all*, *those*, *this*, *each*, *what*, *none*, *such*, *these*.

- Jealousy, lust, hate, greed – these are the raw emotions we will explore.
- Lying, stealing, cheating, committing adultery – which is the greatest sin?
- To struggle with meaning, to edit, to combine sentences – these activities are well known to the struggling writer.
- Wining and dining his friends, stroking people's egos, maintaining a good appearance, and spending money – all were part of his scheme to gain influence.

Use Dashes When You Wish to Emphasize a Parenthetical Element

Commas are usually sufficient punctuation to set off parenthetical elements. In some instances, however, you can use a dash instead, especially if you want to make the insertion more noticeable:

- The building next to ours – the one with the all-cedar exterior – was engulfed in flames.

When you want to whisper rather than shout, you can place the modifiers inside parentheses:

- The secret I have to tell you (the one I have been hinting about) will surprise you.

Use Dashes to Embed a Series or List of Appositives

A single appositive or modifier can easily be set off from the rest of the sentence in commas, but you must use dashes when you insert a series of appositives or modifiers. After all, how else will the reader know when the series is over?

- The essential qualities of an effective writer – discipline, effort, inspiration – can be learned by regular writing.
- With the help of her assistant – a high-speed personal computer – she produced a delightful letter.

Use Dashes to Set off an Emphatic Repetition

You can emphasize an important point by placing a dash or comma at the end of the sentence and then repeating a keyword or phrase:

- Hal is a computer, the ultimate computer.
- Mrs. Leavitt is a gambler, a compulsive gambler.
- He was disturbed by the warning – the warning that everyone else ignored.
- All rapists should be severely punished – punished in a way they will never forget.

Colons

Use the colon when the first sentence anticipates the second sentence or phrase, thereby creating an emphatic tone.

The colon provides a dramatic and somewhat underutilized way to bring a little spark to your writing. Beyond normal business correspondence (Dear Sir or Madam:), you can use the colon before quotations, formal statements and explanations. The colon enables you to highlight a semantic relationship – that is, a movement from a general statement to a specific clarification. The colon also provides a dramatic way to tease the reader's curiosity:

- As a modern ordeal by torture, litigation excels: It is exorbitantly expensive, agonizingly slow, and exquisitely designed to avoid any resemblance to fairness or justice.

You can also use the colon before an instruction or example:

- An intelligent writer knows how to polish documents: revise the document countless times.

Although usage does differ, most stylists agree that you should not capitalize the first letter after the colon unless the colon is introducing a quotation or formal statement:

- You will be surprised by what his former employees wrote in the character report: "His attitude toward his new associates was rude and pretentious". This sentence can easily be revised.

Note that a colon must always follow an independent clause. You should never place a colon between a verb and its direct object. Incorrect: Our choices are: rescind our offer, go ahead with our plans, try to renegotiate the deal.

- We have three choices: a, b, c.
- Our choices are the following: a, b, c.

Because the colon works as the equivalent to for example or such as, it would be redundant and incorrect to write

- We have a number of options, such as: a, b, c.

Apostrophes

Use an apostrophe to denote ownership to a singular or plural noun and indefinite pronoun by adding an -'s if the word does not end in –s.

Of all forms of punctuation, the apostrophe appears to be in greatest peril of extinction. For proof that the apostrophe should be placed on an endangered species list in some grammarian's office, one needs only to consult the popular press or a sample of student themes.

However, because of its ability to denote ownership in a concise way (by avoiding the use of a preposition), the apostrophe plays an important role in the English language. Despite the frequency of its misuse, the apostrophe is a fairly simple form of punctuation to master. You can denote ownership to a singular or plural noun and indefinite pronoun by adding an –'s if the word does not end in –s:

- They worked on Susan's computer.
- The children's toys are clustering the house again.
- You expect me to do a week's worth of typing in two days.
- The people's choice was Bill Clinton.
- When it is someone else's turn to have his or her writing critiqued by the group, remember to be conscientious.

When a singular noun ends in –s, traditional grammarians recommend adding an –'s:

- She loves Keats's poems.
- The business's direct-mailing campaign worked wonders.
- John Adams's letters illustrate his reflective spirit.

However, this usage can be cumbersome. Consequently, the following usage is also correct:

- John Keats' conscience and life spirit energize his poems.
- John Adams' ideas are worth examination.

When a plural noun ends in –s, you only need to add an apostrophe:

- The judge confiscated the drivers' licenses.
- She won two months' free groceries.
- The writers' guild meets Monday.

With compound subjects, when you wish to denote individual ownership, you should add an –'s to each noun:

- Dr. Wilson's and Mr. Speinberg's lawsuits were caused by poor communication.

Or, you can demonstrate joint ownership by placing the –'s after the second subject:

- Pat and Joe's new car is hot!
- This is my father-in-law and mother-in-law's office.

Finally, always use an apostrophe when you form a contraction. The apostrophe is positioned where letters are dropped:

it is	it's
they are	they're
you are	you're
who is	who's
can not	can't
she will	she'll
were not	weren't

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6.4.11: Word Use, Use Language That Is Sensitive to Your Audience

Use Language That Is Sensitive to Your Audience

Review this article. Since you want your writing to be inclusive, it is important to use language that is sensitive to your audience.

Why Is It Important to Use Language that is Sensitive to the Target Audience?

When writers use language that implies a biased or judgmental attitude, the audience may take offense and be less apt to listen to the writer's argument. Language that is insensitive to gender, ethnicity, or disability should be avoided.

Just as writers hope their audience will be willing to respect their point of view, they need to respect the diversity of a broad base of readers. Language that is inclusive and fair may contribute to the credibility of the writer and uphold the audience's sense of dignity and self-worth.

What Revisions will help to Promote Sensitive, Fair Language?

- Use gender-inclusive language:
  - ***they*** *or* ***he or she*** instead of *he*
  - ***humankind*** instead of *mankind*
  - ***garbage collector*** instead of *garbage man*
  - ***server*** instead of *waitress*
- Use correct or accepted racial and ethnic terms:
  - ***African American*** instead of *colored* or *Negro*
  - ***Asian*** instead of *Oriental*
  - ***American Indian*** or ***Native American*** instead of *Indian*
  - ***Native Alaskan*** or ***Inuit*** instead of *Eskimo*
  - ***Hispanic*** instead of *Spanish*
  - ***Latino*** instead of *Mexican*
- Use language that respects people for who they are or recognizes a specific ailment:
  - ***persons with disabilities*** instead of *handicapped*, *challenged*, *disabled*, or *retarded*
  - ***visually impaired*** instead of *blind*
  - ***persons with hearing loss*** instead of *deaf individuals*
  - ***mentally ill*** instead of *crazy*, *moron*, or *loony*
  - ***those with arthritis*** instead of *arthritis sufferers*
  - ***people with diabetes*** instead of *diabetes patients*

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6.4.12: Reviewing, Revising, and Editing Drafts, Revising Drafts

Revising Drafts

Revision is an important stage of the writing process. You may find yourself revising multiple times throughout the writing process. Writing is a recursive process, and revising allows us the opportunity to go back and change things we already wrote, as necessary. How is revision different from proofreading?

What This Handout is About

This handout will motivate you to revise your drafts and give you strategies to revise effectively.

What Does it Mean to Revise?

Revision literally means to "see again", to look at something from a fresh, critical perspective. It is an ongoing process of rethinking the paper: reconsidering your arguments, reviewing your evidence, refining your purpose, reorganizing your presentation, reviving stale prose.

But I thought revision was just fixing the commas and spelling...

Nope. That is called proofreading. It is an important step before turning your paper in, but if your ideas are predictable, your thesis is weak, and your organization is a mess, then proofreading will just be putting a band-aid on a bullet wound. When you finish revising, that is the time to proofread.

How about if I just reword things: Look for better words, avoid repetition, etc.? Is that revision?

Well, that is a part of revision called editing. It is another important final step in polishing your work. But if you have not thought through your ideas, then rephrasing them will not make any difference.

Why is Revision Important?

Writing is a process of discovery, and you do not always produce your best stuff when you first get started. So revision is a chance for you to look critically at what you have written to see

- If it is really worth saying,
- If it says what you wanted to say, and
- If a reader will understand what you are saying.

The Process

What steps should I use when I begin to revise?

Here are several things to do. But do not try them all at one time. Instead, focus on two or three main areas during each revision session.

- Wait awhile after you have finished a draft before looking at it again: The Roman poet Horace thought one should wait nine years, but that is a bit much. A day – a few hours even – will work. When you do return to the draft, be honest with yourself, and do not be lazy. Ask yourself what you really think about the paper.
- As *The Scott, Foresman Handbook for Writers* puts it, "THINK BIG, do not tinker" (61). At this stage, you should be concerned with the large issues in the paper, not the commas.
- Check the focus of the paper: Is it appropriate to the assignment? Is the topic too big or too narrow? Do you stay on track through the entire paper?
- Think honestly about your thesis: Do you still agree with it? Should it be modified in light of something you discovered as you wrote the paper? Does it make a sophisticated, provocative point, or does it just say what anyone could say if given the same topic? Does your thesis generalize instead of taking a specific position? Should it be changed altogether?
- Think about your purpose in writing: Does your introduction state clearly what you intend to do? Will your aims be clear to your readers?

What are some other steps I should consider in later stages of the revision process?

- Examine the balance within your paper: Are some parts out of proportion with others? Do you spend too much time on one trivial point and neglect a more important point? Do you give lots of detail early on and then let your points get thinner by the end?
- Check that you have kept your promises to your readers: Does your paper follow through on what the thesis promises? Do you support all the claims in your thesis? Are the tone and formality of the language appropriate for your audience?
- Check the organization: Does your paper follow a pattern that makes sense? Do the transitions move your readers smoothly from one point to the next? Do the topic sentences of each paragraph appropriately introduce what that paragraph is about? Would your paper work better if you moved some things around?
- Check your information: Are all your facts accurate? Are any of your statements misleading? Have you provided enough detail to satisfy readers' curiosity? Have you cited all your information appropriately?
- Check your conclusion: Does the last paragraph tie the paper together smoothly and end on a stimulating note, or does the paper just die a slow, redundant, lame, or abrupt death?

Whoa! I thought I could just revise in a few minutes...

Sorry. You may want to start working on your next paper early so that you have plenty of time for revising. That way you can give yourself some time to come back to look at what you've written with a fresh pair of eyes. It is amazing how something that sounded brilliant the moment you wrote it can prove to be less-than-brilliant when you give it a chance to incubate.

But I do not want to rewrite my whole paper!

Revision does not necessarily mean rewriting the whole paper. Sometimes it means revising the thesis to match what you Have discovered while writing. Sometimes it means coming up with stronger arguments to defend your position, or coming up with more vivid examples to illustrate your points. Sometimes it means shifting the order of your paper to help the reader follow your argument, or to change the emphasis of your points. Sometimes it means adding or deleting material for balance or emphasis. And then, sadly, sometimes revision does mean trashing your first draft and starting from scratch. Better that than having the teacher trash your final paper.

But I work so hard on what I write that I cannot afford to throw any of it away...

If you want to be a polished writer, then you will eventually find out that you cannot afford NOT to throw stuff away. As writers, we often produce lots of material that needs to be tossed. The idea or metaphor or paragraph that I think is most wonderful and brilliant is often the very thing that confuses my reader or ruins the tone of my piece or interrupts the flow of my argument. Writers must be willing to sacrifice their favorite bits of writing for the good of the piece as a whole. In order to trim things down, though, you first have to have plenty of material on the page. One trick is not to hinder yourself while you are composing the first draft because the more you produce, the more you will have to work with when cutting time comes.

But sometimes I revise as I go...

That is OK. Since writing is a circular process, you do not do everything in some specific order. Sometimes you write something and then tinker with it before moving on. But be warned: there are two potential problems with revising as you go. One is that if you revise only as you go along, you never get to think of the big picture. The key is still to give yourself enough time to look at the essay as a whole once you have finished. Another danger to revising as you go is that you may short-circuit your creativity. If you spend too much time tinkering with what is on the page, you may lose some of what has not yet made it to the page. Here is a tip: Do not proofread as you go. You may waste time correcting the commas in a sentence that may end up being cut anyway.

How do I go about the process of revising? Any tips?

- Work from a printed copy; it is easier on the eyes. Also, problems that seem invisible on the screen somehow tend to show up better on paper.
- Another tip is to read the paper out loud. That is one way to see how well things flow.
- Remember all those questions listed above? Do not try to tackle all of them in one draft. Pick a few "agendas" for each draft so that you will not go mad trying to see, all at once, if you have done everything.
- Ask lots of questions and do not flinch from answering them truthfully. For example, ask if there are opposing viewpoints that you have not considered yet.

Concerns

Whenever I revise, I just make things worse. I do my best work without revising...

That is a common misconception that sometimes arises from fear, sometimes from laziness. The truth is, though, that except for those rare moments of inspiration or genius when the perfect ideas expressed in the perfect words in the perfect order flow gracefully and effortlessly from the mind, all experienced writers revise their work. I wrote six drafts of this handout. Hemingway rewrote the last page of *A Farewell to Arms* 39 times. If you are still not convinced, re-read some of your old papers. How do they sound now? What would you revise if you had a chance?

What can get in the way of good revision strategies?

Do not fall in love with what you have written. If you do, you will be hesitant to change it even if you know it is not great. Start out with a working thesis, and do not act like you are married to it. Instead, act like you are dating it, seeing if you are compatible, finding out what it is like from day-to-day. If a better thesis comes along, let go of the old one. Also, do not think of revision as just rewording. It is a chance to look at the entire paper, not just isolated words and sentences.

What happens if I find that I no longer agree with my own point?

If you take revision seriously, sometimes the process will lead you to questions you cannot answer, objections or exceptions to your thesis, cases that do not fit, loose ends or contradictions that just will not go away. If this happens (and it will if you think long enough), then you have several choices.

You could choose to ignore the loose ends and hope your reader does not notice them, but that is risky. You could change your thesis completely to fit your new understanding of the issue, or you could adjust your thesis slightly to accommodate the new ideas. Or you could simply acknowledge the contradictions and show why your main point still holds up in spite of them. Most readers know there are no easy answers, so they may be annoyed if you give them a thesis and try to claim that it is always true with no exceptions no matter what.

How do I get really good at revising?

The same way you get really good at golf, piano, or a video game – do it often. Take revision seriously, be disciplined, and set high standards for yourself. Here are three more tips:

- The more you produce, the more you can cut.
- The more you can imagine yourself as a reader looking at this for the first time, the easier it will be to spot potential problems.
- The more you demand of yourself in terms of clarity and elegance, the more clear and elegant your writing will be.

How do I revise at the sentence level?

Read your paper out loud, sentence by sentence, and follow Peter Elbow's advice: "Look for places where you stumble or get lost in the middle of a sentence. These are obvious awkwardnesses that need fixing. Look for places where you get distracted or even bored – where you cannot concentrate. These are places where you probably lost focus or concentration in your writing.

Cut through the extra words or vagueness or digression; get back to the energy. Listen even for the tiniest jerk or stumble in your reading, the tiniest lessening of your energy or focus or concentration as you say the words . . . A sentence should be alive" (*Writing with Power* 135).

Practical advice for ensuring that your sentences are alive:

- Use forceful verbs – replace long verb phrases with a more specific verb. For example, replace "She argues for the importance of the idea" with "She defends the idea".
- Look for places where you have used the same word or phrase twice or more in consecutive sentences and look for alternative ways to say the same thing OR for ways to combine the two sentences.
- Cut as many prepositional phrases as you can without losing your meaning. For example, the following sentence, "There are several examples of the issue of integrity in Huck Finn", would be much better this way, "Huck Finn repeatedly addresses the issue of integrity".
- Check your sentence variety. If more than two sentences in a row start the same way (with a subject followed by a verb, for example), then try using a different sentence pattern.
- Aim for precision in word choice. Do not settle for the best word you can think of at the moment – use a thesaurus (along with a dictionary) to search for the word that says exactly what you want to say.

- Look for sentences that start with "It is" or "There are" and see if you can revise them to be more active and engaging.

Works Consulted and Additional Resources

We consulted these works while writing the original version of this handout. This is not a comprehensive list of resources on the handout's topic, and we encourage you to do your own research to find the latest publications on this topic. Please do not use this list as a model for the format of your own reference list, as it may not match the citation style you are using.

Anson, Chris and Robert Schwegler. *The Longman Handbook for Writers and Readers*, 2nd edition. New York: Longman, 2000. See part II, "Drafting and Revising".

Elbow, Peter. *Writing With Power*. New York: Oxford UP, 1998. See especially Part III, "More Ways to Revise".

Hairston, Maxine, John Ruszkiewicz and Christy Friend. *The Scott, Foresman Handbook for Writers*. 6th ed. New York: Longman, 2002. See Chapter 5, "How do you Revise, Edit, and Proofread?

Lanham, Richard. *Revising Prose*. 4th ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000. This book is primarily concerned with stylistic revisions, making your prose forceful and elegant.

Lunsford, Andrea and Robert Connors. *The New St. Martin's Handbook, 5th edition*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2003. See Chapter 4, "Revising and Editing".

Zinsser, William. *On Writing Well*. 6th ed. New York: HarperCollins, 2001. See Chapter 17, "Rewriting and Word Processing".

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6.4.13: Reviewing, Revising, and Editing Drafts, Reorganizing Drafts

Reorganizing Drafts

Read this article to learn strategies for better organizing the ideas in your essay, and how outlining can be helpful before, during, and after you write.

What This Handout is About

This handout gives you strategies to help you rethink your draft's organization.

Why Reorganize?

Many students wonder whether their draft "flows" – that is, whether the ideas are connected in a logical order to make a compelling argument. If you are worried about flow, chances are you are sensing some problems with your organizational scheme. It is time to reorganize!

Prerequisites

Two prerequisites will help you reorganize your draft. One is vital: a working thesis statement to give you a focus for organizing. The other thing you might want to check before you begin is your paragraph development. It will be easier to reorganize your ideas if they are all fully fleshed out.

Strategies

Here are five effective strategies you can use to reorganize: reverse outlining, talking it out, sectioning, listing and narrowing your argument, and visualizing. Read through all of them before you begin and decide which seems like the best fit for your current needs.

Strategy 1. Reverse Outlining

Let's say your paper is about Mark Twain's novel, *Huckleberry Finn*. Your thesis is:

"Through its contrasting river and shore scenes, Twain's Huckleberry Finn suggests that to find the true expression of American democratic ideals, one must leave 'civilized' society and go back to nature."

You feel uncertain whether your paper really follows through on the thesis as promised.

Your paper may benefit from reverse outlining, to make sure it delivers on its promising thesis. A "reverse" outline is one you make after you have written a draft. Your aim is to create an outline of what you have already written, as opposed to the kind of outline that you make before you begin to write. The reverse outline will help you evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of both your organization and your argument. You will be able to see how your ideas are arranged, look for gaps in your reasoning, identify unnecessary repetition, check whether you are answering all parts of the assignment prompt, identify places that need transitions, and tell whether you are presenting ideas in a logical order.

Read the Draft and Take Notes

Read your draft over, and as you do so, make very brief notes in the margin about what each paragraph is trying to accomplish. You may find it helpful to number your paragraphs; if you decide that your organization needs some changes, the numbers will make it easier to locate paragraphs and move them around.

If you are concerned that your paragraphs may not be unified (that is, that you are talking about more than one main idea in each paragraph), you can make a more detailed reverse outline that includes a note about the main idea of each sentence. This will ultimately help you decide where to break your paragraphs so that each one sticks to one main idea.

Make the Outline

After you have gone through the entire draft, make your outline by transferring your brief notes to a fresh sheet of paper, listing them in the order in which they appear. You can write in whatever style you are comfortable using; it is okay to write in sentence fragments or use abbreviations, since you are the only person who will be using the outline. Make sure you are creating an outline of what is actually in your paper, rather than what you intended to have in it or think should be in it! A reverse outline of your paper about *Huckleberry Finn* might look something like this:

Paragraph 1: Intro. Thesis: "Through its contrasting river and shore scenes, Twain's Huckleberry Finn suggests that to find the true expression of American democratic ideals, one must leave 'civilized' society and go back to nature."

Paragraph 2: Background on Huck Finn

Paragraph 3: River for Huck and Jim. Also, shore for Jim.

Paragraph 4: Shore for Huck. Shore and laws for Jim.

Paragraph 5: Shore and family, school.

Paragraph 6: River and freedom, democracy.

Paragraph 7: River and shore similarities.

Paragraph 8: Conclusion.

After making the outline, take a break for a few minutes!

Examine the Outline

Now it is time to focus on your outline. Look at each point and ask yourself questions that address your top concerns.
If you are worried about coherence, you can ask:

- How is this idea related to my thesis?
- How is this idea related to the ideas that come before and after it?

If you are worried about repetition, you can ask:

- Do the same words or phrases appear in several places here?
- If so, could I eliminate or combine some of the paragraphs or sentences?

If you are concerned about overall logic and transitions, you can ask:

- Is this the order I would use if I were explaining my idea to a friend in conversation?
- Will this order be easy for readers to follow?
- Why did I put the ideas in this order – what was my organizing principle?
- Are there places where I seem to suddenly change topics or bring up a new idea? If so, do those places have strong transitions?
  Did I follow the order my thesis suggests, and did I include everything the thesis promised to cover?

If you are concerned about answering the prompt, you can ask:

- If I look at the prompt as a checklist, did I answer all of the questions in the prompt?
- Do I have the right balance between different parts of the assignment (for example, have I balanced my summary of someone else's argument and my criticisms of the argument)?

Feel free to create more questions that address your concerns about the particular paper you are working on.

Let's go back to our *Huckleberry Finn* example for a moment. There seems to be a lot of repetition in our reverse outline – the word "shore" comes up in almost every paragraph. You may have noticed other issues, too. If you revise, what are some of your options?

- You might decide that you want to combine all the shore scenes into a single section, so all the paragraphs on that topic are adjacent to each other.
- You might decide to give "shore for Jim" its own paragraph, instead of having it as an add-on in the third paragraph.
- You might end up dropping the discussion of the law for Jim, if you decide it is off-topic.
- You might decide to move your discussion of the similarities between the shore and the river to an earlier point in the paper.
- You might decide you need a new paragraph to address an idea you forgot to include.

Your revised outline might look like this:

Paragraph 1: Intro. Thesis: "Through its contrasting river and shore scenes, Twain's Huckleberry Finn suggests that to find the true expression of American democratic ideals, one must leave 'civilized' society and go back to nature."

Paragraph 2: Define American democratic ideals and how they are truly expressed.

Paragraph 3: River and shore similarities.

Paragraph 4: River for Huck and Jim (river=nature).

Paragraph 5: Shore for Huck and Jim (shore=civilization).

Paragraph 6: Shore, family, and school.

Paragraph 7: River, freedom, and democracy.

Paragraph 8: Conclusion.

Re-Examine the Thesis, the Outline, and the Draft Together

Look closely at the outline and see how well it supports the argument in your thesis statement. You should be able to see which paragraphs need rewriting, reordering, or rejecting. You may find that some paragraphs are tangential or irrelevant to the focus of your argument or that some paragraphs have more than one idea and need reworking. You might also decide that you need to revise your thesis statement to better fit what you ended up discussing in the body of your draft.

Once you are happy with your outline, go back to your draft and make the necessary changes. It is wise to finish all of the changes to your organization before you begin proofreading.

Strategy 2. Talking it Out

Let's say you are writing about Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal, and your working thesis is:

"The New Deal was actually a conservative defense of American capitalism."

Since we are more accustomed to talking than to writing, the way we explain things out loud often makes more sense both to us and to our audience than the way we first write them down. Talking through your ideas can help you reorganize your draft.

Find a Friend, Your Professor, a Relative, a Tutor, or Any Sympathetic and Intelligent Listener

Your listener does not need to be an expert on the subject matter your paper addresses.

Explain What Your Paper is About

Pay attention to how you explain your argument. Chances are that the order in which you present your ideas and evidence to your listener is a logical way to arrange them in your paper. Let's say that you begin by describing your working thesis. As you continue to explain, you realize that one of the first things you talked about was private enterprise – but your draft does not address this subject until the last two paragraphs. You may realize that you need to discuss private enterprise near the beginning of your paper.

Take Notes or Record the Conversation

You and your listener should keep track of the way you explain your paper. Written notes are extremely helpful – you won't be able to remember all the details of your conversation. Compare the structure of the argument in the notes you or your listener take to the structure of the draft you have written.

Another good strategy to try is recording your conversation using a tape recorder, digital voice recorder, computer microphone, or iPod and microphone. This will allow you to talk without worrying about taking notes. Later, you can review the conversation and make changes to your draft.

Get Your Listener to Ask Questions

It is in your interest as a writer to receive constructive criticism so that your draft will become stronger. You want your listener to say things like, "Would you mind explaining that point about being both conservative and liberal again? I wasn't sure I followed" or "What kind of economic principle is government relief? Is it communist? Archaic?" or "I thought I knew where your argument was going, and I was not expecting you to bring up that issue".

\Questions you cannot answer may signal an unnecessary tangent or an area needing further development in the draft. Questions you need to think about will probably make you realize that you need to explain more in your paper. In short, you want to know that your listener fully understands you; if he or she does not, chances are your readers will not, either.

Strategy 3: Sectioning

Let's say you are working on a paper on euthanasia. Your thesis is:

"Voluntary euthanasia for terminally ill patients is justified on the grounds that it reflects humane values, respects individual autonomy, avoids needless costs, and reduces suffering."

Sectioning works particularly well for long papers where you will be contending with a number of ideas and a complicated argument. It is also useful if you are having difficulty deciding on the goals of each paragraph.

Put Paragraphs Under Section Headings

Your argument has four main categories of support. Put each of your paragraphs into one of the four categories: values, autonomy, costs, and reduction of suffering. If any paragraph (besides the introduction or conclusion) fits into two categories or all three, you may need to look at our paragraph development handout. Ideally, each paragraph should have just one central idea. If some paragraphs do not fit any category, then they probably do not belong in the paper.

Re-Examine Each Section

Assuming you have more than one paragraph under each section, try to distinguish between them. For example, under "humane values", you might have listed an argument in favor of euthanasia, a counterargument, and a reply to the counterargument that strengthens your position. Or perhaps you have two separate arguments under "humane values" that can be distinguished from each other by author, logic, ethical principles invoked, etc.

Write down the distinctions – they will help you formulate clear topic sentences. If a single paragraph includes several arguments or points – for example, two arguments and one counterargument – you probably need to revisit paragraph development. You may be trying to do too many different things within a single paragraph.

Re-Examine the Entire Argument

Which section do you want to appear first? Why? Which second? Why? In what order should the paragraphs appear in each section? Look for an order that makes the strongest possible argument.

Strategy 4: Listing and Narrowing Your Argument

Let's say you are writing a history paper, and your working thesis is this:

"While both sides fought the Civil War over the issue of slavery, the North fought for moral reasons, while the South fought to preserve its own institutions."

For this paper, what might be giving you trouble with organization is that you have created some very broad categories to work with (slavery, morality, institutions). They are all relevant to the Civil War, but there is only so much you can do in a three-, five-, or even ten-page paper. If you look more closely, you can narrow your argument by finding more specific terms; narrowing your argument will, in turn, help you rethink your organization.

In a compare and contrast paper like this one, where you distinguish between and explain two sides of an issue, making a list can help clarify both the organization and the argument.

Make a List

In two columns, list the reasons why each side fought the Civil War, limiting yourself to reasons you address (however briefly) in your draft. Let's say you come up with the following:

North	South
slavery	slavery
moral issues	self-government
humane treatment	right to property
against tyranny	against tyranny
against oppression of slaves	against federal government oppression

As you can see, some of the issues pertain to both sides and some just to one or the other. Thus, the listing process should relatively quickly confirm whether the draft obeys the argument laid out in the working thesis.

Re-examine the Thesis

You can now see that the draft offers clearer terms for your argument. A revised thesis statement might now read:

Both sides believed they fought against tyranny and oppression, but while the South fought for the political and economic rights of slave owners, the North fought for the human rights of slaves.

This revised thesis offers more specifics, which should help you organize your draft more successfully by narrowing the scope.

Re-Examine the Draft's General Structure

It seems from the list and the revised thesis statement that you probably want to establish the similarities first and then explain the differences. Check your draft; did you begin with the similarities and then move on to the differences? If not, you need to reorganize.

Reorganize the Argument

You still need to ask yourself which differences are most important. The order in which you present your points generally reflects a hierarchy of significance for your readers to follow.

Strategy 5: Visualizing

Many people find that a visual technique called clustering, mapping, or webbing is a good tool for rethinking a draft's organization.

When you are working on reorganizing a draft, clustering, mapping, or webbing can help you visually connect the points in your draft. Mapping your draft helps you see its structure in a new way: you will get a clearer sense of the location and arrangement of your ideas. As a result, it should be easier to make editorial choices that will lead to a more cohesive final draft.

Final Thoughts

Learning new strategies for reorganizing your drafts will greatly strengthen your writing process. Most writers find that their ideas develop as they write and that outlines made during the pre-writing stage do not always reflect the structure of the completed draft. Taking the time to examine and, if necessary, rework your organization after writing your first draft will result in a final paper that is easier for readers to follow. We hope the techniques suggested in this handout will help you get things organized!

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6.4.14: Reviewing, Revising, and Editing Drafts, Read Your Paper Aloud to Check for Cohesiveness

Read Your Paper Aloud to Check for Cohesiveness

A common method for catching errors and editing your own writing is reading aloud. This strategy helps you hear any errors that your eye may pass over if just reading.

Why is it Valuable to Read Your Work Aloud?

Reading their own work aloud gives writers the opportunity to take on the role of the reader. When "writers as readers" add hearing to seeing, another of the five senses is put to work in the critical evaluation process. Words and ideas that seemed to flow smoothly and connect logically inside the writer's head often do not reflect the same sense of cohesiveness when heard in spoken form. Writers who hear their work read aloud are better equipped to evaluate the paper's flow of ideas at the global level and to discover grammatical, punctuation, and word choice errors at the surface level.

What to Listen for When Reading Your Work Aloud?

- At the global level:
  - Does the paper make sense?
  - Does the paper's content flow logically?
  - Do the paper's ideas support the thesis?
- At the paragraph level:
  - Have appropriate transitions been made between paragraphs?
  - Have appropriate segues been made among the sentences?
  - Do the paragraph's ideas flow logically and sound unified?
- At the sentence level:
  - What grammatical and usage errors need to be corrected?
  - What punctuation errors are affecting the rhythm of the paper?
  - What word choice issues need to be addressed?

Steps for Reading Effectively Aloud

1. Save a copy of your paper as a new document under a modified file name.
2. Increase the font size to 14 or 16 pt. (or larger), and print a copy of your paper.
3. Find a reasonably quiet, private space to work, if possible.
4. Begin by reading your paper aloud slowly from beginning to end; underline or circle problem areas as you find them.
5. Go back and reread each paragraph aloud a second time; mark up your draft with notes in the margins and corrections of grammatical and word choice errors between the lines.
6. Revise the paper on a word processor based on the critical evaluation you made, and then repeat the read-aloud process to support further revision, editing, and proofreading.
7. Consider asking a friend, relative, or classmate to read the paper aloud to you, also.

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