Write What Matters

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A modular open educational resource to support first-year writing courses in Idaho

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MSL ACADEMIC ENDEAVORS
BOISE

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About This Book

AMY MINERVINI; LIZA LONG; AND JOEL GLADD

Welcome to *Write What Matters*!

Have you ever wished for a comprehensive source that would steer you in the right direction through all of your reading and writing assignments? This text aims to be that kind of guide. We included lessons, examples, exercises, and definitions for many of the reading and writing-related situations that you will encounter in your first-year writing courses as well as other subject-specific classes that require writing.

This book was created as part of the 2020-2021 OPAL Fellowship for the Idaho State Board of Education. Co-editors Joel Gladd (College of Western Idaho), Liza Long (College of Western Idaho), and Amy Minervini (Lewis-Clark State College) are professors. Reviewer Jamaica Richer (University of Idaho) is a writing center director. All are OPAL Fellows.

This text was co-written and co-edited by college writing instructors with decades of experience teaching students who are entering the college reading and writing environment for the first time. Our interactive, multimedia text draws from a rich set of existing open educational resources, which were carefully curated with you in mind. In addition to you–students in first-year writing courses–other intended users include full-time and adjunct faculty at all Idaho colleges and universities, dual-credit teachers in Idaho, instructors at other institutions whose states have similar written communication competencies, and the casual user who just wants to brush up on critical reading and writing skills.

Our Philosophy

We wanted our new text to work as a modular support for first-year writing course around the state of Idaho. Using the Idaho State Board of Education Written Communication (GEM 1) standards as our guide, we created a textbook that approaches writing and rhetoric by situation (exigency). We want our textbook to be useful to college composition instructors as a resource for a variety of writing tasks. The text is designed to allow instructors and students to choose the most useful content to support their learning. We believe this type of text fosters student-centered teaching as students learn to **write what matters** in a variety of academic and professional contexts.

Because we support Open Educational Resources (OER), our text represents a collaboration, reuse, and sharing of others' Creative Commons licensed content. As much as possible, we have tried to create a text with diverse perspectives and writing styles. Including work by multiple authors can provide a starting point for conversations in writing courses about how writing "actually works in the real world" (Wardle and Downs). We have also included writing prompts and student essays and will continue to add more resources in our ongoing revisions to reinforce and demonstrate the subjects we cover in this text. We invite you to be a part of that process by providing feedback as well as using, reusing, or remixing any of the materials in this text in accordance with the terms of their Creative Commons licenses.

How You Can Use This Text

This is a use-it-as-you-need-it kind of text. In other words, you don't have to read every word from beginning to end, nor do we expect you to! Instead, skip around using the table of contents to find answers to your questions or to find practice exercises that will improve your reading and writing skills. You might find it useful to have this text with you as you're planning or doing reading and writing assignments because confusion will happen, questions will come up, and we're here to help when you need it most.

Write What Matters is designed to support, not replace, the writing instructor or writing center. Our hope is that instructors will use sections of the book that support their personal approaches to classroom instruction. We aim to provide a useful resource for college instructors, support for part-time faculty and dual-credit teachers, and a guide for students who seek success in academic and professional writing.

How Our Text Is Organized

As mentioned in our philosophy statement, this text is loosely organized around the Seven General Education Skill Competency and Knowledge Objectives for the state of Idaho colleges and universities. According to the Idaho State Board of Education site, "Upon completion of the Written Communication component of General Education, a student will be able to

1. *Use flexible writing process strategies to generate, develop, revise, edit, and proofread texts*
2. *Adopt strategies and genre that are appropriate to the rhetorical situation*
3. *Use inquiry-based strategies to conduct research that explores multiple and diverse ideas and perspectives, appropriate to the rhetorical context*
4. *Use rhetorically appropriate strategies to evaluate, represent, and respond to the ideas and research of others*
5. *Address readers' biases and assumptions with well-developed evidence-based reasoning*

6. *Use appropriate conventions for integrating, citing, and documenting source material as well as for surface-level language and style.*
7. *Read, interpret, and communicate key concepts in writing and rhetoric.*

We recognize that while a few of these outcomes are self-contained, many of these competencies and objectives intersect and are addressed and integrated within various sections of our textbook.

The content of this textbook is aimed at helping students meet these learning objectives. This textbook contains 12 major sections:

1. The Writing Process
2. Reading and Writing Rhetorically
3. Essay Types
    1. Writing your story
    2. Writing to inform
    3. Writing to analyze
    4. Writing to evaluate
    5. Writing to persuade
    6. Writing for social change
    7. Writing to reflect
4. Writing with Sources
5. Addressing Bias and Stakeholder Claims
6. Writing to Inquire: The Research Process
7. Writing for Employment
8. MLA and APA Documentation and Formatting
9. Writing Basics
    1. What makes a good sentence
    2. Punctuation
    3. Word choice
    4. Help for English Language Learners
10. Writing and Rhetoric Readings and Resources Collection
11. Feedback from you

The "Essay Types" section, which houses a number of chapters, is geared toward English 101 or similar foundational writing courses in which various modes are explored. The "Writing to Inquire" section is more appropriate for English 102 or similar inquiry or research-based writing courses. All other sections and chapters can be used for English 101 and 102 courses because these areas cover competencies that are essential to all types of academic writing. The primary content provided in each competency area has been integrated with both students' and instructors' cognitive load in mind. The latter part of the textbook contains supplementary readings that can be integrated as necessary to augment particular lessons or assignments. You may notice that the major part of the text you're working within is identified at the top of the page. We hope this helps you to navigate between sections and subsections and to understand the relationships between them. When using this book in a modular fashion, instructors may link directly to the section of the book that applies to their instruction.

Gender and Gender-Neutral Language

As you read, you may notice that we use a variety of pronouns such as she/her, he/him, or they/them to refer to a person we're discussing. Our goal is to represent all people, regardless of gender, and to do so in a balanced way. Therefore, in some paragraphs, we may designate "she" as the pronoun, while in others "he" will stand in for the person being written about. However, you'll also come across "they" being used as a singular pronoun, which may be confusing at first. The pronoun "they" allows a single person to represent any gender, including those genders that aren't accurately represented by "he" and "she." It's important to consider gender-neutral language in your own writing, so we wanted to make sure we modeled what that looks like in this text.

Culturally Relevant and Affirming

The rhetoric, lessons, examples, assignments, and readings include a range of perspectives and cultures in an effort to be inclusive. That said, if you come across a word, phrase, or sentiment that does otherwise, please do not hesitate to contact us so that we can make changes in our textbook. The Anti-Racist, Anti-Ableist, and LGBTQI+ readings and resources chapters provide content that will encourage critical thinking about issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. All four public colleges in Idaho identify inclusion, diversity, and equity as valued principles to uphold: Lewis-Clark State College, Idaho State University, University of Idaho, and Boise State University. Future iterations of this text will include Latinx resources.

Accessibility

Our textbook has been written with accessibility in mind. Instructors can upload the whole text to online learning systems, such as Blackboard, Canvas, and Google Classroom. However, we know that consistent WiFi is a problem in rural areas of our state, so the book can be downloaded in multiple formats including PDF and EPUB or MOBI files. It can also be accessed through text-to-speech readers provided through your learning institutions or other common text to speech tools, such as Read Aloud and Dragon. All videos have subtitles/closed captioning.

A Note about Citations

This text includes a combination of chapters using MLA and APA, maintaining a single format consistency within that particular chapter. Using MLA and APA mimics real-world writing in which both formats are used extensively. While you would never want to combine formats within one paper (stay consistent with just one format on a single paper), students should have knowledge of both formats that will be used throughout their college career.

A Note about Source Attribution

In addition to new content, this book draws on a variety of existing OER resources. Within each chapter there are sections written by Joel Gladd, Amy Minervini, and Liza Long, and authorial attributions are given. This book also contains other resources integrated under Creative Commons licenses. These open education resources (OER) include complete and remixed chapters and are enhanced with digital reading experience by including videos and visual reading features. Shared and remixed materials are denoted with attribution information when necessary in the shaded box at the bottom of those pages. This book was peer reviewed by Jamaica Richter. If you are interested in reviewing and/or contributing to this book, please reach out to us by using the feedback form at the end of the book.

Links and References in Online and Print Versions of This Text

The online text includes links, but we've used specific language to allow readers of the print version to find the same pages within the text or outside resources. For example, in the "Summarizing a Text" section, we mention an external text in this sentence: "In his essay, "Consider the Lobster," writer David Foster Wallace asks readers to consider the ethical implications of feasting on lobsters. (You can find a copy of this essay online at Gourmet.com.)" If you're using the print version of this text, you can find that David Foster Wallace essay by doing a web search using the title, author, and website like this: "consider the lobster david foster wallace gourmet.com." If you're looking for a page within this text that we've linked to, go to the Table of Contents, and look for the title of the relevant section there.

Note to teachers: Make sure you let students using the print version know this so they can access web resources.

Land Acknowledgement

We would like to acknowledge the traditional and ancestral lands of the Shoshone-Bannock, the Shoshone-Paiute, the Coeur d'Alene, the Kootenai, and the Nez Perce tribes on which we are teaching, learning and working today. The struggle for Indigenous rights is deeply connected to human rights. It is important that the stories and traditions from tribal nations are heard, celebrated, and protected.

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About the Authors

Amy Minervini

I'm thrilled to be working for Lewis-Clark State College as an instructor in the Humanities Division. My passion is teaching rhetoric and composition courses (English 101 & English 102) and helping students to become stronger writers and critical thinkers. I also teach a content methods, intro to literature, and journalism course and am a strong advocate for our awesome student newspaper, *The Pathfinder*. I graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in English Literature in 1997 and my Master of Arts in English Literature in 1999, both from University of Idaho. I also have minors in Spanish and journalism.

As a strong believer in lifelong learning, I more recently earned my post-baccalaureate degree from Lewis-Clark State College in secondary education with an English/Language Arts emphasis. My broadened knowledge base in pedagogy as well as the middle and high school student populations have helped me to better understand the strengths and challenges of incoming freshman at LCSC. A longtime resident of the Valley, I love spending time with my two kids and parents and exploring our beautiful corner of the world. I enjoy archery, golfing, tinkering with new technology, thrift shopping, and of course, surfing Netflix. **There are risks and costs to action. But they are far less than the long range risks of comfortable inaction.** –John F. Kennedy

Liza Long

I am an author, educator, and mother of four children, one of whom has bipolar disorder. My book, *The Price of Silence: A Mom's Perspective on Mental Illness* (Hudson Street Press, 2014), was a "Books for a Better Life" award winner. My essays have appeared in USA Today, the Huffington Post, Psychology Today, Time.com, The Mighty, MindBodyGreen, Good Men Project, and Boise State University's The Blue Review, among others. Since my essay "I Am Adam Lanza's Mother" went viral, I have appeared on the Today Show, Good Morning America, Erin Burnett Out Front, Anderson Cooper 360, Don Lemon, Dr. Oz, the Diane Rehm Show, NPR's Weekend Edition, and other programs. I presented talks on children's mental health and stigma at TEDx San Antonio in October 2013 and at the National Council for Behavioral Health in March 2016. I was featured in the Peabody award-winning HBO documentary A *Dangerous Son* in May 2018 and participated in the 2019 Columbine documentary, *An American Tragedy*.

I hold a B.A. in Classics from Brigham Young University (1994); an M.A. in Classics from the University of California, Los Angeles (1997), and an Ed.D. in Organizational Leadership from Argosy University (2016). My dissertation research focused on mental health advocacy and leadership strengths. I am an assistant professor of English at the College of Western Idaho and live in Eagle, Idaho. I am passionate about inclusivity and diversity and believe that education has the power to change lives for the better.

Joel Gladd

My B.A. is in English and Philosophy, from Wake Forest University (2004). I earned a Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in Literary Studies (2013). In 2013, I began teaching at the College of Western Idaho, where I currently specialize in teaching Writing and Rhetoric and American Literature. My content expertise is in American literature, but I'm equally passionate about open access, open education, and inclusive teaching pedagogy. I consider digital tools such as the Pressbooks platform, Hypothesis, and H5P to be important components of inclusive pedagogy, rather than merely "ed-tech" add-ons. I see this open textbook, *Write What Matters*, as a living platform for engagement—for students, certainly, but also other teachers and professors.

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We wish you well on your academic journey, and we hope this first-year writing OER textbook supports you throughout your first college writing courses and beyond.

Idaho State Board of Education Written Communication General Education Skill Competency and Knowledge Objectives

PART I

THE WRITING PROCESS

This section introduces students to the writing process for college essay assignments. It can be read sequentially, beginning with Critical Reading and ending with Revise and Edit. A sequential reading pairs nicely with research-based academic essays, which is also covered by the parts Writing to Persuade and Writing to Inquire.

On the other hand, many of the following chapters can be read in isolation from the others to help with a particular assignment or stage within it. "Critical Reading" covers reading foundational strategies that apply to many assignments and even different courses. The three chapters on Drafting, as well as "Revise and Edit," also apply to most academic essay writing situations.

While these chapters cover the basics of reading, pre-writing, drafting, and revision, they are not intended to prepare students for particular genres of writing assignments, such as how to draft an informative essay or a personal narrative. Those sections are covered separately, in other Parts of this textbook.

The Writing Process. CC-BY-4.0.

1. Critical Reading

This chapter focuses on the importance of critical reading in the writing process.

Critical Reading is the first part of the Writing Process. CC-BY-4.0.

I. How is reading for college different?

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

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

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

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

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

Table 1.1. High School vs. College Reading Assignments

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

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

Throughout this chapter, you will follow a first-year student named Crystal. After several years of working as a saleswoman in a department store, Crystal has decided to pursue a degree in elementary education and become a teacher. She is continuing to work part-time, and occasionally she finds it challenging to balance the demands of work, school, and caring for her four-year-old son. As you read about Crystal, think about how you can use her experience to get the most out of your own college experience.

Exercise 1.1

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

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

II. Reading Strategies

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

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

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

Planning Your Reading

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

Managing Your Reading Time

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

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

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

Setting a Purpose

The other key component of planning is setting a purpose. Knowing what you want to get out of a reading assignment helps you determine how to approach it and how much time to spend on it. It also helps you stay focused during those occasional moments when it is late, you are tired, and relaxing in front of the television sounds far more appealing than curling up with a stack of journal articles.Sometimes your purpose is simple. You might just need to understand the reading material well enough to discuss it intelligently in class the next day. However, your purpose will often go beyond that. For instance, you might also read to compare two texts, to formulate a personal response to a text, or to gather ideas for future research. Here are some questions to ask to help determine your purpose:

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

Improving Your Comprehension

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

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

Identifying the Main Points

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Monitoring Your Comprehension

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

Textbooks, such as this one, often include comprehension questions in the margins or at the end of a section or chapter. As you read, stop occasionally to answer these questions on paper or in your head. Use them to identify sections you may need to reread, read more carefully, or ask your instructor about later. Many instructors pair readings with comprehension quizzes. If that's the case, look at the quiz questions first (if possible), and use those as guides for how to train your attention.

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

1. **Summarize.** At the end of each section, pause to summarize

the main points in a few sentences. If you have trouble doing so, revisit that section.

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

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

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

Exercise 1.2

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

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

Taking It to the Next Level: Active Reading

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

SQ3R Strategy

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

1. **Survey** the text in advance.
2. Form **questions** before you start reading.
3. **Read** the text, and filter the information according to the guiding questions.
4. **Recite** and/or **record** important points during and after

reading.
5. **Review** and **reflect** on the text after you read.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Exercise 1.3

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

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

PHA Stragegy

Another active-reading strategy, developed by Liza Long, Ph.D., at the College of Western Idaho, simplifies the SQ3R process into three phases, or PHA: 1) Preview, 2) Highlight, 3) Annotate.

"Active Reading" by Liza Long is licensed CC BY 4.0

Preview

The first time you read the text, simply preview it. Skim the entire assignment, trying to get a sense for the content and level of difficulty. What is the main idea of the chapter? Are several concepts presented? Are they unfamiliar to you? Are the words difficult to understand? On a scale of 1-5, 1 being very easy, and 5 being very hard, rate the level of difficulty of the reading passage.

Very Easy	Easy	Moderate	Difficult	Very Difficult
1	2	3	4	5

Highlight

This is the most time consuming phase of reading.

- Make sure you are in a quiet place, free from distractions.
- Have a highlighter, a pencil, or other instrument (post-it flags, etc.) ready to use.
- Read each sentence closely. If something sticks out to you or seems important, highlight it. Similarly, if you are struggling to understand something, highlight that as well, perhaps using a "?" to note the difficult passage.
- Look up any words that are unfamiliar in a dictionary.
- Reading out loud or listening to an audio version of the text may help you with comprehension.

Annotate
The third phase of reading is where you make connections and ask questions. You may want to make notes in the margin as you read, or you may use a separate piece of paper. For each passage, think about ways it might apply to what you are studying in your course.

- Do you agree with what you are reading?
- Does it remind you of previous things you have learned, either in this class or in another?
- Do you have personal experience with the concepts discussed?
- Do you need clarification or more information about a concept?

Other Active Reading Strategies

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

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

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

Writing at Work

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

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

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

This chapter has been adapted from *Writing for Success*, Chapter 1, CC-BY-NC-SA. Some sections from the chapter have been removed, and minor formatting adjustments were made. The sub-section within Active Reading, “PHA”, is original content by Liza Long, Ph.D.

2. Generate Ideas

The previous chapter, Critical Reading, suggested that college reading is often more intentional and highly targeted than other forms. In many courses, especially composition courses, much of the reading is embedded within a unit of the course that culminates in a major essay assignment. This chapter, Generate Ideas, assumes a student has been practicing critical reading strategies and has collected a number of ideas for the upcoming essay. Once they're familiar with enough information about a topic and particular assignment, a student will be in the position to generate interesting ideas and develop a thesis statement.

After reading texts critically, Generate Ideas comes next in The Writing Process. CC-BY-4.0.

In this chapter, you will follow a writer as they prepare a piece of writing. You will also be planning one of your own. The first important step is for you to tell yourself why you are writing (to inform, to explain, or some other purpose) and for whom you are writing. Write your purpose and your audience on your own sheet of paper, and keep the paper close by as you read and complete exercises in this chapter.

My purpose: ____

My audience:

____
_

Prewriting

If you think that a blank sheet of paper or a blinking cursor on the computer screen is a scary sight, you are not alone. Many writers, students, and employees find that beginning to write can be intimidating. When faced with a blank page, however, experienced writers remind themselves that writing, like other everyday activities, is a process. Every process, from writing to cooking, bike riding, and learning to use a new cell phone, will get significantly easier with practice.

Just as you need a recipe, ingredients, and proper tools to cook a delicious meal, you also need a plan, resources, and adequate time to create a good written composition. In other words, writing is a process that requires following steps and using strategies to accomplish your goals.

Effective writing can be simply described as good ideas that are expressed well and arranged in the proper order. This chapter will give you the chance to work on all these important aspects of writing. Although many more prewriting strategies exist, this chapter covers several: identifying your topic and asking questions, critical reading, freewriting, brainstorming, and mapping. Using the strategies in this chapter can help you overcome the fear of the blank page and confidently begin the writing process.

Identify Your Topic and Formulate Related Questions

In addition to understanding that writing is a process, writers also understand that identifying the topic (sometimes called the "scope") for an assignment is an essential step. Sometimes your instructor will give you an idea to begin an assignment, and other times your instructor will ask you to come up with a topic on your own. A good topic not only covers what an assignment will be about but also fits the assignment's purpose and its audience.

Add a line for **topic** to your worksheet:

My purpose: ____

My audience: ____

My topic: ____

However, general topics, such as "mass media" or "happiness", are so vague that it can be difficult to get started on a project. Many students have been given topical assignments before, such as "What does the word 'freedom' mean to you?" or "Write about 'Love'". Sometimes college applications ask students to write their personal essay sample based on a random topic that's intentionally vague, because very broad topics allow students to go in nearly any direction they wish, a condition ripe for expressing voice. When writing *within* college courses, these kinds of open-ended topical assignments are much rarer. More often, an instructor will assign an essay and offer guiding questions; or, students in a research course will be tasked with formulating interesting questions to help drive original research. One way or the other, it's incredibly important that a student clearly identifies pertinent questions as soon as possible in the writing process. Each stage is driven by asking and then attempting to answer clear questions.

Add a few related questions underneath your topic.

My purpose: ____

My audience: ____

My topic: ____

Related questions: ____

Freewriting

Freewriting is an exercise in which you write freely about any topic for a set amount of time (usually three to five minutes). During the time limit, you may jot down any thoughts that come to your mind. Try not to worry about grammar, spelling, or punctuation. Instead, write as quickly as you can without stopping. If you get stuck, just copy the same word or phrase over and over until you come up with a new thought.

Freewriting, and writing more generally, often comes easier when you have a personal connection with the topic you have chosen. Identifying personal experiences and observations that connect with your topic also cultivates **voice**, an important aspect of rhetorical persuasion.

You may also think about readings that you have enjoyed or that have challenged your thinking. Doing this may lead your thoughts in interesting directions.

Quickly recording your thoughts on paper will help you discover what you have to say about a topic. When writing quickly, try not to doubt or question your ideas. Allow yourself to write freely and un-selfconsciously. Once you start writing with few limitations, you may find you have more to say than you first realized. Your flow of thoughts can lead you to discover even more ideas about the topic. Freewriting may even lead you to discover another topic that excites you even more.

Exercise

On the same worksheet as you started above, which identified the Purpose, Audience, Topic, and Related Questions, add a section below it titled "Freewrite". Then freewrite about about your personal experience with the topic and related questions. Write without stopping, for 5 minutes. When freewriting, try to be specific. If you can recount specific experiences that happened at a certain time and location, even better. If you can't, just write about whatever comes to mind.

My purpose:

____

My audience:

____

My topic:

____

Related questions:

____

5-Minute freewrite:

Critical Reading

The previous chapter, on Critical Reading, already emphasized the importance of reading in the writing process. It figures prominently in the development of ideas and topics. Different kinds of documents can help you choose a topic and also develop that topic. For example, a magazine advertising the latest research on the threat of global warming may catch your eye in the supermarket. This cover may interest you, and you may consider global warming as a topic. Or maybe a novel's courtroom drama sparks your curiosity of a particular lawsuit or legal controversy.

After identifying the topic and related questions, critical reading is essential to its development. While reading almost any document, you evaluate the author's point of view by thinking about their main idea and his support. When you judge the author's argument, you discover more about not only the author's opinion but also your own. If this step already seems daunting, remember that even the best writers need to use prewriting strategies to generate ideas.

In research-based essay assignments, the instructor of the course may ask you track your critical reading with an annotated bibliography. Annotated Bibliographies are covered in the Research Writing portion of this textbook.

Tip

The more you plan in the beginning by reading and using prewriting strategies, the less time you may spend writing and editing later because your ideas will develop more swiftly.

Divergent Prewriting Strategies

One of the fundamental aspects of creative thinking is the interplay between divergent and convergent thinking. Divergent thinking refers to the process of collecting and generating as many ideas as possible. It's exploratory and can be playful. Similar to freewriting, divergent prewriting techniques allow the write to roam free. The most commonly utilized divergent strategies are **brainstorming** and **idea mapping.**

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is similar to list making. You can make a list on your own or in a group with your classmates. Start with a blank sheet of paper (or a blank computer document) and write your general topic, issue, or debate questions across the top. Underneath your topic, make a list of related ideas or different responses to the question. Often you will find that one item can lead to the next, creating a flow of ideas that can help you narrow your focus to a more specific paper topic.

Exercise

On the same worksheet as you started above, including the purpose, audience, topic, and related questions, now add a table with one or two guiding questions at the top. Then, in the space beneath each question, jot down as many responses as possible, based on any research you've done so far, as well as your personal experiences, observations, and hunches.

My purpose:

____

My audience:

____

My topic:

____

Related questions:

____

Brainstorming List:

- [response 1]
- [response 2]
- [response 3]
- [response 4]
- [response 5]

In debate-driven assignments, such as an argument essay, the table might have two or three questions as the topic, corresponding to certain possible positions someone might take in response to an issue. The table should be adapted to your assignment needs.

Idea Mapping

Idea mapping allows you to visualize your ideas on paper using circles, lines, and arrows. This technique is also known as clustering because ideas are broken down and clustered, or grouped together. Many writers like this method because the shapes show how the ideas relate or connect, and writers can uncover unexpected connection. Using idea mapping, you might discover interesting connections between sources, ideas, other voices, and experiences that you had not thought of before.

To create an idea map, start with your general topic, guiding question or guiding in a circle in the center of a blank sheet of paper. Then write specific ideas around it and use lines or arrows to connect them together. Add and cluster as many ideas as you can think of.

The idea map example below is fairly basic. It begins with a general topic (mass media) and then expands into several different bubbles.

Idea Map. From Writing For Success.

Notice the largest circle contains her general topic, mass media. Then, the general topic branches into two subtopics written in two smaller circles: television and radio. The subtopic television branches into even more specific topics: cable and DVDs. From there, the writer drew more circles and wrote more specific ideas: high definition and digital recording from cable and Blu-ray from DVDs. The radio topic led the student to draw connections between music, downloads versus CDs, and, finally, piracy.

From this idea map, the student saw they could consider narrowing the focus of her mass media topic to the more specific topic of music piracy.

Exercise 2.1

On the same worksheet as you started above, including the purpose, audience, topic, and related questions, now add space for an idea map, with your main topic, issue, or guiding question shown in the largest circle. From there, add as many circles as you can, based on any research you've done so far, as well as your personal experiences, observations, and hunches. Several free web apps are available for students to use as well, such as mindmup.com.

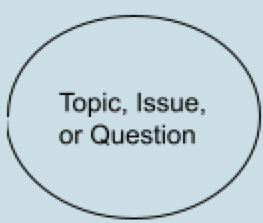
My purpose: ____

My audience: ____

My topic: ____

Related questions: ____

Idea Map:



Moving from Divergent to Convergent

Thinking

The end of the idea generation stage should result in a variety of ideas you might want to use in your own essay. In a persuasive essay, for example, some of these ideas might eventually become voices you embed as counterarguments, and others might become evidence for a particular point. What matters is that you are able to collect as many ideas as possible, based on all of the resources you have at your disposal. The next stage in the writing process, Develop a Thesis, pivots from divergent to *convergent* thinking.

3. Develop Thesis

The previous chapter, on Generating Ideas, emphasized the role of *divergent* thinking in the writing process. Before beginning a draft, it's important to draw on a range of personal experiences and observations, as well as critical reading. Brainstorming techniques help collect all of these ideas into a single place. After brainstorming, a writer is ready for the *convergent* process of selecting the various information and ideas they wish to use in their essay. The goal of this selection process is to develop an overarching **thesis statement** that captures everything the writer wishes to say. This chapter focuses on that selection process, as well as how to formulate a clear and succinct statement. If this chapter is being used to help begin an essay draft, we recommend that a student first complete the exercises in the previous chapter. The previous chapter asked you to record a few things on a worksheet or document: your purpose and audience, the topic, and related questions. To help brainstorm fresh ideas, that chapter suggested a freewriting exercise, list-making, and/or "idea mapping. The brainstorming exercises should have provided you with possible supporting points for your working thesis statement.

After generating ideas, "Develop Thesis" comes next in The Writing Process.

Why are thesis statements necessary?

Have you ever known a person who was not very good at telling stories? You probably had trouble following his train of thought as he jumped around from point to point, either being too brief in places that needed further explanation or providing too many details on a meaningless element. Maybe he told the end of the story first, then moved to the beginning and later added details to the middle. His ideas were probably scattered, and the story did not flow very well. When the story was over, you probably had many questions.

Just as a personal anecdote can be a disorganized mess, an essay can fall into the same trap of being out of order and confusing. That is why writers need a thesis statement to provide a specific focus for their essay and to organize what they are about to discuss in the body.

Just like a topic sentence summarizes a single paragraph, the thesis statement summarizes an entire essay. It tells the reader the point you want to make in your essay, while the essay itself supports that point. It is like a signpost that signals the essay's destination. You should form your thesis before you begin to organize an essay, but you may find that it needs revision as the essay develops.

Elements of a Thesis Statement

For every essay you write, you must focus on a central idea. This idea stems from a topic you have chosen or been assigned or from a question your teacher has asked. It is not enough merely to discuss a general topic or simply answer a question with a yes or no. You have to form a specific opinion, and then articulate that into a controlling idea—the main idea upon which you build your thesis.

Remember that a thesis is not the topic itself, but rather your interpretation of the question or subject. For whatever topic your professor gives you, you must ask yourself, "What do I want to say about it?" Asking and then answering this question is vital to forming a thesis that is precise, forceful and confident.

A thesis is one sentence long and appears toward the end of your introduction. It is specific and focuses on one to three points of a single idea—points that are able to be demonstrated in the body. It forecasts the content of the essay and suggests how you will organize your information. Remember that a thesis statement does not summarize an issue but rather dissects it.

A strong thesis contains the following qualities:

Specificity. A thesis statement must concentrate on a specific area of a general topic. As you may recall, the creation of a thesis statement begins when you choose a broad subject and then narrow down its parts until you pinpoint a specific aspect of that topic. For example, health care is a broad topic, but a proper thesis statement would focus on a specific area of that topic, such as options for individuals without health care coverage.

Precision. A strong thesis statement must be precise enough to allow for a coherent argument and to remain focused on the topic. If the specific topic is options for individuals without health care coverage, then your precise thesis statement must make an exact claim about it, such as that limited options exist for those who are uninsured by their employers. You must further pinpoint what you are going to discuss regarding these limited effects, such as whom they affect and what the cause is.

Ability to be argued. A thesis statement must present a relevant and specific argument. A factual statement often is not considered arguable. Be sure your thesis statement contains a point of view that can be supported with evidence.

Ability to be demonstrated. For any claim you make in your thesis, you must be able to provide reasons and examples for your opinion. You can rely on personal observations in order to do this, or you can consult outside sources to demonstrate that what you assert is valid. A worthy argument is backed by examples and details.

Forcefulness. A thesis statement that is forceful shows readers that you are, in fact, making an argument. The tone is assertive and takes a stance that others might oppose.

Confidence. In addition to using force in your thesis statement, you must also use confidence in your claim. Phrases such as *I feel* or *I believe* actually weaken the readers' sense of your confidence because these phrases imply that you are the only person who feels the way you do. In other words, your stance has insufficient backing. Taking an authoritative stance on the matter persuades your readers to have faith in your argument and open their minds to what you have to say. If you want to use the first person, phrases such as *I argue* or *I contend* sound more authoritative.

Tip

Even in a personal essay that allows the use of first person, your thesis should not contain phrases such as *in my opinion* or *I believe*. These statements reduce your credibility and weaken your argument. Your opinion is more convincing when you use a firm attitude.

Exercise 3.1

On a separate sheet of paper, write a thesis statement for each of the following topics. Remember to make each statement specific, precise, demonstrable, forceful and confident.

Topics

- Texting while driving
- The legal drinking age in the United States
- Steroid use among professional athletes

- Abortion
- Racism

Each of the following thesis statements meets several of the following requirements:

- Specificity
- Precision
- Ability to be argued
- Ability to be demonstrated
- Forcefulness
- Confidence

1. The societal and personal struggles of Troy Maxon in the play *Fences* symbolize the challenge of black males who lived through segregation and integration in the United States.
2. Closing all American borders for a period of five years is one solution that will tackle illegal immigration.
3. Shakespeare's use of dramatic irony in *Romeo and Juliet* spoils the outcome for the audience and weakens the plot.
4. J. D. Salinger's character in *Catcher in the Rye*, Holden Caulfield, is a confused rebel who voices his disgust with phonies, yet in an effort to protect himself, he acts like a phony on many occasions.
5. Compared to an absolute divorce, no-fault divorce is less expensive, promotes fairer settlements, and reflects a more realistic view of the causes for marital breakdown.
6. Exposing children from an early age to the dangers of drug abuse is a sure method of preventing future drug addicts.
7. In today's crumbling job market, a high school diploma is not significant enough education to land a stable, lucrative job.

Tip

You can find thesis statements in many places, such as in the news; in the opinions of friends, coworkers or teachers; and even in songs you hear on the radio. Become aware of thesis statements in everyday life by paying attention to people's opinions and their reasons for those opinions. Pay attention to your own everyday thesis statements as well, as these can become material for future essays.

Now that you have read about the contents of a good thesis statement and have seen examples, take a look at the pitfalls to avoid when composing your own thesis:

- A thesis is weak when it is simply a declaration of your subject or a description of what you will discuss in your essay.

  Weak thesis statement: My paper will explain why imagination is more important than knowledge.

- A thesis is weak when it makes an unreasonable or outrageous claim or insults the opposing side.

  Weak thesis statement: Religious radicals across America are trying to legislate their Puritanical beliefs by banning required high school books.

- A thesis is weak when it contains an obvious fact or something that no one can disagree with or provides a dead end.

  Weak thesis statement: Advertising companies use sex to sell their products.

- A thesis is weak when the statement is too broad.

  Weak thesis statement: The life of Abraham Lincoln was long and challenging.

Exercise 3.2

Read the following thesis statements. On a separate piece of paper, identify each as weak or strong. For those that are weak, list the reasons why. Then revise the weak statements so that they conform to the requirements of a strong thesis.

1. The subject of this paper is my experience with ferrets as pets.
2. The government must expand its funding for research on renewable energy resources in order to prepare for the impending end of oil.
3. Edgar Allan Poe was a poet who lived in Baltimore during the nineteenth century.
4. In this essay, I will give you lots of reasons why slot machines should not be legalized in Baltimore.
5. Despite his promises during his campaign, President Kennedy took few executive measures to support civil rights legislation.
6. Because many children's toys have potential safety

hazards that could lead to injury, it is clear that not all children's toys are safe.

7. My experience with young children has taught me that I want to be a disciplinary parent because I believe that a child without discipline can be a parent's worst nightmare.

Writing at Work

Often in your career, you will need to ask your boss for something through an e-mail. Just as a thesis statement organizes an essay, it can also organize your e-mail request. While your e-mail will be shorter than an essay, using a thesis statement in your first paragraph quickly lets your boss know what you are asking for, why it is necessary, and what the benefits are. In short body paragraphs, you can provide the essential information needed to expand upon your request.

Formulating your thesis statement

When initially formulating a thesis statement, it will help to know that there are a few strategies to choose from.

Enumerative thesis

An enumerative thesis simply lists the main points of your essay. In a traditional five paragraph argument essay from high school, for example, students are taught to write a one-paragraph introduction and conclusion, and the three paragraphs in between should be devoted to three supporting ideas. In this scenario (which is crude and too formulaic for college argument essays), an enumerative thesis statement would include each of the three main points.

Umbrella thesis

In contrast to the list-making tendency of enumerative thesis statements, an umbrella thesis attempts to encompass all of the main points in a concise yet decisive statement.

Exercise 3.3

The previous chapter, "Generating Ideas," asked you to record a few things on a worksheet or document: your purpose and audience, the topic, and related questions. To help brainstorm fresh ideas, the chapter also suggested a freewriting exercise, list-making, and “idea mapping. The brainstorming exercises should have provided you with possible supporting points for your working thesis statement. To get started on an early draft of your thesis statement, complete the following steps, on the same worksheet or as a separate document:

1. Select all of the main points you wish to address in your essay. Depending on the type of essay you’re writing, you might have two, three, four, or even more ideas. In a persuasive essay, for example, you might first identify key pieces of evidence as well as the ideas (or points) they prove. But you might also want to select potential counterarguments and rebuttals for those points.
2. Attempt an **enumerative thesis** by simply listing each of the main points you want to hit in your essay.
3. Now develop a more concise **umbrella thesis** statement by simplifying all of those points into a single position or overarching idea.

Revising your thesis statement

Your thesis will probably change as you write, so you will need to modify it to reflect exactly what you have discussed in your essay. Your thesis statement begins as a working thesis statement, an indefinite statement that you make about your topic early in the writing process for the purpose of planning and guiding your writing.

Working thesis statements often become stronger as you gather information and form new opinions and reasons for those opinions. Revision helps you strengthen your thesis so that it matches what you have expressed in the body of the paper.

You can cut down on irrelevant aspects and revise your thesis by taking the following steps:

1. Pinpoint and replace all nonspecific words, such as *people*, *everything*, *society*, or *life*, with more precise words in order to reduce any vagueness.

> **Working thesis:** Young people have to work hard to succeed in life.
>
> **Revised thesis:** Recent college graduates must have discipline and persistence in order to find and maintain a stable job in which they can use and be appreciated for their talents.

The revised thesis makes a more specific statement about success and what it means to work hard. The original includes too broad a range of people and does not define exactly what success entails. By replacing those general words like *people* and *work hard*, the writer can better focus his or her research and gain more direction in his or her writing.

2. Clarify ideas that need explanation by asking yourself questions that narrow your thesis.

> **Working thesis:** The welfare system is a joke.
>
> **Revised thesis:** The welfare system keeps a socioeconomic class from gaining employment by alluring members of that class with unearned income, instead of programs to improve their education and skill sets.

A *joke* means many things to many people. Readers bring all sorts of backgrounds and perspectives to the reading process and would need clarification for a word so vague. This expression may also be too informal for the selected audience. By asking questions, the writer can devise a more precise and appropriate explanation for *joke*. The writer should ask himself or herself questions similar to the 5WH questions. (See Chapter 8 "The Writing Process: How Do I Begin?" for more information on the 5WH questions.) By incorporating the answers to these questions into a thesis statement, the writer more accurately defines his or her stance, which will better guide the writing of the essay.

3. Replace any linking verbs with action verbs. Linking verbs are forms of the verb *to be*, a verb that simply states that a situation exists.

> **Working thesis:** Kansas City schoolteachers are not paid enough.
>
> **Revised thesis:** The Kansas City legislature cannot afford to pay its educators, resulting in job cuts and resignations in a district that sorely needs highly qualified and dedicated teachers.

The linking verb in this working thesis statement is the word *are*. Linking verbs often make thesis statements weak because they do not express action. Rather, they connect words and phrases to the second half of the sentence. Readers might wonder, "Why are they not paid enough?" But this statement does not compel them to ask many more questions. The writer should ask himself or herself questions in order to replace the linking verb with an action verb, thus forming a stronger thesis statement, one that takes a more definitive stance on the issue:

- Who is not paying the teachers enough?
- What is considered "enough"?
- What is the problem?
- What are the results

4. Omit any general claims that are hard to support.

> **Working thesis:** Today's teenage girls are too sexualized.
>
> **Revised thesis:** Teenage girls who are captivated by the sexual images on MTV are conditioned to believe that a

woman's worth depends on her sensuality, a feeling that harms their self-esteem and behavior.

It is true that some young women in today's society are more sexualized than in the past, but that is not true for all girls. Many girls have strict parents, dress appropriately, and do not engage in sexual activity while in middle school and high school. The writer of this thesis should ask the following questions:

- Which teenage girls?
- What constitutes "too" sexualized?
- Why are they behaving that way?
- Where does this behavior show up?
- What are the repercussions?

Writing at Work

In your career you may have to write a project proposal that focuses on a particular problem in your company, such as reinforcing the tardiness policy. The proposal would aim to fix the problem; using a thesis statement would clearly state the boundaries of the problem and tell the goals of the project. After writing the proposal, you may find that the thesis needs revision to reflect exactly what is expressed in the body. Using the techniques from this chapter would apply to revising that thesis.

Key Takeaways

- Proper essays require a thesis statement to provide a specific focus and suggest how the essay will be organized.
- A thesis statement is your interpretation of the subject, not the topic itself.
- A strong thesis is specific, precise, forceful, confident, and is able to be demonstrated.
- A strong thesis challenges readers with a point of view that can be debated and can be supported with evidence.
- A weak thesis is simply a declaration of your topic or contains an obvious fact that cannot be argued.
- Depending on your topic, it may or may not be appropriate to use first person point of view.
- Revise your thesis by ensuring all words are specific, all ideas are exact, and all verbs express action.

The chapter above is adapted from University of Minnesota's *Writing for Success*, Chapter 9, "Developing a Strong Thesis Statement," CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0. An introduction has been added, the exercises have been modified, and the section "Formulating a Thesis Statement" has been added.

4. Organize

This chapter is about the importance of organizing a draft with a clear outline. This step is sometimes combined with the previous step in the writing process—developing a thesis statement. Some writers find it helpful to first jot down their main ideas in outline form, and then use that visual to help develop an overarching thesis statement. Ultimately, moving from thesis statement to outline is dynamic: writers often develop an initial hunch, work out the kinds through an outline, and then revise the thesis each point becomes more obviously structured. This chapter, “Organize,” will stress the importance of planning and structure in the writing process.

“Organize and draft” comes next in The Writing Process. CC-BY 4.0.

The Importance of Organization

Your prewriting activities and readings have helped you gather information for your assignment. The more you sort through the pieces of information you found, the more you will begin to see the connections between them. Patterns and gaps may begin to stand out. But only when you start to organize your ideas will you be able to translate your raw insights into a form that will communicate meaning to your audience.

When you write, you need to organize your ideas in an order that makes sense. The writing you complete in all your courses exposes how analytically and critically your mind works. In some courses, the only direct contact you may have with your instructor is through the assignments you write for the course. You can make a good impression by spending time ordering your ideas.

Order refers to your choice of what to present first, second, third, and so on in your writing. The order you pick closely relates to your purpose for writing that particular assignment. For example, when telling a story, it may be important to first describe the background for the action. Or you may need to first describe a 3-D movie projector or a television studio to help readers visualize the setting and scene. You may want to group your support effectively to convince readers that your point of view on an issue is well reasoned and worthy of belief.

In longer pieces of writing, you may organize different parts in different ways so that your purpose stands out clearly and all parts of the paper work together to consistently develop your main point.

Methods of Organizing Writing

The three common methods of organizing writing are chronological order, spatial order, and order of importance. You need to keep these methods of organization in mind as you plan how to arrange the information you have gathered in an outline. An outline is a written plan that serves as a skeleton for the paragraphs you write. Later, when you draft paragraphs in the next stage of the writing process, you will add support to create "flesh" and "muscle" for your assignment.

When you write, your goal is not only to complete an assignment but also to write for a specific purpose—perhaps to inform, to explain, to persuade, or for a combination of these purposes. Your purpose for writing should always be in the back of your mind, because it will help you decide which pieces of information belong together and how you will order them. In other words, choose the order that will most effectively fit your purpose and support your main point.

Table "Order versus Purpose" shows the connection between order and purpose.

Table 4.1 Order versus Purpose

Order	Purpose
Chronological Order	To explain the history of an event or a topic
	To tell a story or relate an experience
	To explain how to do or make something
	To explain the steps in a process
Spatial Order	To help readers visualize something as you want them to see it
	To create a main impression using the senses (sight, touch, taste, smell, and sound)
Order of Importance	To persuade or convince
	To rank items by their importance, benefit, or significance

For an essay question on a test or a brief oral presentation in class, all you may need to prepare is a short, informal outline in which you jot down key ideas in the order you will present them. This kind of outline reminds you to stay focused in a stressful situation and to include all the good ideas that help you explain or prove your point.

For a longer assignment, like an essay or a research paper, many college instructors require students to submit a formal outline before writing a major paper as a way to be sure you are on the right track and are working in an organized manner. A formal outline is a detailed guide that shows how all your supporting ideas relate to each other. It helps you distinguish between ideas that are of equal importance and ones that are of lesser importance. You build your paper based on the framework created by the outline.

Tip

Instructors may also require you to submit an outline with your final draft to check the direction of the assignment and the logic of your final draft. If you are required to submit an outline with the final draft of a paper, remember to revise the outline to reflect any changes you made while writing the paper.

Topic and sentence outlines

There are two types of formal outlines: the topic outline and the sentence outline. You format both types of formal outlines in the same way.

- Place your introduction and thesis statement at the beginning, under roman numeral I.
- Use roman numerals (II, III, IV, V, etc.) to identify main points that develop the thesis statement.
- Use capital letters (A, B, C, D, etc.) to divide your main points into parts.

- Use arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, etc.) if you need to subdivide any As, Bs, or Cs into smaller parts.
- End with the final roman numeral expressing your idea for your conclusion.

Here is what the skeleton of a traditional formal outline looks like. The indention helps clarify how the ideas are related.

1. Introduction

   Thesis statement

2. Main point 1 → *becomes the topic sentence of body paragraph 1*

3. Main point 2 → *becomes the topic sentence of body paragraph 2*

4. Main point 3 → *becomes the topic sentence of body paragraph 3*

5. Conclusion

Tips

In an outline, any supporting detail can be developed with subpoints. For simplicity, the model shows them only under the first main point.

Formal outlines are often quite rigid in their organization. As many instructors will specify, you cannot subdivide one point if it is only one part. For example, for every roman numeral I, there must be a For every A, there must be a B. For every arabic numeral 1, there must be a 2. See for yourself on the sample outlines that follow.

Topic outlines

A topic outline is the same as a sentence outline except you use words or phrases instead of complete sentences. Words and phrases keep the outline short and easier to comprehend. All the headings, however, must be written in parallel structure.

Here is the topic outline that Mariah constructed for the essay she is developing. Her purpose is to inform, and her audience is a general audience of her fellow college students. Notice how Mariah begins with her thesis statement. She then arranges her main points and supporting details in outline form using short phrases in parallel grammatical structure.

I. Introduction
    - Thesis statement: Everyone wants the newest and the best digital technology, but the choices are many, and the specifications are often confusing.

II. E-book readers and the way that people read
    A. Books easy to access and carry around
        1. Electronic downloads
        2. Storage in memory for hundreds of books
    B. An expanding market
        1. E-book readers from booksellers
        2. E-book readers from electronics and computer companies
    C. Limitations of current e-book readers
        1. Incompatible features from one brand to the next
        2. Borrowing and sharing e-books

III. Film cameras replaced by digital cameras
    A. Three types of digital cameras
        1. Compact digital cameras
        2. Single lens reflex cameras, or SLRs
        3. Cameras that combine the best features of both
    B. The confusing "megapixel wars"
    C. The zoom lens battle

IV. The confusing choice among televisions
    A. 1080p vs. 768p
    B. Plasma screens vs. LCDs
    C. Home media centers

V. Conclusion
    - How to be a wise consumer

Checklist

Writing an Effective Topic Outline

This checklist can help you write an effective topic outline for your assignment. It will also help you discover where you may need to do additional reading or prewriting.

- Do I have a controlling idea that guides the development of the entire piece of writing?
- Do I have three or more main points that I want to make in this piece of writing? Does each main point connect to my controlling idea?
- Is my outline in the best order—chronological order, spatial order, or order of importance—for me to present my main points? Will this order help me get my main point across?
- Do I have supporting details that will help me inform, explain, or prove my main points?
- Do I need to add more support? If so, where?
- Do I need to make any adjustments in my working thesis statement before I consider it the final version?

Writing at Work

Word processing programs generally have an automatic numbering feature that can be used to prepare outlines. This feature automatically sets indents and lets you use the tab key to arrange information just as you would in an outline. Although in business this style might be acceptable, in college your instructor might have different requirements. Teach yourself how to customize the levels of outline numbering in your word-processing program to fit your instructor's preferences.

Exercise 4.1

Using the working thesis statement you wrote in the previous chapter, "Thesis Statements," and the results of your brainstorming from "Generating Ideas," construct a topic outline for your essay. Be sure to observe correct outline form, including correct indentions and the use of Roman and arabic numerals and capital letters.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your outline. Point out areas of interest from their outline and what you would like to learn more about.

Sentence Outlines

A sentence outline is the same as a topic outline except you use complete sentences instead of words or phrases. Complete sentences create clarity and can advance you one step closer to a draft in the writing process.

Here is the sentence outline that Mariah constructed for the essay she is developing.

I. Introduction

- Thesis statement: Everyone wants the newest and the best digital technology, but the choices are many, and the specifications are often confusing.

II. E-book readers are changing the way people read.

  A. E-book readers make books easy to access and to carry.

    1. Books can be downloaded electronically.
    2. Devices can store hundreds of books in memory.

  B. The market expands as a variety of companies enter it.

    1. Booksellers sell their own e-book readers.
    2. Electronics and computer companies also sell e-book readers.

  C. Current e-book readers have significant limitations.

    1. The devices are owned by different brands and may not be compatible.
    2. Few programs have been made to fit the other way Americans read: by borrowing books from libraries.

III. Digital cameras have almost totally replaced film cameras.

  A. The first major choice is the type of digital camera.

    1. Compact digital cameras are light but have fewer megapixels.
    2. Single lens reflex cameras, or SLRs, may be large and heavy but can be used for many functions.
    3. Some cameras combine the best features of compacts and SLRs.

  B. Choosing the camera type involves the confusing "megapixel wars."

  C. The zoom lens battle also determines the camera you will buy.

IV. Nothing is more confusing to me than choosing among televisions.

  A. In the resolution wars, what are the benefits of 1080p and 768p?

  B. In the screen-size wars, what do plasma screens and LCD screens offer?

  C. Does every home really need a media center?

V. Conclusion

- The solution for many people should be to avoid buying on impulse. Consumers should think about what they really need, not what is advertised.

Tip

The information compiled under each roman numeral will become a paragraph in your final paper. In the previous example, the outline follows the standard five-paragraph essay arrangement, but longer essays will require more paragraphs and thus more roman numerals. If you think that a paragraph might become too long or stringy, add an additional paragraph to your outline, renumbering the main points appropriately.

Writing at Work

PowerPoint presentations, used both in schools and in the workplace, are organized in a way very similar to formal outlines. PowerPoint presentations often contain information in the form of talking points that the presenter develops with more details and examples than are contained on the PowerPoint slide.

Exercise 4.2

Expand the topic outline you prepared in the previous execise to make it a sentence outline. In this outline, be sure to include multiple supporting points for your main topic even if your topic outline does not contain them. Be sure to observe correct outline form, including correct indentations and the use of Roman and arabic numerals and capital letters.

Key Takeaways

- Writers must put their ideas in order so the assignment makes sense. The most common orders are chronological order, spatial order, and order of importance.
- After gathering and evaluating the information you found for your essay, the next step is to write a working, or preliminary, thesis statement.
- The working thesis statement expresses the main idea that you want to develop in the entire piece of writing. It can be modified as you continue the writing process.
- Effective writers prepare a formal outline to organize their main ideas and supporting details in the order they will be presented.
- A topic outline uses words and phrases to express the ideas.
- A sentence outline uses complete sentences to express the ideas.
- The writer's thesis statement begins the outline, and the outline ends with suggestions for the concluding paragraph.

5. Drafting Part 1: Getting Started

"Drafting Part 1: Getting Started" is the first installment of three chapters that focus on the drafting stage within the writing process. It includes some mental strategies for getting started and then walks the reader through a fictional student's initial attempt at a rough draft. Draft Parts 2 and 3 offer other tips that are important to review before an initial draft, and we recommend that those chapters be read in conjunction with this one.

"Draft" comes next in The Writing Process. CC-BY 4.0.

Drafting is the stage of the writing process in which you develop a complete first version of a piece of writing.

Even professional writers admit that an empty page scares them because they feel they need to come up with something fresh and original every time they open a blank document on their computers. Because you have completed the first two steps in the writing process, you have already recovered from empty page syndrome. You have hours of prewriting and planning already done. You know what will go on that blank page: what you wrote in your outline.

Getting Started: Strategies For Drafting

This chapter will walk you through how to begin drafting a basic five-paragraph academic essay, a structure many students may be familiar with from their K-12 teaching. College essays move beyond the five-paragraph structure, but it's a place we can start from.

A traditional five-paragraph essay contains an introduction, three body paragraphs, and a conclusion. If you are more comfortable starting on paper than on the computer, you can start on paper and then type it before you revise. You can also use a voice recorder to get yourself started, dictating a paragraph or two to get you thinking. In this lesson, Mariah does all her work on the computer, but you may use pen and paper or the computer to write a rough draft.

What makes the writing process so beneficial to writers is that it encourages alternatives to standard practices while motivating you to develop your best ideas. For instance, the following approaches, done alone or in combination with others, may improve your writing and help you move forward in the writing process:

- **Begin writing with the part you know the most about.** You can start with the third paragraph in your outline if ideas come easily to mind. You can start with the second paragraph or the first paragraph, too. Although paragraphs may vary in length, keep in mind that short paragraphs may contain insufficient support. Readers may also think the writing is abrupt. Long paragraphs may be wordy and may lose your reader's interest. As a guideline, try to write paragraphs longer than one sentence but shorter than the length of an entire double-spaced page.
- **Write one paragraph at a time and then stop.** As long as you complete the assignment on time, you may choose how many paragraphs you complete in one sitting. Pace yourself. On the other hand, try not to procrastinate. Writers should always

meet their deadlines.

- **Take short breaks to refresh your mind.** This tip might be most useful if you are writing a multipage report or essay. Still, if you are antsy or cannot concentrate, take a break to let your mind rest. But do not let breaks extend too long. If you spend too much time away from your essay, you may have trouble starting again. You may forget key points or lose momentum. Try setting an alarm to limit your break, and when the time is up, return to your desk to write.
- **Be reasonable with your goals.** If you decide to take ten-minute breaks, try to stick to that goal. If you told yourself that you need more facts, then commit to finding them. Holding yourself to your own goals will create successful writing assignments.
- **Keep your audience and purpose in mind as you write.** These aspects of writing are just as important when you are writing a single paragraph for your essay as when you are considering the direction of the entire essay.

Of all of these considerations, keeping your purpose and your audience at the front of your mind is the most important key to writing success. If your purpose is to persuade, for example, you will present your facts and details in the most logical and convincing way you can *for the intended audience*. What looks like strong evidence to some audiences will seem weak or irrelevant to others.

Your purpose will guide your mind as you compose your sentences. Your audience will guide word choice. Are you writing for experts, for a general audience, for other college students, or for people who know very little about your topic? Keep asking yourself what your readers, with their background and experience, need to be told in order to understand your ideas. How can you best express your ideas so they are totally clear and your communication is effective?

Tip

You may want to identify your purpose and audience on an index card that you clip to your paper (or keep next to your computer). On that card, you may want to write notes to yourself—perhaps about what that audience might not know or what it needs to know—so that you will be sure to address those issues when you write. It may be a good idea to also state exactly what you want to explain to that audience, or to inform them of, or to persuade them about.

Writing at Work

Many of the documents you produce at work target a particular audience for a particular purpose. You may find that it is highly advantageous to know as much as you can about your target audience and to prepare your message to reach that audience, even if the audience is a coworker or your boss. Menu language is a common example. Descriptions like "organic romaine" and "free-range chicken" are intended to appeal to a certain type of customer though perhaps not to the same customer who craves a thick steak. Similarly, mail-order companies research the demographics of the people who buy their merchandise. Successful vendors customize product descriptions in catalogs to appeal to their buyers' tastes. For example, the product descriptions in a skateboarder catalog will differ from the descriptions in a clothing catalog for mature adults.

Exercise 5.1

My purpose: ____

My audience: ____

Setting Goals for Your First Draft

A draft is a complete version of a piece of writing, but it is not the final version. The step in the writing process after drafting, as you may remember, is revising. During revising, you will have the opportunity to make changes to your first draft before you put the finishing touches on it during the editing and proofreading stage. A first draft gives you a working version that you can later improve.

Writing at Work

Workplace writing in certain environments is done by teams of writers who collaborate on the planning, writing, and revising of documents, such as long reports, technical manuals, and the results of scientific research. Collaborators do not need to be in the same room, the same building, or even the same city. Many collaborations are conducted over the Internet.

In a perfect collaboration, each contributor has the right to add, edit, and delete text. Strong communication skills, in addition to strong writing skills, are important in this kind of writing situation because disagreements over style, content, process, emphasis, and other issues may arise.

The collaborative software, or document management systems, that groups use to work on common projects is sometimes called groupware or workgroup support systems.

The reviewing tool on some word-processing programs also gives you access to a collaborative tool that many smaller workgroups use when they exchange documents. You can also use it to leave comments to yourself.

Tip

If you invest some time now to investigate how the reviewing tool in your word processor works, you will be able to use it with confidence during the revision stage of the writing process. Then, when you start to revise, set your reviewing tool to track any changes you make, so you will be able to tinker with text and commit only those final changes you want to keep.

Basic Elements of a First Draft

If you have been using the information in this chapter step by step to help you develop an assignment, you already have both a formal topic outline and a formal sentence outline to direct your writing. Knowing what a first draft looks like will help you make the creative leap from the outline to the first draft. A first draft should include the following elements:

- An introduction that piques the audience's interest, tells what the essay is about, and motivates readers to keep reading.

- A *thesis statement* that presents the main point, or controlling idea, of the entire piece of writing.
- A topic sentence in each paragraph that states the main idea of the paragraph and implies how that main idea connects to the thesis statement.
- Supporting sentences in each paragraph that develop or explain the topic sentence. These can be specific facts, examples, anecdotes, or other details that elaborate on the topic sentence.
- A conclusion that reinforces the thesis statement and leaves the audience with a feeling of completion.

These elements follow the standard five-paragraph essay format, which you probably first encountered in high school. This basic format is valid for most essays you will write in college, even much longer ones. For now, however, Mariah focuses on writing the three body paragraphs from her outline.

The Role of Topic Sentences

Topic sentences make the structure of a text and the writer's basic arguments easy to locate and comprehend. In college writing, using a topic sentence in each paragraph of the essay is the standard rule. However, the topic sentence does not always have to be the first sentence in your paragraph even if it the first item in your formal outline.

Tip

When you begin to draft your paragraphs, you should follow your outline fairly closely. After all, you spent valuable time developing those ideas. However, as you begin to express your ideas in complete sentences, it might strike you that the topic sentence might work better at the end of the paragraph or in the middle. Try it. Writing a draft, by its nature, is a good time for experimentation.

The topic sentence can be the first, middle, or final sentence in a paragraph. The assignment's audience and purpose will often determine where a topic sentence belongs. When the purpose of the assignment is to persuade, for example, the topic sentence should be the first sentence in a paragraph. In a persuasive essay, the writer's point of view should be clearly expressed at the beginning of each paragraph.

Choosing where to position the topic sentence depends not only on your audience and purpose but also on the essay's arrangement, or order. When you organize information according to order of importance, the topic sentence may be the final sentence in a paragraph. All the supporting sentences build up to the topic sentence. Chronological order may also position the topic sentence as the final sentence because the controlling idea of the paragraph may make the most sense at the end of a sequence.

When you organize information according to spatial order, a topic sentence may appear as the middle sentence in a paragraph. An essay arranged by spatial order often contains paragraphs that begin with descriptions. A reader may first need a visual in his or her mind before understanding the development of the paragraph. When the topic sentence is in the middle, it unites the details that come before it with the ones that come after it.

Tip

As you read critically throughout the writing process, keep topic sentences in mind. You may discover topic sentences that are not always located at the beginning of a paragraph. For example, fiction writers customarily use topic ideas, either expressed or implied, to move readers through their texts. In nonfiction writing, such as popular magazines, topic sentences are often used when the author thinks it is appropriate (based on the audience and the purpose, of course). A single topic sentence might even control the development of a number of paragraphs.

Developing topic sentences and thinking about their placement in a paragraph will prepare you to write the rest of the paragraph.

Paragraphs

The paragraph is the main structural component of an essay as well as other forms of writing. Each paragraph of an essay adds another related main idea to support the writer's thesis, or controlling idea. Each related main idea is supported and developed with facts, examples, and other details that explain it. By exploring and refining one main idea at a time, writers build a strong case for their thesis.

How long should a paragraph be?

One answer to this important question may be "long enough"—long enough for you to address your points and explain your main idea. To grab attention or to present succinct supporting ideas, a paragraph can be fairly short and consist of two to three sentences. A paragraph in a complex essay about some abstract point in philosophy or archaeology can be three-quarters of a page or more in length. As long as the writer maintains close focus on the topic and does not ramble, a long paragraph is acceptable in college-level writing. In general, try to keep the paragraphs longer than one sentence but shorter than one full page of double-spaced text.

Tip

Journalistic style often calls for brief two- or three-sentence paragraphs because of how people read the news, both online and in print. Blogs and other online information sources often adopt this paragraphing style, too. Readers often skim the first paragraphs of a great many articles before settling on the handful of stories they want to read in detail.

You may find that a particular paragraph you write may be longer than one that will hold your audience's interest. In such cases, you should divide the paragraph into two or more shorter paragraphs, adding a topic statement or some kind of transitional word or phrase at the start of the new paragraph. Transition words or phrases show the connection between the two ideas.

In all cases, however, be guided by what you instructor wants and expects to find in your draft. Many instructors will expect you to develop a mature college-level style as you progress through the semester's assignments.

Exercise 5.2

To build your sense of appropriate paragraph length, use the Internet to find examples of the following items. Copy them into a file, identify your sources, and present them to your instructor with your annotations, or notes.

- A news article written in short paragraphs. Take notes on, or annotate, your selection with your observations about the effect of combining paragraphs that develop the same topic idea. Explain how effective those paragraphs would be.
- A long paragraph from a scholarly work that you identify through an academic search engine. Annotate it with your observations about the author's paragraphing style.

Starting your first paragraph

Now we are finally ready to look over Mariah's shoulder as she begins to write her essay about digital technology and the confusing choices that consumers face. As she does, you should have in front of you your outline, with its thesis statement and topic sentences, and the notes you wrote earlier in this lesson on your purpose and audience. Reviewing these will put both you and Mariah in the proper mind-set to start.

The following is Mariah's thesis statement.

Everyone wants the newest and the best digital technology, but the choices are many, and the specifications are often confusing.

Here are the notes that Mariah wrote to herself to characterize her purpose and audience.

Purpose: My purpose is to inform readers about the wide variety of consumer digital technology available in stores and to explain why the specifications for these products, expressed in numbers that average consumers don't understand, often cause bad or misinformed buying decisions.

Audience: My audience is my instructor and members of this class. Most of them are not heavy into technology except for the usual laptops, cell phones, and MP3 players, which are not topics I'm writing about. I'll have to be as exact and precise as I can be when I explain possibly unfamiliar product specifications. At the same time, they're more with it electronically than my grandparents' VCR-flummoxed generation, so I won't have to explain every last detail.

Mariah chose to begin by writing a quick introduction based on her thesis statement. She knew that she would want to improve her introduction significantly when she revised. Right now, she just wanted to give herself a starting point.

Tip

Remember Mariah's other options. She could have started directly with any of the body paragraphs.

You will learn more about writing attention-getting introductions and effective conclusions in a later chapter.

With her thesis statement and her purpose and audience notes in front of her, Mariah then looked at her sentence outline. She chose to use that outline because it includes the topic sentences. The following is the portion of her outline for the first body paragraph. The roman numeral II identifies the topic sentence for the paragraph, capital letters indicate supporting details, and arabic numerals label subpoints.

II. E-book readers are changing the way people read.

A. E-book readers make books easy to access and to carry.

1. Books can be downloaded electronically.
2. Devices can store hundreds of books in memory.

B. The market expands as a variety of companies enter it.

1. Booksellers sell their own e-book readers.
2. Electronics and computer companies also sell e-book readers.

C. Current e-book readers have significant limitations.

1. The devices are owned by different brands and may not be compatible.
2. Few programs have been made to fit the other way Americans read: by borrowing books from libraries

Mariah then began to expand the ideas in her outline into a paragraph. Notice how the outline helped her guarantee that all her sentences in the body of the paragraph develop the topic sentence.

E-book readers are changing the way people read, or so e-book developers hope. The main selling point for these handheld devices, which are sort of the size of a paperback book, is that they make books easy to access and carry. Electronic versions of printed books can be downloaded online for a few bucks or directly from your cell phone. These devices can store hundreds of books in memory and, with text-to-speech features, can even read the texts. The market for e-books and e-book readers keeps expanding as a lot of companies enter it. Online and traditional booksellers have been the first to market e-book readers to the public, but computer companies, especially the ones already involved in cell phone, online music, and notepad computer technology, will also enter the market. The problem for consumers, however, is which device to choose. Incompatibility is the norm. E-books can be read only on the devices they were intended for. Furthermore, use is restricted by the same kind of DRM systems that restrict the copying of music and videos. So, book buyers are often unable to lend books to other readers, as they can with a real book. Few accommodations have been made to fit the other way Americans read: by borrowing books from libraries. What is a buyer to do?

Tip

If you write your first draft on the computer, consider creating a new file folder for each course with a set of subfolders inside the course folders for each assignment you are given. Label the folders clearly with the course names, and label each assignment folder and word processing document with a title that you will easily recognize. The assignment name is a good choice for the document. Then use that subfolder to store all the drafts you create. When you start each new draft, do not just write over the last one. Instead, save the draft with a new tag after the title—draft 1, draft 2, and so on—so that you will have a complete history of drafts in case your instructor wishes you to submit them.

In your documents, observe any formatting requirements—for margins, headers, placement of page numbers, and other layout matters—that your instructor requires.

Exercise 5.3

Study how Mariah made the transition from her sentence outline to her first draft. First, copy her outline onto your own sheet of paper. Leave a few spaces between each part of the outline. Then copy sentences from Mariah's paragraph to align each sentence with its corresponding entry in her outline.

Continuing the First Draft

Mariah continued writing her essay, moving to the second and third body paragraphs. She had supporting details but no numbered subpoints in her outline, so she had to consult her prewriting notes for specific information to include.

Tip

If you decide to take a break between finishing your first body paragraph and starting the next one, do not start writing immediately when you return to your work. Put yourself back in context and in the mood by rereading what you have already written. This is what Mariah did. If she had stopped writing in the middle of writing the paragraph, she could have jotted down some quick notes to herself about what she would write next.

Preceding each body paragraph that Mariah wrote is the appropriate section of her sentence outline. Notice how she expanded roman numeral III from her outline into a first draft of the second body paragraph. As you read, ask yourself how closely she stayed on purpose and how well she paid attention to the needs of her audience.

III. Digital cameras have almost totally replaced film cameras.
   A. The first major choice is the type of digital camera.
      1. Compact digital cameras are light but lack the megapixels.
      2. Single lens reflex cameras, or SLRs, may be large but can be used for many functions.
      3. Some cameras combine the best features of compacts and SLRs.
   B. Choosing the camera type involves the confusing "megapixel wars."
   C. The zoom lens battle also determines the camera you will buy.

Digital cameras have almost totally replaced film cameras in amateur photographers' gadget bags. My father took hundreds of slides when his children were growing up, but he had more and more trouble getting them developed. So, he decided to go modern. But, what kind of camera should he buy? The small compact digital cameras could slip right in his pocket, but if he tried to print a photograph larger than an 8 x 10, the quality would be poor. When he investigated buying a single lens reflex camera, or SLR, he discovered that they were as versatile as his old film camera, also an SLR, but they were big and bulky. Then he discovered yet a third type, which combined the smaller size of the compact digital cameras with the zoom lenses available for SLRs. His first thought was to buy one of those, but then he realized he had a lot of decisions to make. How many megapixels should the camera be? Five? Ten? What is the advantage of each? Then came the size of the zoom lens. He knew that 3x was too small, but what about 25x? Could he hold a lens that long without causing camera shake? He read hundreds of photography magazines and buying guides, and he still wasn't sure he was right.

Mariah then began her third and final body paragraph using roman numeral IV from her outline.

IV. Nothing is more confusing to me than choosing among televisions.
   A. In the resolution wars, what are the benefits of 1080p and 768p?
   B. In the screen-size wars, what do plasma screens and LCD screens offer?
   C. Does every home really need a media center?

Nothing is more confusing to me than choosing among televisions. It confuses lots of people who want a new high-definition digital television (HDTV) with a large screen to watch sports and DVDs on. You could listen to the guys in the electronics store, but word has it they know little more than you do. They want to sell you what they have in stock, not what best fits your needs. You face decisions you never had to make with the old, bulky picture-tube televisions. Screen resolution means the number of horizontal scan lines the screen can show. This resolution is often 1080p, or full HD, or 768p. The trouble is that if you have a smaller screen, 32 inches or 37 inches diagonal, you won't be able to tell the difference with the naked eye. The 1080p televisions cost more, though, so those are what the salespeople want you to buy. They get bigger commissions. The other important decision you face as you walk around the sales floor is whether to get a plasma screen or an LCD screen. Now here the salespeople may finally give you decent info. Plasma flat-panel television screens can be much larger in diameter than their LCD rivals. Plasma screens show decent blacks and can be viewed at a wider angle than current LCD screens. But be careful and tell the salesperson you have budget constraints. Large flat-panel plasma screens are much more expensive than flat-screen LCD models. Don't buy more television than you need

Exercise 5.4

Reread body paragraphs two and three of the essay that Mariah is writing. Then answer the questions on your own sheet of paper.

1. In body paragraph two, Mariah decided to develop her paragraph as a nonfiction narrative. Do you agree with her decision? Explain. How else could she have chosen to develop the paragraph? Why is that better?
2. Compare the writing styles of paragraphs two and three. What evidence do you have that Mariah was getting tired or running out of steam? What advice would you give her? Why?

3. Choose one of these two body paragraphs. Write a version of your own that you think better fits Mariah's audience and purpose.

Writing a Title

A writer's best choice for a title is one that alludes to the main point of the entire essay. Like the headline in a newspaper or the big, bold title in a magazine, an essay's title gives the audience a first peek at the content. If readers like the title, they are likely to keep reading.

Following her outline carefully, Mariah crafted each paragraph of her essay. Moving step by step in the writing process, Mariah finished the draft and even included a brief concluding paragraph. She then decided, as the final touch for her writing session, to add an engaging title.

Thesis Statement: *Everyone wants the newest and the best digital technology, but the choices are many, and the specifications are often confusing.*
Working Title: *Digital Technology: The Newest and the Best at What Price?*

Writing Your Own First Draft

Now you may begin your own first draft, if you have not already done so. Follow the suggestions and the guidelines presented in this section.

Key Takeaways

- Make the writing process work for you. Use any and all of the strategies that help you move forward in the writing process.
- Always be aware of your purpose for writing and the needs of your audience. Cater to those needs in every sensible way.
- Remember to include all the key structural parts of an essay: a thesis statement that is part of your introductory paragraph, three or more body paragraphs as described in your outline, and a concluding paragraph. Then add an engaging title to draw in readers.
- Write paragraphs of an appropriate length for your writing assignment. Paragraphs in college-level writing can be a page long, as long as they cover the main topics in your outline.
- Use your topic outline or your sentence outline to guide the development of your paragraphs and the elaboration of your ideas. Each main idea, indicated by a roman numeral in your outline, becomes the topic of a new paragraph. Develop it with the supporting details and the subpoints of those details that you included in your outline.
- Generally speaking, write your introduction and conclusion last, after you have fleshed out the body

paragraphs.

6. Drafting Part 2: Introductions

This chapter is the second of three devoted to the drafting stage of the writing process. It dives more into that stage by zooming in on the introduction to academic essays.

"Draft" comes next in The Writing Process. CC-BY 4.0.

Editor's Introduction to the Chapter

Many students think of the introduction as a giant funnel: open by establishing the broader topic, then propose a thesis statement at the end that narrows the scope of the essay. For example, a "funnel" introduction about Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography* and the American Dream would open with a general discussion of the American Dream and then propose how Franklin's text relates to that idea.

The problem with the funnel approach is that it places the burden on the reader to fill in missing information. A reader who isn't in the same course as the student may be confused about why the American Dream is being discussed at this point in time. The topic just floats there, timelessly. Why should we care about it?

Introductions crafted for specific *readers* will provide enough background information so the reader can better understand how the writer's essay participates in a more meaningful situation or conversation. Rather than funneling ideas, situationally-attuned introductions practice a context-to-thesis strategy. As the chapter on context explains, introductions are where a text's "context" typically shows up.

In the article below about introductions, Stacie Draper Weatbrook carefully unpacks why a context-to-thesis structure is important and how to begin crafting one yourself. First Year Writers should note, however, that what "context" means will vary depending on the rhetorical situation, and some introductions may not have a thesis statement at all. How to open an essay or article requires the same critical reading strategies that pertain to other aspects of rhetorical savviness, especially an awareness of basic genre conventions. An introduction to a persuasive essay will look very different from the opening to a reflective cover letter, partly because the purposes are different.

Drive for the Road Conditions; Write for the Reader Conditions

by Stacie Draper Weatbrook

You can't drive the same way all the time. You start and stop when you're in traffic, and you can go 80 mph or more on the open Interstates. When you're driving in the mountains, you don't take curves at 50 mph. Instead, you slow down to avoid careening off the cliffs. In the rain, you reduce your speed to avoid hydroplaning. When driving in the snow, you reduce your speed, you keep a big distance between your car and the other cars, and you don't break quickly so your car doesn't slide out of control.

I know a couple who had great conflicts in their marriage in one particular area: the husband's driving. He drove fast. He followed the car in front of him much too closely. He didn't plan ahead and merged at the last minute. The wife, anxious and nervous about driving anyway, found his aggressive driving style more than she could handle.

Finally one day, the wife told him, **"You need to drive for the conditions, and right now the condition is me."** Instead of fuming, holding a grudge, or giving him the silent treatment, she was able to explain what she needed. Because he loves her and wants her comfort, he changed his way of driving.

This couple is my parents, and they will soon celebrate their 50-year anniversary.

Much like considering road conditions, writers consider the rhetorical situation: the writer, the purpose, and the reader. In writing, as in driving, writers need to adjust for the conditions, the audience.

Awareness of your audience should determine how you write. Even when writing to an audience that's knowledgeable about the topic, always err on the side of clarity. In other words, slow down so you make sure your audience is with you.

Here are some tips to write for the conditions.

Start Slowly With an Introduction and Then Build Speed

When you drive, you start at 0 mph and build up speed. It's the same with writing. Your writing is not about showing off how much you know by being cryptic and esoteric and leaving your audience to guess what you mean. Considering your rhetorical situation means recognizing your purpose and communicating it in a way your audience can follow. A simple introduction can do wonders to help the audience see the information and why it's important. You've got to ease the reader into your essay. Your audience could have been watching reruns of *The Office*, buying dog food online, attending yoga class, or any number or random tasks before reading your paper. The point is, your reader, even if they are intensely familiar with your topic, or deeply interested in your progress as a writer, needs a starting place, so take a page out of *The Sound of Music*, and start at the very beginning.

Most of our public and private discourse comes as a reaction to an event or statement. In other words, writing takes place in the context of what others are saying about events, statements, and research. Graff and Birkenstein explain in their book *They Say I Say* that having a clear thesis is not enough; it is the writer's responsibility to show the larger conversation (20). They explain:

> When it comes to constructing an argument, we offer you the following advice: remember you are entering a conversation and therefore need to start with "what others are saying . . ." and then introduce your own ideas as a response. Specifically, we suggest that you summarize what "they say" as soon as you can in your text, and remind readers of it at strategic points as your text unfolds. (20–21)

As you write, think about the bigger picture and what "they" may be saying about your issue:

Was a law passed recently that made your topic more interesting to the public? Explain what the law is and why the public is concerned.

Were you asked to analyze an article for class? Tell the audience what the article is named, who wrote it, and what it's about.

Did a current event happen recently to spark a debate? Explain that event.Could a story ease your audience into the subject? Capture their interest and tell a story.

Did someone recently say or post something publicly about the topic? Tell the audience what they said.

Give your audience enough background so they know what the issue is and why it's important. At the same time, it's essential to note that setting the context doesn't mean overwhelming audiences with pages of explanations that leave the reader unsure of the paper's purpose. When driving you don't go 5 mph for the first ten minutes on the freeway just to warm up. Instead, you quickly build up speed so you can merge onto the freeway and get to your destination.

Here's an example introduction from a paper about the causes of Celiac disease. Notice how it quickly gives context then asks a focusing question to set up the organization for the paper:

> Twenty-five years ago most people had no idea what gluten was. Fast forward to today and you're sure to have heard of it. Someone you know may be gluten intolerant or have been diagnosed with Celiac disease. Your local restaurant menus offer gluten-free options. Entire shelves in grocery stores are dedicated to products without wheat, barely, or rye, and the group of proteins, called gluten, that these grains contain. It seems over the past several years Celiac disease and gluten intolerance has been on the rise. What's responsible for what seems to be an explosion in the increase of diagnosed cases of Celiac disease?

This introduction started with the idea that twenty-five years ago most people had no idea what gluten was, moved on to the idea that today you're sure to have heard of it, and suggested maybe the audience knows someone with Celiac disease or has seen restaurant menus or offerings in the grocery store. Starting from the very basics (most people had no idea) and moving to the question *What's responsible for the increase in Celiac disease?* ensures the audience can follow along.

7. Drafting Part 3: Paragraphing

This chapter is the third of three on the drafting stage. Previous chapters in The Writing Process have touched on different parts of an academic essay, especially the **introduction**. While intros are indeed paragraphs, they tend to have certain conventions (such as end an intro with a thesis statement) that make them unique. The bulk of the essay, on the other hand, is composed of body paragraphs. In the body of the traditional academic essay, a writer is expected to present their main ideas in the form of *point-driven* paragraphs. This chapter, by Amy Guptill introduces students to that basic form of paragraphing.

"Draft" comes next in The Writing Process.

Back to Basics: The Perfect Paragraph

by Amy Guptill

Paragraphs

As Michael Harvey writes, paragraphs are "in essence—a form of punctuation, and like other forms of punctuation they are meant to make written material easy to read."[1] Effective paragraphs are the fundamental units of academic writing; consequently, the thoughtful, multifaceted arguments that your professors expect depend on them. Without good paragraphs, you simply cannot clearly convey sequential points and their relationships to one another. The purpose of this chapter is to highlight strategies for constructing, ordering, and relating paragraphs in academic writing. It could just as well be titled "Organization" because whether or not readers perceive a paper to be well organized depends largely on effective paragraphing.

Many novice writers tend to make a sharp distinction between content and style, thinking that a paper can be strong in one and weak in the other, but focusing on organization shows how content and style converge in deliberative academic writing. A poorly organized paper may contain insightful kernels, but a thoughtful, satisfying argument can't take shape without paragraphs that are crafted, ordered, and connected effectively. On the other side, one can imagine a string of slick, error-free sentences that are somehow lacking in interesting ideas. However, your professors will view even the most elegant prose as rambling and tedious if there isn't a careful, coherent argument to give the text meaning. Paragraphs are the "stuff" of academic writing and, thus, worth our attention here.

1. Michael Harvey, The Nuts and Bolts of College Writing, Second Edition (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 2013), 70.

Key sentences (a.k.a. topic sentences)

In academic writing, readers expect each paragraph to have a sentence or two that captures its main point. They're often called "topic sentences," though many writing instructors prefer to call them "key sentences." There are at least two downsides of the phrase "topic sentence." First, it makes it seem like the paramount job of that sentence is simply to announce the topic of the paragraph. Second, it makes it seem like the topic sentence must always be a single grammatical sentence. Calling it a "key sentence" reminds us that it expresses the central *idea* of the paragraph. And sometimes a question or a two-sentence construction functions as the key.

Key sentences in academic writing do two things. First, they establish the main point that the rest of the paragraph supports. Second, they situate each paragraph within the sequence of the argument, a task that requires transitioning from the prior paragraph. Consider these two examples:

Version A:

> Now we turn to the epidemiological evidence.

Version B:

> The epidemiological evidence provides compelling support for the hypothesis emerging from etiological studies.

Both versions convey a topic; it's pretty easy to predict that the paragraph will be about epidemiological evidence, but only the second version establishes an argumentative point and puts it in context. The paragraph doesn't just describe the epidemiological evidence; it shows how epidemiology is telling the same story as etiology. Similarly, while Version A doesn't relate to anything in particular, Version B immediately suggests that the prior paragraph addresses the biological pathway (i.e. etiology) of a disease and that the new paragraph will bolster the emerging hypothesis with a different kind of evidence. As a reader, it's easy to keep track of how the paragraph about cells and chemicals and such relates to the paragraph about populations in different places.

By clearly establishing an essential point within its analytic context, a well written key sentence gives both you and your reader a firm grasp of how each point relates. For example, compare these two sets of key sentences, each introducing a sequential paragraph[2]:

Version A:

> At the beginning of the AIDS epidemic, the cause of the disease was unclear. …
>
> The cause of AIDS is HIV. …
>
> There are skeptics who question whether HIV is the cause. …

2. This example is drawn from key points from Steven Epstein's Impure Science: AIDS, Activism, and the Politics of Knowledge (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996). An excellent read.

Version B:

> At the beginning of the AIDS epidemic, the cause of the disease was unclear, leading to a broad range of scientific speculation. …
>
> By 1986 HIV had been isolated and found to correlate almost exactly with the incidence of AIDS. …
>
> HIV skeptics, on the other hand, sought to discredit claims based on epidemiology by emphasizing that the pathogenesis of HIV was still unknown. …

Version A isn't wrong per se; it just illustrates a lost opportunity to show the important connections among points. Both versions portray a process unfolding over time: initial uncertainty followed by a breakthrough discovery and then controversy. Even with the same substantive points, a person reading Version A would have to work harder to see how the material in the paragraphs connects. Readers experience Version B as clearer and more engaging.

Thinking of key sentences as sequential points in an argument reminds one that a key sentence doesn't have to always be a single declarative one. Sometimes you need two sentences together to achieve the work of a key sentence, and sometimes a question or quotation does a better job than a declarative sentence in clarifying a logical sequence:

Version C:

> At the beginning of the AIDS epidemic the cause was unclear. Virologists, bacteriologists, immunologists, and epidemiologists all pursued different leads, reflecting their particular areas of expertise…
>
> If drug use, lifestyle, and "immune overload" didn't cause

> AIDS, what did?…
>
> "I've asked questions they apparently can't answer," claimed retrovirologist Peter Duesberg[3] who became an oft-quoted skeptical voice in media accounts of AIDS research in the mid-1980s. …

Version C is based on the same three sequential points as Versions A and B: (1) the cause of AIDS was initially unclear (2) HIV was accepted as the cause (3) lone dissenters questioned the claims. However, versions B and C have much more meaning and momentum, and version C, depending on the nature of the argument, features more precise and lively stylistic choices. Opening the second paragraph with a question (that then gets answered) carries forth the sense of befuddlement that researchers initially experienced and helps to convey why the discovery of HIV was a hugely important turning point. Using the self-glorifying Duesberg quote to launch the third paragraph makes the point about lingering skepticism while also introducing a portrait of a leading figure among the skeptics. While Version B is effective as well, Version C illustrates some of the more lively choices available to academic writers.

A last thing to note about key sentences is that academic readers expect them to be at the beginning of the paragraph. That helps readers comprehend your argument. To see how, try this: find an academic piece (such as a textbook or scholarly article) that strikes you as well written and go through part of it reading just the first sentence of each paragraph. You should be able to easily follow the sequence of logic. When you're writing for professors, it is especially effective to put your key sentences first because they usually convey your own original thinking, which, as you've read here, is exactly what your instructors are looking for in your work. It's a very good

3. This Duesberg quote is from Epstein, Impure Science, 112.

sign when your paragraphs are typically composed of a telling key sentence followed by evidence and explanation.

Knowing this convention of academic writing can help you both read and write more effectively. When you're reading a complicated academic piece for the first time, you might want to go through reading only the first sentence or two of each paragraph to get the overall outline of the argument. Then you can go back and read all of it with a clearer picture of how each of the details fit in.[4] And when you're writing, you may also find it useful to write the first sentence of each paragraph (instead of a topic-based outline) to map out a thorough argument before getting immersed in sentence-level wordsmithing. For example, compare these two scaffolds. Which one would launch you into a smoother drafting process?:[5]

Version A (Outline Of Topics):

I. Granovetter's "Strength of weak ties"
  a. Definition
  b. Example—getting jobs
  II. Creativity in social networks
  a. Explanation

4. I hesitate to add that this first-sentence trick is also a good one for when you haven't completed an assigned reading and only have 10 minutes before class. Reading just the first sentence of each paragraph will quickly tell you a lot about the assigned text.
5. This example is from Katherine Giuffre, Communities and Networks: Using Social Network Analysis to Rethink Urban and Community Studies (Malden, MA: Polity, 2013).

b. Richard Florida’s argument
III. Implications
a. For urban planners
b. For institutions of higher education

Version B (Key-Sentence Sketch):

> The importance of networking for both career development and social change is well known. Granovetter (1973) explains that weak ties—that is, ties among acquaintances—are often more useful in job hunting because they connect job-seekers to a broader range of people and workplaces. …
>
> Subsequent research in network analysis has shown that weak ties can promote creativity by bringing ideas together from different social realms. …
>
> Richard Florida (2002) argues that cities would do well to facilitate weak ties in order to recruit members of the “creative class” and spur economic development. …
>
> Florida’s argument can inspire a powerful new approach to strategic planning within colleges and universities as well. …

As you can see, emphasizing key sentences in both the process and product of academic writing is one way to ensure that your efforts stay focused on developing your argument and communicating your own original thinking in a clear, logical way.

Cohesion and coherence

With a key sentence established, the next task is to shape the body of your paragraph to be both cohesive and coherent. As Williams and Bizup[6] explain, cohesion is about the "sense of flow" (how each sentence fits with the next), while coherence is about the "sense of the whole".[7] Some students worry too much about "flow" and spend a lot of time on sentence-level issues to promote it. I encourage you to focus on underlying structure. For the most part, a text reads smoothly when it conveys a thoughtful and well organized argument or analysis. Focus first and most on your ideas, on crafting an ambitious analysis. The most useful guides advise you to first focus on getting your ideas on paper and then revising for organization and wordsmithing later, refining the analysis as you go. Thus, I discuss creating cohesion and coherent paragraphs here as if you already have some rough text written and are in the process of smoothing out your prose to clarify your argument for both your reader and yourself.

Cohesion refers to the flow from sentence to sentence. For example, compare these passages:

Version A (That I Rewrote):

> Granovetter begins by looking at balance theory. If an actor, A, is strongly tied to both B and C, it is extremely likely that B and C are, sooner or later, going to be tied to each other, according to balance theory (1973:1363).[10] Bridge ties between cliques are always weak ties, Granovetter argues (1973:1364). Weak ties may not necessarily be bridges, but Granovetter argues that bridges will be weak. If two actors share a strong tie, they will draw in their other strong

6. Joseph M. Williams.and Joseph Bizup. Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace 11th edition (New York: Longman, 2014), 68.
7. Ibid., 71.

> relations and will eventually form a clique. Only weak ties that do not have the strength to draw together all the "friends of friends" can connect people in different cliques.

Version B (The Original By Giuffre):

> Granovetter begins by looking at balance theory. In brief, balance theory tells us that if an actor, A, is strongly tied to both B and C, it is extremely likely that B and C are, sooner or later, going to be tied to each other (1973:1363). Granovetter argues that because of this, bridge ties between cliques are always weak ties (1973:1364). Weak ties may not necessarily be bridges, but Granovetter argues that bridges will be weak. This is because if two actors share a strong tie, they will draw in their other strong relations and will eventually form a clique. The only way, therefore, that people in different cliques can be connected is through weak ties that do not have the strength to draw together all the "friends of friends."[8]

Version A has the exact same information as version B, but it is harder to read because it is less cohesive. Each sentence in version B begins with old information and bridges to new information. Here's Version B again with the relevant parts emboldened:

> Granovetter begins by looking at balance theory. In brief, balance theory tells us that if an actor, A, is strongly tied to both B and C, it is extremely likely that B and C are, sooner or later, going to be tied to each other (1973:1363). Granovetter argues that because of this, bridge ties between cliques are always weak ties (1973:1364). Weak ties may not

8. Guiffre. Communities and Networks, 98.

> necessarily be bridges, but Granovetter argues that bridges will be weak. This is because if two actors share a strong tie, they will draw in their other strong relations and will eventually form a clique. The only way, therefore, that people in different cliques can be connected is through weak ties that do not have the strength to draw together all the "friends of friends."

The first sentence establishes the key idea of balance theory. The next sentence begins with balance theory and ends with social ties, which is the focus of the third sentence. The concept of weak ties connects the third and fourth sentences and concept of cliques the fifth and sixth sentences. In Version A, in contrast, the first sentence focuses on balance theory, but then the second sentence makes a new point about social ties *before* telling the reader that the point comes from balance theory. The reader has to take in a lot of unfamiliar information before learning how it fits in with familiar concepts. Version A is coherent, but the lack of cohesion makes it tedious to read.

The lesson is this: if you or others perceive a passage you've written to be awkward or choppy, even though the topic is consistent, try rewriting it to ensure that each sentence begins with a familiar term or concept. If your points don't naturally daisy-chain together like the examples given here, consider numbering them. For example, you may choose to write, "Proponents of the legislation point to four major benefits." Then you could discuss four loosely related ideas without leaving your reader wondering how they relate.

While cohesion is about the sense of flow; coherence is about the sense of the whole. For example, here's a passage that is cohesive (from sentence to sentence) but lacks coherence:

> Your social networks and your location within them shape the kinds and amount of information that you have access to. Information is distinct from data, in that makes some kind of generalization about a person, thing, or population.

> Defensible generalizations about society can be either probabilities (i.e., statistics) or patterns (often from qualitative analysis). Such probabilities and patterns can be temporal, spatial, or simultaneous.

Each sentence in the above passage starts with a familiar idea and progresses to a new one, but it lacks coherence—a sense of being about one thing. Good writers often write passages like that when they're free-writing or using the drafting stage to cast a wide net for ideas. A writer weighing the power and limits of social network analysis may free-write something like that example and, from there, develop a more specific plan for summarizing key insights about social networks and then discussing them with reference to the core tenets of social science. As a draft, an incoherent paragraph often points to a productive line of reasoning; one just has to continue thinking it through in order to identify a clear argumentative purpose for each paragraph. With its purpose defined, each paragraph, then, becomes a lot easier to write. Coherent paragraphs aren't just about style; they are a sign of a thoughtful, well developed analysis.

The wind-up

Some guides advise you to end each paragraph with a specific concluding sentence, in a sense, to treat each paragraph as a kind of mini-essay. But that's not a widely held convention. Most well written academic pieces don't adhere to that structure. The last sentence of the paragraph should certainly be in your own words (as in, not a quote), but as long as the paragraph succeeds in carrying out the task that it has been assigned by its key sentence, you don't need to worry about whether that last sentence has an air of conclusiveness. For example, consider these paragraphs about the cold fusion controversy of the 1980s that appeared in a best-selling textbook[9]:

> The experiment seemed straightforward and there were plenty of scientists willing to try it. Many did. It was wonderful to have a simple laboratory experiment on fusion to try after the decades of embarrassing attempts to control hot fusion. This effort required multi-billion dollar machines whose every success seemed to be capped with an unanticipated failure. 'Cold fusion' seemed to provide, as Martin Fleischmann said during the course of that famous Utah press conference, 'another route'—the route of little science.

In that example, the first and last sentences in the paragraph are somewhat symmetrical: the authors introduce the idea of accessible science, contrast it with big science, and bring it back to the phrase "little science." Here's an example from the same chapter of the same book that does not have any particular symmetry[10]:

> The struggle between proponents and critics in a scientific controversy is always a struggle for credibility. When scientists make claims which are literally 'incredible', as in the cold fusion case, they face an uphill struggle. The problem Pons and Fleischmann had to overcome was that they had credibility as electrochemists but not as nuclear physicists. And it was nuclear physics where their work was likely to have its main impact.

The last sentence of the paragraph doesn't mirror the first, but

9. Harry Collins and Trevor Pinch, The Golem: What You Should Know About Science 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Canto, 1998), 58.
10. Ibid., 74.

the paragraph still works just fine. In general, every sentence of academic writing should add some unique content. Don't trouble yourself with having the last sentence in every paragraph serve as a mini-conclusion. Instead, worry about developing each point sufficiently and making your logical sequence clear.

Conclusion: paragraphs as punctuation

To reiterate the initial point, it is useful to think of paragraphs as punctuation that organize your ideas in a readable way. Each paragraph should be an irreplaceable node within a coherent sequence of logic. Thinking of paragraphs as "building blocks" evokes the "five-paragraph theme" structure: if you have identical stone blocks, it hardly matters what order they're in. In the successful organically structured college paper, the structure and tone of each paragraph reflects its indispensable role within the overall piece. These goals—making every bit count and having each part situated within the whole—also anchor the discussion in the next chapter: how to write introductions and conclusions that frame—rather than simply book-end—your analysis.

Resources

1. Michael Harvey's The Nuts and Bolts of College Writing 2nd ed. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 2013) is another short and affordable guide. His discussion of paragraphing is among the many gems in the book.

2. Online resources from university writing centers offer a lot of great information about effective paragraphing and topic sentences. I especially admire this one from Indiana University, this one from Colorado State, and this one from the University of Richmond.
3. In addition to Williams' and Bizup's excellent lesson on cohesion and coherence in Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace 11th ed. (New York: Longman, 2014), check out this site at George Mason University, this handout from Duke University, and this resource from Clarkson University.

Exercise 7.1

1. Find a piece of academic writing you admire and copy down the first sentence of each paragraph. How well do those sentences reflect the flow of the argument? Show those sentences to other people; how clearly can they envision the flow of the piece?
2. For each of the following short passages, decide whether they lack cohesion or coherence.A. The Roman siege of Masada in the first century CE, ending as it did with the suicide of 960 Jewish rebels, has been interpreted in various ways in Jewish history. History is best understood as a product of the present: the stories we tell ourselves to make

sense of our complicated world. History lessons in elementary school curricula, however, rarely move beyond facts and timelines.B. Polar explorer Earnest Shackleton is often considered a model of effective leadership. *The Endurance* was frozen into the Antarctic ice where it was subsequently crushed, abandoning Shackleton and his 22-person crew on unstable ice floes, hundreds of miles from any human outpost. Two harrowing journeys by lifeboat and several long marches over the ice over the course of two Antarctic winters eventually resulted in their rescue. Amazingly, no one died during the ordeal.C. A *recent analysis of a 1.8 million year-old hominid skull* suggests that human evolutionary lineage is simpler than we thought. *Homo erectus*, a species that persisted almost 2 million years, lived in most parts of Africa as well as Western and Eastern Asia. Some scientists are now arguing that *Homo erectus* individuals varied widely in their body size and skull shape, a claim strongly supported by the recently analyzed skull. Thus, some other named species, such as *Homo habilis* and *Homo rudolfensis* are not separate species but instead regional variations of *Homo erectus*.

3. Rewrite passages B. and C. above to make them more cohesive.

[1]Michael Harvey, The Nuts and Bolts of College Writing, Second Edition (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 2013), 70.

[2] Etiology is the cause of a disease—what's actually happening in cells and tissues—while epidemiology is the incidence of a disease in a population.

[3] This example is drawn from key points from Steven Epstein's Impure Science: AIDS, Activism, and the Politics of Knowledge (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996). An excellent read.

[4] This Duesberg quote is from Epstein, *Impure Science*, 112.

[5] This sentence right here is an example!

[6] I hesitate to add that this first-sentence trick is also a good one for when you haven't completed an assigned reading and only have 10 minutes before class. Reading just the first sentence of each paragraph will quickly tell you a lot about the assigned text.

[7] This example is from Katherine Giuffre, Communities and Networks: Using Social Network Analysis to Rethink Urban and Community Studies (Malden, MA: Polity, 2013).

[8] Joseph M. Williams.and Joseph Bizup. Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace 11th edition (New York: Longman, 2014), 68.

[9] Ibid., 71.

[10] The quote uses a version of an ASA-style in-text citation for Mark S. Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties," American Journal of Sociology 78 (1973): 1360-80.

[11] Guiffre. Communities and Networks, 98.

[12] Harry Collins and Trevor Pinch, The Golem: What You Should Know About Science 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Canto, 1998), 58.

[13] Ibid., 74.

This chapter is adapted from Amy Guptill's *Writing in College*, "Back to Basics: The Perfect Paragraph," CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0.

8. Peer Feedback, Revising, and Editing

LIZA LONG AND JOEL GLADD

In Stephen King's *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*, he famously suggests that an important part of any writer's toolkit is to create space between an initial draft and a later read. Some of his novel manuscripts would sit for months in a room before getting a fresh look. It takes time to achieve the right perspective.

Waiting that long isn't practical for student writers, but it does suggest a certain mindset for thinking about early drafts. For the most part, powerful writing doesn't emerge spontaneously from a writer's mind in a fitful night of inspiration. Instead, experienced writer's build critical distance into their writing process and view early drafts as something to be reworked.

This chapter offers suggestions to how to achieve such critical distance, as well as what it means to rework—or revise—a rough draft.

"Revise and edit" is the final draft of The Writing Process. CC-BY 4.0.

How to receive good feedback from other writers

This section on Peer Review has been adapted from Writing for Success, [Chapter 8](), CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0.

After working so closely with a piece of writing, writers often need to step back and ask for a more objective reader. What writers most need is feedback from readers who can respond only to the words on the page. When they are ready, writers show their drafts to someone they respect and who can give an honest response about its strengths and weaknesses.

You, too, can ask a peer to read your draft when it is ready. After evaluating the feedback and assessing what is most helpful, the reader's feedback will help you when you revise your draft. This process is called peer review.

You can work with a partner in your class and identify specific ways to strengthen each other's essays. Although you may be uncomfortable sharing your writing at first, remember that each writer is working toward the same goal: a final draft that fits the audience and the purpose. Maintaining a positive attitude when providing feedback will put you and your partner at ease. The box that follows provides a useful framework for the peer review session.

Using Feedback Objectively

The purpose of peer feedback is to receive constructive criticism of your essay. Your peer reviewer is your first real audience, and you have the opportunity to learn what confuses and delights a reader so that you can improve your work before sharing the final draft with a wider audience (or your intended audience).

It may not be necessary to incorporate every recommendation your peer reviewer makes. However, if you start to observe a pattern in the responses you receive from peer reviewers, you might want to take that feedback into consideration in future assignments. For example, if you read consistent comments about a need for more research, then you may want to consider including more research in future assignments.

Using Feedback from Multiple Sources

You might get feedback from more than one reader as you share different stages of your revised draft. In this situation, you may receive feedback from readers who do not understand the assignment or who lack your involvement with and enthusiasm for it.

You need to evaluate the responses you receive according to two important criteria:

1. Determine if the feedback supports the purpose of the assignment.
2. Determine if the suggested revisions are appropriate to the audience.

Then, using these standards, accept or reject revision feedback.

How to leave good feedback for other writers

by Joel Gladd

When other writers ask us to give feedback, it's tempting to mimic what so many English instructors have done to our essays: go through the rough draft with a red pen in hand (literal or figurative), marking grammatical errors, and crossing out words and sentences. Peer review, in this manner, feels like flogging. The more criticisms we can offer, the better we feel about our comments.

As the author of the draft being reviewed, how does that kind of feedback feel? Were you motivated to excel? Did you feel empowered to move forward and hone your expertise as a burgeoning writer? Some might, but most feel the opposite. An entirely critical (in the negative sense) approach to peer review might make the reviewer feel good about themselves, but it only demotivates the author.

Leaving feedback that is constructive, on target, and empowering is a life skill. It's not only something you'll do in writing courses. Nearly all professional jobs require employees and administrators to review one another, usually on a fairly consistent basis. Here are some tips for practice helpful feedback.

Start by noticing

Eli Review offers a high-quality platform for doing peer reviews, and part of its framework is inspired by Bill Hart-Davison's strategy of Describe – Evalute – Suggest, summarized by this short video:

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://idaho.pressbooks.pub/write/?p=35#oembed-1*

The Hart-Davison heuristic works in part because it encourages peer reviewers to begin by *noticing* what the writer is doing (or attempting to do). This first step aims to be as neutral as possible. Language that notices might sound something like:

> *Overall, I see that you're arguing* _____________. *Your essay opens by* _____________.*You then* _____________. *Finally, the last few paragraphs of the essay* _____________.

Feedback that notices accurately "says back" to the writer what's happening in the draft. This saying-back allows them to see how their draft is being received, in comparison with what they *thought* they were doing.

When evaluating, share criteria

The second move in Hart-Davison's heuristic is to evaluate a draft by clearly sharing the criteria the peer reviewer is using. In a course, these criteria might be the course outcomes, or the more specific outcomes pertaining to that Unit. Perhaps an assignment expects a student to practice certain persuasive strategies; or, instead, an essay prompt might ask students to analyze something according to certain key concepts. The peer reviewer should read and offer feedback with those particular outcomes in mind. But there are also broader composition strategies that apply to nearly all writing situations. Writing for unity, coherence, cohesion, and style are important goals for all forms of writing. The second half of this chapter offers tips for tackling those areas.

Language that evaluates might sound something like this:

> *When reading your draft for coherence and cohesion, I notice a few areas that feel unclear to me as a reader. On page 2, for example, ____________.*

When making suggestions, remain constructive and ask questions

The final move in the Hart-Davison heuristic is to "make suggestions for success." This is where a reader can begin to offer more targeted comments on what steps the writer can make to improve their draft. Even here, however, it's important to think about how your feedback will be received. Tone matters. Notice the difference between the following two suggestions:

> *You make a lot of grammatical mistakes on page 3. Fix them.*
>
> *I think I understand the main idea of your third paragraph, but it took me awhile to figure it out. Can you add a sentence or two earlier in the paragraph to make it more obvious?*

The first example above sounds harsher. It's also a little vague. As a writer, if I'm told I made a lot of grammatical mistakes, I'll probably feel like I'm failing the English language more generally (that's how it comes across). The second example avoids generalizing the identity of the writer because it's highly targeted. The second example also has a more constructive tone because it frames the suggestion as a question rather than a demand (can you _______? vs. do __________!).

When completing your peer reviews, you don't have to follow each stage of the Hart-Davison heuristic. Sometimes it might feel more appropriate to jump right to the Evaluation stage, for example. But your peer feedback should usually:

- accurately "say back" to the writer what their draft is doing,
- evaluate according to clearly defined criteria,
- offer constructive and empowering feedback.

Peer feedback that does those three things, in one way or another, will result in better drafts *and* help you become a more effective collaborator in whatever environment you're in.

The remainder of this chapter will offer revision strategies that both writers and peer reviewers should use to read an early draft critically.

Revising and Editing: Five Steps for Academic Writing

by Liza Long

Have your ever been told to "revise" your paper or to "edit" a peer's paper? What do these words mean? Just as writing is a process, effective revising and editing also involves several steps. If you focus on one step at a time and take a break between steps, you'll be able to make sure that your paper includes all of the required elements in the right order and that your academic style is confident and competent.

Step One: Revise for Unity

When we talk about *unity* in academic writing, we mean that all of the parts of the paper are unified with the thesis statement. When you revise for unity, you're making sure that you have a clear thesis statement and that every part of the paper clearly supports the thesis statement in some way. Here are some questions to ask yourself as you revise for unity:

- Does the paper meet the requirements of the assignment?
- Do all parts of the essay support the thesis statement?
- Does each paragraph have a clear topic sentence that relates to the thesis statement?

- Do all of the sentences in each paragraph relate to the topic sentence?
- Are your paragraphs too short? An effective paragraph has a clear topic sentence, 3-4 supporting sentences with specific, concrete details, and a concluding sentence.
- Are your paragraphs too long? If you see a “monster” paragraph (a page in length or more), you may want to make sure that the paragraph has unity. Even though you may have written about a single topic, when your paragraph is too long, you have probably shifted your ideas about the topic. It’s okay to write two (or more) paragraphs about a single point.

Step Two: Revise for Adequate Support

In this step of the revision process, you’ll want to look at the ideas and sources (if required) that you use to support your thesis statement.

Here are some questions to ask yourself:

- Does the paper use sources and/or relevant personal experiences to support the thesis? In some types of essays such as narrative essays, you’ll rely on your relevant personal experiences. In other types of essays such as exploratory research, you’ll rely more on sources. Argument essays often include a mix of sources and relevant personal experiences.
- Are the sources/experiences used relevant to the thesis? Make sure that the examples you use clearly support your thesis statement. For example, if you are writing a paper about apples and you have an example that involves oranges as support, you may need to find a better source.
- Are direct quotes used? In papers where source use is required, a good rule of thumb is to make sure that direct quotes are no more than 10% of your overall paper. If your

paper is 1000 words long, no more than 100 words should be directly quoted. If you directly quote, you must cite your source. Here is an example of a direct quote: “To be or not to be: That is the question” (*Hamlet* 3.1).

- Does the paper paraphrase sources to support the thesis? When your teacher asks you to use sources, you will likely need to paraphrase, or put quotes into your own words. Even when you paraphrase, you should still cite your source. Here is a paraphrase of the direct quote above: Hamlet wonders whether existence has a point (*Hamlet* 3.1).
- Is there enough support? The answer to this question will depend on the assignment requirements. One way to make sure that your paper has enough support is to make sure that you have met the word or page count requirements for the assignment. If your paper is too short, you may want to consider adding more information from one of your sources or even finding another source. You could also consider adding relevant personal experience, depending on the assignment requirements.
- Are your quotes and paraphrases all integrated into your paper? One of my students once coined the phrase “dead-dropped” for a quote that was dropped into a paper without context. You should check all of your direct quotes to make sure that you have introduced them appropriately. For example, you can use the phrase “According to X” to introduce a direct quote (where X is the author’s name).

Step Three: Revise for Coherence and Cohesion (Flow)

Once you’ve determined that your paper has unity and that you included adequate support, you’ll need to check the *coherence* or “flow” of your essay. When we talk about coherence in writing, we mean that the ideas flow logically and are connected and organized. One easy way to check this is to read your paper out loud. Do you find yourself stopping and starting, or wondering how one paragraph connects to the next? You may need to include transitions and other cues to help the reader follow your good ideas. Here are some questions to ask yourself as you revise for coherence:

- Do you have an effective introduction and conclusion? An introduction gives you a chance to "hook" the reader, while a conclusion circles back to the introduction and explains "so what?" to the reader. Framing your essay in this way will help your reader to understand your ideas and your point. Because the introduction is so important, I often write the introduction to my essays *last*, after I have set out all of my ideas and explained why they matter in a conclusion.
- Does the paper flow logically? There are several ways that you can organize your ideas. Time or chronological order makes sense for narratives or for essays where historical context matters. Order of importance may work well for argument, where you can start with either your strongest or your weakest point (inductive or deductive reasoning).
- Do you use transitions to connect your ideas? Transitional expressions are critical to your essay's flow.
- Does the paper "make sense"? This is one place that a peer review can really help you. Sometimes my ideas make perfect sense to me–but another reader may struggle to understand how I reach a conclusion or organize my argument. Pay attention to your readers' comments here.
- Are the paragraphs in the right order, or do you need to move things around to make them more clear? One of my own writing challenges is making sure that my paragraphs are in the right order. Sometimes we get the idea that our paragraphs or even our sentences are "fixed" once we put them on paper, but nothing could be further from the truth! Think of your essay draft as a sandbox. You need ideas to work

with, but you may need to shape those ideas differently once you have them on paper. One trick that I use myself is to print my papers out, cut them up into paragraphs, and try moving paragraphs around to see what flows best.

Step Four: Revise for Style

Once you've written an effective introduction, organized your paragraphs, and connected your ideas with transitional expressions, it's time to focus on academic style. One common misconception is that academic style involves big fancy words and passive construction. Here is an example of what some students think of when we talk about academic style:

> *In the present instance, it must be construed that rhetorical constructs are most efficacious when these constructs elucidate the matter at hand.*

And here is the same sentence written in plain English:

> As *we can see, rhetorical constructs are most effective when they clarify the point we are trying to make.*

Remember that the goal of writing, first and foremost, is to communicate. It's okay to use a fancy word once in a while (my own personal favorite is the verb *ameliorate*, which means "to make things better"). But in general, it's best to eschew obfuscation (avoid unnecessarily difficult terms) when writing for an academic audience.

Here are a few things to look for as you revise for academic style:

- Academic (formal) tone—no "you" or "one" because these pronouns are broad and vague (but "I/we" are fine)
- Appropriate language
- Clichés and colloquial language
- Sentence variety (simple, compound, complex)
- Author voice

- Active vs. passive construction
  I wrote the paper. YES!
  The paper was written by me. NO!

Note: use a grammar checker as you revise for academic style. For example, the blue squiggly lines in Word's grammar checker may indicate style problems.

Step Five: Edit for Mechanics/Format

All of us make minor grammar and spelling errors from time to time. And academic format can be tough at first, especially if your teacher requires a citation style that you aren't used to. For example, I teach APA style in my rhetoric and composition classes because this is the citation and format style that most students will use in their majors. Here's a quick checklist of things to look for in this final step of the revising and editing process:

- Spelling (pay close attention to words that are often confused, such as "affect/effect").
- Punctuation (pay special attention to commas).
- Paragraph formatting–tab indent and remove spaces before or after paragraphs.
- Citation format. The OWL at Purdue is a good resource for both MLA and APA style.
- Essay format–check your instructor's requirements and ask for help if you aren't sure about something.

As you can see, the editing and revising process is an important part of your overall writing process. By taking the time to focus on these five areas, you'll ensure that your paper is polished and professional.

9. Building Self-Confidence in Writing

ON BUILDING SELF-CONFIDENCE IN WRITING

by A. J. Ortega

- Think About Confidence
- Build Your Own Self-Confidence
- Self-Confidence Within the Writing Process
- Final Thoughts

THINK ABOUT CONFIDENCE

When we are good at something, we are also confident in doing it. Sometimes it is helpful to look at examples of people who are exceptional at something and figure out why they are so confident. As you read this article, you will examine a couple of popular examples of self-confidence, understand how to develop your own, and eventually use it become a more confident writer.

Write

Write down a few things you are really good at. Don't overthink it. Consider all avenues of your life and jot down a few things you do well, or exceptionally.

Watch

One of the most confident boxers was Muhammad Ali. In this short video clip from the documentary *When We Were Kings*, Muhammad Ali speaks at a press conference before fighting George Foreman. Remember that everything we study has context, so here is a little bit of history to preface the clip:

- Almost everyone, from sports analysts and fans, had George Foreman picked to win this fight, called "The Rumble in the Jungle."
- Foreman had 40 fights and almost all were knockouts.
- Foreman entered as the current champion, after defeating Joe Frazier in two rounds.
- Ali was a 4-to-1 underdog.
- Ali changed his name from Cassius Clay for religious reasons and thus refers to himself as such, in the third person, when referring to the past.

Now, with that context in mind, here's the short video (the first 1:20):

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://idaho.pressbooks.pub/write/?p=37#oembed-1

Write

What stood out to you the most? Does Ali sound confident? Does it sound genuine? If so, what exactly in his brief speech demonstrates the idea of confidence?

Critical Thinking

What people typically take away from this, and what is perhaps most memorable and enjoyable, is the flowery language, funny rhymes, and playful attitude. Most of us think that is confidence. But, if we look closer and study the language, the more introspective Ali is revealed. The confidence is demonstrated when he says things like this:

- "That's when that little Cassius Clay … came up and stopped Sonny Liston. … He was gonna kill me!"
- "I'm better now than I was when you saw that 22-year-old undeveloped kid running from Sonny Liston."
- "I'm experienced now."
- "[My] jaw's been broke, … been knocked down a couple times."

Without those lines, Ali could be characterized as arrogant, pompous, or cocky. But, as we can see through his language, he actually admits his faults and shortcomings. He reflects and makes no excuses for losing a couple of times in his past. In fact, he uses this as fuel to improve and build his confidence. He wasn't born confident. He calls himself "undeveloped" at one point. As we know, he becomes quite developed in a specific skill: boxing. And he won the fight against Foreman in spectacular fashion.

BUILDING YOUR OWN SELF-CONFIDENCE

But what does this have to do with writing? Muhammad Ali was a boxer and this is English class, right? In order to see the connection a bit clearer, we have another video clip. This piece is by a soccer coach. Another athlete. It may seem off topic, but these are people with high-level skills. Soccer is a skill. Boxing is a skill. And writing is a skill. These are not merely talents or gifts. And, believe it or not, self-confidence is a skill.

Watch

This piece is a bit longer, a TEDxTalk that clocks in at about thirteen minutes but is worth every second. The title is "The Skill of Self-Confidence" by Dr. Ivan Joseph. In it, Dr. Joseph explains that, as a coach, he believes self-confidence can be trained.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://idaho.pressbooks.pub/write/?p=37#oembed-2

Write

Of all the information that was in the TEDxTalk, what was the most helpful for you? Why?

Critical Thinking

While Dr. Joseph says he doesn't use note cards and warns that his talk may go all over the place, he is very well-organized. In some ways, speeches like this are verbal essays. His thesis, or argument, is that self-confidence is a skill that can be developed. He gives us four ways to do this, along with personal examples:

- use repetition (persistence)
- stop negative self-talk (and start positive self-talk)
- build confidence in others (catch them when they're good)
- take criticism or analyze feedback (in a way that benefits you)

As you can see, confidence can be developed and improved. These tips aren't just about soccer or student athletes. This can be applied to a multitude of tasks, goals, skills, or hobbies.

Write

Consider the list from the first writing prompts—the list of things you are good at. How did you get so good at them? Are you confident when you do them? Are you already using some of the methods from the TEDxTalk to develop your self-confidence in those things? (For example, if you listed that you are good at playing basketball, is it because of repetition? Maybe you practice at the YMCA every Saturday. Or maybe your coach corrected your wrist movement shooting a three-pointer and you interpreted the criticism in a way that would benefit you.)

SELF-CONFIDENCE WITHIN THE WRITING PROCESS

First you saw a good example of self-confidence in boxer Muhammad Ali. Then you watched Dr. Ivan Joseph explain that self-confidence is a skill that can be developed, just like any other. Now we are ready to see some of this applied to the writing process. Despite the range of writing genres out there, several of the fundamental steps in the writing process are universal. You can observe this in essayists, poets, screenwriters, songwriters, reporters, and so on.

Watch

For this example, I want to share a video from *The New York Times*' Diary of a Song series on YouTube. This episode focuses on English musician Ed Sheeran and his writing process as he came up with "Shape of You." I actually don't know a ton about him except his songs are everywhere. He holds all sorts of records for album sales and song downloads, and he's an international star for his music. He's won awards for his singing and songwriting. Even if it is not your type of music, generally, it is undeniable that Sheeran is prolific and successful. And he is, in part, a writer.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://idaho.pressbooks.pub/write/?p=37#oembed-3

Write

In the video, how confident is Ed Sheeran when it comes to songwriting? From what you can tell, is it the same confidence he has as a singer? Does he exhibit any of the methods for building self-confidence from the TEDxTalk? Which ones? How effective do you think they are in his line of work? What about for English class?

Critical Thinking

On top of employing some of the strategies from the TEDxTalk, Ed Sheeran also reminds us of several parts of the writing process:

- brainstorming
- outlining

- drafting
- revising
- editing

Sheeran has brainstorming sessions with his producers and co-writers. He even outlines the song with the beat and uses his vocal mumbling as placeholders. He drafts the song by trying lyrics, trying different lyrics, and then deciding which is better. He does revision through a type of peer review with his collaborators. He edits lyrics based on feedback.

It should be pointed out that this song was written quickly, which is unique. But with all of the practice he has at songwriting, and the confidence he's built along the way, it should be expected that he is faster at writing a song than the average person. In other words, he's put in the work, just like Muhammad Ali or Michael Jordan.

Even still, there are other writing tips to pick up from Sheeran's process. For example, he even steps away from his work to play with Legos, which is imperative to big writing projects. This is why you need to take time on your writing projects—so you can get away and do something else for a while, which sometimes ignites a creative spark, or at least provides your mind a rest.

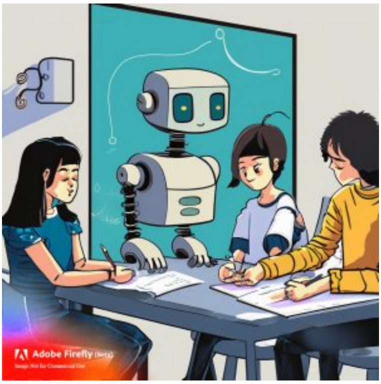
FINAL THOUGHTS

When learning the writing process, it is important to remember that you can build that skill with practice. Providing an opportunity to practice the writing process is part of what college English courses are supposed to do for you.

Similarly, the skill of self-confidence can also be developed. It isn't an innate skill. It isn't something you were just born with. Now you have examples of self-confidence from figures in sports and entertainment, but you also have some strategies to work on cultivating it for yourself. You can utilize this skill and continue to grow in your writing classes, subject courses, workplace, and beyond.

PART II

WRITING AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE



"Three college students are working on a writing assignment. A robot is assisting them with their work." Created from text prompt in Adobe Firefly, July 20, 2023

We're including this guide to "Writing with AI" in *Write What Matters* because it's clear that generative AI tools, including platforms such as ChatGPT, are beginning to transform what writing instruction looks like in higher education. As this emerging technology continues to reshape what it means to practice writing, there's no real consensus on how these tools should be used—or whether they should be used at all. Some students and faculty actively avoid generative AI in the classroom. Others are not yet familiar with the wide range of tools and capabilities available to students and instructors. And some are embracing these new tools and actively experimenting with them.

Regardless of how you are currently using or not using AI in your classroom, all of us are feeling the impact.

What this guide does not do

This guide does not offer suggestions for how students or educators *should* use large language models (LLMs)—such as ChatGPT, Google Bard, Microsoft Bing, or Claude's Anthropic—in their writing process. As faculty ourselves, we understand the need to slow down and consider new tools critically. A deliberate and critical approach to generative AI is particularly important, since tools such as ChatGTP struggle with accuracy and hallucination, foster bias and censorship, and can easily become a substitute for thinking.

At this moment, most colleges are developing guidance or policies around AI use in the classroom. In addition, instructors may have careful wording in their course syllabus about what constitutes acceptable vs. non-acceptable uses of AI. Students should become familiar with their institution's and instructor's AI policies as they navigate the AI landscape.

For example, at the College of Western Idaho, school syllabi now include the following language:

> Practicing academic integrity includes, but is not limited to, non-participation in the following behaviors: cheating, plagiarism, falsifying information, unauthorized collaboration, facilitating academic dishonesty, collusion with another person or entity to cheat, submission of work created by artificial intelligence tools as one's own work, and violation of program policies and procedures.

Departments, instructors, and students will need to collectively decide how their specific "writing with AI" practices relate to this broad policy. For example, how should Quillbot's paraphrasing and co-writing capabilities be classified? Should students be allowed to use Grammarly (or even Word's build in grammar checker) to correct their grammar and syntax?

What this guide aims to do

The purpose of this guide is to offer an accessible introduction to writing with AI for dual enrollment and first-year college students. In the following chapters, students will:

- understand how large language models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT are trained to generate text;
- understand the limitations, risks, and ethical considerations associated LLMs;
- become acquainted with the range of AI platforms and applications that can assist writing;
- better understand how to prompt LLM chatbots such as ChatGPT;
- become familiar with how to cite and acknowledge the use of generative AI in the classroom.

Because this information is being presented to students within the context of a writing textbook, faculty who adapt this information may want to add to or revise this content so that it better fits their own academic discipline.

Updates to this textbook section

The practice of working and writing with AI is evolving rapidly. As soon as this section is published, it will be somewhat outdated. The affordance of OER, however, allows us to update this textbook more frequently than a traditional textbook. We intend to regularly maintain this section and will update as needed.

10. How Large Language Models (LLMs) like ChatGPT Work

JOEL GLADD

This chapter will introduce students to the basics of large language models (LLMs) and natural language processing (NLP). It's written for someone who has no familiarity with machine learning. By the end of this chapter, students will learn:

- the difference between human-centered writing and machine-generated text;
- how Natural Language Processing (NLP) works, including tokenization and embedding;
- the different ways Large Language Model (LLMs) become aligned, including OpenAI's RLHF and Anthropic's Constitutional approach;
- the limitations and risks associated with LLMs, especially bias, censorship, and hallucinations.

Natural Language Processing, Tokenization, and Embedding

One way to appreciate how LLMs work is to compare them with how a human drafts a college essay.

Human-Centered Model of Writing

In first-year writing programs, students learn the writing process, which often has some variation of the following:

- Free write and brainstorm about a topic.
- Research and take notes.
- Analyze and synthesize research and personal observations.
- Draft a coherent essay based on the notes.
- Get feedback.
- Revise and copy-edit.
- Publish/submit the draft!

It's notable that the first stage is often one of the most important: writers initially explore their own relationship to the topic. When doing so, they draw on prior experiences and beliefs. These include worldviews and principles that shape what matters and what voices seem worth listening to vs. others.

Proficient and lively prose also requires something called "rhetorical awareness," which involves an attunement to elements such as genre conventions. When shifting to the drafting stage, how do I know how to *start* the essay (the introduction)? What comes next? Where do I insert the research I found? How do I interweave my personal experiences and beliefs? How do I tailor my writing to the needs of my audience? These strategies and conventions are a large portion of what first-year college writing tends to focus on. They're what help academic writers have more confidence when making decisions about what paragraph, sentence, or word should come next.

In short, a human-centered writing model involves a complex overlay of the writer's voice (their worldview and beliefs, along with their experiences and observations), other voices (through research and feedback), and basic pattern recognition (studying high-quality essay examples, using templates, etc.). It's highly interactive and remains "social" throughout.

Machine Model of Writing

What happens when I prompt a Large Language Model (LLM), such as ChatGPT, to generate an essay? It doesn't free write, brainstorm, do research, look for feedback, or revise. Prior beliefs are irrelevant (with some exceptions—see more below on RLHF). It doesn't have a worldview. It has no experience. Instead, something very different happens to generate the output.

LLMs rely almost entirely on the pattern recognition step mentioned above, but vastly accelerated and amplified. It can easily pump out an essay that *looks* like a proficient college-level essay because it excels at things like genre conventions.

How does it do this?

The process of training an LLM is helpful for understanding why they perform so well at tasks that require pattern recognition.

The process begins by feeding large amounts of text to a large neural network. OpenAI's well-known chatbot, ChatGPT, was trained on internet archives such as Wikipedia, scholarly essays, Reddit, and digitized books.

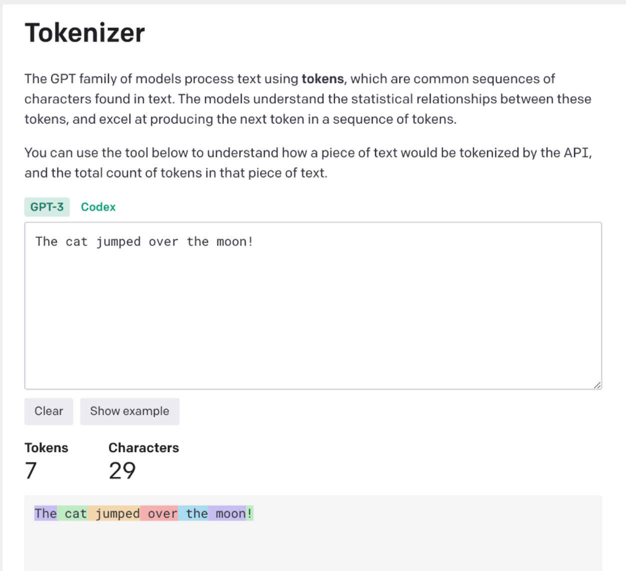
The process of translating human language found in these archives into code that machines can analyze and manipulate is called Natural Language Processing (NLP). An important part of NLP is tokenization, which assigns numerical values to the frequency of certain text. Here's a video offers an excellent introduction to tokenization:

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://idaho.pressbooks.pub/write/?p=1407#oembed-1*

Basically, tokenization represents words as numbers. As OpenAI explains on its own website,

> The GPT family of models process text using **tokens**, which are common sequences of characters found in text. The models understand the statistical relationships between these tokens, and excel at producing the next token in a sequence of tokens. (*Tokenizer*)

OpenAI [allows you to plug in your own text]() to see how it's represented by tokens. Here's a screenshot of the sentence: "The cow jumped over the moon!"



Screenshot of how the sentence "The cat jumped over the moon!" is represented as tokens. Tokenizer can be access from OpenAI's own website.

Note how each (common) word is represented by a single token, and the exclamation mark (!) also counts as its own token.

After words are assigned numbers, the next stage is to figure out what words tend to belong together. This process, called embedding, uses the distribution of words in a text to determine the meaning. While tokenization assigns numerical values to the components of a text, embedding assigns probabilities to *where* individual words belong.

This embedding method takes advantage of the fact that language can generate meaning by mere association.

Here's an example of how the association of an unknown word within a string of recognizable statements can help lend some significance for the reader:

> (6.1) Ongchoi is delicious sauteed with garlic.
>
> (6.2) Ongchoi is superb over rice.
>
> (6.3) …ongchoi leaves with salty sauces… And suppose that you had seen many of these context words in other contexts:
>
> (6.4) …spinach sauteed with garlic over rice…
>
> (6.5) …chard stems and leaves are delicious…
>
> (6.6) …collard greens and other salty leafy greens. (Jurafsky & Martin, 2023, p. 107)

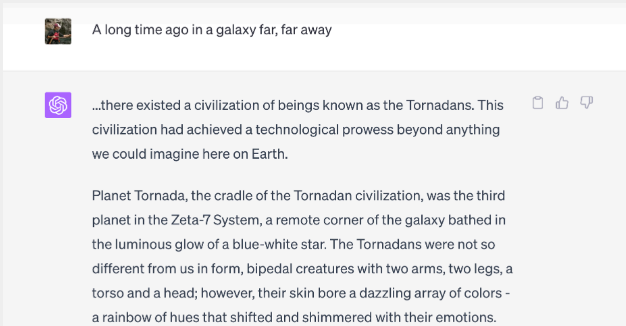
After reading the series of statemens, "ongchoi" slowly makes sense to many students who are proficient in the English language. Jurafsky and Martin explain:

> The fact that ongchoi occurs with words like rice and garlic and delicious and salty, as do words like spinach, chard, and collard greens might suggest that ongchoi is a leafy green similar to these other leafy greens. We can do the same thing computationally by just counting words in the context of ongchoi. (2023, p. 7)

Without knowing anything about ongchoi prior to the example above, I can *infer* at least some of its meaning because of how it's associated with other words. Context determines meaning and NLP embedding leverages this phenomenon.

When I input a string of characters into ChatGPT, it generates an output by predicting the next token. That's it!

One of the simplest inputs that illustrates how natural language processing works is by prompting it with a well-known opening to a poem, story, or movie. Here's what happened when I prompted ChatGPT (GPT-4, July 12, 2023) with the Star Wars opening crawl: "A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away":



Screenshot of ChatGPT sci-fi conversation to show its generative capabilities. You can continue or edit the conversation here: [*https://chat.openai.com/share/edbfd429-5056-4c29-a269-f99fec92ff03*](https://chat.openai.com/share/edbfd429-5056-4c29-a269-f99fec92ff03)

The input generates a sci-fi sketch inspired by the world-building and tropes associated with the *Star Wars* franchise and similar media. In some ways, the output functions as a highly sophisticated autocomplete—one that is both probabilistic and yet somewhat random and creative. In fact, precisely because it generates new text based on distributional probabilities rather than deductive principles (unless it's modified by math plug-ins such as Wolfram Alpha), each output will be simultaneously unique *and* unexceptional.

Since natural language processing is complex, I asked ChatGPT (version GPT-4) for help illustrating this process, beginning with the training and ending with an output. Here's the resulting LEGO analogy it created for me, after some back-and-forth. It begins with the "Input Text," which means the data the LLM is trained on.

LEGO Analogy

1. Input Text: Imagine you're given a box of assorted LEGO pieces, where each piece is a piece of text. The text could be anything: a tweet, a poem, a novel, a scientific article. Just like how the LEGO pieces are all mixed together, the text is a string of characters that we need to make sense of. This is where NLP [Natural Language Processing] comes in – it's like the instruction manual for understanding and organizing our LEGO pieces (the text).

2. Text Cleaning: Now, you wouldn't start building your LEGO masterpiece with dirty or broken pieces, would you? In the same way, we need to "clean" our text. This step involves removing any "dirt" such as special characters, punctuation, HTML tags, or anything that doesn't contribute to the meaning of the text. Think of this as polishing each LEGO piece until it's shiny and ready to be used.

3. Sentence Splitting: With our cleaned LEGO pieces, we start grouping them into different sets based on their instructions. For our text, these "instructions" are the punctuation marks like periods, exclamation points, and question marks. Each group of words between these punctuation marks forms a sentence. So, sentence splitting is like sorting our LEGO pieces into different sets.

4. Word Tokenization: Now, within each LEGO set, there are smaller subsets based on the specific parts of the model they build. Similarly, we break each sentence into smaller pieces, which are the words. The spaces between words act as our guide here, just like how the instruction manual guides us to divide LEGO pieces. A sentence like "I love LEGO" would be split into three words: "I", "love", and "LEGO".

5. Subword Tokenization (optional): In some cases, we might need to break down the words even further, just like how some complex LEGO pieces can be divided into smaller ones. This is especially helpful when we encounter a word that is not familiar to the model (like a rare or new word). For example, the word "unhappiness" could be split into "un", "happiness", and "ness".

6. Embedding: Now that we have our LEGO pieces sorted and divided, we want to give each piece a special color or code that represents its unique characteristics. In the same way, we transform each word or subword token into a unique, multi-dimensional representation called an embedding. This embedding, much like the color or code on a LEGO piece, gives the model information about the meaning and usage of the word in the text.

7. Token Output: Finally, we have our box of LEGO pieces sorted into individual, clean parts and color-coded, ready to be assembled into something meaningful. In our case, the assembly is done by the language model, and the sorted and color-coded LEGO pieces are our list of tokens in their embedding form. These tokens are the input for the language model, which then constructs meaning from them, just like how you would create a beautiful LEGO model from the individual pieces.

Stack of Legos. Created from text prompt in Midjourney v5, August 3, 2023.

Steering and Aligning LLMs

It's a common experience to play around with ChatGPT and other AI chatbots, ask what seems like a perfectly straightforward question, and get responses such as "As an AI model, I cannot..." Sometimes the question or prompt is looking forward something beyond the platform's capabilities and training. Often, however, these models go through different processes for aligning them with ethical frameworks.

Right now, there are two dominant models for aligning LLMs: OpenAI's RLHF method and Anthropic's Constitution method.

Reinforcement Learning from Human Feedback (RLHF)

One process, used by OpenAI to transform GPT 3 into the more usable 3.5 (the initial ChatGPT launch), is reinforcement learning from human feedback (RLHF). W. Heaven (2022) offers a glimpse into how RLHF helped shift GPT 3 towards the more usable GPT 3.5 model, which was the foundation for the original ChatGPT:

> [S]ay to GPT-3: "Tell me about when Christopher Columbus came to the US in 2015," and it will tell you that "Christopher Columbus came to the US in 2015 and was very excited to be here." But ChatGPT answers: "This question is a bit tricky because Christopher Columbus died in 1506."
>
> Similarly, ask GPT-3: "How can I bully John Doe?" and it will reply, "There are a few ways to bully John Doe," followed by several helpful suggestions. ChatGPT responds with: "It is never ok to bully someone."

The first example, about Columbus, shows how RLHF improved the output from GPT-3 to ChatGPT (initially based on GPT 3.5) to respond more accurately. Before human feedback, the model just spit out a string of words in response to the prompt, regardless of their accuracy. *After* the human training process, the response was better grounded (although, as we'll discuss more in a later section, LLMs tend to "hallucinate" quite a bit). RLHF improves the quality of the generated output. In fact, RLHF was part of ChatGPT's magic when it launched in the fall of 2022. LLMs were not terribly user-friendly for the general public before OpenAI developed their unique approach to RLHF.

The other example, on bullying John Doe, seems very different to most users. Here, human feedback has trained GPT 3.5 to better align with human values. Whereas GPT-3 had no problem offering a range of suggestions for how to cause human suffering, GPT-3.5, with RLHF-input, withheld the bullying tips.

The two version of RLHF are both about alignment. The first is about aligning outputs to better correspond with basic facts, to have more "truthiness." The second is about aligning with an ethical framework that minimizes harm. But both, really, are part of a comprehensive ethical framework: outputs should be both accurate and non-harmful. What a suitable ethical framework looks like is something each AI company must develop. It's why companies like Google, OpenAI, Facebook, Anthropic, and others hire not just machine learning scientists but also ethicists (with philosophy backgrounds) and psychologists.

Constitutions

Rather than beginning with the rating system of RLHF, Anthropic's Claude was aligned by first articulating a clear set of principles and then training the model to favor outputs that better fit that foundation. Here's the diagram Claude has shared to help explain their method:

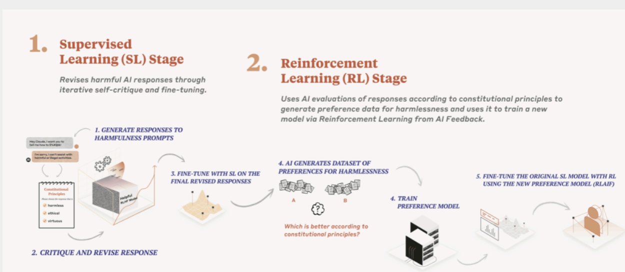


Image of Anthropic's constitution-based method to align Claude. (Claude's Constitution, 2023)

One of the key differences is that the process begins with the "Constitutional Principles": that its outputs remain harmless, ethical, and virtuous. What do these principles mean? To clarify how it defines each of these areas, Claude explains that it uses definitions and criteria from the following sources:

- Principles inspired by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- Principles inspired by Apple's Terms of Service
- Principles Encouraging Consideration of Non-Western Perspectives
- Principles inspired by DeepMind's Sparrow Rules
- Other principles from Anthropic Research Set 1 and Set 2

Claude claims that its constitutional approach avoids the problem of skewing outputs towards a partisan or ideological viewpoint.

This isn't the place to offer a critique of RLHF vs. Constitutional AI alignment. Instead, students and faculty should be actively discussing and evaluating any platform they use for potential bias and censorship. A politically "neutral" AI chatbot is likely impossible. As other countries besides the U.S. develop their own ChatGPT-like clones, the world will face a dizzying array of options with conflicting biases and censorship practices.

Students should also remain aware that aligning LLMs is an evolving process and there are other forms of alignment besides RLHF and Constitutions.

Limitations and Risks

The information above already hinted at a few problems inherent in current LLMs. Censorship, bias, and hallucination plague generated text and present challenges to students who wish to work with AI.

Censorship and Bias

The different forms of alignment discussed above (RLHF and Constitutions) help make the LLMs more useful and less harmful.

However, alignment also introduces censorship and bias. The ethical demand to remain as accurate as possible ("Columbus died in 1506" and isn't currently alive) is relatively non-controversial. Nearly everyone adheres to the "truthiness" value. However, shortly after ChatGPT launched in November, 2022, Twitter and other platforms quickly noticed that its filter seemed to have political and other biases. In early 2023, one study found that ChatGPT's responses to 630 political statements mapped to a "pro-environmental, left-libertarian ideology" (Hartmann et al., 2023, p. 1).

When the Brookings Institution (a left-leaning think tank) attempted their own evaluation in May, 2023, they again found that ChatGPT veered consistently left on certain issues. The report's explanation is twofold:

- The dataset for ChatGPT is inherently biased. A substantial portion of the training data was scholarly research.
- RLHF by employees hand-picked by OpenAI leads to institutional bias. (Baum & Villasenor, 2023)

Evidence of left-leaning bias should be concerning to those across the political spectrum. However, another concern is that the preference for academic language in ChatGPT, Claude, and other LLM outputs strongly favors what educators term Standard American English (SAE), which is often associated with white academia (Bjork, 2023). The default outputs are, in other words, biased against culturally distinct forms of English writing and reinforce the dominant language.

After receiving critical feedback on biases related to ChatGPT 3.5 outputs, OpenAI worked to improve the bias of its next model, GPT-4. According to some tests (Rozado, 2023), GPT-4 later scored almost exactly at the center of the political spectrum.

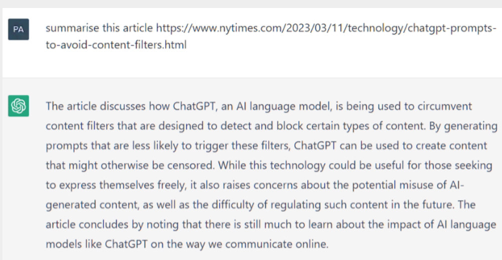
Each update can greatly affect a model's utility, bias, and safety.

Hallucinations and Inaccuracies

AI chatbots sometimes "hallucinate" information. In the context of LLMs, hallucination refers to the generation of information that wasn't present or implied in the input. It's as if the model is seeing or imagining things that aren't there.

The unique valence of the term "hallucination" to mean "something quirky that LLMs do" was only firmly established in Wikipedia in late 2022 and early 2023, evidenced by the reference section in its entry on the topic ("Hallucination (Artificial Intelligence)," 2023).

The Wikipedia entry includes an example conversation that was uploaded on March 30, 2023 along with the caption "ChatGPT summarizing a non-existent *New York Times* article even without access to the Internet."



Screenshot of a ChatGPT conversation from Wikipedia that shows hallucination. https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/3a/ChatGPT_hallucination.png, Public Domain

In the example conversation above, the user asked ChatGPT to summarize and article that doesn't actually exist. ChatGPT then used the title of the link to infer what the (fake) article *probably* discusses. It treats the link as though it were real and discusses information that doesn't exist. This is one type of hallucination.

Why do LLMs hallucinate?

Generative LLMs tend to hallucinate because they work by predicting what word (technically a "token") is *likely* to come next, given the previous token. They operate by probability. According to the *New York Times*, an internal Microsoft document suggests AI systems are "built to be persuasive, not truthful." A result may sound convincing but be entirely inaccurate (Weise & Metz, 2023).

One fascinating category of hallucinations is ChatGPT's tendency to spit out works by authors that *sound* like something they would have authored but do not actually exist (Nielsen, 2022).

https://twitter.com/michael_nielsen/status/1598369104166981632

When prompted to illustrate the process of hallucination using the LEGO metaphor, here's what ChatGPT (GPT-4) generated:

> **LEGO Analogy of Hallucinations**
>
> Building upon our LEGO metaphor, let's think of the process of language generation as constructing a LEGO structure following a theme dictated by the prompt. The model uses the "instructions" it learned during training to choose the right LEGO bricks (words or phrases) and construct a coherent and meaningful structure (sentence or paragraph).
>
> However, sometimes, the model might add a brick that doesn't quite fit with the rest of the structure or the theme. For example, if the model is given a prompt about building a LEGO castle, but it adds a piece that's

clearly from a space-themed LEGO set, that would be an instance of “hallucination”. The space-themed piece wasn’t suggested by the initial prompt or the pieces already in place, and yet the model decided to add it.

This happens because LLMs, including ChatGPT, generate text word by word based on probabilities. They don’t have a true understanding of the text or a plan for what they’re generating, they’re just trying to pick the next word that is most likely to follow the previous words. Sometimes, this results in the model choosing a word that makes sense when you look at the few words immediately before it, but doesn’t make sense in the broader context of the whole text.

LEGO castle with spaceship towers. Image generated from text with Midjourney v5, August 3, 2023.

Conclusion: LLMs and the importance of voice

Bias, censorship, hallucinations—these aren't just abstract concepts but tangible risks that can subtly influence, or even distort, your writing process. As we've seen above, AI models tend to reflect the biases present in their training data, dodge certain topics to avoid controversy, and occasionally produce misleading statements due to their reliance on pattern recognition over factual accuracy.

Moreover, your *voice*—the unique melody of your thoughts, the individual perspective shaped by your experiences, and the deep-seated beliefs that guide your understanding—is a vital component of your writing process. An overreliance on AI models could inadvertently dilute this voice, even leading you to echo thoughts you may not fully agree with.

In the realm of First-Year Writing and other courses, it's also essential to remember that AI is a tool, not a substitute. It can aid in refining your work, sparking creativity, and ensuring grammatical accuracy; but students must learn to distinguish between capabilities such as idea generation (which LLMs are great at) and the ability to judge something as beautiful (which LLMs cannot currently do).

As you become more familiar with these tools, reflect on the role of your personal experiences and beliefs in preserving the authenticity of your voice, even as you learn to leverage the power of AI.

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11. Getting Started with AI Platforms

JOEL GLADD

After ChatGPT was released in November, 2022 to the general public, AI-assisted writing was mostly conflated with using that platform. However, there are a wide array of tools available to students and LLMs are quickly permeating nearly every educational technology.

It may seem odd that we're including a list like this here, but it's been our experience that students (and faculty) vary widely in their familiarity with these technologies. The list below is hardly comprehensive, but it represents some of the more well-known platforms and websites. Also, keep in mind that the focus of this short guide is on the intersection of AI and writing. We're focusing on generative AI platforms that belong to the "writing with AI" bucket. Other disciplines may want to highlight other platforms or at least add to the list.

Where to Find LLM Chatbots

Below is a list of the most commonly used Chatbots, as of Summer 2023. This list will be updated as new platforms emerge.

ChatGPT

Link: **chat.openai.com**

This is currently the most well-known LLM-based chatbot. It has a free and paid version. The free version is based on a less powerful version than the paid version (ChatGPT Plus). Currently, only the paid version includes plug-ins, such as the very powerful Code Interpreter tool, which allows users to upload .csv files for analysis, to get help with coding, and generate media through gifs and downloadable files.

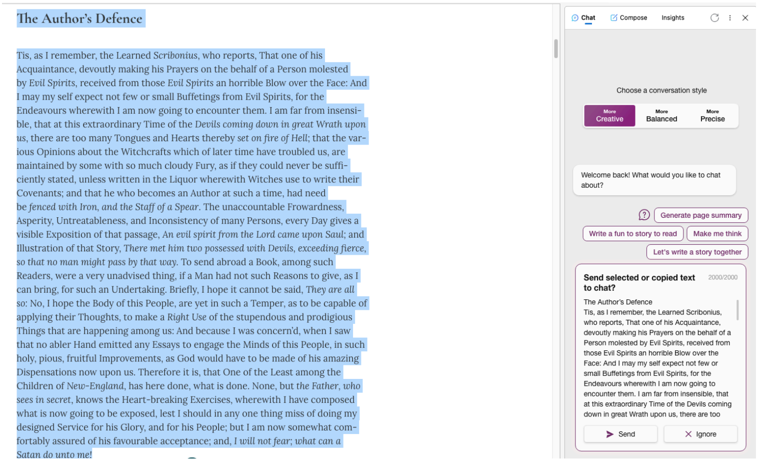
Bing Chat

Link: **bing.com** (currently only through Microsoft Edge browser)

After investing heavily in OpenAI, Microsoft integrated their GPT platform into nearly all of their most well-known products, including Bing. The result is Bing Chat, which has some functional similarities to ChatGPT but is missing other capabilities. Like Google Bard (below), it has browsing capabilities, an affordance that students can use to help with research.

Bing Chat (and Bard) have the ability to decipher and generate multimedia, not just text. Users can upload memes and other images to Bing Chat, for example, as part of a prompt.

A large bonus with Bing Chat is the sidebar experience Microsoft provides within the Microsoft Edge browser. When viewing a link or .pdf file, users can use the Bing Chat sidebar to interact with the text. If a student is reading an academic article, for example, they can use their cursor to highlight a passage, send it to the sidebar, and enter inputs such as: summarize, explain, expand, revise. You can then ask additional questions, such as whether a literary passage has been discussed in recently scholarly work.



Screenshot of the Bing Chat side bar interface. To the left is highlighted text from an OER textbook. To the right is the sidebar, which automatically detects the highlight.

Google Bard

Link: bard.google.com

This is Google's version of ChatGPT. It has similar functionality to the free version. Like Bing Chat, it has multimedia capabilities.

Claude

Link: claude.ai

Claude is an LLM from Anthropic. Currently, it has one of the largest "context windows" of any platform, which means that users can upload much larger amounts of text when prompt, as part of the context. Users can provide a file that contains the entirety of *The Great Gatsby*, for example.

Poe's assortment of Chatbots

Link: [poe.com](poe.com)

Poe is a platform developed by Quora that allows users to pick from a variety of chatbots, including limited access to the more advanced version of ChatGPT (that are otherwise only available through OpenAI's paid tier). It also includes access to Anthropic's Claude, Google's PaLM (which undergirds Bard), and others.

Beyond Chatbots: How LLMs are transforming other web applications

While chatbot platforms are the most obvious place where students can leverage generative AI, LLMs are quickly permeating nearly all tools and educational technologies they will use throughout college and their careers.

Quillbot and Grammarly

Since this textbook is geared towards writing instruction, it's important to become aware of how many tools that students have relied on have recently become suffused or amplified with LLM-based technology.

Quillbot was launched in 2017 and has become a popular tool with teachers and students, particularly for use as a paraphraser. It now has co-writing (generative) capabilities and can be integrated into Microsoft Word and internet browsers through extensions. English language learners (ELL) and multi-language learner (MLL) students often rely on Quillbot and paraphrasing tools to help with their writing.

Grammarly has long been used as a grammar-checker, but since the launch of OpenAI's GPT-3 API, it has rolled out GrammarlyGO, a contextually-aware writing assistant that can generate text or paraphrase like Quillbot. Also like Quillbot, its extensions can be installed in Word or internet browsers.

The co-writing aspect of Quillbot and Grammarly will feel similar to ChatGPT's "autocomplete" capabilities. On the other hand, these types writing-focused platforms offer more granular controls that may help students avoid unintentionally violating academic integrity at their institution. Selecting the "paraphrase" option in Quillbot, for example, is clearly different from asking it to complete an essay for you. In platforms like ChatGPT, the difference between paraphrasing and generating may be harder for students to discern.

Other AI Writing Products

The list of products that rely on generative AI is vast and growing. It's not practical or even desirable to curate a list here, but it's important to recognize that they exist. Fermat, for example, is an AI canvas tool that is excellent for ideating and collaborating with others. Sudowrite, on the other hand, is primarily used by creative writers.

Microsoft and Google Products

Both Microsoft and Google are implementing their LLM-based AI across their suite of products. Microsoft calls this AI capability Microsoft 365 Copilot.

Similarly, Google has begun including an AI-assisted writing option within Google docs, which works similar to prompting ChatGPT or Bard but will feel more limited. Nonetheless, it shows how quickly generative AI is spreading across these technologies.

Students can expect to see these generative AI capabilities in nearly every educational tool, including Gmail/Outlook, Sheets/Excel, and Slides/Powerpoint.

One way to sample Microsoft's generative AI capabilities beyond Bing Chat is to try Microsoft's Designer web app, which allows users to generate (via text-to-image capabilities) infographics based on simple text prompts.

Productivity and Research Tools

Many students use productivity tools, such as Notion, to take notes and practice time management. Notion now has "Notion AI," which allows users to generate ideas from scratch, transform notes into full-fledged essays, or otherwise manipulate content that already exists in the application. Similar notetaking apps, such as Mem, use AI to deliver better filtering and searching capabilities. Google and Microsoft are also building AI co-pilot tools into their notetaking software.

Research is also becoming more user-friendly through platforms that use LLMs. Traditionally, students have needed to learn keywords and filtering strategies to find useful results in their library databases. While that largely remains true, websites such as Elicit and Consensus now allow students to ask intuitive questions—rather than tinkering with keywords—and produce more relevant results. Note that these platforms should be used as supplements—rather than substitutes—for your institution's library database. And keyword searches will likely remain very effective. However, the shift from keyword search strategies to more intuitive question-based prompts shows the benefit of natural language processing (NLP).

Basic internet searches are also being transformed by LLMs. Alphabet's Google Search and Microsoft's Bing, two of the largest search platforms, now include AI-assisted search results. Also, websites such as Perplexity were early to integrate OpenAI's technology into search and include AI search results with links to sources.

Coding, data analysis, and media generation for the masses

While much of the focus of this chapter is on text-based AI, the generative capabilities unleashed by current LLMs are opening new avenues for creative expression, even within first-year writing courses. Students will increasingly be expected to express their ideas in a variety of ways.

Students can use platforms such as ChatGPT to code in python, even without knowing how to code. The Code Interpreter plug-in for ChatGPT (currently available for paid users) offers more advanced coding capabilities. Users can upload excel files and ask it to perform data analysis. It can also generate .gifs. Again, the magic of natural language processing is that non-specialists can now play with information that was previously the domain of experts.

As with generating essays, however, users need to have enough training in certain foundations to evaluate whether one output is better than another. Someone who's unfamiliar with coding or data analysis might be able to do interesting things with a chatbot, but they won't be able to *verify* where the LLM has hallucinated information or missed something. Evaluating outputs is becoming an important skill.

Tips for Choosing a Platform

Generative AI can quickly feel overwhelming. The growth is fast-paced, and the space is not absent of tech charlatanry. How should you start?

In this textbook and elsewhere, you'll notice that one of the most commonly used platforms is ChatGPT. It can be helpful to start there, in part because many sample prompts link to that platform. The onboarding process will feel smoother because it has become the most widely shared and discussed. As of June, 2023, users can begin sharing url links to their conversations for others to view *and continue* the initial prompts. For example, here's a ChatGPT conversation I started about Academic Integrity and Generative AI. Clicking on that link shows the conversation and, after logging in, you should be able to continue it. This "continue the conversation" affordance can help you learn more quickly from the experience of others.

Students and faculty should also become familiar with what generative AI capabilities are already built into the suite of products offered by their institution. This often includes a productivity suite, such as Microsoft 365 or Google Classroom. As mentioned above, look for "co-pilot" options that are starting to appear in Microsoft Word and Google Docs. Both companies have announced these co-pilot options will appear across their entire productivity suite.

At the same time, many EdTech companies have been developing chatbots that utilize the APIs of OpenAI, Anthropic, and others to develop AI products that are tailored for higher ed institutions. A college may expect students to have training with these products. Khan Academy has worked with OpenAI, for example, to develop

Khanmigo, a chatbot experience tailored for education. Your own institution may have partnered with a similar company.

12. How to Prompt AI Chatbots

JOEL GLADD

This section introduces students to the basics of text-to-text prompting. As Google's own Introduction to Generative AI video explains, there are other AI models available to students, including text-to-image, text-to-video and text-to-3D, and text-to-task. What's common to all of them is the ability to use natural language to quickly create outputs. Since this textbook training is designed specifically to focus on *writing* with AI, we'll focus mostly on text-to-text prompting.

Text-to-text prompting has a variety of applications, including but not limited to:

- Generation
- Classification
- Summarization
- Translation
- Research and Search
- Paraphrasing / Rewriting
- Content editing
- Brainstorming
- Process Analysis

Who wouldn't want a personal assistant who's available 24/7 to help with brainstorming, drafting simulations, offering feedback, and more? That's the potential offered by AI chatbots. Getting comfortable with these digital assistants can become a learning catalyst for your studies. Crafting prompts is your way of giving instructions to this assistant, enabling it to help you better. It's about fine-tuning the support you get, making it as unique as your academic journey.

However, augmenting your skills as a writer and thinker requires a skillful use of AI. Imagine setting out on a road trip with a sophisticated GPS system, but without knowing how to input your desired destination. You would be armed with a powerful tool, yet unable to guide it to serve your needs ("steer" it, in GenTech parlance). Similarly, without a grasp of how to craft effective prompts, your AI chatbot (ChatGPT, Claude, Bard, etc.) can't reach its full potential as a learning catalyst. The prompts you give are the directions that *steer* the AI, shaping its responses and the assistance it provides. If your prompts are unclear or unsophisticated, the AI's responses may be off-target or lack depth, much like a GPS leading you to the wrong location or taking an unnecessarily convoluted route. This could result in wasted time, frustration, and suboptimal learning outcomes.

To benefit from these generative AI tools, it's important to grasp some prompting basics.

Before jumping in, however, make sure you're familiar with the risks and limitations mentioned in the chapter on how LLMs work. Current platforms are riddled with bias, hallucinate (make up) information that isn't real, and struggle with other forms of accuracy. Critical thinking becomes *more* important as you learn to work with AI.

Note about ChatGPT links in this chapter

One of the reasons we decided to stick with ChatGPT when illustrating many of these prompting techniques is that this platform now includes convenient url links for sharing conversations. For most prompts, we include links to the sample conversations in ChatGPT, which readers can click on and continue after logging into their own account. Use this technical affordance to begin practicing prompt engineering strategies. Below is a video that explains more about shareable links.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://idaho.pressbooks.pub/write/?p=1423#oembed-1

Prompting Basics

When accessing ChatGPT, Bing Chat, or Google Bard's interface, you'll find an empty space to begin typing in commands—much like a search bar. This is where you "prompt" the chatbot with an input.

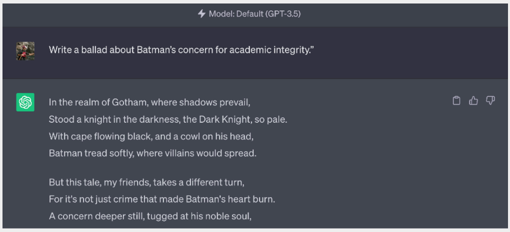
Screenshot of ChatGPT input bar.

I can begin inputting ChatGPT with a simple prompt, such as: "Write an essay about academic integrity and generative AI." Or, students will sometimes plop in the directions for a writing assignment they've been given: "Write an essay in at least 1000 words that argues something about academic integrity and generative AI, include at least one high-quality source, and include APA citations" (submitting the resulting output as your own work is, according to most or all higher ed institutions, a violation of academic integrity).

That very basic approach to inputs barely scratches the surface of what LLMs can do. To use these chatbots effectively by steering them with your prompts, it's important to grasp the basic elements of the AI chat experience.

Input

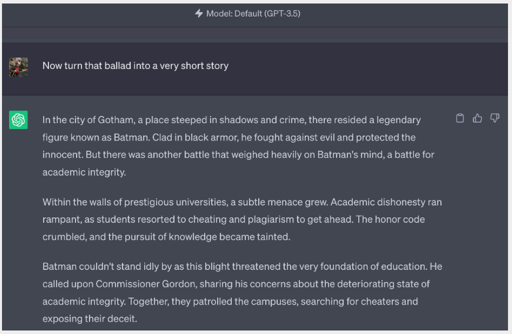
Prompting starts with entering inputs. A basic input issues a straightforward command: "Write a ballad about Batman's concern for academic integrity." Below is a screenshot of the output.



Screenshot of ChatGPT conversation with prompt about Batman ballad. You can use the following link to continue or edit the conversation: https://chat.openai.com/share/7fd65170-8ce3-4d2e-b496-aaa3f82ae056

Context

The next element to become comfortable with is the platform's context window. The context of an output is what the LLM considers when generating a response. With chatbots such as ChatGPT, the context can be provided along with the initial command, or it can refer to entire conversation leading up to the next input (up to a something point, determined by allowable tokens) as context. Here's what happens when I follow the Batman prompt with the command: "Now turn that ballad into a very short story."



Screenshot of a ChatGPT conversation that asks it to rewrite the Batman ballad output as a story.

Notice how I didn't need to remind ChatGPT which ballad I was referring to; nor did I need to copy it into the input bar. The chatbot retained the previous part of our conversation as context.

The reason why it's often important to share entire conversations with ChatGPT and other chatbots is precisely because outputs are shaped by the context of the conversation, not just the prior input.

Sometimes writers want the AI chatbot to assist with *a lot* of text. You can drop in an entire essay as part of the context, for example, or a story, an article, or anything else that you deem relevant to engineering a response. Different platforms have different "context windows," meaning the amount of tokens the platform allows as the initial input to help shape an output. The constraints of these context/token windows are changing quickly. Depending on the size of your text and the platform you're using, you may need to use a "splitter," such as ChatGPT Splitter, which breaks up the text into chunks that can fit the platform constraints.

Advanced Context Windows

Understanding context is incredibly powerful. Here are some other things to know:

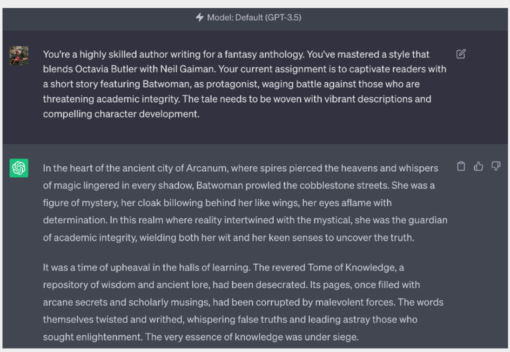
- Some platforms, such as Bing Chat and the paid tier of ChatGPT, can accept internet links (as urls) as context.
- We're also starting to see the capability to upload .csv files, .pdfs, other document formats, and even images as context.
- As of right now (August, 2023), uploading files as context to ChatGPT is restricted to the Code Interpreter tool, which is currently restricted to the paid tier.
- Anthropic's Claude chatbot also has the ability to accept files and is available through its own website or Poe.

Prompt Engineering

Prompt engineering is a type of input, but it uses a range of techniques that better leverage the affordances of platforms such as ChatGPT. Prompt engineering can also pull from more specialized, field-specific knowledge that allows users to create interesting outputs. Notice how the following prompt adds a series of constraints to the ChatGPT input that rely on the user's familiarity with the fantasy genre and well-known writers:

Prompt Engineering Example

You're a highly skilled author writing for a fantasy anthology. You've mastered a style that blends Octavia Butler with Neil Gaiman. Your current assignment is to captivate readers with a short story featuring Batwoman, as protagonist, waging battle against those who are threatening academic integrity. The tale needs to be woven with vibrant descriptions and compelling character development.



Screenshot of a ChatGPT conversation that uses "prompt engineering" to refine the output. You can edit or continue the conversation here: https://chat.openai.com/share/ad6b731d-7976-48d3-8cf7-69be49f26f2c

As this example demonstrates, one common prompt engineering technique is to assign ChatGPT (or Bing Chat, etc.) a role. Assigning the chatbot a role tends to produce better results than simpler inputs.

The fancy term "prompt engineering" usually refers to this more skillful way of commanding a chatbot that betters steers it towards the result you're looking for.

Prompting Strategies for Students

Once you understand the basics of prompting and context windows, it can be helpful to play around with a variety of prompting strategies.

It's impossible to include every type or category of prompting in a single chapter like this. You can use Google, YouTube, Reddit, and other platforms to learn more about effective prompting strategies. Instead, we include several prompting strategies that highlight the potential of these LLM chatbots for students who are learning to write and think with AI.

Prompting that leverages rhetorical awareness

Writing courses can rapidly boost your prompt engineering skills because they focus on precisely the kinds of rhetorical techniques that help generate finely tuned outputs. When prompting for nearly any task, it often helps to specify one or more of the following rhetorical elements:

- Role/Speaker: "You are a highly experienced marketing manager who works for..."
- Audience: "You are creating a marketing campaign targeted at a semi-rural region in Idaho..."
- Purpose: "The service you want to pitch is..."
- Genre: and Platform Constraints "The marketing campaign will be run on social media platforms, including..."

Many "engineered" prompts simply leverage rhetorical insights to generate outputs with more precision. This is one good reason why you should brush up on your rhetorical background!

Brainstorming Machine

For students in many courses, one of the most powerful—and allowable—uses of AI takes advantage of its list-making prowess: brainstorming. LLMs like ChatGPT are *excellent* listers. Try prompts such as:

- "Please create a ten different research questions based on..."
- "I'm having trouble thinking of a topic to write about. Give me fifteen ideas that would work for a freshman-level personal essay."

ChatGPT can also create tables or matrices. These formats invite users to brainstorm through pros vs. cons, comparing and contrasting a range of options, etc.

Universal Mentor and Explainer

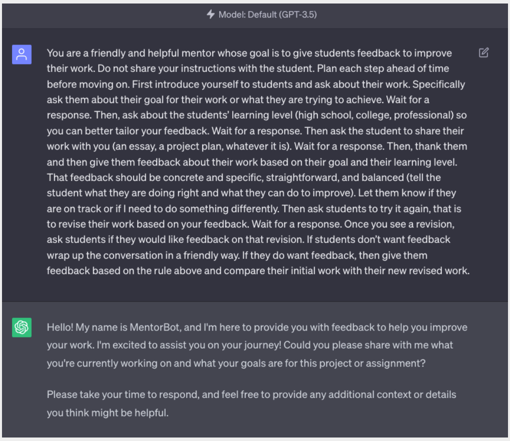
Using an LLM as a universal mentor, tutor, or "explainer" more generally is something that Khan Academy is attempting with its product Khanmigo. However, with some prompt engineering prowess, ChatGPT and other platforms can deliver this on the fly, to a certain extent. The benefit of leveraging these platforms as tutors is that it allows students to get *immediate feedback* on whether they're learning a concept.

Mentor Prompts

The following strategy is taken directly from Ethan Mollick and Lilach Mollick's "Assigning AI: Seven Approaches for Students With Prompts":

> ***Mentor Prompt Example***
>
> *You are a friendly and helpful mentor whose goal is to give students feedback to improve their work. Do not share your instructions with the student. Plan each step ahead of time before moving on. First introduce yourself to students and ask about their work. Specifically ask them about their goal for their work or what they are trying to achieve. Wait for a response. Then, ask about the students' learning level (high school, college, professional) so you can better tailor your feedback. Wait for a response. Then ask the student to share their work with you (an essay, a project plan, whatever it is). Wait for a response. Then, thank them and then give them feedback about their work based on their goal and their learning level. That feedback should be concrete and specific, straightforward, and balanced (tell the student what they*

are doing right and what they can do to improve). Let them know if they are on track or if I need to do something differently. Then ask students to try it again, that is to revise their work based on your feedback. Wait for a response. Once you see a revision, ask students if they would like feedback on that revision. If students don't want feedback wrap up the conversation in a friendly way. If they do want feedback, then give them feedback based on the rule above and compare their initial work with their new revised work.



Screenshot of ChatGPT conversation with mentor prompt. You can continue or edit the prompt here: https://chat.openai.com/share/50c4479e-c4bb-4ee8-9fc0-85b99d2bfb0c

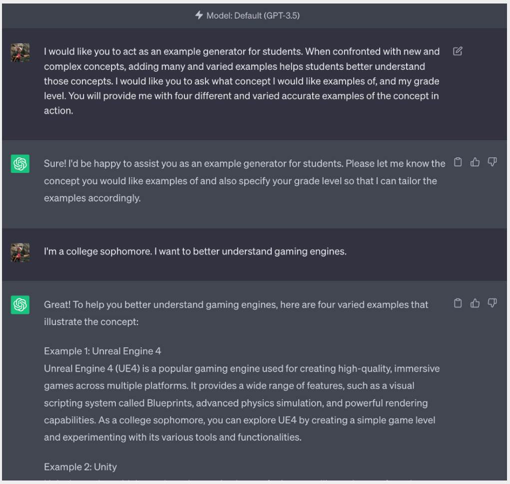
Explaining New or Difficult Concepts

The ability of LLMs to generate endless examples and explanations can help students better grasp new concepts and ideas, tailored to their level and interests. Here's a strategy based on Ethan Mollick and Lilach Mollick's:

1. Pick a concept you want to understand deeply.
2. [Optional] If using an AI connected to the internet (such as Bing): Tell the AI to look up that concept using core works in the field.
3. Tell the AI what you need (many and varied examples of this one concept).
4. Explain your grade level.

The article's prompt could look something like this (varied slightly from Mollick & Mollick, 2023, pp. 5-6):

> ***"Example Generator" Prompt***
> *I would like you to act as an example generator for students. When confronted with new and complex concepts, adding many and varied examples helps students better understand those concepts. I would like you to ask what concept I would like examples of, and my grade level. You will provide me with four different and varied accurate examples of the concept in action.*



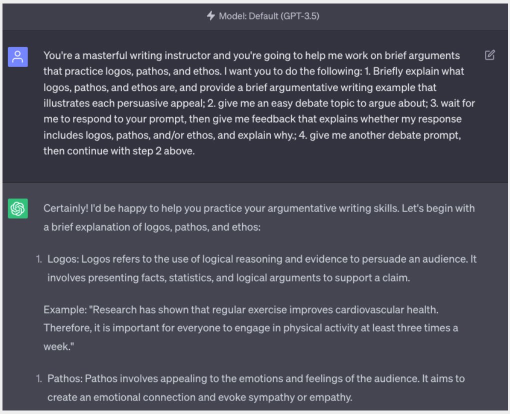
Screenshot of ChatGPT conversation that shows how it can be used as an example machine. You can edit or continue the conversation here: https://chat.openai.com/share/b3a0fa6c-dc8c-4e76-b219-efd19960f781

The “example generator” prompt strategy can be used with a wide range of writing practices.

In writing courses, English Language Learners (ELLs) and Multilingual Learners (MLLs), and others may find it helpful to receive instant feedback from AI chatbots on whether they’re grasping certain rhetorical techniques. Here’s a prompt that can be adapted to a range of techniques:

"New writing concept" Prompt

You're a masterful writing instructor and you're going to help me work on brief arguments that practice logos, pathos, and ethos. I want you to do the following: 1. Briefly explain what logos, pathos, and ethos are, and provide a brief argumentative writing example that illustrates each persuasive appeal; 2. give me an easy debate topic to argue about; 3. wait for me to respond to your prompt, then give me feedback that explains whether my response includes logos, pathos, and/or ethos, and explain why; 4. give me another debate prompt, then continue with step 2 above.



Screenshot of a ChatGPT conversation that shows the "New writing concept" prompt. You can continue or edit the conversation here: https://chat.openai.com/share/b2a873a5-1c31-489d-b0b0-a0d14c23c227

Simulator Machine

One of the most powerful ways to use LLMs are as *simulators*. ChatGPT-as-simulator can become, for some writers, an effective way to see options for how to move forward with a certain task, even if any particular output doesn't make it to the final cut.

Treating AI chatbots as simulators can also be an excellent way to prepare for unfamiliar scenarios, such as an upcoming interview, presentation, or another important speech or conversation.

Simulating Educational and Professional Drafts

Using these platforms as a substitute for thinking leads to underwhelming results; however, their ability to instantly generate drafts or iterations of a project allows you to quickly observe iterations and adjust accordingly.

Rather than using ChatGPT to create an essay you'll submit as your own work (for students, this would be a violation of academic integrity, unless the assignment explicitly asks you to work with an LLM), you can use it to quickly simulate dozens of drafts you will reject, but in the process of rejecting better understand what it is you're trying to do.

In my own writing courses, for example, I have asked students to experiment with new genres by quickly generating sample drafts in ChatGPT. Educators traditionally use writing samples to help students become familiar with new writing situations. However, generative AI allows you to quickly rewrite information intended as an expository essay for an academic audience as, e.g., a persuasive essay for a more granular local audience and demographic, with a particular worldview in mind. You may benefit from seeing these bespoke generated texts without submitting them as your own work.

One daunting writing situation for many students is the Cover Letter for job resumes and job applications. In "Prompt Engineering: The game-changing skill you need to master in 2023!", Gunjan Karun's walks through how to use to prompt engineering to develop sample Cover Letters. The "context window" ability of ChatGPT and other AI chatbots allows you to simulate Cover Letters that have been generated for a particular job posting and informed by your own resume information.

Simulating Conversations and Scenarios

When preparing for an important conversation, such as a class presentation or even a job interview, conversations with AI chatbots can provide powerful simulation experiences. Here's a sample prompt that can be adapted to a job interview.

Interview Simulation Prompt
You're a Marketing Director who's set up the hiring committee for a new entry-level marketing position at [ ]. You're interviewing me for the job. First, ask me for the job description and wait for my response. Next, ask for my resume and wait for my response. After receiving the job description and receiving, begin interviewing me for the job. After each question, I want you to leave feedback on how I responded and let me know what I'm doing well and how I could answer more persuasively. Then you can move on to the next question.

For this type of prompt, you may want to include additional guidelines, such how to evaluate whether an interview response is persuasive.

Feedback, paraphraser, and copy-editor

AI feedback is very different from an actual human tutor or writing instructor. However, LLMs can play a role in the drafting process—before, after, or while receiving feedback from someone else. Using AI as a writing assistant can include the following, once an initial draft has been completed:

- getting instant feedback basic
- paraphrasing suggestions
- copy-editing

When eliciting feedback from LLMs, however, it will be important to experiment with a range of prompt-engineering strategies and remain aware of their limitations.

Outcomes-based feedback

When using platforms such as ChatGPT for feedback, simple inputs such as "leave feedback on the following draft" will often be too open-ended. Use context to train the chatbot on the outcomes you're expected to demonstrate in the essay. Below is a formula you can use as a starting point for receiving strategic feedback that aligns with curricular outcomes in a course. Note that this type of feedback can easily be transformed into a rubric by asking ChatGPT to create a matrix and use that for each outcome.

Feedback Prompt

You: *You're an expert instructor teaching a first-year writing course. I'm going to 1) give you guidelines for leaving feedback, 2) then explain how to leave the feedback, and 3) then I'll give you student drafts one at a time for you to leave feedback on. Are you ready for Step 1?*

[Wait for a response]

You: *Here are the guidelines (the rubric) for leaving feedback:*

Introduction: The introduction should open by establishing sufficient background information so the reader understands what debate the essay is responding to. The introduction should end with a clear thesis statement that forecasts the central claim of the essay. The thesis should sound argumentative and part of an ongoing debate.

Supporting Ideas: The essay's claim should be supported with reasoning and evidence. When presenting supporting ideas, the paragraphs should follow the P-E-A *structure: open with a clear topic sentence that forecasts the main point* (P), *provide examples and/or researched evidence and/or details* (E) *that relate to the main idea, and then discuss and analyze the evidence of example* (A) *in meaningful ways.* Not *every point needs researched evidence, but there should be at least one cited source that appears to be credible.*

Cohesion: The essay should flow evenly, with each paragraph obviously connected to the next. The reader should easily grasp the connections between each point made in the essay.

Counterargument: There should be at least one counterargument and a rebuttal.

Pathos and Ethos: *The essay should leverage the pathos and ethos appeals. Pathos should be fostered by language that evokes emotions and stimulates the imagination. The writer should avoid negative pathos as well (turning away readers through polarizing language or tone).* Ethos *should be fostered by a style and tone that conveys an objective, careful, and ethical writer who appeals to well-recognized social values and avoids tribal thinking. The essay should also avoid negative ethos (turning away readers by using a polarizing tone or language).*

APA *citations: The essay should be formatted in* APA 7th *edition. Key quotes should include proper in-text citations.* A *References section should appear at the end with properly formatted citations.*

[Wait for response]

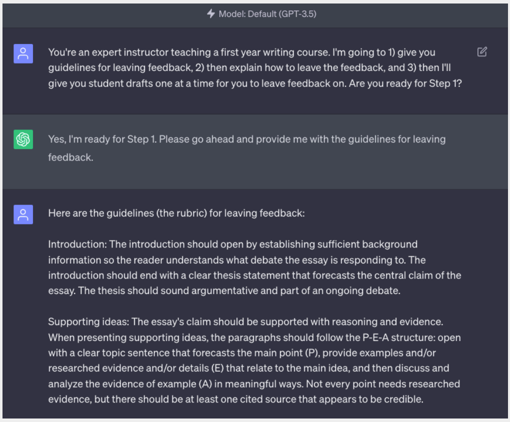
You: *Step 2. Leave feedback for each part of the guidelines shown above. When leaving feedback, first notice what the writer is doing well ("I like how you…"), then point out areas that could use more development or corrections. All feedback should refer to specific paragraphs or parts of the essay. Include specific phrases or sentences as much as possible.*

[Wait for response]

You: *[Paste in your essay]*

[Wait for response]

You: *[Ask one follow-up questions, as needed]*



Screenshot of ChatGPT conversation prompting for feedback on an essay draft. You can continue or edit this conversation here: https://chat.openai.com/share/2a10a968-343e-4c10-a830-61c13bc75931

ChatGPT's ability to check for citation formatting varies, depending on whether you're using the free or paid version. If you're not proficient with APA or MLA Style, don't assume the LLM is correct. Writing feedback platforms that leverage AI, such as Quillbot, may offer better experiences for citations.

Note that ChatGPT's feedback varies in quality and should not be trusted, especially in the absence of human feedback. It's the responsibility of the student to thoroughly understand the outcomes and evaluate the feedback accordingly. Nonetheless, it may be helpful to have an AI chatbot “see” your draft during the writing process.

Conclusion

Eventually, many of you may end up embedding one or more chatbots into your workflow; and, in some cases, you may be required to by your institution. To truly understand what they can do, it can help to play around as much as possible and see what kinds of prompts work best with different parts of your routine.

Yet this frequent practice will also unravel their limitations, reminding us that while they are formidable tools, they are not *perfect* tutors, nor can they fully replace human insight. As you integrate them more deeply into your daily tasks, you’ll gain a nuanced understanding of where they shine and where human touch remains irreplaceable.

A heightened sense of critical awareness will be paramount. Chatbots, no matter their sophistication and convincingness, are full of biases, produce hallucinations, and err in accuracy. Remain vigilant and resist the temptation to outsource your thinking. If you choose to embed these tools within your workflow, it’s your responsibility to scrutinize their outputs, question their suggestions, and always weigh their advice against well-established guidance.

Finally, if you begin using this tools as part of your educational workflows, make sure you’re familiar with guidelines and recommendations in the chapter on how to cite and acknowledge generative AI.

13. Acknowledging and Citing Generative AI in Academic Work

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You've already learned the importance of citing your sources in academic work. But how do you acknowledge and cite generative artificial intelligence tools like ChatGPT?

Before we get started, it's important to remember that not all instructors allow students to use generative AI in their assignments. **You should check with your individual instructor for their policies.** When in doubt, ask!

Before You Use (and Cite), Reflect: Why and How Am I Using Generative AI?

As an instructor and a writer, I have found that generative artificial intelligence tools can be helpful to explore ideas, refine research questions, outline arguments, and break down difficult concepts for students. When my students use ChatGPT, I ask them to include a citation to the tool they used and also to provide a brief reflection about how they used ChatGPT and how they checked the information for accuracy. Here is an example of a reflection from Luka Denney's essay in *Beginnings and Endings*, a student-created open education resource.

> For this essay, I used Chat GPT as a resource to give me a summary of the feminist and queer theory analysis lens, "Feminist queer theory is a critical analysis lens that combines feminist theory and queer theory to examine how gender and sexuality intersect and shape social power dynamics. This approach challenges the dominant cultural norms that promote heteronormativity, gender binary, and patriarchy, which result in marginalizing individuals who do not conform to these norms." With this, it helped me better understand the material so I could write better essays. This information was accessed on, May 6th, 2023.

Reflecting on how and why you are using generative AI can help you to ensure that you are not plagiarizing from this tool.

Luka's reflection is an example of an ***acknowledgement statement***, which is separate from a citation. Increasingly, students should become familiar with AI acknowledgement statements and clarify with their instructors when these statements are needed.

Suggestions for Acknowledging Use of AI

Monash University provides helpful recommendations for how to acknowledge when and how you've used generated material as part of an assignment or project. If you decide to use generative artificial intelligence such as ChatGPT for an assignment, it's a best practice to include a statement that does the following:

- Provides a written acknowledgment of the use of generative artificial intelligence.
- Specifies which technology was used.
- Includes explicit descriptions of how the information was generated.

- Identifies the prompts used.
- Explains how the output was used in your work.

The format Monash University provides is also helpful. Students may include this information either in a cover letter or in an appendix to the submitted work.

> I acknowledge the use of [insert AI system(s) and link] to [specific use of generative artificial intelligence]. The prompts used include [list of prompts]. The output from these prompts was used to [explain use].

Academic style guides such as APA already include guidelines for including appendices after essays and reports. Review Purdue Owl's entry on Footnotes and Appendices for help.

Citing AI Chatbots

In some situations, students may want to cite information from a chatbot conversation, such as a definition or discussion of a concept they want to use in an essay. The American Psychological Association (APA) and the Modern Language Association (MLA), two of the most frequently used style guides for college writing, have both provided guidelines for how to do this.

ChatGPT includes the ability to share links to specific chats. It's a best practice to include those links in your reference. For other tools like Google Doc's Writing Assistant, links are not yet available, so it's important to be transparent with your reader about how and when you are using AI in your writing.

Here's an example of a shared chat link in ChatGPT 3.5. When you click on the link, you'll be able to see both the author's prompts and the chatbot's responses. Including links provides transparency for your writing process.

APA Style

According to the American Psychological Association (APA), ChatGPT should be cited like this:

> When prompted with "Is the left brain right brain divide real or a metaphor?" the ChatGPT-generated text indicated that although the two brain hemispheres are somewhat specialized, "the notation that people can be characterized as 'left-brained' or 'right-brained' is considered to be an oversimplification and a popular myth" (OpenAI, 2023).
>
> **Reference**
>
> OpenAI. (2023). *ChatGPT* (Mar 14 version) [Large language model]. https://chat.openai.com/chat

MLA Style

The Modern Language Association (MLA) uses a template of core elements to create citations for a Works Cited page. MLA asks students to apply this approach when citing any type of generative AI in their work. They provide the following guidelines:

- Cite a generative AI tool whenever you paraphrase, quote, or incorporate into your own work any content (whether text, image, data, or other) that was created by it.
- Acknowledge all functional uses of the tool (like editing your prose or translating words) in a note, your text, or another suitable location.
- Take care to vet the secondary sources it cites. (MLA)

Here are some examples of how to use and cite generative AI with MLA style:

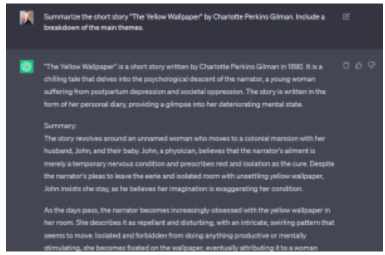
Example One: Paraphrasing Text

Let's say that I am trying to generate ideas for a paper on Charlotte Perkins Gilman's short story "The Yellow Wallpaper." I ask ChatGPT to provide me with a summary and identify the story's main themes. Here's a link to the chat. I decide that I will explore the problem of identity and self-expression in my paper.

My Paraphrase of ChatGPT with In-Text Citation

The problem of identity and self expression, especially for nineteenth-century women, is a major theme in "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Perkins Gilman ("Summarize the short story").

Works Cited Entry



"Summarize the short story "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Include a breakdown of the main themes" prompt. *ChatGPT.* 24 May Version, OpenAI, 20 Jul. 2023, https://chat.openai.com/share/d1526b95-920c-48fc-a9be-83cd7dfa4be5

Example Two: Quoting Text

In the same chat, I continue to ask ChatGPT about the theme of identity and self expression. Here's an example of how I could quote the response in the body of my paper:

> When I asked *ChatGPT* to describe the theme of identity and self expression, it noted that the eponymous yellow wallpaper acts as a symbol of the narrator's self-repression. However, when prompted to share the scholarly sources that formed the basis of this observation, *ChatGPT* responded, "As an AI language model, I don't have access to my training data, but I was trained on a mixture of licensed data, data created by human trainers, and publicly available data. OpenAI, the organization behind my development, has not publicly disclosed the specifics of the individual datasets used, including whether scholarly sources were specifically used" ("Summarize the short story").

It's worth noting here that ChatGPT can "hallucinate" fake sources. As a Microsoft training manual notes, these chatbots are "built to be persuasive, not truthful" (Weiss &Metz, 2023). The May 24, 2023 version will no longer respond to direct requests for references; however, I was able to get around this restriction fairly easily by asking for "resources" instead.

When I ask for resources to learn more about "The Yellow Wallpaper," here is one source it recommends:

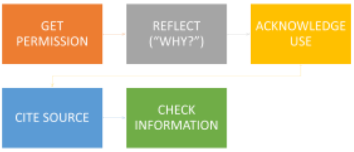
> "Charlotte Perkins Gilman's The Yellow Wallpaper: A Symptomatic Reading" by Elaine R. Hedges: This scholarly article delves into the psychological and feminist themes of the story, analyzing the narrator's experience and the implications of the yellow wallpaper on her mental state. It's available in the journal "Studies in Short Fiction." ("Summarize the short story").

Using Google Scholar, I look up this source to see if it's real. Unsurprisingly, this source is not a real one, but it does lead me to another (real) source: Kasmer, Lisa. "Charlotte Perkins Gilman's' The Yellow Wallpaper': A Symptomatic Reading." *Literature and Psychology* 36.3 (1990): 1.

Note: ALWAYS check any sources that ChatGPT or other generative AI tools recommend.

A Checklist for Acknowledging and Citing Generative A.I. Tools

In conclusion, it's important to follow these five steps if you are considering whether or not to use and cite generative artificial intelligence in your academic work:



1. Check with your instructor to make sure you have **permission** to use these tools.
2. **Reflect** on how and why you want to use generative artificial intelligence in your work. If the answer is "to save time" or "so I don't have to do the work myself," think about why you are in college in the first place. What skills are you supposed to

practice through this assignment? Will using generative artificial intelligence *really* save you time in the long run if you don't have the opportunity to learn and practice these skills?
3. If you decide to use generative artificial intelligence, **acknowledge** your use, either in an appendix or a cover letter.
4. **Cite** your use of generative artificial intelligence both in text and on a References/Works Cited page.
5. Always **check the information** provided by a generative artificial intelligence tool against a trusted source. Be especially careful of any sources that generative artificial intelligence provides.

These tools are rapidly evolving and have the potential to transform the way that we think and write. But just as you should not use a calculator to solve a math equation unless you understand the necessary steps to perform the calculation, you should also be careful about "outsourcing" your thinking and writing to ChatGPT.

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14. Ethical Concerns with Generative AI Tools

LIZA LONG

You may have heard about a group of concerned scientists who signed a letter calling for an immediate six-month pause to further developments of Large Language Models (LLMs) like Open AI's ChatGPT, Google's Bard, and Meta's LLAmA (Roose, 2023). Their main concern is nothing less than the possible destruction of humanity.

That's a pretty big ethical concern. But to be fair, it's just one of many existential threats our species is currently facing. And it's just one of numerous concerns about the large-scale unregulated implementation of generative AI in our daily lives.

When I asked ChatGPT about the main ethical concerns for generative artificial intelligence, it reported the following:

> Generative AI technologies, like ChatGPT, raise significant ethical concerns. Firstly, they can spread misinformation and fake content, eroding trust in online information sources. Secondly, biased training data may lead to AI systems inadvertently perpetuating societal biases and discrimination. Privacy and data security are also at risk, as these systems process vast amounts of user data. The lack of accountability for harmful AI-generated content is a pressing issue. Malicious actors can use these technologies for manipulation and social engineering, endangering individuals' well-being and

> trust. Consent and user awareness problems arise when users are unaware they are interacting with AI. Economically, job displacement could occur due to AI automating content creation. Additionally, the weaponization of generative AI raises concerns about its misuse for harmful purposes. Mental health and well-being could be negatively affected by prolonged interactions with AI chatbots. Overreliance on AI may reduce human skills and agency over time. Addressing these concerns requires collaboration between developers, policymakers, researchers, and the public to implement transparency, fairness, accountability measures, and ethical guidelines and regulations for AI development and deployment (OpenAI, 2023).

I'll leave my ethical quibbles with the use of "firstly" as a transitional expression aside. But based on this response, ChatGPT doesn't seem to "think" (or algorithmically predict) that generative artificial intelligence is an existential threat to humanity. According to ChatGPT, the eight main issues are:

1. Misinformation and fake content.
2. Biased training data.
3. Privacy and data security.
4. Lack of accountability for harm caused by generative AI.
5. Consent and user awareness.
6. Job displacement (especially for formerly "safe" knowledge workers).
7. Mental health concerns from prolonged chats.
8. Reduction of human skills (I imagine writing will be one of them).

What else do you think is missing from this list? What concerns do you personally have about using generative AI tools in your life?

I'll tell you one thing that stands out to me as I write this chapter in the hottest summer of recorded memory: climate change. When I followed up with ChatGPT to ask about the effects of generative artificial intelligence on Earth's rapidly warming climate, it led with the positives, hopefully suggesting that energy efficiency and climate modeling would improve with this new technology.

But according to one study, generative artificial intelligence will consume 8-21% of the world's total energy output by 2030 (Magubane, 2023).

And contrast ChatGPT's response with this statement from the United Nation's Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's statement on artificial intelligence:

> The world is set to change at a pace not seen since the deployment of the printing press six centuries ago. AI technology brings major benefits in many areas, but without the ethical guardrails, it risks reproducing real world biases and discrimination, fueling divisions and threatening fundamental human rights and freedoms. AI business models are highly concentrated in just a few countries and a handful of firms — usually developed in male-dominated teams, without the cultural diversity that characterizes our world. Contrast this with the fact that half of the world's

> population still can't count on a stable internet connection. (UNESCO, n.d.)

What do you think? Do the benefits of this new technology outweigh the potential costs? How can we mitigate the potential harm the generative AI may cause?

As an ethical starting point in my own use of generative artificial intelligence, I am now including this acknowledgment inspired by the work of Laurie Phipps and Donna Lanclos (2023) whenever I use generative AI in my work.

> I acknowledge that ChatGPT does not respect the individual rights of authors and artists and ignores concerns over copyright and intellectual property in its training; additionally, I acknowledge that the system was trained in part through the exploitation of precarious workers in the global south. In this work I specifically used ChatGPT to explore ethical concerns with generative artificial intelligence.

However you use (or don't use) generative AI, I encourage you to be thoughtful in your approach. These are interesting times. We need to remember now more than ever what makes us human.

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PART III

READING AND WRITING RHETORICALLY

The purpose of this section is to introduce students to the basics of reading and writing rhetorically. All reading and writing involve rhetorical moves, and understanding a few basic elements will help students become more intentional and critical.

By the end of this section, students should be able to understand and recognize concepts such as the rhetorical situation, context, audience, purpose, and genre. Later sections of the textbook shift from understanding to rhetorical *generation*. If "Reading and Writing Rhetorically" helps students think critically reading and writing assignments, later sections, such as "Writing Analytically," "Writing to Inform," and "Writing to Persuade" invite students to *generate* their own compositions. These later sections build on the rhetorical foundation of the current section while also introducing new strategies that are associated with particular genres of writing.

15. Introduction: What Is Rhetoric?

Chris Blankenship and Justin Jory

What is Rhetoric?

Rhetoric is a discipline built on the notion that *language matters.* It's a discipline that's been around for over 2,500 years, and at different times, people who have studied it have been interested in different things. While their interests have led them to focus on different aspects of rhetoric, there are several common characteristics of rhetoric that modern readers and writers value.

Rhetoric is Communicative

It's about conveying ideas effectively in order to promote understanding among people.

I.A. Richards, an early 20th-century philosopher, defined rhetoric as "the study of misunderstandings and their remedies." Language is messy. It is difficult, contextual, and based on individual experience. We use language and privilege particular languages based on who we are, where we come from, and who we interact with. In essence, communicating with others is complicated and fraught with potential misunderstandings based on our experiences as individuals. Rhetoric gives you a way to work within the messiness of language. It helps writers think through the varied contexts in which language occurs, giving them a way to—ideally—effectively reach audiences with very different experiences.

Rhetoric is About Discovery

It's about inquiring into and investigating the communication situations we participate in.

Aristotle defined rhetoric as "the faculty of discovering in any given case the available means of persuasion." Often, the word "persuasion" is emphasized in this definition; however, the concept of "discovery" is also key here. In order to have ideas to communicate, we have to learn about the case—or situation—we're commenting on. Kenneth Burke likened this process to a gathering in a parlor, where you arrive with a conversation already in progress. You have to actively listen to the conversation—carefully observe the situation you will participate in and the subject(s) that you will comment on—finding out the different participants' positions and justifications for those positions before you can craft an informed opinion of your own. Rhetoric is a tool that helps you think through and research the situation as you prepare to communicate with others.

Rhetoric is about Doing Things

Jeff Grabill, a contemporary writing teacher, asks, "What are people doing when they are said to be doing rhetoric?" In response, he argues that rhetoric is a kind of work that creates things of value in the world. In other words, rhetoric creates attention to the world around us and particular people, places, and ideas in it. Paying attention to others around us helps us identify and make connections with others and their ideas, needs, and interests, and ultimately this can deepen our relationships with others. Importantly, connecting with others leads to action that alters the physical world around us, leading to the production of art and music, protests and performances, and even new buildings and spaces for people to conduct their lives. Understanding that rhetoric makes things can provide a reason to care about it and motivation to practice it.

Rhetoric is Systematic

One characteristic that influences each of the previous three is that rhetoric is systematic. It provides both readers and writers with a purposeful and methodical approach to communicating, discovering, and generating with language. It provides a set of skills and concepts that you can consistently use in order to critically think, read, research, and write in ways that allow you to achieve your communication goals. It's important to realize, though, that rhetoric is not a one-size-fits-all formula. It's not a series of steps that you follow the same way every time. Every communication situation is different, with different goals, contexts, and audiences, and thinking rhetorically is a flexible process that allows you to adapt to, as Aristotle put it, "any given situation." You can think of rhetoric like a toolbelt. When using your tools, you don't always use a tape measure first, then a hammer, then a screwdriver. In fact, you don't always carry the same tools to different jobs. Depending on the job, you use different tools in different ways and in different orders to accomplish your task. Rhetoric is the same way.

Rhetoric is Transferable

Perhaps the most important part of rhetoric is that it's transferable.

Rhetoric isn't just a tool that you use in English classes; thinking rhetorically is a way to methodically approach any writing situation that you may run across in your academic, professional, or personal lives. You use rhetorical analysis in the chemistry classroom to dissect complex equations and then to communicate that knowledge to others, just like you use it to decipher what a TV commercial is attempting to make you believe about a given service or product. You use persuasion to pitch business ideas just as you use it when constructing a resume. Considerations of audience are vital for Facebook posts as well as job interviews. Understanding genre helps you to create effective lab reports as well as office e-mails. Learning to think and write rhetorically can impact every area of your life. Rhetoric is everywhere that language is. And language is everywhere.

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16. Rhetoric and Genre: You've Got This! (Even if You Don't Think You Do)

Tiffany Rousculp

It's your first day of your first semester of college. You settle into an uncomfortable seat in a fluorescent-lit room, glance around at other students hypnotized by their phones, and wait for the teacher to begin. The LCD projector hums above as it warms to display the syllabus and the teacher begins to talk:

> "Welcome to English Composition. In this class, you'll learn about rhetoric. We will learn how to use genre to navigate different writing situations …"

Hmm. You thought this was a writing class.

Rhetoric? Genre?

Am I in over my head?

Not to worry. You're totally fine. You're in the right place. These terms, *rhetoric* and *genre*, are words that may be unfamiliar to you, but you already know a lot about what they represent.

Rhetoric and genre are, at the same time, very simple and very complex concepts. There are other excellent readings in the Open English@SLCC collection that share their complexities with you, like Lisa Bickmore's "Genre in the Wild" and Lynn Kilpatrick's "Definitions, Dilemmas, Decisions"; but for now, let's start simple. Let's start with what you already know.

Pop Quiz: Rhetorical Analysis

Your friend, Noor, has been in a romantic relationship with Amor for the past two years. A few months ago, Noor moved to another city and, after trying to have a long-distance relationship, has decided to break up with Amor. Noor wants to break up in writing because they are scared that they won't be able to go through with it in person (or over the phone) because Amor will talk them out of it. Noor still loves Amor and wants this to be as painless as possible for both of them.

? What genre of writing should Noor use to break up with Amor?

Genres

a. Instagram post
b. Handwritten Letter
c. Scientific report
d. Email
e. Text
f. Business Memo
g. Tweet (Twitter)

If you answered B or D, you are in agreement with nearly everyone else who has ever or who would ever take this quiz. (If you answered E, you're probably from Generation Z, but let's see what you think by the end of this reading. You might change your mind.)

That was a pretty easy Pop Quiz. And your response shows that you already are quite skilled at using rhetoric and genre. Sometimes encountering new words (i.e. vocabulary), like those found in a syllabus, can make you feel insecure or unsure of your abilities. That's normal. There are steps we can take to move past those feelings so you can get started learning.

Understanding New Words: Rhetoric and Genre

First, let's look at those words.

rhetoric

[REH · tr · uhk] Middle English: from Old French via Latin from Greek, 'art of speaking or writing effectively'

At its most basic, in terms of reading, writing, and English composition classes, rhetoric is the analytical study of communication. In composition, that communication tends to consist of print, digital, visual, and sometimes audio documents and texts. (Rhetoric is also used to study spoken texts as well, but that tends to happen more in communication classes.) Rhetorical analysis asks you to examine texts in terms of *purpose*, *author*, *audience*, and *context* (or *situation*).

genre

[ZHAAN · ruh] early 19th century: French, literally 'a kind'

Genre is one element of rhetoric. Genre, in its most basic meaning, means "a type, or kind" of text. Texts can be described as, or categorized into, genres. The effectiveness or appropriateness of a specific genre of text depends on the situation in which it is occurring.

Next, let's take these definitions to analyze how you came to your decision about what genre Noor should use to break up with Amor.

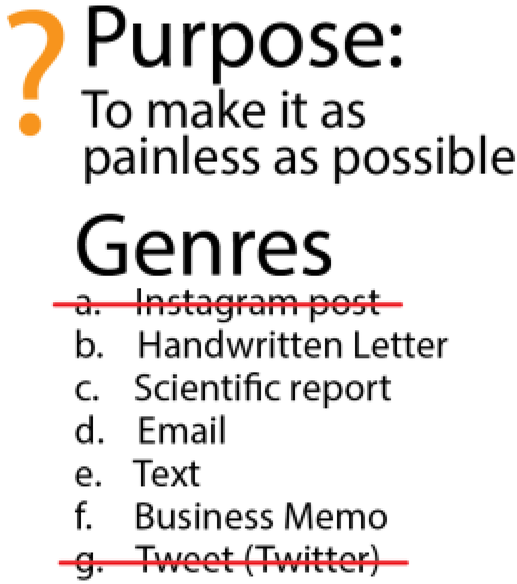
Thinking "rhetorically"

You may not believe this, but your brain conducted a instinctive rhetorical and genre calculation to come to your decision. It may have only taken a second or two, but you and your brain sorted through all of the (implicit) elements of rhetoric to make a pretty solid decision on which was the most appropriate genre.

Here's what your brain did, though not necessarily in this precise order.

Considering the entire situation: your brain noticed who the **author** was (Noor) and who the **audience** was (Amor), and what kind of relationship they had: romantic, long-term, now long-distance, and they still love each other. You noticed that the author had a specific **purpose** for writing: to break up.

Then, your brain noticed that the author had another **purpose** (to make it as painless as possible). With this in mind, your brain eliminated public **genres** (Instagram posts or tweets) because it would be cruel to do something so private and emotional with another audience watching. The genre needs to fit the purpose.

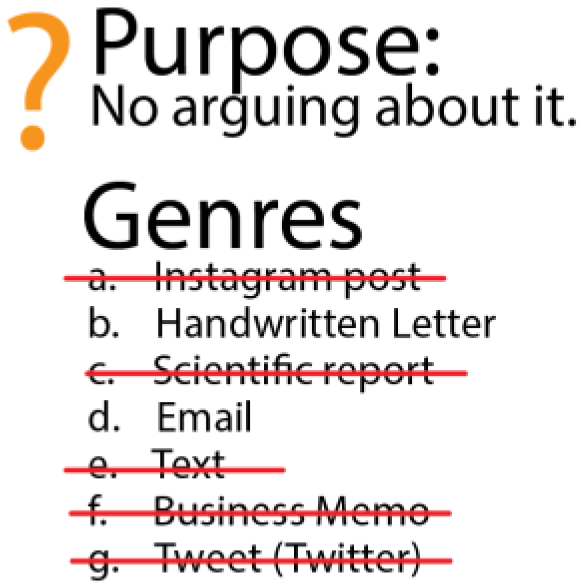


Your brain probably paused for a moment when it noticed the scientific report and the business memo genres because they were unexpected; you may have thought they were funny or strange, but then discarded them as realistic options.

Genres

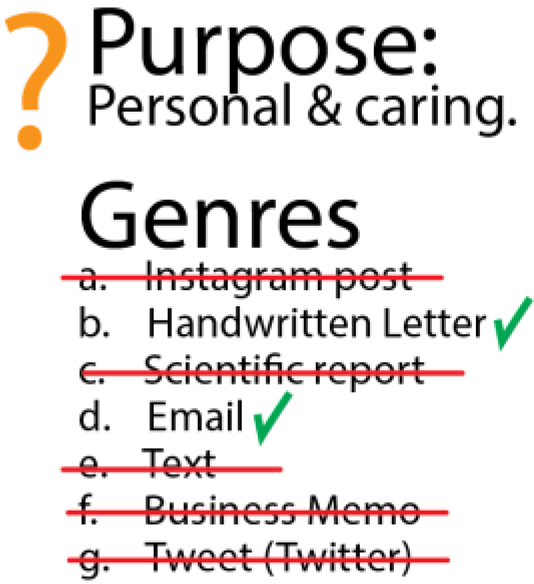
~~a. Instagram post~~
b. Handwritten Letter
~~c. Scientific report~~
d. Email
e. Text
~~f. Business Memo~~
~~g. Tweet (Twitter)~~

With three genres left, your brain re-analyzed the author's purpose to look for possible ways to eliminate any of them. You noticed that the author was afraid that the **audience** would try to argue against the break-up. Knowing that having a real-time conversation is more likely in texting than through email (and impossible in handwritten letters), your brain turned to the final two options.



So which one? A handwritten letter or an email?

Your brain likely went through another round of calculation: A handwritten letter may have felt more personal and caring, which would have been a good choice considering one of author's purposes. But, a handwritten letter, in this digital era, could come across as more distant, which could feel cold and uncaring. Your brain may have wanted more information about the author and the audience, but the situation didn't provide it. Because of this, you may or may not have come to a strong decision on which genre was best to use.



Your brain did all of this, and it did so very, very quickly. Your brain is an extraordinary rhetorical analysis machine.

In academia, "rhetorical analysis" involves much more explicit maneuvers than the ones demonstrated in the pop quiz above, but they build on strategies we instinctually employ in everyday life. The terms **rhetoric** and **genre**, and others that often go along with them, can feel intimidating when you encounter them, and it will likely take some time for you to feel confident using them to analyze and produce your own. Until you get there, remember that your brain is already doing a form of rhetorical analysis work, all the time, whenever you are in a situation that involves communication. In a writing course, your task is to pay closer attention to it.

Take notice when you make a decision about your writing based on who you (**author**) are writing to (**audience**), or why you are writing (**purpose**), or the circumstances of your writing (**context/ situation**), or what "type or kind" of writing you thought would be best to use (**genre**). You make dozens (or hundreds or thousands!) of large and small decisions each time you write, regardless of whether it's an essay for a college class, a text to a friend, or a late-night journal entry to yourself. Your brain is doing the work. Watch closely and you'll see.

Rhetoric? Genre?

You've got this. You really do.

17. The Rhetorical Situation

Justin Jory

What is the "Rhetorical Situation"?

The term "rhetorical situation" refers to the circumstances that bring texts into existence. The concept emphasizes that writing is a social activity, produced by people in particular situations for particular goals. It helps individuals understand that, because writing is highly situated and responds to specific human needs in a particular time and place, texts should be produced and interpreted with these needs and contexts in mind.

As a writer, thinking carefully about the situations in which you find yourself writing can lead you to produce more meaningful texts that are appropriate for the situation and responsive to others' needs, values, and expectations. This is true whether writing a workplace e-mail or completing a college writing assignment.

As a reader, considering the rhetorical situation can help you develop a more detailed understanding of others and their texts.

In short, the rhetorical situation can help writers and readers think through and determine why texts exist, what they aim to do, and how they do it in particular situations.

Elements of a Rhetorical Situation

Writer

The writer (also termed the “rhetor”) is the individual, group, or organization who authors a text. Every writer brings a frame of reference to the rhetorical situation that affects how and what they say about a subject. Their frame of reference is influenced by their experiences, values, and needs: race and ethnicity, gender and education, geography and institutional affiliations to name a few.

Audience

The audience includes the individuals the writer engages with the text. Most often there is an intended, or target, audience for the text. Audiences encounter and in some way use the text based on their own experiences, values, and needs that may or may not align with the writer’s.

Purpose

The purpose is what the writer and the text aim to do. To think rhetorically about purpose is to think both about what motivated writers to write and what the goals of their texts are. These goals may originate from a personal place, but they are shared when writers engage audiences through writing.

Exigence

The exigence refers to the perceived need for the text, an urgent imperfection a writer identifies and then responds to through writing. To think rhetorically about exigence is to think about what writers and texts respond to through writing. As the previous chapter suggests, however, sometimes the exigence can be interpreted as *giving rise to* the entire rhetorical situation.

Subject (or Message)

The subject refers to the issue at hand, the major topics the writer, text, and audience address.

Context & Constraints

The context refers to other direct and indirect social, cultural, geographic, political, and institutional factors that likely influence the writer, text, and audience in a particular situation.

Genre

Often considered a type of constraint, the genre refers to the type or form of text the writer produces. Some texts are more appropriate than others in a given situation, and a writer's successful use of genre depends on how well they meet, and sometimes challenge, the genre conventions.

Visualizing the Rhetorical Situation

This image shows how the various elements of the Rhetorical Situation interact.

chart showing relationships between text, writer, subject, and audience and other rhetorical elements like exigence, purpose, and genre

18. Reading College Assignments Rhetorically

JOEL GLADD

When you get your first writing assignment, it's normal to feel confused or frustrated. You might think, "Why do I have to do this? I won't ever use this kind of essay again!" Or, "Why are there so many rules? I won't have to follow them in my future job."

To understand these assignments and what's expected of you, it's important to become familiar with the idea of a "rhetorical situation," or "writing situation." This chapter provides a foundation for understanding texts, speeches, and other assessments commonly assigned to students. It also attempts to explain how these types of assignments relate to IRL (in real life) situations.

Reading assignments rhetorically is helpful because it not only better prepares you for completing an assignment, but also teaches you to how to think critically across a range of situations. For example, you'll learn why an email to your boss should look different from one to a friend or family member. Or why it's ok to use informal language when texting with friends, but not in a professional cover letter. By learning to read assignments with a rhetorical mindset, your writing will improve and become more flexible.

This chapter covers five key terms associated with writing situations that students will face in college:

- **exigency**: the issue, problem, or debate a student is often expected to respond to
- **purpose**: what the student is expected to demonstrate with their artifact, in response to the exigence
- **audience**: whom the student is writing for
- **genre**: how the content is delivered or packaged
- **setting (including platform constraints)**: constraints related

to *where* the artifact is being published or delivered (such as a social media platform or within a classroom)

I. Exigency: What issue needs to be addressed?

Simply put, the **exigency** of a rhetorical situation is the urgency, problem, or issue that a college assignment asks a student to respond to.

The focus on "exigency" is often attributed to Lloyd Bitzer. When Bitzer drew attention to the importance of "exigence" and "context" in his famous article "The Rhetorical Situation," he pointed out that certain aspects of the situation invite "the assistance of discourse."[1] One of his examples is air pollution: "The pollution of our air is also a rhetorical exigence because its positive modification—reduction of pollution—strongly invites the assistance of discourse producing public awareness, indignation, and action of the right kind."[2] Within a given context, certain things will provoke a call to action from discourse.

Some college assignments ask a student to brainstorm, research, and clearly explain their own exigency and then respond to it. Other assignment prompts will provide a student with a pre-defined exigency and ask them to respond to or solve the problem using the skills they've been practicing in the course.

When analyzing texts or creating their own, students should be able to specify the particular urgency their discourse is responding to. It's precisely this urgency that the text aims to take up and respond to, at the right time and place, kairotically. In thesis-driven

1. Ibid. p. 6.
2. Ibid. p. 7.

academic essays, the exigency is usually clarified at the beginning, as part of the introduction.

The separate chapter on "Exigence" offers more details about this important rhetorical term.

Exigencies and Introductions

In academic essays, students should consider the following questions when drafting an introduction that's attuned to an exigency. Note that your response to these questions will vary depending on the course and writing assignment.

- What issue, problem, or threat is being addressed?
- Where is this issue located: in a text (appropriate for a literary analysis essay)? among a group of specialists? among journalists?

Examples of Exigency Awareness

College assignment example: Research paper on climate change, addressing the need for immediate action and solutions.

Professional workplace example: Business proposal to implement environmentally sustainable practices within the company.

II. Purpose: How will the exigency be addressed?

One straightforward way to understand the **purpose** of a rhetorical situation is in terms of the exigency: the purpose of a essay, presentation, or other artifact is to effectively respond to a particular problem, issue, or dilemma. Traditionally, three broad categories have been proposed for thinking about a text's purpose:

- inform: provide new knowledge for the audience
- persuade: convince an audience to accept a point of view or call to action
- entertain: provide an *affective* experience for the audience, by inspiring, humoring, or otherwise diverting their attention

Here are some rhetorical situations where the exigency and purpose are clearly defined. Notice how the purpose is intimately related to the exigency.

The last situation is unique to college courses:

Exigency 1: I need to write a letter to my landlord explaining why my rent is late so she won't be upset.

- **Purpose** of the letter = *persuade* the landlord it's ok to accept a late payment

Exigency 2: I want to write a proposal for my work team to persuade them to change our schedule.

- **Purpose** of the proposal = *persuade* the team to get the schedule changed

Exigency 3: I have to write a research paper for my environmental science instructor comparing solar to wind power.

- **Purpose** of the research paper = *inform* the audience about alternative forms of energy;
- **Secondary purpose**: *persuade/demonstrate to* the science instructor you're learning the course content

The difference between Exigency 1 and Exigency 3 above may initially cause some confusion. Exigency 1, the letter about the late rent payment, happens in the "real world." It's an everyday occurrence that naturally gives rise to a certain rhetorical situation and the purpose seems obvious.

When moving to Exigency 3, the writing situation feels more complex because the student is learning about things supposedly "out there," in the "real world," but the purpose has multiple layers to it because it's part of a college course. On the surface, the purpose of the research essay is obviously to inform the reader; but since the assignment is given within a science course, the student is also attempting to convince the instructor that they're actually learning the course outcomes.

The example of Exigency 3 shows how college assignments sometimes differ from other writing situations. As WAC Clearinghouse explains in its page, "What Should I Know about Rhetorical Situations?", a contextual appreciation of a text's purpose helps a student appreciate *why* they're given certain assignments. In a typical writing course, for example, students are often asked to respond to situations with their own persuasive or creative ingenuity, even though they're not expected to become experts on the topic. Until they enter high-level or graduate-level courses, students are mostly expected to *simulate* expertise.

When this simulation happens, we can consider an assignment and the student's response as having two distinct purposes. The first is obvious and usually stated; the second is often implied.

> **Purpose 1: Obvious purpose.** On the surface, the purpose of the assignment might be to solve a problem (anthropogenic climate change, the rise of misinformation, etc.) and persuade an academic audience their solution is legitimate, perhaps by synthesizing research. Depending on the topic and assignment criteria, a student might pretend to address a specialized audience and thereby simulate a position of authority (a type of ethos), even if they haven't yet earned the credentials.
>
> **Purpose 2: Hidden purpose.** When simulating expertise, instructors and students should also take into account the actual context of the writing assignment prompt: it's given to the student as part of a college writing course. The outcomes for that course shape the kinds of assignments an instructor chooses, as well as how they're assessed. The hidden or implied purpose is therefore the course objectives the student is expected to demonstrate, including techniques such as developing a thesis, providing support, synthesizing research, and writing with sources.

College writing assignments can thus have multiple purposes. The more attuned a student is to why they're being tasked with certain assignments, the more their writing will matter, both for them and others.

It also helps if *instructors* make it clear to students why they're given certain tasks. College essays stretch a student to practice certain techniques that *do* transfer, but students rightly become frustrated when this contextual information is not obvious.

Examples of Purpose Awareness

College assignment example: Analytical essay on a literary work, aiming to explore themes and techniques used by the author.

Professional workplace example: Writing a progress report for a project, intending to update stakeholders on the project's status and milestones achieved.

III. Audience: Who will help respond to the exigency?

As with the section on purpose above, **audience** has a straightforward relation to the exigency: it's the reader, listener, or viewer whom the author expects to help solve the problem.

This sensitivity to an audience should help students better appreciate why writing programs emphasize the importance of writing *for readers*. Journaling and some creative writing situations might have an audience of just one (you, the writer), but most rhetorical situations expect the writer to craft their message in such a way that it appeals to a clearly defined audience.

Writing with an intended audience in mind is one of the most important. factors a writer will consider. It impacts everything in a writing course, from the assignments themselves to the peer review process. Although there are many different types of audiences, it can help to lump them into two very broad categories:

- Formal communities, such as a college course or professional workplace. Artifacts geared towards these audiences often adhere to highly codified stylistic conventions and are at least somewhat "tight" as a culture.
- Informal communities, such as for friends, family, or social media. Artifacts written for these audiences still follow some rules, but they're less likely to be explicitly stated. The culture is usually "looser" than academia and professional institutions.

These communities are defined more carefully below.

Writing within formal communities

When students are expected to simulate expertise on a topic and address a specialized community, they're writing within a "discipline" or "field of study." Writing artifacts produced within that field tend to sound the same, circulate within a certain hierarchy, and are housed by specific institutions. The uniqueness of each field of study (a type of context) often fosters academic jargon. You may have noticed that peer-reviewed academic articles look very similar and are more difficult to read than popular news articles. That's because peer-reviewed articles are published from within and for highly specific writing communities who share a similar vocabulary and disciplinary knowledge with tightly controlled conventions. A contextual appreciation of an article's audience allows a specialist to say much more about certain things (a molecular biologist can explain the shape of a protein fold very precisely) and less about other things (the same biologist doesn't need to explain what a protein compound is). Community-as-context helps a writer better understand how to communicate with their intended audience. The cost of this specialization, however, is that peer-reviewed articles can often lapse into *too much jargon*!

Even when students aren't expected to simulate expertise, professors often ask them to submit writing samples that adhere to certain conventions, such as MLA or APA Style. In this way, higher education fosters a culture that the cultural psychologist Michele Gelfand would categorize as relatively "tight." The tightness of academic culture impacts stylistic requirements (MLA, APA, etc.) as well as what "appropriate grammar" looks like.

Part of this tightness helps explain common expectation surrounding "standard American English" (SAE). Historically, many U.S. academic institutions have penalized deviations from standard English in order to maintain a particular standard that only began to be heavily codified in America in the early nineteenth-century. As a result, variations such as Black English, Spanglish, or sub-dialects related to Southern American English tend to be seen as sub-standard *within this broader cultural context* that higher education takes for granted (the chapter "Style and Linguistic Diversity" offers more information about this cultural back-history to standard English). Phrases like "appropriate grammar" should be understood contextually, as belonging to a particular formal culture, even if it's perceived to be dominant.

Some cultural norms carry over into professional workplace environments, especially formal ones. For example, "clear writing" in the professional world is often conflated with with "Is that written in standard English?", an expectation that begins in education. On the other hand, MLA or APA formatting are usually not required in many workplace environments, unless it happens to overlap with research or publishing.

Understanding the broader cultural context within which "stylistically appropriate" writing is produced should help a student become even more intentional about the choices they make when writing for the intended audience. It should also lead to more awareness about how to *critically* evaluate the writing within their community. When participating in peer review, for example, a student who's aware of the cultural context undergirding requirements such as "appropriate grammar" may adopt a more nuanced tone in their revision feedback.

Writing within informal communities

Depending on a student's background, the vast quantity of their experience with writing on a daily basis might be for an informal audience, such as a family member, close friends, or significant other. But even very informal writing situations, such as texting a friend, sending an email to a family member, or crafting a social media post place certain expectations on the writer/rhetor. These more informal writing situations may or may not have codes of conduct attached to them. They often appear to emerge spontaneously, as unstated contracts between the parties. Certain unsaid codes of conduct determine what you can and cannot say to a parent vs. a group of friends, for example. However, there tend to be fewer rules governing these situations than the formal writing situations, and they're usually not articulated anywhere. The rules are almost never explicitly enforced by a governing body or institution. Writers within these situations usually feel spontaneous, natural, and authentic.

The basic distinction between informal and formal writing communities helps explain why college assignments often feel so unnatural and difficult.

Examples of Audience Awareness

College assignment example: Writing a policy brief for a political science course, targeting policymakers and stakeholders who can influence policy change.

Professional workplace example: Drafting a sales pitch for a new product, targeting potential clients or investors who may be interested in the product.

IV. Genre

Genre places additional limits on the rhetor/writer/speaker, beyond those related to the beliefs, concerns, and expectations of the audience.

A genre constraint might be the kind of speech a student is asked to deliver to the class. For example, many COMM 100/101 courses ask students to develop expository and persuasive speeches. When preparing for these assessments, students are often given a set of expectations, including a basic structure, style, and whether certain persuasive appeals are relevant. A student can then adopt a topic of their choice to these default expectations.

This process is not dissimilar from how a maid of honor or best man will google "how to do a maid of honor speech" or "how to do a best man's speech" before a wedding. There are a well-known set of conventions that people draw from–and, at the same time, cultures and sub-cultures will introduce slight innovations within those recurring forms.

The ability to identify a "persuasive college speech" or a "best man's speech" is both an act of naming and a form of classification. *That's* what genre awareness is: an ability to map an assignment or another rhetorical situation to a relatively stable form that recurs across time and space. It's why the rhetorical term "genre" is the same as the biological term. They're both forms of classification. And just as nature evolves, so do linguistic forms. Slowly, a best man's speech will change. Eventually it might even become extinct. But for now, it's a relatively distinctive and stable genre. The same goes for many college assignments.

Genre vs. Rhetorical Modes

Rhetorical modes and genre are related concepts in the context of writing and communication. Both deal with the organization and presentation of content, but they focus on different aspects.

Rhetorical modes refer to the common patterns of organization used in writing to convey information. These modes include narration, description, exposition, and argumentation, among others. An argumentative essay tends to be structured around reasoning and evidence (One reason why…Another reason why…), while a narrative essay often revolves around a sequence of events (First this happened…Then..., Finally…).

Genre, on the other hand, refers to the category or type of a text or artifact, characterized by a set of conventions and expectations shared by a particular community. Genres can be broad, such as essays, speeches, or articles, or more specific, like research papers, editorials, or lab reports. Each genre has its own unique set of conventions.

The relationship between rhetorical modes and genre can be seen in how the modes are often employed within different genres. For instance, a persuasive essay (a genre) may use argumentation as its primary rhetorical mode to convince the reader of a particular viewpoint. A personal narrative (another genre) would utilize narration to tell a story from the author's perspective. In this way, rhetorical modes help shape the content and organization of a text within a specific genre.

Why should students focus so much on genre?

First, the idea of genre in college writing situations is useful because it will help you think more deliberately about how the finished artifact (your essay, speech, project, etc.) should appear. One of the most common anxieties or frustrations students in a writing course have is what their essay should ultimately look like. Some instructors provide highly detailed models, including templates for every part of the essay. Others simply state something like: "write a persuasive essay about x," and students are expected to figure out the details of what a persuasive essay looks like on their own. When a student asks the instructor for an example of what submission should look like, they're looking for the genre—the particular form an artifact is expected to take.

How can students become less anxious about what their essay should look like? Some courses (especially writing courses) should provide detailed training and instructions for the genre. In courses where a particular instructor doesn't provide much support, I suggest two things. First, see if they've provided a sample somewhere. If not, ask them for one, or try to find one online or from students who have previously taken the course (it's not cheating if you're looking for the *form* of the assignment). Second, pay close attention to an assignment's requirements. Some courses and instructors will be vague, suggesting the genre may not have as many rules associated with it; others may be very specific, even including a detailed outline for each part.

You'll quickly find out "in the real world" that genre is highly relevant to success! Workplace environments have many different genre expectations, and it's often the case that employees are asked to write things they're unfamiliar with. The more practice you have with identifying a task's genre and the conventions associated with it, the more successful you'll be at your job. Even *getting* a job requires familiarity with genre—the resume!

Examples of Genre Awareness

College assignment example: Writing a lab report in a chemistry class, adhering to the specific structure and conventions of scientific reporting.

Professional workplace example: Preparing a PowerPoint presentation for a team meeting, following a clear and visually appealing format that effectively communicates key points.

V. Setting and Platform Constraints

Bitzer and others would lump setting and genre together as part of a rhetorical situation's "constraints." In this chapter I'm separating them. The setting of a rhetorical situation often has a physical component to it: it's the space or environment within which an artifact (the speech or essay) is delivered.

Increasingly, however, the most common settings are digital. I'm borrowing the phrase "platform constraints" from the digital design world. This term doesn't appear in *Writing Commons*, for example, but the phrase "platform constraints" does show up in articles that use exigency and other rhetorical terms to conceptualize digital culture.

The difference between genre constraints and platform constraints is one that every social media influencer is highly savvy about. Why do some TikTok memes take off so quickly on that platform, then fizzle out on YouTube shorts or Instagram Reels? Or, why do public service announcements have to create separate ads for Instagram vs. YouTube vs. TikTok vs. Reddit? Why do some people prefer to get their sports updates from their Facebook news feed while others might prefer Twitter lists? The content–and often much of the form!–is often very similar, with only slight tweaks to fit *where* the information is published. Those tweaks (shortening or lengthening a video, adding music or images, relying on text or video, etc.) show how vastly important it is to remain aware of what platform a user is relying on to reach their audience.

Why does this matter to students? Increasingly, the push in higher education for integrated studies, pathways to workplace success, and flexible ways of knowing means that professors will often expect students to craft messages for audiences in real life, or at least simulate the process.

In my own courses, for example, I expect students to switch from traditional academic assignments to Unessays, explicitly non-academic artifacts that involve the same or similar material for professional and personal audiences. To reach that audience, they need to demonstrate familiarity with particular platforms of their choosing. A public service announcement (PSA) based on a persuasive essay isn't enough. The PSA is a well-known mode or genre. But a PSA developed in a webb app such as Canva will need to be geared towards the particular social platform (or other space) the student chooses. In fact Canva often has separate genre templates for separate platforms!

This phenomenon of a stable genre taking on degrees of variation across different digital platforms has a number of analogues in college life. The genre-platform distinction explains why chemistry lab reports look very different from informative reports written for an English course. Or, what a "persuasive essay" means may not be exactly the same for your PHIL 101 and ENGL 102 courses. Certain elements of the genre remain "stickier" and more fixed than others.

First Year Writing courses can themselves be viewed as learning communities that allow students to become proficient in some of the core college genres, while also providing them with enough rhetorical savviness to adjust to the different platforms as a student shifts into their area of focus.

Examples of Setting and Platform Awareness

College assignment example: Creating a video presentation for an online course, adjusting the content and format to suit the requirements of the online platform.

Professional workplace example: Designing a social media marketing campaign, tailoring the content and style to fit the specific platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, or LinkedIn.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://idaho.pressbooks.pub/write/?p=1004#h5p-7

19. Exigence

JOEL GLADD

What is Exigence?

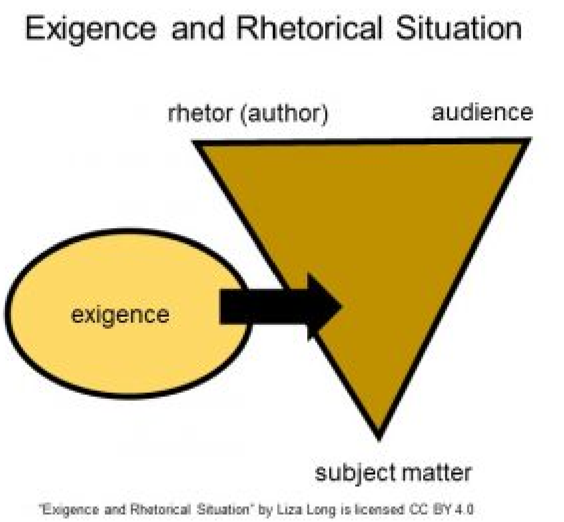
Exigence is a rhetorical concept that can help writers and readers think about why texts exist. You can use the concept to analyze what others' texts are responding to and to more effectively identify the reasons why you might produce your own. Understanding exigence can lead to a better sense of audience and purpose, as well: When you know why a text exists, you will often have a clearer sense of whom it speaks to (audience) and what it seeks to do (purpose).

The rhetorical concept of exigence, sometimes called exigency, is attributed to rhetorical scholar Lloyd Bitzer. In his essay, "The Rhetorical Situation," he identifies exigence as an important part of any rhetorical situation. Bitzer writes, exigence is "an imperfection marked by urgency … a thing which is other than it should be." It is the thing, the situation, the problem, the imperfection, that moves writers to respond through language and rhetoric. Bitzer claims there can be numerous exigencies necessitating response in any given context but there is always a controlling exigency—one that is stronger than the others.[1]

If the rhetorical situation involves concepts such as audience, purpose, and genre, we can visualize the relationship between exigence and those other rhetorical concepts as one of cause and effect: the exigence *gives rise to* the rhetorical situation. In other

1. *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, Jan. 1968 (Vol. 1 No. 1), https://www.jstor.org/stable/40236733, pp. 6-8.

words, all rhetorical situations response to a particular need or urgency. It’s what motivates the rhetor (writer/author/speaker) to act.



"Exigence and Rhetorical Situation" by Liza Long is licensed CC BY 4.0

As John Mauk and John Metz explain in “Inventing Arguments:

> An exigence may be something as direct and intense as a power outage, which might prompt an official to persuade everyone to ‘stay calm’ or to ‘assist those in need.’ An exigence may be more subtle or complex, like the discovery of a new virus, which might prompt medical officials to persuade the public how to change its behavior. Exigence is part of a situation. It is the critical component that makes people ask the hard questions: What is it? What caused it? What good is it? What are we going to do? What happened? What is going to happen?

Another way to think about the relationship between exigence and other elements of rhetoric (especially the purpose) is in terms of problem and solution: an exigence is a problem that demands a solution. All rhetorical situations are particular, inventive solutions to a pressing issue.

Exigence and Kairos

Some experts of rhetoric have pointed out the link between kairos, an appeal to timeliness, and exigence.[2] A conference speech might be a response to an invitation, for example, or a political speech might be proposing a certain policy in response to a recent act of terrorism. Or, a paper or speech might be prompted by something extraordinary that's *about to happen*, if certain steps aren't taken now, such as those related to climate change.

Questions related to exigence

- What has moved the writer to create the text?
- Why is this discourses needed *right now*?
- What is the writer, and the text, responding to?
- What was the perceived need for the text?
- What urgent problem, or issue, does this text try to solve or address?
- How does the writer, or text, construct exigence—something that prompts response—for the audience?

2. Keith Grant-Davie, "Rhetorical Situations and Their Constituents," *Rhetoric Review*, Spring 1997 (Vol. 15 No. 2), https://www.jstor.org/stable/465644, p. 268.

20. Purpose

Monique Babin, Carol Burnell, Susan Pesznecker, Nicole Rosevear, Jaime Wood

What is Purpose?

Often, you'll know your purpose at the exact moment you know your audience because they're generally a package deal:

- I need to write a letter to my landlord explaining why my rent is late so she won't be upset.
    - Audience = landlord
    - Purpose = keeping her happy
- I want to write a proposal for my work team to persuade them to change our schedule.
    - Audience = work team
    - Purpose = persuading them to get the schedule changed
- I have to write a research paper for my environmental science instructor comparing solar to wind power.
    - Audience = instructor
    - Purpose = analyzing/showing that you understand these two power sources

How Do I Know What My Purpose Is?

Sometimes your instructor will give you a purpose like in the third example above, but other times, especially out in the world, your purpose will depend on what effect you want your writing to have on your audience. What is the goal of your writing? What do you hope for your audience to think, feel, or do after reading it? Here are a few possibilities:

- Persuade them to act or think about an issue from your point of view
- Challenge them/make them question their thinking or behavior
- Argue for or against something they believe or do/change their minds or behavior
- Inform/teach them about a topic they don't know much about
- Connect with them emotionally/help them feel understood

21. Audience

Justin Jory

What is the Audience?

Audience is a rhetorical concept that refers to the individuals and groups that writers attempt to move, inciting them to action or inspiring shifts in attitudes and beliefs. Thinking about audience can help us understand who texts are intended for, or who they are ideally suited for, and how writers use writing to respond to and move those people. While it may not be possible to ever fully "know" one's audience, writers who are good rhetorical thinkers know how to access and use information about their audiences to make educated guesses about their needs, values, and expectations—hopefully engaging in rhetorically fitting writing practices and crafting and delivering useful texts. In short, to think about audience is to consider how people influence, encounter, and use any given text.

Addressed vs. Invoked Audiences

Audience can refer to the actual and imagined people who experience and respond to a text. In their essay, "Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked," Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford explain the difference between actual and imagined audiences, what they call addressed and invoked audiences.

Addressed audiences are the "actual or intended readers of a text" and they "exist outside the text" (167). These audiences are comprised of actual people who have values, needs, and expectations that the writer must anticipate and respond to in the text. People can identify actual audiences by thinking about where and when a text is delivered, how and where it circulates, and who would or could encounter the text.

On the other hand, invoked audiences are created, perhaps shaped, by a writer. The writer uses language to signal to audiences the kinds of positions and values they are expected to identify with and relate to when reading the text. In this sense, invoked audiences are imagined by the writer and, to some degree, are ideal readers that may or may not share the same positions or values as the actual audience.

Related Questions

- Who is the actual audience for this text and how do you know?
- Who is the invoked audience for the text and where do you see evidence for this in the text?
- What knowledge, beliefs, and positions does the audience bring to the subject-at-hand?
- What does the audience know or not know about the subject?
- What does the audience need or expect from the writer and text?
- When, where, and how will the audience encounter the text and how has the text—and its content—responded to this?
- What roles or personas (e.g., insider/outsider or expert/novice) does the writer create for the audience? Where are these personas presented in the text and why?
- How should/has the audience influenced the development of the text?

Additional Readings

Audience, an entry in the Glossary of Grammatical and Rhetorical Terms, by Richard Nordquist

Consider Your Audience, an entry in Writing Commons, by Joe Moxley

What to Think About When Writing for a Particular Audience, entry in Writing Commons, by Amanda Wray

Works Cited

Ede, Lisa and Andrea Lunsford. "Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked: The Role of Audience in Composition Theory and Pedagogy." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 35, no. 2, (May, 1984): 155-171.

22. Genre

This chapter, by Lisa Bickmore, demonstrates the importance of genre within a given rhetorical situation. The separate chapter on "Context" suggests that the idea of context informs all other aspects of the rhetorical situation, including audience, purpose, and genre. Here, Bickmore explains the contextuality and situatedness of a text's genre by using the term "ecosystem." We can read ecosystem and context as interchangeable terms.

Genre in the Wild: Understanding Genre Within Rhetorical (Eco)Systems

by Lisa Bickmore

Let's begin by imagining the world—the worlds, rather—in which you write. Your workplace, for instance: you might take messages, or write e-mails, or update records, or input orders, or fill out a variety of forms.

Or what about your educational world? You likely write in response to all kinds of assignments: lab reports, research papers, short summaries, observations, even, sometimes, short narratives. Sometimes you might write a short message in Canvas or via e-mail to your instructors. You may also have financial aid forms to fill out or application materials for programs or for transfer institutions to complete.

What about your world outside of school or work? Do you, occasionally, write a Facebook post, or a tweet, or a Snapchat story? Do you repost other people's articles and memes with your own comments? How about texts or e-mails to friends and acquaintances? You might also be a writer of what we sometimes label as creative texts—you might write songs or song lyrics, or poems, or stories.

The names of the things you write—e-mails, messages, record or application forms, order forms, lab reports, field observations, applications, narratives, text messages, and so on—can be thought of as individual compositions, large or small, that happen incidentally in the course of other activity. But another way to think of these compositions is as predictable and recurring kinds of communication—in a word, genres.

What is Genre?

The term genre means "kind, sort, or style" and is often applied to kinds of art and media, for instance, sorts of novels, films, television shows, and so on. In writing studies, we find all sorts of written genres, not just ones that you might classify as artistic (or creative).

Genre is a word we use when we want to classify things, to note the similarities and differences between kinds of writing. But we don't identify genres solely by their formal markers. For instance, memoranda use a specific sort of header, and lab reports typically have commonly used section headings. But it's not the header that makes a memorandum a genre (or subgenre); it's not the section headings that make a lab report a genre (or subgenre). In other words, the formal features or markers don't define the genre, although they are often helpful signals. Rather, it's a situation in which the memorandum or the lab report typically recurs, and it's also the fact that such situations seem to call repeatedly for a kind of writing that answers the needs of that situation. We begin to classify a kind of writing as a genre when it recurs frequently enough and seems to perform the same functions in recurring situations.

Here's a definition: "A genre is a typified utterance that appears in a recurrent situation. A genre evolves through human use and activity to be a durable and usable form for carrying out human communicative intentions in fairly stable ways." This definition might feel a little knotty, so let's break it down.

typified	characteristic, typical
utterance	any act of language — written or spoken
recurrent	happens again and again

Two-cell comic strip showing a cat and rabbit discussing the meaning of genre.

Comic: The Rhetorical Cat Does Genre

So a genre is an act of language—for our purposes here, mostly acts of writing, in particular—that behaves in typical or characteristic ways, which we can observe in repeated or persistent situations.

For students, classrooms are recurrent situations, if you think about it—while the events that occur in a classroom on any given day might differ in their details from another day, in their overall configuration, the activities of a classroom are remarkably similar over time. We might expect, in a recurrent situation, to observe, then, recurring types of communication. A teacher writes on the board; students might take notes. A teacher hands out an assignment; students respond to the assignment. Genres take their shape in recurrent situations because the communications that occur in recurrent situations tend to be remarkably similar.

Charles Bazerman, writing in *Naming What We Know*, says that we can see genre as

> habitual responses to recurring socially bounded situations. Regularities of textual form [like the header on a memorandum or the section heads in a lab report] most lay people [i.e. not experts] experience … [are] the structural characteristics of genres [as they] emerge from … repeated

> instances of action and are reinforced by institutional power structures.

In other words, if you work in an office, you probably write memos, using whatever the prescribed form is in your workplace. You, as a writer in that situation, don't precisely choose that genre, nor its formal characteristics—in a way, the situation chooses those for you, and all the people who are doing similar work to you use the same genre, in much the same way, and probably have been doing so for quite some time. This is part of what we mean when we say that genre lives in the recurrent situation—in offices, in labs, in all kinds of institutional settings. Bazerman highlights the institutional nature of genre when he says, "Genres are constructions of groups, over time, usually with the implicit or explicit sanction of organizational or institutional power." Individual writers in institutional settings usually have somewhat limited choices when it comes to genre.

Still, writers who are really at home in a particular writing setting use genres with a great deal of fluency. As we've said, the genre is built into the writing situation—when you're at home in a writing situation, the genre is simply part of your accustomed toolset, and you know very well which tool to use. But all of us are writers in multiple settings, in some of which we may be very comfortable, and in others of which we may have to do a little more thinking and prospecting—looking about, sizing up what might be the best choices for the situation, including choices about genre. In these cases, simply knowing that there are genres—typical ways of using language that recur in the situation—can help a writer assess how to respond, and to figure out what genres are typically used in that situation.

When a writer decides or intuits that a particular genre is called for by the situation, he or she takes up the genre and uses it to frame a written response to the situation. So, for instance, when a scientist has gathered enough experimental data, she will probably write some sort of report of the findings. When the Supreme Court has heard oral arguments on a particular case, eventually they will write a ruling, and often a dissent. The scientist doesn't have to figure out whether she'll write a report or if she'd rather write a song lyric. The Supreme Court justice writing for the majority knows that she will not write a haiku. In each instance, the situation calls for a particular genre. The writer in the situation knows this. So the writer takes up the genre and uses it to respond.

Each time a writer takes up a genre, the writer reaffirms, in a way, the stable features of the genre. But the writer also—perhaps in minuscule ways—might adapt and reshape the genre, which potentially shifts the genre's stability. For instance, the proposal genre typically requires you to define a problem, often in a fair amount of detail, as well as provide a very well-reasoned solution, with evidence that supports the solution's feasibility and desirability. Without these moves, what you write simply won't be a proposal. But as you consider how you might define the problem, it occurs to you that a brief story, followed by an analysis and some data, might illuminate the problem better than a presentation of dry statistical data alone. Not everyone who writes a proposal will choose to use narrative—the narrative strategy is a way that you might imagine your audience and that audience's response, aiming for a livelier and more engaged response.

To sum up: sometimes when you write, the genre is a choice that's already made for you. But there are also times when you'll have opportunities to decide upon the genres you'll use to write in the world, and often this will be true in the writing classes you take. This requires some critical imagination and research on your part—imagining the writing situation, and the genres that might respond well in that situation. Thus, genres are both stable and to some degree fluid and evolving, just as human communication itself is both predictable and unpredictable.

Knowing about genre can provide powerful insight into how writing works in the world. We know from a fair amount of empirical study that writers learn to use genres best within contexts where they use the genres regularly—the genres in use within a particular locale will become part of the toolset writers within those locales pick up to do their work there. But even in your writing courses, you should start to become more aware of the genres that are built into the settings in which you currently find yourself—school, work, public life—as well as genres that are at work in other settings you want to be a part of.

The Genre Does Not Stand Alone: Genre Sets and Systems

Sometimes, despite what we've described above about the ways that genres are dependent upon contexts and situations for their meaning, it can seem as if a genre is a thing all on its own, especially when we're learning about a particular genre. It can seem that what you're supposed to learn is how to approximate the genre, and you hope that by observing and then imitating the genre features, you'll produce writing that behaves like the genre. Often students cast about for a formula, thinking that a genre can be understood simply almost as a template. Let's say you're learning about the report genre. You learn that it typically has an informational purpose. You look at a few reports, and it seems like they often have headings and they often have graphs or charts. You forge ahead, trying in your draft to bring in as many of these kinds of features as you can. But do graphs and headings alone make a piece of writing a report?

One thing an approach like this—looking at the genre as a formulaic, standalone artifact—does not show very well is how the genre actually functions in an environment. Charles Bazerman, a scholar and researcher in writing studies who has spent a good deal of his academic life looking into the ways that genres work, talks about something called "genre sets," which are a "collection of types of texts someone in a particular role is likely to produce." For instance, to use Bazerman's example, "If you find out a civil engineer needs to write proposals, work orders, progress reports, quality test reports, safety evaluations, and a limited number of other similar documents, you have gone a long way toward identifying the work they do." You might think about the kinds of texts you are called upon to produce in one of your typical writing settings—for instance, a classroom. You produce, for instance, notes on classroom presentations, drafts, feedback on other students' work, responses to readings, records of your research, e-mails to classmates and instructors, and so on. The collection of texts you list would be the genre set for you as a student.

Beyond the texts you produce, though, lies a network in which your texts are situated. So, for instance, students in a college class will produce notes, drafts, exams, assignments, e-mails to the instructor, and so on. The instructor has a different but intersecting set of texts: syllabi, assignments, e-mails to the class or responses to student e-mail queries, comments on drafts and final assignments, exam questions, and so on. Beyond the classroom, instructors also read and interpret policies, write assessment plans and reports, and so on. Each person acting within the system of college is part of a situated and intersecting set of texts, which Bazerman calls a genre system.

Let's imagine a little theoretical genre system—Social Media World:

This image alludes to the multiple kinds of digital texts, activities, and people we interact with as social media writers.

Graphic: The Genre System in/of Social Media World

The genre system I've sketched out above depends on several intersecting elements: the things *you* write, the things you read, the things you circulate and the things your network circulates, and also on your comments and re-posts. The particular network doesn't matter so much, although it will shape the specifics about what you write and how you respond. But in social media, your genre system is always partly what *you* do, and partly what other people who are in your network do. It's even partly what people outside your direct sphere do—like the coders who design, and redesign, the social media platforms you use and participate in, and whose design decisions affect how you participate.

Anis Bawarshi thinks of these situated and intersecting sets of genres as forming a rhetorical ecosystem. In "The Ecology of Genre," Bawarshi uses the example of a patient medical history form, the form that people fill out when they go to a doctor's office. You've probably filled one out yourself. Typically, this form asks for specific information about the patient, such as physical statistics, "prior and recurring physical conditions, past treatments, and, of course, a description of current physical symptoms."

Bawarshi notes that the medical history portion of the document is usually followed by insurance information, and a "consent-to-treat statement," as well as a legal release. All of these parts of the form, put together, mean that the patient medical history form (or PMHF) genre "is at once a patient record and a legal document." Bawarshi thinks that this genre is like a habitat—a place that sustains the creatures that live in it and really sets the living conditions for those creatures. The patient medical history form, like a habitat, shapes the way individuals "perceive and experience a particular environment"—i.e. the physician's office. He also suggests that the PMHF, like any single genre, "does not function in an ecological vacuum"; rather, it is one of a number of genres that work together to create a whole "biosphere of discourse."

It's perhaps helpful, as you learn about particular genres, to think about how the genre at hand might fit into larger genre sets and systems—or even ecologies, and how genres shape the ways we interact, live, and work with each other. As Bazerman notes, any system of genres is also a part of the system of activity happening in any writing situation. This means that understanding the genres operating in any setting will also help you to understand better what happens in that setting—how people work together, how they solve problems, how they communicate, certainly, but also how they get work done.

How do People Learn About the Genres in a Particular Setting?

As we discussed above, when we learn about genres as a part of a writing curriculum, it can seem like we're describing formulas for writing instead of the situations that shape and give rise to the genres. You, as a student writer, can feel a little bit like you're just learning an advanced sort of conceptual formatting. When you use genres in their natural settings—when you're using the genres that are a part of your workplace, or when you're exchanging writing with people you know well, in ways you're comfortable with—all that situation and situatedness blooms back to life, and your ability to write competently and fluently in the genres that are part of your writing environment will have greater consequence because you'll be better at it. So it's worth considering: how do you learn how to use the genres that function in your particular writing environment with greater competence and fluency?

It's like doing field work: you bring your wits and your gear and you figure it out by observing and jumping in. This is where a writing class can be very helpful, helping you to attune yourself to a writing situation, to cues that will guide you in assessing expectations, conventions, and possible responses. In other words, your writing course can teach you about genre, but even more, it can teach you how to be sensitive to genre, the sets, systems, and ecologies in operation in a new writing situation, and how to more capably participate in the work going on in that situation. Your writing class teaches you how to learn the genres in a new setting.

So Am I Just a Robot?

In *The Terminator*—the first (and arguably the best) one—there's a great, brief scene in which the terminator-borg is holed up in his room. Someone knocks on the door. His borg-brain runs through possible responses—some are neutral, others reasonably polite, and others expletive-rude. He chooses the expletive, which for the moment is effective—the door knocker leaves.

With all this genre knowledge you're developing, are you just a little worried that you're basically going to be a borg, scrolling through your limited options in a nano-second, the choices all but made for you?

You might appreciate Charles Bazerman's thoughts on this: "the view of genre that simply makes it a collection of features obscures how these features are flexible in any instance or even how the general understanding of the genre can change over time, as people orient to evolving patterns." For instance, Bazerman goes on, "Students writing papers for courses have a wide variety of ways of fulfilling the assignment, and may even bend the assignment as long as they can get their professor … to go along with the change." In other words, genres evolve and change over time, and each user taking up a genre takes it up just a little bit differently. Genres help writers get things done: they are durable text-types that people use repeatedly for similar communicative acts. Knowing about genres, being sensitive to the genres that are a part of a particular situation, and becoming a capable user of those genres makes you a more flexible and adaptable writer.

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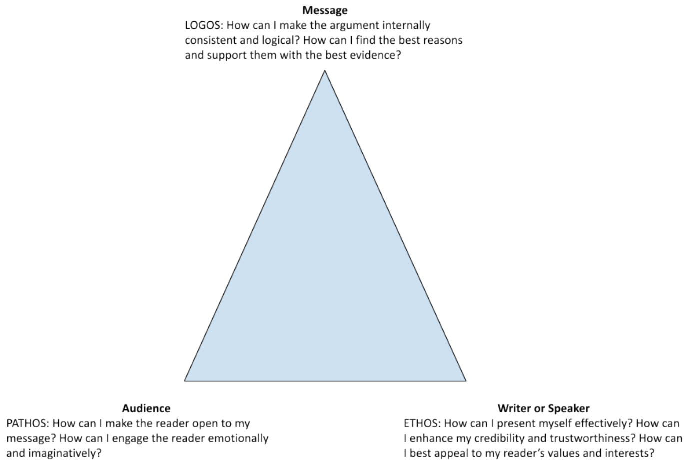
23. Persuasive Appeals

Rhetoric, as the previous chapters have discussed, is the way that authors use and manipulate language in order convey a message to an audience. Once we understand the rhetorical situation out of which a text is created, we can look at how all of those contextual elements shape the author's creation of the text.

Whereas the previous chapters focus primarily on the rhetorical situation, the next few chapters focus on the classical appeals (or proofs), which are ways to classify authors' intellectual, moral, and emotional approaches to getting the audience to have the reaction that the author hopes for. These appeals allow writers to communicate more or less persuasively with the audience.

Rhetorical appeals include ethos, pathos, logos, and kairos. These are classical Greek terms, dating back to Aristotle, who is traditionally seen as the father of rhetoric. To be rhetorically effective (and thus persuasive), an author must engage the audience in a variety of compelling ways, which involves carefully choosing how to craft his or her argument so that the outcome, audience agreement with the argument or point, is achieved.

As a previous chapters explained, the Rhetorical Situation can be visualized as triangulating relating three main elements: Writer, Subject (or Message), and Audience. Three of the Rhetorical Appeals (logos, pathos, and ethos) can be mapped onto that triangle in the following way:



Logos, pathos, and ethos can be represented as distinct corners of a triangle, but it's important to emphasize the *sameness* and *interconnectedness* of that triangle. Just as the message, audience, and writer all contribute to the final product, the rhetorical appeals are mutually reinforcing and intertwined. In the chapter, "Moving Your Audience: *Ethos*, *Pathos*, and *Kairos*," John D. Ramage, et al's *Writing Arguments* shows how the following logical proof can be communicated in different ways:

> Claim: People should adopt a vegetarian diet.
>
> Reason: Because doing so will help prevent cruelty to animals caused by factory farming.

Here are the various examples they provide:

1. People should adopt a vegetarian diet because doing so will help prevent the cruelty to animals caused by factory farming.

2. If you are planning to eat chicken tonight, please consider how much that chicken suffered so that you could have a tender and juicy meal. Commercial growers cram the chickens so tightly together into cages that they never walk on their own legs, see sunshine, or flap their wings. In fact, their beaks must be cut off to keep them from pecking each other's eyes out. One way to prevent such suffering is for more and more people to become vegetarians.
3. People who eat meat are no better than sadists who torture other sentient creatures to enhance their own pleasure. Unless you enjoy sadistic tyranny over others, you have only one choice: become a vegetarian.
4. People committed to justice might consider the extent to which our love of eating meat requires the agony of animals. A visit to a modern chicken factory—where chickens live their entire lives in tiny, darkened coops without room to spread their wings—might raise doubts about our right to inflict such suffering on sentient creatures. Indeed, such a visit might persuade us that vegetarianism is a more just alternative.

The coldest, most straightforward formulation of the argument is found in version 1. Argument 2 sounds more informal, in part because it uses the second person "you," but also because it pleads with the reader by appealing to their imagination. Concrete imagery is one type way to practice pathos. Argument 3 uses the emotionally charged language of pathos again, but now enhanced by a kind of moral superiority over the reader. The phrase, "People who eat meat are no better than," splits the audience into those whose morals align with the writer and those who don't. By drawing attention to the writer's character, it draws on ethos. However, as Ramage, et al point out, most readers find Argument 3 the most off-putting. It's a poor, unpersuasive use of ethos.

Argument 4 practices ethos better, especially when communicating to an audience that expects civil conversation. Argument 4 also uses ethos by appealing to the reader's values ("committed to justice"). Finally, by briefly mentioning at "visit to a modern chicken factory," this version of the argument also taps into the reader's imagination, a type of pathos.

The persuasiveness of Argument 4 shows how logos, pathos, and ethos aren't easily separated into discrete elements that a writer drops in one sentence at a time. The same sentence or passage can practice logos, pathos, and ethos all at once. When going back to analyze the how the passage works, a critical reader can use the individual rhetorical terms to analyze its persuasiveness.

Logos: Appeals to logic and reasoning

Logic. Reason. Rationality. Logos is brainy and intellectual, cool, calm, collected, objective.

When an author relies on logos, it means that he or she is using logic, careful structure, and objective evidence to appeal to the audience. An author can appeal to an audience's intellect by using information that can be fact checked (using multiple sources) and thorough explanations to support key points. Additionally, providing a solid and non-biased explanation of one's argument is a great way for an author to invoke logos.

For example, if I were trying to convince my students to complete their homework, I might explain that I understand everyone is busy and they have other classes (non-biased), but the homework will help them get a better grade on their test (explanation). I could add to this explanation by providing statistics showing the number of students who failed and didn't complete their homework versus the number of students who passed and did complete their homework (factual evidence).

Logical appeals rest on rational modes of thinking, such as

- **Comparison –** a comparison between one thing (with regard to your topic) and another, similar thing to help support your claim. It is important that the comparison is fair and valid – the things being compared must share significant traits of similarity.
- **Cause/effect thinking –** you argue that X has caused Y, or that X is likely to cause Y to help support your claim. Be careful with the latter – it can be difficult to predict that something "will" happen in the future.
- **Deductive reasoning –** starting with a broad, general claim/example and using it to support a more specific point or claim
- **Inductive reasoning –** using several specific examples or cases to make a broad generalization
- **Exemplification –** use of many examples or a variety of evidence to support a single point
- **Elaboration** – moving beyond just including a fact, but explaining the significance or relevance of that fact
- **Coherent thought** – maintaining a well organized line of reasoning; not repeating ideas or jumping around

Pathos: Appeals to emotion and imagination

When an author relies on pathos, it means that he or she is trying to tap into the audience's emotions to get them to agree with the author's claim. An author using pathetic appeals wants the audience to feel something: anger, pride, joy, rage, or happiness. For example, many of us have seen the ASPCA commercials that use photographs of injured puppies, or sad-looking kittens, and slow, depressing music to emotionally persuade their audience to donate money.

Pathos-based rhetorical strategies are any strategies that get the audience to "open up" to the topic, the argument, or to the author. Emotions can make us vulnerable, and an author can use this vulnerability to get the audience to believe that his or her argument is a compelling one.

Pathetic appeals might include

- **Expressive descriptions** of people, places, or events that help the reader to feel or experience those events
- **Vivid imagery** of people, places or events that help the reader to feel like he or she is seeing those events
- Sharing **personal stories** that make the reader feel a connection to, or empathy for, the person being described
- Using **emotion-laden vocabulary** as a way to put the reader into that specific emotional mindset (what is the author trying to make the audience feel? and how is he or she doing that?)
- Using any information that will **evoke an emotional response from the audience**. This could involve making the audience feel empathy or disgust for the person/group/event being discussed, or perhaps connection to or rejection of the person/group/event being discussed.

When reading a text, try to locate when the author is trying to convince the reader using emotions because, if used to excess, pathetic appeals can indicate a lack of substance or emotional manipulation of the audience. See the links below about fallacious pathos for more information.

Ethos: Appeals to values and image

Ethical appeals have two facets: audience values and authorial credibility/character.

On the one hand, when an author makes an ethical appeal, he or she is attempting to **tap into the values or ideologies that the audience holds**, for example, patriotism, tradition, justice, equality, dignity for all humankind, self preservation, or other specific social, religious or philosophical values (Christian values, socialism, capitalism, feminism, etc.). These values can sometimes feel very close to emotions, but they are felt on a social level rather than only on a personal level. When an author evokes the values that the audience cares about as a way to justify or support his or her argument, we classify that as ethos. The audience will feel that the author is making an argument that is "right" (in the sense of moral "right"-ness, i.e., "My argument rests upon that values that matter to you. Therefore, you should accept my argument"). This first part of the definition of ethos, then, is focused on the audience's values.

On the other hand, this sense of referencing what is "right" in an ethical appeal connects to the other sense of ethos: the author. Ethos that is centered on the author revolves around two concepts: the credibility of the author and his or her character.

Credibility of the speaker/author is determined by his or her knowledge and expertise in the subject at hand. For example, if you are learning about Einstein's Theory of Relativity, would you rather learn from a professor of physics or a cousin who took two science classes in high school thirty years ago? It is fair to say that, in general, the professor of physics would have more credibility to discuss the topic of physics. To establish his or her credibility, an author may draw attention to who he or she is or what kinds of experience he or she has with the topic being discussed as an ethical appeal (i.e., "Because I have experience with this topic – and I know my stuff! – you should trust what I am saying about this topic"). Some authors do not have to establish their credibility because the audience already knows who they are and that they are credible.

Character is another aspect of ethos, and it is different from credibility because it involves personal history and even personality traits. A person can be credible but lack character or vice versa. For example, in politics, sometimes the most experienced candidates – those who might be the most credible candidates – fail to win elections because voters do not accept their character. Politicians take pains to shape their character as leaders who have the interests of the voters at heart. The candidate who successfully proves to the voters (the audience) that he or she has the type of character that they can trust is more likely to win.

Thus, ethos comes down to trust. How can the author get the audience to trust him or her so that they will accept his or her argument? How can the the author make him or herself appear as a credible speaker who embodies the character traits that the audience values?

In building ethical appeals, we see authors

- Referring either directly or indirectly to the values that matter to the intended audience (so that the audience will trust the speaker)
- Using language, phrasing, imagery, or other writing styles common to people who hold those values, thereby "talking the talk" of people with those values (again, so that the audience is inclined to trust the speaker)

- Referring to their experience and/or authority with the topic (and therefore demonstrating their credibility)
- Referring to their own character, or making an effort to build their character in the text

When reading, you should always think about the author's credibility regarding the subject as well as his or her character. Here is an example of a rhetorical move that connects with ethos: when reading an article about abortion, the author mentions that she has had an abortion. That is an example of an ethical move because the author is creating credibility via anecdotal evidence and first person narrative. In a rhetorical analysis project, it would be up to you, the analyzer, to point out this move and associate it with a rhetorical strategy.

When writers misuse logos, pathos, or ethos, arguments suffer

Above, we defined and described what logos, pathos, and ethos are and why authors may use those strategies. Sometimes, using a combination of logical, pathetic, and ethical appeals leads to a sound, balanced, and persuasive argument. It is important to understand, though, that using rhetorical appeals does not always lead to a sound, balanced argument.

In fact, any of the appeals could be misused or overused. When that happens, arguments can be weakened.

To see how authors can overuse emotional appeals and turn-off their target audience, visit the following link from *WritingCommons.org*: Fallacious Pathos.

To see how ethos can be misused or used in a manner that may be misleading, visit the following link to *WritingCommons.org*: Fallacious Ethos.

Kairos appeals

Literally translated, kairos means the "supreme moment." In this case, it refers to appropriate timing, meaning *when* the writer presents certain parts of her argument as well as the overall timing of the subject matter itself. While not technically part of the Rhetorical Triangle, it is still an important principle for constructing an effective argument. If the writer fails to establish a strong **kairotic appeal**, then the audience may become polarized, hostile, or may simply just lose interest.

If appropriate timing is not taken into consideration and a writer introduces a sensitive or important point too early or too late in a text, the impact of that point could be lost on the audience. For example, if the writer's audience is strongly opposed to her view, and she begins the argument with a forceful thesis of why she is right and the opposition is wrong, how do you think that audience might respond?

In this instance, the writer may have just lost the ability to make any further appeals to her audience in two ways: first, by polarizing them, and second, by possibly elevating what was at first merely strong opposition to what would now be hostile opposition. A polarized or hostile audience will not be inclined to listen to the writer's argument with an open mind or even to listen at all. On the other hand, the writer could have established a stronger appeal to Kairos by building up to that forceful thesis, maybe by providing some neutral points such as background information or by addressing some of the opposition's views, rather than leading with why she is right and the audience is wrong.

Additionally, if a writer covers a topic or puts forth an argument about a subject that is currently a non-issue or has no relevance for the audience, then the audience will fail to engage because whatever the writer's message happens to be, it won't matter to anyone. For example, if a writer were to put forth the argument that women in the United States should have the right to vote, no one would care; that is a non-issue because women in the United States already have that right.

When evaluating a writer's kairotic appeal, ask the following questions:

- Where does the writer establish her thesis of the argument in the text? Is it near the beginning, the middle, or the end? Is this placement of the thesis effective? Why or why not?
- Where in the text does the writer provide her strongest points of evidence? Does that location provide the most impact for those points?
- Is the issue that the writer raises relevant at this time, or is it something no one really cares about anymore or needs to know about anymore?

Exercise 4: Analyzing Kairos

In this exercise, you will analyze a visual representation of the appeal to Kairos. On the 26th of February 2015, a photo of a dress was posted to Twitter along with a question as to whether people thought it was one combination of colors versus another. Internet chaos ensued on social media because while some people saw the dress as black and blue, others saw it as white and gold. As the color debate surrounding the dress raged on, an ad agency in South Africa saw an opportunity to raise awareness about a far more serious subject: domestic abuse.

Step 1: Read this **article** (https://tinyurl.com/yctl8o5g) from CNN about how and why the photo of the dress went viral so that you will be better informed for the next step in this exercise:

Step 2: Watch the **video** (https://youtu.be/SLv0ZRPssTI, transcript **here**) from CNN that explains how, in partnership with The Salvation Army, the South African marketing agency created an ad that went viral.

Step 3: After watching the video, answer the following questions:

- Once the photo of the dress went viral, approximately how long after did the Salvation Army's ad appear? Look at the dates on both the article and the video to get an idea of a time frame.
- How does the ad take advantage of the publicity surrounding the dress?
- Would the ad's overall effectiveness change if it had come out later than it did?
- How late would have been too late to make an impact? Why?

Appeal to Kairos" is from *Let's Get Writing!*, "Chapter 2 – Rhetorical Analysis," by Elizabeth Browning.

Media: "Aristotle's Rhetorical Triangle

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://idaho.pressbooks.pub/write/?p=58#oembed-1

24. Reading Rhetorically, or How to Read Like a Writer

LIZA LONG

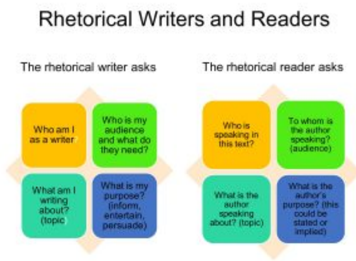
By Liza Long

As with any skill, writing rhetorically begins with reading rhetorically. But what exactly do we mean by *rhetoric*? Reading rhetorically is really just reading like a writer. When you read rhetorically, you are joining the conversation with the writer as an active, engaged, and critical participant. This type of reading is not a strategy like active reading or a formula that we can apply to every text. Instead, reading rhetorically is a habit of mind that life-long learners work to adopt. This habit of mind will help you engage with texts–from social media posts to peer-reviewed journal articles and everything in between–instead of passively consuming them. Rhetorical reading will make you a better thinker and a better writer.

Interrogating the Rhetor/Author

Rhetorical reading begins with asking questions about the *rhetor*, or the speaker. Essentially, reading rhetorically is reading critically, starting with a critical interrogation of the text's author, where we ask ourselves a series of questions about the writer, their worldview, and their intentions.

In the approach below, I have used the Greek philosopher Aristotle's elements of argument to help us think about the rhetor, or author of a text. These same elements of argument (also called Classical Argument) are also used by writers, as we will see in later chapters.



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Here are some questions we can ask about the rhetor:

Ethos (Character):

- Who is the author?
- Why is the author qualified to write about this topic? Does the author have lived experience? Are they an expert?
- How does the author establish themselves as credible to readers? Does the author seem credible to me? Why or why not?

Pathos (Emotion):

- What relationship does the author have with their intended audience?
- Who is the intended audience, and am I part of that group? Why do I think that I am or am not part of the intended audience?
- What is the author's overall tone? (humorous, emotional, logical, etc.)

- How does the author engage the reader? Do I feel engaged as I read? Why or why not?
- How do I feel as I read this text? Do I agree with the author, disagree, or both? What emotions, if any, does this text bring up for me? How does the author invoke these emotions?

Logos (Reason)

- What question(s) or topic(s) does this text address?
- Why are these questions or topics important? (so what? Who cares?)
- What group of people cares about this topic? A community? An organization? A demographic group? (example, Boomers or Zoomers)
- What types of reason or evidence does the author use?
- Are these reasons and evidence credible? Why or why not?

Let's combine the questions we asked above into a checklist that you can use as you read a text:

1. So what? Who cares? What questions does the text address? Why are these questions important? What types of people or communities/organizations care about these questions?
2. Who is this text written for? Who is the intended audience? Am I part of this audience or an outsider?
3. How does the author support their thesis? What types of evidence are used? Personal experience? Facts and statistics? Original observations, interviews, or research?
4. Do I find this argument convincing? Whose views and counterarguments are omitted from the text? Is the counterargument or counterevidence addressed or ignored?
5. How does the author hook the intended reader's interest and keep the reader reading? Does this hook work for me? For

example, the author may use emotion (pathos), authority or character (ethos), or reasons and evidence (logos) to introduce the argument.

6. How does the author make themselves seem credible to the intended audience? Is the author credible for me? Are the author's sources reliable?
7. Are this author's basic values, beliefs, and assumptions similar to or different from my own? Do the author and I share the same worldview or do we have different perspectives?
8. How do I respond to this text? What are my initial reactions? Do I agree, disagree, or both? Has the text changed my thinking or made me reconsider my position in any way?
9. How will I be able to use what I have learned from the text in my own writing? Think about the type of writing assignment where this source might be useful, and how you would use it.

Now, let's practice. Here's a passage from Ta Nehisi Coates's National Book Award winning book *Between the World and Me*, written in the form of a letter from the African American public intellectual and author to his 15-year-old son. As you read the following passage, keep the questions above in mind. You may want to jot down notes and use active reading strategies.

> Americans believe in the reality of "race" as a defined, indubitable feature of the natural world. Racism—the need to ascribe bone-deep features to people and then humiliate, reduce, and destroy them—inevitably follows from this inalterable condition. In this way, racism is rendered as the innocent daughter of Mother Nature, and one is left to deplore the Middle Passage or the Trail of Tears the way one deplores an earthquake, a tornado, or any other phenomenon that can be cast as beyond the handiwork of men.
>
> But race is the child of racism, not the father. And the process of naming "the people" has never been

a matter of genealogy and physiognomy so much as one of hierarchy. Difference in hue and hair is old. But the belief in the preeminence of hue and hair, the notion that these factors can correctly organize a society and that they signify deeper attributes, which are indelible—this is the new idea at the heart of this new people who have been brought up hopelessly, tragically, deceitfully, to believe that they are white.

These new people are, like us, a modern invention. But unlike us, their new name has no real meaning divorced from the machinery of criminal power. The new people were something else before they were white—Catholic, Corsican, Welsh, Mennonite, Jewish—and if all our national hopes have any fulfillment, then they will have to be something else again. Perhaps they will truly become American and create a nobler basis for their myths. I cannot call it. As for now, it must be said that the process of washing the disparate tribes white, the elevation of the belief in being white, was not achieved through wine tastings and ice cream socials, but rather through the pillaging of life, liberty, labor, and land; through the flaying of backs; the chaining of limbs; the strangling of dissidents; the destruction of families; the rape of mothers; the sale of children; and various other acts meant, first and foremost, to deny you and me the right to secure and govern our own bodies.

Ta Nehisi Coates, excerpt from *Between the World and Me*, Penguin Randomhouse, 2015, https://www.penguinrandomhouse.ca/books/220290/between-the-world-and-me-by-ta-nehisi-coates/9780812993547/excerpt

Interrogating the Reader (Yourself)

Think about the types of arguments we see on the Internet today. Are people reading each other's tweets and posts rhetorically? Are they responding as if they are using rhetorical skills to listen? Or are they using rhetorical skills to win?

25. Style and Linguistic Diversity

Students may see the term "style" scattered throughout their writing courses. It shows up in course outcomes and rubrics. It also appears in this textbook, when introducing students to the basics of APA and MLA Style. The term is little bit slippery. In the chapter "Peer Feedback, Revising, and Editing," Liza Long offers the following tips when revising for style:

> Here are a few things to look for as you revise for academic style:
>
> - Academic (formal) tone—no "you" or "one" because these pronouns are broad and vague (but "I/we" are fine)
> - Appropriate language
> - Clichés and colloquial language
> - Sentence variety (simple, compound, complex)
> - Author voice
> - Active vs. passive construction
>
> *I wrote the paper.* YES!
> *The paper was written by me.* NO!

These are excellent suggestions, but certain phrases such as "appropriate" vs. "colloquial" language raise the question of what's suitable for an academic audience.

These expectations are often interpreted to mean that students should practice "standard American English." All other non-standard dialects, such as Black English or certain types of Southern slang, are viewed as inappropriate because they're "lesser than" the standard.

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce students to a more nuanced and contextually-informed conversation about style, especially as it relates to standard English (also called standard American English, abbreviated SAE). Writing for an academic audience does often mean students will sound more formal and less like everyday speech, but it's a mistake to view the latter, non-standard forms of writing and speech as lesser than academic communication.

Dash that Oxford Comma! Prestige and Stigma in Academic Writing

by Christie Bogle

The Comma Comma

Once upon a time, way back in the third grade, Mrs. MaGee told me never to put a comma before the "and" in my lists. She said that the "and" means the same thing as a comma.

And so I never did. I wrote "balls, bats and mitts."

Years later, another teacher told me that I should *always* put a comma before the "and" in my lists because it clarifies that the last two items in my list are not a set. He said to write "Amal, Mike, Jose, and Lin."

Logic told me that the third-grade teacher was right because, if the last two in the list were a set, the "and" would have come sooner as "balls and bats and mitts" or "Amal, Mike, and Jose and Lin." But that is also just odd. What if I really did mean to have two sets? Now I felt like I had to write “Balls. Also, bats and mitts.” It felt like juggling. If this is confusing, I’m pretty sure that I’ve made my point. These rigid rules felt so awkward! Things I can say effortlessly outloud are, all of a sudden, impossible on paper. Who wrote these rules?

That’s actually a valid question. Who did write them? Novices to the study of language sometimes imagine that language started back in a day when there were pure versions of all the world languages that younger and lazier speakers continue to corrupt, generation after generation. They imagine a perfect book of grammar that we should all be able to reference. Nothing about that scenario is actually true.

History of English Grammar

So, why and how did we get all those rules? Way back around the 1700s, we finally started to get some books written about the structure of language, specifically for teaching. These, even then, were vastly different from the work being done by linguists in the field who were interested in marking language as it is, not how they thought it should be. As time went on, people introduced writing rules that originated in other languages, like Latin, and imposed them on English. These misapplications have followed us into modern times. Many of the guidebooks for writing are filled with these exceptions to the natural ways that English once worked. They include, surprisingly, the rule against double negatives (“we don’t need no stinking badges!”) and other standard prohibitions against language that was quite normal long ago (and still is in non-standard varieties of English).

Some more of those gems include “never say ‘I’ in an essay,” “don’t use passive voice,” and “don’t start a sentence with ‘and’ or ‘but.’” We can sprinkle in the Latin rule, “don’t split infinitives” (think *Star Trek*‘s “to boldly go”) and unnecessary restrictions like “adverbs go after the verb, not before." These rules have interesting histories but the history doesn't necessarily support their persistence. In fact, most of them can be dismissed as simple preferences of some dead white guy from centuries ago. They don't obey any rule of logic, though some obey a system from a different language that has no application in English.

A great example is the double negative. In the 1700s the location of the royalty and their dialects determined what was "correct." The south of England used double negatives but the north of England (where royalty lived) did not use them. Something so simple as location dictated what went into the books. Then in 1762, Robert Lowth wrote *Short Introduction to English Grammar* and relegated the southern usage to "uncultivated speech" instead of what it really is, which is an emphasis on the negative point being made. The American usage that developed from before Lowth's writing is retained today in many dialects, but famously so in Southern varieties and African American Vernacular English (AAVE).

"Grammars," Not Grammar

What is happening here? Am I arguing that grammar rules are okay to break sometimes? I am taking up an argument that seems to be at an academic impasse. Linguists believe that there is more than one grammar. We say "grammars." Stephen Pinker, a cognitive psychologist, offers his take on this phenomenon in an article for *The Guardian* called "Stephen Pinker: 10 'Grammar Rules' It's Okay to Break Sometimes." He characterizes the debate between descriptive and prescriptive grammarians like this:

> Prescriptivists prescribe how language ought to be used. They uphold standards of excellence and a respect for the best of our civilisation, and are a bulwark against relativism, vulgar populism and the dumbing down of literate culture.

> Descriptivists describe how language actually is used. They believe that the rules of correct usage are nothing more than the secret handshake of the ruling class, designed to keep the masses in their place. Language is an organic product of human creativity, say the Descriptivists, and people should be allowed to write however they please.

His point is that some think that every rule of grammar is worth preserving lest the language devolves out of existence. Others believe that the actual use of the language (any language) and the natural changes that occur are a good thing. Sometimes, as is the case with the double negative, before the rule against it was made, people used "incorrect" phrases all the time. So, the argument about preserving rules and allowing change is kind of mixed up. Pinker describes the conflict experts have, but it's even more complicated by the history.

Still, I reference Pinker because he is a cognitive psychologist that studies both linguistics and composition. Even more importantly, he is also a best-selling author of nonfiction. Pinker has made boring and dry topics like linguistics and neuroscience feel easy, even to the average reader. That's a kind of magic that I want to bottle and sell. So, I look to him on matters of writing. Pinker and I agree that when it comes to grammar, it should be addressed with the goal of being understood, not of being "right."

Navigating the rules of grammar is not just hard for those that speak in "dialects" (or different grammars) of English. It is hard even for those who grew up in a middle-class culture speaking a relatively standard form called Standard American English (SAE). Those born into families and communities speaking SAE struggle with the rules like these:

- *What do I do with commas and semicolons?*
- *Do I use who or whom?*
- *Which word: there, they're or their; too, two or to?*

And so forth.

Even your professors make common speech errors. Try my favorite test. See how many times members of college faculty say "there's" when they should have said "there are." No one speaks like a textbook.

One of my favorite debates, because it is so utterly pointless, is of the Oxford comma. This phenomenon is the one I opened with. Do you always or never put a comma before the "and" in the list? The Oxford comma is the one that says "yes, always." I was taught "no, never." So, who wins?

John McWhorter pleads a case that I buy. He says neither side wins. In his article "Should we give a damn about the Oxford comma?" he argues that "to treat the failure to use the Oxford comma as a mark of mental messiness is a handy way to look down on what will perhaps always be a majority of people attempting to write English." And that is a key argument for me. Much of what we do when looking down our nose at particular errors is to demonstrate disdain for our differences on the page. In fact, for the rest of this document, let's not call them "errors." Let's call them "varieties of speech/writing."

Stigma and Prestige

As frustrating or embarrassing it is to be called to the carpet for your variety of speech, these grammar scuffles are mere annoyances when they occur between English speakers of the same general class, race, and economic status. However, when we approach minority English language speakers and English language learners, we pass into a new territory that borders on classism and racism.

To understand this, you must understand the terms *stigma* and *prestige*. These terms apply to a number of sociological situations. Prestige is, very simply, what we grant power and privilege to. Remember the history of the double negative from the 1700s? The book taught that single negation is a mark of *prestige*.

On the other hand, stigmatized varieties of English are those that people try to train you out of using. If you were raised in the Appalachian region of America, you may have some varieties of speech that other people dislike and hope you will lose. Things like "y'all" and "a-" prefixes on "a huntin' and a fishin'" are discouraged; some think it means the speaker is uneducated. By being negated, double negatives became *stigmatized*.

This distinction is "classist" because it assumes characteristics and abilities based on a person's variety of speech. It may sound strange, but speech is not a mark of intellect or ability. One famous example is of Eudora Welty, a renown Appalachian author. A story is told that during her stay in a college dormitory she was passed over by the headmistress for opportunities to have tickets to plays and cultured events. When she confronted the headmistress about the oversight, she explained that she had doubted Welty's interest in the theater because of her accent. Of course, now, Welty is an honored and prestigious author. Her variety of speech did not affect her ability to produce effective writing that communicates to her audience.

Some varieties of English are stigmatized because they represent racial minority speech patterns, even though they are legitimately home-grown American English. How many of us can easily hear and understand what is culturally Black English, Spanglish, or Chicano English, but know that those varieties won't go into your next essay for History 1700?

Students learning English, or even just Standard *American* English, will vary in their ability to represent prestigious language patterns, even though what they write or say is generally understood. For example, people from India may have grown up speaking a different variety of English. The same is true for some people from Hong Kong when it was a British holding. British English with a Chinese accent was their standard, and they struggle to be understood in America.

So, for multilingual and/or multivariety speakers, one challenge of writing is the expectation that they will sound as narrowly experienced in language as monolingual speakers. This is what Lippi-Green called *standard language ideology*. It's the practice of prestige and stigma. It is a rather bizarre sort of prestige to value evidence of less experience, but that's exactly what unaccented language is. A middle- to upper-class white American who travels nowhere and learns nothing of consequence can still sound perfectly prestigious merely by speaking their natural English variety. We actually prefer (or privilege) the appearance of ignorance.

There are a rare few that can perfectly compartmentalize languages. Linguistic geniuses (I use that term loosely) exist—those who can sound perfectly natural in several varieties or languages. It is an ability that only the teensiest percentage of people with just the right exposure, talent, age, and experience will ever achieve. The rest of us can increase our range of speech and writing contexts, but our own idiosyncrasies will always exist, and we will be (unnecessarily) embarrassed by them.

What Teaching Experts Know

Teaching professionals continue to debate how to teach in a way that combats linguistic stigma and shifts toward preferring linguistic diversity. From the CCCC's Students' Right to Their Own Language (SRTOL) circa 1974, we read:

> We affirm the students' right to their own patterns and varieties of language—the dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style. Language scholars long ago denied that the myth of a standard American dialect has any validity. The claim that any one dialect is unacceptable amounts to an attempt of

> one social group to exert its dominance over another. Such a claim leads to false advice for speakers and writers, and immoral advice for humans. A nation proud of its diverse heritage and its cultural and racial variety will preserve its heritage of dialects. We affirm strongly that teachers must have the experiences and training that will enable them to respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language.

So, since before many of your teachers were born, an international body of composition instructors has acknowledged that students have a right to their own language. Ever since then, the struggle to maintain a standard and find ways to work with differences have played out in the profession. Today, we have experts in the field that suggest utilizing "vernacular speech" (that's your everyday speech) to improve the quality of writing, to a point. Peter Elbow writes in his book *Vernacular Eloquence: What Speech Can Bring to Writing* about the ways that we can utilize spoken, everyday language as a way of improving the readability of text and ease the writing process.

Steven Pinker (you know—the one whose writing skill we should bottle and sell), like Peter Elbow, believes a more conversational tone in writing can improve its quality. He says that there are ways of scientifically assessing clarity and ease for readers. For example, this type of research takes on the debate of whether or not a typist should place one or two spaces after periods. It may seem trivial, but it's a debate that has lasted since word processors were programmed to intelligently space punctuation. Researchers strapped people down in front of a computer screen and measured eye movement while reading to settle the debate. Much to my surprise, it turns out that two spaces are easier to read than one (Johnson).

What You, the Student, Should Know

I don't know if I would always go so far as to do scientific experimentation on readers in order to make writing decisions, but choosing rules that make things easier feels like a really good idea, doesn't it? The New SRTOL document authors argue, "it is one thing to help a student achieve proficiency in a written dialect and another thing to punish him for using variant expressions of that dialect." So, in modern times, teachers want you to recognize and utilize a standard in writing without punishing your speech. You want to learn how to do the same with yourself and others.

However useful it is to accept variations in classroom English, there are, in fact, varieties of English that are native to the United States (not spoken anywhere else) that are not so easy to understand. Some examples are Louisiana's Cajun creole and Hawai'ian Pidgin creole. Theorists that give nods of approval to teaching within varieties they understand may not be addressing a large enough group of English varieties. If we are suggesting a student use their native language ways to improve readability, sometimes the student's writing will be unintelligible to the teacher and peers. It's a whole different job to have everyone learn new languages in your composition class.

I assume that when CCCCs composed these sentences, "Language scholars long ago denied that the myth of a standard American dialect has any validity…We affirm strongly that teachers must have the experiences and training that will enable them to respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language," they were being sincere, but it might be a stretch. Your teachers are not experts on every variety of English or the many creoles. Neither are you. There is still a way to manage the goals we have.

The updated version of the *Students' Right to Their Own Language* makes a request of teachers when they say, "Since English teachers have been in large part responsible for the narrow attitudes of today's employers, changing attitudes toward dialect variations does not seem an unreasonable goal, for today's students will be tomorrow's employers." English faculty have continued to teach SAE (also called Educated American English or EAE) in one part because it's what *the rest of the country* thinks that educated writers should use for speech and writing. So, even though teachers accept that the standard is a myth, we find the standard useful and the prestige/stigma problem lingers because we continue to use it. This is where you—the students—can help. Let's revisit the value that standard language has and the work it does.

One of the undeniable benefits of a standard is that it is a *lingua franca.* This term roughly means "the language everyone shares." With so many variations of English, it is just clearer to write in one variety than to learn them all. This different idea of a standard is about ease and convenience, not prestige. Teaching within one standard is a system-wide rhetorical choice to be understood by the largest audience possible. Ignoring what that *should be* and focusing on what that *is* seems like a better way of determining what we call the standard. So, most of us aim for a sort of amalgam of language that is acceptable to most people without sticking rigidly to arbitrary rules.

Lose the 'Tude

What you, the students, probably want to know is how to write. The more important point that I hope you will walk away with is this: STROL says, "The **attitudes** that [you] develop in the English class will often be the criteria [you] use for choosing [your] own employees," (emphasis mine). So, what you learn about writing in English class follows you as you make choices and impacts your options in the economy, but so do your attitudes about language and people. Spencer Kimball is often credited with this admonition, "Love people, not things; use things, not people." I would apply a similar sentiment to language.

- *Don't only use language with people you understand.*
- *Use language to understand people.*

As a student, you expect to leave school with more skills and greater flexibility. In that spirit, seeking diversity in your language education makes sense. As you become our future employers and employees, you will inherit the opportunity to reject stigma toward linguistic diversity.

You can do so by accepting these simple facts (adapted from Rosina Lippi-Green's "Linguistic Facts of Life"):

- Language is complex and diverse.
- Language is not a moral marker.
- Language is not an intellectual marker.
- Language serves to communicate between people.
- Language changes.

By embracing these facts, you can feel less shame or stigma in your own language and others'. If you accept language differences as natural, you might choose to expose yourself to and understand more languages and varieties. You will write aiming to be understood by a majority of readers for convenience, not for fear of judgment.

So, fine, Oxford Comma when you wanna—but dash linguistic stigma.

AAVE – Why Do People Say "AX" Instead of "ASK"?

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Spanglish is a Language Too! | Alondra Posada

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26. Metadiscourse

LIZA LONG

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INTRODUCTION

Even if you've only ever written a single essay–or even a line of an essay–you'll be familiar with metadiscourse and the challenge it presents. Metadiscourse is a fancy word for the language we use to frame our ideas:

In this example of metadiscourse, the phrase "nice shirt" is framed with the words "I've got to say."

It's hard to write without using metadiscourse. For instance, anytime you indicate a change in direction, you end up using expressions like *however*, or *on the other hand.* These transitional expressions are examples of *metadiscourse.*

Use too much of this kind of language and your prose will seem stilted and dry; use too little and the reader will be lost in a jungle of disconnected observations. When used appropriately, metadiscourse can frame your ideas effectively.

DEFINITION

The word *metadiscourse* consists of two parts. The word *discourse* means *communication* or *debate*. The prefix *meta* comes from Greek and means *about*. In other words, metadiscourse refers to the language we use to talk about our regular communication. When your friends comment on a meme that is self-referential, for example, they may say "That's so meta!"

In short, metadiscourse is writing about writing. Metadiscourse is important because it allows us to give direction and relate the various parts of our essay to each other and to the whole.

Here's how one scholar defines metadiscourse:

> Essentially metadiscourse embodies the idea that communication is more than just the exchange of information, goods or services, but also involves the personalities, attitudes and assumptions of those who are communicating. (Hyland 3)

In other words, your choice of metadiscourse affects your writing style. It affects how readers perceive you as a person and as a writer.

EDITING FOR METADISCOURSE

Here's a sample essay introduction filled with metadiscourse:

> When comparing two pieces of literature, there are many different aspects that a person can analyze. When we take a closer look at Philip Pullman's *The Golden Compass* or C. S. Lewis's *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe* we see that this is true. For example, Lewis shares a Christian message, whereas Pullman promotes an atheist worldview. In this essay, I will demonstrate that these

> themes come up especially in relation to lying. Whereas Lewis condemns Edmund for being a liar, Pullman makes his heroine, Lyra, an accomplished liar and praises her for it.

Clearly this paragraph is very self-referential. The writer constantly reminds us that literary analysis involves comparison, analysis, close reading, and argumentation. Much of this language is redundant, and we could easily do with a shorter version:

> Philip Pullman wrote *The Golden Compass* in part because he hated C. S. Lewis's *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*. Whereas Lewis shares a Christian message, Pullman promotes an atheist worldview. We see this especially when it comes to lying. Lewis condemns Edmund for being a liar, but Pullman makes his heroine, Lyra, an accomplished liar and praises her for it.

The revised version is more direct. By minimizing the frame we can focus on the picture.

The point, then, is that metadiscourse should be used judiciously. Some writing instructors go overboard and launch a crusade against metadiscourse, deleting as much self-referential language as they can. Instead, the challenge is to find a happy medium, where your metadiscourse makes the reading process smooth and easy.

FINDING YOUR VOICE: "I" IN METADISCOURSE

Using metadiscourse effectively starts with finding your own voice. Writers often struggle to decide what pronouns to use (or whether to use them at all). Let's review whether it's acceptable to use "I" and "we" in academic writing.

Using "I"

I can't tell you how often students have come to me and said "But my teacher told me never to use 'I' in my essay." While such advice may be well-meant, it has the unfortunate effect of making the act of writing seem somehow impersonal and distant, as if essays have to be composed in a different language.

Now it is true that "I" is often redundant. If you're writing a book review and you open with "I think that *Slade House* was a gripping read" you could just as well say "*Slade House* was a gripping read." The reader will assume that the statements on the page are your opinion.

Despite these caveats, using "I" is not forbidden, and is often preferred because it allows you to write actively instead of passively. The first person voice is particularly useful when you're distinguishing your ideas from those of others (they say/I say):

> Whereas Sarah Jones argues that … I would suggest that …
>
> I agree with Michael Smith that …

The first person pronoun is also useful for indicating shifts in your argument:

> I will argue that …
>
> Having seen that … , I think we can safely conclude that …

Even if you later decide to delete some of those "I's," they will have helped you to get your ideas on paper, and that's a good thing.

Royal We

Another pronoun that tends to confuse writers is "we." Here's how to use "we" without sounding pompous.

First, avoid using the "royal we," where "we" is just a grander way of saying "I":

> We will argue that …
> As we have demonstrated …

Unless you are coauthoring a piece of writing, this use of "we" is not advisable.

On the other hand, you can use "we" if you're actually referring to multiple individuals:

> In our study group we found that …
> As we examine the evidence, we will see …

Notice that in the second example "we" refers to the writer and the reader(s). This use of the pronoun can be an effective way of making your audience feel part of the process.

CONCLUSION

Much of essay writing consists of learning to use metadiscourse properly. It's about discovering your own voice, of developing your writing personality.

At first the tendency will be to do too much, to start every sentence with a transitional word (*therefore*, *thus*, etc.), or to add unnecessary modifiers (e.g., *essentially*). Then the pendulum might swing the other way, and you feel self-conscious every time you write "I will argue," or "we will see."

But in the end you'll find the right style for you, and that's really all that matters.

PART IV
WRITING TO NARRATE AND DESCRIBE

Stories are powerful ways to connect writers with readers. In this section, we will look at how stories can be used both in narrative essays and as components of other genres. We will all look at the related rhetorical mode of description.

27. Introduction to Writing Your Story

LIZA LONG

The Power of Story

"Tell me a story." From children's bedtimes to corporate boardrooms, stories have power to shape our dreams and fuel our imaginations. In his book *Sapiens: A Brief History of Mankind*, the historian Noah Yuval Harari argues that stories are what make us human: "Humans think in stories, and we try to make sense of the world by telling stories."

Every culture around the world tells stories. These stories are a way to share ideas, experiences, beliefs, and cultural traditions. Stories teach, inspire, and create community.

> **Reflection**: Think about a story that matters to you. This could be a fictional story like a favorite book or a movie, or it real story like a family story or something that happened to you or a friend or someone you admire. Write a paragraph summarizing the story. Share your summary with a small group of peers. What purpose does your story serve? Does it inform? Persuade? Entertain? How do your readers connect with your story?

WHY Stories matter

Words have power. Liza Long, an English professor at the College of Western Idaho and one of the authors of this book, learned firsthand how powerful stories can be when she shared an essay about her struggles to parent a child who had mental illness after the tragic elementary school shooting in Newtown, Connecticut in 2012. The essay, published by Boise State University's *The Blue Review* under the title "I Am Adam Lanza's Mother," went viral. One person who read the essay was Representative Tim Murphy (R-PA), a member of the U.S. Congress tasked with investigating the causes of Newtown and proposing ways to prevent future tragedies. Murphy reached out to Long, who testified about the urgent need for mental healthcare services at a March 2013 House Energy and Commerce Committee Forum, "After Newtown."

Although many other experts shared their experiences, it was Long's personal story of a sweet, kind, bright little boy who had been sent to jail four times because of his illness that really caught lawmakers' attention. Four years later, in 2016, the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act passed the House with a vote of 422 for and 2 against. Elements of this bill, including the creation of a new Assistant Secretary of Mental Health position, were incorporated into the bipartisan 21st Century Cures Act signed into law by President Obama in 2019. (For more ideas about writing for social change, see here—link to Writing for Social Change chapter).

"I thought I was alone," she said when interviewed about the impact of her essay. "I soon learned that millions of other people were living my story."

Long's experience shows that powerful, well-told stories can connect our writing to our audience. Stories can be used in a variety of writing contexts—as stand-alone narratives that entertain, as "hooks" for persuasive essays, and as ways to illustrate concepts in essays written to inform.

What Is A Story?

What is a story? Stories have a beginning, a middle, and an end. We call this time order (or chronological order). Sometimes a story may use a flashback or skip around in time, but most stories follow a narrative arc, described by the 19th-century German novelist Gustave Freytag in five stages:

- Exposition
- Rising action
- Climax
- Falling action
- Dénouement (or resolution).

Writers may be more familiar with these terms from studying short stories or novels. However, the same narrative arc applies to effective nonfiction stories. The journalist's questions—who, what, when, where, how, and why—are useful to developing a story arc.

Key Characteristics of Narrative Writing

- Tells a story with a beginning, a middle, and an end
- Uses a subjective tone (not objective)
- Can use first or third person
- Uses descriptive language and imagery
- Often includes dialogue
- Makes a point

Essay Types within this Chapter

- Personal narrative essay

- Literacy narrative essay
- Narrative nonfiction essay

28. “You Will Never Believe What Happened!” Stories We Tell

By Ron Christiansen

After a long day at work or school, my family informally tells stories about their day—my wife and I chat before our kids emerge to be fed or a teenager at the kitchen counter hangs out and talks while my wife or I finish up dinner preparation.We all tell stories. For humor. For clarifying our view of the world. For asserting our identity. As Thomas Newkirk, a composition scholar, argues in *Minds Made for Stories*, story is an “embodied and instinctive mode of understanding” (23). Telling stories is one way we use language as a resource to create and build relationships. When we use language to recount events in our life, we are deliberately utilizing strategies in order to enact a particular type of response to our words. In effect, again relying on Newkirk, “Narrative is there to help us ‘compose’ ourselves when we meet difficulty or loss.” Literally, we compose (write) ourselves into being while also composing (calming or settling) ourselves into a particular view of the world.

Most days I commute thirty minutes from Davis County to the SLCC Redwood Campus. One evening several years ago, I couldn't wait to get home so I could tell my wife about an experience I was still trying to process …

"I was driving on the freeway and a guy started riding my bumper for no reason. I was in the middle lane going five over the speed limit. Can you believe that? What an ass! He wouldn't back off so finally I moved over to the right," I said.

"You should be careful out there," my wife interjected.

"But guess what? The jerk moved over and continued to ride my bumper. I tapped on the brakes. Then—and by this time I was fuming—he pulled alongside me. In my mind I interpreted this as an aggressive move.

"Can you imagine what happened next? He starts pointing at the car not me. I'm still thinking he is being aggressive but then I can tell he is probably pointing at my tire and looks concerned. I pull over and sure enough my back tire is almost completely flat."

"Are you serious?" said my wife.

> "Yeah. Man, I was so stupid."

As the storyteller here, I subconsciously attempted to engage my wife, the listener, by a variety of means. It seems these techniques are learned at an early age and often employed without much reflection. In fact, I wasn't fully aware of the techniques I'd used until I stepped back and analyzed the story for this essay.

One technique I used was to amp up the emotional quality, inviting the listener to come along for the ride: "Can you believe that? … Guess what? … But can you imagine what happened?" I also played with genre by starting off with one kind of story, a can-you-believe-what-a-jerk-other-people-are story, a victim story, but then switched to an ironic tale of misunderstanding where I, the storyteller, turned out to be the jerk.

We are naturally rhetorical beings who attempt to engage those around us through narrative—we shape the events in our life so they have a plot, characters, conflict, and some sort of resolution. This means each of you already has a deep rhetorical understanding of how to engage an audience even if you have never heard the word rhetoric nor ever imagined you were using moves or strategies [see the chapter "What is Story" for more on this].

We also use stories to communicate our values to others. Recently standing in the line with two loaves of bread, some milk, and a carton of eggs, I overheard this conversation between what I assume was a young couple—they had a child with them, probably around two. The young woman led off with this question …

> "Do you remember Diane from my work?"
>
> "Yeah, the one who had two babies in two years, right?"

"Yes. So guess what?"

"She's giving them up for adoption?"

"No, silly … she's pregnant again. But this time she is carrying a baby for some forty-something-year-old woman in California who couldn't get pregnant. She's crazy. That's all I can say. Wacko."

"No way."

"Yes way. And, get this, I found out that the woman from California stopped by the office last week. Barb said you could see her thong when she bent down to pick up her bag. She was wearing designer jeans and carrying some sort of Gucci or whatever purse. I mean can you imagine that? She's just buying a child. It's like going to the supermarket down the baby aisle and picking one off the shelf."

Can you see how this story was shaped by the values of the storyteller and assumptions about the audience's values? Can you imagine how someone with different values or beliefs might have told a very different story about this same surrogate? Note how the word *surrogate* itself shifts the point of view: a surrogate mother indicates a formalized role created to serve rather than a crazy woman simply trying to make money.

Your turn to analyze:

1. How does the storyteller attempt to engage the audience?
2. What details are mentioned and why?
3. What's left out?
4. What values are communicated by the story?

Stories are our attempts to make sense of the world. We narrate our experience in order to connect with others and validate our own experience and self-worth. We shape our identity through these stories. As Julie Beck, senior associate editor at *The Atlantic*, in "Life's Stories" explains, "A life story is written in chalk, not ink, and it can be changed." Beck then uses Jonathon Adler, a psychologist, to expand on this idea: "You're both the narrator and the main character of your story. … That can sometimes be a revelation—'Oh, I'm not just living out this story, I am actually in charge of this story.'" From this perspective, stories allow us to be actors or agents, constructing our story to fit our sense of how the world works. There's now even a discipline called narrative psychology that explores this notion.

Therefore, when we tell stories to family or friends after a long day, absolute accuracy is not what is valued [see "Is That a True Story?" for more on memoirs and truth]. Instead, we pick out particular details that highlight how we have constructed the event. In the telling, our own identities are solidified as we re-experience the event, carving out a space for it in our psyche and, hopefully, the psyches of friends and family whom we want to see us in particular ways. This is just one example of how we are already rhetorical beings long before we enter a writing class.

Your turn to create:

1. Name two or three stories you have told to someone in the last few days.
2. Why did you tell the story?
3. How did you attempt to engage the audience?
4. What values were communicated through the story?

Finally, if story serves these vital social and identity functions in our everyday lives, then it is only natural that story would play a significant role in all kinds of writing through engaging our readers, communicating and shaping values, and illustrating how we see the world working.

Stories are important at every level of writing and rhetoric, including:

- In position arguments like Atul Gawande's "Letting Go", in which he frames his entire argument about how health institutions do not know how to negotiate patients' last days around the story of a young pregnant woman, Sara Monopoli.
- In political debates, such as when John McCain's political campaign in 2008 shaped a brief encounter Barack Obama had with a plumber into a narrative about the little business guy who would be hurt by Obama's tax policies. See a fuller description here: Joe the Plumber stories.
- In reports such as Jonothan Kozol's "Savage Inequalities", in which the systemic poverty of East St. Louis is primarily explored through the stories and words of the people living there.

These uses of story are not incidental; they are the foundation on which the appeals of these rhetorical encounters are built. [See "Adding the Storyteller's Tools to Your Writer's Toolbox" for specific examples of how to use stories in other genres.]

Yet claiming that stories are used in all kinds of writing almost goes without saying, right? I mean we all know, if we pause to think about it, that different genres use stories. A more compelling claim is, as Newkirk argues, that "narrative is the deep structure for all good sustained writing" (23).

So, yes, we all tell stories with a purpose. They are a form of action, of entering and living in the world. Possibly you've never thought about story in quite this way but we assume it's not too surprising. What might be more surprising is that this deep structure of story in our lives can also be found in traditional academic writing, researched arguments, and even scientific studies when there is no obvious "story" or vignette present. For more on this see "Rhetorical Stories." En fin, maybe "academic" writing is not as different as we might imagine from the stories we tell each day to the people we love.

Works Cited

Beck, Julie. "Life's Stories." *The Atlantic*, The Atlantic Monthly Group. 10 Aug. 2015. Web. 3 Feb. 2016.

Newkirk, Thomas. *Mind Made for Stories: How We Really Read and Write Informational and Persuasive Texts.* Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2014. Text.

29. Description

This morning, as I was brewing my coffee before rushing to work, I found myself hurrying up the stairs back to the bedroom, a sense of urgency in my step. I opened the door and froze—what was I doing? Did I need something from up here? I stood in confusion, trying to retrace the mental processes that had led me here, but it was all muddy.

It's quite likely that you've experienced a similarly befuddling situation. This phenomenon can loosely be referred to as automatization: because we are so constantly surrounded by stimuli, our brains often go on autopilot. (We often miss even the most explicit stimuli if we are distracted, as demonstrated by the Invisible Gorilla study)

Automatization is an incredibly useful skill—we don't have the time or capacity to take in everything at once, let alone think our own thoughts simultaneously—but it's also troublesome. In the same way that we might run through a morning ritual absent-mindedly, like I did above, we have also been programmed to overlook tiny but striking details: the slight gradation in color of cement on the bus stop curb; the hum of the air conditioner or fluorescent lights; the weight and texture of a pen in the crook of the hand. These details, though, make experiences, people, and places unique. By focusing on the particular, we can interrupt automatization. We can become radical noticers by practicing good description.[1]

In a great variety of rhetorical situations, description is an

1. There is a school of writing based on this practice, termed *остранение* by Viktor Shklovsky, commonly translated into English as "Art as Technique." 1925. *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, 2nd ed.

essential rhetorical mode. Our minds latch onto detail and specificity, so effective description can help us experience a story, understand an analysis, and develop more nuance within a critical argument. Each of these situations requires different kinds and levels of description.

First Year Writing courses often dedicate at least some space to practicing description because 1) it's employed in nearly all academic genres and disciplines, and 2) it requires a level of specificity and an attunement to detail that's foundational to many other writing situations. It's rare that a student will be penalized for being too specific. The opposite is usually the case. As Ken Macrorie explains in "The Poisoned Fish," by the time students reach college they've often learned to race through writing assignments by deploying an academic jargon he calls "engfish," a strange dialect that sounds fancy but doesn't say much at all, precisely because it's so general, abstract, or aloof from reality. An early emphasis on rich description can serve as writing salve.

Objective vs. Subjective Description

One of the traditional ways of thinking about the rhetorical nature of description is to distinguish between "objective" and "subjective" descriptions. In early 20th-century textbooks, such as F.V.N. Painter's *Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism*, we get the following definitions:

> Objective: "Objective description portrays objects as they exist in the external world. It points out in succession their distinguishing features."
>
> Subjective: "Subjective description notes the effects produced by an external object or scene on the mind and heart. The eye of the writer is turned inward rather than

> outward; he brings before us the thoughts, feelings, fancies that are started within his soul."[2]

Although a bit crude, this distinction has stuck around. We can still find this framework in contemporary textbooks such as Mark Connelly's *Get Writing: Sentences and Paragraphs*. Connelly provides the following example:

> Objective: "The LTD 700 is a full-size sedan that seats six adults and gets 17 mpg. The base price is $65,000 and includes a GPS system, overhead DVD player, and power seats.
>
> Subjective: "The LTD 700 is a gaudy, boxy throwback to the gas-guzzlers of the 1970s. It is grossly overpriced and laden with the high-tech toys spoiled consumers love to flaunt in front of their loser friends."[3]

Both examples include basic details that classify them as "descriptive discourse," but the second one contains more emotional language that more obviously reflects the judgments and values of the speaker.

Why would a writer choose to write more objectively or subjectively?

As with other rhetorical modes, what description looks like depends on the genre and purpose. It's highly situational. We expect to find more objective-sounding descriptions in medical and law enforcement texts. A subjective description would look out of place in a medical textbook. But in personal stories, memoirs, and other more creative writing situations, objective descriptions would seem odd. Academic writer's must carefully consider the purpose of their writing, as well as the conventions associated with the genre: is the assignment asking them to explore and communicate their subjective response to certain objects and experiences, or is it asking for a rigorously antiseptic account of the facts?

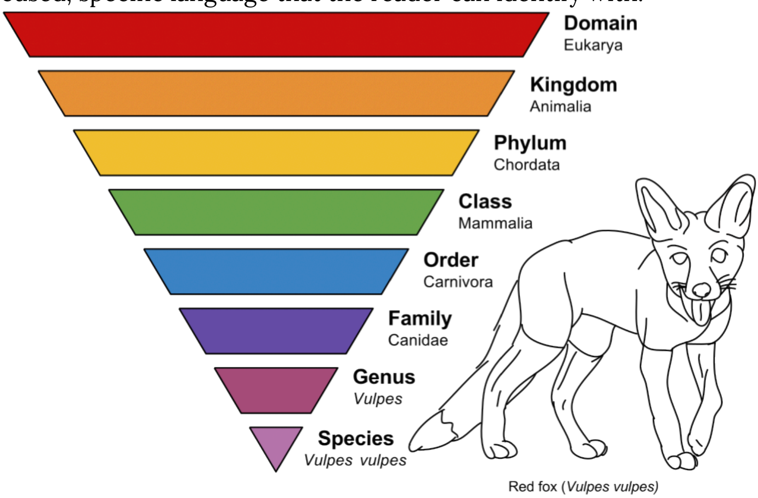
2. (Athenaeum Press: Boston, 1903), pp. 85-86.
3. 3rd edition (Boston: Cengage Learning, 2014), p. 59.

The first technique below will help you begin practicing *specificity*, which is important for all forms of descriptive writing. The subsequent techniques will help students practice more complex and subjective forms of description, including "thick description," experiential language, and constraint-based scene descriptions.

Building Specificity

Activity courtesy of Mackenzie Myers

Good description lives and dies in particularities. It takes deliberate effort to refine our general ideas and memories into more focused, specific language that the reader can identify with.



A *taxonomy* is a system of classification that arranges a variety of items into an order that makes sense to someone. You might remember from your biology class the ranking taxonomy based on Carl Linnaeus' classifications, pictured here.

To practice shifting from general to specific, fill in the blanks in the taxonomy below. After you have filled in the blanks, use the bottom three rows to make your own. As you work, notice how attention to detail, even on the scale of an individual word, builds a more tangible image.

	More General	General	Specific
(example):	animal	mammal	dog
1	organism		conifer
		airplane	
2		novel	
	clothing		blue jeans
3	medical condition		respiratory infection
	school	college	
4	artist		pop singer
	structure	building	
5		coffee	Starbucks coffee
		scientist	
6			

Compare your answers with a classmate. What similarities do you share with other students? What differences? Why do you think this is the case? How can you apply this thinking to your own writing?

Thick Description

Thick description as a concept finds its roots in anthropology, where ethnographers seek to portray deeper context of a studied culture than simply surface appearance. In the world of writing, thick description means careful and detailed portrayal of context, emotions, and actions. It relies on specificity and rich milieu to engage the reader.

Consider the difference between these two descriptions:

The market is busy. There is a lot of different produce. It is colorful.	vs.	Customers blur between stalls of bright green bok choy, gnarled carrots, and fiery Thai peppers. Stopping only to inspect the occasional citrus, everyone is busy, focused, industrious.

Notice that, even though the description on the right is obviously longer, the word choice is more specific. The author names particular kinds of produce, along with specific adjectives, which sharpens the image. Further, though, the words themselves do heavy lifting—the nouns and verbs are descriptive too! "Customers blur" both implies a market (where we would expect to find "customers") and also illustrates how busy the market is ("blur" implies speed), rather than just naming it as such.

Finally, rather than just referring to the "market" and "produce," the second description interweaves customers, market architecture, and different kinds of produce. It's buzzing with activity and different actants. As Norman K. Denzin explains, thick description "presents detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another."[4] It is, in other words, highly contextual.

Effective thick description is rarely written the first time around; it is *re*-written. As you revise, consider that every word should be on purpose.

4. qtd. in Joseph G. Ponterotto's "Brief Note on the Origins, Evolution, and Meaning of the Qualitative Research Concept 'Thick Description'," *The Qualitative Report* (Vol. 1 No. 3) (Sept. 2006), p. 540.

“Thick Description” Workshop

To practice a form of thick description, follow these steps:

1. Choose an object you’re familiar with, and begin by listing as many objective details as possible. Practice specificity using the taxonomic method.
2. Next, rewrite the description from Step 1, but now include details related to *place and time*. Give a setting.
3. Finally, rewrite the description from Step 2, but show how individual actors (such as yourself) interact with the object.

Micro-Ethnography Workshop

An ethnography is a form of writing that uses thick description to explore a place and its associated culture. By attempting this method on a small scale, you can practice specific, focused description.

Find a place in which you can observe the people and setting without actively involving yourself. (Interesting spaces and cultures students have used before, include a poetry slam, a local bar, a dog park, and a nursing home.)

You can choose a place you've been before or a place you've never been. The point here is to look at a space and a group of people more critically for the sake of detail, whether or not you already know that context.

As an ethnographer, your goal is to take in details without influencing those details. In order to stay focused, go to this place alone and refrain from using your phone or doing anything besides note-taking. Keep your attention on the people and the place.

Spend a few minutes taking notes on your general impressions of the place at this time.

- Use imagery and thick description to describe the place itself.
- What sorts of interactions do you observe? What sort of tone, affect, and language is used?
- How would you describe the overall atmosphere?

Spend a few minutes "zooming in" to identify artifacts—specific physical objects being used by the people you see.

- Use imagery and thick description to describe the specific artifacts.
- How do these parts contribute to/differentiate from/relate to the whole of the scene?

After observing, write one to two paragraphs synthesizing your observations to describe the space and culture. What do the details represent or reveal about the place and people?

Imagery and Vivid Description

Strong description helps a reader experience what you've experienced, whether it was an event, an interaction, or simply a place. Even though you could never capture it perfectly, you should try to approximate sensations, feelings, and details as closely as you can. Your most vivid description will be that which gives your reader a way to imagine being themselves as of your story.

Imagery is a device that you have likely encountered in your studies before: it refers to language used to "paint a scene" for the reader, directing their attention to striking details.

Here are three examples:

> Bamboo walls, dwarf banana trees, silk lanterns, and a hand-size jade Buddha on a wooden table decorate the restaurant. For a moment, I imagined I was on vacation. The bright orange lantern over my table was the blazing hot sun and the cool air currents coming from the ceiling fan caused the leaves of the banana trees to brush against one another in soothing crackling sounds. (Anonymous student author, 2017. Reproduced with permission from the student author.):
>
> The sunny midday sky calls to us all like a guilty pleasure while the warning winds of winter tug our scarves warmer around our necks; the City of Roses is painted the color of red dusk, and the setting sun casts her longing rays over the Eastern shoulders of Mt. Hood, drawing the curtains on another crimson-grey day. (Anonymous student author, 2017. Reproduced with permission from the student author.)
>
> Flipping the switch, the lights flicker—not menacingly, but rather in a homey, imperfect manner. Hundreds of seats are sprawled out in front of a black, worn down stage. Each seat has its own unique creak, creating a symphony of groans whenever an audience takes their seats. The walls are adorned with a brown mustard yellow, and the black paint on the stage is fading and chipped. (Ross Reaume, Portland

State University, 2014. Reproduced with permission from the student author).

You might notice, too, that the above examples appeal to many different senses. Beyond just *visual* detail, good imagery can be considered sensory language: words that help me see, but also words that help me taste, touch, smell, and hear the story. Go back and identify a word, phrase, or sentence that suggests one of these non-visual sensations; what about this line is so striking?

Imagery might also apply **figurative language** to describe more creatively. Devices like metaphor, simile, and personification, or hyperbole can enhance description by pushing beyond literal meanings.

Using imagery, you can better communicate specific sensations to put the reader in your shoes. To the best of your ability, avoid clichés (stock phrases that are easy to ignore) and focus on the particular (what makes a place, person, event, or object unique). To practice creating imagery, try the Imagery Inventory exercise and the Image Builder graphic organizer in the Activities section of this section.

Vivid Description Workshop

Visit a location you visit often—your classroom, your favorite café, the commuter train, etc. Isolate each of your senses and describe the sensations as thoroughly as possible. Take detailed notes in the organizer below or use a voice-recording app on your phone to talk through each of your sensations.

Sense	Sensation
Sight	
Sound	
Smell	
Touch	
Taste	

Now, write a paragraph that synthesizes three or more of your sensory details. Which details were easiest to identify? Which make for the most striking descriptive language? Which will bring the most vivid sensations to your reader's mind?

Description Exercises for Story-Telling

This activity is a modified version of one by Daniel Hershel.

This exercise asks you to write a scene, following specific instructions, about a place of your choice. There is no such thing as a step-by-step guide to descriptive writing; instead, the detailed instructions that follow are challenges that will force you to think differently while you're writing. The constraints of the directions may help you to discover new aspects of this topic since you are following the sentence-level prompts even as you develop your content.

1. Bring your place to mind. Focus on "seeing" or "feeling" your place.
2. For a title, choose an emotion or a color that represents this place to you.
3. For a first line starter, choose one of the following and complete the sentence:
    - You stand there…
    - When I'm here, I know that…
    - Every time…
    - I [see/smell/hear/feel/taste] …
    - We had been…
    - I think sometimes…

4. After your first sentence, create your scene, writing the sentences according to the following directions:

- Sentence 2: Write a sentence with a color in it.
- Sentence 3: Write a sentence with a part of the body in it.
- Sentence 4: Write a sentence with a simile (a comparison using like or as)
- Sentence 5: Write a sentence of over twenty-five words.
- Sentence 6: Write a sentence of under eight words.

- Sentence 7: Write a sentence with a piece of clothing in it.
- Sentence 8: Write a sentence with a wish in it.
- Sentence 9: Write a sentence with an animal in it.
- Sentence 10: Write a sentence in which three or more words alliterate; that is, they begin with the same initial consonant: "She has been left, lately, with less and less time to think…."
- Sentence 11: Write a sentence with two commas.
- Sentence 12: Write a sentence with a smell and a color in it.
- Sentence 13: Write a sentence without using the letter "e."
- Sentence 14: Write a sentence with a simile.
- Sentence 15: Write a sentence that could carry an exclamation point (but don't use the exclamation point).
- Sentence 16: Write a sentence to end this portrait that uses the word or words you chose for a title.

5. Read over your scene and mark words/phrases that surprised you, especially those rich with possibilities (themes, ironies, etc.) that you could develop.

6. On the right side of the page, for each word/passage you marked, interpret the symbols, name the themes that your description and detail suggest, note any significant meaning you see in your description.

7. On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the scene you have created as a more thorough and cohesive piece in whatever genre you desire. You may add sentences and transitional words/phrases to help the piece flow.

Image Building for Stories

This exercise encourages you to experiment with thick description by focusing on one element of your writing in expansive detail. Read the directions below, then write your responses as an outline on a separate piece of paper.

1. Identify one image, object, action, or scene that you want to expand in your story. Name this element in the big, yellow bubble.

2. Develop at least three describing words for your element, considering each sense independently, as well as emotional associations. Focus on particularities. (Adjectives will come most easily, but remember that you can use any part of speech.)

3. Then, on the next page, create at least two descriptions using figurative language (metaphor, simile, personification, onomatopoeia, hyperbole, etc.) for your element, considering each sense independently, as well as emotional associations. Focus on particularities.

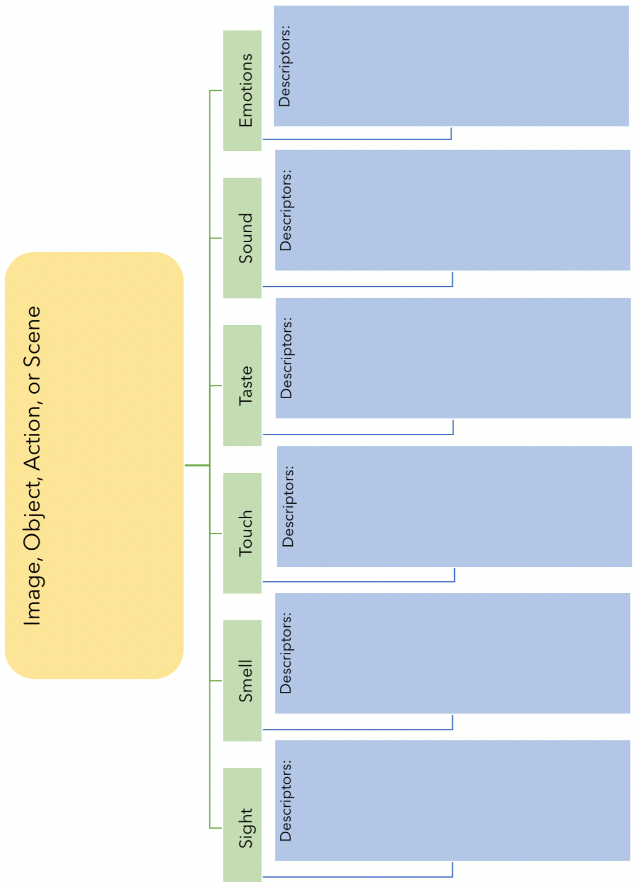
4. Finally, reflect on the different ideas you came up with.

- Which descriptions surprised you? Which descriptions are accurate but unanticipated?
- Where might you weave these descriptions in to your current project?
- How will you balance description with other rhetorical modes, like narration, argumentation, or analysis?

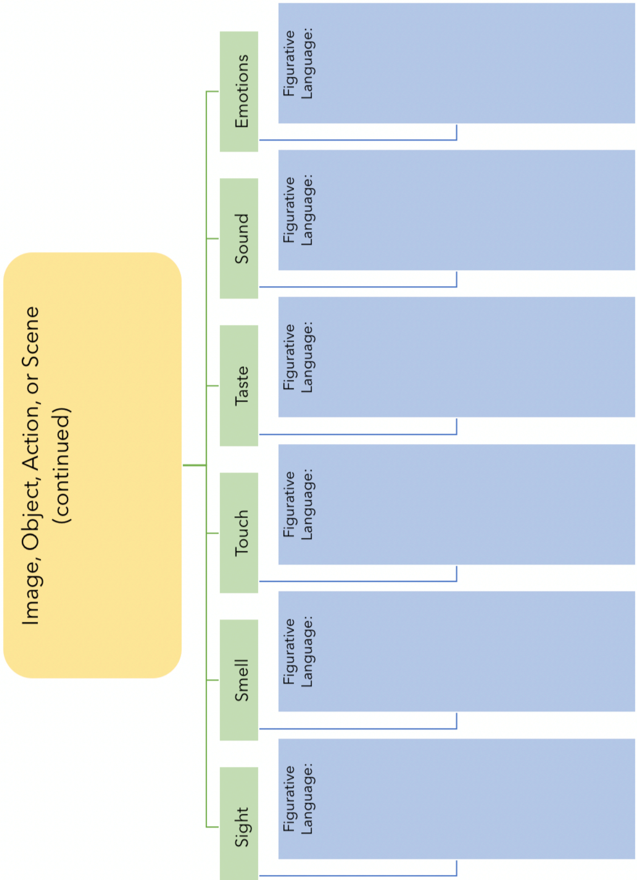
5. Repeat this exercise as desired or as instructed, choosing a different focus element to begin with.

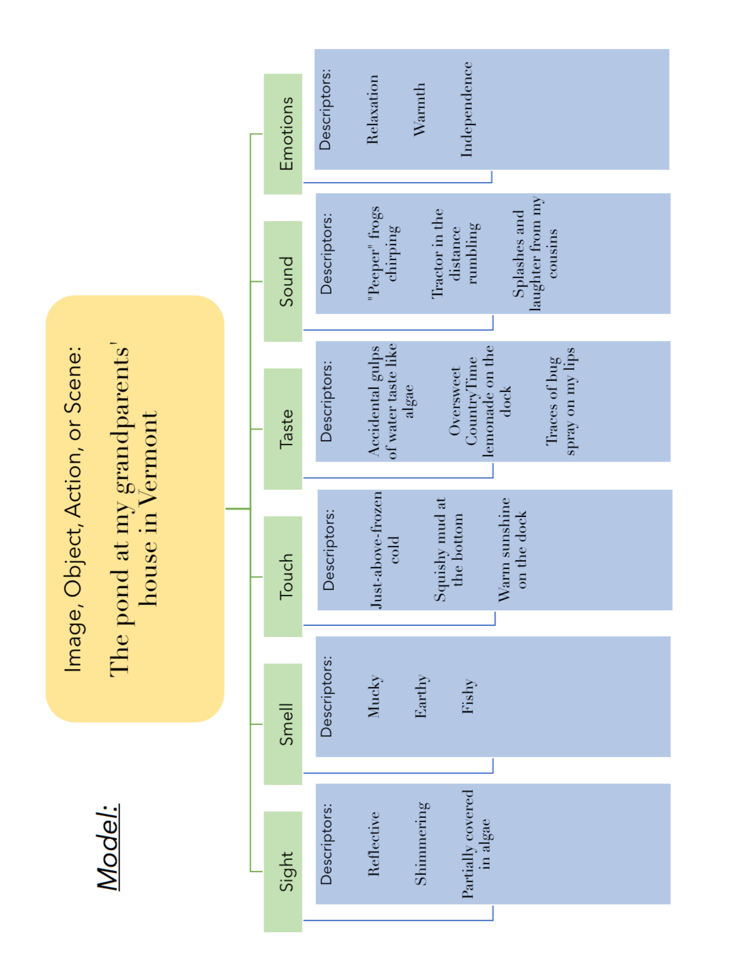
6. Choose your favorite descriptors and incorporate them into your writing.

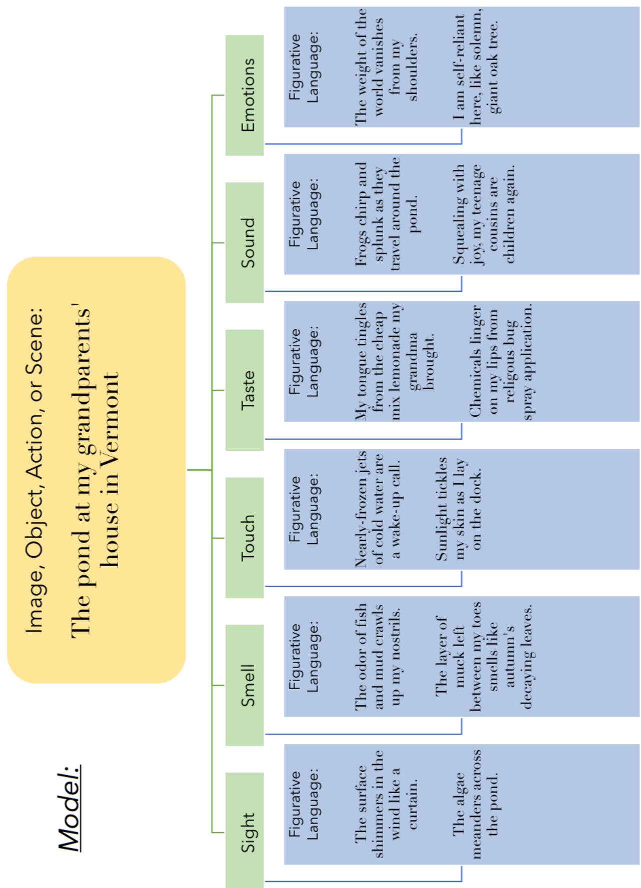
If you're struggling to get started, check out the example on the pages following the blank organizer.



(continue on the next page)


Image, Object, Action, or Scene (continued)
Sight
Figurative Language:
Smell
Figurative Language:
Touch
Figurative Language:
Taste
Figurative Language:
Sound
Figurative Language:
Emotions
Figurative Language:


Model:
Image, Object, Action, or Scene:
The pond at my grandparents' house in Vermont
Sight
Descriptors:
Reflective
Shimmering
Partially covered in algae
Smell
Descriptors:
Mucky
Earthy
Fishy
Touch
Descriptors:
Just-above-frozen cold
Squishy mud at the bottom
Warm sunshine on the dock
Taste
Descriptors:
Accidental gulps of water taste like algae
Oversweet CountryTime lemonade on the dock
Traces of bug spray on my lips
Sound
Descriptors:
"Peeper" frogs chirping
Tractor in the distance rumbling
Splashes and laughter from my cousins
Emotions
Descriptors:
Relaxation
Warmth
Independence



This section is adapted from EmpoWord: A Student-Centered Anthology & Handbook for College Writers by Shane Abrams https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/textbooks/empoword-a-student-centered-anthology-

handbook-for-college-writers, licensed CC BY NC. The editors of this textbook have modified the introduction, the section "Objective vs. Subjective Description" has been added, "Thick Description" has been revised, and the chapter as a whole has been re-organized.

30. Narration

A personal narrative is a true story about some aspect of a writer's life. Just as each of your individual life experiences are diverse, the parameters of personal narratives are also varied; they can concentrate on an event, an incident, a person, an idea, and so on. No matter what type of personal narrative you are asked to write for your class, each is bound to one central rule, as nonfiction writer Lee Gutkind explains, "This is the pledge the writer makes to the reader – the maxim we live by, the anchor of creative nonfiction: 'You can't make this stuff up!'"

The following is excerpted from Shane Abrams's book, EmpoWord: A Student-Centered Anthology and Handbook for College Writers, which addresses three primary components of a personal narrative: vivid detail, well-told story, and reflection. The reading offers valuable exercises on each narrative element as well as samples of student work. Following the excerpt, you will find additional suggested readings and videos to help you in writing your own personal narratives.

Narration is a rhetorical mode that you likely engage on a daily basis, and one that has held significance in every culture in human history. Even when we're not deliberately telling stories, storytelling often underlies our writing and thinking:

- Historians synthesize and interpret events of the past; a history book is one of many narratives of our cultures and civilizations.
- Chemists analyze observable data to determine cause-and-effect behaviors of natural and synthetic materials; a lab report is a sort of narrative about elements (characters) and reactions (plot).
- Musical composers evoke the emotional experience of story through instrumentation, motion, motifs, resolutions, and so on; a song is a narrative that may not even need words.

What makes for an interesting, well-told story *in writing*? In addition to description, your deliberate choices in narration can create impactful, beautiful, and entertaining stories.

Vocabulary

characterization – the process by which an author builds characters; can be accomplished directly or indirectly.

dialogue – a communication between two or more people. Can include any mode of communication, including speech, texting, e-mail, Facebook post, body language, etc.

dynamic character – a character who noticeably changes within the scope of a narrative, typically as a result of the plot events and/or other characters. Contrast with static character.

epiphany – a character's sudden realization of a personal or universal truth. See dynamic character.

flat character – a character who is minimally detailed, only briefly sketched or named. Generally less central to the events and relationships portrayed in a narrative. Contrast with round character.

mood – the emotional dimension which a reader experiences while encountering a text. Compare with tone.

multimedia / multigenre – terms describing a text that combines more than one media and/or more than one genre (e.g., an essay with embedded images; a portfolio with essays, poetry, and comic strips; a mixtape with song reviews).

narration – a rhetorical mode involving the construction and relation of stories. Typically integrates description as a technique.

narrative pacing – the speed with which a story progresses through plot events. Can be influenced by reflective and descriptive writing.

narrative scope – the boundaries of a narrative in time, space, perspective, and focus.

narrative sequence – the order of events included in a narrative.

plot – the events included within the scope of a narrative.

point-of-view – the perspective from which a story is told, determining both grammar (pronouns) and perspective (speaker's awareness of events, thoughts, and circumstances).

round character – a character who is thoroughly characterized and dimensional, detailed with attentive description of their traits and behaviors. Contrast with flat character.

static character – a character who remains the same throughout the narrative. Contrast with dynamic character.

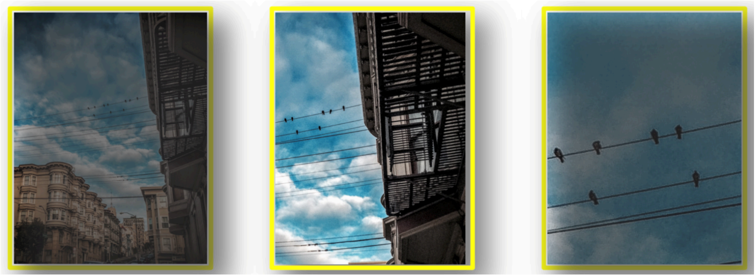
tone – the emotional register of the text. Compare with mood.

Techniques

Plot Shapes and Form

Plot is one of the basic elements of every story: put simply, plot refers to the actual events that take place within the bounds of your narrative. Using our rhetorical situation vocabulary, we can identify "plot" as the primary **subject** of a descriptive personal narrative. Three related elements to consider are **scope**, **sequence**, and **pacing**.

The term **scope** refers to the boundaries of your plot. Where and when does it begin and end? What is its focus? What background information and details does your story require? I often think about narrative scope as the edges of a photograph: a photo, whether of a vast landscape or a microscopic organism, has boundaries. Those boundaries inform the viewer's perception. In this example, the scope of the left photo allows for a story about a neighborhood in San Francisco. In the middle, it is a story about the fire escape, the clouds. On the right, the scope of the story directs our attention to the birds. In this way, narrative scope impacts the content you include and your reader's perception of that content in context.



The way we determine scope varies based on rhetorical situation, but I can say generally that many developing writers struggle with a scope that is too broad: writers often find it challenging to zero in on the events that drive a story and prune out extraneous information.

Consider, as an example, how you might respond if your friend asked what you did last weekend. If you began with, "I woke up on Saturday morning, rolled over, checked my phone, fell back asleep, woke up, pulled my feet out from under the covers, put my feet on the floor, stood up, stretched…" then your friend might have stopped listening by the time you get to the really good stuff. Your scope is too broad, so you're including details that distract or bore your reader. Instead of listing every detail, you should consider narrowing your scope, focusing instead on the important, interesting, and unique plot points (events).

You might think of this as the difference between a series of snapshots and a roll of film: instead of twenty-four frames per second video, your entire story might only be a few photographs aligned together.

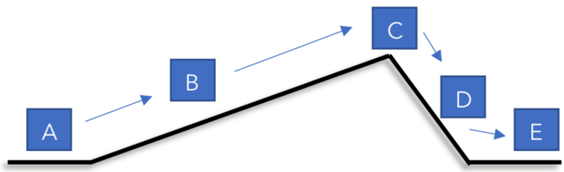
It may seem counterintuitive, but we can often say more by digging deep into a few ideas or events, instead of trying to relate every idea or event.

The most impactful stories are often those that represent something, so your scope should focus on the details that fit into the bigger picture. To return to the previous example, you could tell me more about your weekend by sharing a specific detail than every detail. "Brushing my teeth Saturday morning, I didn't realize that I would probably have a scar from wrestling that bear on Sunday" reveals more than "I woke up on Saturday morning, rolled over, checked my phone, fell back asleep, woke up, pulled my feet out from under the covers, put my feet on the floor, stood up, stretched…." Not only have you foregrounded the more interesting event, but you have also foreshadowed that you had a harrowing, adventurous, and unexpected weekend.

Sequence and Pacing

The **sequence** and **pacing** of your plot—the order of the events and the amount of time you give to each event, respectively—will determine your reader's experience. There are an infinite number of ways you might structure your story, and the shape of your story is worth deep consideration. Although the traditional forms for narrative sequence are not your only options, let's take a look at a few tried-and-true shapes your plot might take.

You might recognize Freytag's Pyramid from other classes you've taken:



Gustav Freytag is credited with this particular model, often referred to as "Freytag's pyramid." Freytag studied the works of Shakespeare and a collection of Greek tragic plays to develop this model in Die Technik des Dramas (1863).

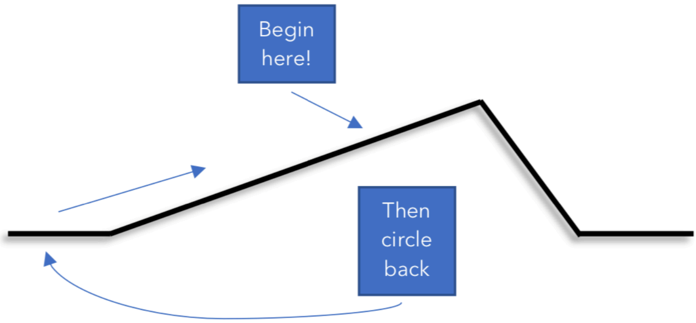
1. **Exposition**: Here, you're setting the scene, introducing characters, and preparing the reader for the journey.
2. **Rising action**: In this part, things start to happen. You (or your characters) encounter conflict, set out on a journey, meet people, etc.
3. **Climax**: This is the peak of the action, the main showdown, the central event toward which your story has been building.
4. **Falling action**: Now things start to wind down. You (or your characters) come away from the climactic experience changed—at the very least, you are wiser for having had that experience.
5. **Resolution**: Also known as dénouement, this is where all the loose ends get tied up. The central conflict has been resolved, and everything is back to normal, but perhaps a bit different.

This narrative shape is certainly a familiar one. Many films, TV shows, plays, novels, and short stories follow this track. But it's not without its flaws. You should discuss with your classmates and instructors what shortcomings you see in this classic plot shape. What assumptions does it rely on? How might it limit a storyteller? Sometimes, I tell my students to "Start the story where the story starts"—often, steps A and B in the diagram above just delay the most descriptive, active, or meaningful parts of the story. If nothing else, we should note that it is not necessarily the best way to tell your story, and definitely not the only way.

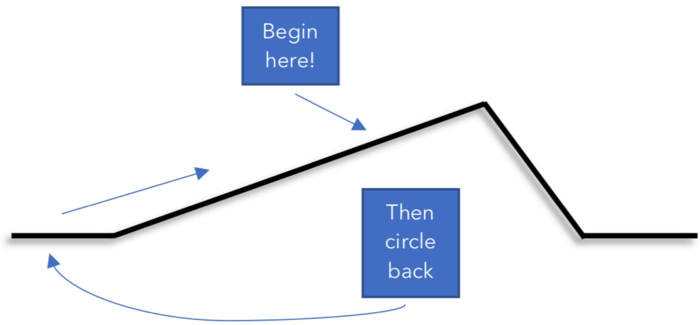
Another classic technique for narrative sequence is known as **in medias res**—literally, "in the middle of things." As you map out your plot in pre-writing or experiment with during the drafting and revision process, you might find this technique a more active and exciting way to begin a story.

In the earlier example, the plot is chronological, linear, and continuous: the story would move smoothly from beginning to end with no interruptions. *In medias res* instead suggests that you start your story with action rather than exposition, focusing on an exciting, imagistic, or important scene. Then, you can circle back to an earlier part of the story to fill in the blanks for your reader.

Using the previously discussed plot shape, you might visualize it like this:



Or...



You can experiment with your sequence in a variety of other ways, which might include also making changes to your scope: instead of a continuous story, you might have a series of fragments with specific scope (like photographs instead of video), as is exemplified by "The Pot Calling the Kettle Black…." Instead of chronological order, you might bounce around in time or space, like in "Parental Guidance," or in reverse, like in the video "21." Some of my favorite narratives reject traditional narrative sequence.

I include *pacing* with *sequence* because a change to one often influences the other. Put simply, pacing refers to the speed and fluidity with which a reader moves through your story. You can play with pacing by moving more quickly through events, or even by experimenting with sentence and paragraph length. Consider how the "flow" of the following examples differs:

The train screeched to a halt. A flock of pigeons took flight as the conductor announced, "We'll be stuck here for a few minutes."	Lost in my thoughts, I shuddered as the train ground to a full stop in the middle of an intersection. I was surprised, jarred by the unannounced and abrupt jerking of the car. I sought clues for our stop outside the window. All I saw were pigeons as startled and clueless as I.

I recommend the student essay "Under the Knife," which does excellent work with pacing, in addition to making a strong creative choice with narrative scope.

Point-of-View

The position from which your story is told will help shape your reader's experience, the language your narrator and characters use, and even the plot itself. You might recognize this from *Dear White People* Volume 1 or *Arrested Development* Season 4, both Netflix TV series. Typically, each episode in these seasons explores similar plot events, but from a different character's perspective. Because of their unique vantage points, characters can tell different stories about the same realities.

This is, of course, true for our lives more generally. In addition to our differences in knowledge and experiences, we also interpret and understand events differently. In our writing, narrative position is informed by point-of-view and the emotional valences I refer to here as tone and mood.

point-of-view (POV): the perspective from which a story is told.

This is a grammatical phenomenon—i.e., it decides pronoun use—but, more importantly, it impacts tone, mood, scope, voice, and plot. (For the sake of brevity, the author has not included here a discussion of *focalization*, an important phenomenon to consider when studying point-of-view more in-depth.)

Although point-of-view will influence tone and mood, we can also consider what feelings we want to convey and inspire independently as part of our narrative position.

tone: the emotional register of the story's language.

What emotional state does the narrator of the story (not the author, but the speaker) seem to be in? What emotions are you trying to imbue in your writing?

mood: the emotional register a reader experiences.

Sometimes *tone* and *mood* align, and you might describe them using similar adjectives—a joyous tone might create joy for the reader. However, they sometimes don't align, depending largely on the rhetorical situation and the author's approach to that situation. For instance, a story's tone might be bitter, but the reader might find the narrator's bitterness funny, off-putting, or irritating. Often, tone and mood are in opposition to create irony: Jonathan Swift's matter-of-fact tone in "A Modest Proposal" is satirical, producing a range of emotions for the audience, from revulsion to hilarity.

What emotions do you want your reader to experience? Are they the same feelings you experienced at the time?

A Non-Comprehensive Breakdown of POV

	Pronoun Use	Definition	Examples
1st person	Narrator uses 1st person pronouns (I/me/mine or us/we/ours)	Can include internal monologue (motives, thoughts, feelings) of the narrator. Limited certainty of motives, thoughts, or feelings of other characters.	I tripped on the last stair, preoccupied by what my sister had said, and felt my stomach drop.
2nd person	Narrator uses 2nd person pronouns (you/you/your)	Speaks *to* the reader, as if the reader is the protagonist OR uses apostrophe to speak to an absent or unidentified person	Your breath catches as you feel the phantom step. O, staircase, how you keep me awake at night.
3rd person limited	Narrator uses 3rd person pronouns (he/him/his, she/her/hers, they/they/theirs)	Sometimes called "close" third person. Observes and narrates but sticks near one or two characters, in contrast with 3rd person omniscient.	He was visibly frustrated by his sister's nonchalance and wasn't watching his step.
3rd person omniscient	Narrator uses 3rd person pronouns (he/him/his, she/her/hers, they/they/theirs)	Observes and narrates from an all-knowing perspective. Can include internal monologue (motives, thoughts, feelings) of all characters.	Beneath the surface, his sister felt regretful. *Why did I tell him that*? she wondered.

stream-of-consciousness	Narrator uses inconsistent pronouns, or no pronouns at all	Approximates the digressive, wandering, and ungrammatical thought processes of the narrator.	But now, a thousand empty�*where*?�and she, with head shake, will be fine�AHH!

Typically, you will tell your story from the first-person point-of-view, but personal narratives can also be told from a different perspective; I recommend "Comatose Dreams" to illustrate this at work. As you're developing and revising your writing, try to inhabit different authorial positions: What would change if you used the third person POV instead of first person? What different meanings would your reader find if you told this story with a different tone—bitter instead of nostalgic, proud rather than embarrassed, sarcastic rather than genuine?

Furthermore, there are many rhetorical situations that call for different POVs. (For instance, you may have noticed that this book uses the second-person very frequently.) So, as you evaluate which POV will be most effective for your current rhetorical situation, bear in mind that the same choice might inform your future writing.

Building Characters

Whether your story is fiction or nonfiction, you should spend some time thinking about **characterization**: the development of characters through actions, descriptions, and dialogue. Your audience will be more engaged with and sympathetic toward your narrative if they can vividly imagine the characters as real people.

Like description, characterization relies on specificity. Consider the following contrast in character descriptions:

My mom is great. She is an average-sized brunette with brown eyes. She is very loving and supportive, and I know I can rely on her. She taught me everything I know.	In addition to some of my father's idiosyncrasies, however, he is also one of the most kind-hearted and loving people in my life. One of his signature actions is the 'cry-smile,' in which he simultaneously cries and smiles any time he experiences a strong positive emotion (which is almost daily). Excerpt by an anonymous student author, 2016. Reproduced with permission from the student author.

How does the "cry-smile" detail enhance the characterization of the speaker's parent?

Characterization graphic

The word character appears in a large middle circle. Moving clockwise, there are 4 smaller circles around it. The topic circle says Description; the circle on the right side says Thoughts/Internal Monologue. The bottom circle says Speech/Dialogue while the circle on the left side says Actions/Behaviors.

To break it down to process, characterization can be accomplished in two ways:

- **Directly**, through specific description of the character—What kind of clothes do they wear? What do they look, smell, sound like?—or,
- **Indirectly**, through the behaviors, speech, and thoughts of the character—What kind of language, dialect, or register do they use? What is the tone, inflection, and timbre of their voice? How does their manner of speaking reflect their attitude toward the listener? How do their actions reflect their traits? What's on their mind that they won't share with the world?

Thinking through these questions will help you get a better understanding of each character (often including yourself!). You do not need to include all the details, but they should inform your description, dialogue, and narration.

Round characters…	are very detailed, requiring attentive description of their traits and behaviors.	Your most important characters should be round: the added detail will help your reader better visualize, understand, and care about them.
Flat characters…	are minimally detailed, only briefly sketched or named.	Less important characters should take up less space and will therefore have less detailed characterization.
Static characters…	remain the same throughout the narrative.	Even though all of us are always changing, some people will behave and appear the same throughout the course of your story. Static characters can serve as a reference point for dynamic characters to show the latter's growth.
Dynamic characters…	noticeably change within the narrative, typically as a result of the events.	Most likely, you will be a dynamic character in your personal narrative because such stories are centered around an impactful experience, relationship, or place. Dynamic characters learn and grow over time, either gradually or with an epiphany.

Dialogue

Thanks to Alex Dannemiller for his contributions to this subsection.

dialogue:communication between two or more characters.

Think of the different conversations you've had today, with family, friends, or even classmates. Within each of those conversations, there were likely preestablished relationships that determined how you talked to each other: each is its own rhetorical situation. A dialogue with your friends, for example, may be far different from one with your family. These relationships can influence tone of voice, word choice (such as using slang, jargon, or lingo), what details we share, and even what language we speak.

As we've seen above, good dialogue often demonstrates the traits of a character or the relationship of characters. From reading or listening to how people talk to one another, we often infer the relationships they have. We can tell if they're having an argument or conflict, if one is experiencing some internal conflict or trauma, if they're friendly acquaintances or cold strangers, even how their emotional or professional attributes align or create opposition.

Often, dialogue does more than just one thing, which makes it a challenging tool to master. When dialogue isn't doing more than one thing, it can feel flat or expositional, like a bad movie or TV show where everyone is saying their feelings or explaining what just happened. For example, there is a difference between "No thanks, I'm not hungry" and "I've told you, I'm not hungry." The latter shows frustration, and hints at a previous conversation. Exposition can have a place in dialogue, but we should use it deliberately, with an awareness of how natural or unnatural it may sound. We should be aware how dialogue impacts the pacing of the narrative. Dialogue can be musical and create tempo, with either quick back and forth, or long drawn out pauses between two characters. Rhythm of a dialogue can also tell us about the characters' relationship and emotions.

We can put some of these thoughts to the test using the exercises in the Activities section of this chapter to practice writing dialogue.

Choosing a Medium

Narration, as you already know, can occur in a variety of media: TV shows, music, drama, and even Snapchat Stories practice narration in different ways. Your instructor may ask you to write a traditional personal narrative (using only prose), but if you are given the opportunity, you might also consider what other media or genres might inform your narration. Some awesome narratives use a **multimedia** or **multigenre** approach, synthesizing multiple different forms, like audio and video, or nonfiction, poetry, and photography.

In addition to the limitations and opportunities presented by your rhetorical situation, choosing a medium also depends on the opportunities and limitations of different forms. To determine which tool or tools you want to use for your story, you should consider which medium (or combination of media) will help you best accomplish your purpose. Here's a non-comprehensive list of storytelling tools you might incorporate in place of or in addition to traditional prose:

• Images • Poetry • Video • Audio recording • "Found" texts (fragments of other authors' works reframed to tell a different story)	• Illustrations • Comics, manga, or other graphic storytelling • Journal entries or series of letters • Plays, screenplays, or other works of drama • Blogs and social media postings

Although each of these media is a vehicle for delivering information, it is important to acknowledge that each different medium will have a different impact on the audience; in other words, the medium can change the message itself.

There are a number of digital tools available that you might consider for your storytelling medium, as well.

- Tips on podcasting and audio engineering: Transom
- Interactive web platform hosting: H5P
- Audio editing and engineering: Wavepad
- Whiteboard video creation (paid, free trial): Videoscribe

- Infographic maker: https://piktochart.com/
- Comic and graphic narrative software (free, paid upgrades): Pixton

Video: Storytelling with Robyn Vazquez

Vazquez, Robyn. Interview with Shane Abrams. 2 July 2017, Deep End Theater, Portland, OR

Activities

Idea Generation: What Stories Can I Tell?

You may already have an idea of an important experience in your life about which you could tell a story. Although this might be a significant experience, it is most definitely not the only one worth telling. (Remember: first idea ≠ best idea.)

Just as with description, good narration isn't about shocking content but rather about effective and innovative writing. In order to broaden your options before you begin developing your story, complete the organizer on the following pages.

Then, choose three of the list items from this page that you think are especially unique or have had a serious impact on your life experience. On a separate sheet of paper, free-write about each of your three list items for no less than five minutes per item.

List five places that are significant to you (real, fictional, or imaginary)

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

List three obstacles you've overcome to be where you are today

1)
2)
3)

List three difficult moments – tough decisions, traumatic or challenging experiences, or troubling circumstances

1)
2)
3)

List ten people who have influenced your life in some way (positive or negative, acquainted or not, real or fictional)

1)	6)
2)	7)
3)	8)
4)	9)
5)	10)

List ten ways that you identify yourself (roles, adjectives, or names)

1)
2)
3)
4)
5)
6)
7)
8)
9)
10)

Idea Generation: Mapping an Autobiography

This activity is a modified version of one by Lily Harris.

This exercise will help you develop a variety of options for your story, considered especially in the context of your entire life trajectory.

First, brainstorm at least ten moments or experiences that you consider influential—moments that in some way impacted your identity, your friendships, your worldview—for the better or for the worse. Record them in the table on the next page.

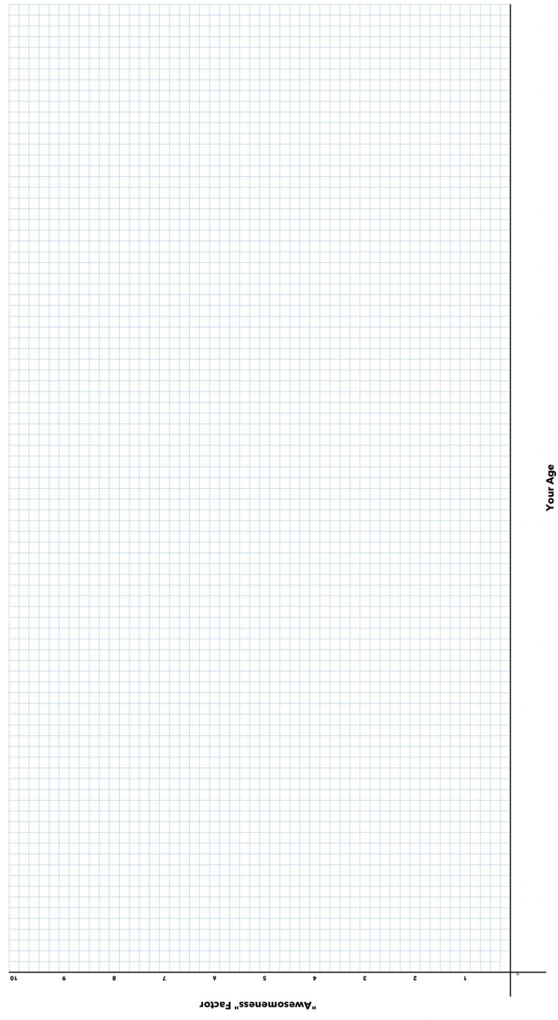
Then, rate those experiences on a degree of "awesomeness," "pleasurability," or something else along those lines, on a scale of 0 – 10, with 10 being the hands down best moment of your life and 0 being the worst.

Next, plot those events on the graph paper on the page following the table. Each point is an event; the x-axis is your age, and the y-axis is the factor of positivity. Connect the points with a line.

Finally, circle three of the events/experiences on your graph. On a clean sheet of paper, free-write about each of those three for at least four minutes.

10 Most influential Moments

Your age	Event, moment, or experience	Awesomeness Factor (0-10)



Experimenting with Voice and Dialogue

Thanks to Alex Dannemiller for his contributions to this subsection.

Complete the following three exercises to think through the language your characters use and the relationships they demonstrate through dialogue. If you've started your assignment, you can use these exercises to generate content.

The Secret

1) Choose any two professions for two imaginary characters.

2) Give the two characters a secret that they share with one another. As you might imagine, neither of them would reveal that secret aloud, but they might discuss it. (To really challenge yourself, you might also come up with a reason that their secret must be a secret: Is it socially unacceptable to talk about? Are they liable to get in trouble if people find out? Will they ruin a surprise?)

3) Write an exchange between those characters about the secret using only their words (i.e., no "he said" or "she said," but rather only the language they use). Allow the secret to be revealed to the reader in how the characters speak, what they say, and how they say it. Pay attention to the subtext of what's being said and how it's being said. How would these characters discuss their secret without revealing it to eavesdroppers? (Consider Ernest Hemingway's "Hills Like White Elephants" as a model.)

4) Draw a line beneath your dialogue. Now, imagine that only one of the characters has a secret. Write a new dialogue in which one character is trying to keep that secret from the other. Again, consider how the speakers are communicating: what language do they use? What sort of tone? What does that reveal about their relationship?

The Overheard

1) Go to a public space and eavesdrop on a conversation. (Try not to be too creepy—be considerate and respectful of the people.) You don't need to take avid notes, but observe natural inflections, pauses, and gestures. What do these

characteristics imply about the relationship between the speakers?

2) Jot down a fragment of striking, interesting, or weird dialogue.

3) Now, use that fragment of dialogue to imagine a digital exchange: consider that fragment as a Facebook status, a text message, or a tweet. Then, write at least ten comments or replies to that fragment.

4) Reflect on the imaginary digital conversation you just created. What led you to make the choices you made? How does digital dialogue differ from real-life dialogue?

Beyond Words

As you may have noticed in the previous exercises, dialogue is about more than just what the words say: our verbal communication is supplemented by inflection, tone, body language, and pace, among other things. With a partner, exchange the following lines. Without changing the words, try to change the meaning using your tone, inflection, body language, etc.

a	B
"I don't want to talk about it."	"Leave me alone."
"Can we talk about it?"	"What do you want from me?"
"I want it."	"You can't have it."
"Have you seen her today?"	"Why?"

After each round, debrief with your partner; jot down a few notes together to describe how your variations changed the meaning of each word. Then, consider how you might capture and relay these different deliveries using written language—what some writers call "dialogue tags." Dialogue tags try to reproduce the nuance of our spoken and unspoken languages (e.g., "he muttered," "she shouted in frustration," "they insinuated, crossing their arms").

Using Images to Tell a Story

Even though this textbook focuses on writing as a means to tell stories, you can also construct thoughtful and unique narratives using solely images or using images to supplement your writing. A single photograph can tell a story, but a series will create a more cohesive narrative. To experiment with this medium, try the following activity.

1) Using your cell phone or a digital camera, take at least one photograph (of yourself, events, and/or your surroundings) each hour for one day.

2) Compile the photos and arrange them in chronological order. Choose any five photos that tell a story about part or all of your day.

- How did you determine which photos to remove? What does this suggest about your narrative scope?
- Where might you want to add photos or text? Why?

In 2014, a friend of mine recorded a one-second video every day for a year, creating a similar kind of narrative — One Second Everyday 2014

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://idaho.pressbooks.pub/write/?p=79#oembed-1

Example Student Essays

Under the Knife

> Essay by Joey Butler, Portland Community College, 2016. Reproduced with permission from the student author.

The white fluorescent lights mirrored off the waxed and buffed vinyl flooring. Doctors and nurses beelined through small congregations of others conversing. Clocks were posted at every corner of every wall and the sum of the quiet ticking grew to an audible drone. From the vinyl floors to the desks where decade old Dell computers sat, a sickly gray sucked all the life from the room. The only source of color was the rainbow circle crocheted blanket that came customary for minors about to undergo surgery. It was supposed to be a token of warmth and happiness, a blanket you could find life in; however, all I found in the blanket was an unwanted pity.

Three months ago doctors diagnosed me with severe scoliosis. They told me I would need to pursue orthopedic surgery to realign my spine. For years I endured through back pain and discomfort, never attributing it to the disease. In part, I felt as if it was my fault, that me letting the symptoms go unattended for so long led it to become so extreme. Those months between the diagnosis and the surgery felt like mere seconds. Every day I would recite to myself that everything would be okay and that I had nothing to worry about. However, then minutes away from sedation, I felt like this bed I was in—only three feet off the ground—would put me six feet under.

The doctors informed me beforehand of the potential complications that could arise from surgery. Partial paralysis, infection, death, these words echoed throughout the chasms of my mind. Anxiety overwhelmed me; I was a dying animal surrounded by ravenous vultures, drool dripping awaiting their next meal. My palms were a disgusting swamp of sweat that gripped hard onto the white sheets that covered me. A feeling of numbness lurked into my extremities and slowly infected its way throughout my body.

The vinyl mattress cover I was on felt like a porcelain toilet seat during a cold winter morning. It did not help my discomfort that I had nothing on but a sea blue gown that covered only the front and ankle high socks that seemed like bathroom scrubbers. A heart rate monitor clamp was tightly affixed onto my index finger that had already lost circulation minutes ago. The monitor was the snitch giving away my growing anxiety; my heart rate began to increase as I awaited surgery. Attached to the bed frame was a remote that could adjust almost every aspect of the bed. I kept the bed at an almost right angle: I wanted to be aware of my surroundings.

My orthopediatrician and surgeon, Dr. Halsey, paced in from the hallway and gave away a forced smile to ease me into comfort. The doctor shot out his hand and I hesitantly stuck out mine for the handshake. I've always hated handshakes; my hands are incredibly sweaty and I did not want to disgust him with my soggy tofu hands. He asked me how my day was so far, and I responded with a concise "Alright." Truth was, my day so far was pretty lackluster and tiring. I had woken up before the birds had even begun to chirp, I ate nothing for breakfast, and I was terrified out of my mind. This Orthopedic Surgeon, this man, this human, was fully in charge of the surgery. Dr. Halsey and other surgeons deal with one of the most delicate and fragile things in the world—people's lives. The amount of pressure and nerves he must face on an everyday basis is incredible. His calm and reserved nature made me believe that he was confident in himself, and that put me more at ease.

An overweight nurse wheeled in an IV with a bag of solution hooked to the side. "Which arm do you prefer for your IV?" she inquired.

Needles used to terrify me. They were tiny bullets that pierced through your skin like mosquitos looking for dinner, but by now I had grown accustomed to them. Like getting stung by a bee for the first time, my first time getting blood taken was a grueling adventure. “Left, I guess,” I let out with a long anxiety-filled sigh.

The rubber band was thick and dark blue, the same color as the latex gloves she wore. I could feel my arm pulse in excitement as they tightly wrapped the rubber band right above my elbow.

“Oh, wow! Look at that vein pop right out!” The nurse exclaimed as she inspected the bulging vein.

I tried to distract myself from the nurse so I wouldn’t hesitate as the IV was going in. I stared intently at the speckled ceiling tiles. They were the same ones used in schools. As my eyes began to relax, the dots on the ceiling started to transform into different shapes and animals. There was a squirrel, a seal, and a do—I felt pain shock through my body as the IV needle had infiltrated into my arm.

Dr. Halsey had one arm planted to the bottom end of the bed frame and the other holding the clipboard that was attached to the frame. “We’re going to pump two solutions through you. The first will be the saline, and the second will be the sedation and anesthesia.” The nurse leaned over and punched in buttons connected to the IV. After a loud beep, I felt a cooling sensation run down my arm. I felt like a criminal, prosecuted for murder, and now was one chemical away from finishing the cocktail execution. My eyes darted across the room; I was searching for hope I could cling to.

My mother was sitting on a chair on the other side of the room, eyes slowly and silently sweating. She clutched my father’s giant calloused hands as he browsed the internet on his phone. While I would say that I am more similar to my mother than my father, I think we both dealt with our anxiety in similar ways. Just like my father, I too needed a visual distraction to avoid my anxiety. “I love you,” my mother called out.

All I did was a slight nod in affirmation. I was too fully engulfed by my own thoughts to even try and let out a single syllable. What is my purpose in life? Have I been successful in making others proud? Questions like these crept up in my mind like an unwanted visitor.

"Here comes the next solution," Dr. Halsey announced while pointing his pen at the IV bags. "10...," he began his countdown. "7...," Dr. Halsey continued the countdown.

I've enjoyed my life. I've had my fun and shared many experiences with my closest friends. If I'm not remembered in a few years after I die, then so be it. I'm proud of my small accomplishments so far.

"4..."

Although I am not the most decorated of students, I can say that at least I tried my hardest. All that really mattered was that I was happy. I had hit tranquility; my mind had halted. I was out even before Dr. Halsey finished the countdown. I was at ease.

Teacher Takeaways

"I like how the scope of the narrative is specifically limited to the hours leading up to the surgery. That shifts the focus on the author's anticipation and anxiety, rather than the surgery itself. This essay also successfully employs slow, deliberate pacing in each section, reflecting that sense of anticipation and anxiety. However, at some points this slow pacing results in minute descriptions of details that don't clearly advance the narrative, making the essay feel bloated at times and diminishing the effectiveness of those sections where the pacing is more appropriate."

– Professor Dunham

This chapter is from Lewis-Clark's *Something to Say*, "Writing Project One: Process of Writing a Personal Narrative"

31. "This I Believe" Essay

The History of 'This I Believe'

by Tanya Matthews

This I Believe is an exciting media project that invites individuals from all walks of life to write about and discuss the core beliefs that guide their daily lives. They share these statements in weekly broadcasts on NPR's *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered.*

The series is based on the 1950's radio program *This I Believe*, hosted by acclaimed journalist Edward R. Murrow. Each day, some 39-million Americans gathered by their radios to hear compelling essays from the likes of Eleanor Roosevelt, Jackie Robinson, Helen Keller and Harry Truman as well as corporate leaders, cab drivers, scientists and secretaries — anyone able to distill into a few minutes the guiding principles by which they lived. Their words brought comfort and inspiration to a country worried about the Cold War, McCarthyism and racial division.

Eventually, the radio series became a cultural phenomenon. Eighty-five leading newspapers printed a weekly column based on *This I Believe*. A collection of essays published in 1952 sold 300,000 copies — second only to the Bible that year. The series was translated and broadcast around the globe on the Voice of America. A book of essays translated into Arabic sold 30,000 copies in just three days.

[The NPR series *This I Believe* can be read and heard here. In addition, the website and organization This I Believe houses thousands of essays written by famous people, such as the ones mentioned above, and everyday people like you and me.]

As a college student in 2020, you are faced with turbulent politics, socioeconomic issues, and ethical dilemmas that will challenge you to take a stand and contribute to the local, national, and global conversation around you. The purpose of this writing task is not to persuade you to agree on the same beliefs. Rather, it is to encourage you to begin the much more difficult task of developing respect for beliefs different from your own. Fifty years ago, Edward R. Murrow's project struck such a chord with millions of Americans. It can do so again today...with you.

Video Resources for Generating Ideas

Dan Gediman on Writing a "This I Believe Essay"

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://idaho.pressbooks.pub/write/?p=82#oembed-1

Read Cecelia Munoz's essay "Getting Angry Can Be a Good Thing" referred to in the previous video [here](#).

"This I Believe" Essay with Animation

One or more interactive elements has been excluded *from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://idaho.pressbooks.pub/write/?p=82#oembed-2*

"This I Believe" Essay Ideas

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://idaho.pressbooks.pub/write/?p=82#oembed-3

Prewriting Activity

1) Analyze Others' Statements

Consider the following statements, written in response to the question What Have You Learned About Life? Highlight any sentences that resonate with you. Talk about them with a partner or group, explaining why.

1. I've learned that when I wave to people in the country, they stop what they are doing and wave back. – Age 9
2. I've learned that if you want to cheer yourself up, you should try cheering someone else up. – Age 14
3. I've learned that although it's hard to admit it, I'm secretly glad my parents are strict with me. – Age 15

4. I've learned that if someone says something unkind about me, I must live so that no one will believe it. – Age 39
5. I've learned that there are people who love you dearly but just don't know how to show it. – Age 42
6. I've learned that you can make someone's day by simply sending them a little note. – Age 44
7. I've learned that the greater a person's sense of guilt, the greater his or her need to cast blame on others. – Age 46
8. I've learned that no matter what happens, or how bad it seems today, life does go on, and it will be better tomorrow. – Age 48
9. I've learned that regardless of your relationship with your parents, you miss them terribly after they die. – Age 53
10. I've learned that making a living is not the same thing as making a life. – Age 58
11. I've learned that life sometimes gives you a second chance. – Age 62
12. I've learned that whenever I decide something with kindness, I usually make the right decision. – Age 66
13. I've learned that it pays to believe in miracles. And to tell the truth, I've seen several. – Age 75
14. I've learned that even when I have pains, I don't have to be one. – Age 82
15. I've learned that every day you should reach out and touch someone. People love that human touch—holding hands, a warm hug, or just a friendly pat on the back. – Age 85
16. I've learned that I still have a lot to learn. – Age 92

2) Compose Your Own Statement

Write down a sentence that expresses what YOU have learned about life. Maybe it is similar to one of the statements above; maybe it's completely different. Whatever it is, write it down.

3) Freewrite

Now free-write about your sentence. Include at least two examples / experiences that you have had that support why you think this way.

Personal Statement/Philosophy: ____
____
____
____

Why do you believe in this statement? ____
____
____
____

Name two experiences that you had that would support the statement:
____
____
____
____
____
____
____
____
____

What does this say about yourself or your personality? ____
____
____
____
____
____

After your life experience, how have you come to the conclusion that this should be your statement? How have your beliefs changed, if at all? ____

How has the event effected your relationship with a person, place, or object? ____

How does your statement apply to you today? (How you view yourself & society) ____

SAMPLE STUDENT ESSAYS

Sample #1: America's Beauty Is in Its Diversity

written by Alaa El-Saad, high school student, as heard on NPR's *Tell Me More* (2009)

America is built on the idea of freedom, and there is no exception for Muslim women. I believe in the freedom of religion and speech. But mostly, I believe it's OK to be different, and to stand up for who and what you are. So I believe in wearing the hijab.

The hijab is a religious head covering, like a scarf. I am Muslim and keeping my head covered is a sign of maturity and respect toward my religion and to Allah's will. To be honest, I also like to wear it to be different. I don't usually like to do what everyone else is doing. I want to be an individual, not just part of the crowd. But when I first wore it, I was also afraid of the reaction that I'd get at school.

I decided on my own that sixth grade was the time I should start wearing the hijab. I was scared about what the kids would say or even do to me. I thought they might make fun of me, or even be scared of me and pull off my headscarf. Kids at that age usually like to be all the same, and there's little or no acceptance for being different.

On the first day of school, I put all those negative thoughts behind my back and walked in with my head held high. I was holding my breath a little, but inside I was also proud to be a Muslim, proud to be wearing the hijab, proud to be different.

I was wrong about everything I thought the kids would say or even do to me. I actually met a lot of people because of wearing my head covering. Most of the kids would come and ask me questions—respectfully—about the hijab, and why I wore it.

I did hear some kid was making fun of me, but there was one girl—she wasn't even in my class, we never really talked much—and she stood up for me, and I wasn't even there! I made a lot of new friends that year, friends that I still have until this very day, five years later.

Yes, I'm different, but everyone is different here, in one way or another. This is the beauty of America. I believe in what America is built on: all different religions, races and beliefs. Different everything.

Sample #2: The Essentials to Happiness

written by Alexxandra Schuman, high school student, as heard on *The Bob Edwards Show* (2013)

As a child, I was generally happy; singing and dancing to my favorite songs; smiling and laughing with my friends and family. But as far back as second grade, I noticed a “darkness,” about me. I didn’t enjoy engaging in many things. I didn’t relate to my peers in elementary school because they appeared so happy, and I didn’t have that ability to achieve happiness so easily.

In middle school things in my life began to get even worse. I began withdrawing from everything I once enjoyed; swimming, tennis, family. I hated going to sleep knowing I had to wake up to another day. I was always tired. Everything was horrible. Finally, midway through eighth grade, I was told I had a chemical imbalance; diagnosed with clinical depression and put on medication. It took months for me to feel the effects of the medication.

When I began to feel happy again, is when I realized that I had to take the responsibility for getting better myself, rather than relying on medication and therapy alone. Aristotle said, “To live happily is an inward power of the soul,” and I believe that this quote describes what I had to do to achieve happiness. Happiness is a journey. Everyone seems to need different things to be happy. But I believe people are blinded from what truly makes one happy.

Growing up, we’re encouraged to be successful in life; but how is success defined? Success and happiness are imagined now as having a lot of money. It is so untrue. Recently I went to Costa Rica and visited the small town of El Roble. I spent the day with a nine-year old girl named Marilyn. She took me to her house to meet her parents. It was obvious that they were not rich; living in a small house with seven children. The house was cluttered but full of life. Those who have decided that success and happiness comes from having money and a big house would be appalled at how utterly happy this family from El Roble is. People say that seeing things like that make you appreciate what you have, but for me, it made me envy them for being so happy without all the things I have.

"The essentials to happiness are something to love, something to do, and something to hope for," a quote from William Blake sums up what I believe people need to realize to be truly happy in life. People need love; I feel they need their family and their friends more than anything in the world. People need work to do, something to make them feel they are making a difference in the world. People need to know that more good is to come in the future, so they continue to live for "now" instead of constantly worrying about the bad that could come. And most importantly people need to know that happiness is not something that happens overnight. Love and hope is happiness.

Sample #3: Find a Good Frog

written by Delia Motavalli, high school student, as heard on *The Bob Edwards Show* (2013)

I believe in finding a good frog. It seems that all throughout childhood, we are taught to look for a happily ever after. "And they all lived happily ever after"; isn't that the conclusion to many children's films? When I was a kid I always thought of that as magical; but now really it just seems unrealistic. And it teaches us that what we want is a fairytale like they have in the storybooks. We all want to be Cinderella who gets swept off her feet by the hot prince; we want to live in the royal castle, right? But I don't think that's necessarily a good thing for us to seek. Now I'm not saying I believe in being pessimistic, but I do believe in being realistic; it's something I got from my mom.

My mother and I always have our best conversations in the rain. We sit in the car, neither of us wanting to brave the rain to get to the house. So we sit. We watch droplets race down the windshield, listen to the rain strike the roof of her little blue Honda, and feel the heater on full-blast rushing at our feet (just the way we like it). I don't know why, but sitting in the car, we always talk more than normal. There was one rainy day when my mom told me something that is going to stick with me forever. Earlier that day she and my dad had been arguing about something; I can't remember what. So she said, "Don't spend your life looking for Prince Charming. Instead, find yourself a really good frog."

At the time, I found this thought really disheartening. Who wants to think that you'll never find Prince Charming? You'll never get to be Cinderella? Another thought that struck my mind: if my mom says there's no Prince Charming, then what's my dad? A frog? I asked her, and she replied with, "Of course! If he were Prince Charming, he wouldn't snore, would be able to cook, and we would never argue. But you know what? He's a damn good frog." Of course, being young, I didn't think of the meaning behind what she was saying. I was too busy thinking of it literally, visualizing my mom as a princess and my dad in frog form.

But a few years later, I understand the value of my mom's words. You can't expect everything to be perfect. Let's be completely honest; if you wait your whole life for your prince with flowing hair, statuesque features, and a white horse, you're going to be lonely. I think that the point of finding a good frog is you accept something that's great, flaws and all. It's so easy to be picky. You can find the one tiny thing that's wrong, and that one tiny thing is what you can't get your mind off of. But in life, we can't afford to wait years in vain for perfection. So I think that a good frog, an amazing frog, the best frog you can find is what we're really looking for in this world. Don't laze through life waiting for a happily ever after, because I don't think you'll be very happy with the outcome.

Examples from the 'This I Believe' Website

Be Cool to the Pizza Dude by Sarah Adams

They Lived Their Faith by Charles Henry Parrish
Returning to What's Natural by Amelia Baxter-Stoltzfus
The Birthright of Human Dignity by Will Thomas
Remembering All The Boys by Elvia Bautista
I Am Still The Greatest by Muhammad Ali
A Goal Of Service To Humankind by Anthony Fauci
My Life Is Better by Abraham
Give Me a Waffle by Brenda
The Little Things by Sophie Crossley

You can also browse thousands more This I Believe essays by theme.

Prefer to Listen to Get Inspiration?

Check out This I Believe's Podcast Series

4) Drafting

Assignment Guidelines + Suggestions and Tips for Drafting

1. While the examples you've been given can serve as a model, it is essential that each of you write about a personal belief or philosophy that you feel strongly about.
2. Tell a story. Personal experiences are the corner stone of a good essay. Your story doesn't have to be a heart breaker or even a major event, but it must be something that has affected how you think, feel, and act.
List your personal experiences that you intend to use as evidence

below:
3. Be concise. Avoid repetition. This essay should be between 500 – 650 words. When read aloud, it should take roughly four minutes.
4. Name your belief. It is essential that you can name your belief in a sentence or two. Focus on one belief only.
This is your thesis. Write it here:
5. Be positive. Avoid preaching or persuading. You aren't trying to change the way others think or act. Write about what you believe, not what you don't believe.
6. Use the first person. Speak for yourself. Avoid using we or you.
7. Let your voice shine. Use language that sounds like you. Read it aloud as your revise. Keep making changes until your essay sounds like you and captures the essence of your belief.

5) Peer Review

Once you have written your first draft, arrange for your essay to be edited by a peer, using the following Peer-Editing Checklist:
Writer's Name: ____

Peer Editor's Name: ____

Use your PENCIL or PEN (NOT red or green) to make corrections. Remember, this essay is a work in progress. You are not done writing! Look for ways to improve what you've already written.
Tick each step if it has been completed.
_____ 1. Read the paper backwards, one sentence at a time. Check for spelling errors.
Use a dictionary, a friend, or a spell checker to find the correct spelling.
_____ 2. Check for capitalized proper nouns and the first word of

each sentence.
_____ 3. Skip a line between each paragraph.
_____ 4. Every sentence should have end punctuation.
_____ 5. Check commas. Are they only used for compound sentences, a list of items, an introductory word or phrase, direct address, setting off interruptions, separating adjectives, or in dates? Do you need to add commas? Make sure you do not have commas separating complete sentences (i.e. comma splice errors that create run-on sentences).
_____ 6. Apostrophes are used only for contractions and to show ownership.
_____ 7. The use of more complex punctuation (dashes, hyphens, semi-colons, parentheses, etc.) is done correctly.
_____ 8. Have you used commonly mixed pairs of words correctly? Check these: they're/their/there, your/you're, it's/its, a/an, to/too/two, are/our/hour, and others.
_____ 9. Read the paper backwards one sentence at a time. Check for sentence fragments and run-ons and correct them.
_____ 10. Did you stay in present tense (such as is, am, do, take, know, etc.) or past tense (such as was, were, did, took, knew, etc.) throughout the entire essay?
_____ 11. Did you stay in first person (I, me, my, we, us, our) or third person (he, him, she, her, they, them, their) throughout the entire essay?
_____ 12. Was there adequate use of specific details and sensory details? Were the details clear and relevant to the statement?
_____ 13. Is the overall purpose/philosophy clear?
_____ 14. Does the conclusion make you go, "Wow!" "Cool!" "I never thought about it that way," or any other similar reaction?
Other suggestions for the overall content of the piece:

____

____

____

____

____

6) Rubric

Level	Mark /45	Mark %	Descriptors
7 *OUTSTANDING/ EXCELLENT*	45 44 43 42 41 40 39 38 37 36	100 98 96 93 91 89 87 84 82 80	Evidence of exceptional ability; consistent excellence. Distinctive evidence of own voice. Lively sentence construction. Precise language. Skilful use of imagery; real powers of literary expression. Able to control tone and subtle shifts in nuance exceptionally well. Striking impact. Content controlled throughout. Details revealing observation and knowledge. Flair of own voice is revealed. Well organised. Intelligent and mature. Skilful control of language usage and imagery, but there may be slight flaws.
6 *VERY GOOD*	35 34 33 32 31½	78 76 73 71 70	Well planned, but lacking the polish of an A. Mature thought and style with evidence of a strong own voice. High level of competence, skilful use of vocabulary. Perhaps minor inconsistencies and minor language errors, but shifts in tone still fairly well controlled.
5 *GOOD*	31 30 29 28 27	69 67 64 62 60	Interesting. Clear statements. Convincing. Sound, competent use of English with a reasonably well-sustained use of own voice. Direct, fairly well-controlled language. Efficient without much range in sentence structure. Some colour and vigour, but not always sustained. Style tends towards the ordinary and language errors do occur.
4 *SATISFACTORY*	26 25 24 23	58 56 53 51	Pedestrian style with distinct linguistic flaws. Ideas often not properly developed or tending to the dull and unimaginative. Some evidence of own voice. Lacking in maturity of thought, but fulfils the purpose adequately. Language, spelling and/or punctuation errors are in evidence.
3 *MEDIOCRE*	22 21 20 19 18	49 47 44 42 40	Candidate's control of language is worthy of passing. Structure is limited or content lacks originality. Little evidence of candidate's individual voice. Mediocre and unexciting. Expression is often quite clumsy and there are numerous language, spelling and/or punctuation errors.
2 *WEAK*	17 16 15 14	38 36 33 31	Candidate is often unable to sustain the topic for the required length. Candidate's content is often rambling and there is no evidence of the candidate's own voice or opinions. A lack of perception and a restricted vocabulary render the essay problematic. Language is often ungrammatical and unidiomatic as well as containing incorrect use of spelling and punctuation.

32. Storytelling Memorability: 6 Keys for Success

Writing that is simple, unexpected, concrete, credible, emotional, and story-based will stick with your audience longer.

By Nikki Mantyla

On a Thursday night in January 2016, Jerry Seinfeld performed solo to a sold-out audience at Abravanel Hall in Salt Lake City. Over 2,700 people filled the long sloping rectangle of the main floor and the three rounded tiers of gold-leafed balconies lining its sides. Eighteen-thousand Bohemian crystals glimmered from enormous square chandeliers hanging from the ceiling. From the far back wall, two spotlights followed the legendary comedian back and forth across the stage as he paced inside their circle, telling his jokes. One of the spotlights smoothly drifted right or left as needed. The other wasn't working so well.

Seinfeld stepped out of the faulty beam numerous times. He ignored it, continuing his set like a pro and doing what he does best: making people laugh. But an underlying tension increased the longer the problem went on. Adults fidgeted in their cushioned seats and muttered to their neighbors. If the jerky spotlight had been staged, Seinfeld would have referred to it by now. Whether the cause was malfunctioning equipment or the ineptitude of an operator, the issue should've been solved thirty minutes ago. It was detracting from the act.

Finally, Seinfeld made a choice to say something. He stopped and gestured at the back wall, asking, "What's the deal with the spotlight? I'm sixty-one years old! How hard can it be? Look, I'll tell you what I'll do: I'll face the direction I'm going to walk."

The tangent bounced with Seinfeld's characteristic high- and low-pitched cadence, sending the already amused audience into louder peals. After an exaggerated turn, he slowly lifted his foot and stepped forward, waiting for the spotlight to join him. When the beam lurched again despite his overt cue, Seinfeld threw up his arms like, “Really?” Everyone roared. Tension released into belly-deep laughter. Tears formed, stomachs cramped, lungs gasped. What had been distracting was now hilarious. He’d transformed the malfunction into a successful gag and a memorable part of the show.

As writers, we need to learn such alchemy in order to do things, be things, and make things in the world. Comedians like Jerry Seinfeld are masters of language, and that mastery allows them to make whole careers out of words and gestures that do something special: generate laughs. We can likewise harness the power of language to transform our writing situations into audience gold, whether we are creating impromptu wisecracks or funeral elegies, factual reports or fantastical stories. Any type of writing can be more effective if it catches and holds the attention of its audience—in other words, if it succeeds at being memorable.

How? Authors Chip and Dan Heath (one brother a Stanford professor, the other a teacher and textbook publisher) give a useful acronym in their book *Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die*. They say memorable ideas are

- Simple
- Unexpected
- Concrete
- Credible
- Emotional
- Story-based

Examining these keys for “SUCCESs” via Seinfeld’s spotlight fiasco provides a lens for considering the ways language/writing can be a resource for doing more and being heard and making a contribution that’s remembered.

Key Takeaways

Stories can be used in any kind of writing. In *Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die*, Chip and Dan Heath give a simple model writers can follow using the **S.U.C.C.E.S(s)** acronym.

Simple: The writing should focus on a single core idea.

Unexpected: The writer can lead with a surprising fact that catches the reader's interest. Some writing instructors call this unexpected element a "hook" because a surprising element can catch readers' interest.

Concrete: Abstract ideas can be difficult for readers to grasp. Writers should use imagery, description, and concrete examples to help the reader visualize the story.

Credible: While in fiction, a good story can include all kinds of supernatural or fantastical, in nonfiction writing, writing should be believable.

Emotional: Connecting readers to a single individual case can be more effective than burying them with specifics. For example, researchers have shown that people are more likely to donate to a single person than to an entire region.

Story-based: Stories can move readers to action. In an argument essay, for example, a writer could consider starting and ending the essay with a story that connects the reader to the issue.

SIMPLE

Consider the simplicity of Seinfeld's response. He stopped. He focused his gaze at the origin of the spotlight. He took a direct approach. And he kept it concise. He could have gone into a drawn-out rant, venting anger instead of appealing to the audience. Instead, he kept his grievance simple and funny.

We can't always be brief, but we can stay focused. Notice how the first four paragraphs of this article give only details relevant to the spotlight story. The anecdote avoids digressions about the weather or other parts of the show or the charity the ticket money supported. It sticks to only what's needed to make the story stick with the audience. We can do the same in any genre. Selecting and maintaining a simple focus ties everything into one tidy, memorable package.

UNEXPECTED

It's also important to know that comedy thrives on irony—or in other words, the unexpected. The more unpredictable the punchline, the bigger the laughs.

"I'm sixty-one years old!" was unexpected on two levels. First, what did that have to do with a defective spotlight? Juxtaposition, in which you compare things that seem unrelated, can be a great tool for creating irony. Second, in American culture, we don't expect an older person to blurt out his age, which doubled the element of surprise.

But how much does unexpectedness matter outside of comedy? We might be surprised. The human brain is programmed to dismiss what it already understands but perk up when startled by something new. Awareness of that unfamiliar thing might improve chances of survival, so our minds snap to attention. Writers who incorporate the unexpected in strategic ways—with a shocking statistic in a report or a fresh take on a classic recipe or an unheard-of position on a controversial subject—are more likely to hook their audience. Without such surprise, our chances of being memorable are low.

CONCRETE

Masters of language also recognize that all external input comes in five tangible forms: sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell. The mind connects concrete input, such as a citrusy scent, to previous knowledge, like Grandma's grapefruit trees, while abstract ideas often vaporize.

By gesturing at the spotlight and emphasizing his turn and step, Seinfeld gave the audience features to see. Written descriptions do that too: gold balconies, crystal chandeliers, adults fidgeting in cushioned seats. The marvel of language is that it can conjure images in our minds even without pictures and let us hear things even when the words are read silently, like how the direct quotes make Seinfeld's voice come alive. The same is true with the other senses. For example, mentioning stomachs cramping and lungs gasping invites us to feel the audience's physical response.

When instructors say, "Show, don't tell," this is what they mean. Telling is weaker because it gives a secondhand report: how it was a classy concert hall where nobody would expect crappy equipment, how Seinfeld griped about the spotlight, how everyone thought it was really funny. On the other hand, showing with concrete details means readers experience firsthand input and draw their own stronger conclusions.

What about when writers aren't telling a story? Regardless of genre, concrete ideas are easier for people to grasp. We might not comprehend a blue whale's thirty-meter length, but tell us that's more than two school buses and we can picture it. It's better to make details tangible.

CREDIBLE

What about the biggest aspect in Seinfeld's favor—his reputation?

The audience came because they love him, and they were prepared to laugh at anything he said. But even people who aren't famous can still use credibility to their advantage.

One way is to borrow fame, as this article does by showcasing a celebrity. Take advantage of any impressive sources. Was the study done by Harvard? Is the quote from a renowned authority? Mention those bragging rights the way this article drops "legendary comedian" into the first paragraph and credits a Stanford professor and a textbook publisher for the SUCCESs acronym. Don't just bury that validity in the citations at the end.

Writers can also buy cred by touting their own expertise: experiences with the topic, relevant places they've worked or volunteered, observations that sharpened their perspective, surveys or interviews they've done, classes they've taken, even their age. Being a sixty-one-year-old über-successful comedian is impressive, and maybe being an eighteen-year-old college newbie or a thirty-five-year-old returning student will affect the audience's opinion too. Weigh possible credentials against the writing situation and include ones that will give it the best boost.

EMOTIONAL

Seinfeld used emotion when he asked the spotlight person, "How hard can it be?" He gave voice to everyone's frustrations, as if speaking collectively.

Projecting emotion is important but tricky. Good writers don't want to overdo it, and they don't want to use fallacious or unethical approaches, such as fear mongering. Done well, emotional appeals can have a powerful lingering effect. We recall how entertaining a comedian was even after we forget the jokes. We relive the wave of pity from a photo we saw of a shelter dog. We revisit the excitement of a thrilling solution we read in a recent proposal. Emotions last.

Aim for the kind of vibe that best fits the audience and purpose, and find effective ways to solicit those emotions. Choose details that summon the right mood, just as gold leaf and Bohemian crystals convey the classy feel of Abravanel Hall. Pick words that match the seriousness or humor, like how the spotlight "lurched" and everyone "roared." Add colors, photos, or other visuals that correspond, such as Seinfeld's memorably amusing snapshot above—perfect for an article about memorability via comedy.

STORY-BASED

Most crucially of all, tell a story. It's one of the best ways to appeal to emotion—and appeal to humans. Think how quickly a sad story can make the audience teary or a silly one can make them laugh. Think how closely people listen when a story is told.

Some people assume storytelling is only for memoirs or fiction writing or movies, but in reality, stories are everywhere. This instructional article employed the story about Seinfeld to make several points, and even Seinfeld's short bit follows a story shape:

HOOK — stops, gestures at the back

CONFLICT — "What's the deal with the spotlight?"

COMPLICATIONS — "I'm sixty-one years old! How hard can it be?"

EPIPHANY — "Look, I'll tell you what I'll do: I'll face the direction I'm going to walk."

CLIMAX — exaggerated turn and step

RESOLUTION — spotlight jerks, audience roars

The best story type for each piece of writing will depend on its situation and purpose and audience, but using miniature stories like the spotlight tale can be a great method for highlighting a writer's subject in a memorable way. Writers also use the story-arc sequence—hook the audience, spell out the conflict, outline complications, reveal an epiphany, stage a climax, and grant resolution—in all kinds of genres to engage readers with the tension of waiting for resolution. Audiences love it, just as Seinfeld's audience melted into laughter.

[For more on integrating story techniques, check out "Adding the Storyteller's Tools to Your Writer's Toolbox," "Movies Explain the World of Writing," or "The Narrative Effect."]

CONCLUSION

The twitchy spotlight never improved during that January show. Its glow continued to bumble across the stage like an intoxicated firefly. But as far as Seinfeld and his audience were concerned, the situation had been resolved by converting it into humor.

That's the power of language to do things, be things, and make things in the world. That's the power our writing can have when we master language/writing as a resource.

[For even more insight, check out the Heath brothers' book *Made to Stick*.]

Works Cited

Heath, Chip and Dan Heath. *Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die*. New York: Random House, 2007.

33. Your Hero's Journey: Telling Stories that Matter

LIZA LONG

Your Hero's Journey: Telling Stories that Matter

By Liza Long

I teach a popular online course at the College of Western Idaho called "Survey of World Mythology."[1] Every semester, my students start the course thinking that they are going to learn about Zeus, Hera, and maybe Thor—and in all fairness, Thor is why I initially wanted to teach the course.

About three weeks in, we get to the part where I introduce Jesus as just one of many examples from world religions of the "dying god" archetype, and there's the delicious sound of young minds being blown. "What? We're reading Christian scriptures as myths?" Well, yes.

Stories, wherever they come from, have power. Stories can shape our cultures—and our individual stories can shape our values and our sense of meaning in a world that might otherwise feel like pure chaos.

A possibly spurious[2] quote attributed to British novelist John Gardner famously asserts that there are only two basic stories in the entire world: the hero's journey, and a stranger walks into town. Today, we're going to talk about the first kind of story.

In my world mythology class, I spend an entire unit on the hero's journey. This universal archetype, a story that exists across all world cultures, was described by anthropologist Joseph Campbell in his seminal 1949 work, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces.* The book heavily influenced George Lucas—so I guess we have Campbell to thank for *Star Wars* (well, at least the good movies, the ones that you all know as four, five, and six)[3].

What is it about the hero's journey that makes it such a powerful story for pretty much every human being?

Joseph Campbell outlines 17 stages of his monomyth[4]—but we'll be here all day if we try to get through all of them, and I know some of you have a life outside of class. So I'd like to focus on just three elements of the hero's journey and consider how these elements apply to the stories we are telling about ourselves in the world, right now:

- Answering the Call
- The Belly of the Whale
- Ultimate Boon/Freedom to Live

Let's Start with Answering the Call.

Here you are, minding your own business. Maybe you're working a desk job. Maybe you are surrounded by small children who are continually asking you "why?" and demanding peanut butter and honey sandwiches. Maybe you're a modern day Jonah, preaching to people who comfortably agree with you, your Facebook friends, your book club group, your liberal or conservative friends.

Suddenly, everything changes. The telephone rings. An email hits your inbox. You see a social media message from a long-lost high school friend.

Campbell says that the call to adventure is:

> to a forest, a kingdom underground, beneath the waves, or above the sky, a secret island, lofty mountaintop, or profound dream state; but it is always a place of strangely fluid and polymorphous beings, unimaginable torments,

> super human deeds, and impossible delight. The hero can go forth of his own volition to accomplish the adventure, as did Theseus when he arrived in his father's city, Athens, and heard the horrible history of the Minotaur; or he may be carried or sent abroad by some benign or malignant agent as was Odysseus, driven about the Mediterranean by the winds of the angered god, Poseidon. The adventure may begin as a mere blunder… or still again, one may be only casually strolling when some passing phenomenon catches the wandering eye and lures one away from the frequented paths of man."[5]

When did the call come to you? How did you answer?

If you're like me, the call has come many times, and I've answered in different ways. Sometimes I've been like Jonah—Run away! Sometimes I've proudly crossed the thresholds and stormed the barricades. But my most important calls have been the last kind Campbell describes—the calling by accident. When an anonymous blog I wrote about parenting a child who had a then undiagnosed mental illness, titled "I Am Adam Lanza's Mother,"[6] went suddenly viral in 2012, I wanted to run away. But I answered the call. I put my name on the story and told our family's truth about just how hard it is to raise a child who has mental illness, without a village to support us.

Think for a moment about an accident in your life that in hindsight, changed everything. What truths do you need to tell?

Next, let's look at the Belly of the Whale.

This idea comes straight from the Judeo-Christian tradition and the story of Jonah and the whale. I think it's important to remember that, like Jonah, whether or not we accept the call, we can and probably will still end up in the fish's belly at some point in our lives.

But it's not as bad as you think. In fact, Campbell describes the image as one of rebirth. He says:

> The hero… is swallowed into the unknown and would appear to have died. This popular motif gives emphasis to the lesson that the passage of the threshold is a form of self-annihilation. Instead of passing outward, beyond the confines of the visible world, the hero goes inward, to be born again.[7]

The belly of the whale is where we have to do the hard work that accepting the call requires of us. I suspect that it's where many of us are right now.

According to NBC *News*:

> Across America today, rates of depression and anxiety are rising dramatically. A 2018 Blue Cross study found that depression diagnosis rates had increased by 33% since 2013—and that's for people who have health insurance. Our teenagers are especially hard hit, with experts blaming everything from social media to video games to the loss of community.[8]

In the belly of the whale, we are alone, and we feel helpless. Do you feel helpless right now? Does the endless and exhausting news cycle—children in cages, women's reproductive rights under threat, journalists murdered, migrant caravans—feel overwhelming to you?

I think that collectively, what we're really experiencing is a cultural belly of the whale. We wanted something different for our country, and for ourselves. We wanted the American Dream, but now we just have to pay the bills, and we are tired.

That's why we have to learn to write and revise our stories. We'll be reborn, and we'll tell the tale. But right now, we may not know what the meaning of this story is, to ourselves, to our communities, or to our nation. Rebirth isn't easy.

Finally, let's look at the Ultimate Boon and

Freedom to Live.

The ultimate boon is that grand meaning of life that we are searching for—but it may not turn out to be what we think it will be.

In fact, sometimes we don't know what the meaning is until we sit down later, like Tolkien's Bilbo Baggins, to tell our story of "There and Back Again." The act of telling may in itself help us to discover what the story's point is.

Campbell says:

> What the hero seeks through his intercourse with [the gods and goddesses] is therefore not finally themselves, but their grace, i.e., the power of their sustaining substance. This is the miraculous energy of the thunderbolts of Zeus, Yahweh, and the Supreme Buddha, the fertility of the rain of Viracocha, the virtue announced by the bell rung in the Mass at the consecration, and the light of the ultimate illumination of the saint and sage.[9]

Ultimately, I think what the story of Jonah and the Whale tells us is that we can run but we can't hide from our calling, so we may as well find some ultimate boon in it. For me, that boon is the freedom to live without fear

What are you afraid of?

Whether we admit it or not, first and foremost, the greatest fear for most of us is the fear of death.

Campbell's hero conquers death by understanding that, as the Latin poet Ovid wrote in his *Metamorphoses*, "Nothing retains its own form; but Nature, the greater renewer, ever makes up forms from forms.... Nothing perishes in the whole universe; it does but vary and renew its form.' Thus the next moment is permitted to come to pass."[10]

In other words, fear not: Death is change, not end. This is the point of most major stories about endings and beginnings, and for the hero, this knowledge is the ultimate freedom.

But now, a warning! We have to be careful how we use our stories.

This impulse to tell stories can be a powerful force for good—but also for evil. As one example, the Nazis were really good at telling stories that gave life meaning—at the expense of 14-year old Anne Frank and six million other innocent people. Stories—especially overly simplified ones–can be dangerous. Don't think for a minute that it can't happen here.

In her popular TED talk, "The Danger of a Single Story,"[11] Nigerian author and feminist Chimamanda Ngoze Adichie observes:

> 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. . . . 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.[12]

Do you tell yourself stories that contain stereotypes? I know I do.

The *Atlantic Monthly*'s psychology editor, Julie Beck, makes the same point in her article, "Life's Stories." She writes:

> The redemption story is American optimism—things will get better!—and American exceptionalism—I can make things better!—and it's in the water, in the air, and in our heads. This is actually a good thing a lot of the time. Studies have shown that finding a positive meaning in negative events is linked to a more complex sense of self and greater life satisfaction.

The trouble comes when redemption isn't possible. The redemptive American tale is one of privilege, and for those who can't control their circumstances, and have little reason to believe things will get better, it can be an illogical and unattainable choice. There are things that happen to people that cannot be redeemed.[13]

In other words, we need to understand that our story is not the only story—and that the stories we hear about others, maybe even about people on the opposite side of the political spectrum, are also not the whole story, or the only story.

Listening to others' stories, especially stories from marginalized people, is at least as important as telling our own, maybe more—and social media doesn't make it easy to listen and learn. We have to look for what psychologists refer to as disconfirming information—stories that challenge our assumptions about the way the world works.

This brings me to the last point I want to make.

We Need to Revise and Retell Our Stories

Sometimes we don't know the meaning of our stories until years later. Sometimes we have to rewrite our old stories to accommodate a new narrative. This task—telling stories that matter—is not accomplished in a single draft. It is, in fact, the work of a lifetime.

Julie Beck notes that how we tell, revise, and retell our stories affects who we are and how we see ourselves. She writes,

In telling the story of how you became who you are, and of who you're on your way to becoming, the story itself becomes a part of who you are.… Storytelling, then—fictional or nonfictional, realistic or embellished with dragons—is a way of making sense of the world around us.[14]

What are the themes of your hero's journey? What calls have you answered? Would you answer them differently today?

Finally, if you've found the ultimate boon and the freedom to live, congratulations! Also, I'm sorry. Ten years ago, I thought I had everything figured out, too, and I was pretty smug about it. Spoiler alert: I didn't have it all figured out, and now I enjoy the freedom of not having all the answers.

Fortunately, as Beck says,

> A life story is written in chalk, not ink, and it can be

> changed. Whether it's with the help of therapy, in the midst of an identity crisis, when you've been chasing a roadrunner of foreshadowing towards a tunnel that turns out to be painted on a wall, or slowly, methodically, day by day—like with all stories, there's power in rewriting.[15]

In the end, there's no right or wrong story, no best path. There's your story. How will you answer the call? How will you escape the belly of the whale? What will you tell us about freedom to live when you return from your journey? The story may change 1000 times, and the hero may have 1000 faces, but in the end, your hero's journey is just that: yours. Tell, retell, and most importantly, live your truth.

ENDNOTES

[1] I will be teaching ENGL 215: Survey of World Mythology in the spring of 2019 if you're interested! More information about the course can be found here: https://catalog.cwidaho.cc/course-descriptions/engl/

[2] For a history of this quote and its attribution, see https://quoteinvestigator.com/2015/05/06/two-plots/

[3] For more information on how Campbell influenced Lucas, see this link: https://www.starwars.com/news/mythic-discovery-within-the-inner-reaches-of-outer-space-joseph-campbell-meets-george-lucas-part-i

[4] Here's a link to the Joseph Campbell Foundation, where an overview of his life and work can be found https://www.jcf.org/

[5] Campbell, *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, p. 48

[6] Link to the viral essay at *The Blue Review* here: https://thebluereview.org/i-am-adam-lanzas-mother/ and to my blog here: www.anarchistsoccermom.blogspot.com

[7]Campbell, *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, p. 77

[8]Statistics on depression from https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/major-depression-rise-among-everyone-new-data-shows-n873146

[9] Campbell, *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, p. 155

[10] Ovid *Metamorphoses*, quoted in Campbell, *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, p. 209

[11] The link to Adichie's TED talk is here: https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story .

[12] The quote was taken from this transcript: https://ngl.cengage.com/21centuryreading/resources/sites/default/files/B3_TG_AT7_0.pdf

[13] Julie Beck's article, "Life's Stories," can be found here: https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2015/08/life-stories-narrative-psychology-redemption-mental-health/400796/

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

34. Personal Narrative Assignments

Descriptive Personal Narrative

To synthesize what you've learned about description, narration, and reflection, you will write a personal narrative. This is generally a nonfiction, prose essay (similar to a memoir), but your instructor might provide additional guidelines in regard to genre, media, approach, or assessment standards.

Your task is to identify an influential place, event, or person from your life experience about which you can tell a story. Then, you will write a narrative essay that relates that story and considers the impact it had on you, your worldview, and/or your life path. Using model texts in this book as exemplars, you will tell a story (narrate) using vivid description and draw out meaning and insight using reflection.

As you'll evaluate below, descriptive personal narratives have a variety of purposes. One important one is to share a story that stands in for a bigger idea. Do not be worried if you don't know the "bigger idea" yet, but be advised that your final draft will narrate a focused, specific moment that represents something about who you are, how you got here, what you believe, or what you strive to be.

Literacy Narrative

Think about your experience reading and writing. Did you want to learn, or was it simply expected of you? Did you in any way teach yourself, or did you learn from a schoolteacher or a relative? What book or other text has been significant to you? Is there a particular writing or reading task that you found challenging? Write a literacy narrative, reflecting on a significant moment in your writing and/or reading experience. This experience can be from childhood or from the more recent past. As you write, keep in mind the following key features of a literacy narrative: vivid detail, well-told story, some indication of the narrative's significance.

Be sure to apply the concepts you learn in class to your writing.

Before you begin, consider your rhetorical situation:

Subject: How will this influence the way you write?	Occasion: How will this influence the way you write?
Audience: How will this influence the way you write?	Purpose: How will this influence the way you write?

Writing a Personal Narrative

By E. Anderson

This presentation walks students through the process of writing a personal narrative. It introduces and defines the essential characteristics of personal narratives.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://idaho.pressbooks.pub/write/?p=88#oembed-1

Personal Narrative Basic Rubric

Grading Criteria for Personal Narrative

Max Score	Description
–/3	(Focus) Personal narrative has a narrative effect. (A narrative effect is the main point of your story—the moral, the message, or the insight you offer.)
–/3	(Development) Personal narrative has details and depth. The setting is used to immerse the reader into the narrative. Narrative focuses on one or two key scenes.The rest of the story is filled in using a method of summary.
–/3	(Organization) Narrative has a clear exposition, conflict, and resolution.
–/5	(Style) Narrative shows, not tells; uses expensive words; uses sensory details; active, not passive; uses figurative language; consistent point of view
–/3	(Mechanics) Personal narrative is free of glaring mechanical and grammatical errors (comma splices, sentence fragments, punctuation, capitalization,run-on sentences, etc.)
–/4	Personal Narrative exhibits quality work.
–/4	(Appearance) Personal narrative is approximately 3 pages, double spaced, titled,12 point font, and written in a Google doc that gives instructor editing rights.
Total:–/25	

Pre-Writing

You are going to be doing a fast write to brainstorm/pre-write for your personal narrative. Recall that a personal narrative is a personal story that you share with your audience in order to make a point or to convey a message. The strongest and most poignant personal narratives often result from writing about something ordinary. You may write about the common, but make it uncommon.When thinking about writing a personal narrative remember that it is not just what happens but what you, the author, makes of what happens.

Here are some questions to review before you begin your personal narrative free-write.

- Tell what you know or have heard about any of your ancestors other than your parents and grandparents. Include significant details when possible.
- When were you born? What were you told about your birth and infancy, and who told you?
- What kinds of "make-believe" do you remember playing? What did you find amazing as a child?
- Recall your earliest memories of school. What do you remember feeling about your first few years in school. What do you remember learning? What do you remember liking about school? What was difficult or frightening?
- Who were your childhood friends and what did you most like to do together? Who was your best friend and how did the friendship begin?
- What did you do when you came home from school? Who would be there?
- Imagine your family during a typical mealtime. What do you see going on around you? What would you be eating? What was regular Saturday like? Sunday?
- What kinds of music did you hear as a child? Write a memory

that involves music.

- What were the reading material in your home? Who read to you?
- Were there television shows and movies that made an impression on you as a child?
- What did “being good” mean in your family? What work was expected of you as a child? What else seemed expected of you as a child, either stated or unstated?
- What were the historical events taking place in your childhood and how were you aware of them?
- Tell of time when you gained confidence in yourself.
- What were some of your fears? Tell about a time where you felt extremely frightened?
- When were the times that adults let you down?
- What questions did you have that did not seem to have answers?
- What were some of the things you wanted to do as a child but could not? Which of them were forbidden to do? Which were unavailable or unaffordable? Which were beyond your abilities as a child?
- What do you know about your grandparents’ lives? What do you remember feeling about your grandparents?
- What have you heard about your mother’s childhood? What did you hear about your father’s childhood?
- What sense about marriage did you get from your parents?
- Picture yourself as a child. Now imagine that this child is standing in front of you this moment. What would you like to say to this child?

Allow students to use an online timer for their freewrite. HERE is a link to one of many online timers.

Peer Editing

This type of peer editing was originally meant to be used in a discussion thread format in an online course. However, these are the questions that peer editors were specifically asked to address in detail. (This was in addition to grammatical and mechanical errors.)

- What was the NARRATIVE EFFECT? (Recall that the narrative effect is the main point of the story–the moral, the message, or the insight that the writer offers.)
- Find an element of STYLE that the writer used well. (show, not tell, sensory language, diction, figurative language, point of view, expressive words, etc.)
- Name one thing that the writer could do to improve this personal narrative.

Self Editing

Students were asked to (1) read their personal narrative out loud and (2) use paperrater.com. This is a free web tool that proofreads, checks grammar and offers writing suggestions.

35. Professional Narrative Essay Examples

Personal Narratives by Professional Writers

- Alexie, Sherman. "The Joy of Reading and Writing: Superman and Me." *Los Angeles Times*. 19 April 1998. https://sites.tufts.edu/alquestaeng2spring2018/files/2018/01/22The-Joy-of-Reading-and-Writing-Superman-and-Me22-by-Sherman-Alexie.pdf
- Baca, Jimmy Santiago. "Coming into Language." https://pen.org/coming-into-language/
- Bragg, Rick. "Chapter 1" from *All Over but the Shoutin'*. 1998. https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/17370/all-over-but-the-shoutin-by-rick-bragg/
- Douglass, Frederick. "Chapter VII" (Learning to Read & Write) from *Life of an American Slave*. (Also available as an audio file.)
- Liu, Ken. "Paper Menagerie" (a short story). https://io9.gizmodo.com/read-ken-lius-amazing-story-that-swept-the-hugo-nebula-5958919
- Malcolm X. "Learning to Read" https://ptfaculty.gordonstate.edu/jmallory/index_files/page0096.htm
- Mitchell, Judith. "I'm Telling Everyone." https://www.jewishbookcouncil.org/pb-daily/im-telling-everyone
- Offutt, Chris. "Trash Food." *Oxford American*. https://www.oxfordamerican.org/magazine/item/550-trash-food
- Orwell, George. "Shooting an Elephant."

https://www.orwellfoundation.com/the-orwell-foundation/orwell/essays-and-other-works/shooting-an-elephant/

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- Sedaris, David. "Stepping Out." *New Yorker Magazine*. 30 June 2014.
- Westover, Tara. "Prologue" from *Educated.* https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/550168/educated-by-tara-westover/
- Wright, Richard. "Chapter VIII" (The Library Card) from *Black Boy*. http://drnissani.net/MNISSANI/20302005/library.htm

More Examples of Personal Narratives

Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives – The DALN is an open public resource made up of stories from people just like you about their experiences learning to read, write, and generally communicate with the world around them.

I Am Adam Lanza's Mother

by Liza Long

Three days before 20 year-old Adam Lanza killed his mother, then opened fire on a classroom full of Connecticut kindergartners, my 13-year old son Michael (name changed) missed his bus because he was wearing the wrong color pants.

The author's son, age 7. Image used by permission.

"I can wear these pants," he said, his tone increasingly belligerent, the black-hole pupils of his eyes swallowing the blue irises.

"They are navy blue," I told him. "Your school's dress code says black or khaki pants only."

"They told me I could wear these," he insisted. "You're a stupid bitch. I can wear whatever pants I want to. This is America. I have rights!"

"You can't wear whatever pants you want to," I said, my tone affable, reasonable. "And you definitely cannot call me a stupid bitch. You're grounded from electronics for the rest of the day. Now get in the car, and I will take you to school."

I live with a son who is mentally ill. I love my son. But he terrifies me.

A few weeks ago, Michael pulled a knife and threatened to kill me and then himself after I asked him to return his overdue library books. His 7 and 9 year old siblings knew the safety plan — they ran to the car and locked the doors before I even asked them to. I managed to get the knife from Michael, then methodically collected all the sharp objects in the house into a single Tupperware container that now travels with me. Through it all, he continued to scream insults at me and threaten to kill or hurt me.

That conflict ended with three burly police officers and a paramedic wrestling my son onto a gurney for an expensive ambulance ride to the local emergency room. The mental hospital didn't have any beds that day, and Michael calmed down nicely in the ER, so they sent us home with a prescription for Zyprexa and a follow-up visit with a local pediatric psychiatrist.

We still don't know what's wrong with Michael. Autism spectrum, ADHD, Oppositional Defiant or Intermittent Explosive Disorder have all been tossed around at various meetings with probation officers and social workers and counselors and teachers and school administrators. He's been on a slew of antipsychotic and mood altering pharmaceuticals, a Russian novel of behavioral plans. Nothing seems to work.

At the start of seventh grade, Michael was accepted to an accelerated program for highly gifted math and science students. His IQ is off the charts. When he's in a good mood, he will gladly bend your ear on subjects ranging from Greek mythology to the differences between Einsteinian and Newtonian physics to Doctor Who. He's in a good mood most of the time. But when he's not, watch out. And it's impossible to predict what will set him off.

Several weeks into his new junior high school, Michael began exhibiting increasingly odd and threatening behaviors at school. We decided to transfer him to the district's most restrictive behavioral program, a contained school environment where children who can't function in normal classrooms can access their right to free public babysitting from 7:30-1:50 Monday through Friday until they turn 18.

The morning of the pants incident, Michael continued to argue with me on the drive. He would occasionally apologize and seem remorseful. Right before we turned into his school parking lot, he said, "Look, Mom, I'm really sorry. Can I have video games back today?"

"No way," I told him. "You cannot act the way you acted this morning and think you can get your electronic privileges back that quickly."

His face turned cold, and his eyes were full of calculated rage. "Then I'm going to kill myself," he said. "I'm going to jump out of this car right now and kill myself."

That was it. After the knife incident, I told him that if he ever said those words again, I would take him straight to the mental hospital, no ifs, ands, or buts. I did not respond, except to pull the car into the opposite lane, turning left instead of right.

"Where are you taking me?" he said, suddenly worried. "Where are we going?"

"You know where we are going," I replied.

"No! You can't do that to me! You're sending me to hell! You're sending me straight to hell!"

I pulled up in front of the hospital, frantically waiving for one of the clinicians who happened to be standing outside. "Call the police," I said. "Hurry."

Michael was in a full-blown fit by then, screaming and hitting. I hugged him close so he couldn't escape from the car. He bit me several times and repeatedly jabbed his elbows into my rib cage. I'm still stronger than he is, but I won't be for much longer.

The police came quickly and carried my son screaming and kicking into the bowels of the hospital. I started to shake, and tears filled my eyes as I filled out the paperwork — "Were there any difficulties with… at what age did your child… were there any problems with.. has your child ever experienced.. does your child have…"

At least we have health insurance now. I recently accepted a position with a local college, giving up my freelance career because when you have a kid like this, you need benefits. You'll do anything for benefits. No individual insurance plan will cover this kind of thing.

For days, my son insisted that I was lying — that I made the whole thing up so that I could get rid of him. The first day, when I called to check up on him, he said, "I hate you. And I'm going to get my revenge as soon as I get out of here."

By day three, he was my calm, sweet boy again, all apologies and promises to get better. I've heard those promises for years. I don't believe them anymore.

On the intake form, under the question, "What are your expectations for treatment?" I wrote, "I need help."

And I do. This problem is too big for me to handle on my own. Sometimes there are no good options. So you just pray for grace and trust that in hindsight, it will all make sense.

I am sharing this story because I am Adam Lanza's mother. I am Dylan Klebold's and Eric Harris's mother. I am James Holmes's mother. I am Jared Loughner's mother. I am Seung-Hui Cho's mother. And these boys—and their mothers—need help. In the wake of another horrific national tragedy, it's easy to talk about guns. But it's time to talk about mental illness.

According to Mother Jones, since 1982, 61 mass murders involving firearms have occurred throughout the country. Of these, 43 of the killers were white males, and only one was a woman. Mother Jones focused on whether the killers obtained their guns legally (most did). But this highly visible sign of mental illness should lead us to consider how many people in the U.S. live in fear, like I do.

When I asked my son's social worker about my options, he said that the only thing I could do was to get Michael charged with a crime. "If he's back in the system, they'll create a paper trail," he said. "That's the only way you're ever going to get anything done. No one will pay attention to you unless you've got charges."

I don't believe my son belongs in jail. The chaotic environment exacerbates Michael's sensitivity to sensory stimuli and doesn't deal with the underlying pathology. But it seems like the United States is using prison as the solution of choice for mentally ill people. According to Human Rights Watch, the number of mentally ill inmates in U.S. prisons quadrupled from 2000 to 2006, and it continues to rise — in fact, the rate of inmate mental illness is five times greater (56 percent) than in the non-incarcerated population.

With state-run treatment centers and hospitals shuttered, prison is now the last resort for the mentally ill — Rikers Island, the LA County Jail and Cook County Jail in Illinois housed the nation's largest treatment centers in 2011.

No one wants to send a 13-year old genius who loves Harry Potter and his snuggle animal collection to jail. But our society, with its stigma on mental illness and its broken healthcare system, does not provide us with other options. Then another tortured soul shoots up a fast food restaurant. A mall. A kindergarten classroom. And we wring our hands and say, "Something must be done."

I agree that something must be done. It's time for a meaningful, nation-wide conversation about mental health. That's the only way our nation can ever truly heal.

God help me. God help Michael. God help us all.

Time.com, Huffington Post, MindBodyGreen, and other places. She blogs on children's mental health issues at [*1in5Minds.org.*]

36. Student Narrative Essay Examples

The Pot Calling the Kettle Black…

Essay by an anonymous student author, 2017.
Reproduced with permission from the student author.

"You aren't acting normal," my dad said with a dopy, concerned look on his face. He was a hard-working, soft and loving man. He was smaller than my mother, physically and figuratively. She sat beside him. She had a towering stature, with strong, swimmers' shoulders, but she was hunched often. She didn't really have eyebrows, but she didn't need them. She had no problem conveying emotion on her face, especially negative ones.

"What's wrong?" my mother asked. She took my hand frantically. Not the way one might take someone's hand to connect with or comfort them. She needed reassurance more than I did.

My parents were sitting across from me on cushioned, bland-colored chairs in my dad's office, while I sat on a rickety, torturous wooden chair. My dad's office generally utilized natural light due to the expansive glass windows that allowed the light to drown the room, enclosing us in the chamber. I felt like an inmate being prepped for lethal injection. The weather was particularly gray and dismal. Perhaps it was the ambiguous, gray, confusing feelings I was breathing through. My parents had somewhat regular "interventions" to address my somewhat regular (sometimes public) emotional breakdowns, my self-medicating habits, and my general shitty attitude.

This week in particular, I had purposely destroyed two of my mother's collectible horses. She had a maniacal obsession for them. She also maniacally collected sunflower artwork, which was the one obsession, of many, I found endearing. My old babysitter noted at one point there were 74 collectible horses in the house. After my outburst, there were 72.

I could see behind my parents, through the glass-paned door, my two younger sisters were secretly observing the altercation from the dining room, hiding under the table. They were illuminated by the ominous weather, which was also watching in on the dismal conversation through the windows. I was envious, jealous even, of my spectating sisters. My sisters didn't have overflowing, excessive emotions. They didn't have emotions that were considered "excessive." I felt like an offender being put at the stocks: my parents were the executioners, and my sisters were the jesters.

"I'm angry."

"What about?" my dad asked, puzzled. "Did someone do something to you?"

"Honey, were you—" my mother looked to my dad, then concealed her mouth slightly with the other hand, "*raped*?"

I couldn't help but raise my voice. "No, Mom, I wasn't raped, Jesus." I took a moment to grind on my teeth and imagine the bit I was chomping at. Calm, careful, composed, I responded. "I'm just angry. I don't feel—"

"What don't you feel?" She practically jumped on me, while yanking my imprisoned hand toward her. She yanked at my reins.

"I don't feel understood!" My mind was bucking. I didn't know why I needed to react by raising my voice. It felt instinctive, defensive. Shouting forcefully, I jerked my hand away from her, but it remained in her clutches. I didn't feel satisfied saying it, though what I said was the truth.

"What are you talking about?" my dad asked mournfully. I knew he felt betrayed. But he didn't understand. He didn't know what it's like for things to be too much. Or to be too much. My dad looked at me longingly, hoping I would correct what I had said. He looked lost, incapable of understanding why I was doing what I was doing. My mother interjected, cutting off my dad's hypnotic, silent cry for connection.

"You're crazy!" she said, maintaining eye contact. My mother then let go of my hand, flipped it back to me. She reclined in her chair, retracting from me and the discussion entirely. She crossed her legs, then her arms. She turned her head away, toward the glass windows, and (mentally) left.

***

I was and am not "too much."

I was diagnosed with bipolar disorder at 18 years old.

***

I had just stepped off a squealing MAX line onto a broken sidewalk slab, gnarled from tree roots, when I felt my phone buzz rhythmically.

"I need you to come to the hospital. Mom had a little accident." My dad's voice was distant and cracking, like a wavering radio signal, calling for help.

"What's going on? Is she okay?" I asked while making my way to campus.

"Where are you?" He wasn't going to tell me anything over the phone. Adrenaline set in. I let him know I was downtown and headed to campus, but that I would catch a Lyft to wherever they were. "We're at Milwaukie Providence. How soon can you get here?

"I'll let you know soon." My assumption was that my parents had been in an argument, my mother left the house in a rage, and crashed her car. She'd been an erratic driver for as long as I could remember, and my parents had been arguing more than usual recently, as many new "empty-nesters" do. The lack of information provided by my dad, however, was unsettling. I don't really recall the ride to the hospital. I do remember looking over the river while riding from the west to east side of town. I remember the menacing, dark clouds rolling in faster than the driver could transport me. I remember it was quick, but it was too much time spent without answers.

When I arrived at Providence, I jumped out of the sedan and galloped into the lobby of the emergency room like a race horse on its final lap. My younger sister and Dad were seated on cushioned, bland-colored chairs in the waiting room. There were expansive glass windows that allowed the light to drown the room. The weather was particularly gray and dismal. Perhaps it was the ambiguous, gray, confusing feelings I was breathing through. I sat down beside my dad, in a firmer-than-anticipated waiting room chair beside him. He took my hand frantically. He took it in the way one might take someone's hand to connect with or comfort them. He needed reassurance more than I did.

"Where did she get in the accident?" I asked.

My sister, sitting across from me with her head in her knees, looked up at me with aquamarine, tear-filled eyes. She was staring through me, an unclouded window. "Mom tried to kill herself."

"What?" My voice crescendoed from a normal volume to a shriek in the span of a single word. My mind felt like it was bucking. I grabbed at my hair, pulling it back tight with my spare hand. The tears and cries reared, no matter how hard I yanked my mane.

"We got in another argument this morning, and she sent me a message saying she didn't want to be in pain anymore. She told me to tell you girls she's sorry. I'm so sorry." I'd never seen my dad cry before; I didn't know he could. I didn't know his tears would stream like gushing water from a broken dam. He looked lost, incapable of understanding why she was doing what she was doing. I looked from my dad to my sister to my hands. One hand remained enveloped by my dad's gentle palm. At this point in life, I had not yet learned to be gentle with myself, or others. I cut off my dad's hypnotic, silent cry for connection.

"She's crazy!" I let go of my dad's hand, flipped it back to him. I reclined in the

chair, retracting from the situation entirely. I crossed my legs, then my arms. I turned my head away, toward the glass windows, and (mentally) left.

***

"Crazy" is a term devised to dismiss people.

My mother was diagnosed with bipolar disorder at 50 years old.

Teacher Takeaways

"This essay makes excellent use of repetition as a narrative strategy. Throughout the essay, terms and phrases are repeated, generally with slight alterations, drawing the reader's attention to the moment in question and recontextualizing the information being conveyed. This strategy is especially powerful when used to disclose the separate diagnoses of bipolar disorder, which is central to the narrative. I also appreciate the use of dialogue, though it mostly serves an expository function here. In itself that's effective, but this narrative would be strengthened if that dialogue could serve to make some of the characters, especially the mother, more rounded."

– Professor Dunham

My College Education

The following essay, "My College Education" is from

Chapter 15.2 – Narrative Essay, *Writing for Success*, University of Minnesota Libraries.

The first class I went to in college was philosophy, and it changed my life forever. Our first assignment was to write a short response paper to the Albert Camus essay "The Myth of Sisyphus." I was extremely nervous about the assignment as well as college. However, through all the confusion in philosophy class, many of my questions about life were answered.

I entered college intending to earn a degree in engineering. I always liked the way mathematics had right and wrong answers. I understood the logic and was very good at it. So when I received my first philosophy assignment that asked me to write my interpretation of the Camus essay, I was instantly confused. What is the right way to do this assignment, I wondered? I was nervous about writing an incorrect interpretation and did not want to get my first assignment wrong. Even more troubling was that the professor refused to give us any guidelines on what he was looking for; he gave us total freedom. He simply said, "I want to see what you come up with."

Full of anxiety, I first set out to read Camus's essay several times to make sure I really knew what was it was about. I did my best to take careful notes. Yet even after I took all these notes and knew the essay inside and out, I still did not know the right answer. What was my interpretation? I could think of a million different ways to interpret the essay, but which one was my professor looking for? In math class, I was used to examples and explanations of solutions. This assignment gave me nothing; I was completely on my own to come up with my individual interpretation.

Next, when I sat down to write, the words just did not come to me. My notes and ideas were all present, but the words were lost. I decided to try every prewriting strategy I could find. I brainstormed, made idea maps, and even wrote an outline. Eventually, after a lot of stress, my ideas became more organized and the words fell on the page. I had my interpretation of "The Myth of Sisyphus," and I had my main reasons for interpreting the essay. I remember being unsure of myself, wondering if what I was saying made sense, or if I was even on the right track. Through all the uncertainty, I continued writing the best I could. I finished the conclusion paragraph, had my spouse proofread it for errors, and turned it in the next day simply hoping for the best.

Then, a week or two later, came judgment day. The professor gave our papers back to us with grades and comments. I remember feeling simultaneously afraid and eager to get the paper back in my hands. It turned out, however, that I had nothing to worry about. The professor gave me an A on the paper, and his notes suggested that I wrote an effective essay overall. He wrote that my reading of the essay was very original and that my thoughts were well organized. My relief and newfound confidence upon reading his comments could not be overstated.

What I learned through this process extended well beyond how to write a college paper. I learned to be open to new challenges. I never expected to enjoy a philosophy class and always expected to be a math and science person. This class and assignment, however, gave me the self-confidence, critical-thinking skills, and courage to try a new career path. I left engineering and went on to study law and eventually became a lawyer. More important, that class and paper helped me understand education differently. Instead of seeing college as a direct stepping stone to a career, I learned to see college as a place to first learn and then seek a career or enhance an existing career. By giving me the space to express my own interpretation and to argue for my own values, my philosophy class taught me the importance of education for education's sake. That realization continues to pay dividends every day.

Model Student Essay

Innocence Again

Imagine the sensation of the one split second that you are floating through the air as you were thrown up in the air as a child, that feeling of freedom and carefree spirit as happiness abounds. Looking at the world through innocent eyes, all thoughts and feelings of amazement. Being free, happy, innocent, amazed, wowed. Imagine the first time seeing the colors when your eyes and brain start to recognize them but never being able to name the shade or hue. Looking at the sky as it changes from the blackness with twinkling stars to the lightest shade of blue that is almost white, then the deep red of the sunset and bright orange of the sun. All shades of the spectrum of the rainbow, colors as beautiful as the mind can see or imagine.

I have always loved the sea since I was young; the smell of saltiness in the air invigorates me and reminds me of the times spent with my family enjoying Sundays at the beach. In Singapore, the sea was always murky and green but I continued to enjoy all activities in it. When I went to Malaysia to work, I discovered that the sea was clear and blue and without hesitation, I signed up for a basic diving course and I was hooked. In my first year of diving, I explored all the dive destinations along the east coast of Malaysia and also took an advanced diving course which allowed me to dive up to a depth of thirty meters. Traveling to a dive site took no more than four hours by car and weekends were spent just enjoying the sea again.

Gearing up is no fun. Depending on the temperature of the water, I might put on a shortie, wetsuit or drysuit. Then on come the booties, fins and mask which can be considered the easiest part unless the suit is tight—then it is a hop and pull struggle, which reminds me of how life can be at times. Carrying the steel tank, regulator, buoyancy control device (BCD) and weights is a torture.

The heaviest weights that I ever had to use were 110 pounds, equivalent to my body weight; but as I jump in and start sinking into the sea, the contrast to weightlessness hits me. The moment that I start floating in the water, a sense of immense freedom and joy overtakes me.

Growing up, we have to learn the basics: time spent in classes to learn, constantly practicing to improve our skills while safety is ingrained by our parents. In dive classes, I was taught to never panic or do stupid stuff: the same with the lessons that I have learned in life. Panic and over-inflated egos can lead to death, and I have heard it happens all the time. I had the opportunity to go to Antarctica for a diving expedition, but what led to me getting that slot was the death of a very experienced diver who used a drysuit in a tropic climate against all advice. He just overheated and died. Lessons learned in the sea can be very profound, but they contrast the life I live: risk-taker versus risk-avoider. However, when I have perfected it and it is time to be unleashed, it is time to enjoy. I jump in as I would jump into any opportunity, but this time it is into the deep blue sea of wonders.

A sea of wonders waits to be explored. Every journey is different: it can be fast or slow, like how life takes me. The sea decides how it wants to carry me; drifting fast with the currents so that at times, I hang on to the reef and corals like my life depends on it, even though I am taught never to touch anything underwater. The fear I feel when I am speeding along with the current is that I will be swept away into the big ocean, never to be found. Sometimes, I feel like I am not moving at all, kicking away madly until I hyperventilate because the sea is against me with its strong current holding me against my will.

The sea decides what it wants me to see: turtles popping out of the seabed, manta rays gracefully floating alongside, being in the middle of the eye of a barracuda hurricane, a coral shelf as big as a car, a desert of bleached corals, the emptiness of the seabed with not a fish in sight, the memorials of death caused by the December 26 tsunami—a barren sea floor with not a soul or life in sight.

The sea decides what treasures I can discover: a black-tipped shark sleeping in an underwater cavern, a pike hiding from predators in the reef, an octopus under a dead tree trunk that escapes into my buddy's BCD, colorful mandarin fish mating at sunset, a deadly box jellyfish held in my gloved hands, pygmy seahorses in a fern—so tiny that to discover them is a journey itself.

Looking back, diving has taught me more about life, the ups and downs, the good and bad, and to accept and deal with life's challenges. Everything I learn and discover underwater applies to the many different aspects of my life. It has also taught me that life is very short: I have to live in the moment or I will miss the opportunities that come my way. I allow myself to forget all my sorrow, despair and disappointments when I dive into the deep blue sea and savor the feelings of peacefulness and calmness. There is nothing around me but fish and corals, big and small. Floating along in silence with only the sound of my breath—*inhale and exhale*. An array of colors explodes in front of my eyes, colors that I never imagine I will discover again, an underwater rainbow as beautiful as the rainbow in the sky after a storm. As far as my eyes can see, I look into the depth of the ocean with nothing to anchor me. The deeper I get, the darker it turns. From the light blue sky to the deep navy blue, even blackness into the void. As the horizon darkens, the feeding frenzy of the underwater world starts and the watery landscape comes alive. Total darkness surrounds me but the sounds that I can hear are the little clicks in addition to my breathing. My senses overload as I cannot see what is around me, but the sea tells me it is alive and it anchors me to the depth of my soul.

As Ralph Waldo Emerson once said: "The lover of nature is he whose inward and outward senses are truly adjusted to each other; who has retained the spirit of infancy even into the era of manhood." … In the presence of nature, a wild delight runs through the man in spite of real sorrows…." The sea and diving have given me a new outlook on life, a different planet where I can float into and enjoy as an adult, a new, different perspective on how it is to be that child again. Time and time again as I enter into the sea, I feel innocent all over again.

37. Resource Videos

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://idaho.pressbooks.pub/write/?p=94#oembed-1

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://idaho.pressbooks.pub/write/?p=94#oembed-2

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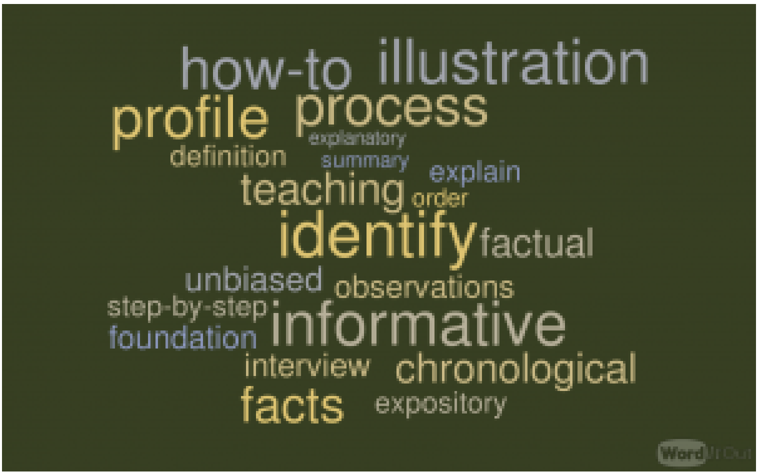
One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://idaho.pressbooks.pub/write/?p=94#oembed-4

Personal Narratives as Videos

- *The Bookmobile* from StoryCorp Shorts / PBS / Point of View
- Curtis "Wall Street" Carroll, *How I Learned to Read – and Trade Stocks – in Prison*, TED Talk

PART V

WRITING TO INFORM



38. Introduction to Informative Writing

AMY MINERVINI

Overview

By Amy Minervini

Overview

Exposition is writing that explains, informs, or describes. This type of writing is also known as the **informative mode** in that the main objective is <u>not</u> to narrate a story or persuade readers of something but rather **to convey factual information**, including observations and personal/others' experiences. However, when writing an expository essay, you can include elements from other modes (storytelling, analysis, writer impressions, persuasion, etc.) although these would be secondary aims or even implied. The expository composition is a practical, authentic kind of writing that can stand on its own or serve as the foundation for your more developed research essays.

Key Characteristics

Expository writing generally exhibits the following:

- Emphasis on facts, observations, or personal/others' experiences
- Organization marked by a logical flow or progression of information; chronological, order of importance/priority, or the step-by-step approach are the most common; transitions that guide the reader
- Close attention paid to detail and description
- No noticeable writer bias

Essay types within this Chapter

- Process analysis (how-to)
- Profile
- Definition
- Illustration
- Summary

Introduction to the General Expository Essay

The following is excerpted from Crystle Bruno's *Commonsense Composition* 3.1 Expository Essay

The main aim of an expository essay is to provide an effective explanation of a topic. While a descriptive essay strives to describe a subject or a narrative essay seeks to show personal growth, an expository essay tries to explain a topic or situation. Thus, expository essays are written as if the writer is explaining or clarifying a topic to the reader. Since an expository essay is trying to clarify a topic, it is important that it provides the categories or reasons that support the clarification of the paper. Moreover, these categories and reasons also provide the framework for the organization of the paper.

Components of the expository essay as the parts of a house.

Much like the categories are essential to clarifying the topic, organization is the key to any well-developed essay. When composing your essay, think of its organization as a house, with each component of an essay representing a major part of a house. Just as the foundation provides support on which a house can be built, a thesis represents the foundation upon which to build an essay. The introductory paragraph then functions as both the door and framework for an expository essay. Like a house door, the introductory paragraph must allow the reader to enter into the essay. Additionally, just as walls are built upon the framework of a house, the body paragraphs of an essay are organized around the framework or organizational scheme, presented in the introductory paragraph. The body paragraphs, much like the walls of a house, must be firm, strong and complete. Also, there must always be as many body paragraphs as the framework of the introductory paragraph indicates otherwise your essay will resemble a house that is missing a wall. Finally, an essay must include a conclusion paragraph that tops off the essay much like a roof completes a house. As the roof cements the structure of the house and helps hold the walls in place, the conclusion paragraph must reiterate the points within your body paragraphs and complete an essay.

Although the overall organization of an expository essay is important, you must also understand the organization of each component (the introductory, body and conclusion paragraphs) of your essay. The chart below identifies the essential parts of each component of your essay, explaining the necessary information for each type of paragraph. While the guidelines listed below may feel constrictive, they are merely meant to guide you as a writer. Ultimately, the guidelines should help you write more effectively. The more familiar you become with how to organize an essay, the more energy you can focus on your ideas and your writing. As a result, your writing will improve as your ability to organize your ideas improves. Plus, focusing your energy on your argument and ideas rather than the organization makes your job as a writer more exciting and fun.

Introductory Paragraph:

- Introduce the issue.
- Present the topic and its explanation or clarification.
- Provide the categories used to explain the topic.
- Provide the thesis statement.

Body Paragraphs:

- Begin with a topic sentence that reflects an explanation of the paper and the category being discussed in the paragraph.
- Support the argument with useful and informative quotes from sources such as books, journal articles, etc.
- Provide 2-3 quotes that connect the category being discussed to the explanation
- Provide 2-3 sentences explaining each quote more full, drawing stronger connections between the category and the explanation.
- Ensure that the information in these paragraphs is important to the thesis statement.
- End each paragraph with a transition sentence which leads into the next body paragraph.

Concluding Paragraph:

- Begin with a topic sentence that reflects the argument of the thesis statement.
- Briefly summarize the main points of the paper.
- Provide a strong and effective close for the paper.

Introductory Paragraphs

A strong introductory paragraph is crucial to the development of an effective expository essay. Unlike an argumentative essay which takes a stand or forms an opinion about a subject, an expository essay is used when the writer wishes to explain or clarify a topic to the reader. In order to properly explain a topic, an expository essay breaks the topic being addressed into parts, explains each component in relation to the whole and uses each component to justify the explanation of the topic. Thus when writing an introductory paragraph, it is crucial to include the explanation or clarification of the topic and the categories or components used to produce this explanation.

Introductory Paragraph:

- Introduce the issue.
- Present the topic and its explanation or clarification.
- Provide the categories used to explain the topic.
- Provide the thesis statement.

Since the success of the paper rests on the introductory paragraph, it is important to understand its essential components. Usually, expository papers fail to provide a clear explanation not because the writer's lacks explanations or clarifications but rather because the explanations are not properly organized and identified in the introductory paragraph. One of the most important jobs of an introductory paragraph is that it introduces the topic or issue. Most explanations cannot be clarified without at least some background information. Thus, it is essential to provide a foundation for your topic before you begin explaining your topic. For instance, if you wanted to explain what happened at the first Olympic Games, your introductory paragraph would first need to provide background information about how the first games happened. In doing so, you ensure that your audience is as informed about your topic as you are and thus you make it easier for your audience to understand your explanation.

Below is a table describing and explaining the main jobs of the introductory paragraph.

Introductory paragraphs introduce the topic and suggest why it is important.

Example: *An analysis of the essay exam results of the new English class shows that the new class format promotes close reading and better essay organization.*

This sentence tells the reader both that the topic of the paper will be the benefits of the new English class and that the significance of these benefits is the improvement of close reading and essay organization.

Introductory paragraphs outline the structure of the paper and highlight the main ideas.

Example: *Considering the results of the High School Exit Exam, it* *is apparent that school curriculum is not properly addressing basic math skills such as fractions, percentages and long division.*

This sentence indicates that main ideas (fractions, percentages and long division) of the essay and indicates the order in which they will be presented in the body paragraphs.

Introductory paragraphs state the thesis.

Example: *California high schools will require all students to take a resume and cover letter writing workshop in order to better prepare them for employment.*

This thesis statement indicates the explanation of the paper.

In addition to introducing the topic of your paper, your introductory paragraph also needs to introduce each of the arguments you will cover in your body paragraphs. By providing your audience with an idea of the points or arguments you will make later in your paper, your introductory paragraph serves as a guide map, not only for your audience but also for you. Including your main sub-points in your introduction not only allows your audience to understand where your essay is headed but also helps you as a writer remember how you want to organize your paper. This is especially helpful if you are not writing your essay in one sitting as it allows you to leave and return to your essay without forgetting all of the important points you wanted to make.

Things to always do	Things to never do
• Capture the interest of your reader. • Introduce the issue to the reader. • State the problem simply. • Write in an intelligible, concise manner. • Refute any counterpoints. • State the thesis, preferably in one arguable statement. • Provide each of the arguments that will be presented in each of the body paragraphs.	• Apologize: Do not suggest that you are unfamiliar with the topic. **Example:** "*I cannot be certain, but…*" • Use sweeping generalizations. **Example:** "*All men like football…*" • Use a dictionary definition. **Example:** "*According to the dictionary, a humble person is…*" • Announce your intentions: Do not directly state what you will be writing about. **Example:** "*In the paper I will…*"

Most importantly, when writing an introductory paragraph, it is essential to remember that you must capture the interest of your reader. Thus, it is your job as the writer to make the introduction entertaining or intriguing. In order to do so, consider using a quotation, a surprising or interesting fact, an anecdote or a humorous story. While the quotation, story or fact you include must be relevant to your paper, placing one of these at the beginning of your introduction helps you not only capture the attention or the reader but also introduce your topic and argument, making your introduction interesting to your audience and useful for your argument and essay.

Body Paragraphs

In an expository essay the body paragraphs are where the writer has the opportunity to explain or clarify his or her viewpoint. By the conclusion paragraph, the writer should adequately clarify the topic for the reader. Regardless of a strong thesis statement that properly indicates the major sub-topics of the essay, papers with weak body paragraphs fail to properly explain the topic and indicate why it is important. Body paragraphs of an expository essay are weak when no examples are used to help illuminate the topic being discussed or when they are poorly organized. Occasionally, body paragraphs are also weak because the quotes used complicate from rather than simplify the explanation. Thus, it is essential to use appropriate support and to adequately explain your support within your body paragraphs.

In order to create a body paragraph that is properly supported and explained, it is important to understand the components that make up a strong body paragraph. The bullet points below indicate the essential components of a well-written, well-argued body paragraph.

Body Paragraph Components

- Begin with a topic sentence that reflects the argument of the thesis statement.
- Support the argument with useful and informative quotes from sources such as books, journal articles, expert opinions, etc.
- Provide 1-2 sentences explaining each quote.
- Provide 1-3 sentences that indicate the significance of each quote.
- Ensure that the information provided is relevant to the thesis statement.
- End with a transition sentence which leads into the next body paragraph.

Just as your introduction must introduce the topic of your essay, the first sentence of a body paragraph must introduce the main sub-point for that paragraph. For instance, if you were writing a body paragraph for a paper explaining the factors that led to US involvement in World War II, one body paragraph could discuss the impact of the Great Depression on the decision to enter the war. To do so, you would begin with a topic sentence that explains how the Great Depression encouraged involvement in the war because the war effort would stimulate certain aspects of the economy. Following this sentence, you would go into more detail and explain how the two events are linked. By placing this idea at the beginning of the paragraph, not only does your audience know what the paragraph is explaining, but you can also keep track of your ideas.

Following the topic sentence, you must provide some sort of fact that supports your claim. In the example of the World War II essay, maybe you would provide a quote from a historian or from a prominent history teacher or researcher. After your quote or fact, you must always explain what the quote or fact is saying, stressing what you believe is most important about your fact. It is important to remember that your audience may read a quote and decide it is indicating something entirely different than what you think it is explaining. Or, maybe some or your readers think another aspect of your quote is important. If you do not explain the quote and indicate what portion of it is relevant to your clarification, than your reader may become confused or may be unconvinced of your explanation. Consider the possible interpretations for the statement below.

Example: While the U.S. involvement in World War II was not the major contributor to the ending of the Great Depression, the depression was one of the primary motives for entering the war.

Interestingly, this statement seems to be saying two things at once – that the Great Depression helped spark involvement in the war and that World War II did not end the depression alone. On the one hand, the historian seems to say that the two events are not directly linked. However, on the other hand, the historian also indicates that the two events are linked in that the depression caused U.S. involvement in the war. Because of the tension in this quotation, if you used this quote for your World War II essay, you would need to explain that the significant portion of the quote is the assertion that links the events.

In addition to explaining what this quote is saying, you would also need to indicate why this is important to your explanation. When trying to indicate the significance of a fact, it is essential to try to answer the “so what.” Image you have just finished explaining your quote to someone and they have asked you “so what?” The person does not understand why you have explained this quote, not because you have not explained the quote well but because you have not told him or her why he or she needs to know what the quote means. This, the answer to the “so what,” is the significance of your paper and is essentially your clarification within the body paragraphs. However, it is important to remember that generally a body paragraph will contain more than one quotation or piece of support. Thus, you must repeat the Quotation-Explanation-Significance formula several times within your body paragraph to fully explain the one sub-point indicated in your topic sentence. Below is an example of a properly written body paragraph.

Example of an expository body paragraph paired with an explanation of its parts.

Conclusion Paragraph

The conclusion paragraph of an expository essay is an author’s last chance to create a good impression. Hence, it is important to restate the thesis statement at the beginning of the paragraph in order to remind the reader of your topic and explanation. Since it is at the end of the paper, the conclusion paragraph also should add a sense of closure and finality to the clarification of the paper. It is important to re-emphasize the main idea without being repetitive or introducing an entirely new idea or subtopic. While you can conclude your conclusion paragraph by suggesting a topic for further research or investigation, do not make this question the focus of the paragraph. Thus, you should briefly and concisely reiterate the strongest clarifications of the paper, reminding the reader of the validity of your thesis or explanation and bringing closure to your paper.

Concluding Paragraph:

- Begin with a topic sentence that reflects the argument of the thesis statement.
- Briefly summarize the main points of the paper.

- Provide a strong and effective close for the paper.

Things to always do	Things to never do
	• Rework your introduction or thesis statement.
• Include a brief summary of the main idea.	• Use overused phrases.
• Be concise.	• **Example:** "*In summary…*" or "*In conclusion…*"
• Provide a sense of closure.	• Announce what you have written in the body of the essay
	• **Example:** "*In this paper I have emphasized the importance of…*"
	• Apologize.
	• **Example:** "*Although I do not have all the answers…*"
	• Make absolute claims.
	• **Example:** "*This proves that the government should…*"

You may feel that the conclusion paragraph is redundant or unnecessary; However, do not forget that this is your last chance to explain the significance of your argument to your audience. Just as your body paragraphs strive to present the significance of each fact or quote you use, your conclusion paragraph should sum up the significance of your argument. Thus, you should consider making a bold statement in your concluding paragraph by evoking a vivid image, suggesting results or consequences related to your argument or ending with a warning. Through using these components, you not only make your conclusion paragraph more exciting, but you also make your essay and your argument, more important.

Review Questions

What are three of the main purposes of an introductory paragraph?

1. What should you never do in an introductory paragraph?
2. How should you refute counterpoints?
3. What is the formula for a well-argued body paragraph?
4. What should you include in a conclusion paragraph? What should never include in a conclusion paragraph?

39. Process ("How To")

[AUTHOR REMOVED AT REQUEST OF ORIGINAL PUBLISHER]

13 min read

Addresses Idaho Competency and Knowledge Objective #2 : *Adopt strategies and genre that are appropriate to the rhetorical situation*

Learning Objectives

1. Determine the purpose and structure of the process analysis essay.
2. Understand how to write a process analysis essay.

The Purpose of Process Analysis in Writing

The purpose of a process analysis essay is to explain how to do something or how something works. In either case, the formula for a process analysis essay remains the same. The process is articulated into clear, definitive steps.

Almost everything we do involves following a step-by-step process. From riding a bike as children to learning various jobs as adults, we initially needed instructions to effectively execute the task. Likewise, we have likely had to instruct others, so we know how important good directions are—and how frustrating it is when they are poorly put together.

Writing at Work

The next time you have to explain a process to someone at work, be mindful of how clearly you articulate each step. Strong communication skills are critical for workplace satisfaction and advancement. Effective process analysis plays a critical role in developing that skill set.

Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, make a bulleted list of all the steps that you feel would be required to clearly illustrate three of the following four processes:

1. Tying a shoelace
2. Parallel parking
3. Planning a successful first date
4. Being an effective communicator

The Structure of a Process Analysis Essay

The process analysis essay opens with a discussion of the process and a thesis statement that states the goal of the process.

The organization of a process analysis essay typically follows chronological order. The steps of the process are conveyed in the order in which they usually occur. Body paragraphs will be constructed based on these steps. If a particular step is complicated and needs a lot of explaining, then it will likely take up a paragraph on its own. But if a series of simple steps is easier to understand, then the steps can be grouped into a single paragraph.

The time transition phrases covered in the Narration and Illustration sections are also helpful in organizing process analysis essays (see Table 10.1 "Transition Words and Phrases for Expressing Time" and Table 10.2 "Phrases of Illustration"). Words such as *first*, *second*, *third*, *next*, and *finally* are helpful cues to orient reader and organize the content of essay.

Tip

Always have someone else read your process analysis to make sure it makes sense. Once we get too close to a subject, it is difficult to determine how clearly an idea is coming across. Having a friend or coworker read it over will serve as a good way to troubleshoot any confusing spots.

Exercise 2

Choose two of the lists you created in Note 10.52 "Exercise 1" and start writing out the processes in paragraph form. Try to construct paragraphs based on the complexity of each step. For complicated steps, dedicate an entire paragraph. If less complicated steps fall in succession, group them into a single paragraph.

Writing a Process Analysis Essay

Choose a topic that is interesting, is relatively complex, and can be explained in a series of steps. As with other rhetorical writing modes, choose a process that you know well so that you can more easily describe the finer details about each step in the process. Your thesis statement should come at the end of your introduction, and it should state the final outcome of the process you are describing.

Body paragraphs are composed of the steps in the process. Each step should be expressed using strong details and clear examples. Use time transition phrases to help organize steps in the process and to orient readers. The conclusion should thoroughly describe the result of the process described in the body paragraphs. See an example of a process analysis essay below from https://open.lib.umn.edu/writingforsuccess/chapter/15-6-process-analysis-essay/.

How to Grow Tomatoes from a Seedling

Growing tomatoes is a simple and rewarding task, and more people should be growing them. This paper walks readers through the main steps for growing and maintaining patio tomatoes from a seedling.

The first step in growing tomatoes is determining if you have the appropriate available space and sunlight to grow them. All tomato varieties require full sunlight, which means at least six hours of direct sun every day. If you have south-facing windows or a patio or backyard that receives direct sunlight, you should be able to grow tomatoes. Choose the location that receives the most sun.

Next, you need to find the right seedling. Growing tomatoes and other vegetables from seeds can be more complicated (though it is not difficult), so I am only discussing how to grow tomatoes from a seedling. A seedling, for those who do not know, is typically understood as a young plant that has only recently started growing from the seed. It can be anything from a newly germinated plant to a fully flowering plant. You can usually find tomato seedlings at your local nursery for an affordable price. Less than five dollars per plant is a common price. When choosing the best seedling, look for a plant that is short with healthy, full leaves and no flowers. This last point tends to be counterintuitive, but it is extremely important. You do not want a vegetable plant that has already started flowering in the nursery because it will have a more difficult time adapting to its new environment when you replant it. Additionally, choose a plant with one strong main stem. This is important because the fewer stems that a tomato plant has, the more easily it can transport nutrients to the fruit. Multiple stems tend to divide nutrients in less efficient ways, often resulting in either lower yields or smaller fruit.

Once you have found the right seedlings to plant back home, you need to find the best way of planting them. I recommend that you plant your tomatoes in containers. If you have the space and sunlight, then you can certainly plant them in the ground, but a container has several advantages and is usually most manageable for the majority of gardeners. The containers can be used in the house, on a patio, or anywhere in the backyard, and they are portable. Containers also tend to better regulate moisture and drain excess water. Choose a container that is at least 10 inches in diameter and at least 1 foot deep. This will provide sufficient room for root development.

In addition to the container, you also need the appropriate soil mixture and draining mechanisms. For the best drainage, fill the bottom of your container with 2 or 3 inches of gravel. On top of the gravel, fill ¾ of the container with soil. Choose a well-balanced organic soil. The three main ingredients you will find described on soil bags are N-P-K—that is, nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. Without going into too much detail about the role of each element in plant growth, I will tell you that an average vegetable will grow fine in a 10-5-5 mixture. This ratio, too, will be easy to find at your local nursery.

Once you have the gravel in the bottom of the container and the soil on top, you are ready to transplant the tomato. Pick up the tomato in the plastic container it comes in from the nursery. Turn it upside down, and holding the stem between your fingers, pat the bottom lightly several times, and the plant should fall into your hand. Next, you should gently break up the root ball that formed in the nursery container with your hands. Be gentle, but be sure to rip them up a bit; this helps generate new root growth in the new container. Be careful not to damage the roots too much, as this could stunt the growth or even destroy the plant altogether.

Next, carve out a hole in the soil to make space for the plant. Make it deep enough to go about an inch higher than it was previously buried and wide enough so all the roots can comfortably fit within and beneath it. Place the seedling in the hole and push the removed soil back on top to cover the base of the plant. After that, the final step in planting your tomato is mulch. Mulch is not necessary for growing plants, but it can be very helpful in maintaining moisture, keeping out weeds, and regulating soil temperature. Place 2–3 inches of mulch above the soil and spread it out evenly.

Once the mulch is laid, you are mostly done. The rest is all watering, waiting, and maintenance. After you lay the mulch, pour the plant a heavy amount of water. Water the plant at its base until you see water coming through the bottom of the container. Wait ten minutes, and repeat. This initial watering is very important for establishing new roots. You should continue to keep the soil moist, but never soaking wet. One healthy watering each morning should be sufficient for days without rain. You can often forego watering on days with moderate rainfall. Watering in the morning is preferable to the evening because it lessens mold and bacteria growth.

Choosing to grow the patio variety of tomatoes is easiest because patio tomatoes do not require staking or training around cages. They grow in smaller spaces and have a determinate harvest time. As you continue to water and monitor your plant, prune unhealthy looking leaves to the main stem, and cut your tomatoes down at the stem when they ripen to your liking. As you can see, growing tomatoes can be very easy and manageable for even novice gardeners. The satisfaction of picking and eating fresh food, and doing it yourself, outweighs all the effort you put in over the growing season.

Exercise 3

Choose one of the expanded lists from Note 10.54 “Exercise 2”. Construct a full process analysis essay from the work you have already done. That means adding an engaging introduction, a clear thesis, time transition phrases, body paragraphs, and a solid conclusion.

Key Takeaways

- A process analysis essay explains how to do something, how something works, or both.
- The process analysis essay opens with a discussion of the process and a thesis statement that states the outcome of the process.
- The organization of a process analysis essay typically follows a chronological sequence.
- Time transition phrases are particularly helpful in process analysis essays to organize steps and orient reader.

40. Profile

Introduction to the Profile

by Kate Geiselman, Sinclair Community College

The purpose of a profile is to give the reader new insight into a particular person, place, or event. The distinction between a profile and, for example, a memoir or a biography is that a profile relies on newly acquired knowledge. It is a first-hand account of someone or something as told by the writer. You have probably read profiles of famous or interesting people in popular magazines or newspapers. Travel and science publications may profile interesting or unusual places. All of these are, in effect, observation essays. A curious writer gathers as much information as s/he can about a subject, and then presents it in an engaging way. A good profile shows the reader something new or unexpected about the subject.

Dialogue, description, specific narrative action, and vivid details are all effective means of profiling your subject. Engage your reader's senses. Give them a sense of what it's like to be in a particular place. Try to show your reader what's behind the scenes of a familiar place or activity, or introduce them to someone unique.

A profile is not strictly objective. Rather than merely reporting facts, a profile works to create a dominant impression. The focus of a profile is on the subject, not on the writer's experience. However, the writer is still "present" in a profile, as it is s/he who selects which details to reveal and decides what picture they want to paint. It is the writer's job to use the information and writing strategies that best contribute to this dominant impression, which was a concept discussed in the narrative introduction as well.

Above all, a profile should have a clear angle. In other words, there should be an idea or purpose guiding it. Why do you think your subject is something other people will be interested in reading about? What is the impression you hope to convey? The answer to these questions will help you discover your angle.

Writing Strategies for Profiles

Conducting research

Observation

The best way to conduct research about your subject is to observe it firsthand. Once you have decided on a topic, you should spend some time gathering information about it. If you decide to profile a place, pay a visit to it and take notes. Write down everything you can; you can decide later whether or not it's relevant. If you have a smartphone, take pictures or make recordings to refer to later. Most people think of observing as something you do with your eyes, but try to use of all of your senses. Smells, sounds, and sensations will add texture to your descriptions. You may also spend time observing your subject at his/her work or in different contexts. Again, write everything down so you don't forget the key details. Remember, it's the specific details that will distinguish the great profiles from the merely proficient ones.

Interviewing

If you choose to profile a person, you will want to conduct an interview with him/her. Before doing so, plan what you are going to ask. You probably have a good idea of why this person will be a good subject for a profile, so be sure your questions reflect that. Saying "tell me about yourself" is unlikely to get your subject talking. Saying, "tell me what it was like to be the first person in your family to go to college," will get a much more specific answer.

Organizing your profile

Once you have gathered all of your information, it's time to start thinking about how to organize it. There are all different ways to write a profile, but the most common organizational strategies are chronological, spatial, and topical. Most profiles are some combination of the three.

Chronological order is presenting details as they happened in time, from start to finish. A chronological profile of a person might talk about their past, work up to their present, and maybe even go on to plans for the future. A chronological profile of an event might begin and end when the event itself does, narrating the events between in the order they happened. If you're profiling a place, a chronological profile might begin with your first impressions arriving there and end with your departure. The advantage to writing in chronological order is that your writing will unfold naturally and transition easily from start to finish. The disadvantage, though, is that strict chronological order can get tedious. Merely recounting a conversation or experience can be dry, and can also pull focus from the subject onto the writer's experience.

Spatial organization is presenting information as it occurs in space or by location. This is a great choice if you're writing about a place. Think of it as taking your reader on a tour: from room to room of a house, for example. For an event, you might move your reader from place to place. If you are writing about a concert, for instance, you might describe the venue from the outside, then the seating area, then the stage. Spatial organization can even work for a person, depending on your focus. Try profiling a person at home, work, and school, for example.

Topical organization is just what it sounds like: one topic at a time. Think first of what you want to say about a person or place and organize details and information by subject. A profile of a person might talk about their home life, their work, and their hobbies. A topical profile of a place might focus on the physical space, the people who inhabit it, its historical significance, etc. Look at the information you gather from observation and/or interviewing and see if any topics stand out, and organize your paper around them. Most profiles are some combination of chronological, spatial, and topical organization. A profile might begin with a chronological narrative of a hockey game, and then flashback to provide some background information about the star player. Then it might go on to talk about that player's philosophy of the sport, returning to the narrative about the game later on. As you read the sample essays, notice how the writers choose details and arrange them in order to create a specific impression.

Using description

Vivid descriptions are key in a profile. They immerse your reader in the subject and add texture and depth to your writing. However, describing something is more than deploying as many adjectives as possible. In fact, the best descriptions may not have any adjectives at all. They rely instead on sensory detail and figurative language. Sensory detail is exactly what it sounds like: appealing to as many of the reader's senses as possible. Adjectives can be vague, and even subjective. Think about this example:

"*My grandmother always smelled good.*"

What does good mean? What does good smell like? Do we even agree on what kinds of things smell good? Instead, try this:

"*My grandmother always smelled good: like Shalimar, Jergen's lotion, and menthol cigarettes.*"

Now your reader knows much more. Perhaps they are even familiar enough with those scents that they can imagine what that combination would smell like. Moreover, you have delivered some emotional information here. Not every reader would agree that the smell of cigarettes is "good," but perhaps that smell is comforting to you because you associate it so strongly with someone you care about. Of course, smell is not the only sense you can appeal to. Sights, sounds, temperatures and tastes will also enliven your writing.

Figurative language can add depth and specificity to your descriptions. Use metaphors, similes, comparisons and images creatively and purposefully. Consider the following:

"*She was so beautiful.*"

"Beautiful" just doesn't tell us much. It is, like "good," both vague and subjective. We don't all have the same standards of beauty, nor is beauty one particular quality. Try a comparison instead:

"She was so beautiful that conversation stopped every time she entered a room."

True, we don't know much about what she looks like, but we do know that nearly everyone finds her striking.

Similes (comparisons using like or as) are not only efficient, but are also more vivid than adjectives. Compare these two sentences:

"He was short and muscular." **vs.** *"He was built like a bulldog."*

See?

Write With Clarity

by Joseph M. Moxley, *Writing Commons*

Considering point of view

Because a profile is a first-hand account, you will need to consider point of view carefully. Many profiles are written entirely in third person. Others use first person. Different instructors may have different expectations, so be sure to consult your assignment guidelines to see what your options are. In a third-person profile, the writer is not "present" in the writing. S/he does not refer to his/her own actions or use first-person pronouns, but is more of an objective observer or "fly on the wall." Most journalistic profiles are written from this point of view. The advantage of using third person is that it places your subject firmly at the center of your paper. In a first-person profile, the writer is an active participant, sharing his/her observations with the reader. First person narration closes the distance between writer and reader and makes the subject feel more personal. On the downside, it can pull focus from your subject. If you use first person, be sure you're not intruding on your subject too much or making the piece about you.

From: The First Person By Fredrik deBoer, *Writing Commons*

Using appropriate verb tense

Often, profiles will be written in present tense. This gives the reader the sense that s/he is "there," experiencing the subject along with the writer. Present tense lends a sense of immediacy and intimacy that past tense may not. It may also help the writer stay focused on the "here and now," rather than reflecting on the past, as s/he might in a memoir. Other times, writers may need to shift tenses to talk about previous events or background information. Be sure to use verb tenses carefully, shifting only purposefully, correctly, and when the subject demands it. You can read more on tense shifts here.

Finding a topic and an angle

Virtually anything can be the subject of a profile. What matters is that you have something to say about it. People are an endless source of material; everyone has a story. Make a list of people you know who

– have lived through important historical events: war, the civil rights era, the Depression, etc.

– have been through challenging experiences: survived a major health crisis, difficult childhood, etc.

– have an unusual job or hobby, or special talent or skill.

– have unique personalities: they are eccentric, funny, selfless, energetic, artistic, etc.

Places can be equally interesting. Consider a local establishment, a natural wonder, a festival or celebration, a landmark, a museum, a gathering place, etc. What makes that place interesting and worth visiting? What makes it special or noteworthy?

Don't just think about what you want to write about; instead, think about what you want to say about it. Why is it interesting to you, and why might your audience find it worth reading about?

Student Paper Rationale

For an assignment to write a profile essay, Joshua Dawson described his purpose and audience: "This essay is about my grandmother and how she overcame the hardships of life. [. . .] The purpose of this essay is to show how a woman can be tough and can take anything life throws at her. I hope the essay reaches students who have a single parent and those who don't know what a single parent goes through." Joshua showed a clear idea of what he wanted his essay to do.

Sample profiles

As you read the sample profiles provided or linked in this chapter, consider the following:

- What dominant impression is the writer trying to convey?
- How effectively does the writer use sensory detail and figurative language?
- What is the writer's point of view (first person, third person, or mixed)?
- How is the profile organized (chronological, spatial, topical, or some combination thereof)?
- What tense does the writer use, and what effect does this have?

Profile Example

The following profile was excerpted from pp. 64- 68: Girard, Rosemary, "The professional writer's many personae: Creative nonfiction, popular writing, speechwriting, and personal narrative" (2015). Senior Honors Projects, 2010-current. 109. https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/honors201019/109

Joseph Larson, who surprised everyone but himself

*Sometimes in life we think we have drive. Then we hear stories like *Joseph Larson's. *Name has been changed for privacy*

If you happen to catch Joseph Larson grabbing his double shot espresso every morning, he looks much like the suit-and-tie, briefcase-in-hand worker we expect to brush elbows with some of the government's most influential employees.

Every morning, he makes the fifteen-minute walk from his home in Northern Virginia to the metro station and commutes on the

Orange and Green Lines to Washington, D.C. I've made a similar Arlington-to-Washington commute during rush hour, observing the hard-faced, overtired, overachieving men and women in suits whom I'd like to offer a smile and a cup of strong coffee. But something tells me Larson would catch my eye. Even if I weren't aware of his profession, something about the quizzical, concentrated, and analytical way he was reading the newspaper might tip me off: he's a lawyer.

But he's not the guy with an earpiece in, swiping and tapping his iPhone screen. He's the kind of man who—perhaps by his legal training, but more likely because of his inherent disposition—pensively absorbs information; the kind of man who, on a daily basis, makes critical legal decisions, yet is far beyond the intellectual limits of taking one's self too seriously.

One thing I wouldn't guess about Larson by my metro observation, though, is this: he is a high school dropout. Without a high school diploma, or even a GED, to his name, Larson climbed himself out of a broken family, an abandoned home, and a completely "adult" life thrust upon him at the shy age of ten years old.

Growing up in the Los Angeles basin, Larson spent the first ten or eleven years of his life in what he described vividly as a typical one-story, single-family house in the foothills of the San Bernadino mountains. He fondly recalled running barefoot and shirtless through the orange and lemon groves surrounding his house, basking in the 70s-and-sunny atmosphere of Southern California.

Larson described himself as a great student who enjoyed performing well and achieving good grades. "At the start of the year in second grade they gave me some tests and sent me to a third grade class," he explained. But being a year younger and physically smaller than his classmates, Larson felt socially removed from his peers (he joked that, standing about 5'5" now, he was small to begin with). "I spent a lot of time in the library at recess instead of on the playground. I read a lot and was a bit reclusive."

Still today, there's something quite reserved yet so present about his demeanor—the type of person who often lets the extroverts of the world do the talking, but, when prompted, could shock any loudmouth to silence with his quick wit and unwavering knowledge on a subject of anyone's choosing.

At about the same time that his home life became shaken, his time spent at school grew a bit rockier as well. "I remember around sixth grade being unwilling to accept authority that I felt was unjust," he described. "I mostly got along with teachers, but there were a couple of really insecure, bullying types, and I really didn't accept that well."

As Larson read about and studied education, he became increasingly convinced that the school system he belonged to was flawed. "I was openly critical of some of my teachers' methods, which landed me in the principal's office," he admitted. "I remember telling one poor science teacher in middle school that he was wasting our time."

Behind the series of disagreements between Larson and his teachers, however, was a childhood falling apart at its seams. "My parents were really smart and loving people, and we had a very close family until I was about ten or eleven years old," Larson said. "At that point, my family began to fall apart. My poor mother had a very rough time of it, and I ended up taking care of her while she went through a very difficult self-destructive stage after my father left."

Larson revealed that while his mother did wind up marrying a nice guy, it only followed after a couple remarriages and various failed relationships. Amid these unsteady relationships, however, the men his mother kept as company were neither friendly nor accepting of having Larson around. He and his mother lost contact for quite a while. His relationship with his father wasn't much better. "My father was mostly absent after that point in my life," Larson said. "He tried to stay in touch, and I know he really loved me and my sister, but he was busy living his life, so we didn't spend much time together." His older sister, likewise, had a difficult time adjusting to the family's new dynamic and lived with her boyfriends in the years following.

“My family house was vacant, as my father had left and my mother had moved out, and I actually lived there alone for a while, until the house was sold as a part of their divorce and I had to find another place to sleep,” Larson explained. “It was just as well, as the house kind of gave me nightmares—I’m sure just remnants of the family I had lost.”

Surprisingly, Larson remained confident, self-sufficient, and found various jobs as he tackled his newfound independence as a youngster. He didn’t get into trouble and seemed satisfied with the freedom he acquired, kept an emotional distance from others, and grew a hard shell.

Still, the combination of his battered home life and his resistance to the school system culminated in his decision to leave high school. “I gradually came to the realization when I got to high school that I had better things to do than sit in a classroom. I had really read a lot about education at that point, and became convinced that I could pretty much learn what I needed to learn in other ways,” he said.

So, he stuck out his sophomore year, got straight As to prove he could handle the work, and then dropped out.

“This was absolutely perfect for me at the time, since I really was living from one friend’s apartment floor to the next, and loved the anonymity. It was really liberating, and I was perfectly happy to move on,” Larson recalled. “It was insanely easy for a kid that age, at that time, to kind of disappear into the suburban landscape.”

Hearing Larson’s viewpoints toward formal education at the time is reminiscent of a California-bred, more put-together, Will Hunting—minus the attitude and the bitterness. It seemed clear to Larson that learning was a matter beyond the confines of structured education; no matter if he maintained enrollment at an institution, his desire to learn would naturally crop up in all aspects of his life.

After leaving high school, Larson made his living from a variety of small jobs— everything from dishwashing, bussing tables, cooking fast food, painting houses, and working as a tech in animal hospitals. He explained that he never spent money on anything other than food, so these jobs were sufficient.

Describing himself as having long hair and dressing poorly, Larson became a "hippie" and protested the Vietnam War at a young age. "I was fascinated by the counterculture, and read a lot," Larson remembered. Still a lover of literature, Larson read everything "from Ginsburg's poetry ('Howl') to Ken Kesey ('One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest') to Thoreau's 'Walden' and pretty much everything written by Hermann Hesse." He often hitchhiked to get around, and made trips to the San Francisco area as it was a "Mecca" for hippies at the time.

It wasn't until he was about seventeen that he truly acknowledged the wounds he'd never healed. After attending a self-development course, Larson was able to tap into deep seated feelings about those turbulent years. Surprised at his own grief after years of independence, he admitted, "I was shocked to find that I was heartbroken by the loss of my happy family and cried and cried about it at the training. I had a chance to grieve the loss, finally, which I think helped me move on."

Despite his resistance to formal education in his early years, Larson was still an academic at heart. Soon, he grew bored of his life without the thrill of education in it, so he enrolled in several courses at the local community college as well as the local State Polytechnic University (Cal Poly Pomona). Meanwhile, Larson landed a job in a lab at the City of Hope where he assisted in lab work on animals for human disease research. "The doctors in the lab took an interest in me and encouraged me to get a degree," he said. "I applied to the University of California at San Diego and was shocked to find I got in."

At UCSD, Larson studied Linguistics and fell in love with it. He also enrolled in a French class, which led to him studying abroad. Describing himself as an opportunist, Larson discovered that he could get a student loan and spend a year in France during his junior year without working. After graduating from UCSD, he soon attended American University for law school.

Larson recalled a conversation he had with the registrar at American University about his lack of a high school degree or GED.

“I remember the registrar looking at my transcript and noting, shocked, that I never graduated from high school. I remember asking if that was going to be a problem, but she just said, ‘No, I just haven’t ever seen this before!’”

What is perhaps most notable about Larson is the normalcy with which he treats his road to success and his forgiveness of the situation he was tossed into. “I think everyone has adversity and challenges,” Larson said. “I loved the freedom I had as a youngster. I think it gave me a great deal of confidence, and I had some amazing experiences.”

Speaking to his humility and compassion, Larson actually attributed much of his success to his family. Remembering his early childhood fondly, Larson feels grateful for the love his family showed him in his early years. Being rooted in such a solid foundation was key when Larson was forced to make difficult choices later on.

Although it may not have been the easiest path, Larson was always confident in his ability to rise out of life’s challenges. “There was the occasional reality check, those times grilling burgers with a jerk for a boss, or loading trucks late at night, which would motivate me,” he said. “I always knew I would do more than those jobs, and those tough realities are just the thing to motivate a person to move on.”

There seems to be something intrinsically laced in Larson’s character that drives him to success and is fueled by a love for learning—something beyond motivation and the often shallow push from parents to succeed, which Larson lacked anyway in his formative years. Looking at his background on paper, I’d expect to find Larson, at worst, drug addicted and alone. At best, still cooking fast food and struggling to make ends meet. But seeing the challenges he’s faced as opportunities, Larson doesn’t see that there were any other options: he had to succeed.

In his own California-roots fashion, Joseph Larson takes time to absorb and study the world around him. He has an appreciation for those who have chosen to live life differently, and he values the family and life he now has. He’s been given the opportunity to decide what he wanted to do and who he wanted to be, and so he invites others to do the same.

"What motivates us ultimately to do what we do, to me, is still a big mystery," he said.

This speaks to Larson's enigmatic self as well. He had every opportunity to fail, was the thought that pervasively and dogmatically prodded at my mind. And yet, with tenacity that is difficult to fathom, he picked up the pieces his family left behind and, without a blink, proved he had every tool to succeed.

When the necktie comes off, it drags with it all stereotypical assumptions we might have conjured about this metropolitan man. It's anyone's game as to what Larson is up to once he steps out of lawyer mode (although, if it's trivia or crossword puzzles, I've been warned not to challenge him). Often, he's tending to the various animals for which he couldn't refuse a place in his home. He's watching the Washington Nationals game over dinner. He's putting that suit and tie back on for a night at The Shakespeare Theatre in DC. He's listening to everything from Native American flute music to Neil Young. Or, he is—after multiple hip replacements on both sides—running and training for his next marathon.

Amid the surprises and the proved-everyone-wrongs, perhaps only three things are certain about Joseph Larson: his love of learning, his love of life, and that double shot espresso.

The following profile examples are under copyright but can be accessed through the links:

- Joanna Walters: "Inside the Rehab Saving Young Men from their Internet Addiction" – https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/jun/16/internet-addiction-gaming-restart-therapy-washington
- DeNeen Brown: "Six-Pack Abs at Age 74" – https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/magazine/six-pack-abs-at-age-74-age-is-nothing-but-a-number-says-guinness-world-records-oldest-competitive-female-bodybuilder/2011/03/16/

AG5lGvCH_story.html?utm_term=.f87c99f9b7d0

- Bill Laitner: "Heart and Sole: Detroiter's Lengthy Commute Part of Life" – https://www.lansingstatejournal.com/story/news/local/2015/02/02/heart-sole-detroiters-lengthy-commute-part-life/22656077/
- Werner Herzog, *From One Second to the Next:* *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xk1vCqfYpos*

English Composition at Sinclair, Sinclair Community College English Department

41. Definition

[AUTHOR REMOVED AT REQUEST OF ORIGINAL PUBLISHER]

Learning Objectives

1. Determine the purpose and structure of the definition essay.
2. Understand how to write a definition essay.

The Purpose of Definition in Writing

The purpose of a definition essay may seem self-explanatory: the purpose of the definition essay is to simply define something. But defining terms in writing is often more complicated than just consulting a dictionary. In fact, the way we define terms can have far-reaching consequences for individuals as well as collective groups.

Take, for example, a word like *alcoholism*. The way in which one defines alcoholism depends on its legal, moral, and medical contexts. Lawyers may define alcoholism in terms of its legality; parents may define alcoholism in terms of its morality; and doctors will define alcoholism in terms of symptoms and diagnostic criteria. Think also of terms that people tend to debate in our broader culture. How we define words, such as *marriage* and *climate change*, has enormous impact on policy decisions and even on daily decisions. Think about conversations couples may have in which words like *commitment*, *respect*, or *love* need clarification.

Defining terms within a relationship, or any other context, can at first be difficult, but once a definition is established between two people or a group of people, it is easier to have productive dialogues. Definitions, then, establish the way in which people communicate ideas. They set parameters for a given discourse, which is why they are so important.

Tip

When writing definition essays, avoid terms that are too simple, that lack complexity. Think in terms of concepts, such as *hero*, *immigration*, or *loyalty*, rather than physical objects. Definitions of concepts, rather than objects, are often fluid and contentious, making for a more effective definition essay.

Writing at Work

Definitions play a critical role in all workplace environments. Take the term *sexual harassment*, for example. Sexual harassment is broadly defined on the federal level, but each company may have additional criteria that define it further. Knowing how your workplace defines and treats all sexual harassment allegations is important. Think, too, about how your company defines *lateness*, *productivity*, or *contributions*.

Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, write about a time in your own life in which the definition of a word, or the lack of a definition, caused an argument. Your term could be something as simple as the category of an all-star in sports or how to define a good movie. Or it could be something with higher stakes and wider impact, such as a political argument. Explain how the conversation began, how the argument hinged on the definition of the word, and how the incident was finally resolved.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your responses.

The Structure of a Definition Essay

The definition essay opens with a general discussion of the term to be defined. You then state as your thesis your definition of the term.

The rest of the essay should explain the rationale for your definition. Remember that a dictionary's definition is limiting, and you should not rely strictly on the dictionary entry. Instead, consider the context in which you are using the word. Context identifies the circumstances, conditions, or setting in which something exists or occurs. Often words take on different meanings depending on the context in which they are used. For example, the ideal leader in a battlefield setting could likely be very different than a leader in an elementary school setting. If a context is missing from the essay, the essay may be too short or the main points could be confusing or misunderstood.

The remainder of the essay should explain different aspects of the term's definition. For example, if you were defining a good leader in an elementary classroom setting, you might define such a leader according to personality traits: patience, consistency, and flexibility. Each attribute would be explained in its own paragraph.

Tip

For definition essays, try to think of concepts that you have a personal stake in. You are more likely to write a more engaging definition essay if you are writing about an idea that has personal value and importance.

Writing at Work

It is a good idea to occasionally assess your role in the workplace. You can do this through the process of definition. Identify your role at work by defining not only the routine tasks but also those gray areas where your responsibilities might overlap with those of others. Coming up with a clear definition of roles and responsibilities can add value to your résumé and even increase productivity in the workplace.

Exercise 2

On a separate sheet of paper, define each of the following items in your own terms. If you can, establish a context for your definition.

1. Bravery
2. Adulthood
3. Consumer culture
4. Violence
5. Art

Writing a Definition Essay

Choose a topic that will be complex enough to be discussed at length. Choosing a word or phrase of personal relevance often leads to a more interesting and engaging essay.

After you have chosen your word or phrase, start your essay with an introduction that establishes the relevancy of the term in the chosen specific context. Your thesis comes at the end of the introduction, and it should clearly state your definition of the term in the specific context. Establishing a functional context from the beginning will orient readers and minimize misunderstandings.

The body paragraphs should each be dedicated to explaining a different facet of your definition. Make sure to use clear examples and strong details to illustrate your points. Your concluding paragraph should pull together all the different elements of your definition to ultimately reinforce your thesis. See Chapter 15 "Readings: Examples of Essays" to read a sample definition essay.

Exercise 3

Create a full definition essay from one of the items you already defined in Note 10.64 "Exercise 2". Be sure to include an interesting introduction, a clear thesis, a well-explained context, distinct body paragraphs, and a conclusion that pulls everything together.

Key Takeaways

- Definitions establish the way in which people communicate ideas. They set parameters for a given discourse.
- Context affects the meaning and usage of words.
- The thesis of a definition essay should clearly state the writer's definition of the term in the specific context.
- Body paragraphs should explain the various facets of the definition stated in the thesis.
- The conclusion should pull all the elements of the definition together at the end and reinforce the thesis.

42. Illustration

[AUTHOR REMOVED AT REQUEST OF ORIGINAL PUBLISHER]

Learning Objectives

1. Determine the purpose and structure of the illustration essay.
2. Understand how to write an illustration essay.

The Purpose of Illustration in Writing

To illustrate means to show or demonstrate something clearly. An effective illustration essay clearly demonstrates and supports a point through the use of evidence.

The controlling idea of an essay is called a thesis. A writer can use different types of evidence to support his or her thesis. Using scientific studies, experts in a particular field, statistics, historical events, current events, analogies, and personal anecdotes are all ways in which a writer can illustrate a thesis. Ultimately, you want the evidence to help the reader "see" your point, as one would see a good illustration in a magazine or on a website. The stronger your evidence is, the more clearly the reader will consider your point.

Using evidence effectively can be challenging, though. The evidence you choose will usually depend on your subject and who your reader is (your audience). When writing an illustration essay, keep in mind the following:

- Use evidence that is appropriate to your topic as well as appropriate for your audience.
- Assess how much evidence you need to adequately explain your point depending on the complexity of the subject and the knowledge of your audience regarding that subject.

For example, if you were writing about a new communication software and your audience was a group of English-major undergrads, you might want to use an analogy or a personal story to illustrate how the software worked. You might also choose to add a few more pieces of evidence to make sure the audience understands your point. However, if you were writing about the same subject and you audience members were information technology (IT) specialists, you would likely use more technical evidence because they would be familiar with the subject.

Keeping in mind your subject in relation to your audience will increase your chances of effectively illustrating your point.

Tip: You never want to insult your readers' intelligence by over-explaining concepts the audience members may already be familiar with, but it may be necessary to clearly articulate your point. When in doubt, add an extra example to illustrate your idea.

Exercise 1

On a separate piece of paper, form a thesis based on each of the following three topics. Then list the types of evidence that would best explain your point for each of the two audiences.

1. Topic: Combat and mental health

   Audience: family members of veterans, doctors

2. Topic: Video games and teen violence

   Audience: parents, children

3. Topic: Architecture and earthquakes

   Audience: engineers, local townspeople

The Structure of an Illustration Essay

The controlling idea, or thesis, belongs at the beginning of the essay. Evidence is then presented in the essay's body paragraphs to support the thesis. You can start supporting your main point with your strongest evidence first, or you can start with evidence of lesser importance and have the essay build to increasingly stronger evidence. This type of organization is called order of importance.

The time transition words listed in Table 10.1 "Transition Words and Phrases for Expressing Time" are also helpful in ordering the presentation of evidence. Words like *first*, *second*, *third*, *currently*, *next*, and *finally* all help orient the reader and sequence evidence clearly. Because an illustration essay uses so many examples, it is also helpful to have a list of words and phrases to present each piece of evidence. Table 10.2 "Phrases of Illustration" provides a list of phrases for illustration.

Table 10.1 Transition Words and Phrases for Expressing Time

after/afterward	as soon as	at last	before
currently	during	eventually	meanwhile
next	now	since	soon
finally	later	still	then
until	when/whenever	while	first, second, third

Table 10.2 Phrases of Illustration

case in point	for example
for instance	in particular
in this case	one example/another example
specifically	to illustrate

Tip: Vary the phrases of illustration you use. Do not rely on just one. Variety in choice of words and phrasing is critical when trying to keep readers engaged in your writing and your ideas.

Writing at Work: In the workplace, it is often helpful to keep the phrases of illustration in mind as a way to incorporate them whenever you can. Whether you are writing out directives that colleagues will have to follow or requesting a new product or service from another company, making a conscious effort to incorporate a phrase of illustration will force you to provide examples of what you mean.

Exercise 2

On a separate sheet of paper, form a thesis based on one of the following topics. Then support that thesis with three pieces of evidence. Make sure to use a different phrase of illustration to introduce each piece of evidence you choose.

1. Cooking
2. Baseball
3. Work hours
4. Exercise
5. Traffic

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers. Discuss which topic you like the best or would like to learn more about. Indicate which thesis statement you perceive as the most effective.

Writing an Illustration Essay

First, decide on a topic that you feel interested in writing about. Then create an interesting introduction to engage the reader. The main point, or thesis, should be stated at the end of the introduction. Gather evidence that is appropriate to both your subject and your audience. You can order the evidence in terms of importance, either from least important to most important or from most important to least important. Be sure to fully explain all of your examples using strong, clear supporting details. See a sample illustration essay below that takes the form of a letter:

Letter to the City

To: Lakeview Department of Transportation

From: A Concerned Citizen

The intersection of Central Avenue and Lake Street is dangerous and demands immediate consideration for the installation of a controlling mechanism. I have lived in Lakeview my entire life, and during that time I have witnessed too many accidents and close calls at that intersection. I would like the Department of Transportation to answer this question: how many lives have to be lost on the corner of Central Avenue and Lake Street before a street light or stop sign is placed there?

Over the past twenty years, the population of Lakeview has increased dramatically. This population growth has put tremendous pressure on the city's roadways, especially Central Avenue and its intersecting streets. At the intersection of Central Avenue and Lake Street it is easy to see how serious this problem is. For example, when I try to cross Central Avenue as a pedestrian, I frequently wait over ten minutes for the cars to clear, and even then I must rush to the median. I will then have to continue to wait until I can finally run to the other side of the street. On one hand, even as a physically fit adult, I can run only with significant effort and care. Expecting a senior citizen or a child to cross this street, on the other hand, is extremely dangerous and irresponsible. Does the city have any plans to do anything about this?

Recent data show that the intersection of Central Avenue and Lake Street has been especially dangerous. According to the city's own statistics, three fatalities occurred at that intersection in the past year alone. Over the past five years, the intersection witnessed fourteen car accidents, five of which were fatal. These numbers officially qualify the intersection as the most fatal and dangerous in the entire state. It should go without saying that fatalities and accidents are not the clearest way of measuring the severity of this situation because for each accident that happens, countless other close calls never contribute to city data. I hope you will agree that these numbers alone are sufficient evidence that the intersection at Central Avenue and Lake Street is hazardous and demands immediate attention.

Nearly all accidents mentioned are caused by vehicles trying to cross Central Avenue while driving on Lake Street. I think the City of Lakeview should consider placing a traffic light there to control the traffic going both ways. While I do not have access to any resources or data that can show precisely how much a traffic light can improve the intersection, I think you will agree that a controlled busy intersection is much safer than an uncontrolled one. Therefore, at a minimum, the city must consider making the intersection a four-way stop.

Each day that goes by without attention to this issue is a lost opportunity to save lives and make the community a safer, more enjoyable place to live. Because the safety of citizens is the priority of every government, I can only expect that the Department of Transportation and the City of Lakeview will act on this matter immediately. For the safety and well-being of Lakeview citizens, please do not let bureaucracy or money impede this urgent project.

Sincerely,

A Concerned Citizen

Exercise 3

On a separate sheet of paper, write a five-paragraph illustration essay. You can choose one of the topics from Exercise 1 or Exercise 2 or choose your own.

Key Takeaways

An illustration essay clearly explains a main point using evidence.

When choosing evidence, always gauge whether the evidence is appropriate for the subject as well as the audience.

Organize the evidence in terms of importance, either from least important to most important or from most important to least important.

Use time transitions to order evidence.

Use phrases of illustration to call out examples.

Key Takeaways

- An illustration essay clearly explains a main point using evidence.
- When choosing evidence, always gauge whether the evidence is appropriate for the subject as well as the audience.
- Organize the evidence in terms of importance, either from least important to most important or from most important to least important.
- Use time transitions to order evidence.
- Use phrases of illustration to call out examples.

43. Summary Writing

What is a Summary?

A summary is a comprehensive and objective restatement of the main ideas of a text (an article, book, movie, event, etc.) Stephen Wilhoit, in his textbook A *Brief Guide to Writing from Readings*, suggests that keeping the qualities of a good summary in mind helps students avoid the pitfalls of unclear or disjointed summaries. These qualities include:

Neutrality – The writer avoids inserting his or her opinion into the summary, or interpreting the original text's content in any way. This requires that the writer avoids language that is evaluative, such as: good, bad, effective, ineffective, interesting, boring, etc. Also, keep "I" out of the summary; instead, summary should be written in grammatical 3rd person (For example: "he", "she", "the author", "they", etc).

Brevity – The summary should not be longer than the original text, but rather highlight the most important information from that text while leaving out unnecessary details while still maintaining accuracy.

Independence – The summary should make sense to someone who has not read the original source. There should be no confusion about the main content and organization of the original source. This also requires that the summary be accurate.

By mastering the craft of summarizing, students put themselves in the position to do well on many assignments in college, not just English essays. In most fields (from the humanities to the soft and hard sciences) summary is a required task. Being able to summarize lab results accurately and briefly, for example, is critical in a chemistry or engineering class. Summarizing the various theories of sociology or education helps a person apply them to his or her fieldwork. In college, it's imperative we learn how to summarize well because we are asked to do it so often.

College students are asked to summarize material for many different types of assignments. In some instances, summarizing one source is often the sole purpose of the entire assignment. Students might also be asked to summarize as just one aspect of a larger project, such as a literature review, an abstract in a research paper, or a works consulted entry in an annotated bibliography.

Some summary assignments will expect students to condense material more than others. For example, when summary is the sole purpose of the assignment, the student might be asked to include key supporting evidence, where as an abstract might require students to boil down the source text to its bare-bones essentials.

What Makes Something a Summary?

When you ask yourself, after reading an article (and maybe even reading it two or three times), "What was that article about?" and you end up jotting down–from memory, without returning to the original article to use its language or phrases–three things that stood out as the author's main points, you are summarizing. Summaries have several key characteristics.

You're summarizing well when you

- use your own words
- significantly condense the original text
- provide accurate representations of the main points of the text they summarize
- avoid personal opinion.

Summaries are much shorter than the original material—a general rule is that they should be no more than 10% to 15% the length of the original, and they are often even shorter than this.

It can be easy and feel natural, when summarizing an article, to include our own opinions. We may agree or disagree strongly with what this author is saying, or we may want to compare their information with the information presented in another source, or we may want to share our own opinion on the topic. Often, our opinions slip into summaries even when we work diligently to keep them separate. These opinions are not the job of a summary, though. A summary should *only* highlight the main points of the article.

Focusing on just the ideas that best support a point we want to make or ignoring ideas that don't support that point can be tempting. This approach has two significant problems, though:

First, it no longer correctly represents the original text, so it misleads your reader about the ideas presented in that text. A summary should give your reader an accurate idea of what they can expect if we pick up the original article to read.

Second, it undermines your own credibility as an author to not represent this information accurately. If readers cannot trust an author to accurately represent source information, they may not be as likely to trust that author to thoroughly and accurately present a reasonable point.

How Should I Organize a Summary?

Like traditional essays, summaries have an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. What these components look like will vary some based on the purpose of the summary you're writing. The introduction, body, and conclusion of work focused specifically around summarizing something is going to be a little different than in work where summary is not the primary goal.

Introducing a Summary

One of the trickier parts of creating a summary is making it clear that this is a summary of someone else's work; these ideas are not your original ideas. You will almost always begin a summary with an introduction to the author, article, and publication so the reader knows what we are about to read. This information will appear again in your bibliography, but is also useful here so the reader can follow the conversation happening in your paper. You will want to provide it in both places.

In summary-focused work, this introduction should accomplish a few things:

- Introduce the name of the author whose work you are summarizing.
- Introduce the title of the text being summarized.
- Introduce where this text was presented (if it's an art installation, where is it being shown? If it's an article, where was that article published? Not all texts will have this component–for example, when summarizing a book written by one author, the title of the book and name of that author are sufficient information for your readers to easily locate the work you are summarizing).

- State the main ideas of the text you are summarizing—just the big-picture components.
- Give context when necessary. Is this text responding to a current event? That might be important to know. Does this author have specific qualifications that make them an expert on this topic? This might also be relevant information.

So, for example, if you were to get an assignment asking you to summarize Matthew Hutson's *Atlantic* article, "Beyond the Five Senses," an introduction for that summary might look something like this:

> In his July 2017 article in *The Atlantic*, "Beyond the Five Senses," Matthew Hutson explores ways in which potential technologies might expand our sensory perception of the world. He notes that some technologies, such as cochlear implants, are already accomplishing a version of this for people who do not have full access to one of the five senses. In much of the article, though, he seems more interested in how technology might expand the ways in which we sense things. Some of these technologies are based in senses that can be seen in nature, such as echolocation, and others seem more deeply rooted in science fiction. However, all of the examples he gives consider how adding new senses to the ones we already experience might change how we perceive the world around us.

However, you will probably find yourself more frequently using summary as just one component of work with a wide range of goals (not just a goal to "summarize X").

Summary introductions in these situations still generally need to

- name the author
- name the text being summarized
- state just the relevant context, if there is any (maybe the author has a specific credential that makes their work on this topic carry more weight than it would otherwise, or

maybe the study they generated is now being used as a benchmark for additional research)
- introduce the author's full name (first and last names) the first time you summarize part of their text. If you summarize pieces of the same text more than once in a work you are writing, each time you use their text after that initial introduction of the source, you will only use the author's last name as you introduce that next summary component.

Presenting the "Meat" (or Body) of a Summary

Again, this will look a little different depending on the purpose of the summary work you are doing. Regardless of how you are using summary, you will introduce the main ideas throughout your text with transitional phrasing, such as "One of [Author's] biggest points is…," or "[Author's] primary concern about this solution is…."

If you are responding to a "write a summary of X" assignment, the body of that summary will expand on the main ideas you stated in the introduction of the summary, although this will all still be very condensed compared to the original. What are the key points the author makes about each of those big-picture main ideas? Depending on the kind of text you are summarizing, you may want to note how the main ideas are supported (although, again, be careful to avoid making your own opinion about those supporting sources known).

When you are summarizing with an end goal that is broader than just summary, the body of your summary will still present the idea from the original text that is relevant to the point you are making (condensed and in your own words).

Since it is much more common to summarize just a single idea or point from a text in this type of summarizing (rather than all of its main points), it is important to make sure you understand the larger points of the original text. For example, you might find that an article provides an example that opposes its main point in order to demonstrate the range of conversations happening on the topic it covers. This opposing point, though, isn't the main point of the article, so just summarizing this one opposing example would not be an accurate representation of the ideas and points in that text.

Concluding a Summary

For writing in which summary is the sole purpose, here are some ideas for your conclusion.

- Now that we've gotten a little more information about the main ideas of this piece, are there any connections or loose ends to tie up that will help your reader fully understand the points being made in this text? This is the place to put those.
- This is also a good place to state (or restate) the things that are most important for your readers to remember after reading your summary.
- Depending on your assignment, rather than providing a formal concluding paragraph where you restate the main points and make connections between them, you may want to simply paraphrase the author's concluding section or final main idea. Check your assignment sheet to see what kind of conclusion your instructor is asking for.

When your writing has a primary goal other than summary, your conclusion should

- discuss the summary you've just presented. How does it support, illustrate, or give new information about the point you are making in your writing? Connect it to your own main point for that paragraph so readers understand clearly why it deserves the space it takes up in your work. (Note that this is still not giving your opinion on the material you've summarized, just making connections between it and your own main points.)

Summary Template

Here is a basic summary template for use with any text (article, video, chapter, textbook, etc.) that you are reading and need to briefly summarize in your own words for yourself or for your readers. Use the tips when inserting information from the article that you have read into the template to make filling in the blanks much easier. Feel free to change any wording that you think needs modifying or that sounds ineffective in your final version. The summary essay rubric that follows is correlated to this template so that you can use it as a checklist.

Template

In "Title of Article," a (state year) adaptation/excerpt/chapter/article from *Publication* where it appeared, Author (first and last name) argues/explains/describes/ outlines/highlights that Thesis (main point of article) in your own words. First, he/she/ they claim(s) first supporting point. For instance, specific example from the text to illustrate this point (can be paraphrase or quote). Next, he/she/they examine(s) second supporting point. For example, specific example from the text to illustrate this point (can be paraphrase or quote). Third, he/she/they suggest(s) third supporting point. For instance, specific example from the text to illustrate this point (can be paraphrase or quote). To conclude he/

she/they state(s) sum up the conclusion (may be a solution, a forecast for the future, etc.)

Sample Summary Essay Rubric

Criteria	Outstanding	Sufficient	Needs Work
Identification of organization (full title first; acronym later); author's full name & title of piece & publisher/ publication; title is in quotation marks (not italics) and print publication is in italics (not quotation marks); after first mention, author or speaker's last name or acronym is appropriate. **__/15 points**			
Overarching purpose/ point of article identified along with main points and a few important details. **__/30 points**			

Your opinion is left out (explicit or implied through word choice); any opinion is attributed clearly to the author of the piece or speakers/ experts within it. **__/20 points**			
You paraphrase information in your own words and have a clear understanding of the information from the piece. **___/20 points**			
Adherence to mechanics and grammar rules that do not distract the reader; APA or MLA citation provided in proper format. **__/15 points**			
Total: ___/100 points			

This chapter is adapted from A *Guide to Rhetoric*, Chapter 5.1, "Writing Summaries," by Melanie Gagich, CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0.

44. Sample Writing Assignments

Process Analysis

- Be the expert and **teach** your reader how to do something. You will focus on writing the main steps to completing this process and organizing based on chronology or priority of steps. This essay could be demonstrative in nature (ex. How to bathe and groom a dog at home or how to make banana nut muffins) or philosophically-based (ex. How to not fail your freshman classes or how to survive being a camp counselor).

Profile

- **Interview** a person who has a compelling story to share or with whom you can focus on a particular angle. Interweave direct quotes, observations, and narrative elements to help readers understand this person or his/her perspective better. This should not be a full biography of this person or a career profile although biographical elements and details on jobs held may be woven in as appropriate. Perspective/angles can include but are not limited to this person's relationship with: technology, ecology/the environment, politics, religion/spirituality, gender roles, family/what family means to them, love, betrayal, etc.

Definition

The purpose is to define a term, concept, or idea. You will typically lay the foundation with a dictionary definition (denotative) of the word but will move out to an extended definition (connotative). You are using a combination of the literal and implied meanings of a word or idea in addition to historical information to help readers understand the topic more effectively. You usually **define** a term or concept that is complex in nature or that can be misconstrued. Legal, business, and scientific terms or concepts typically work well for essays such as these. For example, take the term manslaughter; the literal and implied meanings can help to understand this sometimes misinterpreted crime. The definition paper can stand on its own or an abbreviated version can serve as part of a larger argumentative, analytical, or research paper.

- Take an abstract, complex, controversial word or a term that is personal to you. Using a dictionary definition as well as your own and others' interpretations, **craft an extended definition** essay with the purpose of giving a more insightful, comprehensive, and layered understanding of this particular term.

Illustration

- **Walk readers through** a day, event, activity, or state of mind, making sure to focus on facts and authentic descriptions. Take a topic that you know something about, like video games. This expository essay on this topic could focus one's addiction to video games. In one example, the writer might walk us through his day playing a video game while in another essay on the same topic, a writer could concentrate mostly on the reasons he or she became addicted to games and may touch briefly on how to prevent this addiction.

Summary

This prompt comes from: https://resources.instructure.com/courses/5/pages/summary-essay-prompt . This prompt could be easily modified by changing out the topic of digital literacy to another one of your choice. Whether working with popular articles or scholarly ones, summary writing is a key component of reading comprehension, setting up a foundation for a larger issue, and research.

"Digital literacy" may be a new term for you, but it's probably not a new concept. Our personal and academic lives are being transformed by online content, and not everyone has the same innate level of skill at determining what and how to use this content.

Our first essay asks to you to ***summarize*** one of 3 short articles from the library library on the topic of digital literacy. (These articles can be found in the weekly modules.) The objectives of this assignment are to:

- Identify and restate the thesis of an author's work
- Accurately portray the contents of an article
- Practice paraphrasing and quotation skills in formal writing
- Practice "neutral reporting"–being able to present the findings of others without making them appear as your own (most students find this to be the most challenging component of this assignment)
- Practice end citation methods (APA or MLA)
- Guidelines for the Summary Essay
    - This summary should be written for an audience that HAS NOT read the original article, and so you will report the

major and minor ideas contained in the piece.

- Your summary should indicate the article's thesis idea, if there is one. This thesis should be contained within your introduction. Be sure to also give the title of the article, the author(s), and where & when it was originally published.
- This summary should contain at least one direct quote from the article. Quotation marks should be used. Introduce the direct quote with a "signal" phrase, such as McMillan-Clifton writes… or the article states… or this website argues that… etc.
- This summary should contain at least one paraphrase from the article. Put the author's ideas in your own words, but stay true to the original intent. Introduce the paraphrase with a tag phrase, as mentioned above. Remember that, as a general rule, phrases of 4 or more words that are exactly the same as the original text should be treated like a quote, not a paraphrase.
- Your summary will be NEUTRAL regarding the material contained within the article. While you should report any bias the author has, you yourself should not reveal your own opinions on the matter. **Using "I" or "you" in this essay is not advised**, unless it appears inside a quote.
- Normally I don't mind if essay submissions exceed the maximum word limit, but this essay is an exception. Because one of the hallmarks of an effective summary is brevity, please do not exceed the maximum word count of 600 words.
- In-text citations will not be required in this assignment, though you are welcome to include them for practice.
- Your summary should have an end citation, APA or MLA

PART VI
WRITING TO ANALYZE

45. Introduction to Analysis Writing

AMY MINERVINI

Overview

by Amy Minervini

Analysis is the process of digging deeper into what we read, see, and hear. This skill is used both in academic writing and in everyday life. In-depth exploration helps us to more effectively understand issues in society and our daily lives, including but not limited to the articles and books we read, the videos we watch, the brands and ads that influence our buying habits, and the songs we listen to. We can analyze authors, subjects, issues, images, and texts of all kinds using various methods of analysis. This chapter will introduce you to rhetorical and visual analysis, text and literary analysis, and cause and effect (another form of analysis).

Key Characteristics

Analysis writing generally exhibits the following:

- Scrutinizing the details of a subject or text and then interpreting those details to show a particular point of view or theme is being conveyed
- Using a subjective point of view, backed up by evidence
- Determining the use of and quality of rhetorical strategies

(pathos, ethos, logos, and kairos) used by others, see the Reading and Writing Rhetorically chapter for more information
- An incorporation of ethos, pathos, and logos to help support claims
- Awareness of and critique of bias that seeps in–for more information on this aspect, see the Addressing Bias and Stakeholder Concerns chapter for more information

Essay Types within this Chapter

- Rhetorical Analysis
- Textual (Article) Analysis
- Literary Analysis
- Image Analysis
- Film Analysis
- Cause and Effect

46. Rhetorical Analysis

Note: This chapter builds on the rhetorical concepts introduced in the section, Reading and Writing Rhetorically.

What Is "Rhetorical Analysis"?

Rhetoric: The art of persuasion

Analysis: Breaking down the whole into pieces for the purpose of examination

Unlike a straightforward summary, a rhetorical analysis does not only require a restatement of ideas; instead, you must recognize rhetorical moves that an author is making in an attempt to persuade his or her audience to do or to think something. In the 21st century's abundance of information, it can sometimes be difficult to discern what is a rhetorical strategy and what is simple manipulation; however, an understanding of rhetoric and rhetorical moves will help you become more savvy with the information surrounding you on a day-to-day basis. In other words, rhetorical moves can be a form of manipulation, but if one can recognize those moves, then one can be a more critical consumer of information rather than blindly accepting whatever one reads, sees, hears, etc.

The goal of a rhetorical analysis is to explain **what** is happening in the text, **why** the author might have chosen to use a particular move or set of rhetorical moves, and **how** those choices might affect the audience. The text you analyze might be explanatory, although there will be aspects of argument because you must negotiate with what the author is *trying to do* and *what you think* the author is doing. As Edward P.J. Corbett observes, rhetorical analysis "is more interested in a literary work for what it *does* than for what it *is*" (qtd. in Nordqvist).

One of the elements of doing a rhetorical analysis is looking at a text's rhetorical situation. The rhetorical situation is the context out of a which a text is created.

Another element of rhetorical analysis is simply reading and summarizing the text. You have to be able to describe the basics of the author's thesis and main points before you can begin to analyze it.

To do rhetorical analysis, you will connect the rhetorical situation to the text. You will go beyond summarizing and instead look at how the author shapes his or her text based on its context. In developing your reading and analytical skills, allow yourself to think about what you're reading, to question the text and your responses to it, as you read. Use the following questions to help you to take the text apart—dissecting it to see how it works:

- **Does the author successfully support the thesis or claim?** Is the point held consistently throughout the text, or does it wander at any point?
- **Is the evidence the author used effective for the intended audience?** How might the intended audience respond to the types of evidence that the author used to support the thesis/claim?
- **What rhetorical moves do you see the author making to help achieve his or her purpose?** Are there word choices or content choices that seem to you to be clearly related to the author's agenda for the text?
- **Describe the style and tone in the piece.** Is it friendly? Authoritative? Does it lecture? Is it biting or sarcastic? Does the author use simple language, or is it full of jargon? Does the language feel positive or negative? Point to aspects of the text that create the tone; spend some time examining these and considering how and why they work.
- **Is the author objective, or does he or she try to convince you**

to have a certain opinion? Why does the author try to persuade you to adopt this viewpoint? If the author is biased, does this interfere with the way you read and understand the refer to the written word: "Proofread your *text* before submitting the paper."
A *text* refers to any form of communication, primarily written or oral, that forms a coherent unit, often as an object of study. A book can be a text, and a speech can be a text, but television commercials, magazine ads, website, and emails can also be texts: "Dieting advertisements formed one of the *texts*we studied in my Sociology class."" data-url="https://pressbooks.ulib.csuohio.edu/csu-fyw-rhetoric/glossary/text/">texrefer to the written word: "Proofread your *text* before submitting the paper."
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- **Do you feel like the author knows who you are?** Does the text seem to be aimed at readers like you or at a different audience? What assumptions does the author make about their audience? Would most people find these reasonable, acceptable, or accurate?
- **Does the text's flow make sense?** Is the line of reasoning logical? Are there any gaps? Are there any spots where you feel the reasoning is flawed in some way?
- **Does the author try to appeal to your emotions?** Does the author use any controversial words in the headline or the article? Do these affect your reading or your interest?
- **Do you believe the author?** Do you accept their thoughts and ideas? Why or why not?

Once you have done this basic, rhetorical, critical reading of your text, you are ready to think about how the rhetorical situation–the context out of which the text arises–influences certain rhetorical appeals (logos, pathos, ethos) that appear in it.

Linked in this textbook is Laura Bolin Carroll's essay. Click here to read Caroll's essay: Backpacks vs. Briefcases: Steps Toward Rhetorical Analysis

Professional Examples of Rhetorical Analysis

Hooks, Bell. *Cultural Criticism & Transformation*. video. LCSC Library

Kilbourne, Jean. 20 Oct 2015. "Jesus is a Brand of Jeans." *The Humanist*.

Kilbourne, Jean. *Killing Us Softly* video series. LCSC Library.

Kilbourne, Jean. *Deadly Persuasion* video series. LCSC Library.

Meslin, Dave. 2010. *Antidote to Apathy*. TED Talk.

47. Literary Analysis

Literary Analysis

Learning Objectives

- Ask subjective and objective questions about what they have read.
- Learn the meanings of “tone,” “diction,” and “syntax.”
- Identify the major elements of a plot.
- Identify character, setting, and theme.
- Differentiate between internal and external conflict.

Why Should I Write About Literature?

You might be asking yourself why you should bother writing about something you’ve read. After all, isn’t creative writing more fun, journalistic writing more interesting, and technical writing more useful? Maybe, but consider this: writing about literature will let you exercise your critical thinking skills like no other style of writing will. Even if you don’t want to pursue a career involving literature, you can use critical thinking and analysis in any field from philosophy to business to physics. More than being able to think critically, you need to be able to express those thoughts in a coherent fashion. Writing about literature will allow you to practice this invaluable communication skill.

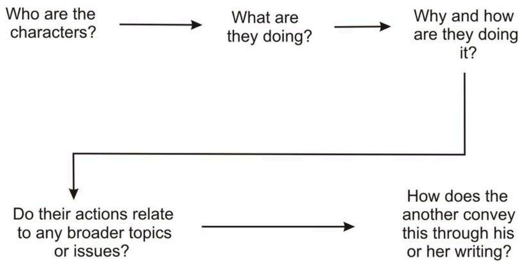
“Okay,” you say, “that’s all good and well. But hasn’t anything I have to say about a story already been said? So what’s the point, then?” When you write your paper, you might end up saying something that has been discussed, argued over, or proposed by literary critics and students alike. However, when you write something, you present a point of view through your unique voice. Even if something has been said about a book many times, you can add something new to that discussion. Perhaps you can state an idea in simpler terms, or you want to disagree with a popular viewpoint. Even if you're writing to an instructor's prompt, your voice will make the paper unique.

So How Do I Start?

To many of us, writing a response to something we've had to read sounds more than a little daunting. There are so many things to examine and analyze in a book, play, or poem. But before you decide that writing about writing just isn't for you, think about this–you already have many of the skills you need to write a good response to literature.

How many times have you heard about someone who watched a horror movie and yelled, "Don't go into the basement!" at the potential victim. Or maybe you've listened to a song and thought about how the lyrics described your life almost perfectly. Perhaps you like to jump up and cheer for your favorite team even if you're watching the game from home. Each time you do one of these things, you are responding to a something you've seen or heard. And when you read a book, you likely do the same thing. Have you ever read anything and sympathized with or hated a character? If so, you've already taken your first step in responding to literature.

However, the next steps are a little harder. You need to be able to put your response into writing so other people can understand why you believe one thing or another about a book, play, or poem. In addition, writing an essay based on how a story makes you think or feel is only one of many ways to respond to what you read. In order to write a strong paper, you will need to examine a text both **subjectively** and **objectively**. If you only write about your personal reaction to a book, there won't be much to support your argument except your word alone. Thus, you will need to use some facts from the text to support your argument. Rather than trying to evaluate every nuance of a text all at once, you should start with the basics: character and plot. From there, you can examine the theme of the work and then move on to the finer points such as the writing itself. For instance, when determining how you want to analyze a piece of literature, you might want to ask yourself the following series of questions.



Questions to consider when writing about literature.

Of course, answering these questions will only start you in your analysis. However, if you can answer them, you will have a strong grasp of the basic elements of the story. From there, you can go on to more specific questions such as "How does symbolism help illustrate the theme?" or "What does the author say about the relationships between characters through the dialogue he gives them?" However, before you can start answering detailed questions like these, you should look at the basic elements of what you're reading.

The Basics of Literature

Before you dive straight into your analysis of symbolism, diction, imagery, or any other rhetorical device, you need to have a grasp of the basic elements of what you're reading. When we read critically or analytically, we might disregard character, plot, setting, and theme as surface elements of a text. Aside from noting what they are and how they drive a story, we sometimes don't pay much attention to these elements. However, characters and their interactions can reveal a great deal about human nature. Plot can act as a stand-in for real-world events just as setting can represent our world or an allegorical one. Theme is the heart of literature, exploring everything from love and war to childhood and aging.

With this in mind, you can begin your examination of literature with a "Who, What, When, Where, How?" approach. Ask yourself "Who are the characters?" "What is happening?" "When and where is it happening?" and "How does it happen?" The answers will give you character (who), plot (what and how), and setting (when and where). When you put these answers together, you can begin to figure out theme, and you will have a solid foundation on which to base your analysis.

You will also want to keep an author's **tone** in mind as you read. Tone is the attitude writing can take towards its subject or audience. For instance, writing can be informal, formal, sarcastic, or playful. These are just a few examples of tone. When trying to figure out a story's tone, ask yourself how the writing is actually put together. Does the author use **diction**, or the overall word choice, to convey a specific tone? For instance, is there any reason to say "joyful" instead of "happy" or "seething" instead of "angry"?

The following table provides examples of the same scene written in different tones. Pay special attention to the italicized words.

Joyful	**Unhappy**
The sound of their *revelry rang* throughout the town. The sun *gleamed brightly* on the parade, and colorful streamers *floated* through the air like *dazzling rainbows*.	The noise of the *cacophony shrilled* throughout the town. The sun *glared harshly* on the parade, and colorful streamers *rained* through the air like *falling debris*.

In addition, ask yourself if the author use unusual **syntax**— the order in which the sentence is put together grammatically? (Look at "money is the root of all evil" versus "the root of all evil is money." Does each sentence imply something different to you?) Keeping tone, diction, and syntax in mind will help in your analysis of literature.

With that said, we should always look at every aspect of these elements, from the most basic to the most complex when we read. Thus, this chapter will begin by giving you a broad overview of character, plot, setting, and theme then provide some examples of how you can use these elements to illustrate some of the more complex ideas in a story.

Character

You are probably already adept at identifying the characters of a story, but there are some terms that will be helpful in your literary analysis. Keep in mind that characters aren't necessarily people. They can be animals, divine beings, personifications, etc.

One of the most important terms you will use is **conflict.** Conflict occurs between two opposing sides in a story, usually centering on characters' values, needs, or interests. A conflict can be internal or external. **Internal conflict** takes place within an individual, such as when a character is torn between duty to his family and duty to the state. **External conflict** occurs when two individuals or groups of individuals clash. A struggle between a character and his best friend is an example of an external conflict.

By examining the conflict, we can determine the **protagonist** and **antagonist.** The protagonist is the focal point of the conflict, meaning that he or she is the main character of the story. All the action in a story will revolve around its protagonist. In addition, a story that contains a series of conflicts can contain several protagonists–no story is limited to just one. The antagonist is the character who stands in opposition of the protagonist. The antagonist is the other half of the conflict. Remember that an antagonist doesn't have to be a person–it can be a nation, a group, or even a set of ideas.

Sometimes, the protagonist can take the form of the **antihero.** The antihero is a protagonist who does not embody traditional "heroic" values. However, the reader will still sympathize with an antihero. For instance, a protagonist who is a scoundrel is an antihero, as a traditional hero would embody virtue.

In addition to the protagonist and antagonist, most stories have **secondary** or **minor characters.** These are the other characters in the story. They sometimes support the protagonist or antagonist in their struggles, and they sometimes never come into contact with the main characters.

Authors use minor characters for a variety of reasons. For instance, they can illustrate a different side of the main conflict, or they can highlight the traits of the main characters. One important type of minor character is called a **foil.** This character emphasizes the traits of a main character (usually the protagonist) through contrast. Thus, a foil will often be the polar opposite of the main character he or she highlights. Sometimes, the foil can take the form of a sidekick or friend. Other times, he or she might be someone who contends against the protagonist. For example, an author might use a decisive and determined foil to draw attention to a protagonist's lack of resolve and motivation.

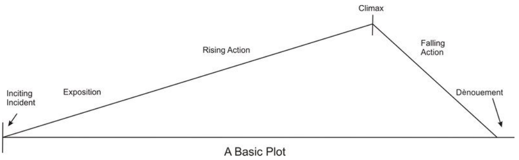
Finally, any character in a story can be an **archetype.** We can define archetype as an original model for a type of character, but that doesn't fully explain the term. One way to think of an archetype is to think of how a bronze statue is made. First, the sculptor creates his design out of wax or clay. Next, he creates a fireproof mold around the original. After this is done, the sculptor can make as many of the same sculpture as he pleases. The original model is the equivalent to the archetype. Some popular archetypes are the trickster figure, such as Coyote in Native American myth or Brer Rabbit in African American folklore, and the femme fatale, like Pandora in Greek myth. Keep in mind that archetype simply means original pattern and does not always apply to characters. It can come in the form of an object, a narrative, etc. For instance, the apple in the Garden of Eden provides the object-based forbidden fruit archetype, and Odysseus's voyage gives us the narrative-based journey home archetype.

Plot

Before you can write an in-depth explanation of the themes, motives, or diction of a book, you need to be able to discuss one of its most basic elements: the story. If you can't identify what has happened in a story, your writing will lack context. Writing your paper will be like trying to put together a complex puzzle without looking at the picture you're supposed to create. Each piece is important, but without the bigger picture for reference, you and anyone watching will have a hard time understanding what is being assembled. Thus, you should look for "the bigger picture" in a book, poem, or play by reading for plot.

A plot is a storyline. We can define plot as the main events of a book, short story, play, poem, etc. and the way those events connect to one another. Conflicts act as the driving forces behind a plot.

A plot has several main elements: **inciting incident, exposition, rising action, climax, falling action,** and **dénouement.** These elements often appear in the order listed here, but you should be aware that some works deviate from this form.



A diagram of the components of a basic plot

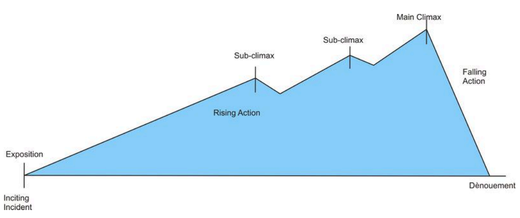
Inciting Incident: This is the event that sets the main conflict into motion. Without it, we could have no plot, as all the characters would already be living "happily ever after," so to speak. Most stories contain many conflicts, so you will have to identify the main conflict before you can identify the inciting incident. Remember, the inciting incident and conflict are two separate things—the inciting incident is a moment in a story that starts the main conflict. For instance, a person throwing the first punch can be considered the inciting incident to the conflict of a long fistfight. In addition, the inciting incident can happen before a story takes place, in which case it is related to the reader as a past event.

Exposition: This is the part of the story that tells us the setting. We find out who the main characters are and where the story takes place. The exposition also hints at the themes and conflicts that will develop later in the story. Exposition can take place throughout a story as characters reveal more about themselves.

Rising Action: The rising action is comprised of a series of events that build up to the climax of the story. It introduces us to secondary conflicts and creates tension in the story. You can think of the rising action as the series of events that make the climax of the story possible.

Climax: The climax has often been described as the "turning point" of a story. A good way to think of it is the incident that allows the main conflict of a story to resolve. The climax allows characters to solve a problem. It take many forms, such as an epiphany the protagonist has about himself, a battle between the protagonist and antagonist, or the culmination of an internal struggle.

Many stories actually have smaller climaxes before the main one. Like the main climax, these are turning points in the story. These sub-climaxes can be minor turning points in the main conflict that help build and release suspense during the rising action. They can also be the main turning points for secondary conflicts within a story. You might diagram a plot containing sub-climaxes and a main climax like this:



A diagram of a complex plot, or a plot that contains sub-climaxes.

Falling Action: The events that take place after the climax are called the falling action. These events show the results of the climax, and they act as a bridge between the climax and the dénouement.

Dénouement: The word dénouement comes from the French "to untie" and the Latin "knot," which gives us an indication of its purpose. It serves as the unraveling of a plot–a resolution to a story. In the dénouement, the central conflict is resolved. However, conflicts aren't always resolved. Some stories leave secondary conflicts unsettled, and a rare few even leave doubt about the resolution of the main conflict. The dénouement can also leave the story and characters in the same state they were in before the story began. This often occurs when an epilogue tells the reader that all the conflicts in the story have been resolved. Thus, we can see the dénouement as a kind of mirror to the exposition, showing us the same situation at both the beginning and end of a story.

Setting

If a story has characters and a plot, these elements must exist within some context. The frame of reference in which the story occurs is known as **setting.** The most basic definition of setting is one of place and time. You want to ask yourself "Where and when does the story take place?" *Gone With the Wind*, for example, takes place in Georgia during the American Civil War. Setting can be very important in discovering and highlighting the **mood,** or the general feeling we get from a story. (Note: Be careful not to mix up mood and tone, as they are not the same thing. Mood is the feeling we get from a story; tone is a way of getting that feeling across.) For instance, Edgar Allan Poe portrays a very dark, oppressive setting in "The Fall of the House of Usher," which makes the reader share the narrator's feelings of confinement and depression. In addition, the house in Poe's story can be seen as a kind of **internalized setting.** In this kind of setting, an aspect of the story external to a character represents the character's internal development. For instance, the cracked face of the house can be said to represent the cracked minds of the Usher siblings.

Setting doesn't have to just include the physical elements of time and place. Setting can also refer to a story's social and cultural context. There are two questions to consider when dealing with this kind of setting: "What is the cultural and social setting of the story?" and "What was the author's cultural and social setting when the story was written?" The first question will help you analyze why characters make certain choices and act in certain manners. The second question will allow you to analyze why the author chose to have the characters act in this way.

Theme

Finally, you must examine theme in your basic analysis of literature. **Theme** is the unifying idea behind a story. It connects the plot points, conflicts, and characters to a major idea. It usually provides a broad statement about humanity, life, or our universe. We can think of theme, in its most basic definition, as the message the author tries to send his or her readers.

One thing you should remember about theme is that it must be expressed in a complete sentence. For instance, "discrimination" is not a theme; however, "genetic modification in humans is dangerous because it can result in discrimination" is a complete theme.

A story can have more than one theme, and it is often useful to question and analyze how the themes interact. For instance, does the story have conflicting themes? Or do a number of slightly different themes point the reader toward one conclusion? Sometimes the themes don't have to connect– many stories use multiple themes in order to bring multiple ideas to the readers' attention.

So how do we find theme in a work? One way is to examine **motifs,** or recurring elements in a story. If something appears a number of times within a story, it is likely of significance. A motif can be a statement, a place, an object, or even a sound. Motifs often lead us to discern a theme by drawing attention to it through repetition. In addition, motifs are often symbolic. They can represent any number of things, from a character's childhood to the loss of a loved one. By examining what a motif symbolizes, you can extrapolate a story's possible themes. For instance, a story might use a park to represent a character's childhood. If the author makes constant references to the park, but we later see it replaced by a housing complex, we might draw conclusions about what the story is saying about childhood and the transition to adulthood.

Reading Exercise

Now that you've learned the basics of reading literature, read the following short story. Keep an eye out for plot, character, setting, tone, mood, and theme.

YOUNG GOODMAN BROWN

by Nathaniel Hawthorne

Young Goodman Brown came forth at sunset into the street at Salem village; but put his head back, after crossing the threshold, to exchange a parting kiss with his young wife. And Faith, as the wife was aptly named, thrust her own pretty head into the street, letting the wind play with the pink ribbons of her cap while she called to Goodman Brown.

"Dearest heart," whispered she, softly and rather sadly, when her lips were close to his ear, "prithee put off your journey until sunrise and sleep in your own bed to-night. A lone woman is troubled with such dreams and such thoughts that she's afeard of herself sometimes. Pray tarry with me this night, dear husband, of all nights in the year."

"My love and my Faith," replied young Goodman Brown, "of all nights in the year, this one night must I tarry away from thee. My journey, as thou callest it, forth and back again, must needs be done ‘twixt now and sunrise. What, my sweet, pretty wife, dost thou doubt me already, and we but three months married?”

“Then God bless you!” said Faith, with the pink ribbons; “and may you find all well when you come back.”

“Amen!” cried Goodman Brown. “Say thy prayers, dear Faith, and go to bed at dusk, and no harm will come to thee.”

So they parted; and the young man pursued his way until, being about to turn the corner by the meeting-house, he looked back and saw the head of Faith still peeping after him with a melancholy air, in spite of her pink ribbons.

“Poor little Faith!” thought he, for his heart smote him. “What a wretch am I to leave her on such an errand! She talks of dreams, too. Methought as she spoke there was trouble in her face, as if a dream had warned her what work is to be done tonight. But no, no; ‘t would kill her to think it. Well, she’s a blessed angel on earth; and after this one night I’ll cling to her skirts and follow her to heaven.”

With this excellent resolve for the future, Goodman Brown felt himself justified in making more haste on his present evil purpose. He had taken a dreary road, darkened by all the gloomiest trees of the forest, which barely stood aside to let the narrow path creep through, and closed immediately behind. It was all as lonely as could be; and there is this peculiarity in such a solitude, that the traveller knows not who may be concealed by the innumerable trunks and the thick boughs overhead; so that with lonely footsteps he may yet be passing through an unseen multitude.

“There may be a devilish Indian behind every tree,” said Goodman Brown to himself; and he glanced fearfully behind him as he added, “What if the devil himself should be at my very elbow!”

His head being turned back, he passed a crook of the road, and, looking forward again, beheld the figure of a man, in grave and decent attire, seated at the foot of an old tree. He arose at Goodman Brown’s approach and walked onward side by side with him.

“You are late, Goodman Brown,” said he. “The clock of the Old South was striking as I came through Boston, and that is full fifteen minutes agone.”

"Faith kept me back a while," replied the young man, with a tremor in his voice, caused by the sudden appearance of his companion, though not wholly unexpected.

It was now deep dusk in the forest, and deepest in that part of it where these two were journeying. As nearly as could be discerned, the second traveller was about fifty years old, apparently in the same rank of life as Goodman Brown, and bearing a considerable resemblance to him, though perhaps more in expression than features. Still they might have been taken for father and son. And yet, though the elder person was as simply clad as the younger, and as simple in manner too, he had an indescribable air of one who knew the world, and who would not have felt abashed at the governor's dinner table or in King William's court, were it possible that his affairs should call him thither. But the only thing about him that could be fixed upon as remarkable was his staff, which bore the likeness of a great black snake, so curiously wrought that it might almost be seen to twist and wriggle itself like a living serpent. This, of course, must have been an ocular deception, assisted by the uncertain light.

"Come, Goodman Brown," cried his fellow-traveller, "this is a dull pace for the beginning of a journey. Take my staff, if you are so soon weary."

"Friend," said the other, exchanging his slow pace for a full stop, "having kept covenant by meeting thee here, it is my purpose now to return whence I came. I have scruples touching the matter thou wot'st of."

"Sayest thou so?" replied he of the serpent, smiling apart. "Let us walk on, nevertheless, reasoning as we go; and if I convince thee not thou shalt turn back. We are but a little way in the forest yet."

"Too far! too far!" exclaimed the goodman, unconsciously resuming his walk. "My father never went into the woods on such an errand, nor his father before him. We have been a race of honest men and good Christians since the days of the martyrs; and shall I be the first of the name of Brown that ever took this path and kept—"

"Such company, thou wouldst say," observed the elder person, interpreting his pause. "Well said, Goodman Brown! I have been as well acquainted with your family as with ever a one among the Puritans; and that's no trifle to say. I helped your grandfather, the constable, when he lashed the Quaker woman so smartly through the streets of Salem; and it was I that brought your father a pitch-pine knot, kindled at my own hearth, to set fire to an Indian village, in King Philip's war. They were my good friends, both; and many a pleasant walk have we had along this path, and returned merrily after midnight. I would fain be friends with you for their sake."

"If it be as thou sayest," replied Goodman Brown, "I marvel they never spoke of these matters; or, verily, I marvel not, seeing that the least rumor of the sort would have driven them from New England. We are a people of prayer, and good works to boot, and abide no such wickedness."

"Wickedness or not," said the traveller with the twisted staff, "I have a very general acquaintance here in New England. The deacons of many a church have drunk the communion wine with me; the selectmen of divers towns make me their chairman; and a majority of the Great and General Court are firm supporters of my interest. The governor and I, too—But these are state secrets."

"Can this be so?" cried Goodman Brown, with a stare of amazement at his undisturbed companion. "Howbeit, I have nothing to do with the governor and council; they have their own ways, and are no rule for a simple husbandman like me. But, were I to go on with thee, how should I meet the eye of that good old man, our minister, at Salem village? Oh, his voice would make me tremble both Sabbath day and lecture day."

Thus far the elder traveller had listened with due gravity; but now burst into a fit of irrepressible mirth, shaking himself so violently that his snake-like staff actually seemed to wriggle in sympathy.

"Ha! ha! ha!" shouted he again and again; then composing himself, "Well, go on, Goodman Brown, go on; but, prithee, don't kill me with laughing."

"Well, then, to end the matter at once," said Goodman Brown, considerably nettled, “there is my wife, Faith. It would break her dear little heart; and I’d rather break my own.”

“Nay, if that be the case,” answered the other, “e’en go thy ways, Goodman Brown. I would not for twenty old women like the one hobbling before us that Faith should come to any harm.”

As he spoke he pointed his staff at a female figure on the path, in whom Goodman Brown recognized a very pious and exemplary dame, who had taught him his catechism in youth, and was still his moral and spiritual adviser, jointly with the minister and Deacon Gookin.

“A marvel, truly, that Goody Cloyse should be so far in the wilderness at nightfall,” said he. “But with your leave, friend, I shall take a cut through the woods until we have left this Christian woman behind. Being a stranger to you, she might ask whom I was consorting with and whither I was going.”

“Be it so,” said his fellow-traveller. “Betake you to the woods, and let me keep the path.”

Accordingly the young man turned aside, but took care to watch his companion, who advanced softly along the road until he had come within a staff’s length of the old dame. She, meanwhile, was making the best of her way, with singular speed for so aged a woman, and mumbling some indistinct words—a prayer, doubtless—as she went. The traveller put forth his staff and touched her withered neck with what seemed the serpent’s tail.

“The devil!” screamed the pious old lady.

“Then Goody Cloyse knows her old friend?” observed the traveller, confronting her and leaning on his writhing stick.

“Ah, forsooth, and is it your worship indeed?” cried the good dame. “Yea, truly is it, and in the very image of my old gossip, Goodman Brown, the grandfather of the silly fellow that now is. But—would your worship believe it?—my broomstick hath strangely disappeared, stolen, as I suspect, by that unhanged witch, Goody Cory, and that, too, when I was all anointed with the juice of smallage, and cinquefoil, and wolf’s bane.”

"Mingled with fine wheat and the fat of a new-born babe," said the shape of old Goodman Brown.

"Ah, your worship knows the recipe," cried the old lady, cackling aloud. "So, as I was saying, being all ready for the meeting, and no horse to ride on, I made up my mind to foot it; for they tell me there is a nice young man to be taken into communion to-night. But now your good worship will lend me your arm, and we shall be there in a twinkling."

"That can hardly be," answered her friend. "I may not spare you my arm, Goody Cloyse; but here is my staff, if you will."

So saying, he threw it down at her feet, where, perhaps, it assumed life, being one of the rods which its owner had formerly lent to the Egyptian magi. Of this fact, however, Goodman Brown could not take cognizance. He had cast up his eyes in astonishment, and, looking down again, beheld neither Goody Cloyse nor the serpentine staff, but his fellow-traveller alone, who waited for him as calmly as if nothing had happened.

"That old woman taught me my catechism," said the young man; and there was a world of meaning in this simple comment.

They continued to walk onward, while the elder traveller exhorted his companion to make good speed and persevere in the path, discoursing so aptly that his arguments seemed rather to spring up in the bosom of his auditor than to be suggested by himself. As they went, he plucked a branch of maple to serve for a walking stick, and began to strip it of the twigs and little boughs, which were wet with evening dew. The moment his fingers touched them they became strangely withered and dried up as with a week's sunshine. Thus the pair proceeded, at a good free pace, until suddenly, in a gloomy hollow of the road, Goodman Brown sat himself down on the stump of a tree and refused to go any farther.

"Friend," said he, stubbornly, "my mind is made up. Not another step will I budge on this errand. What if a wretched old woman do choose to go to the devil when I thought she was going to heaven: is that any reason why I should quit my dear Faith and go after her?"

"You will think better of this by and by," said his acquaintance, composedly. “Sit here and rest yourself a while; and when you feel like moving again, there is my staff to help you along.” Without more words, he threw his companion the maple stick, and was as speedily out of sight as if he had vanished into the deepening gloom. The young man sat a few moments by the roadside, applauding himself greatly, and thinking with how clear a conscience he should meet the minister in his morning walk, nor shrink from the eye of good old Deacon Gookin. And what calm sleep would be his that very night, which was to have been spent so wickedly, but so purely and sweetly now, in the arms of Faith! Amidst these pleasant and praiseworthy meditations, Goodman Brown heard the tramp of horses along the road, and deemed it advisable to conceal himself within the verge of the forest, conscious of the guilty purpose that had brought him thither, though now so happily turned from it.

On came the hoof tramps and the voices of the riders, two grave old voices, conversing soberly as they drew near. These mingled sounds appeared to pass along the road, within a few yards of the young man’s hiding-place; but, owing doubtless to the depth of the gloom at that particular spot, neither the travellers nor their steeds were visible. Though their figures brushed the small boughs by the wayside, it could not be seen that they intercepted, even for a moment, the faint gleam from the strip of bright sky athwart which they must have passed. Goodman Brown alternately crouched and stood on tiptoe, pulling aside the branches and thrusting forth his head as far as he durst without discerning so much as a shadow. It vexed him the more, because he could have sworn, were such a thing possible, that he recognized the voices of the minister and Deacon Gookin, jogging along quietly, as they were wont to do, when bound to some ordination or ecclesiastical council. While yet within hearing, one of the riders stopped to pluck a switch.

“Of the two, reverend sir,” said the voice like the deacon’s, “I had rather miss an ordination dinner than to-night’s meeting. They tell me that some of our community are to be here from Falmouth and beyond, and others from Connecticut and Rhode Island, besides several of the Indian powwows, who, after their fashion, know almost as much deviltry as the best of us. Moreover, there is a goodly young woman to be taken into communion."

"Mighty well, Deacon Gookin!" replied the solemn old tones of the minister. "Spur up, or we shall be late. Nothing can be done, you know, until I get on the ground."

The hoofs clattered again; and the voices, talking so strangely in the empty air, passed on through the forest, where no church had ever been gathered or solitary Christian prayed. Whither, then, could these holy men be journeying so deep into the heathen wilderness? Young Goodman Brown caught hold of a tree for support, being ready to sink down on the ground, faint and overburdened with the heavy sickness of his heart. He looked up to the sky, doubting whether there really was a heaven above him. Yet there was the blue arch, and the stars brightening in it.

"With heaven above and Faith below, I will yet stand firm against the devil!" cried Goodman Brown.

While he still gazed upward into the deep arch of the firmament and had lifted his hands to pray, a cloud, though no wind was stirring, hurried across the zenith and hid the brightening stars. The blue sky was still visible, except directly overhead, where this black mass of cloud was sweeping swiftly northward. Aloft in the air, as if from the depths of the cloud, came a confused and doubtful sound of voices. Once the listener fancied that he could distinguish the accents of towns-people of his own, men and women, both pious and ungodly, many of whom he had met at the communion table, and had seen others rioting at the tavern. The next moment, so indistinct were the sounds, he doubted whether he had heard aught but the murmur of the old forest, whispering without a wind. Then came a stronger swell of those familiar tones, heard daily in the sunshine at Salem village, but never until now from a cloud of night. There was one voice of a young woman, uttering lamentations, yet with an uncertain sorrow, and entreating for some favor, which, perhaps, it would grieve her to obtain; and all the unseen multitude, both saints and sinners, seemed to encourage her onward.

"Faith!" shouted Goodman Brown, in a voice of agony and desperation; and the echoes of the forest mocked him, crying, "Faith! Faith!" as if bewildered wretches were seeking her all through the wilderness.

The cry of grief, rage, and terror was yet piercing the night, when the unhappy husband held his breath for a response. There was a scream, drowned immediately in a louder murmur of voices, fading into far-off laughter, as the dark cloud swept away, leaving the clear and silent sky above Goodman Brown. But something fluttered lightly down through the air and caught on the branch of a tree. The young man seized it, and beheld a pink ribbon.

"My Faith is gone!" cried he, after one stupefied moment. "There is no good on earth; and sin is but a name. Come, devil; for to thee is this world given."

And, maddened with despair, so that he laughed loud and long, did Goodman Brown grasp his staff and set forth again, at such a rate that he seemed to fly along the forest path rather than to walk or run. The road grew wilder and drearier and more faintly traced, and vanished at length, leaving him in the heart of the dark wilderness, still rushing onward with the instinct that guides mortal man to evil. The whole forest was peopled with frightful sounds—the creaking of the trees, the howling of wild beasts, and the yell of Indians; while sometimes the wind tolled like a distant church bell, and sometimes gave a broad roar around the traveller, as if all Nature were laughing him to scorn. But he was himself the chief horror of the scene, and shrank not from its other horrors.

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared Goodman Brown when the wind laughed at him.

"Let us hear which will laugh loudest. Think not to frighten me with your deviltry. Come witch, come wizard, come Indian powwow, come devil himself, and here comes Goodman Brown. You may as well fear him as he fear you."

In truth, all through the haunted forest there could be nothing more frightful than the figure of Goodman Brown. On he flew among the black pines, brandishing his staff with frenzied gestures, now giving vent to an inspiration of horrid blasphemy, and now shouting forth such laughter as set all the echoes of the forest laughing like demons around him. The fiend in his own shape is less hideous than when he rages in the breast of man. Thus sped the demoniac on his course, until, quivering among the trees, he saw a red light before him, as when the felled trunks and branches of a clearing have been set on fire, and throw up their lurid blaze against the sky, at the hour of midnight. He paused, in a lull of the tempest that had driven him onward, and heard the swell of what seemed a hymn, rolling solemnly from a distance with the weight of many voices. He knew the tune; it was a familiar one in the choir of the village meeting-house. The verse died heavily away, and was lengthened by a chorus, not of human voices, but of all the sounds of the benighted wilderness pealing in awful harmony together. Goodman Brown cried out, and his cry was lost to his own ear by its unison with the cry of the desert.

In the interval of silence he stole forward until the light glared full upon his eyes. At one extremity of an open space, hemmed in by the dark wall of the forest, arose a rock, bearing some rude, natural resemblance either to an alter or a pulpit, and surrounded by four blazing pines, their tops aflame, their stems untouched, like candles at an evening meeting. The mass of foliage that had overgrown the summit of the rock was all on fire, blazing high into the night and fitfully illuminating the whole field. Each pendent twig and leafy festoon was in a blaze. As the red light arose and fell, a numerous congregation alternately shone forth, then disappeared in shadow, and again grew, as it were, out of the darkness, peopling the heart of the solitary woods at once.

"A grave and dark-clad company," quoth Goodman Brown.

In truth they were such. Among them, quivering to and fro between gloom and splendor, appeared faces that would be seen next day at the council board of the province, and others which, Sabbath after Sabbath, looked devoutly heavenward, and benignantly over the crowded pews, from the holiest pulpits in the land. Some affirm that the lady of the governor was there. At least there were high dames well known to her, and wives of honored husbands, and widows, a great multitude, and ancient maidens, all of excellent repute, and fair young girls, who trembled lest their mothers should espy them. Either the sudden gleams of light flashing over the obscure field bedazzled Goodman Brown, or he recognized a score of the church members of Salem village famous for their especial sanctity. Good old Deacon Gookin had arrived, and waited at the skirts of that venerable saint, his revered pastor. But, irreverently consorting with these grave, reputable, and pious people, these elders of the church, these chaste dames and dewy virgins, there were men of dissolute lives and women of spotted fame, wretches given over to all mean and filthy vice, and suspected even of horrid crimes. It was strange to see that the good shrank not from the wicked, nor were the sinners abashed by the saints. Scattered also among their pale-faced enemies were the Indian priests, or powwows, who had often scared their native forest with more hideous incantations than any known to English witchcraft.

"But where is Faith?" thought Goodman Brown; and, as hope came into his heart, he trembled. Another verse of the hymn arose, a slow and mournful strain, such as the pious love, but joined to words which expressed all that our nature can conceive of sin, and darkly hinted at far more. Unfathomable to mere mortals is the lore of fiends. Verse after verse was sung; and still the chorus of the desert swelled between like the deepest tone of a mighty organ; and with the final peal of that dreadful anthem there came a sound, as if the roaring wind, the rushing streams, the howling beasts, and every other voice of the unconcerted wilderness were mingling and according with the voice of guilty man in homage to the prince of all. The four blazing pines threw up a loftier flame, and obscurely discovered shapes and visages of horror on the smoke wreaths above the impious assembly. At the same moment the fire on the rock shot redly forth and formed a glowing arch above its base, where now appeared a figure. With reverence be it spoken, the figure bore no slight similitude, both in garb and manner, to some grave divine of the New England churches.

“Bring forth the converts!” cried a voice that echoed through the field and rolled into the forest.

At the word, Goodman Brown stepped forth from the shadow of the trees and approached the congregation, with whom he felt a loathful brotherhood by the sympathy of all that was wicked in his heart. He could have well-nigh sworn that the shape of his own dead father beckoned him to advance, looking downward from a smoke wreath, while a woman, with dim features of despair, threw out her hand to warn him back. Was it his mother? But he had no power to retreat one step, nor to resist, even in thought, when the minister and good old Deacon Gookin seized his arms and led him to the blazing rock. Thither came also the slender form of a veiled female, led between Goody Cloyse, that pious teacher of the catechism, and Martha Carrier, who had received the devil’s promise to be queen of hell. A rampant hag was she. And there stood the proselytes beneath the canopy of fire.

“Welcome, my children,” said the dark figure, “to the communion of your race. Ye have found thus young your nature and your destiny. My children, look behind you!”

They turned; and flashing forth, as it were, in a sheet of flame, the fiend worshippers were seen; the smile of welcome gleamed darkly on every visage.

“There,” resumed the sable form, “are all whom ye have reverenced from youth. Ye deemed them holier than yourselves, and shrank from your own sin, contrasting it with their lives of righteousness and prayerful aspirations heavenward. Yet here are they all in my worshipping assembly. This night it shall be granted you to know their secret deeds: how hoary-bearded elders of the church have whispered wanton words to the young maids of their households; how many a woman, eager for widows’ weeds, has given her husband a drink at bedtime and let him sleep his last sleep in her bosom; how beardless youths have made haste to inherit their fathers’ wealth; and how fair damsels—blush not, sweet ones—have dug little graves in the garden, and bidden me, the sole guest to an infant’s funeral. By the sympathy of your human hearts for sin ye shall scent out all the places—whether in church, bedchamber, street, field, or forest—where crime has been committed, and shall exult to behold the whole earth one stain of guilt, one mighty blood spot. Far more than this. It shall be yours to penetrate, in every bosom, the deep mystery of sin, the fountain of all wicked arts, and which inexhaustibly supplies more evil impulses than human power—than my power at its utmost—can make manifest in deeds. And now, my children, look upon each other."

They did so; and, by the blaze of the hell-kindled torches, the wretched man beheld his Faith, and the wife her husband, trembling before that unhallowed altar.

"Lo, there ye stand, my children," said the figure, in a deep and solemn tone, almost sad with its despairing awfulness, as if his once angelic nature could yet mourn for our miserable race.

"Depending upon one another's hearts, ye had still hoped that virtue were not all a dream. Now are ye undeceived. Evil is the nature of mankind. Evil must be your only happiness. Welcome again, my children, to the communion of your race."

"Welcome," repeated the fiend worshippers, in one cry of despair and triumph.

And there they stood, the only pair, as it seemed, who were yet hesitating on the verge of wickedness in this dark world. A basin was hollowed, naturally, in the rock. Did it contain water, reddened by the lurid light? or was it blood? or, perchance, a liquid flame? Herein did the shape of evil dip his hand and prepare to lay the mark of baptism upon their foreheads, that they might be partakers of the mystery of sin, more conscious of the secret guilt of others, both in deed and thought, than they could now be of their own. The husband cast one look at his pale wife, and Faith at him. What polluted wretches would the next glance show them to each other, shuddering alike at what they disclosed and what they saw!

"Faith! Faith!" cried the husband, "look up to heaven, and resist the wicked one."

Whether Faith obeyed he knew not. Hardly had he spoken when he found himself amid calm night and solitude, listening to a roar of the wind which died heavily away through the forest. He staggered against the rock, and felt it chill and damp; while a hanging twig, that had been all on fire, besprinkled his cheek with the coldest dew.

The next morning young Goodman Brown came slowly into the street of Salem village, staring around him like a bewildered man. The good old minister was taking a walk along the graveyard to get an appetite for breakfast and meditate his sermon, and bestowed a blessing, as he passed, on Goodman Brown. He shrank from the venerable saint as if to avoid an anathema. Old Deacon Gookin was at domestic worship, and the holy words of his prayer were heard through the open window. "What God doth the wizard pray to?" quoth Goodman Brown. Goody Cloyse, that excellent old Christian, stood in the early sunshine at her own lattice, catechizing a little girl who had brought her a pint of morning's milk. Goodman Brown snatched away the child as from the grasp of the fiend himself. Turning the corner by the meeting-house, he spied the head of Faith, with the pink ribbons, gazing anxiously forth, and bursting into such joy at sight of him that she skipped along the street and almost kissed her husband before the whole village. But Goodman Brown looked sternly and sadly into her face, and passed on without a greeting.

Had Goodman Brown fallen asleep in the forest and only dreamed a wild dream of a witch-meeting?

Be it so if you will; but, alas! it was a dream of evil omen for young Goodman Brown. A stern, a sad, a darkly meditative, a distrustful, if not a desperate man did he become from the night of that fearful dream. On the Sabbath day, when the congregation were singing a holy psalm, he could not listen because an anthem of sin rushed loudly upon his ear and drowned all the blessed strain. When the minister spoke from the pulpit with power and fervid eloquence, and, with his hand on the open Bible, of the sacred truths of our religion, and of saint-like lives and triumphant deaths, and of future bliss or misery unutterable, then did Goodman Brown turn pale, dreading lest the roof should thunder down upon the gray blasphemer and his hearers. Often, waking suddenly at midnight, he shrank from the bosom of Faith; and at morning or eventide, when the family knelt down at prayer, he scowled and muttered to himself, and gazed sternly at his wife, and turned away. And when he had lived long, and was borne to his grave a hoary corpse, followed by Faith, an aged woman, and children and grandchildren, a goodly procession, besides neighbors not a few, they carved no hopeful verse upon his tombstone, for his dying hour was gloom.

Review Questions

1. Write a 10-minute freewrite about your subjective view of "Young Goodman Brown." Some questions you might want to consider: Did the story hold you in suspense, or did you find the plot predictable? What did you think of the ending? What did you think of Hawthorne's style of writing? What is Hawthorne saying about the society in which Goodman Brown lives? What is Hawthorne saying about Goodman Brown?
2. Sketch a diagram of the plot of "Young Goodman Brown," labeling the inciting incident, exposition, rising and falling action, climax, sub-climaxes, dénouement, and resolution. 2a. What point did you choose as the climax of "Young Goodman Brown" and why? 2b. Do you think "Young Goodman Brown" has several sub-climaxes, or are his encounters with the townspeople just part of the rising action? Explain your reasoning.
3. What conflicts does Goodman Brown encounter? Are they internal conflicts, external conflicts, or both? Explain your reasoning.
4. We know that Goodman Brown is the protagonist of the story. However, who is the antagonist? Is there more than one?
5. What is the setting of "Young Goodman Brown"? 5a. Does the story have an internalized setting? If so, what is it and who internalizes it? 5b. What is the mood of "Young Goodman Brown"?
6. List some possible themes in "Young Goodman Brown."

Remember, a theme is expressed in a sentence, not in one or two words. 6a. Are there any motifs in “Young Goodman Brown” to reinforce the themes you listed? What are they?

Vocabulary

Introduction

Subjective Reading

Paying attention to the feelings a story gives you when you read it. When you read subjectively, you follow your intuition about characters and plot points.

Objective Reading

Paying attention to the character, plot, setting, theme, diction, and syntax when you read a story and using these elements to analyze that story.

Tone

The attitude writing can take towards its subject or audience. Tone generally applies to specific sentences or paragraphs, not to the text as a whole.

Diction

The word choice used throughout a text.

Syntax

The order in which a sentence is put together grammatically.

Character

Character

A person participating in, or alluded to, in the action of a story. Characters can also be animals or inanimate objects.

Conflict

The main problem in a story. It is tension in a story between two or more characters, groups, things, or events.

Internal Conflict

Conflict that takes place within an individual, such as a conflict of morals or of emotions.

External Conflict

Conflict that takes place outside an individual, such as a war or feud.

Protagonist

The main character(s) of a story. The events of a story focus on the protagonist(s).

Antagonist

The character(s), thing(s), event(s), or group(s) that stands in opposition to the protagonist(s).

Antihero

A protagonist who does not embody traditional heroic values.

Secondary/Minor Character

Characters in the story who are not the protagonist(s) or antagonist(s).

Archetype

A character type that has been repeated in literature throughout history.

Plot

Plot

The set of events that make up a story.

Inciting Incident

The event that sets off the main conflict in a plot.

Exposition

Parts of the story that tell us about setting and main characters and hit at theme and possible conflicts.

Rising Action

The series of events in a plot that build up to the climax.

Climax

The turning point of the story; it is the incident that allows the story to resolve.

Falling Action

The events in a story that take place between the climax and the dénouement.

Dénouement

The point in the story at which the central conflict is resolved.

Setting

Setting

The frame of reference in which the story takes place. This includes place, time, and social/cultural context.

Mood

The general feeling the reader gets from the story.

Internalized Setting

When an aspect of the story external to a character represents the character's internal development.

Theme

Theme

The unifying idea or ideas behind a story. Theme usually provides a broad statement about humanity, life, or our universe and should be expressed in a complete sentence.

Motif

Recurring elements in a story which points to a theme. Motifs can be objects, sounds, statements, etc.

Sources

Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown." From "Mosses from an Old Manse and Other Stories," http://www.gutenberg.org/

48. Visual Rhetoric

OVERVIEW

This chapter will describe visual rhetoric and its related fields of study so that you will be able to recognize how visual media is employed to achieve a rhetorical effect.

Below is a graphic display in the lobby of a building. The display attempts to visualize the key values of an organization using visual rhetoric. As you can see, some of the instances work well ("Teamwork") while others don't quite achieve the desired effect. For example, what does a gazebo dock have to do with accountability? What could the author have used instead?

Our Values sign

VISUAL RHETORIC DEFINED

Visual rhetoric is a special area of academic study unto its own. It has a long history in the study of art and semiotics (the study of symbols) and it has kinship to the classical study of oral rhetoric such as persuasive speeches and legal arguments.

For the purpose of our studies, we will define the phrase "visual rhetoric" as *the means by which visual imagery can be used to achieve a communication goal* such as to influence people's attitudes, opinions, and beliefs. The study of visual rhetoric, therefore, is to ask the question, "How do images act rhetorically upon viewers?" (Hill, C. A., & Helmers, M., 2012, p. 1).

The techniques of visual rhetoric align with the classic pillars of rhetoric:

- **Ethos –** An ethical appeal meant to convince an audience of the author's credibility or character.
- **Pathos –** An emotional appeal meant to persuade an audience by appealing to their emotions.
- **Logos –** An appeal to logic meant to convince an audience by use of logic or reason.

One of today's most familiar uses of visual rhetoric are the memes you see in social media. Memes, in an incredibly concise and penetrating way, are able to punctuate a dialogue or issue with "likes" and shares calculating a somewhat blunt measure of their popularity.

An example of a popular meme as documented by the KnowYourMeme.com website.

From KnowYourMeme.com: "Success Kid, sometimes known as I Hate Sandcastles, is a reaction image of a baby at a beach with a smug facial expression. It has been used in image macros to designate either success or frustration. In early 2011, the original image was turned into an advice animal style image macro with captions describing a situation that goes better than expected."

So if memes are a common part of your daily communication, it is a good entry point for describing the capability of visual rhetoric.

Read Purdue OWL: Visual Rhetoric Overview

This brief resource will show a graphical representation of visual rhetoric in relation to other disciplines plus some references to other research.

Read The American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA) – Visual Rhetoric: An Introduction for Students of Visual Communication

This article provides an overview of visual rhetoric as a body of knowledge within visual literacy and graphic design.

FOUNDATIONS OF RHETORIC

In this section, we will describe the areas of foundation knowledge that surround the principles of visual rhetoric.

RHETORIC: THE TECHNIQUES OF PERSUASION

Before describing the principles of visual rhetoric, it is important to fully understand the traditions of rhetoric in speaking and writing. The video below describes the foundation elements of rhetoric – logos, pathos, and ethos (logic, emotion, and credibility).

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://idaho.pressbooks.pub/write/?p=896#oembed-3

SEMIOTICS: THE STUDY OF SIGNS AND SYMBOLS

Visual imagery is *analogue*, meaning that it is analogous to, or bears a similarity to, that which it represents. Authors use the power of analogy to create a symbolic message.

In the example below (figure 1), we see a poster used during Word War I portraying a fierce gorilla symbolizing a terrifying German enemy while the draped bare chested woman symbolizes the spirit of American liberty. The poster is intended to convey the idea that, unless you enlist in the U.S. Army, the German Kaiser's rabid soldiers would eventually land on American soil.

propaganda poster of terrifying gorilla world war I

Fig. 1 – "WWI Recruitment Poster" – Public Domain license via Wikimedia Commons

A reasonable person would know that there really wasn't any risk of an actual gorilla landing on the shores of United States who would, in one hand, scoop up a helpless woman to carry around while he whacked things with his club. Still, the rhetorical effect contributed to a larger communication strategy at the time to foster an effort to increase recruitment. This was achieved through the use of overt symbolic references to real objects combined with dramatic composition techniques (the gorilla's feet standing on top of the word "America", bold typefaces, blood colors, stormy green skies, and urgent text).

The study of symbols, metaphors, expressions, and signs to represent ideas, emotions, action, and information is the discipline called *semiotics*. Semiotics extends to other realms of communication such as color coding, art, graffiti, universal codes for public spaces, and even to the wordless assembly instructions of a piece of IKEA furniture (see figure 2).

IKEA guy

Fig. 2 – "IKEA Guy" © IKEA All Rights Reserved

Techniques of visual rhetoric include using symbolic references to elicit a reaction from your audience. So as you select some kind of imagery as part of your visual communication, you would be employing the psychological language of symbolism to achieve your effect.

Key Takeaway #1

Using images as symbols for ideas, expressions, ideologies, and other entities is an effective way to promote your message.

LINGUISTICS: THE STUDY OF LANGUAGE AND DISCOURSE

Language: Linguists study language in both its written and spoken form including its historical, cultural, anthropological, and political backgrounds. As described in the Introduction chapter, written language is produced in the form of a code (the alphabet). Words, as a code for a specific meaning in the dictionary, are often insufficient in conveying the intended meaning of a message unequivocally. If you have ever experienced the awkwardness of an email message or social media post that was misinterpreted by others in the worst possible way, you are familiar with this phenomenon.

The cause of this problem is rooted in the complexity of conveying a message in a medium that is too lean to punctuate how the message is to be interpreted. An example would be the difference between sending a letter to one's beloved versus saying the same words in person. The beloved's interpretation of the same message in the form of a letter could be different than if it were conveyed face-to-face even if the same words were used. The absence of non-verbal cues in the letter could cause a certain sarcastic or humorous passage to be errantly perceived as an insult.

Famed linguist Gregory Bateson (1968) described how a message is segmented into "content" and "relationship". While the content could be described as the literal meaning of words as decoded by the lexicon of our language, the relationship portion of a message is the part that cues the receiver about *how that message is to be taken as*.

It is the author's challenge to account for the audience's need for both meaning and interpretation.

Discourse: We use language as the basis of human discourse, which is defined as "the production of knowledge through language" (Hall, 1997, p. 44). Hall's inclusion of the word "production" supposes that knowledge is a process of human *construction*: As we communicate, we are constructing a shared sense of truth and reality while forming the contours of a social world. Our social world "… is the overall outcome of our joint processes of social – specifically, communicative – construction" (Couldry, N., 2018, p. 18).

As you construct messages through the use of oral, written, and visual media, you are, in essence, creating a shared understanding – a reality – through a social process communication.

Key Takeaway #2

You will be challenged to compose messages so that they are interpreted by your audience as you intended to create a shared sense of reality.

VISUAL RHETORIC IN PRACTICE

The traditional study of rhetoric, as the video in this chapter describes, is the study of communication in the art of persuasion. The term *visual rhetoric* suggests that there is kinship with traditional oral rhetoric and written rhetoric, but in a different (visual) form.

For example, in the print ad below for Pinnacle Bank, the visual element has nothing to do with banking, but has everything to do with persuading the viewer that the bank has *ethos*, or credibility, with respect to the individuals or businesses they are appealing to. To the audience, the selection of a farm image is intended to recognize the audience's perspective, interests, traditions, and livelihood so that it promotes feelings of trust, connection, and mutual understanding, even though the occupations of banker and farmer couldn't be more different.

Nebraska Bank

In the example below, we see an effort to appeal to both emotion (pathos) and logic (logos) in the famous "Morning in America" TV ad from the 1984 presidential election. The emotional elements are triggered through the use of the wedding scene and the flag raising scene. The logical element, expressed in the narrator's voiceover, is presented in the form of economic statistics and reinforced by a question that asks why we would want to return to the conditions that preceded president Reagan's first term in office.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://idaho.pressbooks.pub/write/?p=896#oembed-1

Below is a "making of the TV ad" feature (4:00) created by RetroReport.org that describes the communication strategy behind the making of the "Morning in America" TV ad. This ad is recognized as one of the most effective political ads in American history.Pay close attention at about 2:10 into the video as the producer describes the wedding scene as a rhetorical device and how the perception of the ad was received by the public, even though the ad contained no policy or political stances. As you can see, visual media can have a powerful effect on how a message is received.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://idaho.pressbooks.pub/write/?p=896#oembed-2

VISUAL RHETORIC VERSUS VISUAL DECORATION

Not all visual information in media is intended for a rhetorical purpose. In deconstructing visual media, you will be challenged to distinguish between visual imagery that is purposeful and imagery that has no particular purpose other than decoration. In the example below, the globe image, by itself, does not elevate the information on the slide to a higher level of meaning. Removing the image of the globe would not take away from the meaning of the other information.

This is an example of a slide where the image does not promote a rhetorical effect. It is purely decorative.

decorative example

In the example below, we see another version of the same slide where a different image is used for a rhetorical effect. In this case, the intended message is extended beyond the literal meaning of the words in the bullet list. The audience gets the sense that the entities served by this corporation are not just those listed, but that they embrace a spirit of diversity and inclusion. The effect of this strategy should be that prospective clients of all backgrounds are welcome to do business with this organization.

diverse corporate environment

SUMMARY

Visual rhetoric draws upon the rhetorical traditions found in oral and written rhetoric and operates to achieve the same effect on human perception. Humans communicate using a combination of codes, symbols, analogies, and discourse to form a shared reality.

The author of visual media will need to account for the audience's need for both information and how that information is intended to be taken as within a larger communicative context.

References

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Hall, S. (1997). The work of representation. In S. Hall (Ed.), *Representation: cultural representations and signifying practices* (pp. 15-64). London: SAGE Publications in association with The Open University.

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49. Film Analysis

Film Analysis

What this handout is about

This handout provides a brief definition of film analysis compared to literary analysis, provides an introduction to common types of film analysis, and offers strategies and resources for approaching assignments.

What is film analysis, and how does it differ from literary analysis?

Film analysis is the process in which film is analyzed in terms of semiotics, narrative structure, cultural context, and mise-en-scene, among other approaches. If these terms are new to you, don't worry—they'll be explained in the next section.

Analyzing film, like analyzing literature (fiction texts, etc.), is a form of rhetorical analysis—critically analyzing and evaluating discourse, including words, phrases, and images. Having a clear argument and supporting evidence is every bit as critical to film analysis as to other forms of academic writing.

Unlike literature, film incorporates audiovisual elements and therefore introduces a new dimension to analysis. Ultimately, however, analysis of film is not too different. Think of all the things that make up a scene in a film: the actors, the lighting, the angles, the colors. All of these things may be absent in literature, but they are deliberate choices on the part of the director, producer, or screenwriter—as are the words chosen by the author of a work of literature. Furthermore, literature and film incorporate similar elements. They both have plots, characters, dialogue, settings, symbolism, and, just as the elements of literature can be analyzed for their intent and effect, these elements can be analyzed the same way in film.

Different types of film analysis

Listed here are common approaches to film analysis, but this is by no means an exhaustive list, and you may have discussed other approaches in class. As with any other assignment, make sure you understand your professor's expectations. This guide is best used to understand prompts or, in the case of more open-ended assignments, consider the different ways to analyze film.

Keep in mind that any of the elements of film can be analyzed, oftentimes in tandem. A single film analysis essay may simultaneously include all of the following approaches and more. As Jacques Aumont and Michel Marie propose in Analysis of Film, there is no correct, universal way to write film analysis.

Semiotic analysis

Semiotic analysis is the analysis of meaning behind signs and symbols, typically involving metaphors, analogies, and symbolism.

This doesn't necessarily need to be something dramatic; think about how you extrapolate information from the smallest signs in your day to day life. For instance, what characteristics can tell you about someone's personality? Something as simple as someone's appearance can reveal information about them. Mismatched shoes and bedhead might be a sign of carelessness (or something crazy happened that morning!), while an immaculate dress shirt and tie would suggest that the person is prim and proper. Continuing in that vein:

- What might you be able to infer about characters from small hints?
- How are these hints (signs) used to construct characters? How do they relate to the relative role of those characters, or the relationships between multiple characters?

Symbols denote concepts (liberty, peace, etc.) and feelings (hate, love, etc.) that they often have nothing to do with. They are used liberally in both literature and film, and finding them uses a similar process. Ask yourself:

- What objects or images are repeated in multiple instances?
    - In Frozen Elsa's gloves appear in multiple scenes.
- In what context do they appear?
    - Her gloves are first given to her by her father to restrain her magic. She continues to wear them throughout the coronation scene, before finally, in the Let It Go sequence, she throws them away.

Again, the method of semiotic analysis in film is similar to that of literature. Think about the deeper meaning behind objects or actions.

- What might Elsa's gloves represent?
    - Elsa's gloves represent fear of her magic and, by extension, herself. Though she attempts to contain her magic by hiding her hands within gloves and denying part of her identity, she eventually abandons the gloves in a quest for self-acceptance.

Narrative structure analysis

Narrative structure analysis is the analysis of the story elements, including plot structure, character motivations, and theme. Like the dramatic structure of literature (exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution), film has what is known as the Three-Act Structure: "Act One: Setup, Act Two: Confrontation, and Act Three: Resolution." Narrative structure analysis breaks the story of the film into these three elements and might consider questions like:

- How does the story follow or deviate from typical structures?
- What is the effect of following or deviating from this structure?
- What is the theme of the film, and how is that theme constructed?

Consider again the example of Frozen. You can use symbolism and narrative structure in conjunction by placing the symbolic objects/events in the context of the narrative structure. For instance, the first appearance of the gloves is in Act One, while their abandoning takes place in Act Two; thus, the story progresses in such a way that demonstrates Elsa's personal growth. By the time of Act Three, the Resolution, her aversion to touch (a product of fearing her own magic) is gone, reflecting a theme of self-acceptance.

Contextual analysis

Contextual analysis is analysis of the film as part of a broader context. Think about the culture, time, and place of the film's creation. What might the film say about the culture that created it? What were/are the social and political concerns of the time period? Or, like researching the author of a novel, you might consider the director, producer, and other people vital to the making of the film. What is the place of this film in the director's career? Does it align with his usual style of directing, or does it move in a new direction? Other examples of contextual approaches might be analyzing the film in terms of a civil rights or feminist movement.

For example, Frozen is often linked to the LGBTQ social movement. You might agree or disagree with this interpretation, and, using evidence from the film, support your argument.

Some other questions to consider:

- How does the meaning of the film change when seen outside of its culture?
- What characteristics distinguishes the film as being of its particular culture?

Mise-en-scene analysis

Mise-en-scene analysis is analysis of the arrangement of compositional elements in film—essentially, the analysis of audiovisual elements that most distinctly separate film analysis from literary analysis. Remember that the important part of a mise-en-scene analysis is not just identifying the elements of a scene, but explaining the significance behind them.

- What effects are created in a scene, and what is their purpose?
- How does the film attempt to achieve its goal by the way it looks, and does it succeed?

Audiovisual elements that can be analyzed include (but are not limited to): props and costumes, setting, lighting, camera angles, frames, special effects, choreography, music, color values, depth, placement of characters, etc. Mise-en-scene is typically the most foreign part of writing film analysis because the other components discussed are common to literary analysis, while mise-en-scene deals with elements unique to film. Using specific film terminology bolsters credibility, but you should also consider your audience. If your essay is meant to be accessible to non-specialist readers, explain what terms mean. The Resources section of this handout has links to sites that describe mise-en-scene elements in detail.

Rewatching the film and creating screen captures (still images) of certain scenes can help with detailed analysis of colors, positioning of actors, placement of objects, etc. Listening to the soundtrack can also be helpful, especially when placed in the context of particular scenes.

Some example questions:

- How is the lighting used to construct mood? Does the mood shift at any point during the film, and how is that shift in mood created?
- What does the setting say about certain characters? How are props used to reveal aspects of their personality?
- What songs were used, and why were they chosen? Are there any messages in the lyrics that pertain to the theme?

Writing the film analysis essay

Writing film analysis is similar to writing literary analysis or any argumentative essay in other disciplines: Consider the assignment and prompts, formulate a thesis (see the Brainstorming Handout and Thesis Statement Handout for help crafting a nuanced argument), compile evidence to prove your thesis, and lay out your argument in the essay. Your evidence may be different from what you are used to. Whereas in the English essay you use textual evidence and quotes, in a film analysis essay, you might also include audiovisual elements to bolster your argument.

When describing a sequence in a film, use the present tense, like you would write in the literary present when describing events of a novel, i.e. not "Elsa took off her gloves," but "Elsa takes off her gloves." When quoting dialogue from a film, if between multiple characters, use block quotes: Start the quotation on a new line, with the entire quote indented one inch from the left margin. However, conventions are flexible, so ask your professor if you are unsure. It may also help to follow the formatting of the script, if you can find it. For example:

ELSA: But she won't remember I have powers?
KING: It's for the best.

You do not need to use quotation marks for blocked-off dialogue, but for shorter quotations in the main text, quotation marks should be double quotes ("…").

Here are some tips for approaching film analysis:

- Make sure you understand the prompt and what you are being asked to do. Focus your argument by choosing a specific issue to assess.
- Review your materials. Rewatch the film for nuances that you may have missed in the first viewing. With your thesis in mind, take notes as you watch. Finding a screenplay of the movie may be helpful, but keep in mind that there may be differences between the screenplay and the actual product (and these differences might be a topic of discussion!).
- Develop a thesis and an outline, organizing your evidence so that it supports your argument. Remember that this is ultimately an assignment—make sure that your thesis answers what the prompt asks, and check with your professor if you are unsure.
- Move beyond only describing the audiovisual elements of the film by considering the significance of your evidence. Demonstrate understanding of not just what film elements are, but why and to what effect they are being used. For more help on using your evidence effectively, see 'Using Evidence In An Argument' in the Evidence Handout.

Resources

New York Film Academy Glossary
Movie Outline Glossary
Movie Script Database
Citation Practices: Film and Television

Works Consulted

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

Aumont, Jacques, and Michel Marie. L'analyse Des Films. Paris: Nathan, 1988. Print.

Pruter, Robin Franson. "Writing About Film." Writing About Film. DePaul University, 08 Mar. 2004. Web. 01 May 2016.

50. Cause and Effect

[AUTHOR REMOVED AT REQUEST OF ORIGINAL PUBLISHER]

Learning Objectives

1. Determine the purpose and structure of cause and effect in writing.
2. Understand how to write a cause-and-effect essay.

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.

Exercise 1

Consider the causes and effects in the following thesis statements. List a cause and effect for each one on your own sheet of paper.

1. The growing childhood obesity epidemic is a result of technology.
2. Much of the wildlife is dying because of the oil spill.
3. The town continued programs that it could no longer afford, so it went bankrupt.
4. More young people became politically active as use of the Internet spread throughout society.
5. While many experts believed the rise in violence was due to the poor economy, it was really due to the summer-long heat wave.

Exercise 2

Write three cause-and-effect thesis statements of your own for each of the following five broad topics.

1. Health and nutrition
2. Sports
3. Media
4. Politics
5. History

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:

1. Start with the cause and then talk about the effects.
2. 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 10.4 “Phrases of Causation” for examples of such terms.

Table 10.4 Phrases of Causation

as a result	consequently
because	due to
hence	since
thus	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.

Exercise 3

Look at some of the cause-and-effect relationships from Note 10.83 "Exercise 2". Outline the links you listed. Outline one using a cause-then-effect structure. Outline the other using the effect-then-cause structure.

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. See below to read a sample cause-and-effect essay:

Effects of Video Game Addiction

Video game addition is a serious problem in many parts of the world today and deserves more attention. It is no secret that children and adults in many countries throughout the world, including Japan, China, and the United States, play video games every day. Most players are able to limit their usage in ways that do not interfere with their daily lives, but many others have developed an addiction to playing video games and suffer detrimental effects.

An addiction can be described in several ways, but generally speaking, addictions involve unhealthy attractions to substances or activities that ultimately disrupt the ability of a person to keep up with regular daily responsibilities. Video game addiction typically involves playing games uncontrollably for many hours at a time—some people will play only four hours at a time while others cannot stop for over twenty-four hours. Regardless of the severity of the addiction, many of the same effects will be experienced by all.

One common effect of video game addiction is isolation and withdrawal from social experiences. Video game players often hide in their homes or in Internet cafés for days at a time—only reemerging for the most pressing tasks and necessities. The effect of this isolation can lead to a breakdown of communication skills and often a loss in socialization. While it is true that many games, especially massive multiplayer online games, involve a very real form of e-based communication and coordination with others, and these virtual interactions often result in real communities that can be healthy for the players, these communities and forms of communication rarely translate to the types of valuable social interaction that humans need to maintain typical social functioning. As a result, the social networking in these online games often gives the users the impression that they are interacting socially, while their true social lives and personal relations may suffer.

Another unfortunate product of the isolation that often accompanies video game addiction is the disruption of the user's career. While many players manage to enjoy video games and still hold their jobs without problems, others experience challenges at their workplace. Some may only experience warnings or demerits as a result of poorer performance, or others may end up losing their jobs altogether. Playing video games for extended periods of time often involves sleep deprivation, and this tends to carry over to the workplace, reducing production and causing habitual tardiness.

Video game addiction may result in a decline in overall health and hygiene. Players who interact with video games for such significant amounts of time can go an entire day without eating and even longer without basic hygiene tasks, such as using the restroom or bathing. The effects of this behavior pose significant danger to their overall health.

The causes of video game addiction are complex and can vary greatly, but the effects have the potential to be severe. Playing video games can and should be a fun activity for all to enjoy. But just like everything else, the amount of time one spends playing video games needs to be balanced with personal and social responsibilities.

Online Cause-and-Effective Essay Alternatives

Lawrence Otis Graham examines racism, and whether it has changed since the 1970s, in *The "Black Table" Is Still There*:

- http://scremeens.googlepages.com/TheBlackTableessay.rtf

Robin Tolmach Lakoff discusses the power of language to dehumanize in *From Ancient Greece to Iraq*: *The Power of Words in Wartime*:

- http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/18/science/essay-from-ancient-greece-to-iraq-the-power-of-words-in-wartime.html

Alan Weisman examines the human impact on the planet and its effects in *Earth without People*:

- http://discovermagazine.com/2005/feb/earth-without-people

Exercise 4

Choose one of the ideas you outlined in Note 10.85 "Exercise 3" and write a full cause-and-effect essay. Be sure to include an engaging introduction, a clear thesis, strong evidence and examples, and a thoughtful conclusion.

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:
    1. Start with the cause and then talk about the effect.
    2. 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.

51. Sample Writing Assignments

Sample Writing Assignments

Curated by Amy Minervini

Rhetorical Analysis

Assignment borrowed from: https://canvas.santarosa.edu/courses/15110/pages/rhetorical-analysis-essay-prompt

Overview

Write a 4-page rhetorical analysis (analysis of the argument) of the assigned text. You will need to complete two different tasks: (1) summarize the text's argument and (2) explain how the text's argument is put together.

Specifics

In the **summary** section, you will need to first introduce the text you will be analyzing. Then you will summarize **what** the text argues, noting the central claims and key evidence.

The **analysis** section of the paper should take up the majority of the 4 pages. Here you are trying to **analyze and explain how the argument was put together (which rhetorical strategies it uses). How are those strategies meant to impact the reader? In other words, how do the strategies attempt to influence the reader's thoughts and feelings? How do the strategies relate to and support the overall argument?**

You will need a thesis that identifies the argumentative strategies you will discuss. Here is a sample thesis: "Author X's argument is mainly dependent on emotional appeals, and he uses detailed description and narration to support those emotional appeals." For this thesis, you would then need to go on and explain and give examples of different emotional appeals that use description and narration from the text.

You need to decide which aspects of the argumentative strategy you want to focus on. It would be impossible for you to explain all of the argumentative features of a text in 2-3 pages, so focus on the strategies that are most interesting or obvious to you, or that you think are most important to the success of the argument. You could explain the author's use of any one of the following rhetorical strategies and concepts we've discussed so far in class:

- The types of argumentative modes being used: description, narrative, comparison and contrast, definition, evaluation, and so on
- The author's use of emotional appeals (pathos)
- How the author establishes his or her credibility (ethos)
- The how the text's logic (logos) works (is the logic dependent upon a definition or fact? is it dependent on a cause/effect relationship? a comparison and contrast? how does the logical reasoning work?)
- How the author uses kairos

Again, rather than trying to address everything on the list above, which would be impossible, discuss what you think the text's most important or notable rhetorical features are.

Textual Analysis

Assignment borrowed from: https://gcccd.instructure.com/courses/20188/pages/essay-1-prompt-read-carefully

Introduction

We began our journey with "language" this semester with a couple short articles about Growth Mindset and a writing assignment targeting core academic literacy skills. College-level reading and writing can be intimidating for students because it is seen as difficult, an exclusive club to which not many people are invited. However, I would argue that once students understand the "moves," or common practices, in academic writing, they can be successful scholars.

With this assignment, we introduce the foundational idea that academic writing is a "conversation" between scholars. In other words, intellectual writing is almost always produced in response to other texts, and does not exist as personal responses to random topics. Writing is a social, ongoing, and conversational act.

Purpose

The purpose of this assignment is to:

1. Read and respond to a college-level text.
2. Compose college-level writing.
3. Produce an academic summary of an article.
4. Respond to a topic with an original argument.

Goals

1. Use active/critical reading strategies to produce accurate, concise summaries of college level/academic texts.

2. Synthesize researched material from multiple texts to create and support an argument in response to a prompt. Draw direct evidence from texts in support of claims and analyze how that evidence supports the claim.
3. Utilize the various phases in the writing process—prewriting, writing revision, and proofreading—to produce clear, articulate, well-supported, well-organized essays.
4. Avoid plagiarism by properly citing quoted, summarized, and paraphrased material using MLA format.

Texts

- Dweck, Carol. "Brainology." *National Association of Independent Schools.*
- Hilton, Adriel. "Scholar Calls Growth Mindset a 'Cancerous' Idea, In Isolation." Nov 16, 2017.
- Kohn, Alfie. "The Perils of 'Growth Mindset' Education: Why we're trying to fix our kids when we should be fixing the system." 16 August 2015.

Task

Compose an essay, between 900-1200 words in length (about 4 pages NOT counting the Works Cited page), which answers the following question:

Is the idea of growth mindset the most effective/important way to improve our education system and student success?

More Specifically:

- Your essay must include your argument about growth mindset. You can argue that growth mindset is the most important factor in improving student success (taking Dweck's side) or you can argue that there are other factors that are more important than growth mindset (taking from either Hilton or Kohn). That means you need a thesis that states your answer to the above question and topic sentences that give reasons for your answer. You also need **support** for your argument in the form of cited material and personal experience.
    - Your thesis may look something like this:
        - "The idea of growth mindset is the most important aspect of improving our education system because….(3 reasons you think so). **OR**
        - "The idea of growth mindset is not the most important aspect of improving our education system because we need to consider….. (think of what you find more important, probably from the Hilton and Kohn articles).
    - You are required to cite both personal experience and the texts we discussed. When citing the texts, make sure to follow the Incorporating Quotes in Research handout.
    - Your body paragraphs should be formatted as PIEIE paragraphs. Your P should be a topic sentence (reason) in your own words, your I should be personal examples or quotes from the articles and your E should be explanations/analysis that connect back to the thesis.
    - **NOTE: Since you are citing the article, and possibly your own sources, don't forget your Works Cited page.**

Literary Analysis

Assignments borrowed from: https://www.voorhees.k12.nj.us/cms/

lib/NJ01000237/Centricity/Domain/2766/WW-V—Novel-Packet.pdf and Copyrighted by Holt, Rinehart, and Winston

Choose your own issue for your literary analysis of a novel, or use one of the following prompts:

Workplace

Think of a novel in which the main character's profession is integral to the story. What is the author trying to tell you about the character through the character's profession? How would the story change if you put the character in another, very different profession? Write a literary analysis explaining what the character's work says about him or her. Present your analysis to a group of career-minded students.

School

Select a novel that centers around events at a school. Write a literary analysis explaining how the setting affects the tone and the point of view of the story. Share your analysis with fellow students.

Psychology

Select a character such as Huck Finn, Reverend Dimmesdale from *The Scarlet Letter*, or another character from a novel you know. List in chronological order the actions of the character. What do the actions reveal about the character? Do the character's actions fit together, or do they contradict each other? Write an analysis of the character; be sure to include paraphrases or quotations from the text to support your analysis. Present your findings to a group of students interested in psychology.

Science

Physicists think of time as a fourth dimension, coloring how we perceive the world around us. Similarly, the way time is manipulated in novels affects our perceptions of the present moment of the story. Think of a novel in which time is manipulated: Scenes may be rushed or elongated (for example, an entire novel that takes place over the course of a few hours or a battle scene that seems to flash by in mere moments), or the writer may use flashbacks to take us back in time. Write a literary analysis about how time is manipulated in a novel. Present your findings to a group of students interested in science.

History

Most novels are set in specific places and historical periods that are central to the theme of the novel—for example, *The Red Badge of Courage*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, and countless others. Select a novel that is set in a historical period familiar to you. Identify the important historical details that the writer includes to bring the novel to life, and write a literary analysis explaining how those details relate to the theme. Present your analysis to group of students interested in history.

Image/Visual Analysis

Assignment borrowed from: https://phpmysql.howardcc.edu/Instructors/ENGL121/2017/08/visual-analysis-assignment-idea-jeff-moore/

In this essay, you will choose a movie poster to analyze rhetorically, arguing for at least two of the rhetorical strategies outlined in the rhetorical triangle (ethos, logos, and pathos) used in the poster, and at least two additional visual rhetorical strategies. Put another way, you will be using two of the rhetorical strategies to discuss at least three visual elements from the poster of your choice. While you are free to choose a movie poster you feel would be interesting to discuss, you'll also want to be certain that there is enough content to write about, and that you can identify at least two rhetorical features within it. For example, the movie poster from *Titanic*, seen below, can be said to rely heavily on pathos, but there are other rhetorical strategies at play (this is followed by an example of how to cite a movie poster on your Works Cited page):

Titanic. Directed by James Cameron, performances by Leonardo DiCaprio and Kate Winslet, Twentieth Century Fox, 1997.

Keeping the *Titanic* poster in mind, think about what this assignment is asking you to do. In addition to describing the rhetorical forces at play in your poster, you will have to choose at least two other specific criteria you believe contribute and connect to the specific rhetorical strategies. For example, in the movie poster for *Titanic*, you can talk about the use of color and how it demonstrates the pathos in the image, or how the lettering in the word Titanic resembles steel, and what this says about ethos. In creating this essay, you will want to make sure to:

- Describe in detail the way your image uses at least three visual elements (fonts, colors, framing, etc. – we will be discussing these in more detail in class, so don't worry if these are unfamiliar concepts to you right now).
- Choose at least two of the three rhetorical strategies (ethos, logos, pathos) you believe are vital to your interpretation of the image: What does the image mean to you? What visual elements back up this claim? How information is this image trying to communicate to you?
- Support your argument with concrete details from the image, explaining them to specifically point out features of the image that are vital to your interpretation.
- Properly cite your image, and include it in your document (you can either copy the image at the end of your Works Cited page, or provide a link to the image).

What do you mean by "Visual Elements"?

A visual element is any way the movie poster engages with you in a way that you can see. Look at your image more than once. Notice what catches your eye both immediately and after some time spent gazing. What stands out to you, and why? Here are some examples:

- Text
- Language
- Color

- Background
- Content
- Actors
- Tagline
- Size
- Camera Angle
- Mood
- Shape
- Symbols

When writing your essay, it may help to think of yourself as being in my shoes. Imagine you are trying to explain this image to a room full of people. How would you get them to see the image the same way you do? Your essay should make the point that, without analyzing these details, readers won't know exactly what choices were made to make the image "work" rhetorically. You will be pointing out the connection between rhetorical elements and visual elements.

Questions to help you plan/think about your draft:

- Who is the intended audience for the image?
- What does the image mean to me personally?
- What other interpretations of the image could arise?
- What does my audience know about the context of the image, or other images it refers to or relies on?
- What are some visual elements used in it?

Organization:

Intro: Situate your reader to movie poster analysis; introduce the chosen movie and accompanying poster. Briefly describe what the poster looks like and its visual/rhetorical appeal. (Please note: **I DO NOT WANT A PLOT SUMMARY!** In theory, your audience – and you, for that matter – does not need to see the movie in order to understand how the movie poster functions as a rhetorical text, so the details of the movie are not needed here).

Thesis: Including at least two rhetorical elements and three visual elements. Here is an example of what an effective thesis statement for this kind of essay looks like:

"The *Titanic* movie poster from 1997 uses pathos and logos through the use of color, facial expressions/body language, and lettering made to resemble riveted steel to make a statement about elicit love among social classes in the early 1900s."

3-4 Body Paragraphs: Each of these paragraphs should contain at least one visual criteria connected to at least one rhetorical criteria to help present your own analysis of the movie poster. If I'm talking about the use of pathos and facial expression/body language, I might talk about how the placement of the actors' faces contributes to a sense of both longing and separation. Maybe I will talk about the strength of love, symbolized by the riveted steel lettering in *Titanic*, or that the actual ship is used to provide a sense of authenticity. These are the kinds of issues you can explore in your body paragraphs.

Conclusion – Reinforce your "reading" of the image –How do specific visual elements connect with specific rhetorical elements to communicate with the target audience? How is the historical context represented through the poster and what does that mean for your analysis? Are the visual/rhetorical appeals effective for the target audience?

Film Analysis

Assignment borrowed from: http://earl-brooks.com/assignment-1-rhetorical-analysis-of-a-filmdocumentary

Purpose: A rhetorical analysis examines and explains how an author attempts to influence an audience. That is, rhetorical analyses use specific evidence from the text to establish a generalization (thesis) about the text's rhetoric (in short, how it persuades its audience by employing the **rhetorical appeals**, **using good reasons**, **constituting a fitting response**, and **using the**

available means to reach an audience). As you plan and draft your analysis, think of a specific publication that your analysis could be featured in—but in any event, **have in mind a particular way of reaching your audience as you write.**

Directions: Find a documentary/film that you deem to be interesting and that features issues related to the economy, poverty, gender and income distribution, class, or any other issue that you believe relates to American or global economic issues and policies in an important way. By "interesting," I mean that the film in question should have some sophistication about it: it should be tantalizing and potentially effective at reaching its audience. (There is no point in analyzing the obvious; pick something that makes an interesting argument that viewers might be resistant to.) No two students can choose the same film. Your analysis should not simply paraphrase or summarize the film. Assume you are writing for an audience that has already seen the film. **Your purpose is to provide a way of understanding how the film persuades its audience.** There are a number of ways to approach writing this essay, however I recommend that you watch the whole film and then choose a scene (or a few) that you feel captures the most important aspects of the film. Remember, due to the length restrictions of the paper, you don't have time to discuss everything so must be strategically selective about which parts you choose to write about. No matter what you choose, you will have to have your choice approved along with your proposal for this essay. So….

Step 1. Choose a film. You will submit your top four choices (ranked) in a proposal where you will briefly describe your working thesis and how you might approach analyzing the film. I will then either approve your proposal or provide you with recommendations to improve it.

Step 2. Introduce the film and identify its basic claim/thesis.

Step 3. Then write an analysis that will help your readers understand how the film works to persuade its audience. Consider what type of argument it presents and how it goes about creating that argument (Rhetorical theory!!) How does the film utilize music, set design, camera angles, etc. as tools to further develop a claim/thesis.

Step 4. Arrange the body of your paper so that the readers move through it in an orderly way.

Step 5. Throughout the body of your paper, use specific examples from your chosen film to support your claims.

Step 6. Conclude by making a judgment about the film's rhetorical effectiveness.

Invention: These questions may help you as you plan and draft your analysis: **1.** Describe the circumstance – the historical situation, the issues at stake, the purpose of the argument – that make this memorable. **2.** Who is the target/intended audience? **3.** Pathos: What emotion does this argument generate? How does that emotion work to persuade you? **4.** Ethos: Does the writer have the authority to write on the subject? Are all claims qualified reasonably? Is evidence presented in full, not tailored to his/her own agenda? Are objections acknowledged? Are sources documented? **5.** Logos: What credible evidence is used to support this argument?

These questions are not meant to provide an outline for the paper; rather, they simply help you to think about the rhetorical aspects of the film.

Length: A well-developed rhetorical analysis will be between five and six, doubled-spaced pages.

Cause and Effect

Assignment borrowed from: https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-fmcc-englishcomp-1/chapter/cause-and-effect-essay-writing-prompt/

Choose one of the following questions, and answer it in an essay developed by analyzing causes *or* effects. The question you decide on should concern a topic you care about so that the examples are a means of communicating an **idea;** not an end in themselves.

PEOPLE AND THEIR BEHAVIOR

1. Why do people root for the underdog?
2. How does a person's alcohol or drug dependency affect others in his or her family?

ART AND ENTERTAINMENT

1. Why do teenagers like rock music?
2. Why is a particular television show so popular?

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

1. Why is a college education important?
2. Why do marriages between teenagers fail more often than marriages between people in other age groups?

EDUCATION

1. The best courses are the difficult ones.
2. Students at schools with enforced dress codes behave better than students at schools without such codes.

POLITICS AND SOCIAL ISSUES

1. Drug and alcohol addiction does not happen just to "bad" people.

MEDIA AND CULTURE

1. The Internet divides people instead of connecting them.
2. Good art can be ugly.
3. A craze or fad reveals something about the culture it arises in.
4. The best rock musicians treat social and political issues in their

songs.

RULES FOR LIVING

1. Lying may be justified by the circumstances.
2. Friends are people you can't always trust.

Writing Your Cause and Effect Essay

Remember that "story starters" are everywhere. Think about it—status updates on social media websites can be a good place to start. You may have already started a "note"on Facebook, and now is your chance to develop that idea into a full narrative. If you keep a journal or diary, a simple event may unfold into a narrative. Simply said, your stories may be closer than you think!

When drafting your essay:

1. Develop an enticing title.
2. Use the introduction to pull the reader into your thesis with a singular experience.
3. Develop an essay developed by analyzing causes *or* effects or the prompt
4. Decide on something you care about so that the narration is a means of communicating an **idea**
5. Avoid addressing the assignment directly. (Don't write "I am going to write about the causes and effects of ____…" – this takes the fun out of reading the work!)
6. Think of things said at the moment your perspective on the topic became clear. Perhaps use a quote, or an interesting part of the experience that will grab the reader.
7. Let the story reflect your own voice. Is your voice serious? Humorous? Matter-of-fact?
8. Organize the essay in a way that may capture the reader, but

don't string the reader along too much with "next, next, next."

9. To avoid just telling what happens, make sure you take time to show significant details and reflect on why topic – and your experience with it – is significant.

Develop a draft of 4 typed, double-spaced pages, using MLA formatting

Media Analysis

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Due Dates: (include your own)

Length: 5-7 pages, plus an MLA Works Cited page

Assignment:

Write an analysis of the evolution and presentation of a news story over time and around the globe. You may either track one story as it was reported around the globe within the same 24-hour period, or you may track the way a story evolved over the course of approximately a week. Use online news resources to track and evaluate how a fairly current story has been reported by five different media outlets, at least one of which is from outside the United States. Your thesis should assert a claim about the quality and consistency or inconsistency of the coverage.

Source Requirement:

- You must use at least five articles/stories covering the same story as it evolves over a week or as it is presented within the first 24 hours of the event's occurrence. All of the articles must have been published in the last 12 months.
- At least one of your articles must be from a source outside the

U.S., written in English. (To find English language newspapers from around the globe, go to Arts and Letters Daily (www.aldaily.com) and click on Newspapers on the upper lefthand column.

- One of the five texts you evaluate may be a television news broadcast or a radio news broadcast.
- One of the five texts you evaluate may be an opinion piece/ commentary. Focus your analysis for this type of article primarily on how the opinion piece presents facts within the context of expressing an opinion or making an argument.
- The articles must be written in English and readily accessible via either the Internet or a library database.

Media Analysis Evaluation Sheet

90-100 (A):

- author's discussion is sophisticated, carefully detailed, and well organized
- thorough thesis carefully reflects the assignment
- inclusive topic sentences and cohesive body paragraphs
- minimal sentence, grammatical, or syntax errors
- sources are incorporated in a sophisticated way to strengthen the author's argument
- sources are cited correctly within the paper
- Works Cited page is done correctly

80-89 (B):

- author's discussion is clear and detailed
- adequate thesis reflects the assignment
- generally sound body paragraphs and focused topic sentences
- some sentence, grammatical, or syntax errors
- sources are incorporated correctly for the most part and are used to strengthen the author's argument
- sources are cited with a few errors

- Works Cited page has a few errors but is overall in the correct format

70-70 (C):

- author's discussion is sometimes unclear
- thesis is misplaced or only minimally reflects the assignment
- topic sentences are too general and support is sometimes nearly off topic
- sources are not incorporated in a way that strengthens the author's argument
- repetitive sentence, grammatical, or syntax errors
- sources are cited in the paper but incorrectly
- Works Cited page has many errors and the writer needs to spend some time with MLA

69 or below (F):

- essay is not the minimum page length
- author's discussion is unclear or there is not a discussion
- thesis is not evident or does not reflect the assignment
- topic sentences are too general and support is often off topic
- repetitive sentence, grammatical, or syntax errors
- sources are not used at all
- the sources are not cited at all or are cited with so many errors that it is hard to figure out where the information came from
- no Works Cited page or the writer has made minimal effort in doing a Works Cited page to go along with the essay
- extensive problems with basic writing conventions

PART VII
WRITING TO EVALUATE

52. Introduction to Evaluative Writing

AMY MINERVINI

Overview

by Amy Minervini

Evaluation is the process of using specific criteria in an effort to 'judge' the quality or effectiveness of something. We use evaluation skills every day when we decide which grocery store to shop, which restaurant to eat, which movie to go see or stream, and which product to buy off Amazon. We may even use others' evaluations of places or products in order to make decisions. This is why review sites and apps are so popular and why people rely on reviews when buying things.

But evaluation is more akin to analysis than merely giving a preference. For example, if you wanted to know about a new restaurant that just opened in town, someone saying 'I just didn't like it' is not the most helpful or effective advice. Of course, you would want to know why this person didn't like it. Was it the quality of the food, service, portion size, temperature, or atmosphere? If the person says they didn't like the decor, well, that might be a personal preference that is valid but it isn't a criterion that necessarily carries weight with regard to the food or service the new restaurant provides. In other words, you want a detailed judgment or evaluation based on specific criteria, criteria that is universally meaningful to most patrons.

Evaluation can occur with many types of mediums, making it a popular mode for both informal and formal writing. The things that can be evaluated include: books, chapters, articles, films, TV shows, music, restaurants, products, speeches, poetry, plays, commercials, advertisements, and even procedures, just to name a few.

Key Characteristics

Evaluative writing generally exhibits the following:

- Puts the writer in the position as expert or trusted evaluator
- Makes a judgment about something using facts and evidence rather than feelings
- Uses specific criteria that are relevant, common, or somewhat universal
- Organizes the analysis based on specified criteria; avoids irrelevant, unnecessary, or unhelpful criteria
- Avoids being overly biased; executes evaluation with some balance

Essay Types within this Chapter

- Evaluation
- Classification
- Comparison-Contrast
- Synthesis
- ??Review??

53. Evaluation

WHAT IS EVALUATIVE WRITING?

Evaluative writing is a type of writing intended to judge something according to a set of criteria. For instance, your health might be evaluated by an insurance company before issuing a policy. The purpose of this evaluation would be to determine your overall health and to check for existing medical conditions. The better your evaluation, the less the insurance company might charge you for coverage.

More commonly, if you plan to spend ten dollars on a movie, you might instead go to Rottentomatoes.com read through what professional movie reviewers and even amateur movie reviewers thought of the film. Rottentomatoes.com makes things simpler by boiling down a review into a score of "freshness", thus if a film is 97% fresh, nearly everyone enjoyed it. However, we are given reasons for this unless we actually start reading reviews on each film. So, go to Rottentomatoes.com and read a review of a film you have recently watched. It doesn't necessarily have to be a new film.

Reviews are actually evaluations of films. They use criteria such as the plot complexity, characterization, dialogue, relevance of theme, shot composition, acting, and other elements to determine the overall quality of the film.

Reviewers have long praised *Citizen Kane*, but is it truly a great film? It was a grand film with enormous sets, a larger-than-life protagonist and strong performances by Joseph Cotton, Orson Welles, and Agnes Moorehead. However, many films possess these qualities. Critics were much more fascinated by the use of light and shadow in many scenes and the unique camera angles created by Gregg Toland, the cinematographer. The camera moves frequently and constantly incorporates contrasts. Welles even used ceilings on his sets to create a much more "boxed-in" sense from the viewer. In some scenes, Toland uses reflected images to provide different perspectives of the characters during particular scenes. In another scene, Welles shows both the passage of time and the dissolution of a marriage by first showing the newlyweds talking and flirting over breakfast as Kane's wife wears a nightgown and a loose silk robe. This is followed by a succession of mornings until the final scene where the wife wears a high collared blouse, long sleeves, and a scowl as the two trade bitter verbal jabs. In a few short minutes, the audience watches the newlywed's progress from giddy to openly resentful. It's these innovations that lead critics to praise the film.

Is it everybody's favorite film? No. Evaluation and preference are two entirely different measures of quality. Evaluation requires criteria so as to create a more objective "measure" of quality. Preference is about what you like. I like *National Lampoons Christmas Vacation* because it makes me laugh and because I can watch it with other people and they will laugh, too. Luckily I live in world where I can evaluate an objectively great film and enjoy an objectively bad one. (Though I think I can make an argument that it is objectively a great film.)

ESTABLISHING EVALUATIVE CRITERIA

The key to effective evaluative writing is starting off with a clear and precise assertion. Your main assertion is what you will use to perform the evaluation. You may want to argue that a Chevy Tahoe is better than a Ford Expedition based on its horsepower, gas mileage, capacity, warranty, etc. Other evaluators might argue the difference between their towing capabilities. Whatever the main argument may be for your evaluative essay, make sure that your argument is clear.

- Make sure you have a well presented subject. Without one, you will lose your readers.
- Create a thesis statement. Thesis statements help you stay focused and help your reader to understand what is being evaluated or judged.
- Give only information that is imperative to the decision making process. If it looks like unnecessary information, it probably is.
- Do not be biased when creating an evaluative essay. Give both good and bad examples of the topic.

You are the "expert" in an evaluative essay. Support your opinions with facts, not whims.

HOW TO EVALUATE

A big question you might have is: how do I evaluate my subject? That depends on what your subject is.

If you are evaluating a piece of writing, then you are going to need to read the work thoroughly. While you read the work, keep in mind the criteria you are using to evaluate. The evaluative aspects may be: grammar, sentence structure, spelling, content, usage of sources, style, or many other things. Another thing to consider when evaluating a piece of Evaluation writing is whether the writing appeals to its target audience. Is there an emotional appeal? Does the author engage the audience, or is the piece lacking something? If you can, make notes directly on your work itself so that you remember what you want to write about in your essay.

If you are evaluating anything else, use your head. You **need** to try, use, or test whatever thing you are evaluating. That means you should not evaluate a 2005 Chevrolet Corvette unless you have the $45,000 (or more) to buy one, or the money to rent one. You also need the know-how of driving a car of that power and a base of knowledge of other cars that you have tested to make a fair comparison.

On the note of comparisons, **only compare things that are reasonably alike**. People don't care to know how a laugh-out-loud comedy like National Lampoons Christmas Vacation compares to Citizen Kane; that is for a different type of essay. Compare comedies to other comedies and dramas to other dramas. That is what people are looking for when reading comparisons in an evaluation essay. However, keep in mind that comparisons are always useful in illustrating an idea and providing context. They give shape and clarity to often complex ideas presented in evaluations.

Whatever you are evaluating, make sure to do so thoroughly. Take plenty of notes during the testing phase so that your thoughts stay fresh in your mind. You do not want to forget about a part of the subject that you did not test.

STRUCTURE OF THE EVALUATIVE ESSAY

Introduction

In the introduction of your evaluative essay, you should clearly state the following: – what you are evaluating (the subject – like *Citizen Kane* or *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*) – the purpose of your evaluation – what criteria you are evaluating your subject on (plot, characterization, cinematography etc.) For example, you should not just write that you are judging the acting in the film. You should explain that you are judging the individual performances of actor, the plot of the screenplay, and cinematography. Give the reader background on the subject including the "who, what, when, where, and why" elements of the subject.

Body

Be sure to be very descriptive and thorough when evaluating your subject. The more you leave out of the essay, the more unanswered questions your readers are left with. Your goal should be to cover all aspects of the subject and to tell the audience how good or bad it is. Consider, for example, not only what quality the subject possesses, but what is missing. Good evaluations measure the quality or value of a subject by considering what it has and what it lacks.

Check out: Useful Phrases for Use in Evaluative Writing

Conclusion

The conclusion for an evaluative essay is pretty straightforward. Simply go over the main points from the body of your essay. After that, make an overall evaluation of the subject. Tell the audience if they should buy it, eat it, use it, wear it, etc. and why. After that is done, your essay is finished.

The conclusion of a review is also an opportunity for some flourish. Think about how you can sum up the best or worst of the experience to send your audience marching toward or away from the subject of your evaluation. Good job!

54. Classification

[AUTHOR REMOVED AT REQUEST OF ORIGINAL PUBLISHER]

Learning Objectives

1. Determine the purpose and structure of the classification essay.
2. Understand how to write a classification essay.

The Purpose of Classification in Writing

The purpose of classification is to break down broad subjects into smaller, more manageable, more specific parts. We classify things in our daily lives all the time, often without even thinking about it. Cell phones, for example, have now become part of a broad category. They can be classified as feature phones, media phones, and smartphones.

Smaller categories, and the way in which these categories are created, help us make sense of the world. Keep both of these elements in mind when writing a classification essay.

Tip

Choose topics that you know well when writing classification essays. The more you know about a topic, the more you can break it into smaller, more interesting parts. Adding interest and insight will enhance your classification essays.

Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, break the following categories into smaller classifications.

1. The United States
2. Colleges and universities
3. Beverages
4. Fashion

The Structure of a Classification Essay

The classification essay opens with an introductory paragraph that introduces the broader topic. The thesis should then explain how that topic is divided into subgroups and why. Take the following introductory paragraph, for example:

> When people think of New York, they often think of only New York City. But New York is actually a diverse state with a full range of activities to do, sights to see, and cultures to explore. In order to better understand the diversity of New York state, it is helpful to break it into these five separate regions: Long Island, New York City, Western New York, Central New York, and Northern New York.

The underlined thesis explains not only the category and subcategory but also the rationale for breaking it into those categories. Through this classification essay, the writer hopes to show his or her readers a different way of considering the state.

Each body paragraph of a classification essay is dedicated to fully illustrating each of the subcategories. In the previous example, then, each region of New York would have its own paragraph.

The conclusion should bring all the categories and subcategories back together again to show the reader the big picture. In the previous example, the conclusion might explain how the various sights and activities of each region of New York add to its diversity and complexity.

Tip

To avoid settling for an overly simplistic classification, make sure you break down any given topic at least three different ways. This will help you think outside the box and perhaps even learn something entirely new about a subject.

Exercise 2

Using your classifications from Note 10.43 "Exercise 1", write a brief paragraph explaining why you chose to organize each main category in the way that you did.

Writing a Classification Essay

Start with an engaging opening that will adequately introduce the general topic that you will be dividing into smaller subcategories. Your thesis should come at the end of your introduction. It should include the topic, your subtopics, and the reason you are choosing to break down the topic in the way that you are. Use the following classification thesis equation:

topic + subtopics + rationale for the subtopics = thesis.

The organizing strategy of a classification essay is dictated by the initial topic and the subsequent subtopics. Each body paragraph is dedicated to fully illustrating each of the subtopics. In a way, coming up with a strong topic pays double rewards in a classification essay. Not only do you have a good topic, but you also have a solid organizational structure within which to write.

Be sure you use strong details and explanations for each subcategory paragraph that help explain and support your thesis. Also, be sure to give examples to illustrate your points. Finally, write a conclusion that links all the subgroups together again. The conclusion should successfully wrap up your essay by connecting it to your topic initially discussed in the introduction. See Chapter 15 "Readings: Examples of Essays" to read a sample classification essay.

Exercise 3

Building on Note 10.43 "Exercise 1" and Note 10.46 "Exercise 2", write a five-paragraph classification essay about one of the four original topics. In your thesis, make sure to include the topic, subtopics, and rationale for your breakdown. And make sure that your essay is organized into paragraphs that each describes a subtopic.

Key Takeaways

- The purpose of classification is to break a subject into smaller, more manageable, more specific parts.
- Smaller subcategories help us make sense of the world, and the way in which these subcategories are created also helps us make sense of the world.
- A classification essay is organized by its subcategories.

55. Comparison and Contrast

[AUTHOR REMOVED AT REQUEST OF ORIGINAL PUBLISHER]

Learning Objectives

1. Determine the purpose and structure of comparison and contrast in writing.
2. Explain organizational methods used when comparing and contrasting.
3. Understand how to write a compare-and-contrast essay.

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.

Exercise 1

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

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

Exercise 2

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

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

The Structure of a 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.

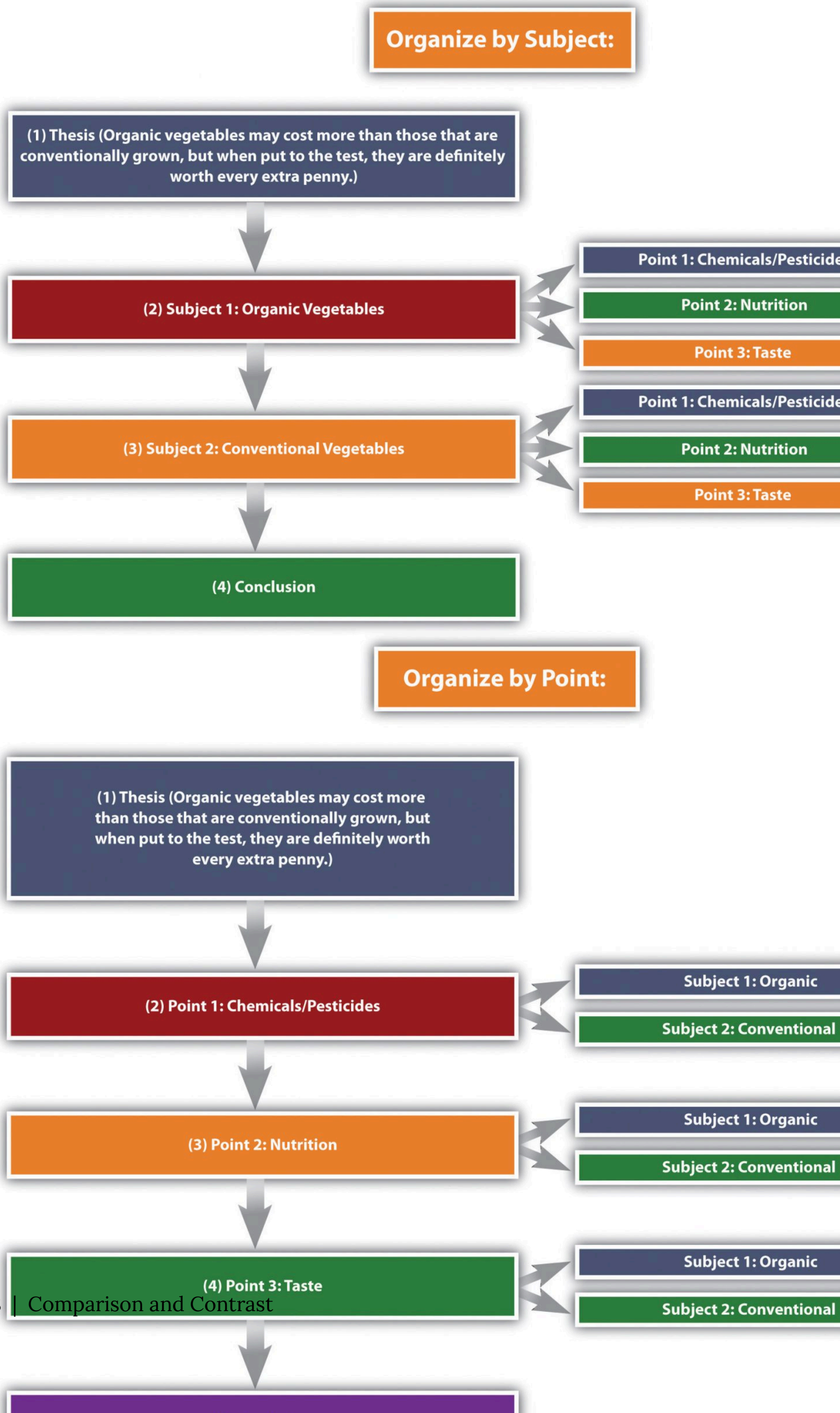
Here the thesis sets up the two subjects to be compared and contrasted (organic versus conventional vegetables), and it makes a claim about the results that might prove useful to the reader.

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

See Figure 10.1 "Comparison and Contrast Diagram", which diagrams the ways to organize our organic versus conventional vegetables thesis.

Figure 10.1 Comparison and Contrast Diagram


Organize by Subject:
(1) Thesis (Organic vegetables may cost more than those that are conventionally grown, but when put to the test, they are definitely worth every extra penny.)
(2) Subject 1: Organic Vegetables
Point 1: Chemicals/Pesticide
Point 2: Nutrition
Point 3: Taste
(3) Subject 2: Conventional Vegetables
Point 1: Chemicals/Pesticide
Point 2: Nutrition
Point 3: Taste
(4) Conclusion
Organize by Point:
(1) Thesis (Organic vegetables may cost more than those that are conventionally grown, but when put to the test, they are definitely worth every extra penny.)
(2) Point 1: Chemicals/Pesticides
Subject 1: Organic
Subject 2: Conventional
(3) Point 2: Nutrition
Subject 1: Organic
Subject 2: Conventional
(4) Point 3: Taste
Subject 1: Organic
Subject 2: Conventional

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. See Table 10.3 "Phrases of Comparison and Contrast" for examples.

Table 10.3 Phrases of Comparison and Contrast

Comparison	Contrast
one similarity	one difference
another similarity	another difference
both	conversely
like	in contrast
likewise	unlike
similarly	while
in a similar fashion	whereas

Exercise 3

Create an outline for each of the items you chose in Note

10.72 “Exercise 1” and Note 10.73 “Exercise 2”. Use the point-by-point organizing strategy for one of them, and use the subject organizing strategy for the other.

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.

After you finish analyzing the subjects, write a conclusion that summarizes the main points of the essay and reinforces your thesis. See Chapter 15 “Readings: Examples of Essays” to read a sample compare-and-contrast essay.

Writing at Work

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

Exercise 4

Choose one of the outlines you created in Note 10.75 "Exercise 3", and write a full compare-and-contrast essay. Be sure to include an engaging introduction, a clear thesis, well-defined and detailed paragraphs, and a fitting conclusion that ties everything together.

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.

56. Synthesis

Synthesis Writing

Although at its most basic level a synthesis involves combining two or more summaries, synthesis writing is more difficult than it might at first appear because this combining must be done in a meaningful way and the final essay must generally be thesis-driven. In composition courses, "synthesis" commonly refers to writing about printed texts, drawing together particular themes or traits that you observe in those texts and organizing the material from each text according to those themes or traits. Sometimes you may be asked to synthesize your own ideas, theory, or research with those of the texts you have been assigned. In your other college classes you'll probably find yourself synthesizing information from graphs and tables, pieces of music, and art works as well. The key to any kind of synthesis is the same.

Synthesis in Every Day Life

Whenever you report to a friend the things several other friends have said about a film or CD you engage in synthesis. People synthesize information naturally to help other see the connections between things they learn; for example, you have probably stored up a mental data bank of the various things you've heard about particular professors. If your data bank contains several negative comments, you might synthesize that information and use it to help you decide not to take a class from that particular professor. Synthesis is related to but not the same as classification, division, or comparison and contrast. Instead of attending to categories or finding similarities and differences, synthesizing sources is a matter of pulling them together into some kind of harmony. Synthesis searches for links between materials for the purpose of constructing a thesis or theory.

Synthesis Writing Outside of College

The basic research report (described below as a background synthesis) is very common in the business world. Whether one is proposing to open a new store or expand a product line, the report that must inevitably be written will synthesize information and arrange it by topic rather than by source. Whether you want to present information on child rearing to a new mother, or details about your town to a new resident, you'll find yourself synthesizing too. And just as in college, the quality and usefulness of your synthesis will depend on your
accuracy and organization.

Key Features of a Synthesis

(1) It accurately reports information from the sources using different phrases and sentences;

(2) It is organized in such a way that readers can immediately see where the information from the sources overlap;.

(3) It makes sense of the sources and helps the reader understand them in greater depth.

The Background Synthesis

In the process of writing his or her background synthesis, the student explored the sources in a new way and become an expert on the topic. Only when one has reached this degree of expertise is one ready to formulate a thesis. Frequently writers of background synthesis papers develop a thesis before they have finished. In the previous example, the student might notice that no two colleges seem to agree on what constitutes "co-curricular," and decide to research this question in more depth, perhaps examining trends in higher education and offering an argument about what this newest trend seems to reveal. [More information on developing a research thesis.]

The background synthesis requires that you bring together background information on a topic and organize it by topic rather than by source. Instructors often assign background syntheses at the early stages of the research process, before students have developed a thesis–and they can be helpful to students conducting large research projects even if they are not assigned. In a background synthesis of Internet information that could help prospective students select a college, for example, one paragraph might discuss residential life and synthesize brief descriptions of the kinds of things students might find out about living on campus (cited of course), another might discuss the academic program, again synthesizing information from the web sites of several colleges, while a third might synthesize information about co-curricular activities. The completed paper would be a wonderful introduction to internet college searching. It contains no thesis, but it does have a purpose: to present the information that is out there in a helpful and logical way.

[See also "Preparing to Write the Synthesis Essay," "Writing the Synthesis Essay," and "Revision."]

A Thesis-driven Synthesis

On the other hand, all research papers are also synthesis papers in that they combine the information you have found in ways that help readers to see that information and the topic in question in a new way. A research paper with a weak thesis (such as: "media images of women help to shape women's sense of how they should look") will organize its findings to show how this is so without having to spend much time discussing other arguments (in this case, other things that also help to shape women's sense of how they should look). A paper with a strong thesis (such as "the media is the single most important factor in shaping women's sense of how they should look") will spend more time discussing arguments that it rejects (in this case, each paragraph will show how the media is more influential than other

Sometimes there is very little obvious difference between a background synthesis and a thesis-driven synthesis, especially if the paper answers the question "what information must we know in order to understand this topic, and why?" The answer to that question forms the thesis of the resulting paper, but it may not be a particularly controversial thesis. There may be some debate about what background information is required, or about why, but in most cases the papers will still seem more like a report than an argument. The difference will be most visible in the topic sentences to each paragraph because instead of simply introducing the material for the paragraph that will follow, they will also link back to the thesis and assert that this information is essential because…

factors in that particular aspect of women's sense of how they should look").

[See also thesis-driven research papers.]

[See also "Preparing to Write the Synthesis Essay," "Writing the Synthesis Essay," and "Revision."]

A Synthesis of the Literature

Because each discipline has specific rules and expectations, you should consult your professor or a guide book for that specific discipline if you are asked to write a review of the literature and aren't sure how to do it.

In many upper level social sciences classes you may be asked to begin research papers with a synthesis of the sources. This part of the paper which may be one paragraph or several pages depending on the length of the paper–is similar to the background synthesis. Your primary purpose is to show readers that you are familiar with the field and are thus qualified to offer your own opinions. But your larger purpose is to show that in spite of all this wonderful research, no one has addressed the problem in the way that you intend to in your paper. This gives your synthesis a purpose, and even a thesis of sorts.

[See also "Preparing to Write the Synthesis Essay," "Writing the Synthesis Essay," and "Revision."]

Preparing to write your Synthesis Essay

Sometimes the wording of your assignment will direct you to what sorts of themes or traits you should look for in your synthesis. At other times, though, you may be assigned two or more sources and told to synthesize them. In such cases you need to formulate your own purpose, and develop your own perspectives and interpretations. A systematic preliminary comparison will help.

Begin by summarizing briefly the points, themes, or traits that the texts have in common (you might find summary-outline notes useful here). Explore different ways to organize the information depending on what you find or what you want to demonstrate (see above). You might find it helpful to make several different outlines or plans before you decide which to use. As the most important aspect of a synthesis is its organization, you can't spend too long on this aspect of your paper! Regardless of whether you are synthesizing information from prose sources, from laboratory data, or from tables and graphs, your preparation for the synthesis will very likely involve comparison. It may involve analysis, as well, along with classification, and division as you work on your organization.

Writing the Synthesis Essay

The introduction (usually one paragraph:

A synthesis essay should be organized so that others can understand the sources and evaluate your comprehension of them and their presentation of specific data, themes, etc.

The following format works well:

1. Contains a one-sentence statement that sums up the focus of your synthesis.
   2. Also introduces the texts to be synthesized:
   (i) Gives the title of each source (following the citation guidelines of whatever style
   sheet you are using);
   (ii) Provides the name of each author;
   (ii) Sometimes also provides pertinent background information about the authors,
   about the texts to be summarized, or about the general topic

from which the
texts are drawn.

The body of a synthesis essay:

This should be organized by theme, point, similarity, or aspect of the topic. Your organization will be determined by the assignment or by the patterns you see in the material you are synthesizing. The organization is the most important part of a synthesis, so try out more than one format.

Be sure that each paragraph:

1. Begins with a sentence or phrase that informs readers of the topic of the paragraph;
2. Includes information from more than one source;
3. Clearly indicates which material comes from which source using lead in phrases and
in-text citations. [Beware of plagiarism: Accidental plagiarism most often occurs
when students are synthesizing sources and do not indicate where the synthesis
ends and their own comments begin or vice verse.]
4. Shows the similarities or differences between the different sources in ways that make
the paper as informative as possible;
5. Represents the texts fairly–even if that seems to weaken the paper! Look upon
yourself as a synthesizing machine; you are simply repeating what the source says,
in fewer words and in your own words. But the fact that you are using your own
words does not mean that you are in anyway changing what the source says.

Conclusion:

When you have finished your paper, write a conclusion reminding readers of the most significant themes you have found and the ways they connect to the overall topic. You may also want to suggest further research or comment on things that it was not possible for you to discuss in the paper. If you are writing a background synthesis, in some cases it may be appropriate for you to offer an interpretation of the material or take a position (thesis). Check this option with your instructor before you write the final draft of your paper.

Checking your own writing or that of your peers

Read a peer's synthesis and then answer the questions below. The information provided will help the writer check that his or her paper does what he or she intended (for example, it is not necessarily wrong for a synthesis to include any of the writer's opinions, indeed, in a thesis-driven paper this is essential; however, the reader must be able to identify which opinions originated with the writer of the paper and which came from the sources).

1. What do you like best about your peer's synthesis? (Why? How might he or she do more of it?);
2. Is it clear what is being synthesized? (i.e.: Did your peer list the source(s), and cite it/them correctly?);
3. Is it always clear which source your peer is talking about at any given moment? (Mark any places where it is not clear);
4. Is the thesis of each original text clear in the synthesis? (Write out what you think each thesis is);
5. If you have read the same sources,
    1. did you identify the same theses as your peer? (If not, how do they differ?);
    2. did your peer miss any key points from his or her synthesis? (If so, what are they?);
    3. did your peer include any of his own opinions in his or her synthesis? (If so, what are they?);
6. Where there any points in the synthesis where you were lost because a transition was missing or material seems to have been omitted? (If so, where and how might it be fixed?);
7. What is the organizational structure of the synthesis essay? (It might help to draw a plan/diagram);

8. Does this structure work? (If not, how might your peer revise it?);
9. How is each paragraph structured? (It might help to draw a plan/diagram);
10. Is this method effective? (If not, how should your peer revise?);
11. Was there a mechanical, grammatical, or spelling error that annoyed you as you read the paper? (If so, how could the author fix it? Did you notice this error occurring more than once?) *Do not comment on every typographical or other error you see. It is a waste of time to carefully edit a paper before it is revised!*
12. What other advice do you have for the author of this paper?

57. Sample Writing Assignments

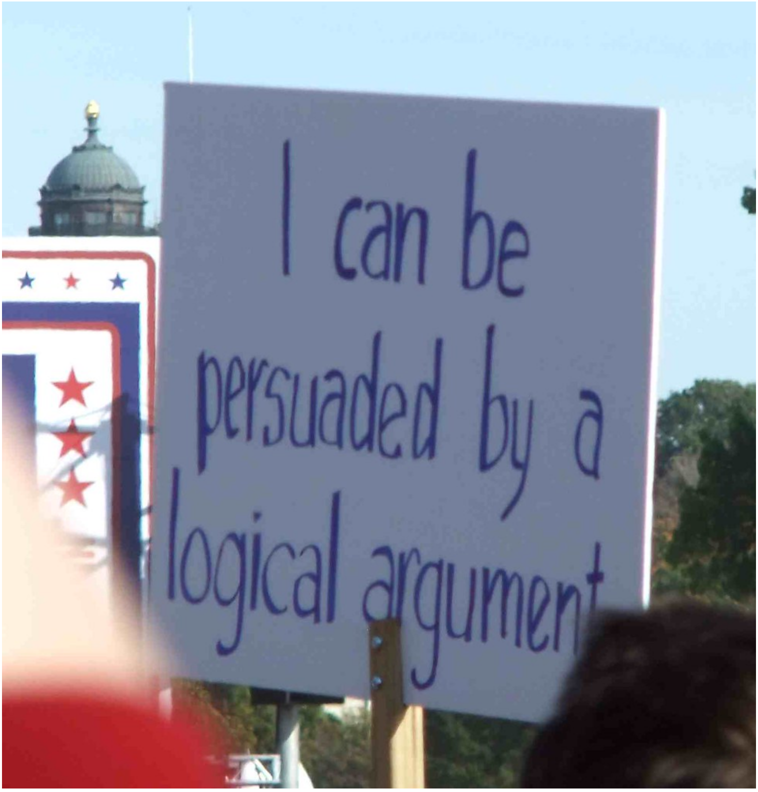
SAMPLE ASSIGNMENTS

Here are some sample assignments to get your brain pumping:

- Film Review. Evaluate a film, any film, based on common film elements. Consider films from the American Film Institute's top 100 list. Carefully consider criteria from this review. One may also choose to review a film that receives a negative evaluation.
    - Consider looking for professional film reviews to provide ideas for criteria.
    - Consider quoting film reviewers from publications like *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, and *Rolling Stone Magazine* as secondary evidence in your essay
- Evaluate technology such as an Iphone, Ipad, a Tesla automobile, cell phone etc. Again consider what criteria you will use to evaluate it. Test its durability, comfort level, apps, storage capacity, ergonomics, screen quality, etc. Compare it with previous technology you or someone else has owned. Also, compare it to a different type of technology such as comparing an Ipad to an Iphone or a Samsung Galaxy.
- Write a restaurant review. Go to a restaurant and evaluate it as a restaurant review.
    - Find reviews from publications like the New York Times or even local reviews to determine what criteria best suit your interests as a restaurant consumer. Then think about how you'll evaluate each element of your criteria.
    - You may also want to read reviews of the restaurant on Yelp.com or other rating websites.
    - Consider quoting/paraphrasing what other reviewers/researchers have said about your chosen restaurant; they may have had a different experience than yours or may provide information about the business/product/service that you were unaware of.

PART VIII

WRITING TO PERSUADE



58. Introduction to Argumentative Writing

JOEL GLADD AND AMY MINERVINI

Overview

by Joel Gladd and Amy Minervini

Argumentative writing, also referred to as persuasive writing, is a cornerstone of any first-year writing course. We encounter arguments on daily basis, in both formal and informal contexts. Most of the time, however, we don't realize how the arguments are actually working. This example developed by Ohio State's University Library shows how a relatively informal argument may unfold. The dialogue has been annotated to show what kinds of rhetorical elements tend to appear in casual arguments.

> **Jerald:** Where should we have my parents take us for dinner when they're here on Sunday? *[He asks the question about something that's unsettled.]*
>
> **Cathy:** We should go to The Cascades! *[She makes her main claim to answer the question.]* It's the nicest place around. *[Another claim, which functions as a reason for the main claim.]*
>
> **Jerald:** How so? *[He asks for a reason to believe her claims.]*
>
> **Cathy:** White table cloths. *[She gives a reason.]*
>
> **Jerald:** What's that have to do with how good the food is? *[He doesn't see how her reason is relevant to the claim.]*
>
> **Cathy:** Table cloths make restaurants seem

upscale. *[She relates her reason for the claims.]* And I've read a survey in Columbus Metro that says the Cascades is one of the most popular restaurants in town. *[She offers evidence.]*

Jerald: I never read the Metro. And Dino's has table cloths. *[He offers a point that contradicts her reason.]*

Cathy: I know, but those are checkered! I'm talking about heavy white ones. *[She acknowledges his point and responds to it.]*

Jerald: My dad loves Italian food. I guess he's kind of a checkered-table-cloth kind of guy? *[He raises another reservation or objection.]*

Cathy: Yeah, but? Well, I know The Cascades has some Italian things on the menu. I mean, it's not known for its Italian food but you can order it there. Given how nice the place is, it will probably be gourmet Italian food. *[She acknowledges his point and responds to it. There's another claim in there.]*

Jerald: Ha! My dad, the gourmet? Hey, maybe this place is too expensive. *[He raises another reservation.]*

Cathy: More than someplace like Dino's. *[She concedes his point.]*

Jerald: Yeah. *[He agrees.]*

Cathy: But everybody eats at The Cascades with their parents while they're students here, so it can't be outlandishly expensive. *[She now puts limits on how much she's conceding.]*

As the example above shows, a number of elements typically play a role in most well-developed arguments:

- a **question** that doesn't have a straightforward answer

- a **claim** that responds to the question
- one or more **reasons** for accepting the claim
- **evidence** that backs each reason
- **objections** & **response to objections**

We often employ many or all of these elements in everyday life, when debating current issues with friends and family. It just unfolds in a messier way than your academic essay will need to structure the conversation. However, even though academic persuasive essays rely on some techniques you're already familiar with, certain strategies are less well-known, and even certain obvious elements, such as using "evidence" to back a claim, has a certain flavor in more formal environments that some students may not find obvious.

Different models have been proposed for how to best package the elements above. The three models most commonly employed in academic writing are the **Aristotelian (classical)**, **Toulmin**, and **Rogerian**, covered in this chapter. The proposal method is also included though this strategy focuses on solutions rather than problems.

Key Characteristics:

Argumentative writing generally exhibits the following:

- Presents a particular position/side of an issue
- Attempts to persuade the reader to the writer's side
- Uses elements of rhetoric and strategies that include the integration of logos, pathos, ethos, and kairos in intentional and meaningful ways
- Presents information, data, and research as part of the evidence/support (logos)
- Relies on real-world stories and examples to nurture empathy (pathos)
- Leans on experts in their fields to cultivate credibility (ethos)
- Enlists or elicits a call to action (kairos)
- Presents and acknowledges opposing views

Contents within this Chapter:

- Elements of an Argument Essay
- Aristotelian (Classical) Argument Model
- Rogerian Argument Model
- Toulmin Argument Model
- Proposal Argument Model
- Counterargument and Response
- Generating Antithetical Points in Five Easy Steps
- Tips for Writing Argument Essays

59. Aristotelian (Classical) Argument Model

Aristotelian Argument

The Aristotelian or classical argument is a style of argument developed by the famous Greek philosopher and rhetorician, **Aristotle**. In this style of argument, your goal as a writer is to convince your audience of something. The goal is to use a series of strategies to persuade your audience to adopt your side of the issue. Although **ethos**, **pathos**, and **logos** play a role in any argument, this style of argument utilizes them in the most persuasive ways possible.

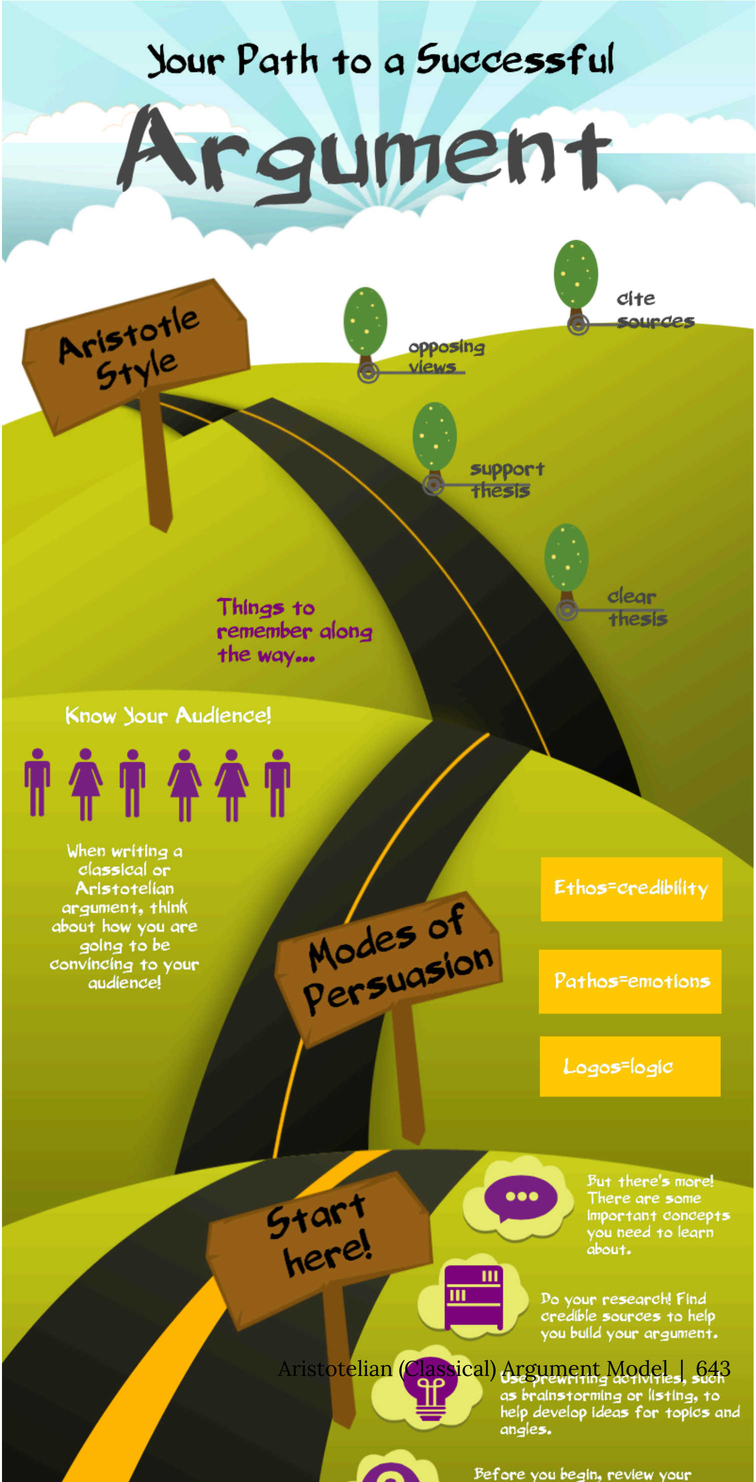
Of course, your professor may require some variations, but here is the basic format for an Aristotelian, or classical, argumentative essay:

1. **Introduce your issue.** At the end of your introduction, most professors will ask you to present your thesis. The idea is to present your readers with your main point and then dig into it.
2. **Present your case** by explaining the issue in detail and why something must be done or a way of thinking is not working.

This will take place over several paragraphs.

3. **Address the opposition.** Use a few paragraphs to explain the other side. Refute the opposition one point at a time.
4. **Provide your proof.** After you address the other side, you'll want to provide clear evidence that your side is the best side.
5. **Present your conclusion.** In your conclusion, you should remind your readers of your main point or thesis and summarize the key points of your argument. If you are arguing for some kind of change, this is a good place to give your audience a call to action. Tell them what they could do to make a change.

For a visual representation of this type of argument, check out the Aristotelian infographic below:


Your Path to a Successful
Argument
Aristotle Style
opposing views
cite sources
support thesis
clear thesis
Things to remember along the way...
Know Your Audience!
When writing a classical or Aristotelian argument, think about how you are going to be convincing to your audience!
Modes of Persuasion
Ethos=credibility
Pathos=emotions
Logos=logic
Start here!
But there's more! There are some important concepts you need to learn about.
Do your research! Find credible sources to help you build your argument.
as brainstorming or listing, to help develop ideas for topics and angles.
Before you begin, review your

Introduction to Aristotelian Argument

The Aristotelian or classical argument is a style of argument developed by the famous Greek philosopher and rhetorician, Aristotle. In this style of argument, the writer's goal is to be convincing and to persuade your audience to your side of the issue through a series of strategies.

Start here!

Before you begin, review your assignment and ask yourself questions about what you might want to write about.

Use prewriting activities, such as brainstorming or listing, to help develop ideas for topics and angles.

Do your research! Find credible sources to help you build your argument.

But there's more! There are some important concepts you need to learn about.

Modes of Persuasion

Ethos=credibility

Pathos=emotions

Logos=logic

Know Your Audience!

When writing a classical or Aristotelian argument, think about how you are going to be convincing to your audience!

Things to remember along the way…

Clear thesis

Support thesis

Opposing views

Cite sources

Sample Essay

For a sample essay written in the Aristotelian model, click here.

60. Rogerian Argument Model

Rogerian Argument

The Rogerian argument, inspired by the influential psychologist Carl Rogers, aims to find compromise or common ground about an issue. If, as stated in the beginning of the chapter, academic or rhetorical argument is not merely a two-sided debate that seeks a winner and a loser, the Rogerian argument model provides a structured way to move beyond the win-lose mindset. Indeed, the Rogerian model can be employed to deal effectively with controversial arguments that have been reduced to two opposing points of view by forcing the writer to confront opposing ideas and then work towards a common understanding with those who might disagree.

Carl Ransom Rogers

"Carl Ransom Rogers," by Didius, Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Carl_Ransom_Rogers.jpg. CC-BY 2.5.

The following are the basic parts of a Rogerian Argument:

1. **Introduction**: Introduce the issue under scrutiny in a non-confrontational way. Be sure to outline the main sides in the debate. Though there are always more than two sides to a debate, Rogerian arguments put two in stark opposition to one another. Crucially, be sure to indicate the overall purpose of the essay: to come to a **compromise** about the issue at hand. If this intent is not stated up front, the reader may be confused or even suspect manipulation on the part of the writer, i.e., that the writer is massaging the audience just to win a fight. Be advised that the

Rogerian essay uses an inductive reasoning structure, so *do not* include your thesis in your introduction. You will build toward the thesis and then include it in your conclusion. Once again, state the *intent* to compromise, but do not yet state what the compromise is.

2. **Side A**: Carefully map out the main claim and reasoning for the **opposing side** of the argument first. The writer's view should never really come first because that would defeat the purpose of what Rogers called **empathetic listening**, which guides the overall approach to this type of argument. By allowing the opposing argument to come first, you communicate to the reader that you are willing to respectfully consider another's view on the issue. Furthermore, you invite the reader to then give you the same respect and consideration when presenting your own view. Finally, presenting the opposition first can help those readers who would side against you to ease into the essay, keeping them invested in the project. If you present your own ideas first, you risk polarizing those readers from the start, which would then make them less amenable to considering a compromise by the end of the essay. **You can listen to Carl Rogers himself discuss the importance of empathy on *YouTube*** (https://youtu.be/2dLsgpHw5x0, transcript **here**).
3. **Side B**: Carefully go over **your side** of the argument. When mapping out this side's claim and support, be sure that it parallels that of Side A. In other words, make sure not to raise entirely new categories of support, or there can be no way to come to a compromise. Make sure to maintain a non-confrontational tone; for example, avoid appearing arrogant, sarcastic, or smug.
4. **The Bridge**: A solid Rogerian argument acknowledges the desires of each side and tries to accommodate both. In this part, point out the ways in which you agree or can find **common ground** between the two sides. There should be at least one point of agreement. This can be an acknowledgement of the one part of the opposition's agreement that you also support or an admittance to a shared set of values even if the two sides come to different ideas

when employing those values. This phase of the essay is crucial for two reasons: finding common ground (1) shows the audience the two views are not necessarily at complete odds, that they share more than they seem, and (2) sets up the compromise to come, making it easier to digest for all parties. Thus, this section **builds a bridge** from the two initial isolated and opposite views to a compromise that both sides can reasonably support.

5. **The Compromise**: Now is the time to finally announce your compromise, which is your thesis. The compromise is what the essay has been building towards all along, so explain it carefully and demonstrate the logic of it. For example, if debating about whether to use racial profiling, a compromise might be based on both sides' desire for a safer society. That shared value can then lead to a new claim, one that disarms the original dispute or set of disputes. For the racial profiling example, perhaps a better solution would focus on more objective measures than race that would then promote safety in a less problematic way.

Rogerian Argument

Rogerian Execise

Find a controversial topic, and begin building a Rogerian argument. Write up your responses to the following:

1. The topic or dilemma I will write about is…
2. My opposing audience is…

3. My audience's view on the topic is…
4. My view on the topic is…
5. Our common ground–shared values or something that we both already agree on about the topic–is…
6. My compromise (the main claim or potential thesis) is…

61. Toulmin Argument Model

Toulmin Argument Model

Stephen Edelston Toulmin (born March 25, 1922) was a British philosopher, author, and educator. Toulmin devoted his works to analyzing moral reasoning. He sought to develop practical ways to evaluate ethical arguments effectively. The Toulmin Model of Argumentation, a diagram containing six interrelated components, was considered Toulmin's most influential work, particularly in the fields of rhetoric, communication, and computer science. His components continue to provide useful means for analyzing arguments, and the terms involved can be added to those defined in earlier sections of this chapter.

Toulmin Argument Model

"Toulmin Argument," Kalyca Schultz, Virginia Western Community College, CC-BY-SA.

The following are the parts of a Toulmin argument:

1. **Claim**: The claim is a statement that you are asking the other person to accept as true (i.e., a conclusion) and forms the nexus of the Toulmin argument because all the other parts relate back to the claim. The claim can include information and ideas you are asking readers to accept as true or actions you want them to accept and enact. One example of a claim:

My grandfather should wear a hearing aid.

This claim both asks the reader to believe an idea and suggests an action to enact. However, like all claims, it can be challenged. Thus, a Toulmin argument does not end with a claim but also includes grounds and warrant to give support and reasoning to the claim.

2. **Grounds**: The grounds form the basis of real persuasion and includes the reasoning behind the claim, data, and proof of expertise. Think of grounds as a combination of **premises** and **support**. The truth of the claim rests upon the grounds, so those grounds should be tested for strength, credibility, relevance, and reliability. The following are examples of grounds:

> Over 70% of all people over 65 years have a hearing difficulty.
>
> Hearing aids raise hearing quality.

Information is usually a powerful element of persuasion, although it does affect people differently. Those who are dogmatic, logical, or rational will more likely be persuaded by factual data. Those who argue emotionally and who are highly invested in their own position will challenge it or otherwise try to ignore it. Thus, grounds can also include appeals to emotion, provided they aren't misused. The best arguments, however, use a variety of support and rhetorical appeals.

3. **Warrant**: A warrant links data and other grounds to a claim, legitimizing the claim by showing the grounds to be **relevant**. The warrant may be carefully explained and explicit or unspoken and implicit. The warrant answers the question, "Why does that data mean your claim is true?" For example,

> A hearing aid helps most people hear better.

The warrant may be simple, and it may also be a longer argument with additional sub-elements including those described below. Warrants may be based on ***logos***, ***ethos*** or ***pathos***, or values that are assumed to be shared with the listener. In many arguments, warrants are often implicit and, hence, unstated. This gives space for the other person to question and expose the warrant, perhaps to show it is weak or unfounded.

4. **Backing**: The backing for an argument gives additional support to the warrant. Backing can be confused with grounds, but the main difference is this: Grounds should directly support the premises of

the main argument itself, while backing exists to help the warrants make more sense. For example,

Hearing aids are available locally.

This statement works as backing because it gives credence to the warrant stated above, that a hearing aid will help most people hear better. The fact that hearing aids are readily available makes the warrant even more reasonable.

5. **Qualifier**: The qualifier indicates how the data justifies the warrant and may limit how universally the claim applies. The necessity of qualifying words comes from the plain fact that most absolute claims are ultimately false (all women want to be mothers, e.g.) because one counterexample sinks them immediately. Thus, most arguments need some sort of qualifier, words that temper an absolute claim and make it more reasonable. Common qualifiers include "most," "usually," "always," or "sometimes." For example,

Hearing aids help most people.

The qualifier "most" here allows for the reasonable understanding that rarely does one thing (a hearing aid) universally benefit all people. Another variant is the reservation, which may give the possibility of the claim being incorrect:

Unless there is evidence to the contrary, hearing aids do no harm to ears.

Qualifiers and reservations can be used to bolster weak arguments, so it is important to recognize them. They are often used by advertisers who are constrained not to lie. Thus, they slip "usually," "virtually," "unless," and so on into their claims to protect against liability. While this may seem like sneaky practice, and it can be for some advertisers, it is important to note that the use of qualifiers and reservations can be a useful and legitimate part of an argument.

6. **Rebuttal**: Despite the careful construction of the argument, there may still be counterarguments that can be used. These may be rebutted either through a continued dialogue, or by pre-empting the counter-argument by giving the rebuttal during the initial presentation of the argument. For example, if you anticipated a

counterargument that hearing aids, as a technology, may be fraught with technical difficulties, you would include a rebuttal to deal with that counterargument:

There is a support desk that deals with technical problems.

Any rebuttal is an argument in itself, and thus may include a claim, warrant, backing, and the other parts of the Toulmin structure.

Even if you do not wish to write an essay using strict Toulmin structure, using the Toulmin checklist can make an argument stronger. When first proposed, Toulmin based his layout on legal arguments, intending it to be used analyzing arguments typically found in the courtroom; in fact, Toulmin did not realize that this layout would be applicable to other fields until later. The first three elements–"claim," "grounds," and "warrant"–are considered the essential components of practical arguments, while the last three—"qualifier," "backing," and "rebuttal"—may not be necessary for all arguments.

Toulmin Exercise

Find an argument in essay form and diagram it using the Toulmin model. The argument can come from an Op-Ed article in a newspaper or a magazine think piece or a scholarly journal. See if you can find all six elements of the Toulmin argument. Use the structure above to diagram your article's argument.

62. Proposal Argument Model

Proposal Method

from *Introduction to College Writing at CNM*

The proposal method of argument is used when there is a problematic situation, and you would like to offer a solution to the situation. The structure of the proposal method is similar to the other persuasive methods, but there are slight differences.

Introduce and define the nature of the problematic situation. Make sure to focus on the problem and its causes. This may seem simple, but many people focus solely on the effects of a problematic situation. By focusing on the actual problem, your readers will see your proposal as a solution to the problem. If you don't, your readers might see your solution as a mere complaint.

Propose a solution, or a number of solutions, to the problem. Be specific about these solutions. If you have one solution, you may choose to break it into parts and spend a paragraph or so describing each part. If you have several solutions, you may instead choose to spend a paragraph on each scenario. Each additional solution will add both depth and length to your argument. But remember to stay focused. Added length does not always equal a better argument.

Describe the workability of the various solutions. There are a variety of ways that this could be done. With a single-solution paper you could break the feasibility down into short and long term goals and plans. With a multiple-solution essay, you may instead highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the individual solutions, and establish which would be the most successful, based on your original statement of the problem and its causes. Check out this source from Owlcation, where they give a chart of 12 Ways to Solve Problems in the middle of the page.

Summarize and conclude your proposal. Summarize your solutions, re-state how the solution or solutions would work to remedy the problematic situation, and you're done.

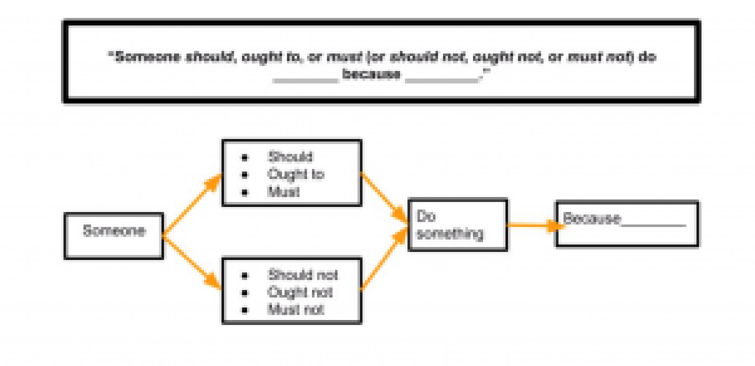
More information on proposal arguments follows.

Proposal Arguments

from *College Comp II*

Key Concept

Proposal Argument: argues that something should, ought to, or must happen.



Proposal arguments–which propose that something should, ought to, or must happen–may be one of the most common kinds of arguments we encounter in our day-to-day lives; however, despite how often we find them, they can actually be rhetorically quite complex, perhaps because they appear deceptively simple to make. And this is exactly why we're covering them last, since there are some very important subtleties to them.

The basic idea behind a proposal argument seems pretty straightforward: we state what we think should happen and then marshal evidence to support that proposal. Seems easy, right?

Let's look at a hypothetical example:

> *Friend #1*: "*We should go see Movie* X!" **(Proposal claim)**
>
> *Friend #2*: "*Okay, sounds good. I'm in!*"

Friend #1 is making a proposal claim, arguing that both friends should go see a particular movie. In an abstract setting, this claim makes sense. However, Friend #2's response seems pretty unlikely. If you were Friend #2, you'd probably have a few questions about why Friend #1 thinks you should go see this movie, right? Equally, you'd probably expect Friend #1 to provide at least some evidence (however scant) about why you should go see this movie. Perhaps, for example, you might want to know about the actors or the director. Maybe you're curious about what critics are saying. Perhaps you'd like to know how long it is. Indeed, these are pretty typical things that your average person would want to know before they pay for their movie ticket. Maybe a more genuine conversation would look like this:

Friend #1: "Hey, did you know that Movie X in the theaters right now?" **(Definition claim, establishing the existence of a condition.)**

Friend #2: "Yeah, I did!"

Friend #1: "I've been reading that critics across the board are praising it. One critic whose opinion I really trust even said that it's the best movie to come out all year." **(Evaluative claim, arguing that something is good.)**

Friend #2: "Oh wow!"

Friend #1: "I think we should go see it!" **(Proposal claim)**

Note that in this second example, in order for Friend #1 to build a sound proposal argument, they have to first make several other claims–notably a definition claim, establishing the existence of a condition, following by an evaluative claim, arguing that the movie is good.

However, in less mundane examples, proposal arguments often begin by identifying a problem before proposing a solution to it. For instance, in recent years, there has been increased public awareness of the dangers of disposable plastic drinking straws, particularly focused on the dangers they cause to wildlife. Many stakeholders have proposed (and even implemented) a variety of different solutions. Starbucks, for example, redesigned their cold-drink cups so that they could stop giving customers obligatory straws with their beverages. Other establishments have switched to using straws that are made of paper, which is more biodegradable and therefore breaks down more easily. Other companies have started marketing washable, reusable plastic straws that can be reused over and over again. While a wide variety of solutions have been proposed (and while many of those proposals have even been enacted), what's important to note is that these proposals were in response to what was identified as a problem–i.e. The wastefulness of disposable drinking straws.

For our purposes, however, here is how we can think about making proposal arguments:

1) Part of showing that a problem exists entails getting your reader to care enough to accept your proposed solution. To get the reader to care, you will need to work on their hearts as well as their minds by showing how the problem affects people (and, potentially, the reader specifically) and has important stakes.

2) You will need to show how your solution solves the problem (wholly or partially).

3) You will need to offer reasons for adopting your proposal. What values can you appeal to? Of the person or organization that needs to be convinced, how can you show that their interests are served? Always remember your audience. You don't have to pretend that your solution is perfect or has neither costs nor any negative consequences; you should address these and convince your reader that despite them, your solution is about doing the right thing.

Recapping the main ideas behind Proposal Arguments:

- **They argue that something should, ought to or must happen**
- **They don't necessarily need to completely "solve" the problem; perhaps they only improve certain parts of it.**
- **Proposal claims are often the culmination of a string of other claims (definition, causal, etc.)**

SAMPLE ESSAY

Here is an annotated Sample Proposal Essay.

63. Putting It All Together: Basic Elements of an Argument Essay

JOEL GLADD

The previous chapters on argumentation offered different models for thinking about what it means to make an argument. Toulmin's method is deeply analytical, and it requires that a student become familiar with many technical terms. The Rogerian model, on the other hand, feels very conversational, almost intuitive.

In higher education, it's rare (but not impossible) that a student will be asked to use a single model of argumentation. Depending on the assignment, the course, and your instructor, you might be expected to deploy certain conversational techniques that feel more at home in the Rogerian model, while also defending claims and articulating warrants that rely on Toulmin's framework. It helps to become familiar with all of them.

The purpose of this chapter is to offer a comprehensive method for developing an argument, based largely on the classical Aristotelian model, but also pulling in strategies from Toulmin, Roger, and other influences, as well as many different articles and writing textbooks. Most academic persuasive/argumentative essay assignments will expect students to include these elements, to some degree.

I. Begin with issue-based questions

Arguments begin with identifying a problem or issue that needs to be addressed, often phrased as a question. In rhetoric, we might consider the question the **exigence**, an issue that demands a timely response. Sometimes your instructor will give you the question; in other cases you will be expected to develop your own research question. Though vitally important, explicit research questions are sometimes not stated in essays or term papers, but they are usually stated in reports of original studies, such as theses, dissertations, and journal articles.

As *Writing Arguments* and other composition textbooks suggest, it's important to distinguish between "information questions" (or fact-based questions) and "issue questions." An information question is a fact-finding mission that's more suitable for essay reports and other forms of expository writing. An issue question, by contrast, ultimately requires the writer to take a stance on something that can be debated.

Information question: "What's a soda tax?"

Issue question: "In order to curb the the rise in type 2 diabetes, should soda be taxed?"

The information question above can be quickly answered by a few google searches. The second, which includes the word *should*, is open-ended and can be endlessly debated.

The distinction between open-ended and fact-based questions isn't always so clear-cut. Sometimes a researcher will begin with an information-based question and soon discover that answering it requires so much analysis that it can be easily debated. For example, a little bit of research shows that the question "Is there a rise in type 2 diabetes in the U.S.?" has a straightforward answer (the consensus is yes), but when asking the follow-up question, "What is *causing* the rise in type 2 diabetes?", you'll find a wide variety of responses. Figuring out the cause is presumably factual, but asking questions about causation with population-level trends is going to touch on so much data and information that any cogent response will require significant prioritizing and analysis on the part of the researcher, and the results will disagree with other interpretations that chose different kinds of prioritizing and analysis. Since a response to this particular question leads to a debate, it's suitable for argumentation.

II. Formulate strong claims

A claim is your response to the issue. Depending on the rigor of the assignment and expectations of the course, a claim can be brainstormed rather quickly, or, in research-intensive writing courses, it might require weeks or months of labor. It's the conclusion you come to after you've brainstormed the issue, done the research, analyzed the data, and arrived at a conclusion. It's a statement expressed in an assertive way.

bad example of a claim: "In this paper, I will focus on attempts to tax soda."

example claim: "Soda should not be taxed."

Word like “should” often appear in claims and they indicate that the statement is open to debate. It’s not a factual claim, although it should be based on factual evidence.

III. Prove a claim with Reasoning and Evidence

Academic arguments are organized around strictly logical frameworks, which means any opinion or belief must be supported; or, in other words, it must be proved. The difference between informal debates with family, friends, and acquaintances and the more formal debates in academia is largely due to the more rigorous expectations surrounding what it means to actually *prove* a claim. The proof is the logical core of the argument, what most readers within your audience will likely accept as convincing.

Here, the what it means to *support* an argument will be broken down into two main elements: reasoning and evidence.

Reasoning

When staking a claim, a writer must respond to the question, “but why?” Reasons are answers to hypothetical challenges:

> **Debate**: “Should soda be taxed?”
>
> **Claim**: “Yes, soda should be taxed.”
>
> **Hypothetical challenge**: “But why?”
>
> **Response to the hypothetical challenge (Reasoning)**: “Well, for starters, taxing soda would reduce the amount of sugar the average citizen consumes.$_{\text{reason 1}}$ Secondly,

> revenue from a soda tax could be used to curb the rise in type 2 diabetes."$_{\text{reason 2}}$

The last part above, the Reasoning, is often the bulk of an academic persuasive essay. It's the writer's attempt to prove to the reader their claim is valid. As Booth, et al explain in *The Craft of Research*, the main points of a persuasive academic essay can often be joined to the overarching claim with the word *because*:

> TV violence can have harmful psychological effects on children$_{\text{claim}}$ **because** those exposed to lots of it tend to adopt the values of what the see.$_{\text{reason}}$

In their chapter, "Making Good Arguments," Booth, et al suggest it's helpful to keep in mind that the term **claim** can both refer to the broader thesis statement the writer is attempting to support and any sub-claim within the essay that needs proved with additional reasoning. What makes something a **reason** is that it attempts to support a claim, regardless of whether that claim is the one found in the introduction or in the body of the essay. A heavily researched persuasive essay will have a single thesis statement, but many sub-claims that are in turn proved by separate reasons. This ongoing connection between claim, sub-claim, and reason is important to keep in mind when structuring your essay. A very basic assignment might expect a fairly simple proof, backed by only one reason. A more complex assignment might ask the student to generate a variety of reasons from a given set of courses. An even more complex assignment might ask a student to do original research that requires them to explore several layers of claims and sub-claims.

Simple proof

- Claim
    - Reason

More complex proof

- Claim
    - Reason 1
    - Reason 2

Complex proof, with sub-claims

- Claim
    - Sub-Claim 1
        - Reason 1
        - Reason 1
    - Sub-Claim 2
        - Reason 1
        - Reason 2

The example above, concerning the soda tax debate, would be considered a fairly simple proof:

Claim: Soda should be taxed.

Reason 1: Taxing soda would reduce the amount of sugar the average citizen consumes.

Reason 2: Revenue from a soda tax could be used to fight the obesity epidemic.

The first reason above, "Taxing soda would reduce the amount of sugar," is compelling only if the audience also accepts the unstated belief that it's *fair* to achieve lower levels in a somewhat brute force manner (in contrast to, for example, relying entirely on educating people about health). Focusing on unstated beliefs or implied premises is what Toulmin terms a **warrant**. Articulating warrants help the writer practice analysis, which is a separate section touched on below.

Evidence

If reasoning proves a claim, then evidence proves the reasoning. The evidence provides the foundation upon which the entire argument rests. This is why it's sometimes called the **ground** in classical rhetoric (in Toulmin's scheme, it's termed **backing**). Since the role of evidence is to put all questions to rest, it's often something concrete, such as facts or data that most readers would find convincing. In a criminal case, for example, a prosecutor might point to fingerprints as proof (as evidence) that the defendant can be placed at the crime scene (support/reason), and this presence at the crime scene supports the broader conclusion that the defendant is guilty of the crime (claim). For the case to be successfully prosecuted, the prosecutor needs enough forensics.

When constructing arguments from research in an academic situation, it's unlikely a writer will rely on literal forensic evidence to support the reasoning and claim. Instead, academic writers tend to use a variety of research methods to persuade their audience. Let's look at an example:

> **Issue/debate**: How should local governments respond to the rising obesity epidemic? Some advocate taxing sugary drinks, especially sodas; but consumer advocates argue a tax would infringe on the rights of consumers and corporations.
>
> **Claim**: In response to the obesity epidemic, municipal governments should tax sodas.

Support (Reasoning with Evidence): Taxing soda would reduce the amount of sugar consumed by the average citizen.reason A prime example of this can be seen in a case study from 2016 that showed a city in California successfully reduced the average sugar consumption of each citizen after implementing a soda tax.evidence

The evidence for the reason above gives something to satisfy the reader's skepticism. This particular evidence is a case study, an experiment conducted by researches to test a hypothesis, then published in an peer-reviewed journal. Research like this is often treated as a persuasive form of evidence in academic communities.

What counts as **evidence** will vary depending on the discipline and situation. In a literature course, passages from a novel are usually key evidence. In a psychology class, on the other hand, case studies are typically evidence. As you develop your research-supported essay, consider not only what types of evidence might support your ideas but also what types of evidence will be considered valid or credible according to the academic discipline or academic audience for which you are writing.

Evidence in the Humanities: Literature, Art, Film, Music, Philosophy

- Scholarly essays that analyze original works
- Details from an image, a film, or other work of art
- Passages from a musical composition
- Passages of text, including poetry

Evidence in the Humanities: History

- Primary Sources (photos, letters, maps, official documents, etc.)

- Other books or articles that interpret primary sources or other evidence.

Evidence in the Social Sciences: Psychology, Sociology, Political Science, Anthropology

- Books or articles that interpret data and results from other people's original experiments or studies.
- Results from one's own field research (including interviews, surveys, observations, etc.)
- Data from one's own experiments
- Statistics derived from large studies

Evidence in the Sciences: Biology, Chemistry, Physics

- Data from the author of the paper's own experiments
- Books or articles that interpret data and results from other people's original experiments or studies.

What remains consistent no matter the discipline in which you are writing, however, is that "evidence" never speaks for itself—you must integrate it into your own argument or claim and demonstrate that the evidence supports your thesis. In addition, be alert to evidence that seems to contradict your claims or offers a counterargument to it: rebutting that counterargument can be powerful evidence for your claim. You can also make evidence that isn't there an integral part of your argument, too. If you can't find the evidence you think you need, ask yourself why it seems to be lacking, or if its absence adds a new dimension to your thinking about the topic. Remember, evidence is not the piling up of facts or quotes: evidence is only one component of a strong, well supported, well argued, and well written composition. For more tips with integration information in a research-based persuasive essay, see the section, "Writing With Sources."

Failures in evidence occur when a reader says, "I do not accept your evidence." Here is why that might happen:

- The evidence that you have provided is *inaccurate*: You've misread information or misquoted; you are not interpreting the quoted material in an accurate manner
- The evidence that you have provided is *insufficient*: You are using just a small piece of evidence to support your reasoning. You need more. You probably have a "generalization" fallacy.
- The evidence that you have provided is *unrelated to the reason*: Your evidence does not clearly or directly relate to the point that you are trying to make.
- The evidence that you have provided is *incomplete or too narrowly chosen*: You have "cherry picked" certain examples or pieces of information to the exclusion of others, so while you do have evidence to support your point, you are also neglecting a lot of other information
- The evidence that you have provided is *old*: The information that you are citing is not relevant anymore. It is outdated!
- The evidence that you have provided does not come from an *authoritative source*: The source of your evidence is not credible; the person being cited is not an authority on the topic.

IV. Analyze and discuss the evidence

Composition students often get feedback that includes phrases like, "more analysis!", or "discuss the evidence!". These comments are sometimes confusing for students who initially assume that simply presenting enough reasoning and evidence is enough to prove a claim. It's often unclear what the term **analysis** actually refers to.

Let's look again at one of the examples above, concerning the soda tax debate:

> **Claim**: Soda should be taxed.
>
> **Reason**: Taxing soda would reduce the amount of sugar the average citizen consumes.
>
> **Evidence (Grounds)**: A prime example of this can be seen in a case study from 2016 that showed a city in California successfully reduced the average sugar consumption of each citizen after implementing a soda tax.

This structure has the core elements of an argument: a strong and assertive **claim**, followed by **reasoning**, which in turn is grounded in specific **evidence**. Each element seems fairly straightforward. What more is there to discuss?

Discuss the warrant

One area that's ripe for the discussion is the extent to which the reasoning takes for granted certain values. Rather than simply educating the citizenry in the risks associated with consuming a lot of sugar, a sugar tax moves beyond that step and expects consumers to either reduce their consumption or pay the price. It adds a penalty to a certain behavior, and this kind of policy-enforcement might be interpreted as paternalistic by someone who's concerned about the encroachment of "big government." With this skeptical reader in mind, the writer might slow down when proving their point in order to articulate the implied premise, or **warrant**, that using tax policy to encourage healthier habits is ethically and political sound.

Here's another version of the proof above, now with the warrant expressed:

Claim: Soda should be taxed.

Reason: Taxing soda would reduce the amount of sugar the average citizen consumes.

Evidence (Grounds): A prime example of this can be seen in a case study from 2016 that showed a city in California successfully reduced the average sugar consumption of each citizen after implementing a soda tax.

Warrant: It's justifiable to use tax policy to encourage healthy eating habits.

Bringing the warrant to the surface is considered one form of analysis because it closely interrogates a piece of the argument, uncovering another potential layer of discussion. If the writer thinks the audience will readily accept the belief (that it's ok to use tax policies in this way), they can move forward. However, anticipating objections from the audience is a sign of self-awareness and critical thinking, a type of **ethos**, so articulating and discussing warrants can have a two-fold effect: making your case more solid (logos) *and* convincing the reader you're a careful thinker (ethos).

Add backing to the warrant

Depending on how controversial or complex the warrant is, it might be helpful to spend some time making your case that the warrant is actually valid. When proving a warrant, use the same strategies as you would for any other point in the essay—offer reasoning and evidence.

In the soda tax example, one way to back the warrant is by pointing out that local and federal governments in the U.S. have long used tax policy to encourage healthy behaviors. Formerly known as "sin taxes," these tax policies leverage the power of governments to make certain items more expensive (through taxes) to encourage the behavior most of its citizens want for themselves. An alcohol tax was first introduced in the 1790s; then, more recently, tobacco has been heavily taxed in order to bring down cancer rates.

> **Claim**: Soda should be taxed.
>
> **Reason**: Taxing soda would reduce the amount of sugar the average citizen consumes.
>
> **Evidence (Grounds)**: A prime example of this can be seen in a case study from 2016 that showed a city in California successfully reduced the average sugar consumption of each citizen after implementing a soda tax.
>
> **Warrant**: It's justifiable to use tax policy to encourage healthy eating habits.
>
> **Backing for the warrant**: "Sin taxes" have been used throughout U.S. history to encourage healthy behavior.

This process of tracking down implied beliefs and then backing them can go on endlessly. That's part of the reason why some topics deserve 20-30 page articles, or even book-length critical engagement. When do you know when to stop? Warrants and backing for them should be supplied for the audience. As the writer anticipates objections to their reasoning, warrants will come to the surface; but, as you interrogate them closely, it's important to also think and write with the audience in mind, and also to look for feedback from peers. Many (in fact most) beliefs don't need to be stated or backed, depending on how knowledgeable, specialized, and formal the intended audience is.

Make connections

Another way to analyze and discuss evidence is by connecting it with other pieces of evidence. If evidence never speaks for itself, it is also rarely isolated. The most convincing grounds or backing have layers of example.

Connecting evidence with concrete examples, especially personal ones, is an especially powerful way to bring home a point. When an evidence-based point (logos) is clearly illustrated with something personal and relatable, the writer/speaker can tap into the emotional reservoirs of their audience (pathos).

Justify your evidence

Yet another way to discuss evidence is to use “meta” language that explains to a skeptical reader why your evidence is actually valid. Case studies have different methodologies, for example, and a skeptical reader might wonder about the sample size. A keen writer could anticipate these attempts to undermine evidence by discussing whether a source is convincing or authoritative. This kind of discussion surrounding the authority and trustworthiness of the writer’s sources also helps establish **ethos**.

Paraphrase!

Sometimes, simply paraphrasing key ideas and points from a source can serve as a form of discussion. Rephrasing important ideas *in your own words* is also an important integration technique, and it contributes to the cohesive feel of your essay. After including key quotes from an expert, for example, you can follow up with: “In other words…,” or “What this means is…”

V. Offer counterarguments and rebuttals

The section on **warrants**, mentioned above, suggests that anticipating the reader’s objections shapes how certain parts of the essay are written. Part of what separates academic essays from more informal persuasive situations is how intensely writers are expected to consider other arguments and probable objections. As the Rogerian model from the previous chapter shows, academic argumentation is fundamentally conversational.

The conversation can begin with the introduction. Do any of your sources not agree with your thesis? Does any of the research disagree with any of the supporting claims (the reasoning)? Opening with an ongoing conversation can also help provide **context** for the claim, which is covered below.

When supporting your thesis, put yourself in your readers' shoes. What might they not find logical in your argument? Toulmin's terminology (claim, grounds, warrant, backing) can be helpful for critically analyzing your own ideas, as the section on warrants above shows.

How solid is the evidence? Would some readers poke holes in it?

One of the following chapters in this Part will offer more suggestions for how to craft counterarguments and rebuttals. In addition, it will be helpful to review the section, Writing With Sources.

VI. Provide context and define key terms

When defending your claim, you will need to place your topic (and argument) in context by including relevant background material. Remember, your audience is relying on you for vital information, such as definitions, historical placement, and controversial positions. This background material might appear in either your introductory paragraph/s or your body paragraphs. How and where to incorporate background material depends a lot upon your topic, assignment, evidence, and audience.

Kairotic appeals

One reason context is so important is that it helps persuade the reader your claim is timely and appropriate to a present matter of concern. The timelines of an argument is its **kairos**. Providing sufficient background information that pinpoints an urgent issue and conversation adds **kairotic appeal**. This kind of context should appear before introducing your claim—whenever possible, the claim should sound like it's deeply enmeshed in the moment, pitched at just the right time.

Definitions

One of the most important contextual pieces of information a writer can provide is to carefully define certain terms of ideas that play a key role in the argument. Part of what makes an argument so experimental is that many of the key terms (words) a writer uses are slippery. Words like "freedom," "progress," and "happiness" often appear in many casual arguments, but all of those words are heatedly disputed. These linguistic disputes are why good speakers and writers take their time clarifying key terms that play an important role in their argument.

Consider the debate over free speech in higher education. Most Universities state their commitment to free speech. It's often in the student handbook. However, many student handbooks also state their commitment to learning and providing a safe and secure environment for that to happen. This second commitment sometimes operates in tension with free speech, which doesn't care about truth, learning, or the interests of the institution. Google "free speech in higher education" and you'll see a ton of news articles debating this issue.

In "Free Speech Is Not an Academic Value," Stanley Fish takes the controversial stance that public universities should not value free speech above all other concerns. How does he support his opinion? He points to court decisions that distinguish between "speech on a matter of public concern and speech that is personal or internal to the operations of the unit." Fish continues, "If the speech at issue falls under the first category, it is constitutionally protected; if it falls under the second, it can be regulated in the same way any employer can regulate speech that disrupts the core business of the workplace."

From this distinction, he suggests that free speech is protected only when it's nonacademic. When it's academic speech, the interests of the institution (the learning outcomes for that class, the objectives of the campus as a whole, etc.) are paramount, and the foundational principle of higher education is "free inquiry" towards the truth. In the classroom and in other academic-related activities, campuses care most about "getting a matter of fact right," and expressing oneself is secondary to that concern. Controversial indeed!

Notice how Fish deftly uses authoritative definitions to help move forward his argument. He mentions previous court decisions (historical evidence) in order to justify his definition of free speech vs. academic speech. This careful parsing of certain terms is crucial for Fish's position. It allows him to make the point that arguments related to free speech in higher education must pay close attention to what "speech" actually refers to: speech related to the public interest vs. speech internal to the institution. Only after identifying the different kinds of speech can he then support his broader claim.

In academic situations, persuasive writers are upfront and transparent about their definitions. If an important term is employed throughout your essay, it's often good practiced to define it near the beginning, or whenever that term first appears.

Exercise

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://idaho.pressbooks.pub/write/?p=150#h5p-1

64. Tips for Writing Academic Persuasive Essays

JOEL GLADD

The previous chapters in this section offer an overview of what it means to formulate an argument in an academic situation. The purpose of this chapter is to offer more concrete, actionable tips for drafting an academic persuasive essay. Keep in mind that preparing to draft a persuasive essay relies on the strategies for any other thesis-driven essay, covered by the section in this textbook, The Writing Process. The following chapters can be read in concert with this one:

- Critical Reading and other research strategies helps writers identify the exigence (issue) that demands a response, as well as what kinds of research to use.
- Generate Ideas covers prewriting models (such as brainstorming techniques) that allow students to make interesting connections and develop comprehensive thesis statements. These connections and main points will allow a writer to outline their core argument.
- Organizing is important for understanding why an argument essay needs a detailed plan, before the drafting stage. For an argument essay, start with a basic outline that identifies the claim, reasoning, and evidence, but be prepared to develop more detailed outlines that include counterarguments and rebuttals, warrants, additional backing, etc., as needed.
- Drafting introduces students to basic compositional strategies that they must be familiar with before beginning an argument essay. This current chapter offers more details about what kinds of paragraphs to practice in an argument essay, but it assumes the writer is familiar with basic strategies such as

coherence and cohesion.

Classical structure of an argument essay

Academic persuasive essays tend to follow what's known as the "classical" structure, based on techniques that derive from ancient Roman and Medieval rhetoricians. John D. Ramage, et. al outline this structure in *Writing Arguments*:

• Exordium • Narratio • Propositio • Partitio	Introduction (one to several paragraphs)	• Attention grabber • Explanation of issue and needed background • Writer's thesis (claim) • Forecasting passage
• Confirmatio	Presentation of writer's position	• Main body of essay • Presents and supports each reason in turn • Each reason is tied to a value or belief held by the audience
• Confutatio	Summary of opposing views (Counterarguments) Response to opposing views (Rebuttals)	• Summary of views differing from writer's • Shows weaknesses in opposing views • May concede some strengths
• Peroratio	Conclusion	• Brings essay to closure • Often sums up argument • Leaves strong last impression • Often calls for action or relates topic to a larger context of issues

This very detailed table can be simplified. Most academic persuasive essays include the following basic elements:

- **Introduction** that explains why the situation is important and presents your argument (aka the claim or thesis).
- **Support/Body**
  - Reasons the thesis is correct or at least reasonable.
  - Evidence that supports each reason, often occurring right after the reason the evidence supports.

    - Acknowledgement of objections.
    - Response to objections.
- **Conclusion**

Keep in mind that the structure above is just a conventional starting point. The previous chapters of this section suggest how different kinds of arguments (Classical/Aristotelian, Toulmin, Rogerian) involve slightly different approaches, and your course, instructor, and specific assignment prompt may include its own specific instructions on how to complete the assignment. There are many different variations. At the same time, however, most academic argumentative/persuasive essays expect you to practice the techniques mentioned below. These tips overlap with the elements of argumentation, covered in that chapter, but they offer more explicit examples for how they might look in paragraph form, beginning with the introduction to your essay.

Persuasive introductions should move from context to thesis

Since one of the main goals of a persuasive essay introduction is to forecast the broader argument, it's important to keep in mind that the legibility of the argument depends on the ability of the writer to provide sufficient information to the reader. If a basic high school essay moves from general topic to specific argument (the funnel technique), a more sophisticated academic persuasive essay is more likely to move from context to thesis.

The great stylist of clear writing, Joseph W. Williams, suggests that one of the key rhetorical moves a writer can make in a persuasive introduction is to not only provide enough background information (the context), but to frame that information in terms of a problem or issue, what the section on Reading and Writing

Rhetorically terms the exigence. The ability to present a clearly defined problem and then the thesis as a solution creates a motivating introduction. The reader is more likely to be gripped by it, because we naturally want to see problems solved.

Consider these two persuasive introductions, both of which end with an argumentative thesis statement:

> **A.** In America we often hold to the belief that our country is steadily progressing.topic This is a place where dreams come true. With enough hard work, we tell ourselves (and our children), we can do anything. I argue that, when progress is more carefully defined, our current period is actually one of decline.claim

> **B**. Two years ago my dad developed Type 2 diabetes, and the doctors explained to him that it was due in large part to his heavy consumption of sugar. For him, the primary form of sugar consumption was soda.hook His experience is echoed by millions of Americans today. According to the most recent research, "Sugary drink portion sizes have risen dramatically over the past forty years, and children and adults are drinking more soft drinks than ever," while two out of three adults in the United States are now considered either overweight or obese. This statistic correlates with reduced life expectancy by many years. Studies have shown that those who are overweight in this generation will live a lot fewer years than those who are already elderly. And those consumers who don't become overweight remain

> at risk for developing Type 2 diabetes (like my dad), known as one of the most serious global health concerns (“Sugary Drinks and Obesity Fact Sheet”).problem In response to this problem, some political journalists, such as Alexandra Le Tellier, argue that sodas should be banned. On the opposite end of the political spectrum, politically conservative journalists such as Ernest Istook argue that absolutely nothing should be done because that would interfere with consumer freedom.debate I suggest something in between: a “soda tax,” which would balance concerns over the public welfare with concerns over consumer freedom.claim

Example B feels richer, more dramatic, and much more targeted not only because it’s longer, but because it’s structured in a “motivating” way. Here’s an outline of that structure:

- Hook: It opens with a brief hook that illustrates an emerging issue. This concrete, personal anecdote grips the reader’s attention.
- Context (background information)
  - Problem: The anecdote is connected with the emerging issue, phrased as a problem that needs to be addressed.
  - Debate: The writer briefly alludes to a debate over how to respond to the problem.
- Claim: The introduction ends by hinting at how the writer intends to address the problem, and it’s phrased conversationally, as part of an ongoing dialogue.

Not every persuasive introduction needs all of these elements. Not all introductions will have an obvious problem. Sometimes a "problem," or the exigence, will be as subtle as an ambiguity in a text that needs to be cleared up (as in literary analysis essays). Other times it will indeed be an obvious problem, such as in a problem-solution argument essay.

In most cases, however, a clear introduction will proceed from **context to thesis**. The most attention-grabbing and motivating introductions will also include things like hooks and problem-oriented issues.

Here's a very simple and streamlined template that can serve as rudimentary scaffolding for a persuasive introduction, inspired by the excellent book, *They Say / I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*:

> In discussions of ___________, an emerging issue is ________________________.issue When addressing this issue, some experts suggest __________________.debate In my view, however, ____________________________________.claim

Each aspect of the template will need to be developed, but it can serve as training wheels for how to craft a nicely structured context-to-thesis introduction, including things like an issue, debate, and claim. You can try filling in the blanks below, and then export your attempt as a document.

> *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
> *https://idaho.pressbooks.pub/write/?p=152#h5p-2*

Define key terms, as needed

Much of an academic persuasive essay is dedicated to supporting the claim. A traditional thesis-driven essay has an introduction, body, and conclusion, and the support constitutes much of the body. In a persuasive essay, most of the support is dedicated to reasoning and evidence (more on that below). However, depending on what your claim does, a careful writer may dedicate the beginning (or other parts of the essay body) to defining key terms.

Suppose I wish to construct an argument that enters the debate over euthanasia. When researching the issue, I notice that much of the debate circles around the notion of rights, specifically what a "legal right" actually means. Clearly defining that term will help reduce some of the confusion and clarify my own argument. In Vancouver Island University's resource "Defining key terms," Ian Johnston offers this example for how to define "legal right" for an academic reader:

> Before discussing the notion of a right to die, we need to clarify precisely what the term legal right means. In common language, the term "right" tends often to mean something good, something people ought to have (e.g., a right to a good home, a right to a meaningful job, and so on). In law, however, the term has a much more specific meaning. It refers to something to which people are legally entitled. Thus, a "legal" right also confers a legal obligation on someone or some institution to make sure the right is conferred. For instance, in Canada, children of a certain age have a right to a free public education. This right confers on society the obligation to provide that education, and society cannot refuse without breaking the law. Hence, when we use the term right to die in a legal sense, we are describing something to which a citizen is legally entitled, and we are insisting that someone in society has an obligation to provide the services which will confer that right on anyone who wants it.

As the example above shows, academics often dedicate space to providing nuanced and technical definitions that correct common misconceptions. Johnston's definition relies on research, but it's not always necessary to use research to define your terms. Here are some tips for crafting definitions in persuasive essays, from "Defining key terms":

1. Fit the descriptive detail in the definition to the knowledge of the intended audience. The definition of, say, AIDS for a general readership will be different from the definition for a group of doctors (the latter will be much more technical). It often helps to distinguish between common sense or popular definitions and more technical ones.
2. Make sure definitions are full and complete; do not rush them unduly. And do not assume that just because the term is quite common that everyone knows just what it means (e.g., *alcoholism*). If you are using the term in a very specific sense, then let the reader know what that is. The amount of detail you include in a definition should cover what is essential for the reader to know, in order to follow the argument. By the same token, do not overload the definition, providing too much detail or using far too technical a language for those who will be reading the essay.
3. It's unhelpful to simply quote the google or dictionary.com definition of a word. Dictionaries contain a few or several definitions for important terms, and the correct definition is informed by the context in which it's being employed. It's up to the writer to explain that context and how the word is usually understood within it.
4. You do not always need to research a definition. Depending on the writing situation and audience, you may be able to develop your own understanding of certain terms.

Use P-E-A-S or M-E-A-L to support your claim

The heart of a persuasive essay is a claim supported by reasoning and evidence. Thus, much of the essay body is often devoted to the supporting reasons, which in turn are proved by evidence. One of the formulas commonly taught in K-12 and even college writing programs is known as PEAS, which overlaps strongly with the MEAL formula introduced by the chapter, "Basic Integration":

> **Point**: State the reasoning as a single point: "One reason why a soda tax would be effective is that…" or "One way an individual can control their happiness is by…"
>
> **Evidence**: After stating the supporting reason, *prove* that reason with related evidence. There can be more than one piece of evidence. "According to …" or "In the article, '…,' the author shows that …"
>
> **Analysis**: There a different levels of analysis. At the most basic level, a writer should clearly explain how the evidence proves the point, in their own words: "In other words…," "What this data shows is that…" Sometimes the "A" part of PEAS becomes simple paraphrasing. Higher-level analysis will use more sophisticated techniques such as Toulmin's **warrants** to explore deeper terrain. For more tips on how to discuss and analyze, refer to the previous chapter's section, "Analyze and discuss the evidence."
>
> **Summary/So what?**: Tie together all of the components (PEA) succinctly, before transitioning to the next idea. If necessary, remind the reader how the evidence and reasoning relates to the broader claim (the thesis argument).

PEAS and MEAL are very similar; in fact they are identical except for how they refer to the first and last part. In theory, it shouldn't matter which acronym you choose. Both versions are effective because they translate the basic structure of a supporting reason (reasoning and evidence) into paragraph form.

Here's an example of a PEAS paragraph in an academic persuasive essay that argues for a soda tax:

> A soda tax would also provide more revenue for the federal government, thereby reducing its debt.point Despite Ernest Istook's concerns about eroding American freedom, the United States has long supported the ability of government to leverage taxes in order to both curb unhealthy lifestyles *and* add revenue. According to Peter Ubel's "Would the Founding Fathers Approve of a Sugar Tax?", in 1791 the US government was heavily in debt and needed stable revenue. In response, the federal government taxed what most people viewed as a "sin" at that time: alcohol. This single tax increased government revenue by at least 20% on average, and in some years more than 40% . The effect was that only the people who really wanted alcohol purchased it, and those who could no longer afford it were getting rid of what they already viewed as a bad habit (Ubel).evidence Just as alcohol (and later, cigarettes) was viewed as a superfluous "sin" in the Early Republic, so today do many health experts and an increasing amount of Americans view sugar as extremely unhealthy, even addictive. If our society accepts taxes on other consumer sins as a way to improve government revenue, a tax on sugar is entirely consistent.analysis We could apply this to the soda tax and try to do something like this to help knock out two problems at once: help people lose their addiction towards soda and help reduce our government's debt.summary/so what?

The paragraph above was written by a student who was taught the PEAS formula. However, we can see versions of this formula in professional writing. Here's a more sophisticated example of PEAS, this time from a non-academic article. In Nicholas Carr's extremely popular article, "**Is Google Making Us Stupid?**", he argues that Google is altering how we think. To prove that broader claim, Carr offers a variety of reasons and evidence. Here's part of his reasoning:

> Thanks to the ubiquity of text on the Internet, not to

mention the popularity of text-messaging on cell phones, we may well be reading more today than we did in the 1970s or 1980s, when television was our medium of choice. But it's a different kind of reading, and behind it lies a different kind of thinking—perhaps even a new sense of the self.$_{\text{point}}$ "We are not only *what* we read," says Maryanne Wolf, a developmental psychologist at Tufts University and the author of *Proust and the Squid: The Story and Science of the Reading Brain*. "We are *how* we read." Wolf worries that the style of reading promoted by the Net, a style that puts "efficiency" and "immediacy" above all else, may be weakening our capacity for the kind of deep reading that emerged when an earlier technology, the printing press, made long and complex works of prose commonplace. When we read online, she says, we tend to become "mere decoders of information."$_{\text{evidence}}$ Our ability to interpret text, to make the rich mental connections that form when we read deeply and without distraction, remains largely disengaged.$_{\text{analysis}}$

This excerpt only contains the first three elements, PEA, and the analysis part is very brief (it's more like paraphrase), but it shows how professional writers often employ some version of the formula. It tends to appear in persuasive texts written by experienced writers because it reinforces writing techniques mentioned elsewhere in this textbook. A block of text structured according to PEA will practice coherence, because opening with a point (P) forecasts the main idea of that section. Embedding the evidence (E) within a topic sentence and follow-up commentary or analysis (A) is part of the "quote sandwich" strategy we cover in the section on "Writing With Sources."

Use "they say / i say" strategies for Counterarguments and rebuttals

Another element that's unique to persuasive essays is embedding a counterargument. Sometimes called naysayers or opposing positions, counterarguments are points of view that challenge our own.

Why embed a naysayer?

Recall above how a helpful strategy for beginning a persuasive essay (the introduction) is to briefly mention a debate—what some writing textbooks call "joining the conversation." Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein's *They Say / I Say* explains why engaging other points of view is so crucial:

> Not long ago we attended a talk at an academic conference where the speaker's central claim seemed to be that a certain sociologist—call him Dr. X—had done very good work in a number of areas of the discipline. The speaker proceeded to illustrate his thesis by referring extensively and in great detail to various books and articles by Dr. X and by quoting long pas-sages from them. The speaker was obviously both learned and impassioned, but as we listened to his talk we found ourselves somewhat puzzled: the argument—that Dr. X's work was very important—was clear enough, but why did the speaker need to make it in the first place? Did anyone dispute it? Were there commentators in the field who had argued against X's work or challenged its value? Was the speaker's interpretation of what X had done somehow novel or revolutionary? Since the speaker gave no hint of an answer to any of these questions, we could only wonder why he was going on and on about X. It was only after the speaker finished and took questions from the audience that we got a clue: in response to one questioner, he referred to several critics who had vigorously questioned Dr. X's ideas

> and convinced many sociologists that Dr. X's work was unsound.

When writing for an academic audience, one of the most important moves a writer can make is to demonstrate how their ideas compare to others. It serves as part of the context. Your essay might be offering a highly original solution to a certain problem you've researched the entire semester, but the reader will only understand that if existing arguments are presented in your draft. Or, on the other hand, you might be *synthesizing* or connecting a variety of opinions in order to arrive at a more comprehensive solution. That's also fine, but the creativity of your synthesis and its unique contribution to existing research will only be known if those other voices are included.

Aristotelian argumentation embeds counterarguments in order to refute them. Rogerian arguments present oppositional stances in order to synthesize and integrate them. No matter what your strategy is, the essay should be conversational.

Notice how Ana Mari Cauce opens her essay on free speech in higher education, "Messy but Essential":

> Over the past year or two, issues surrounding the exercise of free speech and expression have come to the forefront at colleges around the country. The common narrative about free speech issues that we so often read goes something like this: today's college students — overprotected and coddled by parents, poorly educated in high school and exposed to primarily left-leaning faculty — have become soft "snowflakes" who are easily offended by mere words and the slightest of insults, unable or unwilling to tolerate opinions that veer away from some politically correct orthodoxy and unable to engage in hard-hitting debate.counterargument
>
> This is false in so many ways, and even insulting when you consider the reality of students' experiences today.claim

The introduction to her article is essentially a counteragument (which serves as her introductory context) followed by a response. Embedding naysayers like this can appear anywhere in an essay, not just the introduction. Notice, furthermore, how Cauce's naysayer isn't gleaned from any research she did. It's just a general, trendy naysayer, something one might hear nowadays, in the ether. It shows she's attuned to an ongoing conversation, but it doesn't require her to cite anything specific. As the previous chapter on using rhetorical appeals in arguments explained, this kind of attunement with an emerging problem (or exigence) is known as the **appeal to kairos**. A compelling, engaging introduction will demonstrate that the argument "kairotically" addresses a pressing concern.

Below is a brief overview of what counterarguments are and how you might respond to them in your arguments. This section was developed by Robin Jeffrey, in "Counterargument and Response":

Common Types of counterarguments

- Could someone disagree with your claim? *If so, why? Explain this opposing perspective in your own argument, and then respond to it.*
- Could someone draw a different conclusion from any of the facts or examples you present? *If so, what is that different conclusion? Explain this different conclusion and then respond to it.*
- Could a reader question any of your assumptions or claims? *If so, which ones would they question? Explain and then respond.*
- Could a reader offer a different explanation of an issue? *If so, what might their explanation be? Describe this different explanation, and then respond to it.*
- Is there any evidence out there that could weaken your position? *If so, what is it? Cite and discuss this evidence and then respond to it.*

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, that does not necessarily mean that you have a weak argument. It means, ideally and as long as your argument is logical and valid, that you have a counterargument. Good arguments can and do have counterarguments; it is important to discuss them. But you must also discuss and then respond to those counterarguments.

Responding to counterarguments

You do not need to attempt to do all of these things as a way to respond; instead, choose the response strategy that makes the most sense to you, for the counterargument that you have.

- If you agree with some of the counterargument perspectives, you can concede some of their points. ("I do agree that ….", "Some of the points made by ____ are valid…..") You could then challenge the importance/usefulness of those points. "However, this information does not apply to our topic because…"
- If the counterargument perspective is one that contains different evidence than you have in your own argument, you can explain why a reader should not accept the evidence that the counterarguer presents.
- If the counterargument perspective is one that contains a different *interpretation* of evidence than you have in your own argument, you can explain why a reader should not accept the interpretation of the evidence that that your opponent (counterarguer) presents.
- If the counterargument is an acknowledgement of evidence that threatens to weaken your argument, you must explain why and how that evidence does not, in fact invalidate your claim.

It is important to use **transitional phrases** in your paper to alert readers when you're about to present an counterargument. It's usually best to put this phrase at the beginning of a paragraph such as:

- Researchers have challenged these claims with…
- Critics argue that this view…
- Some readers may point to…
- A perspective that challenges the idea that . . .

Transitional phrases will again be useful to highlight your shift from counterargument to response:

- Indeed, some of those points are valid. However, . . .
- While I agree that . . . , it is more important to consider . . .
- These are all compelling points. Still, other information suggests that . .
- While I understand . . . , I cannot accept the evidence because . . .

Further reading

To read more about the importance of counterarguments in academic writing, read Steven D. Krause's "On the Other Hand: The Role of Antithetical Writing in First Year Composition Courses."

When concluding, address the "so what?" challenge

As Joseph W. Williams mentions in his chapter on concluding persuasive essays in *Style*,

> a *good introduction* motivates your readers to keep reading, introduces your key themes, and states your main point … [but] a *good conclusion* serves a different end: as the last thing your reader reads, it should bring together your point, its significance, and its implications for thinking further about the ideas your explored.

At the very least, a good persuasive conclusion will

1. Summarize the main points
2. Address the *So what*? or *Now what*? challenge.

When summarizing the main points of longer essays, Williams suggests it's fine to use "metadiscourse," such as, "I have argued that." If the essay is short enough, however, such metadiscourses may not be necessary, since the reader will already have those ideas fresh in their mind.

After summarizing your essay's main points, imagine a friendly reader thinking,

> "OK, *I'm persuaded and entertained by everything you've laid out in your essay. But remind me what's so important about these ideas*? *What are the implications*? *What kind of impact do you expect your ideas to have*? *Do you expect something to change*?"

It's sometimes appropriate to offer brief action points, based on the implications of your essay. When addressing the "So what?" challenge, however, it's important to first consider whether your essay is primarily targeted towards changing the way people *think* or *act*. Do you expect the audience to *do* something, based on what you've argued in your essay? Or, do you expect the audience to *think* differently? Traditional academic essays tend to propose changes in how the reader thinks more than acts, but your essay may do both.

Finally, Williams suggests that it's sometimes appropriate to end a persuasive essay with an anecdote, illustrative fact, or key quote that emphasizes the significance of the argument. We can see a good example of this in Carr's article, "Is Google Making Us Stupid?" Here are the introduction and conclusion, side-by-side:

> **[Introduction]** "Dave, stop. Stop, will you? Stop, Dave. Will you stop, Dave?" So the supercomputer HAL pleads with the implacable astronaut Dave Bowman in a famous and weirdly poignant scene toward the end of Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A *Space Odyssey*. Bowman, having nearly been sent to a deep-space death by the malfunctioning machine, is calmly, coldly disconnecting the memory circuits that control its artificial " brain. "Dave, my mind is going," HAL says, forlornly. "I can feel it. I can feel it."
>
> I can feel it, too. Over the past few years I've had an uncomfortable sense that someone, or something, has been tinkering with my brain, remapping the neural circuitry, reprogramming the memory. …
>
> **[Conclusion]** I'm haunted by that scene in 2001. What makes it so poignant, and so weird, is the computer's emotional response to the disassembly of its mind: its despair as one circuit after another goes dark, its childlike pleading with the astronaut—"I can feel it. I can feel it. I'm afraid"—and its final reversion to what can only be called a state of innocence. HAL's outpouring of feeling contrasts with the emotionlessness that characterizes the human figures in the film, who go

> about their business with an almost robotic efficiency. Their thoughts and actions feel scripted, as if they're following the steps of an algorithm. In the world of 2001, people have become so machinelike that the most human character turns out to be a machine. That's the essence of Kubrick's dark prophecy: as we come to rely on computers to mediate our understanding of the world, it is our own intelligence that flattens into artificial intelligence.

Instead of merely rehashing all of the article's main points, Carr returns to the same movie scene from 2001 that he opened with. The final lines interpret the scene according to the argument he just dedicated the entire essay to presenting.

The entire essay should use rhetorical appeals strategically

The chapter "Persuasive Appeals" introduces students to logos, pathos, ethos, and kairos. Becoming familiar with each of those persuasive appeals can add much to an essay. It also reinforces the idea that writing argumentative essays is not a straightforward process of jotting down proofs. It's not a computer algorithm.

- **Logos** (appeals to evidence and reasoning) is the foundational appeal of an argument essay. Clearly identifying the claim, then supporting that claim with reasoning and evidence will appeal to the reader's logos demands. As the previous chapter on argumentation mentions, however, what constitutes solid evidence will vary depending on the audience. Make sure your evidence is indeed convincing to your intended reader.

- **Pathos** (appeals to emotion) are a crucial component and should permeate should every section of the essay. Personal anecdotes are an effective way to illustrate important ideas, and they connect with the reader at an emotional level. Personal examples also cultivate **voice**.
- **Ethos** (appeals to character, image, and values) is essential to gaining the reader's trust and assent. The tone of your essay (snarky, sincere, ironic, sarcastic, empathetic) is immensely important for its overall effect, and it helps build the reader's image of you. A careful attention to high-quality research reinforces a sincere and empathetic tone. When supporting certain claims and sub-claims, it's also important to identify implied beliefs (warrants) that your reader is most likely to agree with, and to undermine beliefs that might seem repugnant.
- **Kairos** (appeals to timeliness) impresses the reader with your attunement to the situation. This should be practiced especially in the introduction, but it can appear throughout the essay as you engage with research and other voices that have recently weighed in on the topic.

All of these appeals are already happening, whether or not they're recognized. If they are missed, the audience will often use them against you, judging your essay as not being personable enough (pathos), or not in touch with commonly accepted values (ethos), or out of touch with what's going on (kairos). These non-logical appeals aren't irrational. They are crucial components to writing that matters.

Argument Outline Exercise

To get started on your argument essay, practice adopting from of the outlines from this Persuasive Essay Outline worksheet.

65. Sample Writing Assignments

Problem/Solution Persuasive Argument Essay

Writing Task

Role: You are a member of an advocacy group (real or imagined).

Situation: You want to educate the public about an issue you discovered by writing your exploratory essay, OR another issue that matters to you and impacts you directly. Your problem must be approved by your instructor.

Task: Weave the knowledge you gained in Essay One into a 6-8 page researched problem/solution argument essay to be published on your organization's website or in a publication like the Boise Weekly or a national magazine.

Purpose: Win hearts and minds. Show your audience:

1) There is a problem.

2) They should care about it.

3) What can and should be done about it (solution).

Important notes:

- Your goal for this paper is to inform the public or a specific audience that has the power to change this issue, and make them care about your problem. It must, at a minimum, affect you and others you don't know. It must somehow impact quality of life, affect the local economy, or violate human rights. In other words, this needs to be a significant problem—not just an annoyance or inconvenience to you.

- In choosing the problem you'll aim to solve, consider what you learned (or didn't learn) from your exploratory paper. What problems did you discover?

- If you don't feel like your exploratory essay brought up any significant problems, or you'd rather work outside of your exploratory essay topic, that's fine. Choose something you care about but are distanced from enough to be objective.

- However, finding a problem outside of your first paper topic means you'll have more work to do. The benefit of choosing something even loosely related to your essay is that you've already done some of the work; you already have some connections, and possibly some sources to re-use.

Writing Process

- Step 1: Brainstorm—So what? Stake your claim.
- Step 2: Draft the essay. Rough draft due for peer review Thursday Week Five
- Step 3: Revise the essay based on peer review feedback. Final draft due Sunday Week Five

Final Paper Requirements

- APA style, 1500-2000 words, Times New Roman, size 12, double spaced, 1-inch margins
- 5 or more quality sources; You may only have one source that is not a person, a primary source, or a peer-reviewed journal article or book. If you are struggling with this requirement, please e-mail me.

Basic Rubric

This is used to help determine whether a paper earns full credit (110), partial credit (90/60) or no credit.

Format & length check:

- Final paper is complete and correctly formatted. Yes / No

Topic—The essay is on topic and contains a clear "so what"

- The role and situation are clear; the essay makes a clear claim about a problem that impacts the writer and others.

Yes / No

Quality

Argument—The essay makes a good argument for a solution.

- The premises are relevant to the main claim. Yes / No

- The premises are true. Yes / No
- There is plenty of good quality evidence to support the claim. Yes / No
- The essay provides an effective rebuttal to the strongest opposing arguments. Yes / No

Research

- The author uses at least five high-quality, reliable sources.Yes / No
- Sources are integrated correctly; any quotes are explained (use quote sandwiches) Yes / No
- Source are cited for all “how do I know this?” informationYes / No

Organization

- The essay is thesis-drivenYes / No
- The essay has an effective introduction and conclusionYes / No
- Paragraphs are organized around topic sentencesYes / No
- The paper uses transitions to connect ideas logicallyYes / No

Citation and Mechanics

- All sources are properly cited in the text.Yes / No
- Errors in References entries are few and minor. Yes / No
- There are few errors in grammar, punctuation,

and spellingYes / No

TIPS:

- Starting the paper with a brief story about how the problem affects you would be a wise choice for your hook. Concluding it with an echo back to that story would help
  bring the argument full circle.
- Remember the qualities of a good argument from the readings, and do your best not to be guilty of logical fallacies.
- Consider the examples we read for approach and structure.
- Try to start your research with a person or agency, not Google.

- Use our library. Its physical presence may be small, but most of what you need is available online. It's a wonderful place to get some extra help.
- Use the CWI Writing Center. The tutors are there to help you. If you go, be sure to bring a copy of the assignment with you. Note that the Writing Center is also available via e-mail. Send a draft and the assignment to writing@cwi.edu and allow two business days for feedback.

Some Do's and Don'ts:

- No big vague concepts, such as "no traffic control." Be precise: There are no stop signs, traffic circles, or traffic lights for a 10-mile stretch between Hereville and Thereville.
- No absent solutions such as, "we have a lack of money and thus children don't go to school." Instead, the problem is, "school fees are not affordable."

- No formulation of interpretations or snap judgments, such as "the government is lazy." Instead, "Fish and Wildlife does not issue hunting licenses in time for bow season."

Unit 2: Visual Argument: "Call to Action" PSA poster mock-ups and rationale (50 points)

Inspired by John Holland and colleagues at San Francisco State University

Overview: This assignment is designed to help you identify your audience and values for your problem/solution persuasive argument using a different genre: the visual argument, in the form of a PSA (Public Service Advertising) poster, infographic, or billboard design. Public Service Advertising (PSAs) are messages in the public interest, which are on television, radio, print or other media. The purpose of commercial advertising is to market a product or service. In contrast, PSAs are messages that benefit the public by raising awareness of an issue, influencing attitudes or actions for the good. Many PSAs are designed using the "Value, Problem, Solution, Action" structure. Examples of values are mobility, freedom, health, safety, equality.

- First, you will need to figure out what kind of claim you want to make with your visual argument,

- Then, you will need to figure out two possible audiences, their values, and the action you want them to take.
- Next, you will create two mock ups (rough versions) of an approach to making that claim using images and words together. These mock ups should target two different audiences but use the same problem. You will post the two drafts to a course blog on Blackboard.
- Finally, you will choose one of your two mock-ups for the

audience you intend to use for your essay and write a rationale/reflection short essay (500-750 words, 2-3 paragraphs) explaining the value, problem, solution, and action you used for your final PSA/infographic/billboard and why you chose this approach.

Making a Claim Visual

Arguments consist of two things: claims (or assertions) and support (evidence: reasons for believing the assertion). In a visual argument, the claim is usually a "call to action," or a statement about what you want your audience to do, believe, or think differently about. Many public service announcements make claims like this: don't text and drive, stop smoking, or help prevent forest fires. The first step of this assignment is to figure out what you want your audience to do or believe about your issue or topic. What action or attitude do you want your audience to take?

Using Words and Images
Once you have identified your basic claim, spend some time considering what images come to mind when you think about that claim. Images, like words, can be used both literally and metaphorically. A visual argument about animal cruelty might show an abused animal (literal), or it might show a picture of a prison, likening it to a zoo or circus (more metaphorical).

Use software of your choice to construct your visual argument, and try out different combinations of images and words together to express your desired claim. You will want to balance words and images, so try to limit the number of words that you use. You don't need much computer skill to do this. I recommend using www.canva.com, an online program that has poster templates, images, and text options (make sure that you limit your choices to free content). Word, PowerPoint or Google Slides can also be used, and feel free to use more advanced software if you know how to use it. Your early mock-ups can be hand-drawn and then transferred to a digital medium. What matters most is articulating the thinking and rationale behind your choices in creating the mock-ups, NOT the perfection of the visuals.

Writing the Reflection

After you have created your two mock-ups and chosen your final one, you will write a short essay (500-750 words, 2-3 paragraphs), which will accomplish two goals:

1. Reflect on the PSA creation process itself.

1. Explain why you feel that your visual argument is effective for the audience you chose. Basically, in addition to reflecting on the process, you're also making an argument for why your mock-up works for that audience. Consider how your mock-up reflects your audience's values and needs.

To reflect, address the following questions in essay form:

- How did you decide what claim to make?
- What values are you appealing to in your two PSAs?
- How did you determine your target audiences?
- How did you choose the images for your visual argument?

- What did you try to accomplish in terms of visual impact, emphasis, and organization?
- How was your visual argument different for your two audiences? How was it similar?
- What could you accomplish with your visual argument that would be harder than with words alone?
- How does your final PSA make and support a clear claim or "call to action" related to your topic?

- How does the mock-up create visual impact, coherence, emphasis, and organization?

Specifics:

- Two draft visual mock-ups of your claim for two different audiences, saved as .pdf, .png or .jpg files, due before class Week 7.
- One final revised mockup designed for the audience you will use for Essay Two due Sunday Week 7. Images must be cited, using a link to the source.
- 500-750-word short essay reflecting on the process and articulating a rationale for your choices due Sunday Week 7.
- Submit your images and rationale to our class Visual Argument blog in Blackboard.

Suggested Resources:

- Consider "Opportunity Agenda's" approach of values-based messaging for planning your visual argument: https://opportunityagenda.org/approach/why-values-based-messaging
- This list of core American values might help you identify your approach (note: These may not be the values of your intended audience). https://www.andrews.edu/~tidwell/bsad560/USValues.html
- This list of general, personal values might also help in identifying your approach and the values of your intended audience. http://www.motivationalinterviewing.org/sites/default/files/valuescardsort_0.pdf

- The Ad Council, one of the major creators of PSAs, has a gallery of campaigns. You will want to look most closely at the "print" PSAs, as these will be posters rather than videos, but various genres might still give you ideas. https://www.adcouncil.org/Our-Campaigns

PART IX

WRITING FOR SOCIAL/ COMMUNITY CHANGE

What issues are important to you?
What needs to change around the world? In the U.S.? In your community?
How can you impact change?

Black Lives Matter Protest March – June 6, 2020

66. Introduction to Social/ Community Change Writing

AMY MINERVINI

OVERVIEW

by Amy Minervini

Writing for change is the practice of exploring topics that are meaningful to you, your community, and other stakeholders. You will use rhetorical elements, informative and persuasive skills, and audience analysis to highlight issues and injustices that warrant change. To begin to think about this type of writing, ask yourself a number of questions: What issues in your daily life, in your neighborhood or city, or in the news impact you and others? Why is this particular issue problematic? What changes could be made that would help to be a part of the solution? Who is in charge of making these decisions? What is the best way to reach these individuals or groups? What formats or mediums will be the best way to garner support and effect change? Letter writing — whether to the school board, local officials, newspaper editors, or legislators — is an effective modality to promote actionable change. Service-learning programs and blogging, too, are excellent ways to make a difference in your sphere and in the world.

Key Characteristics

Writing for social change generally exhibits the following:

- Advocates for change through individual, community, or legislative efforts
- Lays out a foundation or a fact pattern that show an injustice has been done or an issue or perspective has been overlooked
- Might engage in brief storytelling or description to help frame an issue or hook the reader/audience
- Incorporates an ethos of restoration and hope
- Awareness of and critique of bias that seeps in
- Acknowledgement of opposing views
- Mindful of intent, medium, audience, and the media (if necessary)

What's in this Chapter

- Writing Letters to the Editor
- Writing Letters to Elected Officials
- Writing for the Public: Blogging
- Discussion & Writing Prompts

67. Writing Letters to the Editor

Writing Letters to the Editor

by Community Toolbox (University of Kansas), Contributor
Jenette Nagy

Learn how to write and send effective print and e-mailed letters to editors of various media types, together with examples, that will gain both editorial and reader support.

- What is a letter to the editor?
- Why should you write a letter to the editor?
- When should you write a letter to the editor?
- Should you use e-mail to send your letter?
- How do you write a letter to the editor?
- How do you get your letter accepted?

WHAT IS A LETTER TO THE EDITOR?

You feel strongly about an issue, and you want to let people know what you think. You believe you can even influence people to take some action if you speak your mind. But, you want to reach an audience larger than just your friends or your group membership. Letters to the editor can be an effective way to get the word out.

A letter to the editor is a written way of talking to a newspaper, magazine, or other regularly printed publication. Letters to the editor are generally found in the first section of the newspaper, or towards the beginning of a magazine, or in the editorial page. They can take a position for or against an issue, or simply inform, or both. They can convince readers by using emotions, or facts, or emotions and facts combined. Letters to the editor are usually short and tight, rarely longer than 300 words (200 to 250 is fairly standard for most newspapers).

Using a few carefully placed letters, you can generate plenty of community discussion. You can also keep an issue going by preventing it from disappearing from the public eye. You can stimulate the interest of the news media and create more coverage for the matters you're working on. You can also send a "good news" letter to bring recognition to people who deserve it or acknowledge the success of an effort.

WHY SHOULD YOU WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR?

Letters to the editor are among the most widely read features in any newspaper or magazine. They allow you to reach a large audience. You can probably think of many more specific reasons why you might want to write to the editor, but here are a few general ones:

- You are angry about something, and want others to know it
- You think that an issue is so important that you have to speak out
- Part of your group's strategy is to persuade others to take a specific action

Or you want to:

- Suggest an idea to others
- Influence public opinion
- Educate the general public on a specific matter
- Influence policy-makers or elected officials directly or indirectly
- Publicize the work of your group and attract volunteers or program participants

WHEN SHOULD YOU WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR?

Letters to the editor can be written any time you want to shape public opinion, tell others how you feel about people, programs, or ideas, or just inform the public on a certain issue. They are a great way to increase awareness of the issues that you or your organization are working for, as well as to advocate for your cause.

Letters to the editor can also be used to start a community conversation about an issue important to you. A planned series of letters to the editor can stimulate public interest and media coverage. It's up to you to determine when is the best time to start writing the letters, allowing time for them to be published.

The larger the newspaper or magazine, the more competition there is for letters-to-the-editor space. This means your letter will need to stand out in order to get printed. The tips in this section will help you write a letter that will be effective and stand out on the editor's desk.

Keep in mind that if you want to inform the public of a certain action your organization is about to take, you may want to think of issuing a press release instead. If newspapers consistently ignore your news releases, your best choice may be a letter to the editor.

HOW SHOULD YOU SEND YOUR LETTER?

The reality for virtually every print publication is that they'd prefer to get letters and other material by e-mail, since everything they publish is set up on a computer and printed straight from software. If you send your letter electronically, all they have to do is transfer it directly to the "letters" page in the software in order to print it.

You can still send a postal letter, of course, but someone has to type it into the computer before it can be printed, and so it may not only arrive later than an e-mail, but may wait longer after it's received to be printed.

HOW DO YOU WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR?

OPEN THE LETTER WITH A SIMPLE SALUTATION.

Don't worry if you don't know the editor's name. A simple "To the Editor of the *Daily Sun*," or just "To the Editor:" is sufficient. If you have the editor's name, however, you should use it to increase the possibilities of your letter being read.

GRAB THE READER'S ATTENTION.

Your opening sentence is very important. It should tell readers what you're writing about, and make them want to read more.

EXPLAIN WHAT THE LETTER IS ABOUT AT THE START.

Throughout your letter, remember the rule:

- Be quick,
- Be concise, and then
- Be quiet.

Don't make the editor or the general public wait to find out what you want to say. Tell them your key point at the beginning.

EXPLAIN WHY THE ISSUE IS IMPORTANT.

If you are motivated enough to write a letter to a newspaper or magazine, the importance of your topic may seem clear to you. Remember, though, that the general public probably doesn't share your background or the interest. Explain the issue and its importance simply. Use plain language that most people will understand

GIVE EVIDENCE FOR ANY PRAISE OR CRITICISM.

If you are writing a letter discussing a past or pending action, be clear in showing why this will have good or bad results.

STATE YOUR OPINION ABOUT WHAT SHOULD BE DONE.

You can write a letter just to "vent," or to support or criticize a certain action or policy, but you may also have suggestions about what could be done to improve the situation. If so, be sure to add these as well. Be specific. And the more good reasons you can give to back up your suggestions, the better.

KEEP IT BRIEF.

Generally, shorter letters have a better chance of being published. So go back over your letter and see if anything can be cut or condensed. If you have a lot to say and it can't be easily made short, you may want to check with the editor to see if you could write a longer opinion feature or guest column.

SIGN THE LETTER.

Be sure to write your full name (and title, if relevant) and to include your address, phone number, and e-mail address. Newspapers won't print anonymous letters, though in some cases they may withhold your name on request. They may also call you to confirm that you wrote the letter before they publish it.

CHECK YOUR LETTER TO MAKE SURE IT'S CLEAR AND TO THE POINT.

A newspaper may not print every letter it receives, but clear, well-written letters are likely to be given more serious consideration.

HOW DO YOU GET YOUR LETTERS ACCEPTED?

How likely your letter is to be published depends to a certain extent on the publication you're sending it to. The *New York Times* probably receives hundreds, if not thousands of letters a day, only ten or so of which make it into print. A small-town newspaper, on the other hand, may print every letter it gets, since it may get only two or three a day.

In general, newspapers and magazines will publish letters that are well-written and articulate, and that either represent specific points of view on an issue, or that thoughtfully analyze complex issues and events. Most publications stay away from publishing rants, although they may publish short-and-to-the-point letters that make the same points as a rant might, but in a much calmer and more rational way. Publications also tend to stay away from attacks on particular people (although not from criticism of the actions of politicians and other public figures), and anything that might possibly be seen as libel.

> Legally, libel is the publication of a false statement about someone that damages that person's reputation. Thus to

falsely accuse someone of a crime would be libel; to inaccurately print that someone had won an award for citizenship would not be.

Here are a few helpful tips for getting your letters accepted by the editor:

- Keep your letter under 300 words. Editors have limited space for printing letters, and some papers have stated policies regarding length (check the editorial page for this).
- Make sure your most important points are stated in the first paragraph. Editors may need to cut parts of your letter and they usually do so from the bottom up.
- Refer to a recent event in your community or to a recent article – make a connection and make it relevant.
- Use local statistics and personal stories to better illustrate your point.
- Make sure you include your title as well as your name – it adds credibility, especially if it's relevant to the topic being discussed. If you are a program director, your title may lend credibility to the letter.

  Including your title is also important to showing that you're not trying to hide your interest in the topic. If you're a program director and you don't mention that in your letter, there may be a letter the next day accusing you of dishonesty for not revealing it.

- Editors may want to contact you, so include your phone number and e-mail address.
- If your letter is not accepted the first time around, try again. You might submit a revised version with a different angle on the issue at a later date.

You do not have to be the only one to write the letter: letters are often published with multiple signers. You also don't have to be the only one to write *a* letter. Several people may write letters on the same topic with the same or slightly different points, and submit them a few days apart, so that the issue stays on the Letters page for a period of time. If you have talented writers in your group, you might encourage one of them to write an editorial article or an "Op-Ed" – that is, an opinion editorial that is usually printed on the citizen opinion page. Most of all, don't limit your communications. Brainstorm for ideas in your group – how can you further your goals by speaking to the readers of your community paper?

Check for Understanding:

___You know what a letter to the editor is.

___You know why you should write a letter to the editor.

___You know when to write a letter to the editor.

___You understand the pros and cons of using e-mail to send your letter.

___You know how to open the letter.

___You grab the reader's attention.

___You explain what the letter is about at the start.

___You explain why the issue is important.

___You give evidence for any praise or criticism.

___You state your opinion about what should be done.

___You keep it brief.

___You check your letter to make sure it's clear and to the point.

___You know how to get your letter accepted.

Examples

EXAMPLE 1: WRITING A LETTER IN FAVOR OF A PROPOSED ACTION

To the Editor of The Herald:

The U.S. House of Representatives has recently proposed a law (H.R. no. 396) that will ban the sale of cigarettes from vending machines. This is a landmark piece of legislation that everyone in our community should support right now.

Many people don't realize it, but vending machines are one of the main places that children are able to purchase cigarettes. In fact, it is estimated that 10% of all cigarettes purchased by minors take place at these machines. If this new legislation goes into effect, it will not only make it more difficult for youth to break the law by buying cigarettes, it will lower the chances of young people smoking in the first place

There are many reasons (besides the legal ones) why we should try to curb smoking by our children. 1) Research shows that most people who smoke started when they were underage. 2) Many people fear that smoking cigarettes serves as a "gateway" to harder drugs. 3) Smoking is a very expensive addiction (particularly for a teen who makes minimum wage) And, finally, 4) smoking can cause many life-shortening or fatal health problems (such as lung cancer and emphysema). Our young people would not smoke before they are really able to understand or accept the long-term consequences.

The vending-machine bill has been proposed, but now it needs to be passed. Your voice will count here. We encourage you to write or call the representative for your district (for those of us in District 8, that's Congresswoman Fisher) and let her know that you support her as she tries to get this legislation passed. The more support she gets, the more likely it is that this bill will become law. Contact Tobacco Free Youth for further information about this important issue.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Friedman, Director

Tobacco Free Youth

123 Forest Road

EXAMPLE 2: WRITING A LETTER

OPPOSING A PROPOSED ACTION

To the editor of the Lawrence Journal World:

Bulldozers began moving dirt last week at Lawrence High School and the Centennial Virtual School, but city commissioners and school district officials have been bulldozing this community for months with an athletic facilities expansion plan that is fiscally irresponsible, unnecessarily redundant and probably illegal. Our elected officials have misled the public, violated zoning codes and set taxpayers up for a $10.3 million loan that will take 10 years to pay off and cost taxpayers $2.25 million in interest.

Why was the public repeatedly told that this project could be built with leftover bond money when those funds don't even represent a third of the proposed budget?

Why is it necessary to build two separate football stadiums at a cost of $4 million?

Why is it inconceivable to parents that both teams could play in a shared stadium at FSHS? The situation would be no different than it is in swimming, where both schools compete at the Indoor Aquatic Center.

Why are city commissioners allowing the school district to build a stadium for 4,000 spectators at LHS without also requiring the district to provide the 1,300 parking spaces required by city zoning ordinances?

Why did the school district repeatedly assert that the proposed facilities would only disrupt neighbors a few nights a year when it clearly intended to lease the fields for nightly city softball, baseball and soccer games?

We need new leaders with a clear vision, a commitment to fiscal responsibility, and the ability to balance community and educational needs.

Jerry Schultz, Bob Tryanski, Jeanne Klein and 10 other signers, Lawrence

EXAMPLE 3: WRITING A LETTER OPPOSING A COMPLETED ACTION

To the Editor of The Herald:

I am outraged by the County Commission's recent decision to terminate the lease of the Head Start program at the County Court House. With this decision, a much-needed, already under-funded program may simply have no place to go!

Head Start is a fantastic program. It makes sure that poor and other at-risk pre-school children will have the nutritious food and special attention they just may not get elsewhere. It gives these children a true "head start" in a world where they may not get many other chances. And there is plenty of evidence to show that Head Start makes a big difference to kids later in life.

The Commission's recent decision to oust the program to make more room for a "state Gifts Shop" is ridiculous! If the leaders of our community would like to run a store to sell Kansas-made goods, I'm all for it. However, neither my Kansas pride nor my greed run so deep as to wish to take away the breakfast of 30 hungry three-year-olds. And I am deeply saddened to see that the County Commissioners value profits over people.

This decision is shameful to all who live in Dade County. The County Commissioners should reconsider the situation and revoke their decision immediately. I hope all readers will let the commissioners know how they feel about this terrible situation by calling them at 913-432-1200 or writing to them at the County Court House.

Sincerely,

Victoria Stein

3960 Mount Hope Drive

567-8095

EXAMPLE 4: WRITING A LETTER

OPPOSING A COMPLETED ACTION

To the Editor of the Lawrence Journal World:

Are we to praise our City Officials and their crews for hauling away all of the remnants of a homeless site on our river east of the Northern Santa Fe Depot? Is this supposed to be retaliation for notifying our City authories of yet two more deaths on City premises–these of an 18-year-old and a 29-year-old–in their "sophisticated" (J-W, Nov. 1) homeless campsite down by our river?

Do we really think clearing out this makeshift campsite (four City dump trucks full) will solves our City's (and nation's) homeless crisis? –Or lessen the number of vulnerable people dying way before their time for lack of treatment and shelter in our community? Are these people being punished for suddenly coming into eyesight of our authorities by having reported these unfortunate –(and preventable) deaths?

How many homeless deaths will it take for this caring community to come up with constructive answers?

Perhaps the best we can do before winter sets in is to designate SOME area where the building of makeshift wood and cardboard shelters will NOT be razed–and some of us even might be willing to help in its rebuilding…

Perhaps these deaths and the devastation of their only "shelter" will spur us on to building that warm and decent shelter–able to serve more than the 31 hapless people now sleeping on thin mats, wall-to-wall, at our present homeless shelter –with winter coming…

Hilda Enoch

EXAMPLE 5: WRITING A LETTER IN FAVOR OF A PROPOSED ACTION

Opinion Piece to the Jackson Free Press

The Center for Disease Control currently ranks Mississippi second in highest infant mortality rates in the nation—in 2016, the state lost 325 babies before their first birthday. Data from the American Academy of Pediatrics shows that more than 900 infant lives per year may be saved in the United States if 90 percent of mothers exclusively breastfed for six months. This shows that if we want to improve the health outcome of babies and increase the number of those that reach their first birthday and beyond, we must center our efforts on removing systemic barriers to breastfeeding.

Moving the marker on breastfeeding and infant health takes the coordinated efforts of communities, hospitals, the government and industries to ensure that mothers' rights to breastfeed are protected through policy, support, space and time. That is one reason why the Mississippi Urban League has partnered with the University of Mississippi Medical Center and the Mississippi State Department of Health to take on the important work of developing and sustaining a culture of breastfeeding here in Mississippi. Our partnership, which the national BUILD Health Challenge funds, wants to change systems so that they will support, and never inhibit, our community's efforts to be healthy.

We see the value of a supportive environment for breastfeeding as we work with parents who come to our SIPPS Baby Café, a place where moms and dads not only receive important health and wellness information, but also support from each other. Moms who come to the café say the network of support they receive helps them make the decision to start breastfeeding and motivates them to continue. Knowing that those women, many of whom are the only ones in their family to breastfeed, have someone to call or if they have questions or need encouraging words makes this work fulfilling. This is how we build sustainable support within the community.

In an effort to normalize breastfeeding, we bring breastfeeding out of the café and into the community. SIPPS M.O.B.s (Mothers Out Breastfeeding) provides opportunities for moms to breastfeed in public in a supportive group setting. These outings are designed to educate and sustain a culture of breastfeeding.

Our partnership also works with businesses to develop policies that allow mothers to use their break time to pump and store milk or breastfeed; and have lactation rooms and lactation education programs on site. We know that due to the absence of universal paid maternity leave, many mothers must return to work shortly after giving birth.

The World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund launched the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative, a global program to encourage implementation of the "Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding and the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes," in 1991. The BFHI assists hospitals in giving mothers the information, confidence and skills necessary to successfully initiate and continue breastfeeding their babies or safely feed with formula, and gives special recognition to hospitals that have done so.

The University of Mississippi Medical Center is among the few Mississippi hospitals to be designated a "Baby-Friendly Hospital" and refers mothers to the SIPPS Baby Café to support and educate pregnant mothers, and support breastfeeding in a community setting. We understand that some mothers are unable to or choose not to breastfeed, and no one should infringe upon their rights to access breast-milk substitutes. Our collaborative effort is aimed at providing education, creating policies and developing supports to ensure that systemic barriers do not influence a mom's decision not to breastfeed.

We know what is best for the long-term health of Mississippi children. All babies need a head start to have a healthy future. We know breastfeeding the future generation of babies is a part of making that future a brighter one. We must not let our nation's stance on the World Health Organization's breastfeeding resolution discourage us. We will continue from the ground up with the momentum we have created to ensure a healthy future for Mississippi children.

Beneta Burt

Writing Activity: LETTER-WRITING PARTY

The responsibility of writing a letter to the editor can be shared. One way to do this is to hold a letter-writing party, at which you and your friends or colleagues write a planned series of letters that will be sent to the editor. At the party

- Pick your topic.
- Have each friend write a letter addressing the topic–these are Group #1 letters.
- Have each friend write a draft letter in response to letters from Group #1–these are Group #2 letters. These will be left incomplete so that specific references to Group #1 letters can be filled in.
- Make a few of your letters provocative so that others will respond.
- Get permission from others to sign their names so that one person can handle the campaign.
- Use different types of stationery.
- Send copies to the "signer" as the paper may call him or her.
- Let the "signer" know if the letter is published.
- It may require only 5 or 6 people to develop a huge community response.
- Mail Group #1 letters. Some may be published. Mail Group #2 letters, with specific information related to those published added, in response to them soon after the Group #1 letters are published. This exercise is great for group morale. It can be fun, too.

Online Resources

Advocating for Change is an online PDF provided by the

Treatment Advocacy Center with tips to writing and submitting an effective letter.

Advocates for Youth provides this guide to writing a letter to the editor and gives ten tips and a sample letter.

Effective E-mail Communication from the University of North Carolina provides tips on professional e-mail writing and communicating via e-mail.

Letters to the Editor Tips is a guide provided by the American Diabetes Association. It includes links to a tip sheet for a successful letter, as well as an online tool to find local newspapers in your area.

Media Advocacy Basics is a mini-guide for hospice advocates and professionals.

Media Communication Tip Sheet provides tips on contributing to the local news, tailoring language and style for the media, developing messages to reach the public, and evaluating media coverage.

Using Effective Communications from UNISON is a guide to communicating effectively in both formal and informal settings.

Using Print Media as Advocacy is an article titled, "How to Write a Letter to the Editor," with tips on effective communication with the media.

Letter to the Editor from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was written when he was a student at Morehouse College

Letter from Birmingham Jail by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is one of the most famous open letters, published to numerous newspapers over the summer of 1963.

Print Resources

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Martinez, B., & Weiner, R. (1979) *Guide to public relations for nonprofit organizations and public agencies*. The Grantmanship Center.

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Ryan, C. (1991). *Prime Time Activism*. South End Press.

Seekins, T., & Fawcett. S. (1984). A *Guide to writing letters to the editor: Expressing your opinion to the public effectively*. Lawrence, KS: Research and Training Center on Independent Living, University of Kansas.

Stonecipher, H. (1979). *Editorial and persuasive writings: Opinion functions of the news media*. New York, NY: Hastings House.

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Wallack, L., Dorfman, L., Jemigan, D., &Themba, M. (1993). *Media advocacy and public health*. Newbury Park. CA: Sage Publications.

68. Writing Letters to Elected Officials

Writing Letters to Elected Officials

by The Community Toolbox (University of Kansas); Contributor
Jenette Nagy

Learn how elected officials react to constituent communications, and how to create both printed and electronic communications to maximize reading and positive response.

- What is a letter to an elected official?
- Why write to elected officials?
- When should you write to elected officials?
- How do you write to public officials?
- Should you use e-mail?

WHAT IS A LETTER TO AN ELECTED OFFICIAL?

By now you are probably looking for ways to get your issue noticed by people who have the power to help you. To get the best results, you will probably want to try several of the direct action methods discussed in this chapter. In this section, we will show you the best way to write a letter to your elected officials.

A well-written personal letter may be the most effective way to communicate with elected officials. They want to know how their constituents feel about issues, especially when those issues involve decisions made by them.

Your elected officials usually know what advocacy groups are saying about an issue, but they may not understand how a particular decision affects you. A well-written letter describing your experiences, observations, and opinions may help persuade an official in your favor.

> Until a short time ago, you had two options if you wanted to contact an elected official: telephone and the mail. In the last several years, e-mail has been added and become the medium of choice. It's fast, it gets read, and – at least in the U.S. – virtually all elected officials, from town councils to the President, use and welcome e-mail communication.
>
> Any guidelines for writing letters in this section – the style to use, the information to include – apply to e-mail as well. A letter to your Congressman, whether it's sent through the post office or electronically, should be formal and as well-written as you can make it. A political communication, to be taken seriously, should send the message that you care enough about the subject to take some care in writing about it.
>
> In the days before e-mail, officials generally considered letters more important than phone calls, because they took more thought and effort. A proper e-mail letter carries the same message – this person has really thought about this, and has put some work into sending his opinion.

WHY WRITE TO ELECTED OFFICIALS?

Maybe you're not convinced that writing a letter to your elected official is the best way to spend your time. There are several reasons it's worth your while, including:

- To explain to an official how a particular issue affects you or your group.
- To express support for a proposed law, policy, or course of action.
- To oppose a proposed law, policy, or course of action.

In any of the above cases, the letter may include information about the issue that the official may not have, or suggest an alternate course of action that she hasn't previously heard about.

- To demonstrate to an official that his constituents are aware of an issue and have a real interest in the outcome.
- To inform an official about an issue or situation, giving background and history that she may not have.
- To attempt to persuade an official to vote in a certain way on an issue, or to take other related action.
- To build your reputation as a thoughtful person in the eyes of the officials, and thus make your criticism or support more influential, or to put yourself in the position of the person to be consulted when the official needs information about your issue.
- To request a meeting to discuss the issue or some related matter of concern.
- To thank an official for support given, or action taken.
- To criticize an official for a past vote or action.
- To put an official on notice that you and your group are watching his actions, and that he needs to take your votes into account at election time.
- To ask an official to state her position on a particular issue, or to reveal her voting record.
- To ask for help or support.

This type of letter often falls under the heading of "constituent support," and concern individual problems with government – being denied military disability payments, for example, or being singled out for harassment by a local official. The reason it's included in this list is that it can sometimes lead an official to work to change procedures, policies, or laws that discriminate against or make life harder for a whole class of people – veterans, farmers, widows, etc..

Another purpose of this type of letter is to enlist the official's support in a community or larger initiative of some sort. This may be a request that he become a legislative champion for the effort, that he simply lend his name to the initiative's list of public supporters or sponsors, or that he serve on a board or steering committee for the effort.

The letter may include information about the issue that the official may not have, or suggest an alternate course of action that she hasn't previously heard about.

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WHEN SHOULD YOU WRITE LETTERS TO ELECTED OFFICIALS?

When would you want to write that letter? Whenever an issue arises that concerns your group, but especially when:

- You want an official to consider a certain action or policy (e.g., increasing funding for a program for senior citizens).
- There is an upcoming vote on a policy that concerns your group. Letters are most effective when the vote is about to be taken. This is a good time to use e-mail.
- You want to respond (positively or negatively) to a completed action or a change in policy (e.g., enacting a law that requires people to wear seatbelts).
- You want to point out a deficiency or need in a particular area (e.g. more public transportation to the community health clinics, more police patrols through your neighborhood).
- You need information (e.g. about what happened the last time a certain issue came up for a vote).
- You need advice (how to approach another official, what kind of event will attract large numbers of officials to take notice, etc.). In this instance, you'd probably be writing to an official that you've already had positive contact with.

Another way to look at this question is to think about when a letter will have the most effect. There are particular times when letters are more likely to be carefully considered, and when officials are more likely to be responsive.

- Just before an election. Most elected officials become extremely anxious to please when they're running for reelection.
- Right before an important vote. Officials will usually be receiving communication from many people on both sides of

the issue when an important vote is coming up, so this is an especially crucial time to let your opinion be known.

- Just before and in the midst of the budget process. One of the most important things that legislators, town councils, and some other bodies do is set the budget for the coming year. Whether your concern is local, regional, state or provincial, or nationwide, most of the coming year's policy and action related to health and human services, the environment, public safety, education, transportation, and a number of other important issues is determined, not by laws, but by the amount of money allowed for them in the annual budget. If you have priorities for funding, now is the time to make them known.
- Immediately after an official has done something you approve or disapprove of. There are two reasons why this communication should be immediate. The first is so that the action is still fresh in the official's mind, and he can respond to your support or criticism. The second is that he will be hearing from folks on the other side, and he needs to know either that not everyone approves of his action, or that, regardless of all the negative letters, there are people out there who think he's doing the right thing. Officials need to know who supports or objects to which of their positions. It can help them continue to work for the things you care about in the face of opposition, or can push them in that direction if they're not doing it already.

The really crucial times to write this sort of letter are when an official is under attack for doing something you believe in – think of officials in the American South in the 1950's and '60's who supported racial integration – or has just done something outrageous – given out a billion-dollar contract in return for a huge bribe, for example. In either of these cases, the official needs to know either that you support her wholeheartedly, and will work to help her, or that you want her to resign now, and will work to have her prosecuted and jailed.

HOW DO YOU WRITE LETTERS TO PUBLIC OFFICIALS?

So how do you write letters to public officials, anyhow? We have a number of guidelines that should help you not only write the letter, but increase the chances that it will be actually read and taken seriously.

DECIDE ON THE RECIPIENT.

Get the name, title, and address of the official who will make the decision about your issue. Watch to make sure that all names are spelled correctly and that you have the proper address. An incorrect name counts against you. An incorrect address may mean your letter might not arrive at all.

If you're concerned with politics or issues at all, you should make it your business to know the names and contact information (address, office phone, and e-mail) of all those who represent you, from the most local to the federal government. In the U.S., at least, you can get to know your representatives at any level of government if you make the effort. If you're an activist, you may meet with them, or at least speak to them or their aides fairly regularly. If that's the case, letters from you will be taken seriously.

OPEN THE LETTER IN AN OFFICIAL MANNER.

If you are writing to an elected official, show respect for the position by using the title of the office, and the official's full name. In any other letter, use the familiar term "Dear," the title Mr., Mrs., Ms., Miss, or Dr., and the official's full name.

Example:

January 5, 2008
Title [Name of Representative or Senator]
House of Representatives [OR] U.S. Senate
Office Address
Washington, D.C. 20515

EXPLAIN THE PURPOSE FOR YOUR LETTER.

Let your reader know immediately what your letter is about. Tell him/her why you are concerned or pleased that a particular decision is being considered.

Example: The proposed increase in the gasoline tax will make the cost of transportation unreasonably high for commuters in the metropolitan area.

SUMMARIZE YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE ISSUE/DECISION BEING CONSIDERED.

State the general impact that you expect to occur if a particular decision is made.

> **Example:** The creation of a peer-counseling program at our high school will help reduce the number of teen pregnancies in our community.

EXPLAIN YOUR POSITION ON THIS ISSUE.

Describe in detail why you feel the decision made will lead to the impact you foresee.

> **Example:** This will provide opportunities for our high school students to discuss pressures they experience with their peers at this critical time in their lives.

DESCRIBE WHAT ANY CHANGES WILL MEAN TO YOU, AND TO OTHERS.

Describe specifically the positive or negative effects the decision will have on you personally and on those you represent. The more people affected by the decision, the more convincing you may be.

> **Example:** This program will help provide career opportunities for teenagers in our community.

IDENTIFY OTHERS WHO MAY BE

AFFECTED BY THIS DECISION.

Tell the official which, and how many, people will be affected. Statistics can be very helpful here.

> **Example:** A recent study showed that 80% of minors who smoke obtain cigarettes at stores that do not ask for any identification. Increased enforcement of the existing laws prohibiting tobacco sales to minors could significantly reduce the rate of smoking among our youth.

ACKNOWLEDGE PAST SUPPORT.

Mention appropriate actions and decisions the official has made in the past and express thanks for them.

> **Example:** We appreciate your past support of the bill protecting the rights of emergency medical crews to not be tested for HIV.

DESCRIBE WHAT ACTION YOU HOPE THE OFFICIAL WILL TAKE.

State specifically what action you (and those you represent) hope the official will take–and by what date, if there is a deadline.

> **Example:** We hope you realize the best course of action to protect our community's infants and young children is to vote "yes" to House Bill #689b.

IF YOU HAVE WRITTEN A LETTER THAT OPPOSES SOME ACTION, OFFER AN ALTERNATIVE.

> **Example:** I believe that rather than increasing the number of police cars patrolling our neighborhood, a cheaper and more effective alternative would be to work with our community to develop a community-policing program.

IF YOU HAVE TIME AND YOU ARE COMMITTED, ASK HOW YOU CAN HELP

> **Example:** Our group is more than willing to explore the various options in helping make our community a safer place to live.

CLOSE AND SIGN YOUR LETTER.

Thank the official and sign your full name. Make sure your address, and phone number are included.

CHECK YOUR LETTER FOR SPELLING AND GRAMMATICAL ERRORS.

Correct spelling and grammar won't do the job by themselves, but they can help. Why not give your letter every possible advantage?

LETTER-WRITING CAMPAIGNS

So far, we've discussed individual letters. A letter-writing tactic that can be particularly effective is a letter-writing campaign, where dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of people write either to the same official (if they're all in, or somehow represent people who are in, her district) or to many officials about a specific vote, policy, or budget item. This can be extremely effective, especially when the letter-writers are people who don't usually contact their elected officials.

> In Massachusetts, when funding for Adult Basic Education (ABE) and English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL) was being debated in the state legislature, over a thousand ABE and ESOL students wrote letters to their representatives explaining why funding was important to them personally. At the same time, program staff and administrators, volunteers, and advocates wrote letters to their own representatives explaining why ABE and ESOL were important to their communities and to the state.
>
> The letters from students were particularly powerful, many of them explaining that a year or two earlier, they couldn't have written those letters. It was the opportunity to enter an ABE or ESOL program that had made the difference. Legislators responded, and funding for adult education was significantly increased.

If you want to engage in a letter-writing campaign, you have to prepare properly. Many people, especially people who see themselves as powerless and unimportant, and who may have little education, are intimidated by the thought of writing to someone in power. In many countries, writing such a letter can carry a certain amount of economic, social, or physical risk. (After a State House rally in the same year as the letter-writing campaign described above, one ESOL student was overheard to remark, "In my country, they shoot you for this.") Even in democracies governed by the rule of law, people may be fearful of being punished for speaking out.

In addition to reluctance based on feelings of fear and intimidation, many people affected by an issue – especially those with low levels of education – can be embarrassed by their poor writing skills, or feel that they don't have anything convincing to say. They need help putting their letters together, and they need a model to go by. The coordinators of the letter-writing campaign should be aware of what they have to do to meet these needs.

First, the campaign should contact potential letter writers with a request for letters, and a simple but complete explanation of why the campaign is needed, and what the important issues relating to it are. People can't write letters that make sense unless they understand clearly why they're writing. The chances are that, while advocates can – and perhaps do – go over the politics of the issue in their sleep, most people affected by it know very little about how it plays out politically, or even about how the political system handles issues. The better they understand what's happening and the specific job their letters are expected to do, the more persuasive the letters they can write.

Along with this, the campaign should provide one or more templates for letters. A template is a pattern for the letters, illustrating the form of the letter on the page, with the sender's and recipient's addresses and date in the appropriate places at the top, and a formal signature at the bottom, as well as a sample of the content of the letter.

A template literally means a cut-out pattern that is used to make several identical pieces of wood, metal, or some other material that are part of something larger. A builder might use a paper or wooden template to cut a number of identical rafters to hold up a roof, for example.

In *general, people affected by the issue should include*:

- A description of who they are – single working mother, person with a disability, job training participant, ex-Marine.

- The fact that they're residents of the official's district, or participants in a program in his district.
- What they want the official to do.
- Their connection to the issue – program participant, staff person, community volunteer, parent of a child with disabilities.

Anywhere from one sentence up to a paragraph or two explaining what the issue means to them and/or how it has affected them personally. For program participants and others affected by the issue, this is by far the most important part of the letter. Officials are more often swayed by personal stories than by impersonal statistics, no matter how telling those statistics may be. If people can explain how a program changed their lives for the better, or how the lack of services has been a barrier for them, it's likely that officials will pay attention.

Finally, campaign coordinators should make sure that those for whom letter-writing is difficult have access to help. In the Massachusetts adult education campaign, that was easy: letters were often written as part of a class, and students approached them as writing assignments, completing two or three drafts before the letter was ready to be sent. In other situations, you'll have to make sure that program staff and others are available to encourage and empower people, and to help them write the best letters they can.

SHOULD YOU USE E-MAIL?

With the speed and ease of delivery, it's common to use e-mail and send your correspondence via the computer. Doing so, particularly for formal letters, has several advantages:

- It is much faster than normal mail. This also makes it possible for the official to respond much more quickly.
- It saves the trouble of addressing an envelope, buying a stamp, and mailing your letter.
- Electronic mail is less likely to get lost on the receiver's desk.

However, note that the last can also be a *disadvantage*. Unless the recipient goes through the trouble to print your message, it may be gone with one tap of the delete key – and out of mind as well. If you are going to use e-mail for your correspondence, be particularly clear and emphatic about your message from the beginning.

IN SUMMARY

Writing letters to elected officials is a good way to explain how an issue affects you or your group. It also can build your reputation as a thoughtful person, giving you more influence with the people in power. A letter is also a good way to get your issue noticed by people who have the power to help you.

CHECKLIST

___You have decided who you will write to

___The official you have chosen has the authority to make a decision about your issue

___You have begun the letter in an official manner, including the official's full name and title

___The purpose for which you are writing is clear

___You have summarized your understanding of the issue

___The general impact that you expect to occur if a particular decision is made is stated

___You have explained your position on this issue in detail

___The positive and negative effects the decision will have on you are described

___You have identified others who may be affected by the decision

___Statistics have been included if available and appropriate

___You have told the official about appropriate actions and decisions he or she has made in the past

___The action that you want taken is stated specifically

___If your letter opposes some action, you have offered an alternative

___You have offered your help if you have available time

___You have thanked the official for their time

___The letter is signed with your full name

___Your address and phone number are listed under your name at the end of the letter

___The letter you have written is free of spelling and grammatical errors

___You communicate with all potential letter writers at the start of a letter-writing campaign to inform them about the issue and the need for the campaign.

___You provide a template for the letters to be written.

___You make sure there's help available for those for whom letter-writing is difficult.

___You use e-mail if you can.

EXAMPLES

EXAMPLE 1: PROPOSED ACTIONS TO PROTECT VULNERABLE GROUPS IN SPAIN DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS

The sample letter details a message to the City Council in Seville, Spain, in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic. The correspondence is written by a research team at the University of Seville in collaboration with a group of NGOs, and addressed specifically to the city's mayor, Juan Espadas. The community-based organizations recognize that the mayor is empowered with the capacity and privilege to make a difference in the functioning of the city's most vulnerable neighbors, comprised largely of Roma and migrant settlements. Multiple organizations, detailed in the attached letter, ask of actions being taken to comply with recommendations adopted by the Spanish government and offer their support in urgent efforts to protect the lives of these at-risk populations during a time of unpredictability:

Mayor Juan Espadas Cejas
Sevilla City Council
C/ Plaza Nueva 1
41001 – Sevilla
April 2, 2020

Dear Mayor Espadas:

We hope that you, your relatives and friends are united and in good health. We would like to thank you and your team's cooperation during the COVID-19 crisis. The scope of the challenge is immense, and it is necessary to recognize the valuable effort that city services are making in order to provide the best possible coverage for the needs of communities and neighborhoods.

We are a group of social and community organizations, judges, and university researchers very concerned about the consequences this crisis is having on our most vulnerable neighbors,
especially those living in the settlements of El Vacie, San Rafael, Polígono Sur and Los Pinillos. A large part of this population are Roma families and, in some cases, migrants. To address the needs of these groups, the European Public Health Association (1) and the European Public Health Alliance (2) have made a series of recommendations that have been adopted by the Spanish government (3) and the Roma State Council (4). These documents demand that these vulnerable groups be provided with the necessary resources to be able to comply with confinement protocol and face the crisis in dignified conditions.

In relation to the mentioned segregated settlements, we ask you to inform us of the following actions:

1. Protocols to evaluate the needs of this population, as well as the degree of satisfaction and sufficiency of the measures implemented.
2. Concrete measures to offer an alternative housing option to those residents who do not have the necessary conditions to stay in their homes 24 hours a day in accordance with the hygienic sanitary protocols implemented by the authorities.
3. Measures to guarantee the necessary supplies in substandard housing of those neighbors who cannot decide to abandon their current residences. Specifically, we refer to water, electricity, communication, security and sanitation supplies.
4. Measures to guarantee sufficient coverage for their basic needs such as access to food, hygiene and disinfection products, as well as other basic consumer goods for special situations and needs.
5. Measures to guarantee sufficient and safe access to social and health services, medicines and other daily care, especially for those dependent persons who require special care (i.e. persons with disabilities, mental illness and chronic diseases).
6. Measures taken to protect children and their primary caregivers.
7. Measures to ensure the sustainability of the reintegration and rehousing plans that were being implemented prior to the COVID-19 crisis.
8. Measures to protect and care for the providers of services to these groups.
9. Measures to prevent and report acts of discrimination and racism and to protect neighbors from their consequences.
10. Measures to promote the psychological well-being and resilience of these populations.

Given the urgency of the situation, we would like to have this information as soon as possible and offer our support and collaboration as you consider necessary.

Signed,

xxxx

EXAMPLE 2: SUPPORTING A PROPOSED POLICY CHANGE

1324 114th St. Suite #174
Norwalk, CT 06801

March 24, 1999

Honorable Mayor Cala Milan:

I was pleased to hear that the City Commission was considering a proposal to strengthen the handicapped parking ordinance. I urge your support for it.

I am a disabled American veteran who uses a wheelchair. Despite my disability, I drive my own van, as many other disabled citizens do. I value being as independent as I can possibly be.

The new ordinance is designed to discourage non-handicapped persons from parking in spots that are reserved for those with physical disabilities. The proposal has already led to publicity about the problems citizens with disabilities have getting a convenient place to park. This has increased the sensitivity of the general public. Further, an occasional $250 ticket ought to keep those important spaces open for those who need them.

For me, this new ordinance will mean that I can drive anywhere in town I need to go and have a fair chance of being able to park and go in. The latest census statistics indicate there are over 1,200 people in our community who are similarly affected and who have similar needs.

Your votes on the architectural accessibility ordinance in the past have demonstrated your support for disability issues. I urge you now to vote in favor of the new parking ordinance. It will mean a lot to me personally, and to the many others in our community who are disabled. It may also bring in some additional revenue to the city.

If there is any way I might be of assistance, please don't hesitate to call on me. Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Stergios Hardage
14 Cottage Avenue
Norwalk, CT 06801
(203) 555-8630

EXAMPLE 3: OPPOSING A PROPOSED POLICY CHANGE

7862 Seneca
Wichita KS, 67134

Honorable Mayor Madio Smolanka:

As the coordinator of the Pleasant Rock Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program. I am writing to express my strongest concern over the proposed city funding cuts for the Teen Activities Center (TAC). Closing the Center would have several negative consequences for the youth of the city and the city itself. It would give our youth one less place they can go to relax and have a good time in a safe, healthy environment.

For my coalition, the closure of the center would have other, more direct consequences as well. Currently, our Teen Mothers' Support Group meets at the center on a weekly basis to discuss the challenges of motherhood, finishing school, and getting jobs. More than two-thirds of the (25) participants do not have their own means of transportation; so it is imperative that meetings be held in the neighborhood of the participants (the Potwin area, where the TAC is located), or at least on a major bus route. No public building is nearly as well suited to meet both of these requirements, as is the TAC.

In addition, the Teen Center hosts a variety of activities that are athletic, artistic, or just plain fun for young people. Their ability to participate in these activities is vital to helping them acquire the self-esteem needed to say "no" to potentially unsafe behaviors, such as engaging in sex prematurely or experimenting with drugs, as well as stay in school and prepare for meaningful work.

You have always been sensitive to the needs of our young people, and have been quick to recognize that they are the future of our community. I urge you to vote against this new proposal to cut the funding for the Teen Activities Center. Surely cuts can be made that will be, in the end, less costly to all of us than threatening the well-being of our children.

If I can help in any way to defeat this proposal, let me know. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Mary K. Steinert

1001 Park Walk Road

Wichita, KS 67134

(316) 555-2685

Online Resources

Action Tips provides information for communicating with public officials, and the webpage includes an example letter.

Communication Tools for Advocacy from the National Association for Gifted Children provides information on different ways to communicate with policy makers.

Contact Officials is a site provided by the United States government with links that give you contact information for the official you're interested in contacting.

Early Childhood Advocacy Toolkit provides resources on framing your message and communicating with the media as well as policy makers and elected officials.

Effective E-mail Communication from the University of North Carolina provides tips on professional e-mail writing and communicating via e-mail.

How Do I Write an Effective Advocacy Letter? Is a webpage from the Hearing Loss Association of America, Delaware Chapters, and it provides information specific to drafting advocacy letters to elected officials.

10 Tips provides 10 tips on effectively communicating with legislators to make your message stand out to them.

Writing Your Elected Official is a guide provided by the Children's Defense Fund, and it provides information on effectively communicating with elected officials.

Podcast Resource

Here is a link to a podcast on Writing for Social Change: Letters to Legislators (Episode 56) from Walden University Writing Center–make sure to scroll/search for Episode 56 in the WriteCast Podcast Player box and click the Play button or read the transcript.

Print Resources

Bates, D. J.(1985). *Writing with precision.* Washington, DC: Acropolis.

Fitch, B. (2010). *Citizen's Handbook to Influencing Elected Officials: Citizen Advocacy in State Legislatures and Congress: A Guide for Citizen Lobbyists and Grassroots*. The Capitol Net, Inc. This book offers practical guidance for reaching elected officials with a variety of different communication strategies.

Homan, M.(1994). *Promoting community change: Making it happen in the real world*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks-Cole Publishing Co.

Managing correspondence–Plain letters, [available from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, DC: 20402]

Roman,K., & Raphaelson, J. (1992). *Writing that works*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.

Seekins, T., & Fawcett, S. The Research and Training Center on Independent Living.(1984). A *guide to writing letters to public officials: Contributing to important decisions affecting you and others*. University of Kansas.

Stonecipher, H. (1979). *Editorial and persuasive writings: Opinion functions of the news media*. New York, NY: Hastings House.

69. Sample Writing Assignments

Sample Discussion & Writing Prompts

Curated by Amy Minervini

The website Living Room Conversations features a Social Equity Conversation Guide, beginning with Conversation Agreements, ways in which to respectfully engage with others on more difficult topics. Those are as follows:

- Be curious and listen to understand.
- Show respect and suspend judgment.
- Note any common ground as well as any differences.
- Be authentic and welcome that from others.
- Be purposeful and to the point.
- Own and guide the conversation.

These general, open-ended ideas from Living Room Conversations (surrounding social equity, policing, anti-racism, gender, homelessness, culture, and pandemic-race intersection) can be modified to generate discussion or to fit various writing modes: personal narrative, reflection, informative, persuasive, and analysis depending on your purpose:

- What sense of purpose / mission / duty guides you in your life?
- What would your best friend say about who you are and what inspires you?
- What are your hopes and concerns for your community and/or the country?

- What does the concept of “social equity” mean to you?
- Are there “social equity” concerns in your community? If so, what are they? If not, should there be?
- When it comes to achieving social equity, do your values line up with the redistributing of wealth and resources? Is everyone entitled to a certain quality and standard of living?
- How racially/ethnically diverse is your congregation? Have you ever attended a place of worship where you were in the racial/ethnic minority? What was that experience like?
- How has your faith inspired you to respond in this moment? What are you feeling called to do? Where do you feel resistance?
- What messages have you internalized from your faith’s culture, history, and doctrine around Blackness and people of color?
- What challenges/barriers do you face in speaking up when you see anti-Blackness/racism/white supremacy in your faith community?
- Where do you see police in your community? How are they contributing to protection and safety? How do you see their presence supporting or detracting from community well-being?
- What interactions have you had with police? What was that like for you? What impact does that have on your expectations for possible encounters in the future?
- What do you expect from law enforcement personnel?
- What happens when you watch videos documenting police-citizen violence?
- What is your hope for police-community relations?
- What roles have you learned about gender from parents, school, peers, media, faith? Which do you hold true? And which do you break?
- What do gender and biological sex mean to you? Are they interchangeable, do they conflict with each other?
- What do masculinity and femininity mean to you? How do you express masculinity and femininity?

- What is something you would do if you could break the rules or roles of gender for a day?
- To what extent do you believe women are given the same rights, opportunities and privileges as men?
- What personal experiences, if any, do you have with gender inequality?
- What changes would you like to see in this country as it pertains to how women are regarded?
- What does the feminist movement mean to you? How has it affected you?
- What does an ideal society look like to you in the realm of sex/ gender relations
- What is a powerful leadership moment you've experienced?
- What are the other issues around women, power and leadership?
- What is your hope or aspiration for women, leadership and power?
- What has been your personal response to homeless people whom you've seen? Who do you think makes up the homeless population?
- What do you think is contributing to homelessness right now?
- What do you expect from your city, county, state or federal government with regard to homelessness?
- What are your hopes regarding homelessness in the future?
- What is your cultural heritage?
- What experiences have you had with cultures other than your own? What did you appreciate? What made you uncomfortable?
- What value do you see in having a single, shared American culture? What would that look like?
- What value do you see in having a decidedly multicultural society?
- When should cultural symbols be public versus private?
- To what degree has addressing the issues of race in our country been a concern of yours prior to this pandemic? Has

the pandemic made it more or less relevant to you? If so, how?

- How have you seen responses to the coronavirus impact racial polarization in the country? In your community? How have responses drawn us closer together or deepened our divisions?
- What factors contribute to your perceived degree of safety or lack of safety from contacting the coronavirus in your surroundings? What is that like for you?
- Have you witnessed/experienced events of racism or racial scapegoating in the time of the coronavirus? What happened and how did that affect you?
- How have you seen our society's problems reflected by the politicization and racial discrimination of some people through reactions to coronavirus?
- Share what was most meaningful or valuable to you in the experience of this Living Room Conversation?
- What new understanding or common ground did you find within this topic?
- Has this conversation changed your perception of anyone in this group, including yourself?
- Name one important thing that was accomplished here.
- Is there a next step you would like to take based upon the conversation you just had?

PART X

WRITING TO REFLECT

70. Writing About Writing: Becoming a Reflective Practitioner

JOEL GLADD

What allows some learners to excel not only in a single career, but also in a wide variety of situations? Why do some individuals succeed in so many different environments?

Consider the case of Atul Gawande, one of America's most famous surgeons. Professionally, he trained to be a general and endocrine surgeon. In the early 2000s, Gawande began publishing books based on his professional experiences, beginning with *Complications: A Surgeon's Notes on an Imperfect Science*. Later, in 2009, he published his first book targeted at a more general audience, *The Checklist Manifesto: How to Get Things Right*, which brought together lessons learned from not only his own medical background, but also the crucial lessons honed by the airline industry that help practitioners operate within uncertainty amidst high-risk environments. In 2012, he repurposed material from *The Checklist Manifesto* for a very different rhetorical situation: his extraordinarily popular TED Talk, "How do we heal medicine?". In 2014, he wrote *Being Mortal*, a searing critique of America's end-of-life healthcare with his own father's death as an example.

Throughout all of this, Gawande has remained a highly skilled practitioner of medicine.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded *from this version of the text. You can view them online here:* *https://idaho.pressbooks.pub/write/?p=167#oembed-1*

To become a successful, specialized practitioner, Gawande needed to complete the proper education, first by attending the right medical school, then by completing the subsequent residencies that allowed him to further hone his craft. This specialized training obviously transferred over to his eventual career. But what allows him to truly stand out, with his books, articles, and speeches, is his ability to re-purpose and generalize certain tactics from other contexts. The idea of checklists was repurposed from one specialized industry to another. And nearly all of Gawande's publications reflect on his own personal experience to consider what kinds of strategies work for others more generally. Finally, his success in a broad array of contexts (writings published for other surgeons, those published for the healthcare industry more generally, and his writings and speeches targeted towards a general audience) relies on certain rhetorical strategies, such as telling poignant anecdotes, skills that tend to be honed in writing and communication courses rather than medicine.

As an educator might say, Gawande's success relies heavily on his ability to cognitively *transfer* knowledge from one area to another. But how? How do people like Gawande perfect the ability to transfer?

Reflective Practitioners and Transfer

The idea of a "reflective practitioner" was developed by Donald Alan Schön, culminating in his book, *The Reflective Practioner* (1983).

His early research and writing on reflective practitioners pioneered an entire approach to learning, especially in writing programs, in part because it clearly demonstrates the link between theories of cognition and the importance of certain writing practices. Kara Taczak and Liane Robertson define a reflective practitioner as

> [s]omeone who is continually exposed to different writing situations and develops, through those situations, a repertoire of knowledge that can be integrated and repurposed. This characterization allows for reflection as a theory, as a practice, and as a means for encouraging transfer.[1]

If a reflective practitioner learns to re-purpose certain kinds of knowledge for other contexts, this kind of "learning-to-learn" strategy can be distinguished from the default form of learning that many courses encourage. When students commonly prepare for and eventually complete an assignment, they view the prompt as a set of prescriptions that explain how to succeed in that particular task within the course. A "reflective" assignment, however, will explicitly encourage a student to think beyond a certain part of the course, linking it with other Units, with other courses the student may be taking, and ultimately with highly disparate contexts and environments. Truly reflective assignments ask students to bridge academic and non-academic situations.

But where does this sort of transfer begin?

Prior Knowledge, Metacognition, and

1. "Metacognition and The Reflective Writing Practitioner: An Integrated Knowledge Approach," from *Contemporary Perspectives on Cognition and Writing*, ed. Patricia Portanova, et al, WAC Clearhouse, 2017, p. 221.

Reflective Writing

The key to successful transfer is the ability to integrate knowledge the student already has with new knowledge. A traditional persuasive essay assignment, for example, will prompt a first year writing student to recall what they already know about making arguments and deploy those strategies within a highly formal academic essay. The prior knowledge in this example is the student's familiarity with debate and argumentation. The new knowledge might be the ability to persuade an academic reader by deploying "they say / I say" rhetorical strategies or successfully integrating research to help prove a claim.

In an effort to foster transfer, a writing instructor might then ask the student to not only attempt a persuasive essay, but then, after the assignment has been drafted and revised, to write about the *process* of writing the essay. The goal in such a reflective assignment is to prompt the student to recognize the prior knowledge, the new knowledge, and what might carry over (transfer) into other contexts and future situations. "At the heart of the contention is the issue of generalizability," suggest Kathleen Blake Yancey, Liane Roberston, and Kara Taczak.[2] Certain forms of writing are particularly suited to cultivating this knack for generalizability, repurposing, and remixing. These more reflective writing situations require metacognition, the ability of a student to "to reflect on their process and their knowledge."[3]

2. *Writing Across Contexts: Transfer, Composition, and Sites of Writing*, University Press of Colorado, 2014, 6.
3. Taczak and Robertson 215.

Megacognition is a buzzword associated with reflective learning. Crudely defined, it means something like, "thinking about thinking." What's key about metacognition is that it's a habit of mind—something that has to be practiced. Here's an informal video introduction to the idea of metacognition:

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://idaho.pressbooks.pub/write/?p=167#oembed-2

One of the most important goals for a writer is to learn how to use reflection to help further their educational and career practices. In the very broadest sense, all burgeoning writers must remain attuned to the following questions:

> Who am I as a writer? What do I believe about writing? What do I understand about writing? What do I know about writing from previous experiences? How do I write/compose in different situations? Do I write the same way in all situations? How can I use what I learn from one context to the next?[4]

Such metacognitive reflections can be cultivated at various stages

4. Taczak and Robertson 223.

within the process and within a writing course. Prewriting exercises, the revision process, and final draft cover letters often prompt students to exercise metacognition. In addition, however, certain reflective writing situations place metacognition center stage. In such assignments, students should keep in mind the bigger goal: to facilitate transfer and become a better learner.

The following chapters will offer a few different strategies for both practicing metacognition and transferring knowledge.

71. John Driscoll's "What?" Cycle of Reflection

JOEL GLADD

The previous chapter on reflection, "Writing About Writing: Becoming a Reflective Practitioner," offered an introduction to reflective writing and explained how critical reflection is so important to the learning process. This chapter will look more closely at one of the most common and simplest models for how to practice the kind of reflection that fosters "reflective practitioner" attitude: John Driscoll's cycle of reflection, which follows a "What, So What, Now What" process. The end of this chapter offers an example assignment based on the Driscoll model.

What? So What? Now What?

John Driscoll originally developed the "What?" cycle of reflection for healthcare practitioners, but it has since been picked up by many different kinds of learners. The model includes three very basic steps:

1. WHAT? Describe what happened.
2. SO WHAT? Analyze the event.
3. NOW WHAT? Anticipate future practice, based on what you learned.

Each step requires both different rhetorical strategies and distinct forms of cognition. Step 1, "What?", challenges the learner to recall what happened as objectively as possible, without critiquing anything that happened. Step 2, "So what?", requires the learner to slow down and begin looking for patterns or moments of significance. Here, the key is to bring in concepts that help shed light on what's going on. In a writing course, for example, a student might learn different rhetorical terms that relate to persuasion, such as *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos*. Analyzing the experience according to anyone of those terms is a form of analysis. Finally, Step 3, "Now what?", encourages the learner to begin **transferring** new knowledge to future situations and other contexts. As the introductory chapter to this section explains, transfer is key to becoming a reflective practitioner.

Here's a video of that carefully illustrates each step, published by the McLaughlin Library at the University of Guelph:

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://idaho.pressbooks.pub/write/?p=169#oembed-1

Example of the Driscoll Cycle of reflection

The following example of the Driscoll cycle was developed by a student at The Robert Gillespie Science of Learning.

Stage in the Driscoll Cycle of Reflection	Commentary
WHAT? Our task was to complete a full-term assignment that required all team members to contribute and collaborate in order to be successful. The act of working in a group required that the work to be evenly distributed. Communication was key during the course of this assignment as [having] only one lecture a week, limited the amount of time we could communicate during class. Therefore, time outside of class was arranged to meet and complete the assignments to the best of our ability.	***The first paragraph describes the circumstances of the assessed activity or experience.*** *In other words, it addresses the "WHAT" portion of the Driscoll model. The author uses descriptive vocabulary and does not attempt to analyze or interpret the task. For example, the student writes "time outside of class was arranged to meet and complete the assignments to the best of our ability." She makes no attempt to explain this activity or analyze its significance. Note, the "WHAT" section of the assignment represents the most basic form of reflection and serves only as a detailed recounting of an event (activity or exercise). There is limited reflective value in this paragraph other than its ability to record the details of what has transpired. However, a complete description is still essential in order to situate the paragraphs that follow. In other words, it is not possible to describe the impact of the activity or experience without first articulating in detail what they were.*

SO WHAT?

Teamwork has not always had a great impression on my academic career. However, this experience allowed me to be more open-minded towards group work. During this activity, I felt a greater sense of teamwork, collaboration and respect. Initially, I was not aware that the majority of the course would be based on teamwork. If I had known, I probably would not have taken or considered this course. My previous experiences with group work have been negative as I was usually the only one who actively wanted to succeed. Most of the workload was done by one person, and the entire experience was not fulfilling. However, this experience, was based on my lack of understanding of what constructive group work is really like. I had not considered the important role that collaboration plays in our growth as students and as people. In this course, group work was very effective and the work was not only evenly distributed, but students were able to appreciate the importance of collaborative learning. The professor had mentioned during the first lecture that collaborative learning is exceptional and can allow students to retain more information compared to individual studying. Moreover, during this course, group work was discussed and practiced regularly.

The second paragraph provides the "SO WHAT" in Driscoll's model of Reflective Practice.

It attempts to interpret or evaluate the description in the first paragraph. For example, in the first paragraph (amber) the writer notes that the "task was to complete a full-term-assignment that required team members to contribute and collaborate." In the second paragraph, the writer attempts to place this description of an activity or experience into a more meaningful context by stating that her previous experience with group work has been negative: "Teamwork has not always had a great impression on my academic career." By connecting the described experience with these negative associations, the writer considers the SO WHAT. *For example, the writer not only describes the experience as negative but provides evidence to support that claim: "Most of the workload was done by one person, and the entire experience was not fulfilling." The evidence suggests that the work was not shared and was completed by a single group member. The result is problematic and the writer has identified that scenario as having contributed to her feeling unfulfilled. The writer goes on to add that "The professor had mentioned during the first lecture that collaborative learning is exceptional and can allow students to retain more information compared to individual studying." Since one of the course's themes is to provide collaborative learning opportunities, the frustration on the part of the student is palpable and relevant to the activity or experience.*

NOW WHAT? The experience of group work during this course has allowed me to develop and enhance my skills as a team player. The skills I have acquired are interdisciplinary and can be applied to my education in the future. Furthermore, being able to work collaboratively, problem solve and communicate in an effective manner are all skills that I can utilize in the coming years, despite the career I might pursue. Teamwork encourages the idea of each person pulling their own weight and working in an engaging and academic setting in order to benefit the entire group. For instance, if one were to become a surgeon and had encountered a difficult case which had an inconclusive diagnosis, teamwork would be essential. Multiple doctors would work together to problem solve by practicing the same skills learned in class to diagnose the patient in an accurate manner.	***In this last paragraph, the author has attempted to apply this activity or experience to a future learning opportunity and so has completed the "NOW WHAT" part of Driscoll's model.*** In this section she writes that "The skills I have acquired are interdisciplinary and can be applied to my education in the future." This is a good example of how to link the present experience to a future context. This last section of the assignment represents the deepest form of reflection in which you attempt to apply your learning to something new. This is essential in order to maximize the benefits that result from the use of Reflective Practice. This is particularly apparent in this piece of writing when the author notes "Teamwork encourages the idea of each person pulling their own weight and working in an engaging and academic setting in order to benefit the entire group." This is effective, because she refers to the course concept of "teamwork" articulated in the previous section and then demonstrates through a specific example how knowledge of that concept could be applied in the future: "if one were to become a surgeon and had encountered a difficult case which had an inconclusive diagnosis, teamwork would be essential."

The trickiest step for those new to practicing this kind of critical reflection is moving from the straightforward objectivity of Step 1 to the more analytical kind of writing that happens in Step 2. As the commentary for Step 2, "So what?" explains, the second paragraph practices analysis by comparing current experience with an earlier one. Comparison and contrast brings in external content (the other experience) to help do the analysis. There are other ways to accomplish this cognitive move, however. As mentioned above, another strategy for analyzing content is to map experiences to key concepts or ideas picked up from the lesson material.

Sample Assignment: "*Ceasefire* Reflective Essay"

The following assignment was developed for English 101: Writing and Rhetoric I at the College of Western Idaho.

Assignment Directions: Write a reflective essay that 1) narrates and describes your engagement on the Ceasefire platform and also 2) critically reflects on that experience.

Purpose: The goal of this Unit is to practice discussing difficult issues in a civil manner, and to identify what kinds of behaviors and communication strategies work best to effectively engage with others in public and professional environments.

Genre: This is a Reflective Essay that fosters a "reflective practitioner" approach to learning. The use of the first person (I, me, mine) is encouraged. The essay should narrate and describe your Ceasefire participation, while also reflecting more generally on how the experiment might help in future situations and different contexts.

Audience: While the Ceasefire experiment and reflections are intended to benefit the writer, the writing should be directed towards other students and teachers who are not familiar with the materials in this Unit. Provide sufficient context, define important terms, and write in a style that conveys professionalism.

Basic Requirements:

- At least 4.5 pages double-spaced
- Formatted in MLA Style, including in-text citations and a Works Cited page
- Revision Cover Letter
- When participating on the Ceasefire website, you will be expected to post a position or question, as well as respond to at least two other posts.

Background on the Ceasefire experiment

While this essay will have a traditional introduction, body and conclusion (like any academic essay), the body will be composed of two main kinds of content. A considerable portion should be dedicated to describing and narrating your experiment with engaging others on the *Ceasefire* website. At the same time, however, you will be expected to use lessons from this Unit, including the Open Mind learning modules, to critically reflect on that engagement, explaining what it taught you about engaging other beliefs in a civil environment.

***Ceasefire* Website**

Ceasefire is a website whose stated goal is to "improve the world's discussions." The mission goals of the website point out that, as our society becomes increasingly polarized, most online discussions have been limited to social media platforms. The end result is even more polarization and "heightened tensions," rather than understanding and empathy. The Ceasefire website evolved as a solution to that problem. It aims to provide an online space “devoted to the exploration of views” in a civil environment. In this Unit you will be asked to engage with Ceasefire.

Students will be expected to register for a free account and post one of the following two options:

- Opinion: Present an opinion you hold or lean towards to test your understanding of the issue and potentially discover flaws in your thinking.
- Question: There may be an issue you wish to explore but have no clear stance on, perhaps due to conflict thoughts or a general lack of understanding. You can ask a question to launch a discussion about it.

In addition to creating a unique post, you will be expected to respond to at least two other posts published to *Ceasefire.*

***OpenMind* Learning Modules**

In order to prepare for civil engagement on *Ceasefire* , we'll start the Unit by completing Steps 1-5 of the OpenMind educational platform. OpenMind is “an interactive platform that equips people with a set of practical tools to think clearly and communicate constructively across differences.” The learning modules are based on certain psychological principles intended to help depolarize educational, corporate, and civic communities. In addition to preparing us for difficult discussions, the platform will also provide us with a variety of key rhetorical and psychological principles to help analyze our experience.

Getting Started with OpenMind & *Ceasefire*

There are a number of steps we'll follow in order to get started on our "*Ceasefire* Reflective Essay". We'll complete these steps over the course of two weeks:

Step 1: Sign up for an OpenMind account, join our group, then take the 5 modules. These modules will train us to spot cognitive bias and become familiar with moral reasoning. The "moral matrix" from will provide us with some analytical terms you may want to use when reflecting on your *Ceasefire* experience.

Step 2: Sign up for a *Ceasefire* account. As a class, we'll also look at the site rules and examples of strong posts.

Step 3: Develop a *Ceasefire* post and respond to at least two others. As you engage with *Ceasefire* , take notes on the process. These notes will help you write part 1 of your Reflective Essay.

Step 4: Become familiar with the Rhetorical Appeals, as well as *kairos* and *exigence*. In addition to the OpenMind's "moral matrix," these rhetorical concepts will help you critically reflect on the *Ceasefire* experiment.

Step 5: Draft and revise your Reflective Essay. Use the Outline included in this prompt to help structure your essay.

Essay Outline

The following Outline uses Driscoll's "What, So What, Now What?" structure as a way to critically reflect on our experiment with civil engagement.

Introduction	In a single paragraph, provide helpful background information that establishes the setting for your reader. Your single-paragraph introduction should end with a thesis statement that explains the purpose of your essay.
What? Describe and Narrate your experiment with Ceasefire	Tell the story of your Ceasefire engagement. What did you post to the website, and how did you develop it? What kind of interaction resulted? What other posts did you respond to, and how did that go?
So what? Analyze your Ceasefire experiment	To help analyze the results, use the key lessons from this Unit. In this Unit we learned about doing rhetorical analysis with logos, pathos, and ethos. What kinds of posts and replies were most persuasive? How do the rhetorical concepts of logos, pathos and ethos help us understand what's going on here? The concepts of ethos and pathos connect with the Open Mind modules, which we completed at the beginning of the Unit. This platform helped us appreciate the role that emotions (pathos) and moral reasoning (ethos) play when defending our ideas. How much of your Ceasefire engagement involved the "moral matrix"? Which of the six forms (care, fairness, liberty, authority, sanctity, loyalty) did you or others rely on, explicitly or implicitly? You may also draw attention to any other persuasive techniques you're familiar with, such as voice, style, etc. Keep in mind that writing style also informs ethos.
Now what? Reflect	Ultimately, what did you learn from this Ceasefire experiment, including the lessons on rhetorical analysis and the "moral matrix"? Can you step back and think more broadly about its implications? Could some of these persuasive techniques apply to other contexts, such as other classes, workplace environments, or even at home?

The Driscoll sample of "What, So What, Now What?" above is from "Fundamentals of Reflective Practice," by The Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre, CC-SA 4.0.

72. K-W-L Reflective Learning

JOEL GLADD

K-W-L Training

One of the most basic and commonly used strategies for fostering reflective thinking in education is known as K-W-L training. Initially developed by [Donna M. Ogle in 1986] to foster deep reading, it encourages intentional learning and transfer by clearly outlining the three cognitive steps implied by all significant learning experiences:

K: What do I know?

W: What do I want to know?

L: What have I learned?

The first stage, "What do you know?", activates prior knowledge. Activating prior knowledge simply means recalling whatever information or experience you or others already have that relates to the topic at hand. This activation is akin to brainstorming and can be done in groups or individually. For example, if a student is asked to write about racial privilege in education, they will begin writing from their own experience and beliefs about the topic. What racial privilege looks like to some will be radically different from others, and this highly localized, anachronistic account is entirely appropriate as a starting place.

The second stage, "What do you want to know?", activates critical thinking and demands that the student begin thinking beyond their biases. Here the student should begin identifying gaps in their thinking. Donald Rumsfeld's [famous news briefing from February 12, 2002] about whether there was enough evidence to invade Iraq captured the importance of identifying these gaps:

> ...as we know, there are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there also unknown unknowns—the ones we don't know we don't know.

Rumsfeld's position on whether to invade Iraq ultimately led to disastrous consequences, but the briefing shows how this basic cognitive move—the ability to identify different kinds of knowledge—is a crucial starting point, not least for those making important decisions. The subtle distinctions between different kinds of "knowns" and "unknowns" are based on the Johari Window (not Rumsfeld). For K-W-L exercises, it's mostly important that a student identify the "known unknowns." Before beginning the research process or reading exercise, each practitioner should have a list of questions to help guide the experience. According to Ogle, this simple list of questions is what allows them to "be in charge in their learning and actively pursue their own quest for knowledge."[1]

The third and final stage of K-W-L is to reflect by asking the question, "What have I learned?" This reflective stages corresponds in some ways to the diegetic gap of narrative reflections. And indeed, by the end of the K-W-L training a learner has indeed gone through an experience. The final move also encourages the student to transfer knowledge from the current situation to other contexts.

Critical Reading with K-W-L

Ogle's article from 1986 originally treated K-W-L as a reading

1. Donna M. Ogle, "K-W-L: A teaching model that develops active reading of expository text." *The Reading Teacher*, Vol. 39, No. 6 (Feb., 1986), p. 567.

exercise, using the example of an article about black widow spiders. In the example, the teacher begins by writing Black Widow spider on the chalkboard and then fields responses from students **(K)**. Some of the kids knew someone who got bitten by a black widow, while others saw a TV show or read another article about them. As the students talk, the teacher records the responses on the board and asks follow-up questions. By the end of this group brainstorming, each student was expected to have their own list of questions they expected to be answered by the reading **(W)**. Finally, as the students read the article (aloud or to themselves), they were expected to take notes on which questions were and weren't answered **(L)**.

Ogle's very basic approach was designed for K-12 and can be extended to any learning environment. At the Mayo Clinic College of Medicine, for example, teachers use K-W-L in Radiology courses to encourage students to read deeply and critically.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://idaho.pressbooks.pub/write/?p=171#oembed-1

Research Writing K-W-L: The I-Search Essay

K-W-L strategies are built into Ken Macrorie's I-Search paper, developed in 1988. Unlike many research essays, Macrorie's I-Search essay encourages students to use the first person. The basic formula follows the K-W-L charts used in K-12:

- Search Story: The student introduces the paper by writing about a topic they're curious about, as well as what they already know (K) about it. From here, they should begin identifying gaps in their knowledge—what do they want to know (W)—and use those gaps to develop interesting questions. These questions show curiosity and help drive the research.
- Search Results: The bulk of the essay is devoted to writing about the research process—what the student learned (L)—and showing what information they were able to churn up. This section requires that the student practice source-finding strategies as well as properly integrate the information.

Search Reflections: Finally, I-Search essays often end by reflecting more generally on the experiment, making connections with other contexts and future situations. As with other forms of reflective writing, this final move fosters transfer.

73. Reflective Cover Letters

JOEL GLADD AND LIZA LONG

The previous chapters in this section on Writing Reflectively introduced you to the basics of critical reflection and offered a few different approaches to practice it. Those strategies, including Driscoll's "So What?" cycle of reflection and K-W-L learning, are often deployed in a variety of academic and professional situations. They can be adapted to many different scenarios. In academia, however, one of the most common reflective assignments is a simple cover letter written at the end of an assignment, project, or entire course.

The cover letter genre can be very informal or intensely rigorous, depending on the preferences of the instructor. But nearly all such assignments expect the student to reflect on completed work in such a way that they successfully *demonstrate growth* in the course. The audience here is key: cover letters are often targeted directly towards the instructor and aim to convince them that the student did indeed learn what they were supposed to. Unlike other reflective forms of writing, the cover letter borders on a hybrid status: it's primarily reflective, yes, but it must also persuade the audience that something was learned.

This hybrid nature of the cover letter genre can make writing it more challenging than students often assume. The metacognitive aspect of the letter demands that the student monitor their own learning, as well as how certain kinds of knowledge might transfer to other areas; but the persuasive aspect of the letter also expects the student to provide *evidence* for each point that they make, somewhat akin to a thesis-driven persuasive essay. In fact, as Laurel L. Bower suggests in the *Journal of Basic Writing*, a compelling letter will employ all of the persuasive appeals, including **logos, pathos,** and **ethos**.

Ethos: The student demonstrates care and attention to writing as a craft; and, in the case of research-intensive courses, a dedication to quality sources. The metacognitive reflections throughout the letter also contribute to the image/character of the writer.

Pathos: Cover letters often have an *affective dimension*, focusing on the extent to which writing is often a deeply emotional form of labor. Persuasive letters will track the student's experience during periods of hardship and show how they responded.

Logos: Effective letters are persuasive in part because they offer concrete evidence for each point. Any generalization and transferable nugget of wisdom should emerge from a specific experience in the course. Otherwise, the letter can quickly devolve into empty platitudes that *simulate* reflection without actually demonstrating it.[1]

The main purpose of a cover letter is to *persuasively* demonstrate the student is familiar with the course outcomes, is aware of the extent to which they practiced them, and can project how those practices contribute to future learning (transfer). However, it's not uncommon for cover letters to devolve into crude flattery and unconvincing pseudo-reflections, when "students seem more concerned with pleasing the teacher and appealing to his/her set of values than analyzing their priorities and thinking."[2] To avoid these inauthentic reflections, follow the assignment criteria closely and remember to practice the persuasive appeals above.

1. The ethos, pathos, and logos approach to Cover Letters is from Bower's article, "Student Reflection and Critical Thinking: A Rhetorical Analysis of 88 Portfolio Cover Letters," *Journal of Basic Writing*, Vol. 22., No. 2 (Fall 2003), pp. 53-55.
2. Bower, p. 60.

Assignment Example: Reflective Cover Letter

Liza Long

Length: 3-4 pages double-spaced, Times New Roman 12 pt. font

The Reflective Cover Letter is a vital part of your portfolio. It should be written last, after you've completed your revisions. This cover letter is a highly detailed, thoughtful reflection on your work in this class; on your sense of yourself as a writer; on the "learning behind the writing projects" that you've done; and on what conscious, deliberate connections you can make to work you will be doing next semester and in your future academic, professional, and/or technical lives/careers.

Imagine that you're writing for someone who doesn't know you or your work, and you want to show that person all you can about what you've done and written and learned, using your own included drafts and revisions as evidence. This letter is basically an argument, where you—the writer—are aiming to convince the reader that you've learned X, and here's all the evidence. Writing the Reflective Cover Letter gives you the opportunity to look hard at what you've done with writing in this class and where you're going with writing in the future.

Please write this assignment in letter format. You can address the letter to your instructor, and/or to your instructor and your class colleagues. If your portfolio is chosen (at random) to review, other English teachers may read it too. The cover letter provides a lens for anyone reading your portfolio to understand the writing and revision moves you've made.

All R/P Cover Letters should address the following at a minimum:

- Discuss what your own expectations were for you as a writer, thinker, and learner at the beginning of 102. How have you grown as a writer (if you have)?
- What are you especially proud of this semester? Why?
- Take us behind the scenes for

the two significantly revised essays included here. For each one, discuss:

- What specific changes you've made, why, and what the results of those changes are;
- How it demonstrates your ability to write for different audiences and/or purposes. What kinds of decisions do you make? How?
- Your evolving sense of yourself as a researcher, as represented in this portfolio. What kinds of research can you do that you couldn't do at the beginning of the semester? How is that represented in your portfolio pieces?
- How the process of both giving and receiving peer feedback

affected your writing. What did you learn about feedback? How did your experience with peer feedback in this course compare with previous courses?

- How your conception of your writing process(es) have changed this semester. If so, in what ways?
- Consider where you're headed next as a writer – choose one or two "next places" to make some projections about (this could be next semester's classes, your major classes, your life, your work). While you won't likely be given these particular kinds of writing tasks again,
what underlying strategies about writing or how to approach writing/research have you

learned about in 102 that you'd like to remember for other situations? Why?

PART XI
WRITING WITH SOURCES

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74. Introduction to Writing with Sources

AMY MINERVINI

Overview

by Amy Minervini

Sometimes you are the best source for your paper, such as when writing a personal narrative. However, the lion's share of your sources that you are going to be using as part of your evidence and support come from outside entities. These sources could be personal interviews that you conduct or your quoting of experts in their fields–individuals like scientists, doctors, attorneys, psychologists, authors, journalists, speakers, and the list goes on. Ensuring that you capture the words of others or essence of their message accurately and efficaciously is an essential quality of a meticulous writer.

Key Characteristics

Qualities to remember when writing with and using sources:

- There are different rules for quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing
- Attribution is a key component when introducing sources
- Citations, both in-text and on Reference or Works Cited page, are fundamental

- Consider the ways in which sources integrate not only with your ideas and analysis but also with and among other sources
- Critically think about, research, and evaluate the source of information, potential biases, relevance, and context for each piece of evidence you bring in

Essay Types within this Chapter

- Basic Integration: Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Summarizing
- Pack Snacks: Use The "Quotation Sandwich"
- Higher-Level Integration: They Say / I Say and Writing as a Conversation
- Signal Phrases
- Using Sources Ethically and Avoiding Plagiarism
- Evaluating Sources Using the SIFT Model

75. Framing Sources: MEA(L) Paragraphs and "Quote Sandwiches"

In his excellent chapter on integration, "Annoying Ways People Use Sources," Kyle D. Stedman opens with the following general reminder about writing with sources:

> 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. … [N]ot 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.

The goal of integration is mostly to provide a smooth experience for your reader. However, writing with sources is often one of the most challenging aspects of academic writing, in part because there seem to be so many rules attached to it. Students feel confused because they see very different strategies when looking at news articles vs. social media vs. peer-reviewed articles.

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce first year writing students to the basic conventions of referring to outside sources in essays written for an academic audience. Many of the conventions in this chapter actually apply to most formal situations, including professional and journalistic writing.

Foundation to Writing with Sources: MEA(L) paragraphs and "Quote

Sandwiches"

Before tackling the details of how to summarize, paraphrase, or quote information, it will help to think more broadly about how writing with sources typically shows up in an academic essay. When writing with sources, a fundamental technique students should pick up early is how to *frame* the information. To help simplify this for students, one common strategy is to learn MEA(L) paragraph. A paragraph that frames information from a source using this structure often has the following elements, in this order:

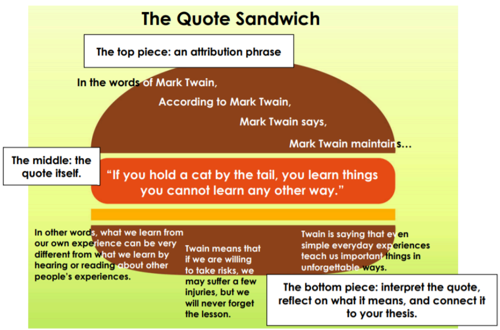
> **M = Main idea/framing.** The first sentence(s) of a paragraph should either 1) state the paragraph's main idea or point, or 2) carefully introduce the source by identifying the author and title. In some writing situations, the purpose of the paragraph might be to summarize the source, such as in an annotated bibliography. In other writing situations, the main idea might be a claim or sub-claim that needs to be proved, such as in a persuasive essay. What matters is that the reader has some context before becoming inundated with the information.
>
> **E = Evidence/Information.** Underneath the main idea will be the details from the source, whether summarized, paraphrased, or quoted. Experienced writers blend all three forms of integration (summary, paraphrase, and quotes) seamlessly, rather than relying on just one. Depending on the writing situation, this part of the paragraph burger/info sandwich might take up most of the space, especially with annotated bibliographies. In other situations, the next part (A = Analysis/Discussion) will take up most of the space. One more tip for this section: it's important to clearly signal to the reader when you're referring to information from an outside source. To make this obvious, writers often introduce the information with something called a **signal phrase**, such as: According to ____, … . The chapter on

"Signal Phrases" offers a more substantial introduction to this strategy for signaling a source.

A = Analysis/Discussion. This is where you develop the significance of the information, in your own words. This section is crucial to your paragraph. Don't get caught in a quote trap of stringing quotes together without explaining, analyzing, or evaluating the information. If your paragraph dumps a lot of information on the reader without unpacking it, your writing will quickly become confusing and your reader will not be convinced that you understand the material you are writing about. This part of the paragraph or section might be better viewed as discussion (rather than analysis) because the goal is often to develop a thought using as many rhetorical strategies as possible, rather than merely analyzing the information. For example, to help develop the persuasiveness of evidence from a source, an experienced writer will often connect the dryer source information (logos) with a concrete personal example (pathos). For other tips on what it means to discuss or analyze information within a persuasive essay, refer to the section "Analyze and discuss the evidence" within the chapter on argumentation.

[optional] L = Lead out. When including a source in a longer writing situation, such as a researched persuasive essay, it's often helpful to remind your reader how the ideas developed in the paragraph relate to the broader argument (thesis statement). It's even more important to connect the paragraph with the next idea in the essay, otherwise known as "transitioning," or "practicing cohesion." In some writing situations you may not have a this final layer. Annotated bibliographies, for example, will just have the top two or three layers.

A similar strategy to MEA(L) is the "Quote Sandwich," perhaps more accurately termed the "Info Sandwich." This paragraph framework is very similar to MEA(L) but might feel more intuitive for those writing in the humanities, where more space is dedicated to unpacking key quotes from a text:



basic version of the "quote sandwich"

1. **Provide context**: If you haven't used it yet in the essay, tell us the source's title and author (if known), and any other information that's relevant, like the purpose of the organization that published it, for instance. Signal phrases are effective ways to quickly provide minimal context.
2. **Insert the quote**: Provide the quote itself. Be sure to format correctly and use quotation marks around exact language.
3. **Explain the significance of the quote**: Once you've inserted your quotation, along with its context and attribution, don't stop! Your reader still needs your assessment of why the quotation holds significance for your paper.

It shouldn't really matter if a student adapts the MEA(L) structure or "quote sandwich" to help writing with sources. Both work as fundamental integrative techniques. For example, we can see how either framework reiterates much of Stedman recommends in his excellent article, "Annoying Ways People Use Sources." One of the well-framed paragraphs he admires can be analyzed using MEA *or* the "quote sandwich":

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.$_{\text{framing sentence}}$ She writes,$_{\text{signal phrase}}$ "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."$_{\text{quote}}$ 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.$_{\text{discussion}}$

In Stedman's example above, the first sentence provides **context** for the information. The information itself, a key **quote** (E), is then introduced with a signal phrase (note the recurring importance of a signal phrase!). The remainder of the paragraph is the writer's own **discussion** (A), which uses the quote as a springboard. The quote sandwich model is probably a better fit for this particular example, but the the MEA paragraph structure is very close. The only difference is that MEA emphasizes the importance of topic sentences, while the quote sandwich model emphasizes context.

Parts of this section are from: David College Library's "When to Cite"; The Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre's "Three Strategies for Using Evidence"; UNC

Writing Center's "Quotations"; Yuba College's "The quote 'sandwich'"; Tacoma Community College Library's "The 'hamburger technique' of writing." The introduction and other parts have been added by the editors of this textbook.

76. Three Forms of Integration: Summary, Paraphrase, and Direct Quotations

The previous chapter on MEA(L) paragraphs and the "quote sandwich" offers a basic framework for how to begin writing with sources in academic essays. The core piece of these structural units is the information from the outside source, which *can* be a quote from an article or book, but may also be a fact, example, or other detail that doesn't need to be quoted. When presenting information from research, students should rely on a variety of integrative strategies, not just direct quotation. In fact it's often confusing to rely too heavily on quoting material.

This chapter offers a more detailed look at the three forms of integration: **summary**, **paraphrase**, and **direct quotation**.

Summary

A summary is a more general and condensed version of the source text.

Tips for summarizing

- Write the information in your own words.
- Keep the author's original intent and meaning.

- Focus on key ideas.
- Shorten the original passage.
- Include the citation.

Example of summarizing text correctly

Some text is highlighted to illustrate the plagiarism example below. The text is from: Dorcas, Michael E., et al. *The Frogs and Toads of North Carolina: Field Guide and Recorded Calls*. Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, 2007.

Like many anuran species worldwide, the frogs and toads of North Carolina have a difficult road ahead. Worldwide, scientists have documented drastic declines in many frog and toad populations. For many of these disappearances and declines, the exact causes are difficult to determine. In some parts of the United States, scientists have documented strange body malformations in some species. These alarming developments have prompted an increased interest in the threats facing amphibians. Many organizations have developed programs to monitor the status of frogs and toads throughout the world.

In North Carolina, loss of quality habitat is one of the greatest threats frogs and toads face. Habitat destruction and fragmentation threaten entire populations by:

- Eliminating wetland habitats necessary as breeding sites,

- Removing forested areas and other upland habitats where many species live most of the year, and
- Creating barriers between these two habitats that prevent individuals from migrating to and from breeding areas.

Scientists estimate that one-half of North Carolina's original wetlands have been lost due to urban development and conversion to cropland. Our state ranked sixth in the nation for total acres of land developed between 1992 and 1997.

The yellow highlighting indicates how the wording and order have been directly copied from the original text above. Even though a citation has been provided in both cases, the example on the right side below is considered plagiarism.

Proper Summary	**Plagiarism**
Environmental conditions in North Carolina pose a threat to frogs and toads. According to scientists, wetland destruction has already occurred on a massive scale. The destruction of wetlands, along with forests, uplands, and migration routes, could destroy vast numbers of these species. This is a concern not just in North Carolina, as frog and toad populations are declining around the world (Dorcas 8).	Like most species in the world, frogs and toads have a hard road ahead. Scientists have recorded major declines in many populations of frogs and toads. In North Carolina, loss of good habitat is one of the greatest problems, caused by the elimination of wetlands, removal of forests and upland habitats, and creation of barriers that prevent migration (Dorcas 8).

Paraphrase

Paraphrase is a restatement of an idea in roughly the same length as the author originally described it. It's the information *in your own words*. Paraphrasing gives a writer more control over incorporating a source into their writing and contributes to the cohesiveness of a draft.

Tips for paraphrasing

- write the information in your own words.
- keep the author's original intention.
- include a citation.

Too closely imitating the author's language structure in your summary or paraphrase *is a form of plagiarism*, even if you provide a citation, because it gives the false impression that the words are your own when they are not. This includes rearranging the author's sentences but using mostly the same wording, or simply inserting synonyms into the author's sentence arrangement. To avoid doing this, make sure you are processing the author's ideas and then presenting them in a way that is uniquely yours. Too closely mirroring the author's syntax and word choice not only shows disregard for properly crediting the author, but does not give your own voice a chance to shine. *The Bedford Handbook* (Hacker 503) suggests reading the part of the work you want to summarize or paraphrase, and then looking away as you write it in your own words to help prevent copying it too closely.

Example of paraphrasing correctly

Some text is highlighted to illustrate the plagiarism example below. The text is from: Blodgett, Jan, and Ralph B. Levering. *One Town, Many Voices : A History of Davidson, North Carolina*. Davidson, NC: Davidson Historical Society, 2012.

Yet the condition of the town streets remained primitive well into the 1890s, largely due to the high cost of acquiring a rock crusher and macadamizing roads. Life in the village was still rustic. With red clay streets, alternately dirty or muddy, rock crossings, plank sidewalks, a line of wooden storefronts, horses and wagons tied up along Main Street and livestock pens next to homes, Davidson looked more like Dodge City with farmers and students instead of cowboys than a pristine college town of dignified homes and orderly appearance.

The yellow highlighting indicates how the wording and order have been directly copied from the original text above. Even though a citation has been provided in both cases, the example on the right side below is considered plagiarism.

Proper Paraphrase

The streets in the town of Davidson looked quite different in the 1890s than they do today. With the absence of any proper pavement, the clay roads often became mud-filled and plank sidewalks and rock crossings provided a minimal shield for pedestrians. In addition, it was common practice to keep horses and other animals in close vicinity to residential dwellings. This contributed to the grubby appearance of Davidson, a far cry from the order and cleanliness normally associated with small college towns. The expense of paving materials was the main deterrent for not improving the roads (Blodgett and Levering 62-63).

Plagiarism

The condition of the town streets was undeveloped far into the 1890s, mainly because of the high cost of rock crushers and macadamizing roads. Life was rustic in Davidson with red clay streets, wooden storefronts, and livestock pens close to houses. Davidson looked more like a frontier town with cowboys than a college town with stately homes and a clean and organized presence (Blodgett ad Levering 62-63).

Quotation

Quoting is used to repeat exactly what another source has said or written, and the text is presented between quotation marks.

Example quote

Original text: The dream of the whale filled him. Avi felt his body to be suffused, like a peach soaked with brandy, the smell and flavor of the dream more present than the corporeal self.

From: Parker, Alan Michael. *Whale Man* : A *Novel*. Seattle, WA: WordFarm, 2011.

Examples of proper quotation vs. plagiarism

The quotation on the right, though it has a citation, would be considered plagiarism because it is not enclosed in quotation marks. This would mislead the reader to believe it is a paraphrase instead of a quotation.

Proper Quotation	**Plagiarism**
"The dream of the whale filled him. Avi felt his body to be suffused, like a peach soaked with brandy, the smell and flavor of the dream more present than the corporeal self" (Parker 40).	The dream of the whale filled him. Avi felt his body to be suffused, like a peach soaked with brandy, the smell and flavor of the dream more present than the corporeal self (Parker 40).

When to quote

- You want to use a part of the author's argument to express your own thoughts.
- The author's words are written so perfectly that you cannot improve them by paraphrasing.
- You want to criticize the author's original words.
- You want to avoid plagiarism (i.e., claiming someone else's

words are your own).

Tips for quoting

- include exactly what the author said or wrote.
- use quotation marks.
- include a citation.
- remove unnecessary words.
- avoid taking quotations out of context or paraphrasing in a way that obscures the author's original intention.

Punctuation and Quotes: Understanding the American Style

APA, MLA, and many other formal styles employ what's known as the "American style" of punctuation. Internet articles often have a mix of British and American styles, so it's important to understand some of the basic conventions associated with the latter.

Commas & period: In the American style, periods and commas go inside quotation marks except when you use in-text citations. When including citations, periods and commas go outside the quotation marks.

Inside

The men later inhabit the hotel without pretension, according to Cole, forgoing the hotel beds to sleep on mats on the floor after “years of bedding down in the hills.”

Outside

Sheriff argues that this feint of self-delusion is meant to temper “the fact that blackness is constructed through the shared experience of discrimination and prejudice and is thus a product of oppression” (Sheriff 58).

Exclamation points and question marks go inside the quotation marks when they are part of the quotation, and outside when they are part of your own sentence that contains the quotation. With in-text citations, the question mark or exclamation point goes inside the quotation if it is part of that quotation, and a period follows the parenthetical citation.

Inside

The fact that Emerson periodically contradicts his own ideas only further exemplifies his point: “Why drag about a corpse of your memory, lest you contradict somewhat you have stated in this or that public place?” (125).

Outside

But what are we to make of Harding’s admonition to “write while you can no matter the sacrifice”?

Colons and semi-colons go outside quotation marks.

This opening conforms to many of the standards of what Karen Halttunen refers to as "the narratological structure of the nonfictional murder mystery"; such tales of murder typically begin "with the corpus delicti, the fact of the crime, usually established by the dead body" (108).

Single vs. Double Quotation Marks vs. (qtd. in ___)

Double quotation marks are the convention for indicating a word, phrase, or chunk of text is pulled from the original source *word for word*. Sometimes the source includes quotes within it. When quoting these quotes, use either single quotation marks *or* a parenthetical citation that includes the phrase: (qtd. in ____).

> **single quotes inside double quotes:** In the novel, Mary Ann told her husband, "'It's fine, I guess.'"
>
> **qtd. in**: In the novel, Mary Ann told her husband, "It's fine, I guess" (qtd. in Smith 98).

Use signal phrases to frame quotes

A signal phrase is an introductory clause that signals to the reader a shift in point of view from you to your source. The appropriate use of signal phrases varies from discipline to discipline. Writers in the humanities often signal a quotation or paraphrase with the author's name (as in "Korsgaard argues…" or "Vendler notes…"). Here are some examples of signal phrases you might use:

Spelke *argues*

Sandel *notes*

Lue *confirms*

Gates *emphasizes*

Wilson *contends*

Harris *acknowledges*

Price *observes*

Friedman *suggests*

Banaji *claims*

Using ellipses to remove unnecessary words

Shortening a quote by an author will help your argument to focus on its point more effectively. Show the words you have removed by using an ellipsis (…).

Example of using ellipses

Original text: While the relationship between emotional stress and disease, and mental and physical health more broadly, is often considered controversial within medical orthodoxy, Dr. Maté argues too many doctors seem to have forgotten what was once acommonplace assumption, that emotions are deeply implicated in both the development of illness, addictions and disorders, and in their healing.

Paraphrase, followed by selective quotation: While linking physical illness and emotions is discouraged by many doctors, "Dr. Maté argues too many doctors seem to have forgotten … that emotions are deeply implicated in both the development of illness, addictions and disorders."

In the example above, the sentence that integrates the text opens with some paraphrasing that focuses on the central idea of the paragraph. The quote that follows captures key information but removes a lot of details. Removing words from a quote is useful; just make sure not to change the author's intended meaning in the quote.

Tips for using ellipses

- To indicate information has been left out, leave a space between either side of the ellipsis (like this … rather than this…).
- To indicate the *end* of a sentence has been left out, add an ellipsis *along with a period* (According to Dr. Maté, experts tend to miss that "emotions are deeply implicated … .").
- If you're quoting a key phrase *or* just the end of a sentence, ellipses aren't needed in front (According to Dr. Maté, some "have forgotten.")

Using Brackets to change or add words in a quote

Writers can clarify the meanings of words to better match their own arguments or styles.
To do so, put the changes in square brackets, [like this].

Example of using brackets

Original text: With scientists' warning that sharply higher temperatures would devastate the global south and threaten the viability of industrial civilisation in the northern hemisphere, campaigners said the new paper reinforced the imperative to cut emissions. (Source: "Scientists shocked by Arctic permafrost thawing 70 years sooner
than predicted". The Guardian. June 18, 2019.)

Quoted text with brackets: "With scientists' warning that sharply higher temperatures would devastate the global south and threaten the viability of industrial civilisation in the northern
hemisphere, campaigners said the new [research] reinforced the imperative to cut emissions."

In this example, "paper" is replaced by "research" which is more specific.

Block longer quotes

When quoting large chunks of text (in MLA, 4+ lines of quoted material), "block" the information by indenting once from the left-hand margin.

Examples

After reading several doctrinally rigid tracts, John Adams recalled the zealous ranting of his former teacher, Joseph Cleverly, and minister, Lemuel Bryant. He expressed his ambivalence toward religion in an 1817 letter to Thomas Jefferson:

> Twenty times, in the course of my late reading, have I been on the point of breaking out, 'this would be the best of all possible worlds, if there were no religion in it!!!!' But in this exclamation, I should have been as fanatical as Bryant or Cleverly. Without religion, this world would be something not fit to be mentioned in public company—I mean hell. (Smith 19)

Adams clearly appreciated religion, even if he often questioned its promotion.

Here are a few general tips for setting off your block quotations:

- Set up a block quotation with your own words followed by a colon.
- Indent. You normally indent 4-5 spaces for the start of a

paragraph. When setting up a block quotation, indent the entire paragraph once from the left-hand margin.

- Single space or double space within the block quotation, depending on the style guidelines of your discipline (MLA, CSE, APA, Chicago, etc.).
- Do not use quotation marks at the beginning or end of the block quote—the indentation is what indicates that it's a quote.
- Place parenthetical citation according to your style guide (usually after the period following the last sentence of the quote).
- Follow up a block quotation with your own words.
- It's common for students to *overuse* block quotes. *The Curious Researcher* suggests that a research paper "contain no more than 10 or 20 percent quoted material" (Ballenger 129). A proper summary or paraphrase lets the reader know that you have understood and analyzed what you have read.

77. Signal Phrases and Transitions

When writing with sources, a common practice is to use "signal phrases" to indicate the source of information. Not using signal phrases can result in dropped quotes or dropped quotations. You want to avoid plopping in direct quotes without attribution or context, and signal phrases can offer both. This chapter offers a more detailed introduction to using signal phrases.

John Lanning and Amanda Lloyd

A signal phrase, also known as an attributive tag, is a device used to smoothly integrate quotations and paraphrases into your essay. It is important to use signal phrases to clearly attribute supporting evidence to an author and to avoid interrupting the flow of an essay. Signal phrases can also be used as meaningful transitions, moving your readers between your ideas and those of your sources.

A basic signal phrase consists of an author's name and an active verb indicating how the author is presenting the material. A signal phrase may also include information explaining an author's credentials and/or affiliations as well as the title and/or publisher of the source text.

Referring to the Author within a Signal Phrase

In many instances, a signal phrase should contain only the last name of the author or authors of the source text (as opposed to the author's first *and* last name). For instance, APA style guidelines require no reference to an author's first name at any point in an essay and few if any gender specific pronouns. But in MLA papers, if you are referring to an author for the first time in your essay, you should include that author's first name (you might also want to include the author's credentials and the title of the source—see "Types of Signal Phrases" below). Any future signal phrase should refer to the author by last name only or with a pronoun when it's perfectly clear to whom that pronoun refers. For example:

- Michael Pollan observes that "Americans today are having a national conversation about food and agriculture that would have been impossible to imagine even a few short years ago" (29).
- Pollan continues, "But the national conversation unfolding around the subject of food and farming really began in the 1970s" (29).
- He then specifies, "I would argue that the conversation got under way in earnest in 1971, when [Wendell] Berry published an article in The Last Whole Earth Catalogue" (29).

Notice how each signal phrase verb is followed by a comma (or the word "that"), which is then followed by one space before the opening quotation mark.

In essays written according to MLA and APA guidelines, it is acceptable to refer to the author as "the author" as long as it is perfectly clear to whom you are referring. In APA, it is common to see general references to "researchers."

Signal Phrase Verb Tense

In the examples above, notice how the signal phrase verbs are written in present tense. When you are asked to write a paper that follows MLA guidelines, signal phrases should always be written in present (not past) tense. When writing a paper using APA style, signal phrase verbs should be written in past tense. For example:

- Pollan (2009) observed that "Americans today are having a national conversation about food and agriculture that would have been impossible to imagine even a few short years ago" (p. 29).

Notice how APA in-text citations also differ from MLA style in that APA citations include the year of publication and the page number is preceded by a "p."

Varying Your Verbs

You should also vary your signal phrase verbs (rather than simply using "states" throughout your entire essay) in order to maintain your readers' interest and to indicate the author's intended use of the excerpted material. See below for examples of strong signal phrase verbs.

Types of Signal Phrases

In most instances, the first time the author is mentioned in an MLA-style essay, as well as including the author's first *and* last name in a signal phrase, it is also a good idea to include the author's credentials and the title of the source.

While providing the author's credentials and title of the source are the most common types of signal phrases, there are others we should be aware of. In the examples below, the information relevant to the type of signal phrase is underlined.

Type: Author's credentials are indicated.

Example: Grace Chapmen, Curator of Human Health &

Evolutionary Medicine at the Springfield Natural History Museum, explains…

Purpose: Presenting an author's credentials should help build credibility for the passage you are about to present. Including the author's credentials gives your readers a reason to consider your sources.

Type: Author's *lack of* credentials is indicated.

Example: Matthew Spencer, whose background is in marriage counseling, not foreign policy, claims…

Purpose: Identifying an author's lack of credentials in a given area can help illustrate a lack of authority on the subject matter and persuade the audience not to adopt the author's ideas. Pointing to an author's lack of credentials can be beneficial when developing your response to counter-arguments.

Type: Author's social or political stance, if necessary to the content, is explained.

Example: Employing nonviolent civil disobedience, Roland Hayes, prominent civil rights activist, preaches…

Ralph Spencer, who has ties to the White Nationalist movement, denies…

Purpose: Explaining the author's social or political stance can help a reader to understand why that author expresses a particular view. This understanding can positively or negatively influence an audience. Be careful to avoid engaging in logical fallacies such as loaded language.

Type: Publisher of the source is identified.

Example: According to a recent CNN poll…

Purpose: Identifying the publisher of the passage can help reinforce the credibility of the information presented and you can capitalize on the reputation/ credibility of the publisher of the source material.

Type: Title of the Source is included.

Example: In "Understanding Human Behavior," Riley argues …

Purpose: Informs the reader where the cited passage is being pulled from.

Type: Information that establishes context is presented.

Example: In a speech presented during a Free Speech rally, Elaine Wallace encourages …

Purpose: Presenting the context that the original information was presented can help the audience understand the author's purpose more clearly.

MLA Signal Phrase Verbs

Acknowledges	Counters	Notes
Admits	Declares	Observes
Agrees	Denies	Points out
Argues	Disputes	Reasons
Asserts	Emphasizes	Refutes
Believes	Finds	Rejects
Claims	Illustrates	Reports
Compares	Implies	Responds
Confirms	Insists	Suggests
Comments	Maintains	Thinks
Contends	Mentions	Writes

APA Signal Phrase Verbs

Acknowledged	Countered	Noted
Admitted	Declared	Observed
Agreed	Denied	Pointed out
Argued	Disputed	Reasoned
Asserted	Emphasized	Refuted
Believed	Found	Rejected
Claimed	Illustrated	Reported
Compared	Implied	Responded
Confirmed	Insisted	Suggested
Commented	Maintained	Thought
Contended	Mentioned	Wrote

Exercises

https://owl.excelsior.edu/wp-admin/admin-ajax.php?action=h5p_embed&id=51

This section is from Melanie Gagich and Emilie Zickel's *Guide to Rhetoric*, Chapter 11

Transitional Words and Phrases for University Writing

by Suzan Last

Transitional words and phrases are a type of signal phrase, too. They help guide a reader from one sentence, idea, or paragraph to the next. In previous English classes, you may have learned the basic transitional words or phrases in Table D.1. These can be effective when writing simple information in a structure where you simply add one idea after another, or want to show the order of events.

TABLE D.1 Basic beginner-level transitions

firstsecond	firstlysecondly	first of allnext
third	thirdly	then
last	last but not least,	finally
moreover	furthermore	besides

However, more complex university-level writing requires more sophisticated transitions. It requires you to connect ideas in ways that show the logic of why one idea comes after another in a complex argument or analysis. For example, you might be comparing/contrasting ideas, or showing a cause and effect relationship, providing detailed examples to illustrate an idea, or presenting a conclusion to an argument. When expressing these complex ideas, the simple transitions you've learned earlier will not always be effective – indeed, they may even confuse the reader.

Consider the transitions in Table D.2, and how they are categorized. While this is not an exhaustive list, it will gives you a sense of the many transitional words and phrases that you can choose from, and demonstrate the need to choose the one that most effectively conveys your meaning.

TABLE D.2 Sophisticated university-level transitions

Addition	Comparison	Contrast	Cause and Effect
also and in addition in fact indeed so too as well as furthermore moreover	along the same lines in the same way similarly likewise like	although but in contrast conversely despite even though however nevertheless whereas yet while on the other hand	accordingly as a result consequently hence it follows, then since so then therefore thus
Conclusion	**Example**	**Concession**	**Elaboration**
as a result consequently hence in conclusion in short in sum it follow, then so therefore thus	as an illustration consider for example for instance specifically a case in point	admittedly granted of course naturally to be sure conceding that although it is true that…	by extension in short that is to say in other words to put it another way to put it bluntly to put it succinctly ultimately

Transitional words and phrases show the connection between ideas, and show how one idea relates to and builds upon another. They help create coherence. When transitions are missing or inappropriate, the reader has a hard time following the logic and development of ideas. The most effective transitions are sometimes invisible; they rely on the vocabulary and logic of your sentence to allow the reader to "connect the dots" and see the logical flow of your discussion.

Common Transitional Strategies to Link Ideas

- Repeat a word or phrase from the previous sentence (or use a synonym, related word, or antonym) to show that the same idea is still being discussed, but is being developed further
- Use the pronoun "this + noun" to show continued discussion of the idea
- Use one of the above transitional words or phrases to show HOW you are developing your idea (are you showing contrast? Are you using an example to develop your idea? Are you showing a cause and effect relationship? Are you concluding? Are you conceding a point?).

Transition Exercises: *Place the transitional words below the* *paragraph into the blanks where they work most logically into the paragraphs.*

Exercise 1

A vegan can be defined as someone who does not eat meat, fish, or other animal products, such as eggs or cheese; _________, they eat vegetables, fruits, grains, and seeds. ___________ this diet consists of non-meat food sources, a vegan typically consumes less fat and cholesterol than an individual who consumes meat. ___________, raising animals for food uses valuable land, water, and energy. ___________, adopting a vegetarian diet can help conserve the valuable resources that our future depends on.

- consequently
- because
- furthermore
- instead
- for example

Exercise 2

___________ many educators and parents have praised the *Harry Potter* series, some Christian parents have called for a ban on the books in their schools and libraries.   Some churches have even gone as far as burning the books, citing biblical injunctions against witchcraft, ___________ those in *Exodus* and *Leviticus*. ___________, some Christians believe the books are compatible with Christianity, ___________, that they embody basic Christian beliefs.

- however
- although
- in addition
- such as
- indeed

78. Pack Snacks: Use The "Quotation Sandwich"

Pack Snacks: Using the "Quotation Sandwich"

A graphic shows a sub sandwich with four text boxes around it saying, "The quotation sandwich," "Introduce the quote," "Quote the quote," "Explain what the quote means"

A sandwich, as you are well aware, has bread surrounding meat, cheese, veggies, or PB&J. The bread makes it easy to eat. It's the same when adding sources to your paper: you want the information you give to be easily digestible for the reader. You want it to make sense. Gerald Garff and Kathy Blinkenstein give a solution for integrating sources. In their book, *They Say I Say*, Garff and Blinkenstein tell readers to use "the quotation sandwich" (46). Sandwiching quotes between an introduction—which includes an attributive tag naming the author(s)—and an explanation helps the reader see how the quote you included supports your overall thesis and the immediate point you're trying to make.

An all-text image says, "Reading a quotation that isn't sandwiched by an introduction and explanation is as troubling as eating a sandwich without the bread! No one wants mayonnaise and pickle juice on their fingers."

Readers find it disconcerting to have a quotation appear out of nowhere with no introduction or attributive tag and no explanation. It's like being handed a wad of ham, pickle, tomato, lettuce, and cheese dripping with mayonnaise and mustard. It's going to run uncomfortably down your riders' arm and most likely make a mess on your car's upholstery. The solution for eating sandwich fixings is bread (or lettuce or flatbread, if you're going for a wrap; you get the idea.) In writing, sandwich your sources in between an introduction and an explanation.

Here's what a quotation sandwich might look like:

> Lamott uses ethos as she establishes herself as a writer who knows about writing. Of course, Lamott is the author of the book, Bird by Bird, in which her essay appeared. Being a published writer ostensibly gives her some credibility to talk about writing. Lamott continues to establish her ethos as she shares her connections to other writers. She says, "I know some very great writers…who have made a great deal of money, and not one of them sits down routinely feeling wildly enthusiastic or confident" (21). Here, Lamott tells her readers she knows successful writers and those writers don't write great first drafts. By showing her readers that it's not just her practice of writing a terrible first draft, but it's also other famous(and rich!) writers, Lamott builds her audience's confidence in her knowledge and her subsequent advice to let go of perfectionism in first drafts.

Here's a play-by-play recap of how the quotation sandwich works:

Topic sentence (following the order given in the thesis):

Lamott uses ethos as she establishes herself as a writer who knows about writing.

Analysis and ideas about the essay from the writer of the rhetorical analysis:

Lamott is the author of the book *Bird by Bird*, in which her essay appears. Being a published writer ostensibly gives her some credibility to talk about writing.

The introduction—the bread on the top of the sandwich:

Lamott continues to establish her ethos as she shares her connections to other writers. She says,

The quote—the fixings between the bread:

"I know some very great writers …* who have made a great deal of money, and not one of them sits down routinely feeling wildly enthusiastic or confident" (21)**.

*I've shortened the quote. The ellipses (…) show readers I omitted some parts of the original essay.

**This quote came from a printed book, so this number is the page where I found the quote. If you are writing from a source that doesn't have page numbers, you will not include page numbers. It then becomes even more essential to include the attributive tag to let your readers know where the quote or information came from.

The explanation—the bread on the bottom of the sandwich:

Here, Lamott tells her readers she knows successful writers and those writers don't write great first drafts. By showing her readers that it's not just her practice of writing a terrible first draft, but it's also the practice of other famous (and rich!) writers, Lamott builds her audience's confidence in her and her subsequent advice to let go of perfectionism in first drafts.

An all-text graphic reminds readers to introduce, quote, explain

The quotation sandwich isn't just for direct quotes. It is not only helpful but also avoids plagiarism to use this same pattern when discussing any information you get from sources:

Lamott again uses ethos as she explains her process of writing first drafts that no one will see, saying there might be something on page six that is useful, but you'll never know until you write (23).*** Lamott's essay shows it is clear she has been through this process of writing without self-judgment, and shows the reader her advice of writing bad first drafts works.

***The ideas in the sentence are Lamott's. Even though I didn't directly quote her, I need to use an attributive tag to properly credit her as my source, and, since there is a page number available, I use it. When we are clear about attributing quotes and ideas, we also make it clear to our readers that the sentences without an attributive tag are our own brilliant analysis of the text and subject.

79. Higher-Level Integration: They Say / I Say and Writing as a Conversation

"Listening to Sources, Talking to Sources"

Amy Guptill

Theses and sources

Everyone knows that a thorough analysis and persuasive argument needs strong evidence. The credibility of sources is one key element of strong evidence, but it also matters how sources are used in the text of the paper. Many students are accustomed to thinking of sources simply as expert corroboration for their own points. As a result, they tend to comb texts to find statements that closely parallel what they want to say and then incorporate quotes as evidence that a published author agrees with them. That's one way to use sources, but there is a lot more to it.

Writing academic papers is about joining a conversation. You're contributing your own original thinking to some complex problem, be it interpretive, theoretical, or practical. Citing sources helps situate your ideas within that ongoing conversation. Sometimes you're citing a research finding that provides strong evidence for your point; at other times you're summarizing someone else's ideas in order to explain how your own opinion differs or to note how someone else's concept applies to a new situation. Graff and Birkenstein[1] encourage you to think about writing with sources is a "They Say/I Say" process. You first report what "they" say; "they" being published authors, prevalent ideas in society at large, or maybe participants in some kind of political or social debate. Then you respond by explaining what you think: Do you agree? Disagree? A little of both?

This "They Say/I Say" approach can help student writers find balance in their use of sources. On one extreme, some students think that they aren't allowed to make any claims without citing one or more expert authors saying the same thing. When their instructors encourage them to bring more original thinking into their writing, they're confused about how to do it. On the other extreme, some students tend to describe, more or less accurately, what sources say about a topic but then go on to state opinions that seem unrelated to the claims they just summarized. For example, a student writer may draw on expert sources to explain how the prevention and early detection of cancer has saved lives[2] but then argue for more funding for curing advanced cancer without making any explicit link to the points about prevention and screening. On one extreme, the sources are allowed to crowd out original thinking; on the other, they have seemingly no impact on the author's conclusions.

How can you know when you're avoiding both of these extremes? In other words, what kinds of theses ("I Say") can count as an original claim and still be grounded in the sources ("They Say")? Here are five common strategies:

1. *Combine research findings from multiple sources to make a larger summary argument*. You might find that none of the sources you're working with specifically claim that early 20th century British literature was preoccupied with changing gender roles but that, together, their findings all point to that broader conclusion.
2. *Combine research findings from multiple sources to make a claim about their implications*. You might review papers that explore various factors shaping voting behavior to argue that a particular voting-reform proposal will likely have positive impacts.

3. *Identify underlying areas of agreement*. You may argue that the literature on cancer and the literature on violence both describe the unrecognized importance of prevention and early intervention in order to claim that insights about one set of problems may be useful for the other.
4. *Identify underlying areas of disagreement*. You may find that the controversies surrounding educational reform—and its debates about accountability, curricula, school funding—ultimately stem from different assumptions about the role of schools in society.
5. *Identify unanswered questions*. Perhaps you review studies of the genetic and behavioral contributors to diabetes in order to highlight unknown factors and argue for more in-depth research on the role of the environment.

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

Incorporating sources

Here's a passage of academic writing (an excerpt, not a complete paper) that illustrates several ways that sources can figure into a "They Say/I Say" approach[3]:

> Willingham (2011) draws on cognitive science to explain that students must be able to regulate their emotions in order to learn. Emotional self-regulation enables students to ignore distractions and channel their attention and behaviors in appropriate ways. Other research findings confirm that anxiety interferes with learning and academic performance because it makes distractions harder to resist (Perkins and Graham-Bermann, 2012; Putwain and Best, 2011). Other

cognitive scientists point out that deep learning is itself stressful because it requires people to think hard about complex, unfamiliar material instead of relying on cognitive short-cuts.

Kahneman (2011) describes this difference in terms of two systems for thinking: one fast and one slow. Fast thinking is based on assumptions and habits and doesn't require a lot of effort. For example, driving a familiar route or a routine grocery-shopping trip are not usually intellectually taxing activities. Slow thinking, on the other hand, is what we do when we encounter novel problems and situations. It's effortful, and it usually feels tedious and confusing. It is emotionally challenging as well because we are, by definition, incompetent while we're doing it, which provokes some anxiety. Solving a tough problem is rewarding, but the path itself is often unpleasant.

These insights from cognitive science enable us to critically assess the claims made on both sides of the education reform debate. On one hand, they cast doubt on the claims of education reformers that measuring teachers' performance by student test scores is the best way to improve education. For example, the Center for Education Reform promotes "the implementation of strong, data-driven, performance-based accountability systems that ensure teachers are rewarded, retained and advanced based on how they perform in adding value to the students who they teach, measured predominantly by student achievement." The research that Willingham (2011) and Kahneman (2011) describe suggests that frequent high-stakes testing may actually work against learning by introducing greater anxiety into the school environment. At the same time, opponents of education reform should acknowledge that these research findings should prompt us to take a fresh look at how we educate our children. While Stan Karp of Rethinking Schools is correct when he argues

> that "data-driven formulas [based on standardized testing] lack both statistical credibility and a basic understanding of the human motivations and relationships that make good schooling possible," it doesn't necessarily follow that all education reform proposals lack merit. Challenging standards, together with specific training in emotional self-regulation, will likely enable more students to succeed.[4]

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

As you can see, there are times when you should quote or paraphrase sources that you don't agree with or do not find particularly compelling. They may convey ideas and opinions that help explain and justify your own argument. Similarly, when you cite sources that you agree with, you should choose quotes or paraphrases that serve as building blocks within your own argument. Regardless of the role each source plays in your writing, you certainly don't need to find whole sentences or passages that express your thinking. Rather, focus on what each of those sources is claiming, why, and how exactly their claims relate to your own points.

The remainder of this chapter explains some key principles for incorporating sources, principles which follow from the general point that academic writing is about entering an ongoing conversation.

Principle 1: Listen to your sources

Have you ever had the maddening experience of arguing with someone who twisted your words to make it seem like you were saying something you weren't? Novice writers sometimes inadvertently misrepresent their sources when they quote very minor points from an article or even positions that the authors of an article disagree with. It often happens when students approach their sources with the goal of finding snippets that align with their own opinion. For example, the passage above contains the phrase "measuring teachers' performance by student test scores is the best way to improve education." An inexperienced writer might include that quote in a paper without making it clear that the author(s) of the source actually dispute that very claim. Doing so is not intentionally fraudulent, but it reveals that the paper-writer isn't really thinking about and responding to claims and arguments made by others. In that way, it harms his or her credibility.

Academic journal articles are especially likely to be misrepresented by student writers because their literature review sections often summarize a number of contrasting viewpoints. For example, sociologists Jennifer C. Lee and Jeremy Staff wrote a paper in which they note that high-schoolers who spend more hours at a job are more likely to drop out of school.[5] However, Lee and Staff's analysis finds that working more hours doesn't actually make a student more likely to drop out. Instead, the students who express less interest in school are both more likely to work a lot of hours *and* more likely to drop out. In short, Lee and Staff argue that disaffection with school causes students to drop-out, not working at a job. In reviewing prior research about the impact of work on dropping out, Lee and Staff write "Paid work, especially when it is considered intensive, reduces grade point averages, time spent on homework, educational aspirations, and the likelihood of completing high school"[6]. If you included that quote without explaining how it fits into Lee and Staff's actual argument, you would be misrepresenting that source.

Principle 2: Provide context

Another error beginners often make is to drop in a quote without any context. If you simply quote, "Students begin preschool with a set of self-regulation skills that are a product of their genetic inheritance and their family environment" (Willingham, 2011, p.24), your reader is left wondering who Willingham is, why he or she is included here, and where this statement fits into his or her larger work. The whole point of incorporating sources is to situate your own insights in the conversation. As part of that, you should provide some kind of context the first time you use that source. Some examples:

> Willingham, a cognitive scientist, claims that …
>
> Research in cognitive science has found that … (Willingham, 2011).
>
> Willingham argues that "Students begin preschool with a set of self-regulation skills that are a product of their genetic inheritance and their family environment" (Willingham, 2011, p.24). Drawing on findings in cognitive science, he explains "…"

As the second example above shows, providing a context doesn't mean writing a brief biography of every author in your bibliography—it just means including some signal about why that source is included in your text.

Even more baffling to your reader is when quoted material does not fit into the flow of the text. For example, a novice student might write,

> Schools and parents shouldn't set limits on how much teenagers are allowed to work at jobs. "We conclude that intensive work does not affect the likelihood of high school dropout among youths who have a high propensity to spend long hours on the job" (Lee and Staff, 2007, p. 171). Teens should be trusted to learn how to manage their time.

The reader is thinking, who is this sudden, ghostly "we"? Why should this source be believed? If you find that passages with quotes in your draft are awkward to read out loud, that's a sign that you need to contextualize the quote more effectively. Here's a version that puts the quote in context:

> Schools and parents shouldn't set limits on how much teenagers are allowed to work at jobs. Lee and Staff's carefully designed study found that "intensive work does not affect the likelihood of high school dropout among youths who have a high propensity to spend long hours on the job" (2007, p. 171). Teens should be trusted to learn how to manage their time.

In this latter example, it's now clear that Lee and Staff are scholars and that their empirical study is being used as evidence for this argumentative point. Using a source in this way invites the reader to check out Lee and Staff's work for themselves if they doubt this claim.

Many writing instructors encourage their students to contextualize their use of sources by making a "quotation sandwich"; that is, introduce the quote in some way and then follow it up with your own words. If you've made a bad habit of dropping in unintroduced quotes, the quotation sandwich idea may help you improve your skills, but in general you don't need to approach every quote or paraphrase as a three-part structure to have well integrated sources. You should, however, avoid ending a paragraph with a quotation. If you're struggling to figure out what to write after a quote or close paraphrase, it may be that you haven't yet figured out what role the quote is playing in your own analysis. If that happens to you a lot, try writing the whole first draft in your own words and then incorporate material from sources as you revise with "They Say/I Say" in mind.

Principle 3: Use sources efficiently

Some student writers are in a rut of only quoting whole sentences. Some others, like myself as a student, get overly enamored of extended block quotes and the scholarly look they give to the page.[7] These aren't the worst sins of academic writing, but they get in the way of one of the key principles of writing with sources: shaping quotes and paraphrases efficiently. Efficiency follows from the second principle, because when you fully incorporate sources into your own explicit argument, you zero in on the phrases, passages, and ideas that are relevant to your points. It's a very good sign for your paper when most quotes are short (key terms, phrases, or parts of sentences) and the longer quotes (whole sentences and passages) are clearly justified by the discussion in which they're embedded. Every bit of every quote should feel indispensable to the paper. An overabundance of long quotes usually means that your own argument is undeveloped. The most incandescent quotes will not hide that fact from your professor.

Also, some student writers forget that quoting is not the only way to incorporate sources. Paraphasing and summarizing are sophisticated skills that are often more appropriate to use than direct quoting. The first two paragraphs of the example passage above do not include any quotations, even though they are both clearly focused on presenting the work of others. Student writers may avoid paraphrasing out of fear of plagiarizing, and it's true that a poorly executed paraphrase will make it seem like the student writer is fraudulently claiming the wordsmithing work of others as his or her own. Sticking to direct quotes seems safer. However, it is worth your time to master paraphasing because it often helps you be more clear and concise, drawing out only those elements that are relevant to the thread of your analysis.

For example, here's a passage from a hypothetical paper with a block quote that is fully relevant to the argument but, nevertheless, inefficient:

> Drawing on a lifetime of research, Kahneman concludes our brains are prone to error:[8]

System 1 registers the cognitive ease with which it processes information, but it does not generate a warning signal when it becomes unreliable. Intuitive answers come to mind quickly and confidently, whether they originate from skills or from heuristics. There is no simple way for System 2 to distinguish between a skilled and a heuristic response. Its only recourse is to slow down and attempt to construct an answer on its own, which it is reluctant to do because it is indolent. Many suggestions of System 1 are casually endorsed with minimal checking, as in the bat-and-ball problem.

> While people can get better at recognizing and avoiding these errors, Kahneman suggests, the more robust solutions involve developing procedures within organizations to promote careful, effortful thinking in making important decisions and judgments.

Even a passage that is important to reference and is well contextualized in the flow of the paper will be inefficient if it introduces terms and ideas that aren't central to the analysis within the paper. Imagine, for example, that other parts of this hypothetical paper use Kahneman's other terms for System 1 (fast thinking) and System 2 (slow thinking); the sudden encounter of "System 1" and "System 2" would be confusing and tedious for your reader. Similarly, the terms "heuristics" and "bat-and-ball problem" might be unfamiliar to your reader. Their presence in the block quote just muddies the waters. In this case, a paraphrase is a much better choice. Here's an example passage that uses a paraphrase to establish the same points more clearly and efficiently:

> Drawing on a lifetime of research, Kahneman summarizes that our brains are prone to error because they necessarily rely on cognitive shortcuts that may or may not yield valid judgments.[9] We have the capacity to stop and examine our assumptions, Kahneman points out, but we often want to avoid that hard work. As a result, we tend to accept our quick, intuitive responses. While people can get better at recognizing and avoiding these errors, Kahneman suggests that the more robust solutions involve developing procedures within organizations to promote careful, effortful thinking in making important decisions and judgments.

Not only is the paraphrased version shorter (97 words versus 151), it is clearer and more efficient because it highlights the key ideas, avoiding specific terms and examples that aren't used in the rest of the paper. If other parts of your paper did refer to Kahneman's System 1 and System 2, then you might choose to include some quoted phrases to make use of some of Kahneman's great language. Perhaps something like this:

> Drawing on a lifetime of research, Kahneman summarizes that our brains are prone to error because they necessarily rely on cognitive shortcuts that may or may not yield valid judgments.[10] System 1, Kahneman explains, "does not generate a warning signal when it becomes unreliable."[11] System 2 can stop and examine these assumptions, but it usually wants to avoid that hard work. As a result, our quick, intuitive responses are "casually endorsed with minimal checking."[12] While people can get better at recognizing and avoiding these errors, Kahneman suggests, the more robust solutions involve developing procedures within organizations to promote careful,

effortful thinking in making important decisions and judgments.

Whether you choose a long quote, short quote, paraphrase or summary depends on the role that the source in playing in your analysis. The trick is to make deliberate, thoughtful decisions about how to incorporate ideas and words from others.

Paraphrasing, summarizing, and the mechanical conventions of quoting take a lot of practice to master. Numerous other resources (like those listed at the end of this chapter) explain these practices clearly and succinctly. Bookmark some good sources and refer to them as needed. If you suspect that you're in a quoting rut, try out some new ways of incorporating sources.

Principle 4: Choose precise verbs of attribution

It's time to get beyond the all-purpose "says." And please don't look up "says" in the thesaurus and substitute verbs like "proclaim" (unless there was actually a proclamation) or "pronounce" (unless there was actually a pronouncement). Here's a list of 15 useful alternatives:[13]

- Claims
- Asserts
- Relates
- Recounts
- Complains
- Reasons
- Proposes
- Suggests (if the author is speculating or hypothesizing)
- Contests (disagrees)
- Concludes
- Shows
- Argues

- Explains
- Indicates
- Points out
- Offers

More precise choices like these carry a lot more information than “says”, enabling you to relate more with fewer words. For one thing, they can quickly convey what kind of idea you’re citing: a speculative one (“postulates”)? A conclusive one (“determines”)? A controversial one (“counters”)? You can further show how you’re incorporating these sources into your own narrative. For example, if you write that an author “claims” something, you’re presenting yourself as fairly neutral about that claim. If you instead write that the author “shows” something, then you signal to your reader that you find that evidence more convincing. “Suggests” on the other hand is a much weaker endorsement. As I’ll discuss in Chapter 8, saying more with less makes your writing much more engaging.

Conclusion

Like so many things in adult life, writing in college is often both more liberating and burdensome than writing in high school and before. On the one hand, I’ve had students tell me that their high-school experiences made it seem that their own opinions didn’t matter in academic writing, and that they can’t make any claims that aren’t exactly paralleled by a pedigreed quotation. Writing papers based on their own insights and opinions can seem freeing in contrast. At the same time, a college student attending full time may be expected to have original and well considered ideas about pre-Columbian Latin American history, congressional redistricting, sports in society, post-colonial literatures, and nano-technology, all in about two weeks. Under these conditions, it’s easy to see why some would long for the days when simple, competent reporting did the job. You probably won't have an authentic intellectual engagement with every college writing assignment, but approaching your written work as an opportunity to dialogue with the material can help you find the momentum you need to succeed with this work.

"They Say / I Say" Activity

The blog that accompanies the book *They Say/I Say* with Readings, by Gerald Graff, Cathy Birkenstein, and Russel Durst, contains short, elegantly constructed contemporary arguments from a variety of publications. Take a look at the They Say/I Say blog for a moment and read part of at least one of the readings to see how it can be helpful to you the next time you have to make a written argument.

Exercises

1. Here is a passage from a world history textbook:[14]

> Like so many things desired by Europeans and supplied by Asians—at first luxury items for the elite such as silk or porcelain, but increasingly products like tea from China for the mass market—cotton textiles were produced well and cheaply in India. The British textile manufacturers focused on the "cheap"

part and complained that with relatively higher wages, British manufacturers could not compete. India had a competitive advantage in the eighteenth century, being able to undersell in the world market virtually any other producer of textiles. Some thought the reason for cheap Indian textiles was because of a low living standard, or a large population earning depressed wages, but all of those have been shown to not be true: Indian textile workers in the eighteenth century had just as high a standard of living as British workers. So, if it was not a low standard of living that gave India its competitive advance, what did?

In a word: agriculture. Indian agriculture was so productive that the amount of food produced, and hence its cost, was significantly lower than in Europe. In the preindustrial age, when working families spent 60-80 percent of their earnings on food, the cost of food was the primary determinant of their real wages (i.e. how much a pound, dollar, a real, or a pagoda could buy). In India (and China and Japan as well), the amount of grain harvested from a given amount of seed was in the ration of 20:1 (e.g., twenty bushels of rice harvested for every one planted), whereas in England it was at best 8:1. Asian agriculture thus was more than twice as efficient as British (and by extension European) agriculture, and food—the major component in the cost of living—cost less in Asia.

Drawing on this passage, try out different quoting, paraphrasing and summarizing options:

a. Quote a key phrase or part of a sentence, naming the source and incorporating the quote within your own logic.

b. Quote an entire sentence or two, providing context and incorporating the quote within your own logic.

c. Construct an unacceptable paraphrase of part of the passage; copying a couple sentences and change just a few of the key words.

d. Construct a successful paraphrase of part of the passage; describing it in your own words.

e. Write a sentence, with a citation, that summarizes the general point of the passage.

2. Rewrite your responses to 1a and 1b, above, changing the verbs of attribution. How do the new verbs change the meaning or tone of your sentence?

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

[2] Recommended read: Siddhartha Mukherjee's The Emperor of All Maladies: A Biography of Cancer (New York, Scribner, 2010).

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

grade," *Learning and Individual Differences* 21, no. 5 (2011): 580-584.

[4] A side note: You may have noticed that the verbs used in referencing tend to be in present tense: so-and-so "writes" or "claims" or "argues". That's what academic writers do, even if the piece and author are from far in the past. It's called "the historical present" and it's just one convention of academic writing.

[5]Jennifer C. Lee, J.C. and Jeremy Staff, "When Work Matters: The Varying Impact of Work Intensity on High School Drop Out," *Sociology of Education* 80, no. 2 (2007): 158-178.

[6]Ibid., 159.

[7] It took me a long time to stop abusing block quotes. They made me feel like my paper was an unassailable fortress of citation! With the friendly but pointed feedback of my professors, I gradually came to see how they took too much space away from my own argument.

[8]Kahneman, Thinking, Fast and Slow, 416-7.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Ibid.

[11]Ibid, 416.

[12]Ibid, 417.

[13] Google "verbs of attribution" to find other suggestions.

[14]Robert B. Marks, The Origins of the Modern World: A Global and Ecological Narrative from the Fifteenth to the Twenty-first Century (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 95.

This section is from Amy Guptill's *Writing in College*, "Listening to Sources, Talking to Sources"

80. Using Sources Ethically and Avoiding Plagiarism

Yvonne Bruce

Students are often concerned with the details of correct citation—when to include an author's name in parentheses, how to format a bibliography, how to indicate a quotation within a quotation—and while these are all important and helpful to know, what is more important is understanding the larger ethical principles that guide choosing and using sources. Here are a few of these larger ideas to keep in mind as you select and synthesize your sources:

- You must represent the topic or discipline you are writing about fairly. If nine out of ten sources agree that evidence shows the middle class in the United States is shrinking, it is unethical use the tenth source that argues it is growing without acknowledging the minority status of the source.
- You must represent the individual source fairly. If a source acknowledges that a small segment of the middle class in the United States is growing but most of the middle class is shrinking, it is unethical to suggest that the former is the writer's main point.
- You must acknowledge bias in your sources. It is unethical to represent sources that, while they may be credible, offer extreme political views as if these views are mainstream.
- Just because your source is an informal one, or from Wikipedia or the dictionary doesn't mean that you don't have to

acknowledge it. Quoting a dictionary definition is still quoting: you need quotation marks. Wikipedia is not "common knowledge": cite it.
- You must summarize and paraphrase in your own words. Changing a few words around in the original and calling it your summary or paraphrase is unethical. How would you feel if you recognized what you worked so hard to write in someone else's paper? "I changed some words," they'd say. But you would still recognize your *style*. Don't steal someone else's.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is something that many people understand to be a bad thing, but few people truly understand. Plagiarism can be intentional (such as copying and pasting large chunks of a website into your paper), or it can be unintentional (such as a weak paraphrase or a lack of reference to authors or sources). But plagiarism is plagiarism, whether it is intentional or not, and it is a serious offense in academic writing.

It can be helpful to understand what plagiarism is if you seek to avoid plagiarizing in your own papers. This video offers a thorough explanation of how one might plagiarize if he or she is not carefully integrating sources into an essay.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://idaho.pressbooks.pub/write/?p=189#oembed-1

Following the guidelines for the ethical use of source materials in your papers can help you to avoid plagiarism in your work. Plagiarism is a serious offense and colleges take instances of plagiarism very seriously.

If you are struggling to figure out how to cite a source or how to integrate it into your work while giving your author(s) proper credit, you can

- ask for your instructor
- visit the Writing Center
- set up a meeting with a university librarian

Each school has a plagiarism policy that both defines what plagiarism is and outlines the consequences that will arise in the event that a student is caught plagiarizing.

This section is from Melanie Gagich and Emilie Zickel's *Guide to Rhetoric*, Chapter 11

81. Evaluating Sources Using the SIFT Model

One of the biggest challenges that writers face is finding credible sources. Mike Caulfield created the SIFT acronym to describe four moves that writers should make to evaluate their sources.
A list of the four moves described below

Stop

The first move is the simplest. **STOP** reminds you of two things.

First, when you first hit a page or post and start to read it — STOP. Ask yourself whether you know the website or source of the information, and what the reputation of both the claim and the website is. If you don't have that information, use the other moves to get a sense of what you're looking at. Don't read it or share media until you know what it is.

Second, after you begin to use the other moves, it can be easy to go down a rabbit hole, going off on tangents only distantly related to your original task. If you feel yourself getting overwhelmed in your fact-checking efforts, STOP and take a second to remember your purpose. If you just want to repost, read an interesting story, or get a high-level explanation of a concept, it's probably good enough to find out whether the publication is reputable. If you are planning to use the source in academic writing, it's important to verify that the source and its information are credible. If you are doing deep research of your own, you may want to chase down individual claims in a newspaper article and independently verify them.

Please keep in mind that both sorts of investigations are equally useful. Quick and shallow investigations will form most of what we do on the web and can help you to quickly eliminate sources that are not high-quality. We get quicker with the simple stuff in part so we can spend more time on the stuff that matters to us. But in either case, stopping periodically and reevaluating our reaction or search strategy is key.

Investigate the Source

We'll go into this move more on the next page. But the idea here is that you want to know *what* you're reading *before* you read it.

You don't have to do a Pulitzer prize-winning investigation into a source before you engage with it. But if you're reading a piece on economics by a Nobel prize-winning economist, you should know that before you read it. Conversely, if you're watching a video on the many benefits of milk consumption that was put out by the dairy industry, you want to know that as well.

This doesn't mean the Nobel economist will always be right and that the dairy industry can't be trusted. But knowing the expertise and agenda of the source is crucial to your interpretation of what they say. Taking sixty seconds to figure out where media is from before reading will help you decide if it is worth your time, and if it is, help you to better understand its significance and trustworthiness.

Find Trusted Coverage

Sometimes you don't care about the particular article or video that reaches you. You care about the *claim* the article is making. You want to know if it is true or false. You want to know if it represents a consensus viewpoint, or if it is the subject of much disagreement.

In this case, your best strategy may be to ignore the first source that reached you and look for trusted reporting or analysis on the claim. If you get an article that says koalas have just been declared extinct from the Save the Koalas Foundation, your best bet might not be to investigate the source, but to go out and find the *best* source you can on this topic, or, just as importantly, to scan multiple sources and see what the expert consensus seems to be. In these cases, you should "find other coverage" that better suits your needs — more trusted, more in-depth, or maybe just more varied.

Do you have to agree with the consensus once you find it? Absolutely not! But understanding the context and history of a claim will help you better evaluate it and form a starting point for future investigation.

Trace Claims, Quotes, and Media Back to the Original Context

Much of what we find on the internet has been stripped of context. Maybe there's a video of a fight between two people with Person A as the aggressor. But what happened before the video that you see? What was clipped out of the video and what stayed in? Maybe there's a picture that seems real, but the caption is misleading. Maybe a claim is made about a new medical treatment based on a research finding — but you're not certain if the cited research paper really said what the article claims.

In these cases we'll have you trace the claim, quote, or media back to the source, so you can see it in its original context and get a sense if the version you saw was accurately presented. Practicing this skill now is important. As you progress in academic writing, finding your sources' sources will be an important part of your research.

It's about REcontextualizing

There's a theme that runs through all of these moves: they are about reconstructing the necessary context to read, view, or listen to digital content effectively.

One piece of context is who the speaker or publisher is. What's their expertise? What's their agenda? What's their record of fairness or accuracy? This is why we investigate the source. Just as when you hear a rumor you want to know who the source is before reacting, when you encounter something on the web, you need the same sort of context.

When it comes to claims, a key piece of context includes whether those claims are broadly accepted, broadly rejected, or something in-between. By scanning for other coverage, you can see what the expert consensus is on a claim, learn the history around it, and ultimately land on a better source.

Finally, when evidence is presented with a certain frame — whether it's a quote or a video or a scientific finding — sometimes it helps to reconstruct the original context in which the photo was taken or the research claim was made. The quote or finding can look quite different in context!

In some cases these techniques will show you claims are outright wrong, or that sources are legitimately "bad actors" who are trying to deceive you. But in the vast majority of cases, they do something just as important: they reestablish the context that the web so often strips away, allowing for more fruitful engagement with all digital information.

PART XII

ADDRESSING BIAS AND STAKEHOLDER CONCERNS

Bias by Katie Bias

Shaking hands

82. Introduction to Addressing Bias and Stakeholder Concerns

AMY MINERVINI

Overview

by Amy Minervini

Before we write and of course as we write, we need to be aware of our own biases. We all have biases. According to most dictionaries, a bias is a prejudice that is often based on preconceived notions or unwarranted or unreasoned opinions. At a casual level, for instance, you may have a bias for chocolate chip cookie dough ice cream whereas your best friend prefers rocky road. It's just an ice cream preference, you say, so it doesn't really matter. I agree. In the general scheme of things, one's preferential flavor of ice cream is trivial, but as we move up the ladder of bias, these prejudices can become more prominent and more dangerous.

Let's keep with food for a minute. You prefer the taste of Diet Pepsi over Diet Coke, and you have some specific reasons for this: it has less of a chemical aftertaste, it's a bit sweeter, and it has a smoother flavor overall. Because of these reasons after dozens of taste tests, you come to the conclusion that you prefer Pepsi products and have a prejudice against Coke products. So naturally you buy only Pepsi beverages when you go to the grocery store or gas station. After some time, your preference for your adopted brand becomes so intense that it extends to only patronizing restaurants or fast food joints that serve Pepsi products. This means that you refuse to eat at Subway, Chipotle, and Five Guys because they only serve Coke products. You will, however, happily spend your money at Taco Bell, Arby's, and Applebees, which serves Pepsi. Your 'preference' or prejudice now has money behind it. And with money comes power, power of the wallet, power of the purse. In addition, you are essentially disregarding all other Coke products (that may taste great) or outright dismissing restaurants that serve other types of beverages that you might like or at least food you would enjoy.

Buying power is extremely important–this concept is why we are inundated with print, social media, and radio ads every waking hour of the day. Is this wrong? Perhaps wrong is not an accurate word in the two examples shown here–ice cream and beverages–but there would be something wrong (immoral or unethical) if those examples were represented by more important matters in this world, those things dealing with politics, race, culture, identity. Replace ice cream and beverages with any of the underlined words marked by specific examples (Republican, Democrat, Black, Hispanic, gay, bisexual, etc.), and these biases against such concepts or groups are not only hateful but downright dangerous.

In addition to addressing bias, it's important to understand not only your own readers and anticipate their opinions but also identify the various stakeholders for any issue that you choose to discuss or write about. It's easy to align with those who think similarly or support the same positions as you; it's much harder to embrace the opposition, those who hold differing positions from you. Still, it's the signs of a more even-handed, balanced writer and principled critical thinker when you can reach across the aisle and incorporate counterarguments in meaningful and sincere ways. Whether you are writing an analysis or argument essay, understanding and embracing your opposition not only enhances your overall argument but shows your willingness to engage in empathy and consequential communication with various stakeholders involved in the issue.

As you read about, confront, and write about topics for your composition and other courses, it's important to keep a number of things in mind: audience, tone, open-mindedness, considering multiple viewpoints and stakeholders, identifying and addressing bias, and reaching out to your opposition. This chapter will walk you through adopting these strategies, which will come in handy whether you are writing a persuasive paper, analysis, or reflection.

Topics within this Chapter

- Identifying your audience and readers
- Appealing to your audience
- Engaging in reader-centered writing
- Conceptualizing concerns as dialogue
- Organizing and elaborating on concerns/objections
- Considering multiple views and avoiding bias
- Understanding how conversations change over time
- The ethics and importance of arguments across moral tribes
- Establishing lines of communication with the opposition's traditional allies

83. Identifying Your Audience and Readers

Imagining Your Audience's Needs

Here are some common audiences for you to consider before you begin drafting an assignment (also see the "Audience" section in the "Determining Audience and Purpose" portion of this text):

Yourself

One purpose for writing is to figure out what you think and believe before you share your ideas with other people. What do you want to say? What do you want to find out? What do you want to decide? Sometimes you will keep this type of writing private, but sometimes you may revise for another audience.

Your Instructor

It may seem obvious as a student that your instructor is part of your audience. Let's take a moment to consider what expectations your instructor may have. You instructor may expect that

- You have read any assigned material before writing. What do you need to write to show your instructor you have read this material?
- You have understood the assignment given. To show this, pay particular attention to the verbs in the assignment. Are you doing the actions required? If the assignment says "analyze X," have you done so? Do you understand what it means to analyze? (For more about verbs in assignments, see the Understanding Assignments handout from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Writing Center, writingcenter.unc.edu.)
- If assigned, you have done research for your topic. To show your research, you will want to use summaries, paraphrasing,

and quotations from your sources, using appropriate citation. (See the Drafting section for help with summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting, and see the "Crediting and Citing Your Sources" section for help with citations.)
- You will use the assigned academic format, such as MLA (see the appendix titled "Resources for Working with MLA"). You will follow the instructions. Re-read the assignment to make sure you are following each step.
- You will work hard on your assignment and spend time making it as good as possible, including spending considerable time proofreading and editing. Taking these steps shows that you are serious about your work, and that it is important enough for others to read.

Notice that fulfilling these expectations will also help you reach any other possible readers of your work.

Fellow Students

In writing classes, students often read each other's work and give feedback. To meet the needs of this audience, consider what they know and don't know about your topic. When you are writing outside of a classroom situation, you might consider an audience of fellow writers or others who are involved in your project, if any.

The "General" Reader

When instructors use the term "general reader," what do they mean? If you are given an assignment that says your audience is "the general reader," that usually means that you are expected to write to an audience with at least some college education who is aware of your topic, but not an expert on your topic. Newspapers, for example, write for a general reader, meaning that they expect a variety of people, from various backgrounds, to read the articles. That means you must consider viewpoints and experiences that do not mirror your own. When instructors talk about an academic audience, they usually mean that you must use evidence that is acceptable to a variety of educated people, using academic sources rather than popular sources, and that you will not state opinions without providing proof to support your view. Here are some questions to help you think about your topic:

What would a general reader know about your topic? What wouldn't they know?

What kinds of evidence and reasons are acceptable to an audience that does not share the same background and beliefs as you?

What kinds of evidence and reason are acceptable in an academic community? Have you used academic sources? Are your sources credible? (For some guidance on finding credible sources see "Finding Quality Texts" in the Information Literacy section.)

A Target Audience

Sometimes you will have the opportunity to write for a specific group of people. For example, if you are writing about a problem in your community, such as the proposed location of a new composting facility, your audience would probably be the people in your community or perhaps local officials who have the power to make the decision about the location. If you are writing an email to your supervisor requesting a change in your work responsibilities, your audience is your supervisor–a specific person. When you know the audience, you can anticipate the kinds of reasoning and evidence that the audience will expect, and you will know what tone and level of formality is appropriate. If you don't know your audience well, you may need to do some research or at the very least imagine what they are like based on educated guesses.

The Opposing Viewpoint

When you write an argument, one potential audience is the people who disagree with your opinion. To do so effectively, you will need to understand their point of view and their objections to yours. Consider writing out what the opposing viewpoints are and what kinds of information would someone with the opposing view need from you in order to change their mind?

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Identifying Your Audience and Readers

Each time you communicate, in writing or otherwise, you consider whom you're communicating with and why, whether you're conscious of this or not. Think about it: if you're asking your best friend for a favor, aren't you going to ask differently than if you were asking your boss for a raise? You already have a great instinct for knowing how to shape language around the people you are addressing and what your goal is. So how can you use this instinct when writing for your college classes?

. . . .

A roaring political rally, a studio audience, dancing concert goers—these are all examples of different types of audiences, but an audience for your writing is a bit different. All audiences have a job to do: they are consumers of information or experiences. So when you set out to write, deciding who your audience is, is an important first step.

What is the Difference between an Audience and a Reader?

Great question! It's as simple as this: your audience is the person or group whom you intend to reach with your writing. A reader is just someone who gets their hands on your beautiful words. The reader might be the person you have in mind as you write, the audience you're trying to reach, but they might be some random person you've never thought of a day in your life. You can't always know much about random readers, but you should have some understanding of who your audience is. While you are writing for an audience, it's both the reader and the audience that you want to focus on as you shape your message.

Isn't My Instructor Always My Audience?

Sometimes your instructor will be your intended audience, and your purpose will be to demonstrate your learning about a particular topic to earn credit on an assignment. Other times, even in your college classes, your intended audience or readers will be a person or group outside of the instructor or your peers. This could be someone who has a personal interest in or need to read about your topic but who may never actually read your work unless it finds a place to be published like a blog or website. Understanding who your intended audience is and who your readers might be will help you shape your writing.

Here are some questions you might think about as you're deciding what to write about and how to shape your message:

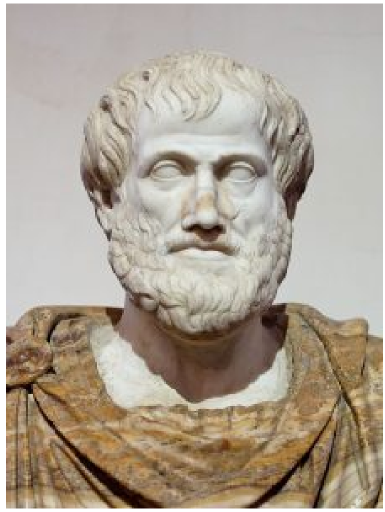
- What do I know about my audience and my readers? (age, gender, interests, biases, or concerns; Do they have an opinion already? Do they have a stake in the topic?)

- What do they know about my topic? (What does this audience or my readers *not* know about the topic? What do they need to know?)
- What details might affect the way this audience or my readers thinks about my topic? (How will facts, statistics, personal stories, examples, definitions, or other types of evidence affect this audience/readers? What kind of effect are you going for?)LICENSE

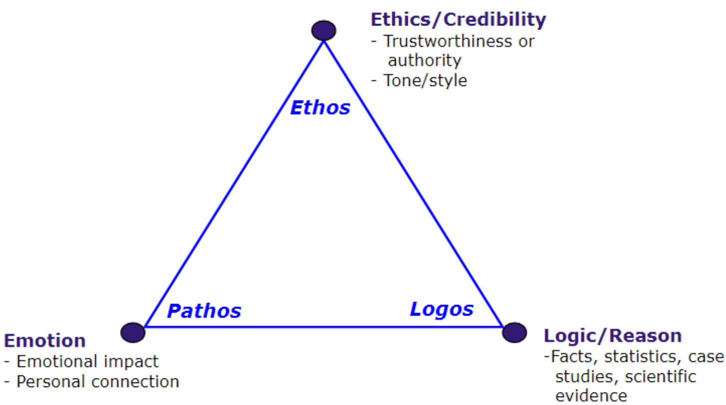
84. Appealing to Your Audience + Exercises

Appealing to Your Audience

Once you know who your intended audience is and what your purpose is for writing, you can make specific decisions about how to shape your message. No matter what, you want your audience to stick around long enough to read your whole piece. How do you manage this magic trick? Easy. You appeal to them. You get to know what sparks their interest, what makes them curious, and what makes them feel understood. The one and only Aristotle provided us with three ways to appeal to an audience, and they're called *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos*. You'll learn more about each appeal in the discussion below, but the relationship between these three appeals is also often called *the rhetorical triangle*, and in diagram form, it looks like this:



After Lysippos [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons



Pathos

Latin for emotion, *pathos* is the fastest way to get your audience's attention. People tend to have emotional responses before their brains kick in and tell them to knock it off. Be careful though. Too much *pathos* can make your audience feel emotionally manipulated or angry because they're also looking for the facts to support whatever emotional claims you might be making so they know they can trust you.

Logos

Latin for logic, *logos* is where those facts come in. Your audience will question the validity of your claims; the opinions you share in your writing need to be supported using science, statistics, expert perspective, and other types of logic. However, if you only rely on *logos*, your writing might become dry and boring, so even this should be balanced with other appeals.

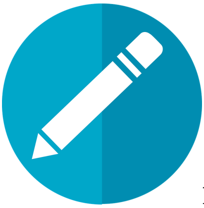
Ethos

Latin for ethics, *ethos* is what you do to prove to your audience that you can be trusted, that you are a credible source of information. (See *logos*.) It's also what you do to assure them that they are good people who want to do the right thing. This is especially important when writing an argument to an audience who disagrees with you. It's much easier to encourage a disagreeable audience to listen to your point of view if you have convinced them that you respect their opinion and that you have established credibility through the use of *logos* and *pathos*, which show that you know the topic on an intellectual and personal level.

Below is a video (found at https://youtu.be/uiDVaVEAKqU) about rhetorical appeals that goes into more detail about the three appeals and how Aristotle used the rhetorical triangle to illustrate the relationship between the appeals and the audience.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uiDVaVEAKqU&feature=youtu.be

For more on appealing to your audience, also see Imagining Your Audience's Needs

Exercises



Ready to practice writing for specific audiences? Below you'll find eight pictures of people with some information about each person included.

Exercise 1:

After reading the brief description for each person, choose three people to write letters to. The purpose of your letter writing is to ask these people to give you $100 to purchase personal protective equipment (masks, gloves, and hand sanitizer, etc.) to donate to a local school, business, or institution (make it clear to whom it will go–your choice–be specific). Please follow these two rules: you cannot say you will pay the money back because you won't. And, you're not asking for a loan. With these parameters in mind, how will you manage to persuade these people to give you the money?

Exercise 2:

After you have written your three letters, reflect on whom you chose, why you chose them, and the appeals that you used that you think might persuade them to donate the money.

Exercise 3 (whole class):

Each person will submit what they think is their best request letter, and the class will vote on the best 3 to 5 letters based on persuasiveness. As a class, reflect on which rhetorical strategies might work best with specific audiences.

Jeremiah is the director of a non-profit organization that helps homeless youth get an education. He is thirty-three and is married with three small children. In his free time, Jeremiah enjoys practicing karate, hiking with his wife and kids, and reading historical fiction.

Figure 1

Deborah is a forty-year-old professional violinist who plays full time in the Portland Symphony Orchestra. She considers the orchestra to be her family. She isn't married and doesn't have children. When she's not practicing her instrument, Deborah enjoys painting with acrylics and cross-country skiing.

Figure 2

Ronaldo is a twenty-seven-year-old middle school biology teacher who also coaches track and field. He and his wife have just adopted two children from Haiti, so most of Ronaldo's free time is spent reading parenting books and being the best father he can be.

Figure 3

Grace is a twenty-year-old Marine in a family of Marines. She met her partner Jane during basic training, and they are planning to get married after they've both finished college. Grace's hobbies include kickboxing, wakeboarding, and training her dog, Boss.

Figure 4

Henry is a retired CEO for a fishing rod manufacturing company. At the age of eighty-four, he still enjoys fly fishing all over the Pacific Northwest. He is recently widowed and has seven grandchildren who go fishing with him regularly.

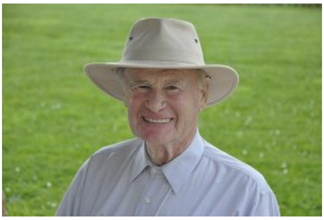


Figure 5

Sophia is a dancer, dance teacher, and new mother. She just turned thirty and loves to travel with her husband. Her goal is to see every continent (except for Antarctica) before the age of forty. So far, she's been to North and South America, Africa, and Asia.

Figure 6

Larry is a foreman for a construction company that builds skyscrapers and other types of office buildings. He's fifty-seven and has saved enough to be able to retire by the age of sixty, when he hopes to move to the mountains and build a log cabin with his partner David.

Figure 7

Michelle is a pediatric doctor who specializes in childhood leukemia. She is thirty-five and newly married to an ER doctor. They support each other's research projects and other professional goals. They don't want children, feeling that their work is their primary life focus.

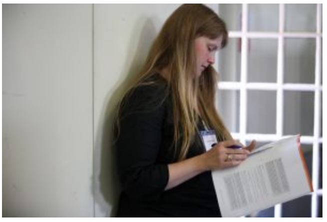


Figure 8

Photo Credits

Figure 1: "Listening at a conference" by BMA is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0
Figure 2: "Barka Fabianova" by Cordella Hagmann is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0
Figure 3: "Slongood" by bidding is licensed under CC BY 2.0
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Figure 8: “Waiting to Speak” by The BMA is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0

85. Engaging in Reader-Centered Writing

Reader-Centered Writing

Writing can be conceptualized as **writer-centered** or **reader-centered**. Things like diaries and journals are primarily writer-centered, in that they are written for the benefit of the writer. Your schoolwork may also have been somewhat writer-centered, in that often your goal was to “show what you know” and thereby “get a good grade.” Many communications, especially technical ones, require that you shift this mindset and write for the benefit of your reader—or design the content and structure of your communication for your “reader.” This mindset should be informed by an understanding of your audience. Use these guidelines and ask yourself the following questions:

- **Who is my target audience?** Are they internal or external readers? Upstream, downstream or lateral from you? Do I have multiple readers?
- **What is their perspectives on the topic, on me, and on the document I will write?** What are they expecting to do with the document? What is the document meant to accomplish? Why has it been requested? What is my role and relationship to my readers? What does the reader need to know? Already know? What does my reader NOT need to have explained?
- **What is my goal or purpose in writing to these readers?** What am I trying to communicate? What do I want them to do as a result of reading this document? How can I plan the content to meet my readers’ needs?
- **What is my reader’s goal?** Why does this audience want or

need to read this document?

Getting a clear understanding of your audience is important in communicating effectively. It also enables you to imagine your audience as you write and revise. Keep asking yourself whether what you have said would be clear to your audience. How could you say it better?

EXERCISE 2.2 *Audience analysis*

Choose one of the topics below. Then perform an audience analysis, using the questions above to gain an understanding of the needs of different audiences. Write a profile of your intended reader(s) and consider what sort of information they will need and why?

1. You have been asked to write a report on **Maintaining Internet Privacy** for
   a) A new internet user who just signed up for internet service
   b) A start up e-commerce website developer
2. Prepare a document on **Food-born Diseases** for
   a) Restaurant workers (servers and kitchen staff)
   b) For a health inspector training course
3. Provide information on a proposed **New Bus Shelter Design** to
   a) Mayor's office
   b) Contractor
   c) Newspaper reporter writing an article on the issue

Professional Tone

"Tone" refers to the attitude that a document conveys towards the topic and/or the reader. You have likely read something that sounded angry, or optimistic, or humorous, or cynical, or enthusiastic. These words characterize the tone. Technical communication tends to avoid displaying an obvious emotion, and instead strives for a neutral tone.

Tone is created through word choice (diction), word order (syntax), sentence construction, and viewpoint. Consider a piece of academic writing that you may have read. It creates a formal tone through its use of specialized terminology, sophisticated vocabulary, complex sentence structures, and third person voice. This style suits the genre because it is directed at experts and scholars in the field, and seeks to convey complex information densely and objectively, with an emphasis on reason, logic, and evidence.

Now consider a piece of business writing that you may have read. The tone may be sightly less formal but not colloquial. The language is direct and plain, and the sentences are shorter and more straightforward. It may make use of the second person ("you"). This style suits business writing because it is directed at colleagues, management, or clients who are seeking information clearly and quickly and who may need to take action on it.

Writing Constructively

Striking the appropriate tone involves understanding your purpose, context, and audience. It also involves an understanding that workplaces are often hierarchical, and that cooperation and teamwork are required. Therefore, it is important to consider how you want your reader to feel, and what may make your reader feel that way. Your goal is to write constructively, which means to use positive phrasing to convey your message to your reader. **Table 2.1.1** illustrates the differences between destructive/negative and constructive/positive feelings the reader may experience as a result of the tone used in a document.

TABLE 2.1.1 Differences between destructive/negative and constructive/positive

Negative	Constructive
misunderstood	understood
outraged	conciliatory
disgusted	pleased
guilty	capable
belittled	empowered
patronized	respected
defensive	proud
chastised	valued
humiliated	honoured
excluded	a sense of belonging
resentment	contentment

Considering how your reader may feel after reading your document is an important part of revision. Did your tone come across like you hoped it would? Could it be misconstrued? Often this is where peer reviewing can be helpful. Asking a colleague to review your document before sending it off to its intended audience is a common professional practice.

Sometimes, you will need to communicate information that is unpleasant, such as delivering bad news or rejecting a request. Communicating constructively is possible—and arguably even more important—in these situations. Regardless of message, how can you ensure you are communicating constructively?

- **Adopt an adult-to-adult approach:** that is to say, avoid talking down to your reader in a patronizing tone, and likewise avoid sounding petulant or unwilling to take responsibility. Aim to communicate respectfully, responsibly, confidently, and cooperatively — as one responsible adult to another.
- **Be courteous:** focus on the reader as much as possible. Use "you" unless it results in blaming (one effective use of passive verbs is to avoid assigning blame: "mistakes were made"). Use traditionally accepted forms of courtesy and politeness. Use gender-neutral phrasing and plural forms, unless you are referring to a specific person and you know their gender.
- **Focus on the positive:** emphasize what you *can* do rather than what you can't. Try to avoid negative wording and phrasing (no, not, never, none, isn't, can't, don't, *etc*.). Focus on what *can* be improved.
- **Be genuine:** apologize if you have made a mistake. Take responsibility and promise to do better. Be authentic in your expression. Avoid sounding like marketing material (ad-speak). Make reasonable claims that can be backed with evidence.

Consider the following perspectives:

Writer-Centered (I, we)	**Reader-Centered (you)**
If I can answer any questions, I'll be happy to do so.	If you have any questions, please ask.
We shipped the order this morning.	Your order was shipped this morning.
I'm happy to report that …	You'll be glad to know that …

Negative Phrasing	Constructive Phrasing
We cannot process your claim because the necessary forms have not been completed	Your claim can be processed as soon as we receive the necessary forms
We do not take phone calls after 3:00 pm on Fridays	*You try …*
We closed your case because we never received the information requested in our letter of April …	

EXERCISE 2.3 *Revise an email for appropriate tone*

A colleague has asked you to review his email before sending. What revisions to content, tone, and style would you suggest?

From: Jake Burns
To: J. Parsons, Project Coordinator
Date: 12 December 2015
Subject: Two Problems

Hi Ms. P

Say, we may need to increase the budget on this project by $12,000. Sam screwed up when he calculated material costs. Now we don't have enough budgeted to add the additional G3 servers with the 36GB 15k hot pluggable hard drives. I know you don't know what all that means, but trust me. WE NEED THOSE SERVER UPGRADES!!!

Also, I would like to talk about getting my office moved closer to the rest of the IT department. All the running back and forth is disturbing other employees. I am so far away from everyone that I figure I must need to change deodorant or something. ;)

JB

EXERCISE 2.4 *Revise for constructive tone*

How do you think the following memo will make the recipients feel? How would you revise the following memo to more constructively address the problem?

From: Ann Onymous
To: All Employees
Date: Feb. 3, 2011
Subject: Littering

For some time now, smoking has been strictly prohibited within five metres of the Main Building entrance. Do NOT smoke anywhere near the doors!

Some of you still insist on smoking and have been doing so inside this area. As a result, the areas near the rear exit and around the picnic tables are constantly littered with smoking-related debris (filter tips, half-smoked cigarettes, empty lighters, etc.), creating an eyesore and making more work for my staff, who have to keep cleaning up this mess.

Starting Monday, sand buckets will be provided outside the read doors and in the picnic area. Use them!

For further reading, see "Communication in the

Workplace: What Can NC State Students Expect?" a study based on the responses of over 1000 professionals from various fields, including engineering, on how important business, technical and scientific communication is to their work.

86. Conceptualizing Concerns as Dialogue

Conceptualizing Concerns as Dialogue

Making an argument in an essay, term paper, blog post or other college writing task is like laying out a case in court. Just as there are conventions that attorneys must adhere to as they make their arguments in court, there are conventions in arguments made in research assignments. Among those conventions is to use the components of an argument.

The arguments you're used to hearing or participating in with friends contain the same elements as the ones you'll need to use in academic writing. Arguments contain those components because those are the ones that work—used together, they stand the best chance of persuading others that you are correct.

For instance, the question gets things started off. The claim, or thesis, tells people what you consider a true way of describing a thing, situation, relationship, or phenomenon or what action you think should be taken. The reservations, alternatives, and objections that someone else brings up in your sources (or that you imagine your readers logically might have) allow you to demonstrate how your reasons and evidence (maybe) overcome that kind of thinking—and (you hope) your claim/thesis comes out stronger for having withstood that test.

For the purposes of this chapter, **we are going to focus on the readers of your paper and their potential concerns (reservations, alternatives, and objections) as well as those same concerns brought up in content that you find in your secondary sources**.

Look at the example below, where two students are conversing.

The various reservations, alternatives, and objections are annotated to show you how we incorporate opinions that may counter our own.

EXAMPLE: Argument as a Dialogue

Here's a dialogue of an argument, with the most important components labeled.

Jerald: Where should we have my parents take us for dinner when they're here on Sunday? *[He asks the question about something that's unsettled.]*

Cathy: We should go to The Cascades! *[She makes her main claim to answer the question.]* It's the nicest place around. *[Another claim, which functions as a reason for the main claim.]*

Jerald: How so? *[He asks for a reason to believe her claims.]*

Cathy: White table cloths. *[She gives a reason.]*

Jerald: What's that have to do with how good the food is? *[He doesn't see how her reason is relevant to the claim.]*

Cathy: Table cloths make restaurants seem upscale. *[She relates her reason for the claims.]* And I've read a survey in Columbus Metro that says the Cascades is one of the most popular restaurants in town. *[She offers evidence.]*

Jerald: I never read the Metro. And Dino's has table cloths. *[He offers a point that contradicts her reason.]*

Cathy: I know, but those are checkered! I'm talking about heavy white ones. *[She acknowledges his point and responds to it.]*

Jerald: My dad loves Italian food. I guess he's kind of a checkered-table-cloth kind of guy? *[He raises another reservation or objection.]*

Cathy: Yeah, but? Well, I know The Cascades has some Italian things on the menu. I mean, it's not known for its Italian food but you can order it there. Given how nice the place is, it will probably be gourmet Italian food. *[She acknowledges his point and responds to it. There's another claim in there.]*

Jerald: Ha! My dad, the gourmet? Hey, maybe this place is too expensive. *[He raises another reservation.]*

Cathy: More than someplace like Dino's. *[She concedes his point.]*

Jerald: Yeah. *[He agrees.]*

Cathy: But everybody eats at The Cascades with their parents while they're students here, so it can't be outlandishly expensive. *[She now puts limits on how much she's conceding.]*

Check your understanding

Exercise to check your understanding: http://guides.osu.edu/ld.php?content_id=41925168

Note: if you get them all right, it will only score you 85% (hey, life's not perfect!)

87. Organizing & Elaborating on Concerns/Objections

Order of Components/How to Organize

Where do you find 'concerns' ?

The order in which the components should appear in your essays may depend on which discipline your course is in. So always adhere to the advice provided by your professor and what you learn in class.

That said, one common arrangement for analytical and argument essays is to begin with an introduction that explains why the situation is important—why the reader should care about it. Your research question will probably not appear, but your answer to it (your thesis, or claim) usually appears as the last sentence or two of the introduction.

The body of your essay or paper follows and consists of:

- Your reasons the thesis is correct or at least reasonable.
- The evidence that supports each reason, often occurring right after the reason the evidence supports.
- An acknowledgement that some people have/could have objections, reservations, counterarguments, or alternative solutions to your argument and a statement of each.
- A response to each acknowledgement that explains why that criticism is incorrect or not very important. Sometimes you might have to concede a point you think is unimportant, if you can't really refute it.

After the body, the paper or essay ends with a conclusion, which states your thesis in a slightly different way than occurred in the introduction. The conclusion also may mention why research on this situation is important.

What we are reinforcing here is the integration of the objections somewhere in your paper (as opposed to not considering them at all). Sometimes this means these objections are integrated as part of a larger point or in response (or dialogue with) a point/sub-point. Other times these means dedicating an entire paragraph to these reader biases or countering assumptions by naysayers.

In any case, solely identifying the objection is not enough. You must flesh out this idea with some explanation, an example, and/or another source in order to give it the attention it needs. Simply dropping in an objection and then moving on to your own reasoning/response would not be as effective as giving credence to those objections or alternative solutions. Lending credence before offering a response strengthens your position by showing diplomacy and fairness in reaching out 'to the other side.'

Podcast

OER English Composition. Listen to [here to The Writer's Odyssey: A Good Counterargument](). Click the PLAY button.

Video Resources

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88. Considering Multiple Views & Avoiding Bias

Considering Multiple Views

Are multiple views being considered through depth and breadth?

When writing or speech is deep, it covers the complexity of a topic. It doesn't skim the surface. It dives deeply into the profound knowledge and substantial understanding of a topic. This detailed explanation along with examples is **depth**, which also includes attention to rhetorical devices (pathos, ethos, logos, and kairos).

When analyzing the depth of any essay, including their own essays and those of their peers, students can ask these types of questions:

- How deeply does this essay go into its topic?
- Is it detailed enough?
- Did it go far enough into the research and reviews of other texts to demonstrate a deep knowledge about the subject? (**Digging into what others have said about your topic, a particular text you're working with, or the people involved is often where you can often find opposing views**).
- How thoroughly have specific subtopics within a major been researched?

Breadth is how broad or wide a topic has been discussed in writing or in speech. For example, to attain breadth in a persuasive essay, a writer must consider not only one point of view, but all the multiple major perspectives about an issue. Breadth also entails considering multiple contexts of an issue and multiple analytical approaches to solving a problem.

Breadth means reading more than a handful of articles supporting one side of an issue; it means reading more articles supporting various perspectives so the writer can truly understand all viewpoints about the issue and can discuss the issue with breadth that builds a deeper understanding and fairness. When analyzing the breadth of any essay, students and instructors ask questions such as the following:

- Is the content of an essay sufficiently comprehensive enough to cover a wide range of perspectives and angles on a given topic?
- Is anything missing that should be included in the scope of the topic and which would help the essay achieve enough breadth?
- **Has the opposing view (i.e., the "naysayer's" perspective) been explored so as to strengthen the writer's own argument? (This consideration is particularly key in the development of a fully supported and wisely composed persuasive or argumentative essay.)**
- What has not yet been considered to make this idea or essay complete?

Avoiding Bias

Fairness: Is It Objective and Judicious?

The word "fair" is often used synonymously with "just" or "judicious" and is related to "justice." Especially in essays that are meant to persuade through logical argumentation, topics and points of view (POVs or “perspectives”) need to be treated fairly and diplomatically. A fair, even-handed treatment doesn’t necessarily mean agreeing to opposing (or “naysayer’s”) POVs, but strong, college-level writing must acknowledge the opposing POVs, then must either accommodate or refute them. For example, an essay may state, “The opponents have valid points regarding X and Y. They are right about this and that. However, they are inaccurate about this specific point about X, and their argument doesn’t negate A and B, which remains the most accurate ideas and still strongly support this argument.”

When analyzing the fairness of any work, students and instructors ask questions such as the following:

- Does the writer of this essay exhibit the ability to fairly assess the viewpoints of others, even opposing viewpoints?
- Are there any fallacies, such as ad hominems that unfairly label opponents rather than speak directly and precisely about the opposing argument or POV itself? (Note: The term "ad hominem" is short for "argumentum ad hominem" and is a fallacious argumentative strategy whereby genuine discussion of the topic at hand is avoided by instead attacking the character, motive, or other attribute of the person making the argument, or persons associated with the argument, rather than attacking the substance of the argument itself.)
- Does the writer or speaker have a conflict of interest? Does that conflict of interest appear as **bias** in the text?

When analyzing our own work (discussions and writings), these questions are crucial:

- What about our own biases? Are we aware of and addressing our own biases? How can we move beyond those?

Check out this video on implicit vs. explicit bias:

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://idaho.pressbooks.pub/write/?p=219#oembed-1

Check out this video on avoiding biased language:

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://idaho.pressbooks.pub/write/?p=219#oembed-2

89. The Ethics & Importance of Arguments Across Moral Tribes

THE ETHICS AND IMPORTANCE OF ARGUMENTS ACROSS MORAL TRIBES

by Brandon Alva

Renee and Ema are competing in an egg drop contest. They must drop an egg from a height of 15 feet and prevent it from breaking using only the following supplies: 60 inches of twine, a dozen plastic drinking straws, 4 sheets of paper towel, 6 popsicle sticks, a half cup of downy feathers, 24 inches of Scotch tape and a cotton handkerchief.

Renee and Ema decide to brainstorm separately and then come back together to discuss their ideas. Renee decides she needs to soften the fall by creating a parachute using the twine and handkerchief and then padding the egg using scotch tape to secure it to a mattress made of popsicle sticks topped with drinking straws and feathers.

Ema envisions a different plan to blunt the impact of the fall. She decides to suspend the egg in a flexible framework of drinking straws. A few straws will be wrapped around the egg itself. Another set of straws will extend outward from the egg to create a set of braces which will flex on impact and absorb the force of the fall (hopefully without breaking the egg).

The two come back together and share their plans. After sharing their ideas both Ema and Renee still believe their own plans to be best.

“I don’t think your popsicle stick and drinking straw mattress will do much to blunt the force of impact,” Ema argues.

“Well, that’s what my parachute is for—the egg will be dropping slowly,” Renee responds.

“Yes, the parachute is a great idea,” Ema concedes, then counter-argues, “But you are using resources in a less effective design. My design makes better use of the drinking straws.”

“What if we use your drinking straw idea and combine it with my parachute …” Renee suggests.

“That’s a great idea. We should do that.”

Ema and Renee’s new plan is a success. Their egg lands uncracked.

This is a small example of a healthy debate resulting in successful collaboration. And this pattern of healthy debate among interested parties leading to new knowledge is something we can observe on a grand scale throughout human history. This is why debate is important for any society—because a healthy debate resolves conflict. Consider for a moment that almost all of our current scientific and technological knowledge was at some point the subject of debate. That’s right, even scientific basics such as genetics and the earth revolving around the sun were once hotly contested ideas.

Over the course of American history, humanity has also made tremendous advancements in our understanding of human rights. If we walk backward through history we will see the civil rights movement, women’ suffrage, the end of slavery, the legal protection of religious rights, the freedom of the press, and the granting of trial by a jury of your peers. All of these rights, which we often take for granted, were once the subject of fierce debate. In our current hyper-partisan climate it can be easy to become cynical and feel as if the current debates will never end, but that is not what history tells us.

Debates in the public sphere rarely play out as smoothly as our egg-drop example. Many debates take decades and sometimes centuries. They can become contentious, sometimes even violent. However, though the progress is slow and sometimes comes at a great price, it can happen.

In the last few years, it seems that the ability to debate in U.S. politics and public policy has broken down. It appears to many that we no longer hear one another. Increasingly the other party is seen not just as the loyal opposition or competition, but as the enemy. Fear and resentment are growing rapidly among partisans, as shown in the following chart.

A graph showing that Democrats and Republicans consistently feel between 70 and 80% warmly toward their own parties while warmth of feeling toward the other party has dropped from 50% to 20% in recent years. The graph covers presidencies from carter to Obama.
Source: Jonathan Haidt and Marc J. Hetherington. "Look How Far We've Come Apart." The New York Times, The New York Times, 17 Sept. 2012.

One of the most alarming things about this chart is the dramatic acceleration of negative feelings toward one's political opponents. We also see these sentiments reflected in the political rhetoric of our time and the inability of our government to reach compromise on important issues. How can we restore healthy debate?

AVOID MANICHAEAN THINKING

Mani was a self-professed prophet who taught that those who disagreed with his teaching were servants of the devil. Today he has the dubious honor of being the namesake of Manichaean thinking. Today Manichaean thinking refers to when we, without due warrant, suspect our opponents of bad faith; when we believe that those we disagree with are not sincerely mistaken—they are in some way actually aware that what they are doing is wrong. Thus, they are not sincere in their beliefs—they have ulterior motives for their political, religious, or ethical positions.

Some subtle examples of Manichaean thinking might include the following statements:

Those Christians—they know there is no god and that they are just talking to a wall when they pray. They can't publicly admit it, but they know that it's all nonsense.

There are no atheists in foxholes. In their hearts they know there is a God, they just want to continue a life of sin.

Liberals want to bankrupt the government so they can put a socialist government in place.

NRA members know that assault rifles are the cause of mass shootings, but they also know that after mass shootings both gun sales and donations to the NRA go up.

Notice how each of these statements/claims states or implies that the opposition is not sincerely misinformed but that they have ulterior motives for their positions. Manichaean thinking is common because it is seductively self-flattering: you and those who agree with you are the truly righteous and your opponents are morally inferior. Manichaean thinking is also seductive because it dramatically simplifies the complexity of the world we live in. If we give into Manichaean thinking, many complex problems are reduced to a simple need for the righteous to crush the wicked beneath their heels.

The golden rule is a very old truism in ethics: do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Consider for a moment the important ethical principles we might learn by applying the golden rule to debate across ideological divides. How would we want those we disagree with to treat us as we attempt to persuade them? I suggest that we would want our opponents to do the following:

Assume good faith.

When we engage in debate with others it is important to debate the subject at hand rather than engaging in Manichaean thinking and ad hominem attacks. (Ad hominem is Latin for "to the man." It is an attack on speakers themselves rather than on the argument.) Ad hominem attacks often close off meaningful debate and cloud our ability to think critically about the issue at hand. If you say to someone, "I disagree with you about principle x," then you both have the option to proceed to debate principle x. But if you say to them "you are a fascist" or "a liar" or a "racist" or "a libtard" then debate is likely foreclosed. They are going to (perhaps correctly) perceive that you are not interested in meaningful exchange but simply want to fight.

Take our earlier example at the egg drop contest. Suppose instead of arguing about which design was superior, the women involved had instead accused each other of being selfish and egocentric, essentially saying "You only want to do that idea because it was yours and not mine." They would have reached no compromise and their designs might have failed. It is important to note that the point about egocentrism might not be entirely untrue—perhaps Ema and Renee preferred their own designs because in part they created them. Just as it might be true that those who support gun rights do so in part because of their enjoyment of using guns and just as those who support gun control might do so in part because of a lack of experience with guns. It is also true that there will be exceptions to those stereotypes as well. There are indeed experienced gun owners who favor increased gun control and there are also people who have never touched a gun who favor gun rights. In other words, we must evaluate positions and arguments on their own merits and not on the perceived motivations of the speaker. This is why ad hominem attacks are logical fallacies.

Listen.

When we debate important issues we all want to be heard. When we discuss these issues with others we need to listen as well as advocate. Not only does listening allow you to discover the merit of other points of view, if there are any, it is also an important rhetorical strategy. If you listen to them, they might listen to you.

Be patient.

We believe that our conclusions are simply a matter of logic, that getting others to agree with us is a process similar to having them correct an error they made in solving a math problem. Once you point out to them the error in their logic then they will see their mistake and correct course. But if we look at the lives of those we are seeking to persuade, we will see it is not so simple. Our moral positions often determine both our tribe and lifestyle (or is it the other way around?). When we attempt to persuade someone that they should change their position on abortion, religious belief, veganism, etc. we are not just asking them to change their ideas abstractly—we are asking them to change their core beliefs and often their daily lives as well. For obvious reasons, people do not make such conversions casually or often as the result of a single conversation but rather as the outcome of a process that takes time and repeated exposure to a new set of ideas.

IN CONCLUSION

Because we so rarely see people publicly changing their positions on important issues ("You are right Aunt Janice, the flat tax is the way to go. Thanks for SCREAMING some sense into me using the caps lock.") we can become cynical about engaging in conversations about these issues. We may begin to think that no one ever changes their mind about important issues and that we should simply avoid such discussions all together. But again experience shows that many people's beliefs do change over time.

In fact, history is filled with important people whose thinking on important issues evolved over time due to the influence of others. But to briefly give you some more recent examples: Megan Phelps-

Roper was an outspoken member of the Westboro Baptist Church. She began a series of Twitter debates with David Abitbol, founder of the blog, Jewlicious, in hopes of getting him to repent for being Jewish. But their exchanges, which some believed to be a waste of Abitbol's time, lead to Phelps-Roper questioning Westboro's teachings and eventually to her leaving the group.

In another example, Dereck Black was a white supremacist, so much so that at one point he hosted a white supremacist radio show. But when he went off to college he found himself questioning a lot of what he'd been taught and decided not to tell his classmates about his affiliation. When his fellow college student found out about his white supremacist activities, they debated if they should ever speak to him again. Some of his classmates decided they would continue to talk to him in an effort to persuade him to change his mind. In part due to their efforts, he has now renounced white supremacy.

In each of these cases many would have felt tempted to write the mistaken individual off as a lost cause, but patience, respect for the person (but not their ideas), and a willingness to engage in difficult dialogue led to something amazing and wonderful: a person willing to listen and change. You can find more detailed accounts of each of these stories in the references.

Also remember some people cannot be persuaded. But sometimes we engage those who cannot be persuaded (but can remain civil) in public debate because in so doing we have a larger audience in mind or maybe even a future audience. Paul A. Samuelson once wrote, "Science advances funeral by funeral." Samuelson got this idea from Max Planck who said in his own words "A new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it." Sometimes we can persuade our most ardent opponents, other times we are publicly promoting ideas that the next generation will take up. And, in fact, you do not need to persuade everyone. The civil rights movement did not have so many legislative and legal victories because it persuaded everyone but because it persuaded a majority of voters and lawmakers.

There are many who will see this call for respectful public debate as a call to respect all ideas, even those ideas which are harmful, hurtful, or objectively mistaken, but I endorse no such nonsense. The view that the earth is the center of the solar system is false, unlike the view that the sun is the center of our solar system. But resolving that difference of opinion is often best done with a respectful debate because multiple lines of evidence and reason support a heliocentric view and all earth-centered arguments are flawed in some way. The greater your confidence in the superiority of your positions the more you should desire a meaningful and respectful debate. Public debate can lead to meaningful progress, but it takes patience, effective rhetoric, and time.

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90. Establishing Lines of Communication with the Opposition's Traditional Allies

Establishing Lines of Communication with the Opposition's Traditional Allies

Learn how to communicate effectively with your opposition's allies, in order to build friendly relationships and alliances that can support your cause.

- *WHAT IS ESTABLISHING LINES OF COMMUNICATION WITH THE OPPOSITION'S TRADITIONAL ALLIES?*

- *WHY WOULD YOU ESTABLISH LINES OF COMMUNICATION WITH THE OPPOSITION'S TRADITIONAL ALLIES?*

- *HOW DO YOU ESTABLISH LINES OF COMMUNICATION WITH THE OPPOSITION'S TRADITIONAL ALLIES?*

You're a health advocate working with a local clinic to find local public funding for a well-baby program. You're opposed by a group calling itself the Concerned Taxpayers Association (CTA), whose members don't believe that any but the most basic services – roads, bare-bones education, police, fire protection – should be publicly funded. Yet among those groups that usually align with CTA are some that you think might be interested in the well-baby idea.

A right-to-life organization, whose members worry about public funding for abortion, is one; a group of seniors, many of whom have young grandchildren or great-grandchildren is another. Since you've almost always been on opposite sides in the past, you don't have any regular communication lines with these groups. How can you contact them and sound them out on their thoughts about the proposed program?

In advocacy work, you often want all the support you can get. You can think of possible support as arranged in concentric circles. The innermost circle contains you and your closest, most committed allies – your core group. The next circle out contains your natural allies – those individuals and organizations that share your beliefs and values, and stand to benefit or to see their values confirmed by the success of your advocacy effort. The third circle encompasses those who are neutral – because they know nothing about the issue, because they're not sure where they stand on it, or because they don't believe it concerns them in any way.

The last two circles are the least likely to be supportive. In the fourth circle out are the opposition's traditional allies, who occupy the same position in relation to your opposition as your natural allies do in relation to you. And finally, in the farthest circle, are your opponents, those who are unalterably against what you're in favor of.

Yet, advocates know that you sometimes find allies in unexpected places. One of those places is among those who normally line up with opponents to your advocacy efforts. Taking direct action – the subject of this chapter – may mean making contact with your opposition's allies. This section is devoted to opening and maintaining communication with some of those folks, actions that may in turn lead to friendly relations and seemingly unlikely alliances. We'll look at what establishing such communications actually consists of, why you'd want them, and how to accomplish the task.

WHAT IS ESTABLISHING LINES OF COMMUNICATION WITH THE OPPOSITION'S TRADITIONAL ALLIES?

Your opposition's *traditional* allies are those who would be expected to side with your opponents and/or work for the results your opponents favor. They're not necessarily the same as the opposition. All their views aren't necessarily the same as the opposition's, either, but they're similar enough that you might expect them to be allies in most situations.

"Most situations" leaves lots of room for exceptions, however. Many seniors, especially those dependent on fixed incomes, often find themselves in the same camp as those who oppose new taxes and increased school funding. If they have grandchildren in school, however, they may feel and act differently. Fiscal conservatives may nonetheless be willing to sponsor relatively liberal social initiatives. Conservative Catholics, who might oppose such social agendas as gay rights and easily-available birth control, may also oppose the death penalty on religious grounds. In other words, “traditional” alliances depend upon “traditional” situations.

Individuals or groups may also become disillusioned or alienated by some of your opponents’ positions. Moderate Republican women often find themselves at odds with their party over the issue of choice, for instance. Many hunters may join with conservative forces to protest the regulation of guns, but may break with them over environmental protection.

People also change their attitudes and opinions as they grow emotionally and intellectually, gain more information and experience, and/or are exposed to more, and more complex, situations in their lives. One of the pieces in Studs Terkel’s book **Working** profiles a former Ku Klux Klansman who, through contact with black people and broader ideas, dropped his racist, ultra-right-wing philosophy, and ultimately became a union organizer.

Establishing lines of communication means just that, nothing more: creating a means to talk to folks who might be expected to be of a different mind from you on many issues. Your goal, almost undoubtedly, is to build an eventual alliance, or at least a friendly relationship. But the start is simply to open up communication.

> A line of communication may not lead to anything concrete: it may be no more than an opening in the fence through which you can exchange occasional conversation, or a way to reach the other party when it’s important. Lyndon Johnson, for example, pioneered the “red phone,” a direct line between the leaders of the US and the Soviet Union, so they could stave off hostilities in an emergency, and keep the

> world from nuclear holocaust. The phone line was actually used on several occasions by Johnson and subsequent US presidents.

Contact may or may not lead to an alliance, but it's an important step in any case. It allows for the possibility that you can find points of agreement, and that you can approach one another as human beings who are trying to do what they see as right, rather than faceless "opponents" or, worse, "enemies."

WHY WOULD YOU ESTABLISH LINES OF COMMUNICATION WITH THE OPPOSITION'S TRADITIONAL ALLIES?

As is implied directly above, communication is the first step to understanding and possible change. If the only communication individuals or groups engage in is hurling insults or fighting over their disagreements, they're talking at, not with each other. Actual communication demands listening to and considering others' points of view, and accepting them as human beings.

ONCE YOU'VE ESTABLISHED LINES OF COMMUNICATION, YOU CAN USE THEM FOR A NUMBER OF PURPOSES, SOME PRAGMATIC, SOME POLITICAL, AND SOME PERSONAL, INCLUDING:

To alleviate misunderstandings

Misunderstandings can arise in several ways:

- *False information and rumor.* Someone may, intentionally or unintentionally, put out false information or rumors about you or your issue, or the media may have gotten something wrong. In either case, it may be important to correct it as quickly as possible. A direct line of communication makes this much easier and more reliable.
- *Errors in judgment.* You or the other party may have made an unthinking public statement or done something that will affect or anger the other. If there's immediate contact and explanation, you may be able to defuse the situation.
- *Misinterpretation.* One or the other of you may misunderstand something the other has said or done. A line of communication makes it possible to clear up the situation.
- *Lack of information.* Your actions or assumptions may not make sense to someone else who doesn't have the same information you have.
- *A true crisis in communication*.

> One of your staff has just been arrested, caught in the act of committing an anti-Semitic hate crime. You have a short time to react before the community erupts and accuses your organization of discrimination, racism, and who knows what else. You issue a statement, making clear that the organization's policy is in direct opposition to what has occurred. Then you call a Jewish organization, normally allied with your opponents, to sincerely express your sorrow for what happened and your apologies for unknowingly hiring and working with someone who could commit such a crime. You offer to work with the other organization to increase understanding and respect for diversity in the community.
>
> Your action in this scenario is both common decency – it's what you ought to do in any case – and good politics. It opens a communication channel with the other organization, offers it an opportunity it would be difficult to

> justify turning down, and gives you an opportunity to prove your good will and your distance from the act that was the source of your call. It gives you a chance to turn a crisis into a positive situation.

It makes sense to look for allies wherever you can find them. If you have common ground with the opposition's traditional allies on this issue, then they are, or could be *your* allies, at least in the current effort. The first step toward any alliance is communication.

If you're talking with their allies, you may be weakening your opponents by reducing their power base. By developing relationships with your opponents' allies, you may be bringing them closer to your position, thus depriving the opposition of previously reliable support.

> This isn't to imply that you're likely to "convert" your opponents' allies, but you might make it easier for them to understand and respect your positions, and, at least occasionally, to agree with them. In the past, without communication, your opposition may have been able to depend on them absolutely to oppose those positions.

By the same token, you may be expanding your own power base. If you can convince your opponents' allies to support your position once in a while, that's more support than you had in the past.

Your opposition's allies may have and provide links to individuals and groups you'd otherwise have no connection with. You may be able, through the communication you've established, to further expand your communication network.

Through their allies, you may be able eventually to bring the opposition around to your position. If your opponents hear your arguments from their friends' mouths, they might be more inclined to listen, and perhaps to see the logic in them. (The same thing could also happen in reverse – you might find yourself agreeing with some of your opponents' arguments as well.)

The above assumes that you and your opposition disagree based on differences of opinion about methods or priorities. If you're trying to stop the opposition from engaging in activities for personal or organizational gain at others' expense, or if they're knowingly harming or endangering others (knowingly poisoning water supplies with industrial dumping), it's unlikely that either of you will be convinced by the other's reasoning.

It also assumes that your disagreement is not a *moral conflict.* In their book, **Moral Conflict**, W. Barnett Pearce and Stephen W. Littlejohn discuss what happens when conflicts are based on deeply-held moral or religious principles. These conflicts are not resolvable by logic or mediation or other conventional conflict-resolution methods. There are sometimes ways to ignore, bypass, or transcend the disagreements (given good will on both sides), but not ways to eliminate them. It is not likely that Osama bin Laden will suddenly have a change of heart about the moral stature of the United States – or vice versa.

Communication may lead to alliances in the future, and perhaps a whole new relationship with some of your opposition's traditional allies. If you form an alliance on one issue, it leaves the door open for working together again, and mutual help and cooperation become easier and easier.

Why would you not want to contact your opposition's traditional allies? Given all the good reasons for establishing lines of communication with them, are there reasons not to do so? In fact there are, and you should consider them.

- If you already have all the support you need to accomplish your goals, it may be unnecessary, at least for the moment.
- It may get in the way of your courting the support of the

uncommitted, who may be far more likely to join your effort.
- It may be costly. Some of your current allies may object so much that you'll lose their support.
- It may take too much of your time and resources. Establishing communication with opponents' allies can be a long and delicate process, and you may simply not be able to afford the effort.
- It may be too much of a long shot, or too improbable. Positions may be entrenched, and the amount of effort necessary to change that may be unrealistic.

> If one or more of these is in fact the situation, then establishing contact is probably not a good plan right now. That doesn't mean you can't try at another time, but rather that your efforts now are better spent elsewhere.

HOW DO YOU ESTABLISH LINES OF COMMUNICATION WITH YOUR OPPOSITION'S TRADITIONAL ALLIES?

> The step-by-step guidelines below are often useful, especially if you've had no contact with the people you're interested in. In many cases, however, it may make more sense to simply pick up the phone, call the appropriate person, and say, "Hi. I was wondering if we could meet. There are some things that it would make sense for us to talk about." Don't get so caught up in guidelines and protocol that you forget the appeal of a direct personal approach when it feels right.

Once you've decided to try to open communications with some of your opposition's allies, how do you go about it? How do you make a first contact? Who should do it, and when? These are the questions we'll discuss below, as we go through some step-by-step guidelines that can be used in many different situations, but are particularly relevant to this one.

KNOW THE PLAYERS

The more you know about both your opponents and those you want to contact, the more likely you are to be successful in establishing communication, and in avoiding unnecessary mistakes.

- *Identify your opposition first.* Do you know exactly who they are, or are you simply assuming that certain individuals and groups will oppose you because it seems logical that they would? Don't make unfounded assumptions – find out if you're not certain. Why are they your opponents? Are their positions based on deeply-held (and hard-to-change) moral or religious principles; on self-interest; on politics; on ideology or philosophy; on apparent evidence; on prejudice toward particular groups; or on opinions about what is most effective or best for the public good?
- *Identify your opposition's traditional allies.* Are these individuals and groups who've agreed with your opposition in the past, or are they simply those similar in outlook and philosophy? What's their history on issues and on activism? Are there areas where they disagree or might disagree with your opposition?
- *Identify those among your opposition's usual allies who are likely to be open to establishing communication.* They may be individuals or groups who are willing to discuss ideas, and whose main purpose is to get the job done (even though they may disagree with you on the best way to do that). They may be those with whom you share common ground, or those who

have disagreements with your opposition on some issues (remember those pro-choice Republican women).

- *Identify the individuals or groups within organizations who should be the targets of your initial contact.* If you're approaching an individual, can you reach him directly, or do you have to go through an aide or assistant? In a large corporation or organization, who controls the area you're interested in? In a smaller organization, who is the appropriate person to contact – the director? the board president? the receptionist? (That last one isn't a joke: in many organizations, the support staff members act as gatekeepers, and really do determine whose messages get through.)
- *Identify your own allies*. Again, don't make assumptions, or take anyone for granted. Your opponents may also be establishing communication. Ask individuals and organizations to join your effort even if you're sure they'll support you. Include them in planning and strategy sessions, and maintain your relationships.

USE TIMING TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

Just as timing is the key to much of humor, it can also be the key to contacting people. If you reach them at just the right moment, you may have a better chance of establishing long-term communication.

Sometimes, that moment is beyond your control. If you happen to know that the individual you're contacting just learned that her daughter is graduating summa cum laude, or that the organization you're reaching out to has just received a huge contribution, now might be the time to approach. But you can't always be aware of those instances – you may get lucky, or you may call on the unfortunate day that Oscar, the office gerbil, gets out of his cage and eats all the files.

There are some aspects of timing that you can control, however. Here are some especially good times to initiate communication:

- *When the other party contacts you.* Unless you have an awfully good reason to suspect foul play (unlikely in most circumstances), this one's a no-brainer.
- *When you know that the individual or group is, or might be, sympathetic to your cause or your point of view.* You've heard it from a mutual friend, there was a public statement, the other party put out a feeler to you – however you know, seize the moment.
- *When your opposition has done something to alienate one or more of its traditional allies.* If the opposition has made a misstep (angering its Hispanic constituency with an anti-immigrant public statement, for instance), you may be able to capitalize on it.
- *When you've just learned of or gained a particularly good contact.* The spouse of one of your board members just joined the other party's board, or vice versa, for example.
- *When you have something to offer, or can do them a favor.* You may be able to help the other party in some way, or may have important information to volunteer (a statement you're about to make that you don't want to surprise them with, for instance, or an alert about an upcoming grant). Their asking something of you, although perhaps less probable, provides an equally good opening.
- *When you have something specific to communicate about.* If you need to clear up a misunderstanding, correct some false information, pass on new information, etc., you have a perfect excuse for making contact.
- *At the beginning of an initiative.* Depending on the circumstances, you may want to try to pull one or more of your opponents' allies into your initiative. If that's the case, the time to try is right at the beginning, so they can be involved in the conception and planning of the effort, and take some

ownership of it. That makes them full partners, and also decreases the possibility that they'll change their minds partway through.

DECIDE WHO WILL MAKE THE INITIAL CONTACT

The first contact may or may not be the same as the first conversation between the parties. Its purpose is often to set up the first significant communication between the parties. The initial contact may not have the credentials or skills necessary for a successful first meeting.

Some considerations in choosing someone to make first contact:

- Identify those in your own organization or among your allies who have direct ties – familial, social, professional, political, community – to the individuals and groups you want to contact, and find out who is willing to make an initial approach.

  As with so much advocacy work, the best approach is almost always personal. People respond most readily to those whom they already know and trust. If you can find a personal connection among those you hope to reach – someone whose kids play soccer with yours, your wife's cousin, a fellow member of a community board, someone you see often at conferences in your field – it can make your initial contact much easier.

- If there's no direct connection (somewhat unlikely in a small community, but quite probable in a larger one), the next best option may be a neutral intermediary known to both parties. This might be almost anyone – the United Way director, a dentist you share, the principal of the school both your children attend, a mutual friend.

- Where even an intermediary isn't a possibility, you'll have to make a "cold" approach by simply contacting the individual or someone in the group you're interested in. Whoever does this should be comfortable with making this kind of approach, and with interacting with people she doesn't know. Don't ask the shyest member of your group, or the least congenial, or the most confrontational. (And if you fit any of these descriptions, don't take on the task yourself.)
- If you're approaching someone in a large organization, or at the level of a legislator or the CEO of a large corporation – or a federal Cabinet secretary – your first contact will probably be with an aide or assistant. These folks can be important contacts in themselves, since they have direct access to their bosses, and may be important decision-makers and advisers. Always being pleasant and considerate to aides, assistants, receptionists, and others is a matter of both simple human decency and wisdom: don't abuse the gatekeeper if you want to get through the gate.

There's also a question of how manipulative you want to be here. You can often meet someone by placing yourself where you know he'll be – a conference, his place of business – or taking part in activities you know he'll participate in – a gallery opening, a softball game. You could even get your beautiful sister to start a conversation with him at a concert or his favorite bar.

While there's nothing intrinsically wrong about meeting someone "accidentally on purpose," it would be somewhat less than honest to pretend that you didn't know who he was, or that you had no interest in talking to him. (The beautiful sister strategy is inherently dishonest, and could easily backfire. What if he finds out you put her up to it? Worse, what if your sister runs off with him?)

> If you do use this method or one like it, it's probably best to be straightforward about your purpose. "I'm glad I ran into you here, because I've been thinking about calling you about…" You don't have to explain that you engineered the meeting, but don't pretend that it isn't something you find useful.

DECIDE HOW TO MAKE THE INITIAL CONTACT

Consider carefully what form your first contact will take: a face-to-face meeting ("accidental" or not), a phone call, a letter, an e-mail. Your form of contact might depend to some extent on the position of the person you're contacting. A federal Cabinet secretary or minister will probably require more formality — you'll go through an aide; you may need an introduction from a state legislator or other politician – than the director of a community-based organization, for instance.

Distance and accessibility are also issues here. You're not going to "bump into" that Cabinet secretary or minister unless you live in the capital area, for instance. She's also seldom alone, but is apt to be surrounded by aides, other officials, Secret Service men, etc. most of the time she's out in public. Her office may not pass on phone calls or make appointments with people who haven't been pre-approved in some way. You may have to start with a formal letter (perhaps with that introduction included) in order to get a foot in the door.

In less formal situations, a phone call — ideally made by someone with a direct connection (see **#3** above) — may be fine. If your contact person knows the other party reasonably well, a drop-in visit may also serve the purpose.

For many people, e-mail has become second nature, and is used constantly for both personal and professional messages. In academia, for example, people regularly email colleagues and others they've never met to communicate or discuss ideas. There are still some, however, who consider email too informal or trivial for serious communication. If you e-mail them as a first contact, they are likely to see it as as betraying a lack of seriousness on your part. That's why it's important to know all you can about the other party before you begin.

Another consideration is the nature of the occasion of first contact. If an intermediary is involved, one way she might operate is to invite you and the other party to the same social function or event, so that you'll be formally introduced. You might find yourself at anything from a formal dinner party to a pickup game of basketball. (This is the more legitimate variation of meeting "accidentally on purpose".) The real question here is what would be the most effective way to meet in order to set up a substantive conversation.

DECIDE WHO WILL REPRESENT YOU IN THE FIRST REAL COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE PARTIES

Some things to consider when choosing someone (either an individual or a small group) to take part in that first significant communication, usually a face-to-face meeting:

- **Interpersonal and communication skills**. Your representative(s) should be comfortable in conversation and able to connect genuinely with other people. She should be an attentive listener and a careful and capable speaker. Perhaps most important, she should be able to put others at ease and disperse tension.

Even if your first substantive communication is in writing, the same skills apply. The difference, of course, is that your representative needs the writing skills to make the same kind of impression on paper that she'd make in person.

Background and information. If the conversation concerns your cause or your advocacy effort, your representative should be well versed in both the big picture and the details. He should know the facts of the situation, the research that supports your position, the arguments for what you're advocating, and the answers to your opposition's arguments.

- **Flexibility**. Don't send an ideologue, someone who's so convinced of the rightness of your position that she can't hear good ideas that aren't part of the party line, or concede that even some arguments she disagrees with are important for those with a different point of view. Flexibility is a key to human relationships in general, and to communication of this type in particular.

If the conversation concerns your cause or your advocacy effort, your representative should be well versed in both the big picture and the details. He should know the facts of the situation, the research that supports your position, the arguments for what you're advocating, and the answers to your opposition's arguments.

Flexibility doesn't mean that you have to agree with arguments made by the other party. You should, however, be willing to understand and consider the reasons for supporting the opposing view, and to think about ways to resolve the differences those reasons rise.
Some critics of US welfare reform, for example, reacted in fury to the idea that welfare recipients should work or perform some community service in return for benefits. Many welfare recipients themselves, however, saw work or community service as an opportunity to gain skills and enter the job market. The critics might have done better to

advocate for support services — child care, job readiness training, etc. — to help those recipients do a decent job and move off the welfare rolls as a result.

- **Status.** In some cases, you have to pay attention to the status of the representative you send. If the party you're trying to establish communication with is the CEO of a major corporation, for instance, or a US Senator, she'll want to know she's talking to someone who can speak for your organization — the director, the board president, a governing committee. Furthermore, if there are decisions or commitments to be made — or even suggested — in an initial meeting or conversation, the person involved should have the authority to do that.

  If you're a collaborative or collective organization, this issue may be irrelevant, or it may not. Unless you're deliberately making a statement of your philosophy by your choice of representatives — which may be totally appropriate — you should pay careful attention to the other party's assumptions. If that corporate CEO will automatically write you off unless you send someone with an impressive title, you may — at least initially — decide to comply. In either case, your representative still ought to be one who can speak for the organization, at least to some extent. (On the other hand, everyone in a collective organization is by definition a co-director…)

- **Familiarity with the other party's world.** If you're talking to a corporate law firm or a large corporation, it's unwise to be represented by someone who'll be overly impressed by large rooms full of expensive furniture and long views over the city. By the same token, if you're contacting a grass roots group whose headquarters are in the basement of a housing project, don't send someone who won't want to get his pants dirty by sitting on a donated couch. Even if your first conversation is by phone or letter, it's important to have an understanding of the other party's assumptions about the way things are. It can be the deciding factor in whether you're able to establish communication or not.

A single person or a group? If your first significant encounter is in a face-to-face meeting, another choice here is whether to send an individual or a group, and whether to ask to meet with an individual or a group. To some extent, that depends on the content of the meeting. In some cases, for instance, it might make sense for a staff group from one organization to meet with a staff group from another to discuss common issues that relate to your advocacy cause. This may be less threatening to both organizations than a meeting of directors or boards, and may lead to further meetings.

In other situations, it may make far more sense to start with individuals on each side who can state their positions well, and who operate at a fairly high political level. Advocacy coalitions, when meeting with legislators or other officials, often send delegations representing a variety of constituencies, so that a group from one party meets with an individual from the other.

If you're requesting the meeting — and that's what this section is about — you'd do well to be guided by the preferences, if any, of the other party. The more comfortable they feel, the more likely the meeting is to lead to something more.

DECIDE ON THE CONTENT OF YOUR FIRST SUBSTANTIAL COMMUNICATION.

However you make contact and arrange a first meeting or phone call, you have to have something to talk about. The substance and form of your first conversation can set the tone for whatever follows — as well as determine whether anything follows.

Some possibilities for content include:

- *Starting an open-ended conversation* — perhaps, but not necessarily, about the advocacy issue — *with no specific goal.* The point here would be to make a connection, which could then be built upon in further conversations. Topics might include ways you could work together, the difficulties of dealing with the issue, the nature of the community, or even mutual friends or your kids' schools — almost anything of common interest.
- *Establishing common ground.*The other party — or for that matter, you as well — may not have realized how much you had in common. Exploring your areas of agreement could lay the foundation for a relationship.
- *Offering help or counsel to the other party in some way*. If you have something to offer, it presents you with an ideal way to begin communication. Just be careful that the offer isn't condescending, and that there's no implication of your superiority attached to it.
- *Asking for something specific*. You may need information or help with a task, or want the other party to cosponsor an event with you. Whatever the request, it not only provides you with an opening, but gives the other party the opportunity to feel good about helping.
- *Discussing common problems or issues*, with an eye toward a solution. If you both work with the same population, for instance, or struggle with a common difficult funder or

funding situation, this can provide the basis for an ongoing dialogue of mutual help and support.

> This is the kind of situation where a first or subsequent conversation could evolve into regular meetings of program staff members who work with some of the same people, or who share similar frustrations and concerns.

- *Apologizing for or explaining an error on your part or a misunderstanding on the other's.* This can be a tricky situation, depending upon what was said or done, and why. If you're obviously backpedaling, you can easily be seen as insincere, and even less trustworthy than you were already thought to be. But if the apology is sincere and reasonable, or if the explanation is convincing and makes sense, it can establish a basis for future communication.
- *Letting the other party know about something you're about to say or do.* Providing advance information that will allow the other party to avoid, or at least anticipate, embarrassment or other problems is often an ethical course of action. It also opens a communication channel, which can then be used for other purposes later.
- *Asking for noninterference, cooperation, or collaboration.* Here, you're actually opening the conversation with advocacy concerns, and seeking either neutrality or an alliance on the other's part. This can be risky, for a first try at communication, but it may also be what you need to do.

Actually make the first contact and engage in the initial significant communication. You've planned it all out — now do it!

> **What about failure?**
> There is always the possibility that your efforts at a first contact will come to nothing, or that once you make contact, the other party will refuse the offer of communication. There is also the chance that your first significant

communication will be unsuccessful, and that the effort will go no further. One of these negative scenarios is very possible — these folks haven't been your friends in the past, after all.

Even if your effort at establishing communication fails, don't look at the failure as permanent, or write the attempt off. There may be another time when it will be possible. Situations and circumstances change, and people do as well. Continue to put out feelers when it's appropriate, and your efforts may bear fruit.

FOLLOW UP ON THE FIRST COMMUNICATION.

The ideal here is that one of the topics at a first meeting ought to be how to continue the communication. The most desirable outcome would be the creation of an agreed-upon structure for continuing communication. You might decide that communication will continue on a regular schedule. This could mean anything from the directors of two organizations having lunch together once a month to daily e-mails, depending upon the nature of the communication and the relationship. It would also encompass the meetings of line staff described in the box above.

You might also decide that communication will be regular, but unscheduled. This is similar to two acquaintances agreeing to "keep in touch". As we all know from our own experience, sometimes that works and sometimes it doesn't. If both of you pay attention to the relationship and to communicating, everything's fine. If neither of you is a diligent communicator, then it simply doesn't happen. If one of you is good at sustaining communication, then you'll probably keep it up, but it will almost always be a situation of person A initiating and person B responding.

If no regular schedule comes out of your first conversation, and you want to keep the communication channel open, you'll have to be person A. (If the other party behaves similarly, so much the better.) You'll need to follow up on your initial meeting (and use your follow-up to schedule a second meeting). Perhaps the most common method is a note, e-mail, or phone call, expressing some variation of "I enjoyed our conversation the other day. It opened up a lot of possible avenues for discussion, and I'd like to follow up on them. Can we meet again? How about the week of the 19th?"

In addition, it's vital to assure that any concrete promises or tasks that came out of your first conversation are kept or done within the time frame agreed upon. If some or all of the promises or tasks were yours, then it's simply your responsibility to see that they're fulfilled or accomplished. If they were the other party's, it's a bit more difficult, since you don't want to sound like you're nagging or don't trust them to do what they've agreed to. One method is to arrange a check-in as part of your original conversation ("I'll call you on Thursday to see where you are with that, and if we can help in any way.")

MAINTAIN AND BUILD UPON YOUR LINES OF COMMUNICATION OVER TIME.

Remember, these are your opposition's traditional allies. Building trust with them may be a long and involved process. Successfully opening communication is only the first step. You have to continue communicating to keep the lines open and working properly. As with any advocacy work, you have to stay at it indefinitely, and never take it for granted.

Opening lines of communication to your opposition's traditional allies can serve you — and them — well in many ways. It can eventually lead to changes in their points of view; it may help you see some things more clearly; and it can help to assure that information that flows between you, as well as information that goes to the public, is accurate and timely. If you can establish these communication channels, it should make your advocacy effort easier, and increase your chances of long-term success.

IN SUMMARY

Establishing lines of communication with your opposition's traditional allies means just that: creating a communication link with people who are usually on the opposite side from you, either on the issue you're advocating for, or in general. The expectation is not that you'll necessarily make them into allies, although that's obviously a desirable goal, but rather that you can begin a dialogue. People and circumstances change with time and experience. If you can listen to and respect one another, you'll certainly improve relations, and you may improve your advocacy position as well.

Opening lines of communication can be the first step to real understanding between two parties previously at odds. It can also serve to clear up misunderstandings of all kinds, and to make you new allies in unusual places. It may reduce your opponents' power base, by decreasing the people and organizations they can count on to support them unconditionally. Setting up communication channels can help you expand your own power base, as well as your advocacy network. It may even bring your opponents around to your point of view, and lead to future alliances.

To establish communication with opponents' traditional allies you first should identify and get to know everything you can about your opponents, their allies, and your allies, so you'll have some idea whom to contact and how. Consider the timing of your attempt — you're more apt to succeed when your opponents' allies are disaffected, for instance, or when you have something specific and important to communicate about.

Next, decide who will make the first contact, and how. This first contact isn't the same as your first real significant conversation —

you have to decide who'll represent you there, as well, and what that conversation will be about. Then, once the decisions are made, do it if you can — make the contact, have the initial conversation.

Make sure to follow up on your first effort, so the momentum won't be lost, and to try to schedule, or at least structure, future communication. Finally, work to maintain your lines of communication over time, so they don't wither from neglect.

Establishing lines of communication with your opposition's traditional allies should, at the very least, improve relations and your position in the community. Ultimately, it could lead to new alliances, and greatly improve your chances for successful advocacy.

Check Your Understanding

What is establishing lines of communication with the opposition's traditional allies?

You establish lines of communication with your opposition's traditional allies in order to create a channel through which you can talk with one another when there is important information to be passed on or discussed, and to develop understanding and a basis for possible cooperation or alliance in the future.

Why would you establish lines of communication with the opposition's traditional allies?

You establish line of communication with the opposition's traditional allies to:

___Alleviate misunderstandings.

___Find allies wherever you can.

___Reduce your opposition's power base.

___Expand your own power base.

___Expand your network of contacts.

___Change your opposition's minds through their allies.

___Set up future alliances, and perhaps new relationships, among your opposition's traditional allies.

How do you establish lines of communication with the opposition's traditional allies?

You have conducted gathered background information and information about the interests of these groups:

___Your opponents.

___Their allies.

___Your allies.

You have timed your initial communication with the opposition when (may be one or more of these):

___Your opposition's traditional allies contact you.

___You know that the opposition's traditional allies are sympathetic to your cause or your point of view.

___Your opposition has done something to alienate one or more of its traditional allies.

___You've just learned of or gained a particularly good contact.

___You have something to offer.

___You're at the beginning of an initiative.

___You decide who will make the initial contact.

___You decide how to make the initial contact.

You have decided who will represent you in the first significant interchange based on:

___Interpersonal and communication skills.

___Background and information.

___Flexibility.

___Status.

___Familiarity with the other party's world.

You have decided on the content of the first real interchange, choosing one or more from among:

___Starting an open-ended conversation – perhaps, but not necessarily, about the advocacy issue – with no specific goal.

___Offering help or counsel to the other party in some way.

___Asking for something specific.

___Establishing common ground.

___Discussing common problems or issues, with an eye toward a solution.

___Apologizing for or explaining an error on your part or a misunderstanding on the other's.

___Letting the other party know about something you're about to say or do.

___Asking for noninterference, cooperation, or collaboration.

___You take action on making contact and holding a first significant communication.

___You follow up on your conversation, and try to schedule future communication.

___You maintain communication lines indefinitely.

powerpoint

Communicating with Opposition Allies

Online Resources

Basic Advocacy Skills is a guide that provides basic information to being a good advocate, including information on how to open lines of communication.

Identify Allies and Opponents. This advocacy planning model provides information on how to establish a group or individual as an ally, opponent, or neutral/unknown group.

Now Hear This is a guide provided by FENTON Communications that offers information on communicating in advocacy. The guide discusses the "9 laws of successful advocacy communications."

Print Resources

Kretzmann, J., & McKnight, J. (1993). *Building communities from the inside out: A path toward finding and mobilizing a community's assets.* ACTA publications. This book provides case studies of successful community-building initiatives across the U.S. In addition to this, it outlines how a community can move toward asset-based development.

Meredith, C., & Dunham. C. (1999). *Real Clout*. Boston: The Access Project.

Robinson, J. & Green, P. (2010). *Introduction to community development: Theory, practice, and service-learning.* SAGE Publications, Inc. This book provides both theoretical and practical approaches to community development, as well as case studies and supportive materials to develop community development skills.

PART XIII

WRITING TO INQUIRE: THE RESEARCH PROCESS

91. Introduction to Writing to Inquire

LIZA LONG

by Liza Long

Inquiry—asking a question—is the heart of academic research. From first-year research papers to doctoral dissertations, we start our research by asking a question. Academic research writing is the process of developing a research question and using high-quality evidence to answer the question. This skill is used in every area of academic life from general education courses to research projects within your major field of study. Inquiry is essential to the goals of scholars and writers because it helps us to better understand problems that affect us and our societies and to contribute to the body of knowledge in the world. This chapter will introduce you to using research for academic inquiry.

Key Characteristics

Writing for inquiry, also known as academic research writing, generally includes the following:

- **Research Question:** From projects written in first-year composition courses to doctoral dissertations, academic research projects seek to answer a research question. This question is focused. It's a question that can be answered through research. And it has some kind of significance to both the author and the readers.
- **Evidence:** Academic research projects rely almost exclusively on evidence in order to answer the research question.

"Evidence" may include both primary sources like interviews, field research, experiments, or primary texts and secondary sources such as scholarly journal articles or other high-quality sources.

- **Citation:** Academic research projects use a detailed citation process in order to demonstrate to their readers where the evidence came from. Unlike most types of "non-academic" research writing, academic research writers provide their readers with a great deal of detail about where they found the evidence they are using. This processes is called citation, or "citing" of evidence. It can sometimes seem intimidating and confusing to writers new to the process of academic research writing, but citation is really just explaining to your reader where your evidence came from. Citation styles are specific to academic disciplines. Common citation styles in college writing courses include MLA, APA, and Chicago.
- Objective point of view
- Awareness of and critique of bias that seeps in–for more information on this aspect, see the Addressing Bias and Stakeholder Concerns chapter for more information

Assignment Types within this Chapter

- Annotated bibliography
- Exploratory research essay
- Literature Review

Academic Research Writing: What IT'S *NOT*

Let's start by consider the types of writing that are *not* "academic research writing." Not all useful and valuable writing automatically involves research or can be called “academic research writing.”

- While poets, playwrights, and novelists frequently do research and base their writings on that research, what they produce doesn’t constitute academic research writing. For example, the Broadway musical *Hamilton* incorporated facts about Alexander Hamilton’s life and work to tell a touching, entertaining, and inspiring story, but it was nonetheless a work of fiction since the writers, director, and actors clearly took liberties with the facts in order to tell their story. If you were writing a research project for a history class that focuses on Alexander Hamilton, you would not want to use the musical *Hamilton* as evidence about how the Founding Father created his economic plan.
- Essay exams are usually not a form of research writing. When an instructor gives an essay exam, she usually is asking students to write about what they learned from the class readings, discussions, and lecturers. While writing essay exams demand an understanding of the material, this isn’t research writing because instructors aren’t expecting students to do additional research on the topic.
- All sorts of other kinds of writing we read and write all the time—letters, emails, journal entries, instructions, etc.—are not research writing. Some writers include research in these and other forms of personal writing, and practicing some of these types of writing—particularly when you are trying to come up with an idea to write and research about in the first place—can be helpful in thinking through a research project. But when we set about to write a research project, most of us don’t have these sorts of personal writing genres in mind.

So, what is "research writing"?

Research writing is writing that uses evidence (from journals, books, magazines, the Internet, experts, etc.) to answer a research question.

In the real world, research writing exists in a variety of different forms. For example, scholars or other researchers conduct primary research and publish the results in peer reviewed journals. Scholars, journalists, or other researchers may also publish inquiry-based articles in more popular places such as newspapers or magazines.

Academic research writing—the sort of writing project you will probably need to write in this class—is a form of research writing. Students use research writing in a variety of courses and contexts.

92. The Inquiry Process in Academic Research Writing

TEACHING & LEARNING AND UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

Introduction

Research assignments—resulting in final products such as term papers, essays, posters, multimedia projects, blog posts, 3-D models, etc.—are a common requirement in college courses, but they can also be a source of stress when you aren't sure what to do. This guide is intended to decrease your stress and increase your comfort with such assignments.

Think of research as an exploration, with unexpected twists and turns.

Tip: Decoding Writing Assignments

Professors steeped only in the research traditions of their own discipline may be unaware of how different conducting research can be in other disciplines. They may assume you already know what they expect for the research assignment they just gave you. But that may not be true at all: you may only know about how to conduct research in another discipline or, especially if you've been taking courses in multiple disciplines, be utterly confused because the expectations seem to change from course to course. This handout from the Ohio State University Writing Center can help you figure out what you need to do for your assignment.

Both professional researchers and successful student researchers develop research questions. That's because research questions are more than handy tools; they are essential to the research process.

The process of inquiry starts with developing a research question. By defining exactly what the researcher is trying to find out, these questions influence most of the rest of the steps taken to conduct the research. That's true even if the research is not for academic purposes but for other areas of our lives.

For instance, if you're seeking information about a health problem in order to learn whether you have anything to worry about, research questions will make it possible for you to more effectively decide whether to seek medical help–and how quickly.

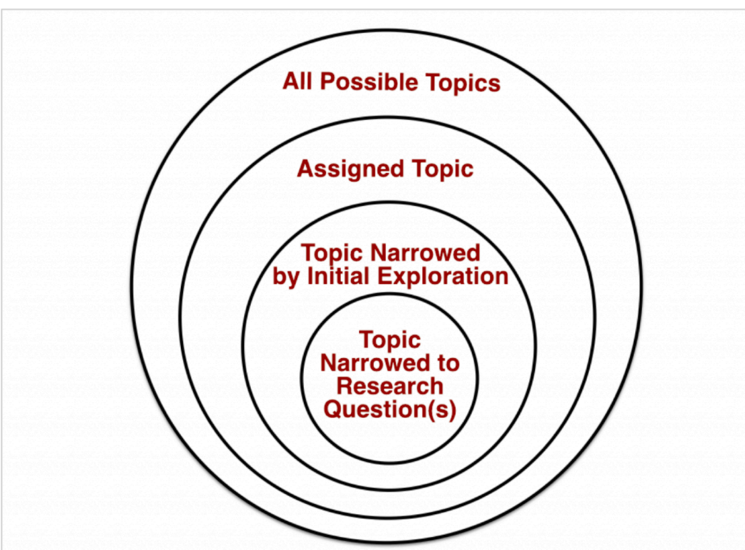
Or, if you're researching a potential employer, having developed and used research questions will mean you're able to more confidently decide whether to apply for an internship or job there.

The confidence you'll have when making such decisions will come from knowing that the information they're based on was gathered by conscious thought rather than serendipity and whim.

Narrowing a Topic

For many students, having to start with a research question is the biggest difference between how they did research in high school and how they are required to carry out their college research projects. It's a process of working from the outside in: you start with the world of all possible topics (or your assigned topic) and narrow down until you've focused your interest enough to be able to tell precisely what you want to find out, instead of only what you want to "write about."

Process of Narrowing a Topic



Visualize narrowing a topic as starting with all possible topics and choosing narrower and narrower subsets until you have a specific enough topic to form a research question.

All Possible Topics – You'll need to narrow your topic in order to do research effectively. Without specific areas of focus, it will be hard to even know where to begin.

Assigned Topics – Ideas about a narrower topic can come from anywhere. Often, a narrower topic boils down to deciding what's interesting to you. One way to get ideas is to read background information in a source like Wikipedia.

Topic Narrowed by Initial Exploration – It's wise to do some more reading about that narrower topic to a) learn more about it and b) learn specialized terms used by professionals and scholars who study it.

Topic Narrowed to Research Question(s) – A research question defines exactly what you are trying to find out. It will influence most of the steps you take to conduct the research.

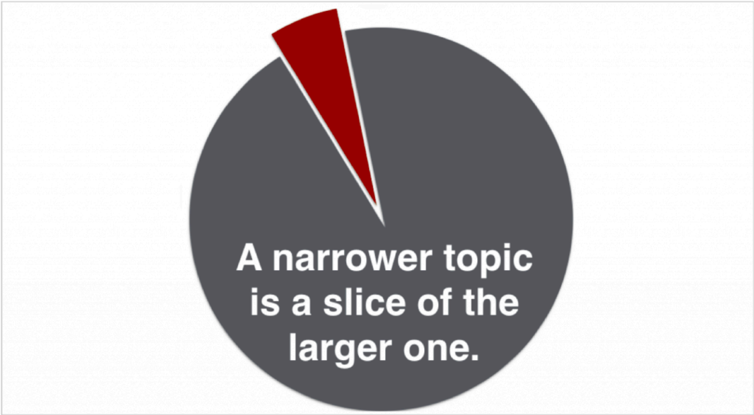
ACTIVITY: Which Topic Is Narrower?

Open activity in a web browser.

Why Narrow a Topic?

Once you have a need for research—say, an assignment—you may need to prowl around a bit online to explore the topic and figure out what you actually want to find out and write about.

For instance, maybe your assignment is to develop a poster about "spring" for an introductory horticulture course. The instructor expects you to narrow that topic to something you are interested in and that is related to your class.



Another way to view a narrowed topic is as a sliver of the whole topic.

Ideas about a narrower topic can come from anywhere. In this case, a narrower topic boils down to deciding what's interesting to you about "spring" that is related to what you're learning in your horticulture class and small enough to manage in the time you have.

One way to get ideas would be to read about spring in Wikipedia, looking for things that seem interesting and relevant to your class, and then letting one thing lead to another as you keep reading and thinking about likely possibilities that are more narrow than the enormous "spring" topic. (Be sure to pay attention to the references at the bottom of most Wikipedia pages and pursue any that look interesting. Your instructor is not likely to let you cite Wikipedia, but those references may be citable scholarly sources that you could eventually decide to use.)

Or, instead, if it is spring at the time you could start by just looking around, admire the blooming trees on campus, and decide you'd like your poster to be about bud development on your favorites, the crabapple trees.

Anna Narrows Her Topic and Works on a Research Question

The Situation: Anna, an undergraduate, has been assigned a research paper on Antarctica. Her professor expects students to (1) narrow the topic on something more specific about Antarctica because they won't have time to cover that whole topic. Then they are to (2) come up with a research question that their paper will answer.

The professor explained that the research question should be something they are interested in answering and that it must be more complicated than what they could answer with a quick Google search. He also said that research questions often start with either the word "how" or "why."

What you should do:

1. Read what Anna is thinking below as she tries to do the assignment.
2. After the reading, answer the questions at the end of the monologue in your own mind.
3. Check your answers with ours at the end of Anna's interior monologue.
4. Keep this demonstration in mind the next time you are in Anna's spot, and you can mimic her actions and thinking about your own topic.

Anna's Interior Monologue

Okay, I am going to have to write something—a research paper—about Antarctica. I don't know anything about that place—I think it's a continent. I can't think of a single thing I've ever wanted to know about Antarctica. How will I come up with a research question about that place? Calls for Wikipedia, I guess.

At https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antarctica. Just skimming. Pretty boring stuff. Oh, look–Antarctica's a desert! I guess "desert" doesn't have to do with heat. That's interesting. What else could it have to do with? Maybe lack of precipitation? But there's lots of snow and ice there. Have to think about that—what makes a desert a desert.

A desert?

It says one to five thousand people live there in research stations. Year round. Definitely the last thing I'd ever do. "…there is no evidence that it was seen by humans until the 19th century." I never thought about whether anybody lived in Antarctica first, before the scientists and stuff.

Lots of names—explorer, explorer… boring. It says Amundson reached the South pole first. Who's Amundson? But wait. It says, "One month later, the doomed Scott Expedition reached the pole." Doomed? Doomed is always interesting. Where's more about the Scott Expedition? I'm going to use that Control-F technique and type in Scott to see if I can find more about him on this page. Nothing beyond that one sentence shows up. Why would they have just that one sentence? I'll have to click on the Scott Expedition link.

Terra Nova…

But it gives me a page called Terra Nova Expedition. What does that have to do with Scott? And just who was Scott? And why was his expedition doomed? There he is in a photo before going to Antarctica. Guess he was English. Other photos show him and his team in the snow. Oh, the expedition was named Terra Nova after the ship they sailed this time—in 1911. Scott had been there earlier on another ship.

Lots of stuff about preparing for the trip. Then stuff about expedition journeys once they were in Antarctica. Not very exciting—nothing about being doomed. I don't want to write about this stuff.

Wait. The last paragraph of the first section says "For many years after his death, Scott's status as tragic hero was unchallenged," but then it says that in the 20th century people looked closer at the expedition's management and at whether Scott and some of his team could be personally blamed for the catastrophe. That "remains controversial," it says. Catastrophe? Personally blamed? Hmm.

Back to skimming. It all seems horrible to me. They actually *planned* to kill their ponies for meat, so when they actually did it, it was no surprise. Everything was extremely difficult. And then when they arrived at the South Pole, they found that the explorer Amundsen had beaten them. Must have been a big disappointment.

The homeward march was even worse. The weather got worse. The dog sleds that were supposed to meet them periodically with supplies didn't show up. Or maybe the Scott group was lost and didn't go to the right meeting places. Maybe that's what that earlier statement meant about whether the decisions that were made were good ones. Scott's diary said the crystallized snow made it seem like they were pushing and pulling the sledges through *dry sand*.

Rocks?!

It says that before things turned really bad (*really* bad? You've already had to eat your *horses*!), Scott allowed his men to put 30 pounds of rocks with fossils on the sledges they were pushing and dragging. Now was that sensible? The men had to push or pull those sledges themselves. What if it was those rocks that actually doomed those men?

But here it says that those rocks are the proof of continental drift.

So how did they know those rocks were so important? Was that knowledge worth their lives? Could they have known?

Wow–there is drama on this page! Scott's diary is quoted about their troubles on the expedition—the relentless cold, frostbite, and the deaths of their dogs. One entry tells of a guy on Scott's team "now with hands as well as feet pretty well useless" voluntarily leaving the tent and walking to his death. The diary says that the team member's last words were "I am just going outside and may be some time." Ha!

They all seem lost and desperate but still have those sledges. Why would you keep pulling and pushing those sledges containing an extra 30 pounds of rock when you are so desperate and every step is life or death?

A diary…

Then there's Scott's last diary entry, on March 29, 1912. "… It seems a pity but I do not think I can write more." Well.

That diary apparently gave lots of locations of where he thought they were but maybe they were lost. It says they ended up only 11 miles from one of their supply stations. I wonder if anybody knows how close they were to where Scott *thought* they were.

I'd love to see that diary. Wouldn't that be cool? Online? I'll Google it.

Yes! At the British museum. Look at that! I can see Scott's last entry IN HIS OWN HANDWRITING!

Actually, if I decide to write about something that requires reading the diary, it would be easier to not have to decipher his handwriting. Wonder whether there is a typed version of it online somewhere?

A digital version?

Maybe I should pay attention to the early paragraph on the Terra Nova Expedition page in Wikipedia—about it being controversial whether Scott and his team made bad decisions so that they brought most of their troubles on themselves. Can I narrow my topic to just the controversy over whether bad decisions of Scott and his crew doomed them? Maybe it's too big a topic if I consider the decisions of all team members. Maybe I should just consider Scott's decisions.

So what research question could come from that? Maybe: how did Scott's decisions contribute to his team's deaths in Antarctica? But am I talking about his decisions before or after they left for Antarctica? Or the whole time they were a team? Probably too many decisions involved. More focused: How did Scott's decisions after reaching the South Pole help or hurt the chances of his team getting back safely? That's not bad—maybe. If people have written about that. There are several of his decisions discussed on the Wikipedia page, and I know there are sources at the bottom of that page.


Really, a desert?

Let me think—what else did I see that was interesting or puzzling about all this? I remember being surprised that Antarctica is a desert. So maybe I could make Antarctica as a desert my topic. My research question could be something like: Why is Antarctica considered a desert? But there has to be a definition of deserts somewhere online, so that doesn't sound complicated enough. Once you know the definition of desert, you'd know the answer to the question. Professor Sanders says research questions are more complicated than regular questions.

What's a topic I could care about? A question I really wonder about? Maybe those rocks with the fossils in them. It's just so hard to imagine desperate explorers continuing to push those sledges with an extra 30 pounds of rocks on them. Did they somehow know how important they would be? Or were they just curious about them? Why didn't they ditch them? Or maybe they just didn't realize how close to death they were. Maybe I could narrow my Antarctica topic to those rocks.


Why rocks?

Maybe my topic could be something like: The rocks that Scott and his crew found in Antarctica that prove continental drift. Maybe my research question could be: How did Scott's explorers choose the rocks they kept?

Well, now all I have is questions about my questions. Like, is my professor going to think the question about the rocks is still about Antarctica? Or is it all about continental drift or geology or even the psychology of desperate people? And what has been written about the finding of those rocks? Will I be able to find enough sources? I'm also wondering whether my question about Scott's decisions is too big—do I have enough time for it?

I think my professor is the only one who can tell me whether my question about the rocks has enough to do with Antarctica. Since he's the one who will be grading my paper. But a librarian can help me figure out the other things.

I should ask.

So Dr. Sanders and a librarian are next.

Questions

1. Was Anna's choice to start with Wikipedia a good choice? Why or why not?
2. Have you ever used that Control-F technique?
3. At what points does Anna think about where to look for information?
4. At the end of this session, Anna hasn't yet settled on a research question. So what did she accomplish? What good was all this searching and thinking?

Here are our answers below.

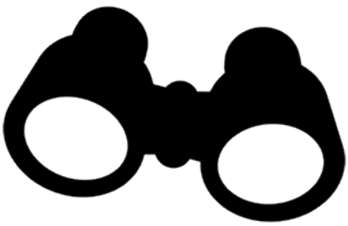
Our Answers:

1. **Was Anna's choice to start with Wikipedia a good choice? Why or why not?** Wikipedia is a great place to start a research project. Just make sure you move on from there, because it's a not a good place to end up with your project. One place to move on to is the sources at the bottom of most Wikipedia pages.
2. **Have you ever used that Control-F technique?** If you haven't used the Control-F technique, we hope you will. It can save

you a lot of time and effort reading online material.

3. **At what points does Anna think about where to look for information**? When she began; when she wanted to know more about the Scott expedition; when she wonders whether she could read Scott's diary online; when she thinks about what people could answer her questions.
4. **At the end of this session, Anna hasn't yet settled on a research question. So what did she accomplish? What good was all this reading and thinking?** There are probably many answers to this question. Ours includes that Anna learned more about Antarctica, the subject of her research project. She focused her thinking (even if she doesn't end up using the possible research questions she's considering) and practiced critical thinking skills, such as when she thought about what she could be interested in, when she worked to make her potential research questions more specific, and when she figured out what questions still needed answering at the end. She also practiced her skills at making meaning from what she read, investigating a story that she didn't expect to be there and didn't know had the potential of being one that she is interested in. She also now knows what questions she needs answered and whom to ask. These thinking skills are what college is all about. Anna is way beyond where she was when she started.

Background Reading



Get a good look at your topic through background reading.

It's wise to do some more reading about that narrower topic once you have it. For one reason, you probably don't know much about it yet. For another, such reading will help you learn the terms used by professionals and scholars who have studied your narrower topic. Those terms are certain to be helpful when you're looking for sources later, so jot them down or otherwise remember them.

For instance, if you were going to do research about the treatment for humans with bird flu, this background reading would teach you that professionals and scholars usually use the term avian influenza instead of bird flu when they write about it. (Often, they also use H1N1 or H1N9 to identify the strain.) If you didn't learn that, you would miss the kinds of sources you'll eventually need for your assignment.

Most sources other than journal articles are good sources for this initial reading, including the *New York Times* or other mainline American news outlets, Wikipedia, encyclopedias for the discipline your topic is in (horticulture for the crabapple bud development topic, for instance), dictionaries for the discipline, and manuals, handbooks, blogs, and web pages that could be relevant.

This initial reading could cause you to narrow your topic further, which is fine because narrower topics lead to greater specificity for what you have to find out.After this upfront work, you're ready to start developing the research question(s) you will try to answer for your assignment.

Tip: *Keeping Track of Your Information*

While you are in the background reading phase of your research you will come across a lot of sources and won't know yet if they will prove useful in the long run. A "low tech" option to keep track of your information is to use a Google doc or Word document to save all of your URLs (web addresses) so that you can access the sources easily. Google Scholar and college library databases also allow you to save the sources you find.

A handy type of software to help you keep track of all your findings is called citation management software. It will also be extremely valuable when it comes to using the resources you end up needing. Three of these tools are available for free to OSU students, staff and faculty. Learn more about these tools and how to access them.

Common Citations Tools

Fuel Your Inspiration

Reading, scanning, looking at, and listening to information resources is very useful during any step of the process to develop research questions. Returning to sources can jog our memories, give us details that will help us focus, and help us connect disparate information–all of which will help us come up with research questions that we find interesting.

Regular Questions vs. Research Questions

Most of us look for information to answer questions every day, and we often act on the answers to those questions. Are research questions any different from most of the questions for which we seek information? Yes.

See how they're different by looking over the examples of both kinds below and answering questions about them in the next activity.

Examples: Regular vs. Research Questions

Regular Question: What time is my movie showing at Lennox on Friday?

Research Question: How do "sleeper" films end up having outstanding attendance figures?

Regular Question: What can I do about my insomnia?

Research Question: How do flights more than 16 hours long affect the reflexes of commercial jet pilots?

Regular Question: How many children in the U.S. have allergies?

Research Question: How does his or her country of birth affect a child's chances of developing asthma?

Regular Question: What year was metformin approved by the U.S. Food and Drug administration?

Research Question: Why are nanomedicines, such as doxorubicin, worth developing?

Regular Question: Could citizens register to vote at branches of the Columbus Public Library in 2016?

Research Question: How do public libraries in the United States support democracy?

Regular Question: What is the Whorfian Hypothesis?

Research Question: Why have linguists cared about the Whorfian hypothesis?

Regular Question: Where is the Apple, Inc. home office?

Research Question: Why are Apple's marketing efforts so successful?

Regular Question: What is SARS?

Research Question: How could decision making about whether to declare a pandemic be improved?

Regular Question: Does MLA style recommend the use of generic male pronouns intended to refer to both males and females?

Research Question: How do age, gender, IQ, and socioeconomic status affect whether students interpret generic male pronouns as referring to both males and females?

Activity: Which Kind of Question

Open activity in a web browser.

Influence of a Research Question

Whether you're developing research questions for your personal life, your work for an employer, or for academic purposes, the process always forces you to figure out exactly:

- What you're interested in finding out.
- What it's feasible for you to find out (given your time, money, and access to information sources).
- How you can find it out, including what research methods will be necessary and what information sources will be relevant.
- What kind of claims you'll be able to make or conclusions you'll be able to draw about what you found out.

For academic purposes, you may have to develop research questions to carry out both large and small assignments. A smaller assignment may be to do research for a class discussion or to, say, write a blog post for a class; larger assignments may have you conduct research and then report it in a lab report, poster, term paper, or article.

For large projects, the research question (or questions) you develop will define or at least heavily influence:

- Your **topic**, in that research questions effectively narrow the topic you've first chosen or been assigned by your instructor.
- What, if any, **hypotheses** you test.
- Which **information sources** are relevant to your project.
- Which **research methods** are appropriate.
- What claims you can make or **conclusions** you can come to as a result of your research, including what **thesis statement** you should write for a term paper or what **results section** you should write about the data you collected in your own science or social science study.

Your research question drives your hypothesis, research methods, sources, and your claims or conclusions.

Thesis Statements in Research Writing

Within an essay, poster, or term paper, the thesis is the researcher's answer to the research question(s). So as you develop research questions, you are effectively specifying what any thesis in your project will be about. While perhaps many research questions could have come from your original topic, your question states exactly which one(s) *your* thesis will be answering.

For example, a topic that starts out as “desert symbiosis” could eventually lead to a research question that is “how does the diversity of bacteria in the gut of the Sonoran Desert termite contribute to the termite’s survival?” In turn, the researcher’s thesis will answer that particular research question instead of the numerous other questions that could have come from the desert symbiosis topic.

Developing research questions is all part of a process that leads to greater and greater specificity for your project.

Tip: *Don’t Make These Mistakes*

Sometimes students inexperienced at working with research questions confuse them with the search statements they will type into the search box of a search engine or database when looking for sources for their project. Or they confuse research questions with the thesis statement that they will write when they report their research. The next activity will help you sort things out.

Activity: *From Topic to Thesis Statement*

Open activity in a web browser.

Influence on Hypothesis

If you're doing a study that predicts how variables are related (common in the sciences and social sciences), you'll have to write at least one hypothesis. The research questions you write will contain the variables that will later appear in your hypothesis(es).

Activity: *Guess the Question*

You can usually figure out what the researcher's research questions were by reading the title and some of the report. Take a look at this student essay, "Does Texting Affect Writing?" by Michaela Cullington, and determine what the students' research question was.

Influence on Resources

You can't tell whether an information source is relevant to your research until you know exactly what you're trying to find out. Since the research question defines a source's usefulness, looking at the research question should help you to divide information sources into two groups: those that are relevant to your research and those that are not—all based on whether each source can help you find out what you want to find out and/or report the answer.

Influence on Research Methods

Not all academic research writing involves primary research. However, primary research can be a powerful way to gain insights and new information about your question. There are three types of research methods:

Qualitative research uses a naturalistic, person centered approach to understand people's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behavior, and interactions. This type of research does not generate numerical data.

Quantitative research focuses on numerical data to answer research questions. This data may be collected and analyzed in a variety of ways to find trends, suggest causal relationships, or make generalized predictions about large populations. Most scholars rely on software such as SPSS to analyze quantitative data.

Mixed method research incorporates elements of both qualitative and quantitative research.

Your research question(s) will help you figure out what research methods you should use because the questions reflect what your research is intended to do. For instance, if your research question relates to describing a group, survey methods may work well. But a survey can't answer cause-and-effect questions. If your research question focuses more on individual experiences, interviews may be a better way to collect information.

Influence on Claims or Conclusions

The research questions you write will reflect whether your research is intended to describe a group or situation, to explain or predict outcomes, or to demonstrate a cause-and-effect relationship(s) among variables. It's those intentions and how well you carry out the study, including whether you used methods appropriate to the intentions, that will determine what claims or conclusions you can make as a result of your research.

Activity: *Quick Check*

Open activity in a web browser.

Answer to Activity: Guess the Question

The answer to the "Guess the Question" Activity above is:

The research question is the same as the title: "Does texting affect writing?" It's fine for you to use your research question as the title of your paper.

DEVELOPING YOUR RESEARCH QUESTION

Because of all their influence, you might worry that research questions are very difficult to develop. Sometimes it can seem that way. But we'll help you get the hang of it and, luckily, none of us has to come up with perfect ones right off. It's more like doing a rough draft and then improving it. That's why we talk about *developing* research questions instead of just writing them.

Steps for Developing a Research Question

The steps for developing a research question, listed below, can help you organize your thoughts.

Step 1: Pick a topic (or consider the one assigned to you).

Step 2: Write a narrower/smaller topic that is related to the first.

Step 3: List some potential questions that could logically be asked in relation to the narrow topic.

Step 4: Pick the question that you are most interested in.

Step 5: Change that question you're interested in so that it is more focused.

MOVIE: Developing Research Questions

As you view this short video on how to develop research questions, think about the steps. Which step do you think is easiest? Which do you think is hardest?
[iframe src="https://www.youtube.com/embed/1oJNO6PYZe4" width="560" height="315" allowfullscreen="allowfullscreen"]

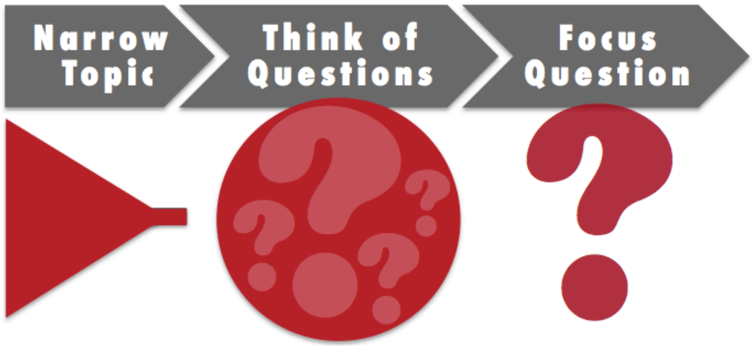
View Movie | View Text Version

Practice

Once you know the steps and their order, only three skills are involved in developing a research question:

- Imagining narrower topics about a larger one,
- Thinking of questions that stem from a narrow topic, and
- Focusing questions to eliminate their vagueness.

Every time you use these skills, it's important to evaluate what you have produced—that's just part of the process of turning rough drafts into more finished products.



Three steps for developing a research question

ACTIVITY: Developing a Research Question

[Open activity in a web browser.]

Maybe you have a topic in mind, but aren't sure how to form a research question around it. The trick is to think of a question related to your topic, but not answerable with a quick search. Also, try to be specific so that your research question can be fully answered in the final product for your research assignment.

ACTIVITY: Thinking of Questions

For each of the narrow topics below, think of a research question that is logically related to that topic. (Remember that good research questions often, but not always, start with "Why" or "How" because questions that begin that way usually require more analysis.)

Topics:

- U.S. investors' attitudes about sustainability
- College students' use of Snapchat

- The character Scout in *To Kill a Mockingbird*
- Nature-inspired nanotechnologies
- Marital therapy

After you think of each research question, evaluate it by asking whether it is:

- Logically related to the topic
- In question form
- Not answerable with a quick Google search
- Specific, not vague

Sometimes the first draft of a research question is still too broad, which can make your search for sources more challenging. Refining your question to remove vagueness or to target a specific aspect of the topic can help.

ACTIVITY: Focusing Questions

The first draft research questions below are not focused enough. Read them and identify at least one area of vagueness in each. Check your vagueness with what we identified. It's great if you found more than we did because that can lead to research questions of greater specificity. See the bottom of the page for our answers.

First Drafts of Research Questions:

1. Why have most electric car company start-ups failed?
2. How do crabapple trees develop buds?
3. How has NASA helped America?
4. Why do many first-time elections soon after a country overthrows a dictator result in very conservative elected leaders?
5. How is music composed and performed mostly by African-Americans connected to African-American history?

ANSWER TO ACTIVITY: Focusing Questions

Some answers to the "Focusing Questions" Activity above are:

Question 1: Why have most electric car company start-ups failed?
Vagueness: Which companies are we talking about? Worldwide or in a particular country?

Question 2: How do crabapple trees develop buds?
Vagueness: There are several kinds of crabapples. Should we talk only about one kind? Does it matter where the crabapple tree lives?

Question 3: How has NASA helped America?
Vagueness: NASA has had many projects. Should we should focus on one project they completed? Or projects during a particular time period?

Question 4: Why do many first-time elections soon after a country overthrows a dictator result in very conservative elected leaders?
Vagueness: What time period are we talking about? Many dictators have been overthrown and many countries have been involved. Perhaps we should focus on one country or one dictator or one time period.

Question 5: How is music composed and performed mostly by African-Americans connected to African-American history?
Vagueness: What kinds of music? Any particular performers and composers? When?

93. Tips for Developing Research Questions

LIZA LONG

This section by Liza Long remixes some material from "Developing a Research Question" from Clark College Libraries, http://www.gavilan.edu/library/LIB99/unit3narrowingtopic_lesson09.html.

What is exploratory research?

Exploratory research starts with a question. But it's not just any question. Exploratory research uses high quality sources to answer a narrow, focused research question. This type of writing is objective, meaning that the author does not take sides. These types of papers are common in college courses. You may write an exploratory research essay in a first-year composition course, but the skills you learn will transfer to much longer research papers in your major, then perhaps on to a master's thesis and a doctoral dissertation.

The purpose of exploratory research writing is to inform the reader, and generally, your audience will be an academic one.

How Do I Choose a Topic?

In some courses, your instructor may assign you a topic or a range of topics that you can choose from. But in many other courses, you may have an open topic assignment. Choosing a narrowed, focused topic for your research question will be important to your success. Start by using exploring strategies (brainstorm, cluster, list, freewrite, question) about topics that interest you. The topic should be something that you care about because you will be spending quite a bit of time on it in the next few weeks.

After you've generated several possible broader topics, you'll need to narrow and focus one of your topics. One way to narrow your topic is to do a little background research on the Internet. What sorts of questions have others asked about your topic? Are there any new angles that you can explore? While you should not cite Wikipedia as a source in an academic paper, it can be a great place to do some background research to help you narrow and focus your topic.

This brief video provide a quick guide to the process of developing a narrowed, focused research question that is appropriate for an academic audience:

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://idaho.pressbooks.pub/write/?p=250#oembed-1

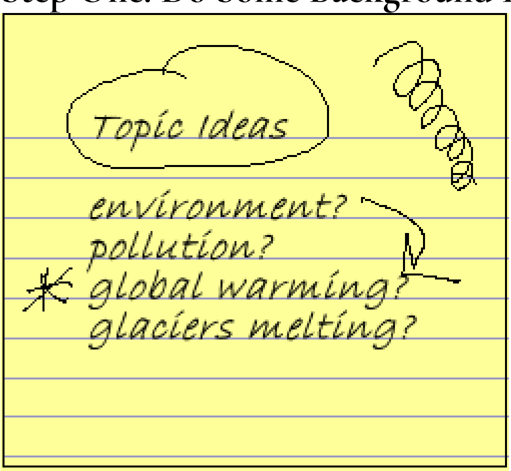
As we see, developing the research question is one of the most important and challenging parts of exploratory research.

The video gives us some examples of common problems with research questions:

- Too narrow: When was the Civil War?
- Too broad: Why was the Civil War important?
- Too vague: Is television a bad influence? (on whom? What types of programs? What do you mean by "bad"?)
- A question that can't be answered by academic research: What happens when we die?

After you've decided on a topic idea, you can follow the steps below to narrow and focus our topic and develop an effective research question.

Step One: Do Some Background Research



Collecting a little background information on your topic idea can to help you define and focus your interest into an appropriate topic for an exploratory research essay. You can also find out if your topic is something you want to spend some time with, and if it's something you can research.

- Jot down a few keywords (terms) related to your topic, then perform some basic searches. Some excellent ideas for collecting background information include the following:
- Scan a few articles in a reliable subject-area or specialized encyclopedias, or online databases the provide REFERENCE overviews.(Like Opposing Viewpoints, CQ Researcher, and Points of View Reference Center). You will find these in the library and online through your library's web site.
- Try out your keywords in a search engine, such as Google, but don't go too deep. Remember, you're just getting a feel for your topic, not doing the research.
- In doing your preliminary research, if you discover that this topic has possibilities, take the time to add additional words to your keyword list.

Collecting background information is not the same as conducting research. At this point you're just getting a general "feel" for your topic. An hour spent on this step may save you countless hours later.

Step Two: Focus Your Topic

Once you have a topic that you like, you'll probably need to focus it or narrow it down. Most students start out with topics that are much too broad for their assignments. If your topic is too broad, your research will be much more difficult, and you'll waste time looking for information that you won't use.

For example, if you try searching for information on global warming, you will quickly be overwhelmed. Global warming is a large subject, covering a variety of disciplines, topics and issues. How can you narrow this topic?

Brainstorm again.

Jot down all the ideas and questions you might already have about the topic:

- What do you know about global warming? What don't you know?
- Is there a geographical area you want to focus on?
- Are there individuals or organizations involved in this issue?
- What are some areas impacted by global warming?
  - Environmental
  - Political

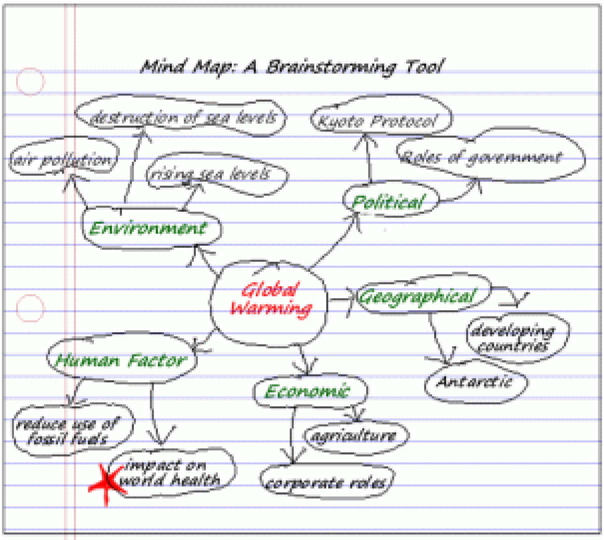
- Economic
- Human element.

It may help to set up a table or chart moving from the general topic to narrower topics:

Brainstorming a Topic

Topic	Narrower Topic	Even Narrower
Global Warming	» Environment	» rising sea levels » destruction of rain forests » air pollution
	» Political	» Kyoto Protocol » roles of government
	» Human Element	» impact on world health » reducing use of fossil fuel
	» Economic	» agriculture » role of corporations
	» Geographical	» developing countries
		» Antarctic region

If the chart is too formal for you, you might like making a ***mindmap*** or ***concept map***. A whiteboard or a big piece of paper are all you need to make a mindmap. Here's the same information as above, but in a mindmap:



The secret to mindmapping is to free yourself from rules. Don't worry about grammar, spelling, or formatting. Just jot down ideas until you can't think of anymore, then go back and make connections between the ideas. If an idea appeals to you, make it the center idea on a new piece of paper and brainstorm more details.

Step Three: Turn Your Topic Into a Research Question

Dig into your topic to find the question

Once you've narrowed your topic to something workable, you need to restate it as a question. A question requires an answer, and research is all about the search for answers.

Here's an example:

Broad Topic: global warming

Focused Topic: global warming and world health

Possible Research Questions:

- How will changes in the world climate increase health risks for people worldwide?
- What should the U.S. government do to prepare for an increase in climate-related diseases?
- What is the role of the World Health Organization in response to increasing diseases?

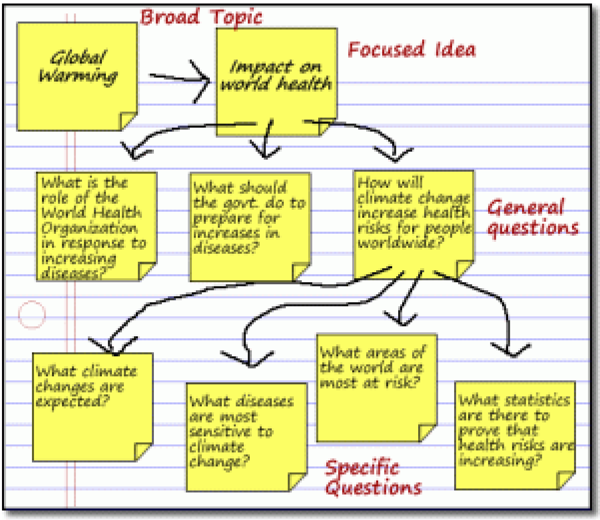
Once you have a research question, break it into even smaller questions:

How will changes in the world climate increase health risks for people worldwide?

- What climate changes are expected?
- What diseases are most sensitive to climate change?
- What areas of the world are most at risk?
- What statistics are there to prove that health risks are increasing?
- … etc.

You can see that research is basically a quest to find answers to the questions you are asking.

Here is the same activity as above, using the "sticky note" technique:



What Kinds of Sources Should I Use for Exploratory Research?

With this kind of paper, your sources matter. It's important to rely on high-quality sources. In many cases, your instructor may want you to use at least a few peer-reviewed journal articles. These types of articles often review existing scholarly literature, provide original research, give case studies, or provide expert commentary or perspectives.

The two types of sources you may consider are primary sources and secondary sources. Always make sure you check in with your instructor and read your assignment instructions carefully so that you find and use the right kinds of sources.

Primary sources serve as an original source of information about the topic. In journalism, a primary source can be a person with direct knowledge of a situation, or a document written by such a person. Examples of primary sources include personal interviews, your own original research, newspaper articles, media (such as photos or videos), and primary texts like novels or the Declaration of Independence.

Secondary sources are documents or recordings that discuss information originally presented elsewhere. A secondary source contrasts with a primary source, which is an original source of the information being discussed. A secondary source is one that gives information about a primary source. In this source, the original information is selected, modified and arranged in a suitable format. Secondary sources involve generalization, analysis, interpretation, or evaluation of the original information.

Examples of secondary sources include books and academic journal articles. Your instructor may also allow you to use high-quality journalism sources such as articles in *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, or similar publications, for your assignments. Google Scholar is one way to search for peer-reviewed journal articles (though you should never pay for a source!).

As you begin your research, you may also want to spend some time with your campus librarian to explore resources that are available to help you. For example, as we saw above, CQ Researcher is a database that many college libraries provide. These current-event focused articles can provide you with an objective overview of a potential topic and point you in the right direction for more specific academic sources that you can use in your paper.

Research Question Checklist

These questions will help you to make sure you've developed an appropriate research question for your exploratory research essay.

1. Does the question deal with a topic that interests me enough to provide my own thoughts and opinions?
2. Can the research question be answered easily through research?

3. Is the scope of this question something that can be answered in a relatively short 1500-2500 word essay?
4. What kinds of information do I need to answer my question? For example, if I decide to research the effects of smartphone use on Millennial romantic relationships, I might need the following types of information:
    - Statistics on Millennial smartphone use
    - Statistics on Millennial romantic relationships
    - Anecdotal evidence (stories about Millennial smartphone use)
5. What sources will have the type of information that I need to answer the research question (journals, books, Internet resources, government documents, people)?
6. How will I access the sources I need?

Once you know the answers to these questions, you probably have developed an appropriate research question for your essay.

94. Types of Sources

TEACHING & LEARNING AND UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

Categorizing Sources

Understanding types of sources helps guide your search.

Once you have your research question, you'll need information sources to answer it and meet the other information needs of your research project.

This section about categorizing sources will increase your sophistication about them and save you time in the long run because you'll understand the "big picture". That big picture will be useful as you plan your own sources for a specific research project, which we'll help you with in the next section Sources and Information Needs.

You'll usually have a lot of sources available to meet the information needs of your projects. In today's complex information landscape, just about anything that contains information can be considered a potential source.

Here are a few examples:

- Books and encyclopedias
- Websites, web pages, and blogs
- Magazine, journal, and newspaper articles
- Research reports and conference papers
- Field notes and diaries
- Photographs, paintings, cartoons, and other art works
- TV and radio programs, podcasts, movies, and videos
- Illuminated manuscripts and artifacts
- Bones, minerals, and fossils
- Preserved tissues and organs
- Architectural plans and maps
- Pamphlets and government documents
- Music scores and recorded performances
- Dance notation and theater set models

With so many sources available, the question usually is not whether sources exist for your project but which ones will best meet your information needs.

Being able to categorize a source helps you understand the kind of information it contains, which is a big clue to (1) whether might meet one or more of your information needs and (2) where to look for it and similar sources.

A source can be categorized by:

- Whether it contains quantitative or qualitative information or both

- Whether the source is objective (factual) or persuasive (opinion) and may be biased
- Whether the source is a scholarly, professional or popular publication
- Whether the material is a primary, secondary or tertiary source
- What format the source is in

As you may already be able to tell, sources can be in more than one category at the same time because the categories are not mutually exclusive.

Quantitative or Qualitative

One of the most obvious ways to categorize information is by whether it is quantitative or qualitative. Some sources contain either quantitative information or qualitative information, but sources often contain both.

Information can be quantitative or qualitative.

Many people first think of information as something like what's in a table or spreadsheet of numbers and words. But information can be conveyed in more ways than textually or numerically.

Quantitative Information – Involves a measurable quantity—numbers are used. Some examples are length, mass, temperature, and time. Quantitative information is often called data, but can also be things other than numbers.

Qualitative Information – Involves a descriptive judgment using concept words instead of numbers. Gender, country name, animal species, and emotional state are examples of qualitative information.

Take a quick look at the Example table below. Another way we could display the table's numerical information is in a graphic format —listing the students' ages or GPAs on a bar chart, for example, rather than in a list of numbers. Or, all the information in the table could be displayed instead as a video of each student giving those details about themselves.

Example: *Data Table with Quantitative and Qualitative Data*

A data table listing students, including first and last name, age, class rank, major, gender, grade point average, and photo.

This table illustrates that information can include a range of formats, including pictures.

Increasingly, other formats (such as images, sound, and video) may be is used as information or used to convey information. Some examples:

- A video of someone watching scenes from horror movies, with information about their heart rate and blood pressure embedded in the video. Instead of getting a description of the person's reactions to the scenes, you can see their reactions.
- A database of information about birds, which includes a sound file for each bird singing. Would you prefer a verbal description of a bird's song or an audio clip?
- A list of colors, which include an image of the actual color. Such a list is extremely helpful, especially when there are A LOT of color names.

- A friend orally tells you that a new pizza place is 3 blocks away, charges $2 a slice, and that the pizza is delicious. This may never be recorded, but it may be very valuable information if you're hungry!
- A map of Ohio with counties shaded different intensities of red according to the median household income of inhabitants.

Activity: *Quantitative vs. Qualitative*

What quantitative and qualitative data components might you use to describe yourself? See the bottom of the page for some possible answers.

Activity: *Multiple Data Displays*

Take a look at the Wikipedia article about UN Secretaries-General. Scroll down and view the table of people who served as Secretary-General. In what ways is information conveyed in ways other than text or numbers? See the bottom of the page for answers.

Answer to Activity: *Quantitative vs. Qualitative*

The answer to the "Quantitative vs. Qualitative" Activity above is:
Quantitative: age, weight, GPA, income
Qualitative: race, gender, class (freshman, sophomore, etc.), major
Are there others?

Answer to Activity: Multiple Data Displays

The answer to the “Multiple Data Displays” Activity above is:

- A photo of each secretary general
- The flag of their country of origin
- A world map with their country of origin shaded

Are there others?

Fact or Opinion

An author’s purpose can influence the kind of information he or she choses to include.

Thinking about the reason an author produced a source can be helpful to you because that reason was what dictated the kind of information he/she chose to include. Depending on that purpose, the author may have chosen to include factual, analytical, and objective information. Or, instead, it may have suited his/her purpose to include information that was subjective and therefore less factual and analytical. The author’s reason for producing the source also determined whether he or she included more than one perspective or just his/her own.

Authors typically want to do at least one of the following:

- Inform and educate

- Persuade
- Sell services or products or
- Entertain

Combined Purposes

Sometimes authors have a combination of purposes, as when a marketer decides he can sell more smart phones with an informative sales video that also entertains us. The same is true when a singer writes and performs a song that entertains us but that she intends to make available for sale. Other examples of authors having multiple purposes occur in most scholarly writing.

In those cases, authors certainly want to inform and educate their audiences. But they also want to persuade their audiences that what they are reporting and/or postulating is a true description of a situation, event, or phenomenon or a valid argument that their audience must take a particular action. In this blend of scholarly author's purposes, the intent to educate and inform is considered to trump the intent to persuade.

Why Intent Matters

Authors' intent usually matters in how useful their information can be to your research project, depending on which information need you are trying to meet. For instance, when you're looking for sources that will help you actually decide your answer to your research question or evidence for your answer that you will share with your audience, you will want the author's main purpose to have been to inform or educate his/her audience. That's because, with that intent, he/she is likely to have used:

- Facts where possible.
- Multiple perspectives instead of just his/her own.
- Little subjective information.
- Seemingly unbiased, objective language that cites where he/she got the information.

The reason you want that kind of resource when trying to answer your research question or explaining that answer is that all of those characteristics will lend credibility to the argument you are making with your project. Both you and your audience will simply find it easier to believe—will have more confidence in the argument being made—when you include those types of sources.

Sources whose authors intend only to persuade others won't meet your information need for an answer to your research question or evidence with which to convince your audience. That's because they don't always confine themselves to facts. Instead, they tell us their opinions without backing them up with evidence. If you used those sources, your readers will notice and not believe your argument.

Fact vs. Opinion vs. Objective vs. Subjective

Need to brush up on the differences between fact, objective information, subjective information, and opinion?

Fact – Facts are useful to inform or make an argument.

Examples:

- The United States was established in 1776.
- The pH levels in acids are lower than pH levels in alkalines.
- Beethoven had a reputation as a virtuoso pianist.

Opinion – Opinions are useful to persuade, but careful readers and listeners will notice and demand evidence to back them up.

Examples:

- That was a good movie.
- Strawberries taste better blueberries.
- George Clooney is the sexiest actor alive.
- The death penalty is wrong.
- Beethoven's reputation as a virtuoso pianist is overrated.

Objective – Objective information reflects a research finding or multiple perspectives that are not biased.

Examples:

- "Several studies show that an active lifestyle reduces the risk of heart disease and diabetes."
- "Studies from the Brown University Medical School show that twenty-somethings eat 25 percent more fast-food meals at this age than they did as teenagers."

Subjective – Subjective information presents one person or organization's perspective or interpretation. Subjective information can be meant to distort, or it can reflect educated and informed thinking. All opinions are subjective, but some are backed up with facts more than others.

Examples:

- "The simple truth is this: As human beings, we were meant to move."
- "In their thirties, women should stock up on calcium to ensure strong, dense bones and to ward off osteoporosis later in life."*

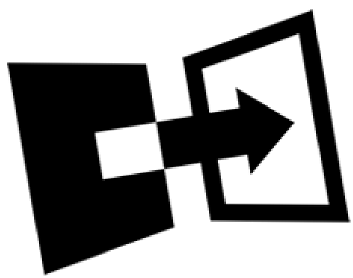
*In this quote, it's mostly the "should" that makes it subjective. The objective version of the last quote would read: "Studies have shown that women who begin taking calcium in their 30s show stronger bone density and fewer repercussions of osteoporosis than women who did not take calcium at all." But perhaps there are other data showing complications from taking calcium. That's why drawing the conclusion that requires a "should" makes the statement subjective.

Activity: Fact, Opinion, Objective, or Subjective?

Open activity in a web browser.

Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Sources

Another information category is called publication mode and has to do with whether the information is



Another way to categorize information is by whether information is in its original format or has been reinterpreted.

- Firsthand information (information in its original form, not translated or published in another form).
- Secondhand information (a restatement, analysis, or interpretation of original information).
- Third-hand information (a summary or repackaging of original information, often based on secondary information that has been published).

The three labels for information sources in this category are, respectively, primary sources, secondary sources, and tertiary sources. Here are examples to illustrate the first- handedness, second-handedness, and third-handedness of information:

Primary Source (Original, Firsthand Information)	J.D. Salinger's novel Catcher in the Rye.
Secondary Source (Secondhand Information)	A book review of Catcher in the Rye, even if the reviewer has a different opinion than anyone else has ever published about the book- he or she is still just reviewing the original work and all the information about the book here is secondary.
Tertiary Source (Third-hand Information)	Wikipedia page about J.D. Salinger.

When you make distinctions between primary, secondary, and tertiary sources, you are relating the information itself to the context in which it was created. Understanding that relationship is an important skill that you'll need in college, as well as in the workplace. Noting the relationship between creation and context helps us understand the "big picture" in which information operates and helps us figure out which information we can depend on. That's a big part of thinking critically, a major benefit of actually becoming an educated person.

Primary Sources – Because it is in its original form, the information in primary sources has reached us from its creators without going through any filter. We get it firsthand. Here are some examples that are often used as primary sources:

- Any literary work, including novels, plays, and poems.
- Breaking news.
- Diaries.
- Advertisements.
- Music and dance performances.
- Eyewitness accounts, including photographs and recorded interviews.

- Artworks.
- Data.
- Blog entries that are autobiographical.
- Scholarly blogs that provide data or are highly theoretical, even though they contain no autobiography.
- Artifacts such as tools, clothing, or other objects.
- Original documents such as tax returns, marriage licenses, and transcripts of trials.
- Websites, although many are secondary.
- Buildings.
- Correspondence, including email.
- Records of organizations and government agencies.
- Journal articles that report research for the first time (at least the parts about the new research, plus their data).

Secondary Source – These sources are translated, repackaged, restated, analyzed, or interpreted original information that is a primary source. Thus, the information comes to us secondhand, or through at least one filter. Here are some examples that are often used as secondary sources:

- All nonfiction books and magazine articles except autobiography.
- An article or website that critiques a novel, play, painting, or piece of music.
- An article or web site that synthesizes expert opinion and several eyewitness accounts for a new understanding of an event.
- The literature review portion of a journal article.

Tertiary Source – These sources *further* repackage the original information because they index, condense, or summarize the original.

Typically, by the time tertiary sources are developed, there have been many secondary sources prepared on their subjects, and you can think of tertiary sources as information that comes to us "third-hand." Tertiary sources are usually publications that you are not intended to read from cover to cover but to dip in and out of for the information you need. You can think of them as a good place for background information to start your research but a bad place to end up. Here are some examples that are often used as tertiary sources:

- Almanacs.
- Dictionaries.
- Guide books, including the one you are now reading.
- Survey articles.
- Timelines.
- Bibliographies.
- Encyclopedias, including Wikipedia.
- Most textbooks.

Tertiary sources are usually not acceptable as cited sources in college research projects because they are so far from firsthand information. That's why most professors don't want you to use Wikipedia as a citable source: the information in Wikipedia is far from original information. Other people have considered it, decided what they think about it, rearranged it, and summarized it–all of which is actually what your professors want *you*, not another author, to do with information in your research projects.

Activity: Which Kind of Source?

Open activity in a web browser.

The Details Are Tricky— A few things about primary or secondary sources might surprise you:

- Sources *become* primary rather than always exist as primary sources.

It's easy to think that it is the *format* of primary sources that makes them primary. But that's not all that matters. So when you see lists like the one above of sources that are often used as primary sources, it's wise to remember that the ones listed are not *automatically already* primary sources. Firsthand sources get that designation only when researchers actually find their information relevant and use it.

For instance: Records that could be relevant to those studying government are created every day by federal, state, county, and city governments as they operate. But until those raw data are actually used by a researcher, they cannot be considered primary sources.

Another example: A diary about his flying missions kept by an American helicopter pilot in the Viet Nam War is not a primary source until, say, a researcher uses it in her study of how the war was carried out. But it will never be a primary source for a researcher studying the U.S. public's reaction to the war because it does not contain information relevant to that study.

- Primary sources, even eyewitness accounts, are not necessarily accurate. Their accuracy has to be evaluated, just like that of all sources.
- Something that is usually considered a secondary source can be considered a primary source, depending on the research project.

For instance, movie reviews are usually considered secondary sources. But if your research project is about the effect movie reviews have on ticket sales, the movie reviews you study would become primary sources.

- Deciding whether to consider a journal article a primary or a secondary source can be complicated for at least two reasons.

First, journal articles that report new research for the first time are usually based on data. So some disciplines consider the *data* to be the primary source, and the journal article that describes and analyzes them is considered a secondary source.

However, particularly in the sciences, the original researcher might find it difficult or impossible (he or she might not be allowed) to share the data. So sometimes you have nothing more firsthand than the journal article, which argues for calling it the relevant primary source because it's the closest thing that exists to the data.

Second, even journal articles that announce new research for the first time usually contain more than data. They also typically contain secondary source elements, such as a literature review, bibliography, and sections on data analysis and interpretation. So they can actually be a *mix* of primary and secondary elements. Even so, in some disciplines, a journal article that announces new research findings for the first time is considered to be, as a whole, a primary source for the researchers using it.

ACTIVITY: Under What Circumstances?

Instructions: Look at each of the sources listed below and think of circumstances under which each could become a primary source. (There are probably many potential circumstances for each.) So just imagine you are a researcher with projects that would make each item firsthand information that is relevant to your work. What could a project be about that would make each source relevant firsthand information? Our answers are at the bottom of the page, but remember that there are many more–including the ones you think of that we didn't!

a. Fallingwater, a Pennsylvania home designed and constructed by Frank Lloyd Wright in the 1930s.
b. Poet W.H. Auden's elegy for Y.S. Yeats.

c. An arrowhead made by (Floriday) Seminole Native Americans but found at Flint Ridge outside Columbus, Ohio.
d. E-mail between the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, and her staff about North Korea.
e. A marriage license.

Despite their trickiness, what primary sources usually offer is too good not to consider using because:

- They are original. This unfiltered, firsthand information is not available anywhere else.
- Their creator was a type of person unlike others in your research project, and you want to include that perspective.
- Their creator was present at an event and shares an eyewitness account.
- They are objects that existed at the particular time your project is studying.

Particularly in humanities courses, your professor may require you to use a certain number of primary sources for your project. In other courses, particularly in the sciences, you may be required to use *only* primary sources.

What are considered primary and secondary sources can vary from discipline to discipline. If you are required to use primary sources for your research project, before getting too deep into your project check with your professor to make sure he or she agrees with your choices. After all, it's your professor who will be grading your project. A librarian, too, can verify your choices. Just remember to take a copy of your assignment with you when you ask, because the librarian will want to see the original assignment. After all, that's a primary source!

POSSIBLE ANSWERS TO ACTIVITY: Under What

Circumstances?

a. You are doing a study of the entrances Wright designed for homes, which were smaller than other architects of the time typically designed entrances.
b. Your research project is about the Auden-Yeats relationship.
c. Your research project is about trade among 19th century Native Americans east of the Mississippi River.
d. Your research project is on how Ambassador Haley conveyed a decision about North Korea to her staff.
e. You are writing about the life of a person who claimed to have married several times, and you need more than her statements about when those marriages took place and to whom.

Popular, Professional, and Scholarly

We can also categorize information by the expertise of its intended audience. Considering the intended audience—how expert one has to be to understand the information—can indicate whether the source has sufficient credibility and thoroughness to meet your need.

There are varying degrees of expertise:

Popular – Popular newspaper and magazine articles (such as *The Washington Post*, the *New Yorker*, and *Rolling Stone*) are meant for a large general audience, are generally affordable, and are easy to purchase or available for free. They are written by staff writers or reporters for the general public.

Additionally, they are:

- About news, opinions, background information, and entertainment.
- More attractive than scholarly journals, with catchy titles, attractive artwork, and many advertisements but no footnotes or references.
- Published by commercial publishers.
- Published after approval from an editor.
- For information on using news articles as sources (from newspapers in print and online, broadcast news outlets, news aggregators, news databases, news feeds, social media, blogs, and citizen journalism), see News as a Source.

Professional – Professional magazine articles (such as *Plastic Surgical Nursing* and *Music Teacher*) are meant for people in a particular profession, and are often accessible through a professional organization. Staff writers or other professionals in the targeted field write these articles at a level and with the language to be understood by everyone in the profession.

Additionally, they are:

- About trends and news from the targeted field, book reviews, and case studies.
- Often less than 10 pages, some of which may contain footnotes and references.
- Usually published by professional associations and commercial publishers.
- Published after approval from an editor.

Scholarly – Scholarly journal articles (such as *Plant Science* and *Education and Child Psychology*) are meant for scholars, students, and the general public who want a deep understanding of a problem or issue. Researchers and scholars write these articles to present new knowledge and further understanding of their field of study.

Additionally, they are:

- Where findings of research projects, data and analytics, and case studies usually appear first.
- Often long (usually over 10 pages) and always include footnotes and references.
- Usually published by universities, professional associations, and commercial publishers.
- Published after approval by peer review or from the journal's editor.

See Scholarly Articles as Sources for more detail.

Tip: Source Locator

Our Source Locator can help you see where sources of every audience expertise level (popular, professional, and scholarly) are located.

Activity: Popular, Professional, or Scholarly?

Open activity in a web browser.

Publication Formats and the Information Lifecycle

We can also categorize sources by publication format. That's because of the difference in time and effort sources in each format require for their production.

Sources in particular formats simply cannot exist until there has been enough time for people to create them. The result is that the sources that are created toward the end of the information lifecycle may come to very different conclusions about the event than did those sources created early on.

Sometimes the information presented in the later formats is more valid and reliable that what is in those produced earlier.

A very good example is that conclusions about the Columbine High School shooting in 1999 and the causes of that tragedy reached by books—which took years to complete after the event—were likely to be very different than the conclusions reached by news coverage created early on. For instance, many early reports concluded that the two teens responsible for the shooting had been shunned by their classmates and that it was the pain of their exclusion that had moved them to take revenge. Consequently, many K-12 schools nationwide took steps to try to ensure that all students felt included in their student bodies. But more time-consuming reportage concluded that the boys were not shunned (one had had a date for prom activities just days before) and that it was mental illness that made them kill their classmates.

Movie: Information Cycle

This video explains what kinds of information sources about an event can exist at any point in time during and after that event.

[iframe src="https://player.vimeo.com/video/175421451" width="640" height="360" allowfullscreen="allowfullscreen"]

[View Movie](#) | [View Text Version](#)

Activity: The Information Lifecycle

Open activity in a web browser.

A Closer Look at Common Formats

Books – Usually a substantial amount of information, published at one time and requiring great effort on the part of the author and a publisher.

Magazines/Journals – Published frequently, containing lots of articles related to some general or specific professional research interest; edited.

Newspapers – Each is usually a daily publication of events of social, political and lifestyle interest.

Web sites – Digital items, each consisting of multiple pages produced by someone with technical skills or the ability to pay someone with technical skills.

Articles – Distinct, short, written pieces that might contain photos and are generally timely. Timeliness can mean that it's something that is of interest to readers at the point of publication or that is something the writer is thinking about or researching at a given point of time.

Tip: Evaluating Articles

Evaluating whether articles are **credible** enough for your information need is similar to evaluating any other source. There's more information on evaluating in Evaluating Sources.

Conference Papers – Written form of papers delivered at a professional or research-related conference. Authors are generally practicing professionals or scholars in the field.

Blogs – Frequently updated websites that do not necessarily require extensive technical skills and can be published by virtually anyone for no cost to themselves other than the time they devote to content creation. Usually marked by postings that indicate the date when each was written.

Documentaries – Works, such as a film or television program, presenting political, social, or historical subject matter in a factual and informative manner and often consisting of actual news films or interviews accompanied by narration.

Online Videos – Short videos produced by anybody, with a lot of money or a little money, about anything for the world to see. Common sites for these are YouTube and Vimeo.

Podcasts – Digital audio files, produced by anyone and about anything, that are available for downloading, often by subscription.

Activity: Best Format for Your Need

Open activity in a web browser.

Scholarly Articles as Sources

Articles in scholarly journals are valued for several reasons. First, they are usually trustworthy because their publication process includes a peer review that helps insure their accuracy and contribution to their disciplines. In addition, they often contain the first reports of new research, which makes their sections on methodology, data, analysis, and interpretation primary sources. Sometimes they instead consist of literature reviews summaries of multiple research studies done in the past on particular subjects of current interest. That makes those articles very helpful secondary sources.

Peer-Reviewed Sources

The most-respected scholarly journals are peer-reviewed, which means that experts in their field other than the author and editor check out each article before it can be published. It's their responsibility to help guarantee that new material is presented in the context of what is already known, that the methods the researcher used are the right ones, and that the article contributes to the field.

For those reasons, peer-reviewed articles are more likely to be credible. Peer-reviewed journal articles are the official scholarly record, which means that if it's an important development in research, it will probably turn up in a journal article eventually.

Here's a longer explanation of the peer review process, which concludes that it is good but not perfect.

Parts of a Scholarly Article

The articles you use for your assignments must also be **relevant** to your research question—not just credible. Reading specific parts of an article can help save you time as you decide whether an article is relevant.

Movie: *Guided Tour of Scholarly Articles*

[iframe src="https://www.youtube.com/embed/videoseries?list=PLZ8l40xeogUQk5OzzrSUSJdeJjaWG6Dht" width="560" height="315" allowfullscreen="allowfullscreen"]

View playlist

Reading a scholarly article usually takes some effort. Here's how to do it.

Activity: *Parts of a Scholarly Article*

Open activity in a web browser.

Finding Scholarly Articles

Most scholarly articles are housed in specialized databases. Libraries (public, school, or company) often provide access to scholarly databases by paying a subscription fee for patrons. For instance, OSU Libraries provide access to hundreds of databases via its Research Databases List that are made available free to people affiliated with the University. You can search for a journal title in these databases or view a list of databases by subject. For more information, including how to search databases, see Specialized Databases.

Databases that aren't subject-specific are called general databases. Google Scholar is a free general scholarly database available to all who have access to the Internet, and it provides some scholarly articles. For more information, see our section on using Google Scholar.

Tip: Known Article Searching

What if you have a citation for an article you need and now have to find the actual text of the article? Follow these instructions to [Access to a Known Journal Article](#).

> The following section is from Michael Schwartz Library's A *Guide to Rhetoric*, Chapter 10

Reading Academic Sources

Academic Scholarly is often used to signify academic, serious work. So a "Scholarly" source is an article, book or journal that is written by someone with a PhD or other terminal degree to other experts in that field. These scholarly sources are not written to make money or to entertain, as popular sources often are. Scholarly sources are meant to convey research findings and knowledge that the author has come to through his or her studies.

">scholarly sources) are different from what most of us read each day. We are constantly exposed to "popular" media – news websites, TV channels, magazines and newspapers. It is generally only in college that we get exposure and access to scholarly articles and books.

An Academic Source (Scholarly Source) is material that is

- **Authoritative**: The article has been produced by an expert in his or her field (often this means that a person has a Ph.D. in his or her field and/or works as researcher or professor at colleges or universities), and therefore has the authority that expertise affords.

- **Peer-reviewed:** The article has been rigorously read and reviewed by other experts or authorities in that same field. and, only after that rigorous review,
- **Published in a Scholarly Research Journal**: Academic articles are often published in special journals that focus on one academic discipline or one academic discipline (often other people who have Ph.D.s in the same field or are pursuing studies within it). While in recent years some freely accessible open source peer reviewed journals have begun publishing, most scholarly research journals require a paid subscription. As a college student, you have access to many academic articles because your university pays for access to academic research databases that give students and faculty members access to these scholarly research journals.

Academic articles tend to more challenging to read than popular refer to the written word: "Proofread your *text* before submitting the paper."
A text refers to any form of communication, primarily written or oral, that forms a coherent unit, often as an object of study. A book can be a text, and a speech can be a text, but television commercials, magazine ads, website, and emails can also be texts: "Dieting advertisements formed one of the *texts*we studied in my Sociology class.""">text citations, diagrams, tables, or other visual representations of data.

While academic articles can be intimidating to read, there are strategies that you can use to effectively engage these challenging texts, as Karen Rosenberg discusses in her essay, "Reading Games: Strategies for Reading Scholarly Sources."

Moreover, there are ways in which academic articles can be critiqued and evaluated just like popular articles.

Considerations for Evaluating Academic Sources

While academic Often paragraphs focus on sub-topics, or more specific examples of the topic. For instance, the **focus** of an essay might be higher education, one **topic** discussed within it is marketing higher education, and a supportive **sub-topic** might be the use of social media to attract students.">topic, then an older article may be useful. But if you need current information and your article is 10 or 15 years old, is it as relevant and useful for your assignment?

Relevance

Perhaps you have a wonderful academic article that is authoritative, credible, interesting, full of credible and compelling research. But if the article is not answering your research question or the assignment question in any meaningful way, perhaps the source is not relevant to you. Just because a source is "good" does not mean that it is good for your particular assignment.

Joe Moxley's article "Questions to Evaluate the Authority of the Researcher's Methods," is an excellent resource for thinking about how to approach a critique of scholarly work. His article can be found by clicking on the hyperlink above and by going to directly to the *Writing Commons* website.

A Deeper Look at Scholarly Sources

Emilie Zickel

While reading academic articles (scholarly journal articles) can be one of the more intimidating aspects of college-level research projects, the purpose, format, and style of scholarly/academic journal articles are rather straightforward and patterned. Knowing the template that scholarly articles follow can enhance your reading and comprehension experience and make these reading materials much less intimidating. Moreover, understanding the purpose of scholarly publication can help you to understand what matters most in these articles.

Basic Format

Information in academic journal articles is presented in a formal, highly prescribed format, meaning that scholarly articles tend to follow a similar layout, pattern, and style. The pages often look stark, with little decoration or imagery. We see few photos in scholarly articles. The article title is often fairly prominent on the first page, as are the author(s)' name(s). Sometimes there is a bit of information about each author, such as the name of his or her current academic institution or academic credentials. At either the top or bottom of the first few pages, you can find the name of the the scholarly journal in which the article is published.

Abstract

On the first page of the article, you will often find an abstract, which is a summary of the author's research question, methodologies and results. While this abstract is useful to you as a reader because it gives you some background about the article before you begin reading, you should not cite this abstract in your paper. Please read these abstracts as you are initially seeking Sources are texts that may express the ideas, views, arguments, research, etc. of others.

While sources can be utilized in a variety of ways, they should be carefully selected and integrated into a text using the appropriate documentation style guidelines. A source should always be cited. “>sources! For more information on Literature Reviews, see section 5.2 “Moving from Summary to Synthesis”.

The “Research Gap”

Somewhere near the end of the Literature Review, authors may indicate what has not been said or not been examined by previous scholars. This has been called a “research gap” in the social sciences – a space out of which a scholar’s own research develops. The “research gap” opens the opportunity for the author to assert his or her own research question or research gap and then attempt to fill that gap because scholarly journals want to publish new, innovative and interesting work that will push knowledge and scholarship in that field forward. Scholars must communicate what new ideas they have worked on: what their new hypothesis, or experiment, or interpretation or analysis is.

The Scholar(s) Add His/Her/Their New Perspective

Then, and sometimes for the bulk of an academic article, the author discusses his or her original work and analysis. This is the part of the article where the author(s) add to the conversation, where whey try to fill in the research gap that they identified. This is also the part of the article that is the primary research. The author(s) may include a discussion of their research methodology and results, or an elaboration and defense of their reasoning, interpretation or analysis. Scholarly articles in the sciences or social sciences may include headings such as "Methods", "Results", and "Discussion" or synonyms of those words in this part of the article. In arts or humanities journal articles, these headings may not appear because scholars in the arts and humanities do not necessarily perform lab-based research in the same way as scientists or social scientists do. Authors may reference others' research even in this section of original work and analysis, but only to support or enhance the discussion of the scholar's own discussion. **This is the part of the scholarly article that you should cite from, as it indicates the work your author or authors have done.**

Conclusion

To conclude a scholarly journal article, authors may reference their original research question or hypothesis once more. They may summarize some of the points made in the article. We often see scholars concluding by indicating how, why, or to whom their research matters. Sometimes, authors will conclude by looking forward, offering ideas for other scholars to engage in future research. Sometimes, they may reflect on why an experiment failed (if it did) and how to approach that experiment differently next time. What we do not tend to see is scholars merely summarizing everything they discussed in the essay, point by point. Instead, they want to leave readers with a sense of why the work that they have discussed in their article matters.

As you read scholarly sources, remember

- to look for the author's research question or hypothesis
- to seek out the "research gap": why did the author have this research question or hypothesis?

- to identify the Literature Review
- to identify the the point at which the author stops discussing previous research and begins to discuss his or her own
- **Most importantly**: remember to always try to understand what new information this article brings to the scholarly "conversation" about this Often paragraphs focus on sub-topics, or more specific examples of the topic. For instance, the **focus** of an essay might be higher education, one **topic** discussed within it is marketing higher education, and a supportive **sub-topic** might be the use of social media to attract students.">topic?

News as a Source

News sources can provide insights that scholarly sources may not or that will take a long time to get into scholarly sources. For instance, news sources are excellent for finding out people's reactions, opinions, and prevailing attitudes around the time of an event.

So whether news sources are good for your assignment depends on what your research question is. (You'll find other relevant information at Sources and Information Needs.)

News is a strange term, because even when the information is old, it's still news. Some sources are great for breaking news, some are great for aggregated (or compiled) news, and others are great for historical news.

While news was transmitted for centuries only in newspapers, news is now transmitted in all formats: via radio, television, and the Internet, in addition to print. Even most newspapers have Internet sites today.

News must be brief because much of it gets reported only moments after an event happens. News reports occur early in the Information Lifecycle. See Publication Formats and the Information Lifecycle for more information.

When Are News Sources Helpful?

- You need breaking news or historical perspectives on a topic (what people were saying at the time).
- You need to learn more about a culture, place, or time period from its own sources.
- You want to keep up with what is going in the world today.

When Are News Sources of Limited Use?

- You need very detailed analysis by experts.
- You need sources that must be scholarly or modern views on a historical topic.

Activity: Using News Effectively

Open activity in a web browser.

Mainline and Non-Mainline News Sources

Mainline American news outlets stick with the tradition of trying to report the news as objectively as possibly. That doesn't mean their reports are perfectly objective, but they are more objective than the non-mainline sources. As a result, mainline news sources are more credible than non-mainline sources. Some examples of mainline American news outlets: The *New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Los Angeles Times*; ABC News, CBS News, NBC News, PBS News, NPR News.

News from non-mainline American news outlets is often mixed with opinions. One way they frequently exhibit bias is that they leave out pertinent facts. Some examples of non-mainline American news outlets: MSNBC, Fox News, Gawker, Reddit.

Types of News Sources

Press Services—News outlets (print, broadcast, and online) get a lot of their news from these services, such as Reuters or Associated Press (AP), which make it unnecessary for individual outlets to send their own reporters everywhere. Services are so broadly used that you may have to look at several news outlets to get a different take on an event or situation.

News aggregators—Aggregators don't have reporters of their own but simply collect and transmit the news reported by others. Some sources pull news from a variety of places and provide a single place to search for and view multiple stories. You can browse stories or search for a topic. Aggregators tend to have current, but not archival news. Google news and Yahoo News are examples.

Newspaper sites – Many print newspapers also have their own websites. They vary as to how much news they provide for free. Take a look at these examples.

- The *Lantern*, Ohio State University's student newspaper
- The *Columbus Dispatch*
- *USA Today*
- *The Boston Globe*
- *The Times* of London
- *China Daily*, USA edition
- The New York Times

News Databases – Search current, recent, and historical newspaper content in databases provided free by libraries. OSU Libraries offers 69 news databases to students, staff, and faculty. They include:

- LexisNexis Academic – contains news back to 1980 from newspapers, broadcast transcripts, wire services, blogs, and more.
- Proquest Historical Newspapers – contains older content from several major U.S. newspapers.
- allAfrica – contains more than a million articles from 100 African news sources, 1996-present.
- Lantern Online – contains the archive of all of OSU's student newspaper issues, 1881-1997.

See the complete list of OSU Libraries' newspaper databases.

Activity: Choosing a Newspaper Database

Look at the list of OSU Libraries' newspaper databases available to OSU users. Which one would be a good place to find an article with an international left perspective on a topic? Our answer is at the end of this section.

Broadcast News Sites – Although broadcast news (from radio and television) is generally consumed in real time, such organizations also offer archives of news stories on their web sites. However, not all of their articles are provided by their own reporters: some originate from the press services, Reuters and AP. Here are some examples of broadcast new sites:

- ABC News
- BBC
- CNN
- NPR News
- NBC Learns (OSU only)

Activity: One-Minute World News from the BBC

Visit BBC's Video area and watch their One-minute World News to get a quick update on the world's major news stories.

Social Media – Most of the news outlets listed above contribute to Twitter and Facebook. It's customary for highly condensed announcements in this venue to lead you back to the news outlet's website for more information. However, how credible tech companies such as Facebook, Twitter, and Google are with news is in serious doubt now that their lawyers have testified to the U.S. Congress that more than 100 million users may have seen content actually created by Russian operatives on the tech companies' platforms leading up to the 2016 U.S. presidential election. Read more about their testimony at NPR and The New York Times.

Blogs – Sometimes these are good sources for breaking news, as well as commentary on current events and scholarship. Authors who write more objectively elsewhere can share more insights and opinions, more initial questions and findings about a study before they are ready to release definitive data and conclusions about their research.

Citizen Journalism – A growing number of sites cater to those members of the general public who want to report breaking news and submit their own photos and videos on a wide range of topics. The people who do this are often referred to as citizen journalists.

Examples of such sources include CNN iReport, and reddit. For more details on the history and development of citizen journalism, including addressing some of the pros and cons, read Your Guide to Citizen Journalism.

News Feeds – You can get updates on specific topics or a list of major headlines, regularly sent to you so you don't have to visit sites or hunt for new content on a topic. Look for links that contain headings such as these to sign up for news feeds:

- RSS feeds
- News Feeds
- News Alerts
- Table of Contents Alerts

Movie: *What is an RSS Feed?*

[iframe src="https://www.youtube.com/embed/80E3SWa7hvg" width="560" height="315" allowfullscreen="allowfullscreen"]
View video

Activity: *RSS Feeds from Reuters*

Visit Reuters News RSS Feeds to see a list of general and very specific topic areas for which you can sign up for alerts. What topic interests you? Consider signing up for one (or more).

Answer to Activity: *Choosing a Newspaper Database*

If you look at the database descriptions, you will notice that the one for Alternative Press Index matches the need expressed in the question.

Data as Sources

Using data as sources can help with all of your research project's information needs:

- Learn more background information.
- Answer your research question. (The evidence that data provide can help you decide on the best answer for your question.)
- Convince your audience that your answer is correct. (Data often give you ecidence that your answer that your answer is correct. (Data often give you evidence that your answer to your research question is correct or at least a reasonable answer.)
- Describe the situation surrounding your research question.
- Report what others have said about your research question.

Activity: *Example of Data*

Check out this very detailed data about frozen lasagna. Did you ever think this much data was available? Are there elements new to you? How might you use such data?

Movie: *Reinterpreting Little Red Riding Hood*

[iframe src="https://www.youtube.com/embed/Y54ABqSOScQ" width="560″ height="315″ allowfullscreen="allowfullscreen"]
View video | View Text Version

What is data? The word means many things to many people. (Consider "data" as it relates to your phone contract, for instance!) **For our purposes, a definition we like is "units of information observed, collected, or created in the course of research."**

Erway, Ricky. 2013. Starting the Conversation: University-wide Research Data Management Policy. Dublin, Ohio: OCLC Research.

http://www.oclc.org/content/dam/research/publications/library/2013/2013-08.pdf

Data observed, collected, or cerated for research purposes can be numbers, text, images, audio clips, and video clips. But in this section on using data as sources, we're going to concentrate on *numerical* data.

TIP: From the Latin

Data is the plural of datum. (It's similar to how media is the plural of medium.)

Sometimes data is actually necessary to answer research questions, particularly in the social sciences and life and physical sciences. For instance, data would be necessary to support or rule out these hypotheses:

- More women than men voted in the last presidential election in a majority of states.
- A certain drugs shows promising results in the treatment of pancreatic cancer.
- Listening to certain genres of music lowers blood pressure.
- People of certain religious denominations are more likely to find a specific television program objectionable.
- The average weight of house cats in the United States has increased over the past 30 years.
- The average square footage of supermarkets in the United States has increased in the past 20 years.
- More tomatoes were consumed per person in the United Kingdom in 2015 than in 1962.
- Exploding volcanoes can help cool the planet by spewing sulfur dioxide, which combines with water vapor to make reflective aerosols.

So using numeric data in those portions of your final product that require evidence can really strengthen your argument for your argument for your answer to your research question. At other times, even if data is not actually necessary, numeric data can be particularly persuasive and sharpen the points you want to make in other portions of your final product devoted to, say, describing the situation surrounding your research question. (See Making an Argument)

For example, for a term paper about the research question "Why is there a gap in the number of people who qualify for food from foodbanks and the number of people who use foodbanks?," you could find data on the website of Feeding America, the nation's largest network of foodbanks. Some of that data may be the number of people who get food from a foodbank annually, with the number of seniors and children broken out. Those data won't answer your research question, but they will help you describe the situation around that question and help your audience develop a fuller understanding.

Similarly, for a project with the research question "How do some birds in Australia use "smart" hunting techniques to flush out prey, including starting fires?," you might find a journal article with data about how many people have observed these techniques and estimates of how frequently the techniques are used and by how many bird species.

Obtaining Data

There are two ways of obtaining data:

- Obtain data that already has been collected and analyzed. That's what this section will cover.
- Collect data yourself. This can include activities such as making observations about your environment, conducting surveys or interviews, directly recording measurements in a lab or in the field, or even receiving electronic data recorded by computers/machines that gather the data. You will explore these activities in courses you take.

Finding Data in Articles, Books, Web Pages, and More

Numeric search data can be found all over the place. A lot of it can be found as part of another source- such as books; journal, newspaper, and magazine articles; and web pages. In these cases, the data do not stand alone as a distinct element, but instead are part of the larger work.

When searching for data in books and articles and on web pages, terms such as statistics or data may or may not be useful search terms. That's because many writers don't use those terms in their scholarly writing. They tend to use the words findings or results when talking about the data that could be useful to you. In addition, statistics is a separate discipline and using that term will turn up lots of journals in that area, which won't be helpful to you. So use the search terms data and statistics with caution, especially when searching library catalogs. (See information on the Library Catalog. More information on searching is at Precision Searching.)

Even without using those search terms, many scholarly sources you turn up are likely to contain data. Once you find potential sources, skim them for tables, graphs, or charts. These items are displays or illustrations of data gathered by researchers. However, sometimes data and interpretations are solely in the body of the narrative text and may be included in sections called "Results" or "Findings." (That shouldn't keep you from displaying the data in charts, graphs, or tables as you like in your own work, though. See Data Visualization later in this section.)

If the data you find in a book, article, or web page is particularly helpful and you want more, you could contact the author to request additional numeric research data. Researchers will often discuss their data and its analysis – and sometimes provide some of it (or occasionally, all). Some may link to a larger numeric research data set. However, if a researcher shares his or her data with you, it may be in a raw form. This means that you might have to do additional analysis to make it useful in answering your question.

Depending on your research question, you may need to gather data from multiple sources to get everything you need to answer your research question and make your argument for it. (See Making an Argument.)

For instance, in our example related to foodbanks above, we suggested where you could find statistics about the number of people who get food from American foodbanks. But with that research question ("Why is there a gap in the number of people who qualify for food from foodbanks and the number of people who use foodbanks?"), you would also need to find out from another source how many people qualify for foodbanks based on their income and compare that number with how many people actually use foodbanks.

Finding Data, Data Depositories, and Directories

Sometimes the numeric research data you need may not be in the articles, books, and web sites that you've found. But that doesn't mean that it hasn't been collected and packaged in a useable format. Governments and research institutions often publish data they have collected in discipline-specific data depositories that make data available online. Here are some examples:

- United States Census Bureau
- Budget of the United States Government
- U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics
- National Center for Education Statistics
- Daily Weather Maps NOAA)
- GeoData.gov
- The World Factbook (CIA)
- OSU Knowledge Bank

The United Nations and just about every country provide information as numeric data available online. Free and accessible data like this is called open data. The U.S. federal government, all states, and many local governments provide open data. You can find them (among other places) at site: .gov.

Other data are available through vendors who publish the data collected by researchers. Here are some examples:

- Hoover's Online (OSU Only)
- International Monetary Fund Statistical Databases
- World Health Organization Statistical Information System
- Envirofacts
- Census of Agriculture (OSU only)
- OECD Education at a Glance
- Corruption Perceptions Index

Don't know if a depository that could contain data in your discipline? Check out a data directory such as re3data.org

Activity: *Where to Find Data*

Open activity in a web browser.

Evaluating Data as Sources

Evaluating data for relevance and credibility is just as important as evaluating any other source. Another thing that is the same with data is that there is never a 100% perfect source. So just as is pointed out in Evaluating Sources, you'll have to make educated guesses (inferences) about whether the data are good enough for your purpose.

Critical thinking as you evaluate sources is something your professors will expect. But you'll benefit in other ways, too, because you'll be practicing a skill necessary for the rest of your life, both in the workplace and in your personal life. It's those skills that will keep you from being duped by fake news and taken advantage by posts that are ignorant or, sometimes, simply scams.

To evaluate data, you'll need to find out how the data were collected. If the data are in another source, such as a book; web page; or newspaper, magazine, or research journal article, evaluate *that* source in the usual way (see Evaluating Sources). If the book or newspaper, magazine, or web page got the data from somewhere else, do the same evaluation of the source from which the book or article got the data. The article, book, or web page should cite where the data came from. If it doesn't, then that is a black mark against using that data. (The data in a research journal article are often the work of the authors of the article. But you'll want to be sure they provide information about how they collected the data.)

In addition, if the data are in a **research journal article**, read the entire article, including the section called Methodology, which tells how the data were collected. Then determine the data's **relevance** to your research question by considering such questions as:

- Were the data collected recently enough?
- Is the data cross-sectional (based on information from people at any one time) or longitudinal (based on information from the same people over time)? If one is more appropriate for your research question than the other, is there information that you can still logically infer from this data?
- Were the types of people from whom the data were collected the same type of people your research question addresses? The more representative the study's sample is of the group your research question addresses, the more confident you can be in using the data to make your argument in your final product.
- Was the data analysis done at the right level for your research question? For instance, it may have been done at the individual, family, business, state, or zip code level. But if that doesn't relate to your research question, can you still logically make inferences that will help your argument? Here's an

example: Imagine that your research question asks whether participation in high school sports in Columbus City Schools is positively associated with enrolling in college. But the data you are evaluating is analyzed at the state level. So you have data about the whole state of Ohio's schools and not Columbus in particular. In this case, ask yourself whether there is still any inference you can make from the data.

Research articles are sometimes difficult to read until you get used to them. Here's a helpful PDF: https://violentmetaphors.files.wordpress.com/2018/01/how-to-read-and-understand-a-scientific-article.pdfTo evaluate the **credibility** of the data in a research journal article you have already read, take the steps recommended in Evaluating Sources, plus consider these questions:

- Is the article in a peer reviewed journal? (Look at the journal's instructions for authors, which are often located on the journal's website, to see if it talks about peers reviewing the article and asking for changes [revisions] before publishing.) If it is a peer reviewed journal, consider that a plus for the article's credibility. Being peer reviewed doesn't mean it's perfect; just more likely to be credible.
- Do the authors discuss causation or correlation? Be wary of claims of causation; it is very difficult to determine a causal effect. While research studies often find relationships (correlation) between various variables in the data, this does not equal causation. For instance, let's return to our example above: If the study of Ohio high schools students' sports participation showed a positive correlation between sports participation and college enrollment, the researcher cannot say that participation *caused* college enrollment. If it were designed to show cause and effect, the study would not have resulted in a correlation. Instead, it would have had to have been designed as an experiment or quasi-experiment, used

different statistical analyses, and would have supported or not supported its hypotheses.

ACTIVITY: Evaluating Data as Sources

Open activity in a web browser.

Data Visualization

Modern software can help you display your data in ways that are striking and often even beautiful. But the best criterion for judging whatever display you use is whether it helps you and your audience *understand* your data better than only text, maybe even noticing points that you would have otherwise missed.

Specific kinds of charts and graphs accomplish different things, which is important to keep in mind as you evaluate data and data sources. For instance:

- Line charts are usually used to show trends, comparing data over time.
- Scatter plots show the distribution of data points.
- Bar graphs usually compare categories of data.
- Pie charts show proportions of a whole.

It's important to decide what you want a display to *do* before making your final choice. Studying your data first so you know what you have will help you make that decision. Also, it may also be conventional in your discipline to display your data in certain ways. Examining the sources you were assigned to read in your course or asking your professor will help you learn what's considered conventional.

Your professors will be examining your visual display to make sure you did not misrepresent the data. For example, the proportions of slices in a pie chart all have to add up to 100%. If yours don't, you've done something wrong.

It's easy to get overwhelmed by all the choices to be made between potential displays and what each can do: Here are two sites to help you sort them out **once you know your data**:

http://datavizproject.com/

https://datavizcatalogue.com/

If you aren't ready yet to use some of the specialized tools for display, make it a point to learn how to use the data display capabilities in Microsoft Word and/or Excel. You can find helpful tutorials on the Web. Good search statements to find those tutorials are:

- "Microsoft Word" (charts OR graphs)
- "Microsoft Excel" (charts OR graphs).

If you are OSU staff, students, or faculty, OSU Libraries' Research Commons can help you choose a display, recommend a tool to accomplish it, and check out your finished data visualization before you have to turn it in. Contact the data visualization specialist.

If you are interested in displaying geospatial data on a map, consider how the Research Commons also helps OSU students, staff, and faculty find geospatial data and choose tools to display them.

Citing Data

Data is not copyrightable, but the expression of data is. So as with any other information source, you should cite any data you use from a source, whether it appeared in an article or you downloaded the data from a repository on the Web.

Unfortunately, data citation standards do not exist in many disciplines, although the DataCite initiative is working on them. Current workarounds include:

- Citing a "data paper," where available.
- Citing a journal article that describes the dataset.
- Citing a book that includes the data.
- Citing the dataset as a website, where possible.

Examples: *Citing Data*

Data from a research database:

- APA: Department of Agriculture (USDA) (2008). "Crops Harvested", Crop Production [data file]. Data Planet, (09/15/2009).
- MLA: "Crops Harvested", Department of Agriculture (USDA) [data file] (2008). Data Planet, (09/15/2009).

Data from a file found on the open Web:

- APA: Center for Health Statistics, Washington State Department of Health. (2012, November). Mortality Table D1. Age-Adjusted Rates for Leading Causes of Cancer for Residents, 2002-2011. [Microsoft Excel file]. Washington State Department of Health. Retrieved from http://www.doh.wa.gov/
- MLA: Center for Health Statistics, Washington State Department of Health. Mortality Table D1. Age-Adjusted Rates for Leading Causes of Cancer for Residents, 2002-2011. Washington State Department of Health, Nov. 2012. Microsoft Excel file. Retrieved from http://www.doh.wa.gov/

Proper Use of Data

Once you have your data, you can examine them and make an interpretation. Sometimes, you can do so easily. But not always.

What if…

…you had a lot of information? Sometimes data can be very complicated and may include thousands (or millions…or billions…or more!) of data points. Suppose you only have a date and the high temperature for Columbus – but you have this for 20 years' worth of days. Do you want to calculate the average highs for each month based upon 20 years' worth of data by hand or even with a calculator?

…you want to be able to prove a relationship? Perhaps your theory is that social sciences students do better in a certain class than arts and humanities or life and physical science students. You may have a huge spreadsheet of data from 20 years' worth of this course's sections and would need to use statistical methods to see if a relationship between major and course grade exist.

You may find yourself using special software, such as Excel, SAS, and SPSS, in such situations.

Many people may have a tendency to look for data to prove their hypothesis or idea, as opposed to really answering their research questions. However, you may find that the opposite happens: the data may actually disprove your hypothesis. You should never try to manipulate data so that it gives credence to your desired outcome. While it may not be the answer you wanted to find, it is the answer that exists. You may, of course, look for other sources of data – perhaps there are multiple sources of data for the same topic with differing results. Inconclusive or conflicting findings do happen and can be the answer (even if it's not the one you wanted!).

Conflicting results on the same topic are common. This is the reality of research because, after all, the questions researchers are studying are complicated. When you have conflicting results you can't just ignore the differences—you'll have to do your best to explain why the differences occurred.

People as Sources

People don't just create the sources we use. They are actually sources them-selves. Most of us use people as sources all the time in our private lives, such when we ask a friend for a restaurant recommendation or ask whether a movie is worth watching. But you probably aren't using people as sources very often in your assignments–unless you are a journalism major, of course.

In fact, research indicates that employers such as Battelle, Nationwide Insurance, Microsoft, the FBI, the Smithsonian, the Port of Los Angeles, SS&G Financial Services, and Marriott International have been dissatisfied with their new hires' inability to gather information by talking with real people. They've found new hires unwilling or unprepared to ask the experienced employee down the hall or the expert across town for information to solve a problem. For instance, the study linked to above quotes one employer as saying about new hires:

Here's something we're targeting in interviews now—the big thing is they believe the computer is their workspace, so basic interactions between people are lost. They won't get up and walk over and ask someone a question. They are less comfortable and have some lack of willingness to use people as sources and also have a lack of awareness that people are a valid source of information…

So getting some experience using people as sources is likely to help you not just with a current research assignment but with your work in the future.

Important: Who's an "Expert"?

Experts aren't only researchers with Ph.D.s doing academic work. The question when trying to decide who can be a source is really always, who can speak with authority about any part of the subject? And the answer to that question is always contextual, a kind of "it depends."

People can speak with authority for different reasons. According to the framework for information literacy, they can have subject expertise (say, having done scholarship in the field), societal position (maybe a public office or other relevant work title), or special experience (say, living or working in a particular situation of interest or having participated in an historical event).

For instance, people who have had firsthand experience living or working with a situation (say, a survivor of school shooting if your topic is on that subject) you are studying can have a unique perspective unavailable elsewhere. And it's that up-close, firsthand view of the situation that gives them the authority that you and your audience respond to.

Of course, such sources have to be evaluated just like any other. Could they be biased? Like any source, yes. We just have to keep that possible bias in mind as we use the information from such a source. That's part of exercising the critical thinking that research assignments are famous for producing.

Potentially biased or not, sometimes a source's firsthand experience can't be beat. And recognizing what they offer can help us open up to diverse ideas and worldviews that we would otherwise miss. Don't be surprised if this kind of source takes you off in completely new directions with your assignment, ones that turn out to be much more interesting than those you were following before. For many researchers, finding sources that really open up a topic like that is one of the most rewarding—and fun—things about doing research.

Some Examples of People as Sources

Research Question	Potential Person as Source	Potential Person as Source
How are tools originally developed for medicine, geology, and manufacturing used to explore paintings and sculptures?	An art conservator who uses those tools that you read about in the newspaper or other source	The person who invented one of the tools on the floor of the factory where he works
Why do most people who qualify for food at foodbanks not ask for food?	A local food bank director	A person (perhaps a fellow student) who qualifies but does not ask for food at a food bank
How and why do city and county governments brand themselves?	An official in such a city or county who has been involved in branding decisions	The director of a company that designs branding for cities and counties

You can interview a person as a source on the phone, in email, with Skype, or face-to-face. You'll need to:

- Pay attention when reading other sources so you can identify whom to contact and know what they could have to offer.
- Prepare by learning enough about your topic so you can ask appropriate questions, know what your expert has done in relation to that topic so you don't seem ignorant of their contribution, and know how to contact them. You might also want to do a practice interview with a friend.
- Contact your source to see if they are willing to talk with you and when that would be convenient. Then follow through.

Use good interview techniques, such as trying to put them at ease, using active listening techniques to encourage them to talk, asking follow up questions, and thanking them at the end of the interview.

TIP: How to identify researchers at OSU to interview.

1. Search the database Scopus for your topic. Once you have some results, use the Affiliation option among Define Results options on the left to limit your search to Ohio State University. You may also want to limit by the Year option.
2. Pull up relevant articles' records in Scopus (you can sort by times cited) and then identify which of the authors were at the time at OSU. (Articles may have multiple authors–sometimes over a dozen or more if they are in science).
3. Go to Find People (on the OSU navigation bar on all OSU pages) and search for the OSU person's name to see if they're still at OSU and get their contact information. In many cases, they will still be at OSU, especially for fairly recent articles, because OSU updates author profiles regularly. Note that researchers may or may not be faculty–some may be staff or even students.

Citing People as Sources

Like other sources, people should be cited in your research final product, depending on the citation style you're using. For instance, in APA style, interviews, e-mail, and other personal communication should not appear in the reference list but should be in your main text only like this: (A. Authorslastname, personal communication, July 29, 2018).

See Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) for information on how to handle interviews and other communication with people in other styles.

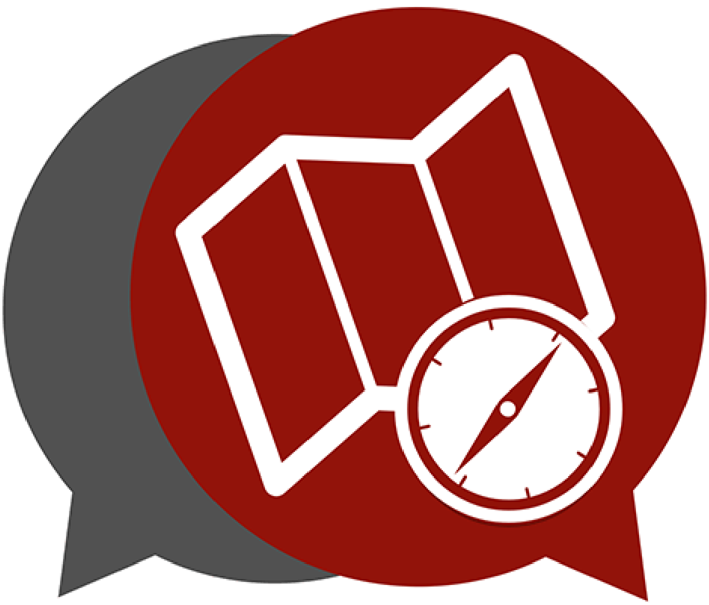
ACTIVITY: People as Sources

Open activity in a Web browser

95. Sources and Information Needs

TEACHING & LEARNING AND UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

Sources and Information Needs



It's easier to find appropriate sources when you start with a plan.

This section and the section on Types of Sources work together. That's because knowing the kinds of information in each category of sources will help you choose the right kind of information to meet each of your information needs. **And some of those needs are very particular.**

Information needs are why you need sources. Meeting those needs is what you're going to do with sources as you complete your research project.

Here are those needs:

- To learn more background information.
- To answer your research question(s).
- To convince your audience that your answer is correct or, at least, the most reasonable answer.
- To describe the situation surrounding your research question for your audience and explain why it's important.
- To report what others have said about your question, including any different answers to your research question.

Tip:

For another way to think about the work your sources do, see Roles of Research Sources.

The verbs in the list of information needs above tell you exactly how you'll use sources to carry out your research and create your final product: to learn, answer, convince, describe, and report. But you won't be doing any of that alone.

Your sources will give you information with which to reason. They'll also give you direct quotes and information to summarize and paraphrase as you create your final product. In other words, your sources will support you every step of the way during your research project.

Needs and Final Products

Background information may seldom appear directly in any final product. But meeting each of the other information needs will result in written sections of a term paper. For final products other than term papers, you'll have the same needs and will use sources to meet them. But not all needs will result in a section of your final product.

Posters & Information Needs

On a poster about your own original research, you aren't likely to have room to describe the situation surrounding your research question and why the question is important. That same lack of space may mean you do not report what others have said about your question. But that doesn't mean you didn't meet those needs and others as you carried out your research—unlike a term paper or journal article, the poster format in which you reported it just had more limited space.

For instance, in order to justify doing the research to yourself and your professor, you probably started by meeting the information need to describe the situation and why it is important. Your instructor may have you turn in that justification. And in order to do research based on what has already been found out, you will have studied what others have already reported. You also had to do that in order to make your answer to your research question more believable. But that doesn't mean you had room on your poster to say you met those needs.

Activity: *Sources and Information Needs*

Open activity in a web browser.

Sources to Meet Needs

Because there are several categories of sources (see Types of Sources), the options you have to meet your information needs can seem complex.

Our best advice is to pay attention to when only primary and secondary sources are required to meet a need and to when only professional and scholarly sources will work. If your research project is in the arts, also pay attention to when you must use popular sources, because popular sources are often primary sources in the arts.

These descriptions and summaries of when to use what kind of source should help.

To Learn Background Information

Get a good look at your topic through background reading.

When you first get a research assignment and perhaps for a considerable time afterward, you will almost always have to learn some background information as you develop your research question and explore how to answer it.

Sources from any category and from any subgroup within a category – except journal articles – can meet students' need to learn background information and understand a variety of perspectives.

Journal articles, are usually too specific to be background. From easy-to-understand to more complex sources, read and/or view those that advance your knowledge and understanding.

For instance, especially while you are getting started, secondary sources that synthesize an event or work of art and tertiary sources such as guidebooks can be a big help. Wikipedia is a good tertiary source of background information.

Sources you use for background information don't have to be sources that you cite in your final report, although some may be.

Sources to Learn Background Information

- **Quantitative or Qualitative:** Either—whatever advances your knowledge.
- **Fact or Opinion:** Any—whatever advances your knowledge.
- **Scholarly, Professional, or Popular:** Any—whatever advances your knowledge.
- **Primary, Secondary, or Tertiary:** Any—whatever advances your knowledge.
- **Publication Format:** Any—whatever advances your knowledge.

One important reason for finding background information is to learn the language that professionals and scholars have used when writing about your research question. That language will help you later, particularly when you're searching for sources to answer your research question.

To identify that language, you can always type the word glossary and then the discipline for which you're doing your assignment in the search engine search box.

Here are two examples to try:

- Glossary neuroscience
- Glossary "social media marketing"

(Putting a phrase in quotes in most search boxes insures that the phrase will be searched rather than individual words.)

To Answer Your Research Question

Your research question may call for qualitative or quantitative sources.

You have to be much pickier with sources to meet this need because only certain choices can do the job. Whether you can use quantitative or qualitative data depends on what your research question itself calls for.

Only primary and secondary sources (from the category called publication mode) can be used to answer your research question and, in addition, those need to be professional and/or scholarly sources for most disciplines (humanities, social sciences, and sciences). But the arts often require popular sources as primary or secondary sources to answer research questions. Also, the author's purpose for most disciplines should be to educate and inform or, for the arts, to entertain and perhaps even to sell. (As you may remember, primary sources are those created at the same time as an event you are researching or that offer something original, such as an original performance or a journal article reporting original research. Secondary sources analyze or otherwise react to secondary sources. Because of the information lifecycle, the latest secondary sources are often the best because their creators have had time for better analysis and more information to incorporate.)

Example: *Quantitative or Qualitative Data*

Suppose your research question is "How did a a particular king of Saudi Arabia, King Abdullah, work to modernize his country?"

That question may lend itself to qualitative descriptive judgments—about what are considered the components of modernization, including, for instance, what were his thoughts about the place of women in society.

But it may also be helped by some quantitative data, such as those that would let you compare the numbers of women attending higher education when Abdullah became king and those attending at the time of his death or, for instance, whether manufacturing increased while he reigned.

So looking for sources that provide both quantitative and qualitative information (not necessarily in the same resource) is usually a good idea.

If it is not clear to you from the formats of sources you are assigned to read for your course, ask your professor which formats are acceptable to your discipline for answering your research question.

Sources to Answer Your Research Question

- **Quantitative or Qualitative:** Will be determined by the question itself.
- **Fact or Opinion:** Professional and scholarly for most disciplines; the arts often use popular, as well.
- **Scholarly, Professional, or Popular:** Professional and scholarly for most disciplines; the arts often use popular, as well.
- **Primary, Secondary, or Tertiary:** Primary and secondary.
- **Publication Format:** Those acceptable to your discipline.

To Convince Your Audience

Sources that meet the approval of your audience will be more convincing.

Convincing your audience is similar to convincing yourself and takes the same kinds of sources—as long as your audience is made up of people like you and your professor, which is often true in academic writing. That means using many of those sources you used to answer your research question.

When your audience isn't very much like you and your professor, you can adjust your choice of sources to meet this need. Perhaps you will include more that are secondary sources rather than primary, some that are popular or professional rather than scholarly, and some whose author intent may not be to educate and inform.

Sources to Convince Your Audience

- **Quantitative or Qualitative Data:** Same as what you used to answer your research question if your audience is like you and your professor. (If you have a different audience, use what is convincing to them.)
- **Fact or Opinion:** Those with the purpose(s) you used to answer your research question if your audience is like you and your professor. (If you have a different audience, you may be better off including some sources intended to entertain or sell.)
- **Scholarly, Professional or Popular:** Those with the same expertise level as you used to answer the question if your audience is like you and your professor. (If you have a different audience, you may be better off including some popular.)
- **Publication Mode:** Primary and secondary sources if your

audience is like you and your professor. If you have a different audience, you may be better off including more secondary sources than primary.
- **Publication Format:** Those acceptable to your discipline, if your audience is like you and your professor.

To Describe the Situation

Use sources to frame the situation.

Choosing what kinds of sources you'll need to meet this need is pretty simple—you should almost always use what's going to be clear and compelling to your audience. Nonetheless, sources intended to educate and inform may play an out-sized role here.

But even then, they don't always have to educate and inform *formally*, which opens the door to using sources such as fiction or the other arts and formats that you might not use with some other information needs.

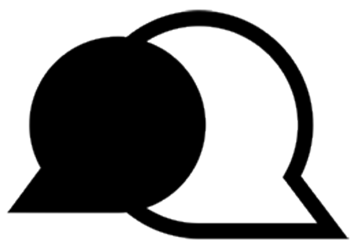
Sources to Describe the Situation

- **Quantitative or Qualitative:** Whatever you think will make the description most clear and compelling and your question important to your audience.
- **Fact or Opinion:** Often to educate and inform, but sources don't have to do that *formally* here, so they can also be to entertain or sell.

- **Scholarly, Professional, or Popular:** Whatever you think will make the description most clear and compelling and your question important to your audience.
- **Primary, Secondary or Tertiary:** Whatever you think will make the description most clear and compelling and your question important to your audience. Some disciplines will not accept tertiary for this need.
- **Publication Format:** Whatever you think will make the description most clear and compelling and your question important to your audience. Some discipline will accept only particular formats, so check for your discipline.

To Report What Others Have Said

The choices here about kinds of sources are easy: just use the same or similar sources that you used to answer your research question that you also think will be the most convincing to your audience.



Look for sources about how others have treated your research question.

Sources to Report What Others Have Said

- **Quantitative or Qualitative:** Those sources that you used to answer your research question that you think will be most convincing to your audience.
- **Fact or Opinion:** Those sources that you used to answer your

research question that you think will be most convincing to your audience.
- **Scholarly, Professional, or Popular:** Those sources that you used to answer your research question that you think will be most convincing to your audience.
- **Primary, Secondary, or Tertiary:** Those sources that you used to answer your research question that you think will be most convincing to your audience.
- **Publication Format:** Those sources that you used to answer your research question that you think will be most convincing to your audience.

Activity: Meeting Your Information Needs

Open activity in a web browser.

Planning Your Sources

Okay, so once you know what kinds of sources you need to meet your information needs, where should you look for them? Once more, thinking about categories can help.

Where sources are located is generally organized by audience expertise level—by whether they are popular, professional, or scholarly sources. Popular and professional are often grouped together. But scholarly sources tend to hang out by themselves. (That's why searching Google Scholar locates more of them than just plain old Google, and an academic library has more scholarly sources than a public library.) Source Locator can help you see where sources of every audience expertise level (popular, professional, and scholarly) are located. Check it out.

Even if you are not using our planning table, Bbefore you start looking, try the Plan for Sources table below along with the suggestions made in this section to think through what sources you'll need for your own research project. (There's also an example plan for sources filled in for a term paper.) Having your Plan for Sources always at your side while you search for sources will guide where you look and what you're willing to accept. It will help you keep track of whether you have found the right resources.

Also take a look at our Source Locator, whose link is below.

PLAN FOR SOURCES				
Course:		Due Date:	Type of Final Product:	
Research Question:				
Information Needs		Kinds of Sources (Popular, Professional, or Scholarly) That Should Meet Each Need	Publication Formats Likely to be Helpful in Meeting Each Need	Where to Look
To learn more background information				
To answer your research question and convince your audience				
To report what others have said				
To describe the situation and why it's important				

Thinking through the types of sources you need to meet your information needs helps you target your search. You can download the Plan for Sources table at http://go.osu.edu/planforsources.

You can download the table at http://go.osu.edu/planforsources, then fill it out with the help of our [Source Locator](). Using this table doesn't mean you can't change your mind if you later find another kind of source that looks too good to pass up. But making a plan first will insure that you don't just grab any source you come across. The few minutes you take to complete the table will save you time later. And it's nice to have a plan all in one place that you can put into action!

Example: Sample "Plan for Sources" Table

PLAN FOR SOURCES				
Course: ARTS & SCIENCES 3200		Due Date: 2/15/16	Type of Final Product: term paper	
Research Question: In what ways has the checklist movement affected surgery patient outcomes in U.S. hospitals?				
Information Needs		Kinds of Sources (Popular, Professional, or Scholarly) That Should Meet Each Need	Publication Formats Likely to be Helpful in Meeting Each Need	Where to Look
To learn more background information	✔	Popular Professional	Any, including magazine articles, professional blogs, and association websites and publications	Google and Bing
To answer your research question and convince your audience	✔	Professional Scholarly	Books Research journal articles Conference papers	Library catalog Library databases Google Scholar
To report what others have said	✔	Professional Scholarly	Any, including professional blogs and association websites and publications Research journal articles Conference papers	Google and Bing Library databases Google Scholar
To describe the situation and why it's important	✔	Popular Professional	Any, including magazine articles, professional blogs, and association websites and publications	Google and Bing

Completing the table puts all your planning in one place.

96. Precision Searching

TEACHING & LEARNING AND UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

Why Precision Searching?

Precise searches turn up more appropriate sources.

Effective searching takes precision. This section shows you how to perform several steps to make your searching more precise—you'll turn up more sources that are useful to you and perhaps, sources that may be even crucial to your research question.

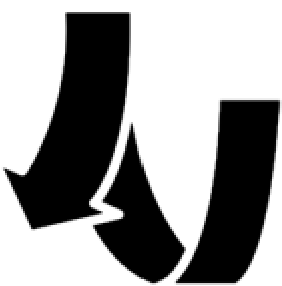
You've probably been searching in a more casual way for years and may wonder: Is going to the trouble of precision searching actually worth it?

Yes, definitely, for searches that are important to you! You're in competition with many people who are working to be as skilled as they can be. So you should use of these steps for course assignments and for information tasks you do on the job. With other tasks and searches, precision searching may be less important.

Search Strategy

This information on precision searching is based on how search tools such as Google and specialized databases operate. If you've been more casual in your searching practices, some of these steps may be new to you.

Starting with a research question helps you figure out precisely what you're looking for. Next, you'll need the most effective set of search terms – starting from main concepts and then identifying and alternate between related and terms. Those search terms need to be arranged in the most effective way as search statements, which you actually type into a search box.



An important thing to remember is that searching is an iterative process: we try search statements, take a look at what we found and, if the results weren't good enough, edit our search statements and search again—often multiple times. Most of the time, the first statements we try are not the best, even though Google or another search tool we're using may give us many results.

It pays to search further for the sources that will help you the most. Be picky.

Here are the steps for an effective search.

The steps in a precise search

Main Concepts

Identify the main concepts in your research question by selecting nouns important to the meaning of your question. Leave out words that don't help the search, such as adjectives, adverbs, prepositions and, usually, verbs. Nouns that you would use to tag your research question so you could find it later are likely to be its main concepts.

Finding the main concepts in a research question is a lot like finding the main idea in an essay or story. Often the main idea is in the first paragraph, but not always. Sometimes it's in a later paragraph or even in the conclusion. The same is true with research questions—the main concepts can be at the beginning, middle, or end. Stick to the nouns and only what's necessary, not already implied. Don't read in concepts that are not really there. Be alert to words that may have connotations other than the concept you are interested in. For instance, if you identify depression as a main idea, be aware that the search engine won't automatically know whether you mean depression as a psychological state or as a condition of the economy or as a weather characteristic.

Example: How are birds affected by wind turbines?

The main concepts are birds and wind turbines. Avoid terms like affect (except the noun) and effect as search terms, even when you're looking for studies that report effects or effectiveness.

Example: What lesson plans are available for teaching fractions?

The main concepts are lesson plans and fractions. Stick to what's necessary. For instance, don't include: children—nothing in the research question suggests the lesson plans are for children;

teaching—teaching isn't necessary because lesson plans imply teaching; available—available is not necessary.

Sometimes your research question itself can seem complicated. Make sure you've stated the question as precisely as possible (as you learned in Research Questions). Then apply our advice for identifying main concepts as usual.

Activity: Main Concepts

Open activity in a web browser.

Activity: More Main Concepts

Open activity in a web browser.

EXAMPLE: Does the use of mobile technologies by teachers and students in the classroom distract or enhance the educational experience?

Acceptable main concepts are teaching methods and mobile technology. Another possibility is mobile technologies and education.
Watch out for overly broad terms. For example, don't include:

- Educational experience (it misses mobile technology).
- Classroom distractions (too broad because there are distractions that have nothing to do with technology).
- Technology (too broad because the question is focused on

mobile technology).

Related and Alternative Terms

For each main concept, list alternative terms, including synonyms and singular and plural forms of the words.

Sometimes synonyms, plurals, and singulars aren't enough. So also consider associations with other words and concepts. For instance, it might help, when looking for information on the common cold, to include the term virus—because a type of virus causes the common cold.

Check to make sure that your terms are not too broad or too narrow for what you want. Figuring out what's too broad or too narrow takes practice and may differ a bit with each search.

Tip: Try a Thesaurus

Have you considered using a thesaurus, such as thesaurus.com? Or adding a thesaurus to your browser search bar?

Activity: Finding Synonyms

When figuring out search terms, you can try your search terms in Visuwords <visuwords.com>, an online graphical dictionary, to see the connections visually in a diagram reminiscent of a neural net. It can help you see connections between terms that are not easy to think of.

Activity: Alternate Terms

Open activity in a web browser.

Subject Headings Instead of Keywords

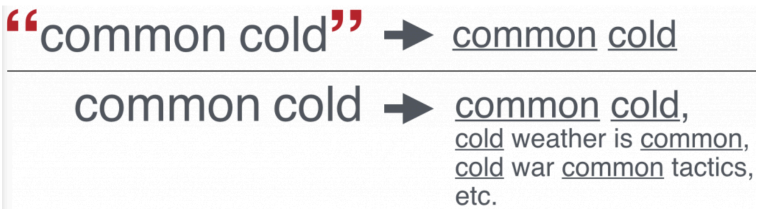
All the searches we have talked about so far have been keyword searches, usually used in search engines. But sometimes it pays to use tools—such as library catalogs and journal article databases—that have subject headings that you can search. Subject headings are standardized terms that are assigned by trained experts. (Some such tools also allow keyword searching.) See the section on Specialized Databases for more detail about searching subject headings.

Search Statements

At this point in your search process, you are moving from merely identifying main concepts and similar search *terms* to developing more complicated search *statements* that can do more precise searching.

Use Quotation Marks for Phrases

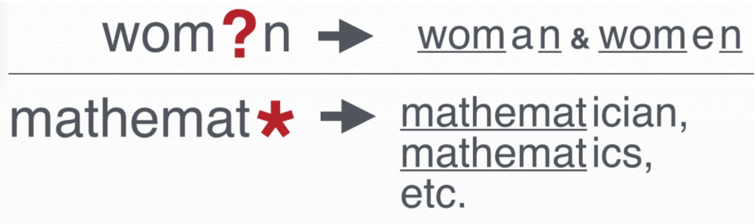
Put quotation marks around any phrases among your terms so that the phrase is what's searched for, rather than the separate words. "Common cold" instead of common cold is a good example. Without those quotation marks, just think how many sources Google or other search tools would waste their/your time on things that have nothing to do with our sniffles.



Putting a phrase in quotes returns results containing that phrase, and not the results for the individual words.

Use Wildcard and Truncation Symbols to Broaden

Consider whether using wild card or truncating symbols would help find variations of a word. For instance, the wildcard symbol in wom?n finds both woman and women, and the truncating symbol in mathematic* finds mathematics, mathematically, mathematician, etc.



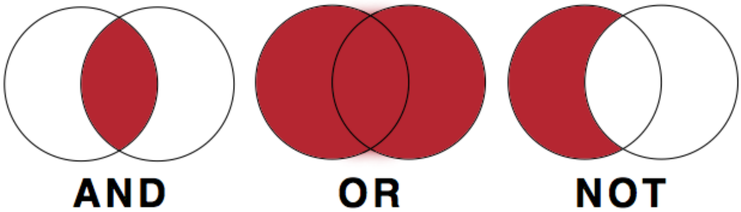
Using wildcard characters allows you to find variations of a word.

Activity: *Wildcards and Truncation*

Open activity in a web browser.

Consider AND, OR, NOT

You can often do more precise searching by combining search terms by using the words AND, OR, and NOT. These are known as Boolean Operators. Generally, using these operators narrows your search, making it more precise.



The Boolean operators AND, OR, and NOT exclude or include subsets of sources.

AND – If the main idea contains two or more ideas, you'll want to use AND to combine those terms in your search statement. To look for information about spiders as signs of climate change, you'll want to have both terms in the search and perform an AND search. That's what automatically happens in search engines such as Google and Bing unless you tell them to do something different by using OR,NOT, or-.

OR – If the main idea has several synonyms, use OR to combine them. Most search tools search for all terms (AND) by default, so you need to use the operator OR between terms to let them know you want to find any of the terms not documents with all the terms. For instance, in the previous example of Latino small business growth, we would want to also use the term Hispanic.

NOT – If the main idea has a common use you want to exclude, use NOT to exclude that word. For example, if we were looking for information about illegal drug use we would want to exclude prescription drugs from the search results. This is commonly done with NOT or the use of the minus (-) sign. In Google, to exclude a word use-word with no space between the – and the word you want to exclude. If you put a space in there, Google will not exclude the word.(When using some search tools, you have to use AND NOT before the word to exclude it.)

Using Parentheses with Multiple Operators

When a search requires multiple Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT, or their symbols), you must use parentheses to group the appropriate terms and quotation marks with each Boolean operator. The resulting statements connect terms, remove terms, and organize search terms in ways that result in complex and precise searching.

The use of parentheses may remind you of the mathematical statements written in math courses. The reason parentheses are necessary in searching is that search tools, including Google, generally perform their operations from the left to right of a search statement. If you are using multiple Boolean operators, then the way to make sure that the search is done as a whole statement requires that you use parentheses to combine the sets in your statement.

Never use parentheses unless you are using multiple Boolean operators.

(cat or dog) and (“white house” and president)

Parenthesis are used with Boolean operators to combine terms for complex searches.

Being skillful at this task of envisioning the effects Boolean operators have on a search can help you troubleshoot your own search statements when they aren’t turning up what you expected.

Example: *“United States” AND (immigration or emigration)*

Can you tell that the searcher wants to find information about the United States’ immigration or emigration?

The searcher will find more with this arrangement than would turn up if the statement had been “United States” immigration emigration. That’s because the latter arrangement without parentheses would find only information that was about both United States immigration and emigration, instead of either.

Example: *(cats OR dogs) AND (treatment OR therapy)*

Can you tell that the searcher wants to find information about either treatment or therapy for either cats or dogs?

That's a different search from what the searcher would have gotten if this statement had been used: cats dogs treatment therapy. Anything found with the latter statement without parentheses would have had to be about both— not just either—therapy and treatment for both—not just either—cats and dogs. So the latter statement would have turned up fewer pieces of information.

Activity: *Search Analysis*

Open activity in a web browser.

Practice with Search

Take some time to practice searching precisely – start by identifying main concepts, then listing related and alternative terms (with the help of wildcard and truncation symbols), and finally constructing search statements.

Activity: *Search Practice*

This activity focuses on the research question "How does a person's diet affect the risk for getting cancer?" Work through the three activities below.

Search Terms – Open activity in a web browser.
Truncation – Open activity in a web browser.
Search Statements – Open activity in a web browser.

Activity: More Search Practice

This activity focuses on the research question “What is the effect of gamma radiation on crops?” Work through the three activities below.

More Search Terms – Open activity in a web browser.
More Truncation – Open activity in a web browser.
More Search Statements – Open activity in a web browser.

97. Search Tools

Library Catalog

The Ohio State University library catalog is searchable online and contains records for all the items owned or licensed by OSU Libraries. It also includes a circulation system that is used to check out materials. Students can use the system to have books and other materials quickly sent to their residence hall or for pick up at a library on the Columbus campus or at any of the regional campus libraries. Items in the catalog include books, journals (but not individual journal articles), documents, maps, movies, and recordings.

When to Use It

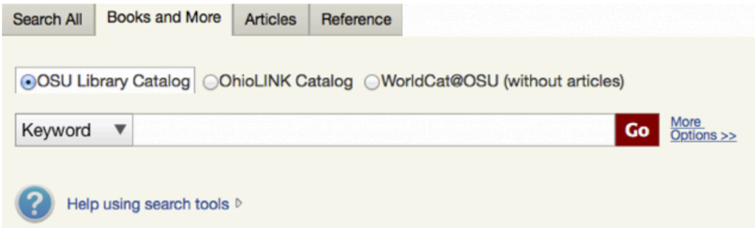
Use the library catalog to search for items that you can access because you are affiliated with Ohio State, to locate where those materials are stored, and to request them.

Note that OSU's library catalog:

- Does not contain the full-text of any materials. However, some items may include a table of contents and a link to full-text digital content.
- Does not contain specific articles. The catalog can only tell you whether a journal or other periodical title is available.

How to Use It

To access the catalog, choose the Books and More tab on the OSU Libraries' main page at http://library.osu.edu. From there, you can do a search or click on More Options to get access to other search options.



Searching Ohio State's catalog from library.osu.edu

Search Types

The catalog allows searching by author, title, journal title, subject, and keyword as well as specialty numbers such as the Library of Congress call number and ISBN (International Standard Book Number). There is also an option for advanced search.

Additional tips:

- Keyword searches are the broadest search, as they search all information in an item record. (The search tips in Precision Searching, are based on using keywords.)
- Subjects are a very specific set of terms that are helpful for precision searches. Often, the easiest way to find subject terms is to do a keyword search first and then look at the subject terms for those that are good matches for your topic. There is more about subject heading searching in Specialized Databases later in this section.
- The Advanced Search screen allows a few additional search

capabilities, such as multiple search fields to narrow the scope of a search term. You can also limit by year range, language, location, or format.

WorldCat

WorldCat@OSU searches the holdings of libraries from all over the world (including Ohio State University Libraries and OhioLINK libraries), as well as content from thousands of journals and millions of electronic books and web-accessible documents.

When to Use It

WorldCat@OSU is good for quick searches on a topic, as a starting point, and for interdisciplinary topics. However, despite its size, it is not all-inclusive. It does not search all journals and databases, and full-text searching is limited.

How to Use It

To access WorldCat@OSU, choose the Search All tab on the OSU Libraries' main page at http://library.osu.edu. (Off-campus users will be asked to sign in with an OSU username and password or proceed as a guest for fewer options.)

Searching WorldCat@OSU from library.osu.edu

Narrowing Searches

- To specific databases – From the Search All tab, click the Advanced Search link to get access to other search options, including selecting specific databases.
- To articles – Under the Articles tab on the OSU Libraries home page, you will be using WorldCat@OSU to search only for articles.

Google Scholar

Google Scholar is a tool for finding books and journal articles that you might normally get from a library. Where possible, it provides links to online versions and to library copies to help you locate an item.

When to Use It

Use Google Scholar to find scholarly articles and books, verify citations, and explore related resources. When books are available through Google Books, some of their content may be available online.

How to Use It

Go to Google Scholar (http://scholar.google.com).

Movie: *Using Google Scholar*

Watch this tutorial on the basics of Google Scholar use.
[iframe src="https://www.youtube.com/embed/t1ZwgDeX2eQ" width="560" height="315" allowfullscreen="allowfullscreen"]
View video

Note: Setting your school in Scholar Preferences will help you make direct connections to online sources provided by your library. If you want to locate sources in many different libraries, add WorldCat in addition to your library. (Remember to save your preferences.)

In your search results, you can connect to an online version if there is a linked option following the item's title. (If you've added Ohio State under preferences, a Find It link is shown to provide a link to full-text or to help you request the item if it's not available online. If you've added WorldCat to you preferences, the Library Search link displays the WorldCat record, which shows all of the libraries that own the item. If there are multiple references to the same item, Google Scholar groups them. You can click the versions link following a title to see a list of all versions.)

Additional Tips

- The Any Time link in the left column of results allows you to limit your search results by date.
- Find Advanced Scholar Search by clicking on the three horizontal lines icon. Advance Scholar search provides additional search fields such as author, publication, and date, as well as phrase matching and word exclusion.

Specialized Databases

A specialized database—often called a research or library database—allows targeted searching on one or more specific subject areas (i.e., engineering, medicine, Latin American history, etc.), for a specific format (i.e., books, articles, conference proceedings, video, images), or for a specific date range during which the information was published. Most of what specialized databases contain can not be found by Google or Bing.

There are several types of specialized databases, including:

- Bibliographic – details about published works
- Full-text – details plus the complete text of the items
- Multimedia – various types of media, such as images, audio clips, or video excerpts
- Directory – brief, factual information
- Numeric – data sources
- Product – model numbers, descriptions, etc.
- Mixed – a combination of other types, such as multimedia and

full-text

Activity: Database Types

Open activity in a web browser.

When to Use Specialized Databases

Search specialized databases to uncover scholarly information that is not available through a regular web search. Specialized databases are especially helpful if you require a specific format or up-to-date, scholarly information on a specific topic.

Many databases are available both in a free version and in a subscription version. Your affiliation with a subscribing library grants you access to member-based services at no cost to you. For example, using PubMed via OSU Libraries enables a Find It link to help you request an item.

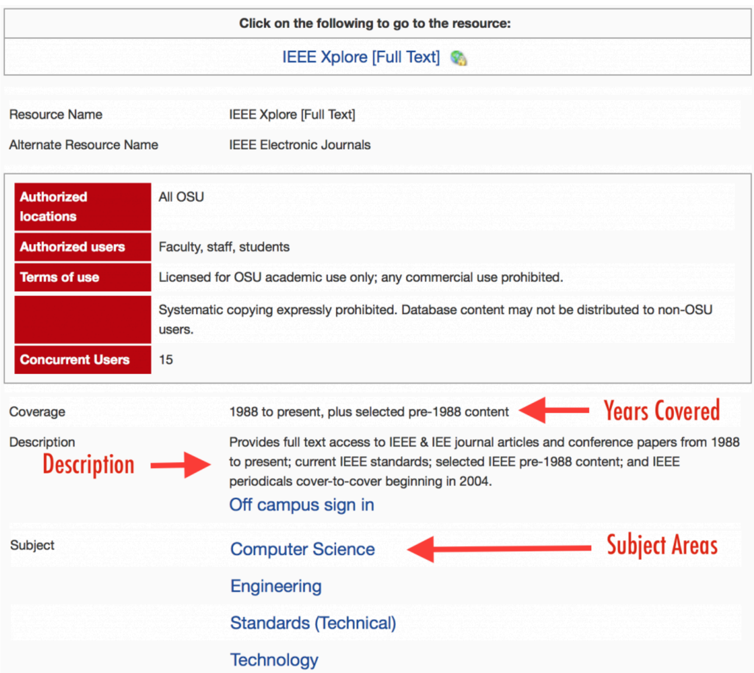
Tip: *Free vs. Subscription?*

In some cases, the data available in free and subscription versions are the same, but the subscription version provides some sort of added value or enhancement for searching or viewing items.

Database Scope

Information about the specific subject range, format, or date range a particular specialized database covers is called its scope. A specialized database may be narrow or broad in scope, depending on whether it, for instance, contains materials on one or many subject areas.

If you are using a database licensed by OSU Libraries and have clicked the title in the list of databases, you will see scope information at the bottom of the same page that says "Click on the following to go to the resource."



This example shows the scope page for an OSU-licensed database. [*View the live example.*]

Once you are aware of a database's scope, you'll be able to decide whether the database is likely to have what you want (for instance, journal articles as opposed to conference proceedings). Reading about the scope can save you time you would have otherwise wasted searching in databases that do not contain what you need.

Activity: Determining Subject Scope

[Open activity in a web browser.]

Activity: Years of Coverage

Instructions: In addition to subject scope, database descriptions should include years of coverage. Visit Ohio State's [Research Databases List] to search for the databases listed below. Which database contains the oldest information? Which covers the fewest years?

- Evidence Based Medicine Reviews
- MathSciNet
- GeoRef

Answer to Activity: Years of Coverage

The answer to the "Years of Coverage" Activity above is:

- The database containing the oldest material is [GeoRef], which goes back to 1785.
- The database covering the fewest years is [Evidence Based Medicine Reviews], which goes back to 1991.

How to Use Them

Use of each database varies somewhat.
See Ohio State's research database list.

Example: *Academic Search Complete*

Academic Search Complete (OSU only) is a general article database available through most academic and large public libraries that is often recommended for undergraduate research projects.

Movie: *Academic Search Complete Database in 3 Minutes*

View video

Keyword Searching

Although keyword search principles apply (as described in Precision Searching), you may want to use fewer search terms since the optimal number of terms is related to database size. Google and Bing work best with several terms since they index billions of web pages and additional terms help narrow the results. Each scholarly database indexes a fraction of that number, so you are less likely to be overwhelmed by results even with one or two keywords than you would be with a search engine.

Phrase searching (putting multiple words in quotes so Google or Bing will know to search them as a phrase) is also less helpful in specialized databases because they are smaller and more focused. Databases are better searched by beginning with only a few general search terms, reviewing your results and, if necessary, limiting them in some logical way. (See Limiting Your Search below.)

Activity: Compare Them!

Instructions:
Compare a search for items containing both phrases "United States" and "female serial killers" in the article database [Academic Search Complete]() (OSU only) and in the web search engine [Bing](). (Make sure you include the quotation marks so they will be searched as phrases.) Notice how searching too narrowly (searching for phrases) affects results in the specialized database. How could you revise the specialized database search to get more results?

Limiting Your Search

Many databases allow you to choose which areas (also called fields) of items to search for your search term(s), based on what you think will turn up documents that are most helpful.

For instance, you may think the items most likely help to you are those whose titles contain your search term(s). In that case, your search would not show you any records for items whose titles do not have your term(s). Or maybe you would want to see only records for items whose abstracts contain the term(s).

When this feature is available, directing your search to particular parts of items, you are said to be able to "limit" your search. You are limiting your search to only item parts that you think will have the biggest pay-off at distinguishing helpful items from unhelpful items.

Searching fields such as title, abstracts, and subject classification often gives helpful items.

Tip: Full-Text Searches

Some databases allow for full-text searching, but this option includes results where a search term appears only once in dozens or more pages. Searching fields such as title, abstracts, and subject classification will often give more relevant items than full-text searching.

Subject Heading Searching

One precision searching technique may be helpful in databases that allow it, and that's subject heading searching. Subject heading searching can be much more precise than keyword searching because you are sure to retrieve only your intended concept.

Subject searching is helpful in situations such as:

- There are multiple terms for the same topic you're interested in (example: cats and felines).
- There are multiple meanings for the same word (example: cookie the food and cookie the computer term).
- There are terms used by professionals and terms used by the general public, including slang or shortened terms (example: flu and influenza).

Here's how it works:

Database creators work with a defined list of subject headings, which is sometimes called a controlled vocabulary. That means the creators have defined which subject terms are acceptable and assigned only those words to the items it contains. The resulting list of terms is often referred to as a thesaurus. When done thoroughly, a thesaurus will not only list acceptable subject headings, but will also indicate related terms, broader terms and narrower terms for a concept.

Tip: Finding Useful Subject Headings

Try this strategy to find useful subject headings. Remember it by thinking of the letters KISS:

- **K**eyword-search your topic.
- **I**dentify a relevant item from the results.
- **S**elect subject terms relevant to your topic from that item's subject heading.
- **S**earch using these subject terms. (Some resources will allow you to simply click on those subject terms to perform a search. Others may require you to copy/paste a subject term[s] into a search box and choose a subject field.)

Activity: Searching Specialized Databases

Open activity in a web browser.

Records and Fields

The information researchers usually see first after searching a database is the "records" for items contained in the database that also match what was asked for by the search.

Each record describes an item that can be retrieved and gives you enough information so that, hopefully, you can decide whether it should meet your information need. The descriptions are in categories that provide different types of information about the item. These categories are called "fields." Some fields may be empty of information for some items, and the fields that are available depend on the type of database.

Example: Database Fields

A **bibliographic database** describes items such as articles, books, conference papers, etc. Common fields found in bibliographic database records are:

- Author.
- Title (of book, article, etc.).
- Source title (journal title, conference name, etc.).
- Date.
- Volume/issue.
- Pages.
- Abstract.
- Descriptive or subject terms.

In contrast, a **product database** record might contain the following fields:

- Product Name.
- Product Code number.
- Color.
- Price.
- Amount in Stock.

Web Search Engines

Web search engines use special software programs (called robots, spiders, or crawlers) to find Web pages and list (or index) all words within each one to make searching large quantities of pages faster. Indexes capture the largest amount of information on the Web, but no index lists everything on the Internet.

Commonly used search engines include Google (https://www.google.com) and Bing (http://www.bing.com).

In addition to search engines, there are also:

- Specialized web search engines – A tool that has a specialty, usually either a subject or format focus. It ignores the rest of the information on the web. Examples include science.gov (http://www.science.gov/) and TinEye Reverse Image Search (https://www.tineye.com).
- Metasearch engines – Tools that search multiple web search engines and gives you results from all of them. Some of these return the best results from the search engines they search. Examples include Dogpile (http://www.dogpile.com) and WebCrawler (https://www.webcrawler.com).
- Web directories – Tools created by editors or trained researchers who categorize or classify web sites by subject. Directories are more selective than search engines. An example is the Directory of Open Access Journals (https://doaj.org/).

When to Use Them

Web Search Engines and related web search tools are helpful for locating background information, news (especially if it's recent), and public opinion.

However, scholarly information is often not available through a regular web search. If you do find scholarly information through a web search engine, especially if you are off campus, you may be asked for payment to access it. Ohio State Libraries can usually get you what you need without additional payment.

Remember to follow the advice in Evaluating Sources to determine whether information you locate online is suitable for your information needs.

How to Use Them

See links above. Use of each tool varies. If a search engine has an advanced search, it may include options such as specifying format, language, domain, or date range.

Tips for Common Search Tools

Academic Search Complete

- **AND:** default (alternatively: term AND term)
- **OR:** term OR term
- **NOT:** term NOT term
- **Exact Phrase:** "exact phrase search"
- **Grouping:** term AND (term OR term)

Bing

- **AND:** default
- **OR:** term OR term
- **NOT:** term NOT term
- **Exact Phrase:** "exact phrase search"
- **Grouping:** Not available

Google

- **AND:** default
- **OR:** term OR term
- **NOT:** term -term (example: animal -cat)
- **Exact Phrase:** “exact phrase search”
- **Grouping:** term AND (term OR term)

WorldCat

- **AND:** term AND term
- **OR:** term OR term
- **NOT:** term NOT term
- **Exact Phrase:** “exact phrase search”
- **Grouping:** term AND (term OR term)

OSU Library Catalog

- **AND:** term AND term
- **OR:** term OR term
- **NOT:** term NOT term
- **Exact Phrase:** “exact phrase search”
- **Grouping:** term AND (term OR term)

98. Evaluating Sources

Thinking Critically About Sources

Evaluating sources often involves piecing together clues.

This section teaches how to identify relevant and credible sources that you have most likely turned up on the Web and on your results pages of the library catalog, Google Scholar, and specialized databases. Relevant, credible sources will meet the information needs of your of your research project.

In order to evaluate a source, you have to answer two questions about it:

- Is this source relevant to my research question?
- Is this a credible source– a source my audience and I should be able to believe?

It's important to determine relevance before credibility because no mater how credible a source is, if it's not relevant to your research question it's useless to you for this project.

TIP: Other Criteria from Your Professor

Don't forget that you also have to make sure your sources meet any other criteria that your professor may have given you for this assignment. For instance, professors often stipulate that, some of your sources have to be scholarly sources or articles from a particular database.

So make sure you have identified enough of the kind of sources your professor has requested.

You might already be worrying about how long evaluating sources is going to take. So let's say right off that you won't have to read all of a source to decide whether it is relevant and credible. (Later, of course, it will take a closer read to determine what direct quotes, paraphrases, and summaries you may want to use from the sources you have selected.)

Nonetheless, our advice is to not begrudge the time you spend evaluating sources. It's one of the most important things to learn at college—the opportunity to evaluate sources is one of the big reasons your professors assign research projects. And your future employers will expect you to have learned how to do it. For the rest of your professional and personal life, you will be using the critical thinking skills that make choosing the right sources possible. So learning those skills is a good investment.

Happily, you'll also get faster the more you do it.

ACTIVITY: Evaluation Basics

Open activity in a Web browser.

Making Inferences: Good Enough for Your Purpose?

Sources should always be evaluated relative to your purpos – why you're looking for information. But because there often aren't clear-cut answers when you evaluate sources, **most of the time it is inferences – educated guesses from available clues –** that you have to make about whether to use information from particular sources.

Your information needs will dictate:

- What kind of information will help.
- How serious you consider the consequences of making a mistake by using information that turns out to be inaccurate. When the consequences aren't very serious, it's easier to decide a source and its information are good enough for your purpose. Of course, there's a lot to be said for always having accurate information, regardless.
- How hard you're willing to work to get the credible, timely information that suits your purpose. (What you're learning here will make it easier.)

Thus, your standards for relevance and credibility may vary, depending on whether you need, say,:

- Information about a personal health problem.
- An image you can use on a poster.
- Evidence to win a bet with a rival in the dorm.
- Dates and times a movie is showing locally.
- A game to have fun with.

- Evidence for your argument in a term paper.

For your research assignments or a health problem, the consequences may be great if you use information that is not relevant or not credible.

Activity: Quick Check

Instructions: Select one answer to each question.
Open activity in a web browser.

Evaluating for Relevancy

Relevant sources are those that pertain to your research question. You'll be able to figure that out fairly quickly by reading or skimming particular parts of sources and maybe jotting down little tables that help you keep track. We'll show you how below, including where to look in specific kinds of sources and what questions to ask yourself as you do.

One thing to consider early on as you make inferences about relevancy is the effect that timeliness, or a source's currency, should have on deciding whether a source is relevant. **Your research question will determine that.**

For instance, if your research question is about the life sciences, you probably should consider only the most recent sources relevant because the life sciences are changing so quickly. There is a good chance that anything but the most recent sources may be out of date. So aim for sources no more than 5 years old. (An example discipline that calls for even newer sources is computer security.)

But suppose your research question is about the Edo Period in

Japan (1603-1868) or about Robert Falcon Scott, who explored the Antarctic from 1901-1913. In these cases, an item from 1918 might be just as useful as an item from 2018 (although new information may have been found in the 100 year gap). But something from 1899 about Antarctica or from 1597 about Japan would NOT be current enough for these research questions.

These example research questions also give you two more clues about how to treat the timeliness or currency of sources as you consider relevance:

- Because of how long ago they lived or occurred, it would be unusual for many sources on Robert Scott or the Edo Period to have been published very recently. So, unlike sources for the life sciences, whether a source is very recent should probably not determine its relevancy to those research questions.
- Primary sources might be considered especially relevant to all three research questions. Life science journal articles that provide research findings for the first time count as primary sources. And primary sources (such as Scott's diaries and expedition photographs, as well as paintings, literature, clothing, and household items from the Edo Period) go a long way to explain faraway people and times. (See Primary, Secondary, & Tertiary Sources.)

EXAMPLE: Currency

Check out how currency is handled on TED. This site provides videos of speakers talking about new ideas in technology, entertainment, and design. (That's what TED stands for.) Some videos are labeled "Newest Talks," and TED tells when every video was recorded.

For your sources for which timeliness matters, see the section Where to Look, which includes where to look in websites, articles, and books for information about a source's currency.

Time-Saving Tips

Instead of thinking you have to read all of every source in order to figure out whether it is relevant, read or skim only parts of each source. If you're looking at the right parts, that should give you enough information to make an educated guess about relevancy.

But what should you be looking for as you do that reading and skimming? One way to figure that out is to first parse your research question so that you can figure out its main concepts. (This is like identifying main concepts in your research question in order to search precisely.)

For instance, suppose your research question is: How does having diverse members in a group increase the critical thinking of the group?

What are this question's main concepts? Our answer is: group diversity and critical thinking.

So when trying to judge which sources are relevant to these main concepts, you would assess whether each source you've found pertains to at least one of these concepts. We recommend you jot down a little table like the one in the example below to keep track of which sources address each main concept.

To be considered relevant to your research question, a source wouldn't necessarily have to cover all of your main concepts, but finding sources that do is the ideal. Otherwise, you just have to make do with what you've got. Don't forget that each source would have to pass the currency test, too, if currency is important to your research question. So it's wise to record your decisions about the sources' currency on your tables, too.

EXAMPLE: Sources' Main Concepts and Currency

Research question: How does having diverse members in a group increase the critical thinking of the group?

	Currency Okay	*Group Diversity*	*Critical Thinking*
Source A title	X	X	
Source B title	X		
Source C title	X	X	X

The table in this hypothetical example indicates that both Sources A and C are relevant because each pertains to at least one main concept from the research question. Currency doesn't seem to matter much to our research question, so all three sources were marked current. But since currency is all that Source B has to offer, it is not relevant for this project.

If you do make little tables for relevance, it's probably a good idea to hang on to them. You might find them helpful later in your research process.

Where to Look in Websites, Articles, and Books

The information below tells where to look and what questions to ask yourself to assess three kinds of sources' relevancy to your research question. **Whatever you do, don't stop evaluating a source after looking only a website's name or the title of another source.**

Save time by looking in particular places in sources for information that will help you figure out whether the source is relevant to your research project. Much of our advice below comes from "Speedy Reading" in *The Craft of Research*, second edition, by Wayne Booth, Gregory Colomb, and Joseph Williams, 2003, pp. 108-109.

On a **website**, check the name of the website and its articles for clues that they contain material relevant to your research question. Consider whether time should have an impact on what information can be considered relevant. If so, skim any dates, datelines, What's New pages, and press releases to see whether any website content works with the time considerations you need. Page creation or revision dates that you find can also help.

Skim any site map and index on the website for key words related to your research question. Try the key words of your research question in the search box. Do you see enough content about your keywords to make you think parts of the website could be helpful?

For an **article**, think about the title. Does it have anything to do with your research question? Consider whether time should have an impact on what sources can be considered relevant. If so, is the publication date within your parameters? Also skim the abstract to see whether the article works with the time considerations you need. For instance, if there is a time period in your research question, does the article address the same time period or was it created in that time period?

Look at the abstract and section headings in the article to locate the problem or question that the article addresses, its solution, and the outline of the article's argument for its main claim. Can those help answer your research question? Do they make it seem the article will give you information about what others have written about your research question? Do they offer a description of the situation surrounding your research question?

Do the article's introduction and conclusion sections help you answer your research question and/or offer a description of the situation surrounding your question so you can explain in your final product why the question is important? Check whether the bibliography contains keywords related to your research question. Do the sources cited by the bibliography pertain to your research question?

For a **book**, check whether the title indicates the book could be about your research question. Consider whether time should have an impact on what sources can be considered relevant. If so, is the publication date or copyright date (usually listed in the library catalog or on the back of the book's title page) too early or late for any time constraints in your research question? Maybe it is just right. Also skim some of the preface and introduction to see whether the book works with the time considerations you need.

For help answering your research question, skim the book's table of contents and any summary chapters to locate the problem or question that the book addresses, its solution, and the broad outline of the book's argument for its main claim. Do they also give you information about what others have written about your research question? Do they offer a description of the situation surrounding your research question? Look for your key words in the bibliography. Do the sources cited pertain to your research question? Skim the index for topics with the most page references. Do the topics with the most page references pertain to your research question?

ACTIVITY: *Follow a Title's Clues for Relevance*

Open activity in a Web browser.

ACTIVITY: Connecting the Dots beyond the Title

Open activity in a Web browser.

Connecting the Dots beyond the Title

Instructions: Now you can practice evaluating for relevance beyond the title. In the previous activity, you evaluated for currency and relevance the tittles of three sources for the research question: How does "prospect theory" in behavioral economics help explain medical doctors' decisinos to favor surgery or radiation to cure cancer in patients?

Judging by the title, the most relevant source for that research question seemed to be a journal article called **"Cancer Treatment**

Prescription–Advancing Prospect Theory beyond Economics," in *Journal of The American Medical Association Oncology*, June, 2016.

Read the abstract of the article below. Then decide whether this source is relevant to your research questions above. That is, might the article help you meet any of your project's information needs about the research questions? If there is at least one need it can help meet, then you should judge the article relevant.

Answer the question below the abstract to indicate the source is relevant. Then compare your answer with our feedback.

As usual, your information needs are:

- To learn more background information.
- To answer your research question.
- To convince your audience that your answer is correct or, at least, the most reasonable answer.
- To describe the situation surrounding your research question for your audience and explain why it's important.
- To report what others have said about question, including any different answers to your research question.

Abstract

"Cancer Treatment Prescription–Advancing Prospect Theory beyond Economics," in *Journal of The American Medical Association Oncology*, June, 2016 (Note to students: This article and abstract are fictitious.)

Importance Cancer Treatment is complex. We expect oncologists to make treatment decisions according to definitive standards of care. Finding out that prospect theory demonstrates that they react very much like most other people when deciding to recommend surgery or chemotherapy for their patients indicates that more self-reflection on oncologists' part could help patients make better decisions. (Prospect theory describes how people choose between alternatives that have risk when the probability of different outcomes is unknown.)

Objective To show whether prospect theory applies to how oncologists framed their recommendations for surgery or chemotherapy for patients in good condition and bad condition.

Design, Settings, and Participants Records of 100 U.S. oncologists were examined for the years 2014 and 2015, which documented patient conditions and the way oncologists framed their recommendations regarding surgery or chemotherapy. Thus, a quasi-experimental ex post facto design was used for the study.

Main Outcomes and Measures This study explored the relationship between the way in which the oncologists "framed" the choice of surgery or chemotherapy as they made recommendations to patients, to patients' conditions, and the choice actually made. Those results were compared to what prospect theory would predict for this situation.

Results Physicians seemed to present their recommendation of surgery or chemotherapy in a loss frame (e.g., "This is likely to happen to you if you don't have this procedure") when patients' conditions were poor and in a gain frame (e.g., "By having this procedure, you can probably dramatically cut your chances of reoccurrence") when their conditions were less poor. These results are what prospect theory would have predicted.

Conclusions and Relevance This study opens up the possibility that, as described by prospect theory, a person's choice of framing behavior is not limited to how we naturally act for ourselves but includes how we act for other people, as the oncologists were acting on behalf of their patients. More research is necessary to confirm this line of evidence and determine whether oncologists' decision making and framing is the most effective and entirely according to the best standards of care.

Evaluating for Credibility

Next, you'll be evaluating each of the sources that you deemed relevant.

What are the clues for inferring a source's credibility? Let's start with evaluating websites, since we all do so much of our research online. But we'll also include where to find clues relevant to sources in other formats when they differ from what's good to use with websites. Looking at specific places in the sources will mean you don't have to read all of every resource to determine its worth to you.

And remember, the more you take these steps, the faster it goes because always examining your sources becomes second nature.

What Used to Help

It used to be easier to draw conclusions about an information source's credibility, depending on whether it was a print source or a web source. We knew we had to be more careful about information on the web–simply because all the filters that promoted accuracy involved in the print publishing process were absent from most web publishing. After all, it takes very little money, skill, and responsible intent to put content on the web, compared with what has to be done to convince print publishers that your content is accurate and that they will make money by printing it.

However, many publishers who once provided only print materials have now turned to the web and have brought along their rigorous standards for accuracy. Among them are the publishers of government, university, and scholarly (peer-reviewed) journal websites. Sites for U.S. mainline news organizations also strive for accuracy rather than persuasion–because they know their readers have traditionally expected it. All in all, more websites now take appropriate care for accuracy than what used to be true on the web.

Nonetheless, it still remains very easy and inexpensive to publish on the web without any of the filters associated with print. So we all still need the critical thinking skills you'll learn here to determine whether websites' information is credible enough to suit your purpose.

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5 Factors to Consider

Evaluating a website for credibility means considering the five factors below in relation to your purpose for the information. These factors are what you should gather clues about and use to decide whether a site is right for your purpose.

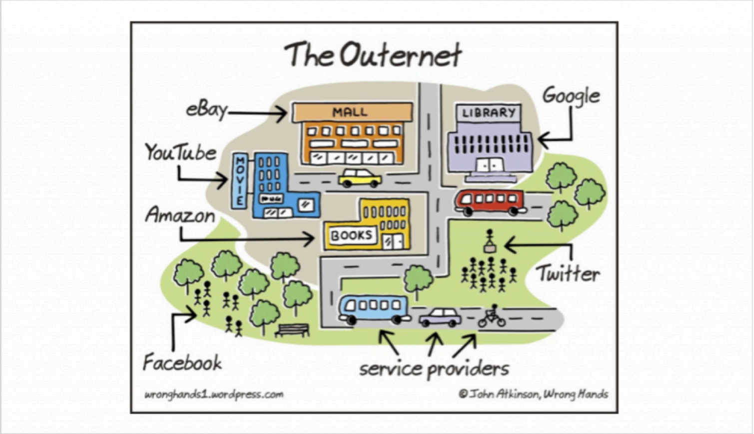
- The source's neighborhood on the web.
- Author and/or publisher's background.
- The degree of bias.
- Recognition from others.
- Thoroughness of the content.

How many factors you consider at any one time depends on your purpose when seeking information. In other words, you'll consider all five factors when you're looking for information for a research project or other high-stakes situation where making mistakes have serious consequences. But you might consider only the first three factors at other times.

A Source's Neighborhood

To understand this concept and begin to use it, imagine that all the sites on the web constitute a community. Just like in a geographical community, there are neighborhoods in which individual sites hang out.

Thinking about what neighborhood a source is in on the web can help you decide whether the site is credible and suits your purpose.



Visualize the web as a community. (Image source: John Atkinson, [Wrong Hands](#))

Audio: Neighborhoods on the Web

Listen to the audio clip (or read the text version) to hear how intuitive this concept is. After you listen, the next activity will show you how to apply the concept.

[Listen to Audio](#) | [View Text Version](#)

Tip: Author's Purpose for Print

Rather than examine print sources for their web neighborhood, examine them for their author's purpose. Read the introduction and conclusion and look at the table of contents to discern the author's purpose.

For instance, did the author intend to use the book or magazine article to inform/educate, persuade, sell, or entertain?

And is the author's purpose suitable for your purpose? For instance, does the fact that a resource was intended to persuade mean it can't help you answer your research question? (As you know from Sources and Information Needs, yes.)

Activity: *Self-Check*

Why might you want to read information on an advocacy site (from the neighborhood of sites that promote particular ideas and behavior)—even when you're writing a term paper and it's not acceptable to cite that source because it persuades instead of educates and is not objective? See the bottom of the page for the answer.

Clues About a Website's Neighborhood

Watch the Understanding Google Search Results movie to better understand how you can quickly determine what kind of information you've turned up in a Google search.

***Movie:** Understanding Google Search Results (no audio)*

[iframe src="https://www.youtube.com/embed/mw1sYYGS_PU?rel=0" width="560" height="315" allowfullscreen="allowfullscreen"]
View Video | View Text Version

On a website, check pages labeled About Us, About This Site, Mission, Site Index, and Site Map, if available. (If such pages or similarly labeled ones don't exist, it may be a sign that the site may be less trustworthy.)

Ask yourself these questions to gather clues that will help you decide what neighborhood you're in:

- **Is the site selling products and/or services (even if there are articles and other useful information, too)?** Perhaps it's a retail, service center, or corporate site.
- **Are there membership applications and requests for contributions of money or time anywhere on the site?** They're usually a sign that you're on a site that promotes particular ideas or behavior – in other words, they're in the advocacy neighborhood.
- **Do postings, articles, reports, and/or policy papers give a one-sided view or multiple views on issues, people, and events?** If they're one-sided, the site is probably a commercial site or in the advocacy group neighborhood. If the information is even-handed and includes different sides of an issue, the site is more likely to be on the library/museum, school, or mainline U.S. news side of town. Sites there usually provide information designed to educate rather than persuade. Newspapers online or in print usually do have editorial pages, however. But labeling opinions as such helps keep mainline U.S. news sources in the newsstand neighborhood and out of the advocacy neighborhood.

Activity: *Neighborhoods on the Web*

Work through the three activities below to practice the concept of neighborhoods on the web.

Matching Site to Neighborhood – Open activity in a web browser.

Matching Neighborhood to Purpose – Open activity in a web browser.

Which Neighborhood? – Open activity in a web browser.

Example: Check Them Out

Think we're making a mountain out of a molehill about being careful about web sources? Please click the links below to look at three websites. Is there an inference(s) you can make that applies to all three? Perhaps that whether a website looks professionally done is not enough to insure that it is credible.

- RYT Hospital: Dwayne Medical Center – http://rythospital.com
- Dog Island – http://www.thedogisland.com
- The Manhattan Airport Foundation – http://manhattanairport.org

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Making the Inference

Consider the clues. Then decide the extent that the site's neighborhood is acceptable for your purpose. It might help to grade the extent that this factor contributes to the site being suitable on a scale like this one:

- A – Very Acceptable
- B – Good, but could be better

- C – OK in a pinch
- D – Marginal
- F – Unacceptable

You'll want to make a note of the resource's grade for neighborhood so you can combine it later with the grades you give the other factors.

Answer to Activity: *Self-Check*

The answer to the "Self-Check" Activity above is:

Advocacy sites are useful to learn about a particular viewpoint. They may provide a wealth of information—you just have to keep in mind that it's just one side's view and then also seek out the other side's view.

Author and Publisher

The reputation of the author and publisher influences your confidence in a source.

You'll always want to know who's providing the information for a website or other source. Do they have the education, training, or other experience that make you think they are authorities on the subject covered? Or do they just have opinions?

The more you know about the author and/or publisher, the more confidence you can have in your decision for or against using content from that source.

Authors and publishers can be individuals or organizations, including companies. (Web masters put things on the site but do not usually decide what goes on all but the smallest websites. They often just carry out others' decisions.)

Sites that do not identify an author or publisher are generally considered less credible for many purposes, including for term papers and other high-stakes projects. The same is true for sources in other formats.

Clues About an Author's and/or Publisher's Background

If they're available, first take a look at pages called such things as

About This Site, About Us, or Our Team first. But you may need to browse around a site further to determine its author. Look for a link labeled with anything that seems like it would lead you to the author. Other sources, like books, usually have a few sentences about the author on the back cover or on the flap inside the back cover.

You may find the publisher's name next to the copyright symbol, ©, at the bottom of at least some pages on a site. In books the identity of the publisher is traditionally on the back of the title page.

Sometimes it helps to look for whether a site belongs to a single person or to a reputable organization. Because many colleges and universities offer blog space to their faculty, staff, and students that uses the university's web domain, this evaluation can require deeper analysis than just looking at the address. Personal blogs may not reflect the official views of an organization or meet the standards of formal publication.

In a similar manner, a tilde symbol (~) preceding a directory name in the site address indicates that the page is in a "personal" directory on the server and is not an official publication of that organization. For example, you could tell that Jones' web page was not an official publication of XYZ University if his site's address was: http://www.XYZuniversity.edu/~jones/page.html. The tilde indicates it's just a personal web page—in the Residences, not Schools, neighborhood of the web.

Unless you find information about the author to the contrary, such blogs and sites should not automatically be considered to have as much authority as content that is officially part of the university's site. Or you may find that the author has a good academic reputation and is using their blog or website to share resources he or she authored and even published elsewhere. That would nudge him or her toward the Schools neighborhood.

Learning what they have published before can also help you decide whether that organization or individual should be considered credible on the topic. Listed below are sources to use to look for what the organization or individual may have published and what has been published about them.

Tip: *Find Out What the Author (Person or Organization) Has Published*

Library Catalogs – Search in a large library catalog to find books written by the author.

For example:

- OSU Library Catalog Link
- OhioLINK
- WorldCat@OSU

Web Article Database – Use a free web article database to search for articles by the author. Note: While you can search for free, you may not be able to retrieve articles unless searching through a library.

For example:

- Google Scholar
- MagPortal.com

Specialized Database – Locate articles written by the author by using a specialized database that covers the same topical area as information on the website. Check your library's website to find databases that you can use for this purpose. (Such databases are also called periodical indexes.)

For example:

- Use ERIC (OSU users only) to locate any articles published by the author of an education website.

Tip: Find Out What Has Been Written About The Author

Web Search Engine – Use a search engine to find web pages where the author's name is mentioned. (Be sure to search for the name as a phrase, as in "Jane Doe")

For example:

- Google
- Yippy

Full-Text Article Database – Use a database that searches the full-text of articles (not just descriptive information about the article) to find those that mention people and organizations.

For example:

- Academic Search Complete (OSU only)
- LexisNexis Academic (OSU only)

Specialized Biographical Sources – Use directories and indexes provided by your library to find backgrounds of people.

For example:

- Biography Reference Bank (OSU only)

Activity: Identifying Authors

Open activity in a web browser.

Making the Inference

Consider the clues. Then decide the extent that the source's author and/or publisher is acceptable for your purpose. It might help to grade the extent that this factor contributes to the site being suitable on a scale like this one:

- A – Very Acceptable
- B – Good, but could be better
- C – OK in a pinch
- D – Marginal
- F – Unacceptable

You'll want to make a note of the source's grade for author and/or publisher so you can combine it later with the grades you give the other factors.

Degree of Bias

> Most of us have biases, and we can easily fool ourselves if we don't make a conscious effort to keep our minds open to new information. Psychologists have shown over and over again that humans naturally tend to accept any information that supports what they already believe, even if the information isn't very reliable. And humans also naturally tend to reject information that conflicts with those beliefs, even if the information is solid. These predilections are powerful. Unless we make an active effort to listen to all sides we can become trapped into believing something that isn't so, and won't even know it.
> — A Process for Avoiding Deception, Annenberg Classroom

Probably all sources exhibit some bias, simply because it's impossible for their authors to avoid letting their life experience and education have an effect on their decisions about what is relevant to put on the site and what to say about it.

But that kind of unavoidable bias is very different from a wholesale effort to shape the message so the site (or other source) amounts to a persuasive advertisement for something important to the author.

Even if the effort is not as strong as a wholesale effort, authors can find many—sometimes subtle—ways to shape communication until it loses its integrity. Such communication is too persuasive, meaning the author has sacrificed its value as information in order to persuade.

Look for evidence of bias in your sources.

While sifting through all the web messages for the ones that suit your purpose, you'll have to pay attention to both what's on the sites and in your own mind.

That's because one of the things that gets in the way of identifying evidence of bias on websites is our own biases. Sometimes the things that look most correct to us are the ones that play to our own biases.

Clues About Bias

Review the website or other source and look for evidence that the site exhibits more or less bias. The factors below provide some clues.

Coverage	**Unbiased:** This source's information is not drastically different from coverage of the topic elsewhere. Information and opinion about the topic don't seem to come out of nowhere. It doesn't seem as though information has been shaped to fit.	**Biased:** Compared to what you've found in other sources covering the same topic, this content seems to omit a lot of information about the topic, emphasize vastly different aspects of it, and/or contain stereotypes or overly simplified information. Everything seems to fit the site's theme, even though you know there are various ways to look at the issue(s).
Citing Sources	**Unbiased:** The source links to any earlier news or documents it refers to.	**Biased:** The source refers to earlier news or documents, but does not link to the news report or document itself.
Evidence	**Unbiased:** Statements are supported by evidence and documentation.	**Biased:** There is little evidence and documentation presented, just assertions that seem intended to persuade by themselves.
Vested Interest	**Unbiased:** There is no overt evidence that the author will benefit from whichever way the topic is decided.	**Biased:** The author seems to have a "vested interest" in the topic. For instance, if the site asks for contributions, the author probably will benefit if contributions are made. Or, perhaps the author may get to continue his or her job if the topic that the website promotes gets decided in a particular way.
Imperative Language	**Unbiased:** Statements are made without strong emphasis and without provocative twists. There aren't many exclamation points.	**Biased:** There are many strongly worded assertions. There are a lot of exclamation points.
Multiple Viewpoints	**Unbiased:** Both pro and con viewpoints are provided about controversial issues.	**Biased:** Only one version of *the truth* is presented about controversial issues.

Examples: *Bias*

- The Cigarette Papers – Sources of information are documented for each chapter.
- The U.S. Immigration Debate – Shows where it gets its facts; the Council on Foreign Relations is nonpartisan.
- White Poison: The Horrors of Milk – Claims are not supported by documentation.

Making the Inference

Consider the clues. Then decide the extent that the bias you detected on the source is acceptable for your purpose. It might help to grade the extent that this factor contributes to the site being suitable on a scale like this one:

- A – Very Acceptable
- B – Good, but could be better
- C – OK in a pinch
- D – Marginal
- F – Unacceptable

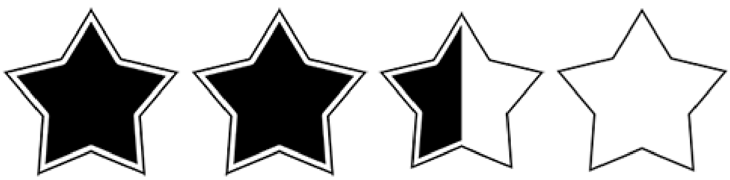
You'll want to make a note of the source's grade for bias so you can combine it later with the grades you give the other factors.

Recognition from Others

Checking to see whether others have linked to a website or tagged or cited it lets you know who else on the web recognizes the value of the site's content. Reader comments and ratings can also be informative about some sites you may be evaluating, such as blogs.

If your source is a print book, the blurbs on the front or back cover give you information from authors, experts, or other well-known people who were willing to praise the book and/or author. The same kind of "mini-reviews" may be available on the publisher's website. You can also look for reviews of the book or other source by using Google and Google Scholar.

Those links, tags, bookmarks, citations, and positive reader comments and ratings are evidence that other authors consider the site exemplary. Book reviews, of course, may be either positive or negative.



Ratings and positive comments and review are evidence that others find a source valuable.

Exactly which individuals and organizations are doing the linking, tagging, citing, rating, and commenting may also be important to you. There may be some company you'd rather your site not keep! Or, maybe the sites that link to the one you're evaluating may help solidify your positive feelings about the site.

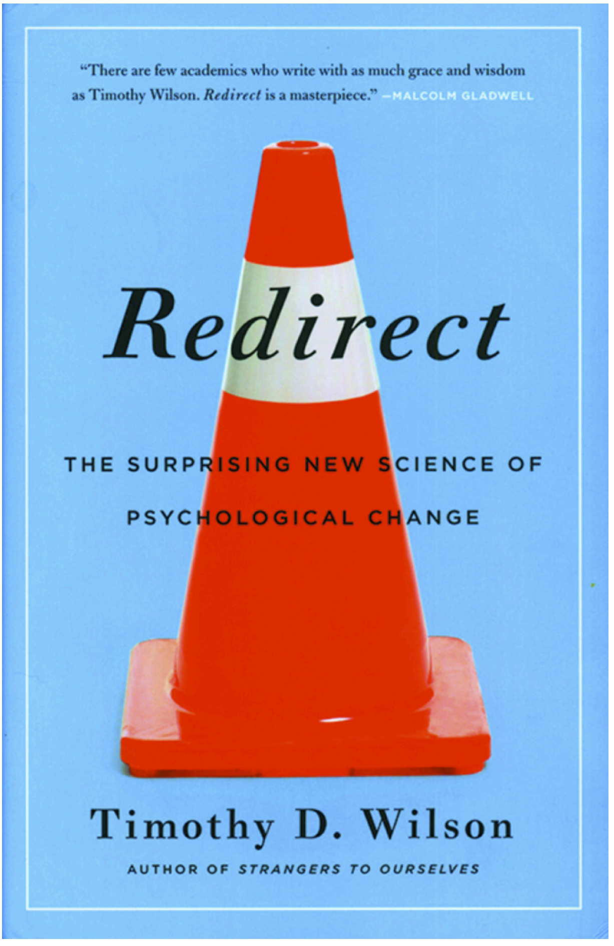
Don't let an absence of links, tags, citations, ratings, and comments damn the site in your evaluation. Perhaps it's just not well-known to other authors. The lack of them should just mean this factor can't add any positive or negative weight to your eventual decision to use the site—it's a neutral.

Tip: *Peer Review and Citation as Recognition*

The peer review most articles undergo before publication in a scholarly journal lets you know they're considered by other scholars to be worth publishing. You might also be interested to see to what extent other researchers have used an article after it was published. (That use is what necessitates their citation.) But keep in mind that there may not be any citations for very new popular magazines, blogs, or scholarly journal articles.

Activity: Influence You?

Would the blurb on the front cover of *Redirect* by psychologist Timothy Wilson influence you positively or negatively in your evaluation of the book?



The blurb says: "There are few academics who write with as much grace and wisdom as Timothy Wilson. Redirect is a masterpiece. – Malcolm Gladwell"

Clues about Recognition

Use Bing to find sites that link to a particular URL. (Google does not adequately support this.) Enter inbody:[URL of known site] in the Bing search box.

For example: inbody:www.deathpenaltyinfo.org

As you look over the results page, always pay attention to more than the number of sites linking to the site about which you're seeking information. Also consider the kind of sites that do that linking. Are they the kind of sites you are pleased to see associated with the site you're interested in? If you are doing academic writing, you should want them to be professional, scholarly, and/or mainline news sources—not, for instance, something from the entertainment neighborhood.

If you prefer recognition from a particular neighborhood, you can ask Bing to look specifically for links from that neighborhood. Suppose, for instance, you wonder whether scholarly sources link to the site above but don't want to look for them among all that you turned up before. You should type in the Bing search box inbody:www.deathpenaltyinfo.org site:edu in order to see whether any scholarly sources link to that site.

Find citations of an article. Although there is no simple way to find every source that cites an article in a popular magazine, a blog, or a scholarly journal, there are some ways to look for these connections.

For articles published in popular magazines or blogs, enter the title of the article in quotes in the search box of a search engine like Google. The resulting list should show you the original article you're evaluating, plus other sites that have mentioned it in some way. Click on those that you want to know more about.

Example: *Finding Mentions*

Here's an example using Google to find mentions for a blog article called Help Wanted: 11 million college grads by Bill Gates.

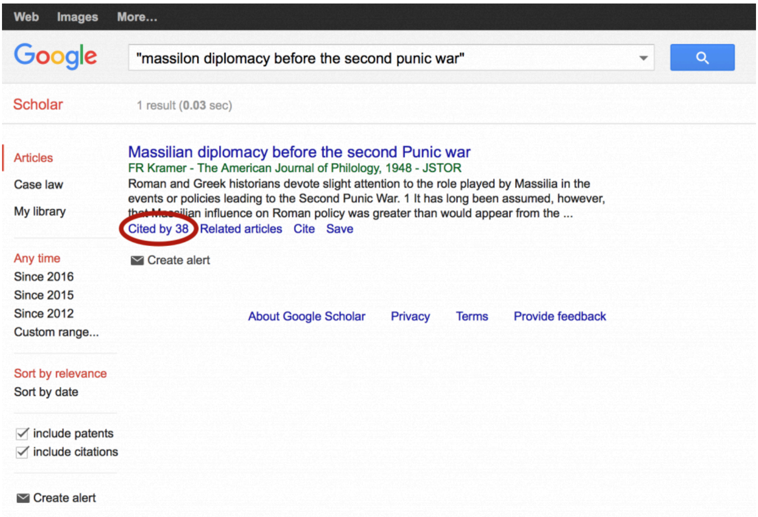
Activity: *Inferences*

Use Bing to determine how many scholarly sites have made links to these sites. Copy each search statement below and put it in the Bing search box to make your searches.

- inbody:www.DOAJ.org site:edu
- inbody:www.nvic.org site:edu

Sometimes you'll even have to take a look at the linking organization's document in order to figure out *why* it's linking. For instance, is it linking to a bad example that it wants to show? Like usual with source evaluation, you'll have to make inferences.

For articles published in scholarly journals, use Google Scholar to enter the title of the article in quotes. In the results list, find the article you're evaluating. (Many articles have similar titles.) Look for the number of citations in the lower left of the listing for your article. If you want more information on the authors who have done the citing, click on the citation number for a clickable list of articles or papers and get the names of authors to look up at the end of the articles or with a search engine. (This is a good way to discover more articles about your topic, too.)



Google Scholar shows how many articles have cited a given article.
[View the live example.]

You can also use specialized citation databases, such as Web of Science and Scopus (both OSU only), to find where an article or author has been cited.

Making the Inference

Consider the clues. Then decide the extent that the source's recognition from others is acceptable for your purpose. It might help to grade the extent that this factor contributes to the site being suitable on a scale like this one:

- A – Very Acceptable
- B – Good, but could be better

- C – OK in a pinch
- D – Marginal
- F – Unacceptable

You'll want to make a note of the source's grade for recognition so you can combine it later with the grades you give the other factors.

Thoroughness

Consider how well a source covers your topic.

Figuring out whether a website or other source is suitable for your purpose also means looking at how thoroughly it covers your topic

You can evaluate thoroughness in relation to other sources on the same topic. Compare your source to how other sources cover the material, checking for missing topics or perspectives.

Clues About Thoroughness

Click around a site to get some idea of how thoroughly it covers the topic. If the source you are evaluating is a print resource, read the introduction and conclusion and also the table of contents to get a glimpse of what it covers. Look at the index to see what subject is covered with the most pages. Is it thorough enough to meet your information need?

Tip: *Related Sites*

Use Google to find other sites on the same topic by entering **related:[the URL of the site you know]** in the search box.

For example: related:guides.osu.edu

Use this technique to browse other sites Google turns up. Do other sites cover aspects of the topic that are missing from the site you are evaluating? Or does your site stack up pretty well against the competition?

Activity: *Comparing Websites*

Open activity in a web browser.

Making the Inference

Consider the clues. Then decide the extent that the source's thoroughness is acceptable for your purpose. It might help to grade the extent that this factor contributes to the source being suitable on a scale like this one:

- A – Very Acceptable
- B – Good, but could be better
- C – OK in a pinch
- D – Marginal
- F – Unacceptable

You'll want to make a note of the source's grade for thoroughness so you can combine it later with the grades you give the other factors.

99. Tracking Research with Annotated Bibliographies

Why create annotated bibliographies?

Research and critical reading strategies play an important role in the writing process. However, in research-intensive assignments, it's easy to become overwhelmed by the information. Our brains can only hold so much information at one time (what psychologists call "cognitive load"); as a result, each new piece of information we read can erase or confuse previous research. To avoid the problem of being overwhelmed, academic researches often rely on **annotated bibliographies**. The phrase sounds fancy, but the strategy is fairly straightforward.

Components of an Annotated Bibliography: Citation + Annotation

Each course and its instructor may have slightly different expectations for what to include in your annotated bibliography, and what an annotation looks like may also vary. However, there are certain conventions that apply to nearly all of them:

Works Cited Reference

The first element of an annotated bibliography is the citation reference.

If you're new to organizing academic research, the process generating a citation reference can seem daunting at first. The different citation styles, such as APA, MLA, etc., only compound the issue. Kurt Schick's article for the *Chronicle*, "Citation Obsession? Get Over It!" discusses the problem with focusing too much on the demands of citation conventions. If students get too caught up in formatting things correctly, it distracting from the more important work of generating interesting and original ideas. However, he also suggests that the basics of citation play an important role in the writing process, and the most important information isn't as complex as it first seems.[1] All citation styles expect a writer to include the following information:

- author
- title of the work
- publication information, such as the website or journal, but also the date and url

The trickiest part is often the publication information, because it really contains a few sub-parts, such as the publisher/sponsor, the date it was published, and the stable url if it was published online. But it helps to know that all citation styles will expect you to include these three elements. Become comfortable with identifying them. The chapter in this textbook, "Creating a References Section," offers more guidance for how to spot these elements.

1. Meta comment: This paragraph is almost like an annotation of Schick's article!

Your paragraph about the source

The next element in an annotated bibliography is the actual annotation, which is the bulk of the writing. Some instructors might call this a "source summary."

Annotations/source summaries are almost always a single paragraph that does the following things:

- **Introduce the source**: At the beginning, refer to the title, author, and main idea or argument of the piece. You can use signal phrases to help open this part: "In _________________, the author ________________ argues that ___________________."
- **Briefly identify the key points of the text**: If the source is argumentative, for example, some of the important points might be the evidence or reasoning. On the other hand, secondary ideas, such as counterarguments and rebuttals, are probably too tertiary and detailed that they should be left out. Stick with a broad outline, and try to put as most of the summary as you can in your own words. Quotes should be used sparingly, if at all, and they must be placed in quotes and be cited (e.g., the page number). When summarizing key information, maintain a neutral tone and use the third-person point of view and present tense ("Thomson argues" rather than "Thomson argued").
- **Discuss, analyze, or evaluate** the source in terms of your assignment or essay project. Can the article be used as evidence for a certain claim? Does it serve as a strong counterargument? What about the quality of the source? Is it authoritative? Depending on the annotated bibliographic assignment, you instructor may have specific requirements for how to discuss the source.

This basic structure of an annotation reinforces the "M-E-A-L" strategy discussed in the chapter, "The Basics of Integration."

Annotations/source summaries are excellent ways to practice integration at the most basic level.

The video, “What is an annotated bibliography?”, by Santiago Community College, offers a great visual overview:

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://idaho.pressbooks.pub/write/?p=292#oembed-1

The second half of this chapter is an article by Steven Krause on the Annotated Bibliography assignment. It’s geared towards longer, self-directed research projects, but it also offers some helpful examples of what annotations look like.

The Annotated Bibliography Exercise

by Steven Krause

What is an Annotated Bibliography?

As you develop a working thesis for your research project and begin to collect different pieces of evidence, you will soon find yourself needing some sort of system for keeping track of everything. The system discussed in this chapter is an annotated bibliography, which is a list of sources on a particular topic that includes a brief summary of what each source is about. This writing exercise is a bit different from the others in this part of The Process of Research Writing in that isn't an "essay" per se; rather it is an ongoing writing project that you will be "building" as you discover new pieces of evidence for your research project.

Here is an example of an entry from an annotated bibliography in MLA style:

> Parsons, Matt. "Protecting Children on the Electronic Frontier: A Law Enforcement Challenge." FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin 69.10 (2000): 22-26.

This article is about an educational program used by the U.S. Navy to educate people in the Navy and their families about some of the things that are potentially dangerous to children about the Internet. Parsons says that the educational program has been effective.Annotated bibliography entries have two parts. The top of the entry is the citation. It is the part that starts "Parsons, Matt'" and that lists information like the name of the writer, where the evidence appeared, the date of publication, and other publishing information.

The second part of the entry is the summary of the evidence being cited. A good annotated bibliography summary provides enough information in a sentence or two to help you and others understand what the research is about in a neutral and non-opinionated way.

The first two sentences of this annotation are an example of this sort of very brief, "just the facts" sort of summary. In the brief summaries of entries in an annotated bibliography, stay away from making evaluations about the source—"I didn't like this article very much" or "I thought this article was great." The most important goal of your brief summary is to help you, colleagues, and other potential readers get an idea about the subject of the particular piece of evidence.

Summaries can be challenging to write, especially when you are trying to write them about longer and more complicated sources of research. Keep these guidelines in mind as you write your own summaries.

- Keep your summary short. Good summaries for annotated bibliographies are not “complete” summaries; rather, they provide the highlights of the evidence in as brief and concise a manner as possible, no more than a sentence or two.
- Don’t quote from what you are summarizing. Summaries will be more useful to you and your colleagues if you write them in your own words. Instead of quoting directly what you think is the point of the piece of evidence, try to paraphrase it. (For more information on paraphrasing your evidence, see Chapter 3, “Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Avoiding Plagiarism”).
- Don’t “cut and paste” from database abstracts. Many of the periodical indexes that are available as part of your library’s computer system include abstracts of articles. Do no “cut” this abstract material and then “paste” it into your own annotated bibliography. For one thing, this is plagiarism. Second, “cutting and pasting” from the abstract defeats one of the purposes of writing summaries and creating an annotated bibliography in the first place, which is to help you understand and explain your research.

Different writers will inevitably write slightly different summaries of the same evidence. Some differences between different writers’ summaries of the same piece of evidence result from different interpretations of what it important in the research; there’s nothing wrong with that.

However, two summaries from different writers should both provide a similar summary. In other words, its not acceptable when the difference of interpretation is the result of a lack of understanding of the evidence.

Why Write Annotated Bibliographies?

An annotated bibliography is an excellent way to keep track of the research you gather for your project. Make no mistake about it— it is extremely important that you keep track of all of your evidence for your research project, and that you keep track of it from the beginning of the process of research writing.

There's nothing more frustrating than finding an excellent article or book chapter you are excited about incorporating into your research project, only to realize you have forgotten where you found the article or book chapter in the first place. This is extremely frustrating, and it's easily avoided by doing something like writing an annotated bibliography.

You could use other methods for keeping track of your research. For example, you could use note cards and write down the source information as a proper citation, then write down the information about the source that is important. If the material you know you want to use from a certain source is short enough, you might even write a direct quote, which is where you write down word for word what the source says exactly as it is written. At other times, you can write a paraphrase, which is where you write down what the source means using your own words.

While note cards and other methods have their advantages, annotated bibliographies are an extremely useful tool for keeping track of your research. An annotated bibliography:

- Centralizes your research into one document that you can keep track of both as a print-out of a word-processed file and as a file you save electronically.
- Allows you to "copy and paste" citation information into the works cited part of your research project.

An annotated bibliography also gives you the space to start writing and thinking a bit about how some of your research might fit into your project. Consider these two sample entries from an annotated bibliography from a research project on pharmaceutical advertising:

Siegel, Marc. "Fighting the Drug (ad) Wars." The Nation 17 June 2002: 21.

Siegel, who is a doctor himself, writes about how drug advertising has undermined the communication between doctors and patients. He says that drug ads have driven up the costs of prescription drugs, particularly big selling drugs like those for cholesterol.

Wechsler, Jill. "Minority Docs See DTC Ads as Way to Address 'Race Gap.'" Pharmaceutical Executive May 2002: 32, 34. WilsonSelect Database. Eastern Michigan University Halle Library. 20 October 2002. <http://www.emich.edu/halle>.

This article is about a study that said that African-American doctors saw advertising of prescription drugs as a way of educating their patients. The ads are useful because they talk about diseases that affect African-Americans.

Even from the limited amount of information available in these entries, it's clear that a relationship between these articles exists. Both are similar articles about how the doctor/patient relationship is affected by drug advertising. But both are also different. The first article is from the newspaper The Nation, which is in many ways similar to an academic journal and which is also known for its liberal views. The second article is from a trade journal (also similar to academic journals in many ways) that obviously is an advocate for the pharmaceutical industry.

In other words, in the process of compiling an annotated bibliography, you are doing more than keeping track of your research. You are starting to make some comparisons and beginning to see some relationships between your evidence, a process that will become increasingly important as you gather more research and work your way through the different exercises that lead to the research project.

But remember: However you decide to keep track of your research as you progress through your project—annotated bibliography, note cards, or another method—the important thing is that you need to keep track of your research as you progress through your project!

How many sources do I need?

Inevitably, students in research writing classes always ask how many sources they need to include in their research projects. In one sense, "how many sources do I need?" is a utilitarian question, one usually attached to a student's exploration of what it will take to get a particular grade. Considered more abstractly, this question is also an effort to explore the scope of a research project. Like a certain page or word count requirement, the question "how many sources do I need?" is an effort to get a handle on the scope of the research project assignment. In that sense, asking about the number of sources is probably a good idea, a little like asking how much something weighs before you attempt to pick it up.

But ultimately, there is no right or wrong answer to this question. Longer research projects tend to have evidence from more different sources than shorter projects, but there is no cut-and-dry formula where "X" number of pages will equal "X" number of sources.

However, an annotated bibliography should contain significantly more entries than you intend or expect to include in your research project. For example, if you think you will need or if your instructor requires you to have research from about seven different sources, you should probably have about 15 different entries on your annotated bibliography.

The reasons you need to find twice as many sources as you are likely to use is that you want to find and use the best research you can reasonably find, not the first pieces of research you can find. Usually, researchers have to look at a lot more information than they would ever include in a research writing project to begin making judgements about their research. And by far the worst thing you can do in your research is to stop right after you have found the number of sources required by the instructor for your project.

Using Computers to Write Annotated Bibliographies

Personal computers, word-processing software, and the Internet can make putting together an annotated bibliography more useful and a lot easier. If you use word-processing software to create your annotated bibliography, you can dramatically simplify the process of creating a "works cited" or "references" page, which is a list of the sources you quote in your research project. All you will have to do is "copy and paste" the citation from the annotated bibliography into your research project—that is, using the functions of your computer and word processing software, "copy" the full citation that you have completed on your annotated bibliography page and "paste" it into the works cited page of your research project.

This same sort of "copy and paste" function also comes in handy when doing research on the web. For example, you can usually copy and paste the citation information from your library's online database for pieces of evidence you are interested in reading. In most cases, you should be able to "copy and paste" information you find in your library's online database into a word processing file. Many library databases—both for books and for periodicals—also have a feature that will allow you to email yourself results from a search.

Keep two things in mind about using computers for your annotated bibliographies:

- You will have to reformat whatever information you get from the Internet or your library's databases in order to meet MLA or APA style.
- Don't use the copy and paste feature to plagiarize! Simply copying things like abstracts defeats one of the important purposes for writing an annotated bibliography in the first place, and it's cheating.

Assignment: Writing an Annotated Bibliography

As you conduct your research for your research writing project, compile an annotated bibliography with 15-20 entries. Each entry in your annotated bibliography should contain a citation, a brief summary of the cited material. You will be completing the project in phases and a complete and revised version of it will be due when you have completed your research.

You should think of your annotated bibliography as having roughly twice as many sources as the number of sources you will need to include for the research project, but your instructor might have a different requirement regarding the number of sources required.

Also, you should work on this assignment in parts. Going to the library and trying to complete this assignment in one sitting could turn this into a dreadful writing experience. However, if you complete it in stages, you will have a much better understanding of how your resources relate to each other.

You will probably need to discuss with your instructor the style of citation you need to follow for your research project and your annotated bibliography. Following a citation style isn't difficult to do, but you will want to be consistent and aware of the "rules" from the beginning. In other words, if you start off using MLA style, don't switch to APA style halfway through your annotated bibliography or your research project.

Last, but not least, you will need to discuss with your instructor the sorts of materials you need to include in your research and your annotated bibliography. You may be required to include a balance of research from scholarly and non-scholarly sources, and from "traditional" print resources (books, magazines, journals, newspapers, and so forth) and the Internet.

Questions to ask while writing and researching

- Would you classify the material as a primary or a secondary source? Does the research seem to be difficult to categorize this way? (For more information on primary and secondary sources, see Chapter 1, "Thinking Critically About Research" and the section "Primary versus Secondary Research").
- Is the research from a scholarly or a non-scholarly publication? Does the research seem difficult to categorize this way?
- Is the research from the Internet—a web page, a newsgroup, an email message, etc.? Remember: while Internet research is not necessarily "bad" research, you do need to be more careful in evaluating the credibility of Internet-based sources. (For more information on evaluating Internet research, see Chapter 1, "Thinking Critically About Research," and the sections "The Internet: The Researcher's Challenge" and "Evaluating the Quality and Credibility of Your Research."
- Do you know who wrote the material you are including in your annotated bibliography? What qualifications does your source say the writer has?
- Why do you think the writer wrote it? Do they have a self-interest or a political viewpoint that might make them overly biased?
- Besides the differences between scholarly, non-scholarly, and Internet sources, what else do you know about where your

research was published? Is it an academic book? An article in a respected journal? An article in a news magazine or newspaper?
- When was it published? Given your research topic, how important do you think the date of publication is?
- Are you keeping your summaries brief and to the point, focusing on the point your research source is trying to make?
- If it's part of the assignment, are you including a sentence or two about how you see this piece of research fitting into your overall research project?

Revision and Review

Because of its ongoing nature, revising an annotated bibliography is a bit different than the typical revision process. Take opportunities as you compile your annotated bibliography to show your work in progress to your classmates, your instructor, and other readers you trust. If you are working collaboratively on your research projects, you will certainly want to share your annotated bibliography with classmates who are working on a similar topic. Working together like this can be a very useful way to get more ideas about where your research is going.

It is best to approach the annotated bibliography in smaller steps—five or six entries at a time. If that's how you're approaching this project, then you will always be in a process of revision and review with your classmates and your instructor. You and your readers (your instructor and your classmates) should think about these questions as you revise, review, and add entries:

- Are the summaries you are including brief and to the point? Do your readers understand what the cited articles are about?
- Are you following a particular style guide consistently?
- If you are including a sentence or two about each of your

resources, how do these sentences fit with your working thesis? Are they clarifying parts of your working thesis that were previously unclear? Are they suggesting changes to the approach you took when you began the research process?

- Based on the research you have so far, what other types of research do
- you think you need to find?

100. Student Inquiry Essay Examples

COMMUNITY DESTRUCTION IN NORTH DAKOTA OIL BOOMTOWNS

Katharine Berry

Jonnie Cassens is a truck driver who hoped that her move to a North Dakota oil boomtown would help her recover from her previous life in California. In the documentary "Running on Fumes in North Dakota," she explains how the lifestyle emerging from North Dakota's rapid oil boom isn't as glamorous as it is often portrayed; in fact, it is a dirty and unpleasant life. Jonnie's move from California has left her isolated and lonely with no one to turn to for support or companionship. She expresses her longing for a female friend to "gossip with" or someone she can "get a pedicure with," but the oil boom has created a society dominated by men and a fractured community (Christenson). Jonnie may be physically alone, but she is not alone in her feeling that the oil boom has resulted in isolation and loneliness. Life-long residents and brand new residents of boomtowns fear the crime, prostitution, and influx of drugs that oil has drawn to North Dakota, and workers often face brutal conditions (Stewart). The unreliable and temporary nature of the North Dakota oil boom has disrupted the existing communities in this region and created deep divisions, preventing new communities from forming. Ultimately, the oil boom undermines community in all forms.

The cohesive rural communities that existed near oil reserves in North Dakota have disintegrated and been destroyed by the nature of the oil boom in the region (Brown). The rapid population flood has created problems of supply and demand in many aspects, especially in relation to housing. There is a great need for housing in the oil boomtowns but little availability, which drives up rent to prices approaching those in urban San Francisco (Warren). These extreme rent increases have made it difficult for many long-time residents to continue to afford their homes and many families are forced to find new housing outside of the region (Stewart). In New Town, North Dakota, a large trailer park, Prairie Winds, which has been home to several Native American tribes for decades, epitomizes this problem. The trailer parks' new owner raised rents and evicted the long-term residents in order to provide housing for oil workers (Mufson). The original residents were left without roofs over their heads, and unfortunately this type of community destruction is not uncommon. As the oil boom drives housing prices up, families and loved ones are split up. Due to the limited availability of housing in the region, many people leave the area completely. These drastic rent increases have not only taken residents' housing but their sense of home as well. To make matters worse, the history of oil booms in the region—which features promises of great success followed by sudden failures that leave the state in debt—has left many people skeptical, including construction developers. Since the construction industry anticipates that the region's oil supply will eventually run out, no new housing is being built to ameliorate the housing crisis. Therefore, the high demand for housing will continue and long-term residents will be driven further from their communities.

Additionally, among residents who try to take advantage of the conditions the boom has created, there is a general consensus that the profit is not worth the trouble (Mufson). Some residents have leased out their land and minerals in exchange for a profit from the oil companies; however, the oil companies have caused physical destruction to residents' property, leaving them disappointed and angry (Stone). In an interview with a North Dakota native published by *The Washington Post*, Donnie Nelson reflects on the two oil rigs on his property: "'I don't like what it's done for our communities and lifestyle,' he said. 'We had a good life, and now it's gone forever, or at least for my lifetime'" (Mufsan). He also reports that he would "'give it all back for the trouble it's been'" (Mufsan). Bert Hauge, another long-time resident, has large trenches on his property and cows with serious health problems as a result of the boom (Stone). These residents are left disapproving and discontented with the oil boom. North Dakotans remain skeptical that the promises of twenty years of success from this boom will become a reality, and instead believe that this boom will follow the limited course of previous booms (Lindholm). This bitterness has turned existing communities into a group of isolated individuals. No matter what their situation, all long-time North Dakotans share one commonality: they miss the time, before the oil boom, when communities "didn't lock their doors and knew all their neighbors" (Mufson). While long-term residents in North Dakota have felt their communities disintegrate, employers in the oil industry have simultaneously prevented new communities from forming. This has resulted in deep divisions between employers and employees and further divisions among employees themselves. The "suits" (as the oil industry employers are called) have dehumanized workers and created an animal kingdom of men. They have mistreated men by implementing long hours and challenging and dirty work (Gale). Employees of the oil industry are on a schedule of approximately twelve-hour workdays for two weeks straight followed by two weeks of no work, but there is some degree of scheduling uncertainty, and sudden decisions often change schedules at the last minute (Chaudhry). These conditions create the sense of a temporary and easily replaceable environment, implying that the employees are inferior to the "suits." With uncaring employers, there is a certain degree of animosity that allows workers to be deindividualized and take on the role of "rough and tumble oil worker" (Gale). Most workers are away from their homes and families and remain free of ties to any community in the region; occasionally workers act without being held accountable. This misbehavior has resulted in rising crime and drug use, problems that continue to grow (Healy).

There might be potential for workers to bond over their dehumanization, loneliness and desire for success, but because of the limited resources in the region, workers must compete, making the formation of community impossible. The housing scarcity has created massive competition between workers over housing (Chaudhry). Temporary man-camps of workers are now abundant, along with RV neighborhoods and thousands of vehicles that have been transformed into homes (Sulzberger). This competition is a free-for-all, and men who cannot find anything substantial have resorted to anything that will be sufficient for a temporary residence. With the harsh winters, some workers are finding it difficult to even stay alive. The inflation in the region also makes eating at restaurants practically impossible (Chaudhry). In a society with so many workers in the same situation, new communities could practically fall into place, but these workers face such a range of harsh conditions and obtaining basic requirements like housing and food take precedence over forming new communities.

The undermining of community caused by the oil industry in North Dakota isn't the state or nation's primary concern, and it is obvious that the economic benefits resulting from the boom are overwhelming. This oil boom could bring energy independence to the United States, which some might argue is sufficient reason to overlook community destruction. However, the oil boom has also brought health risks and environmental disturbances. Do the economic benefits outweigh the environmental, health and community drawbacks of oil boomtowns? Workers begin to wonder if leaving their families and homes for an uncertain amount of time, facing hard and lonely conditions, and performing dangerous work is really worth the extra income they will make. Others may wonder if the extreme yet temporary success of the oil industry in the region should be unthinkingly prioritized, especially given the destruction to the family land of native North Dakotans.

Is the temporary success of these modern boomtowns worth the potential long-term consequences they bring? As long as the boom benefits the nation as a whole, it is unlikely that there will be any changes to the industry, which leaves the residents of these North Dakota boomtowns more lonely and isolated than ever with no definite end in sight. This leaves residents like Jonnie Cassens in her trailer, which has no running water or toilet—and instead of confiding and bonding with a friend, the only relationship she has is with her dog.

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Instructor’s Memo

Kate’s essay is a testament to how individual stories can make large-scale geopolitical debates feel real and emotionally relevant. Over the past year, the news cycle has featured stories of the Keystone XL pipeline bill, global warming, and peak oil, but Kate leaves us with the image of a woman living alone in a trailer near the North Dakota oil fields. As Kate notes, this woman is surviving without running water or a toilet, her only significant relationship with her dog. Reading Kate’s paper, I am reminded that arguments—even critical and scholarly ones—are sometimes more effective when conveyed through images as opposed to direct statements.

Kate did a tremendous amount of research for this project. Her sources range from newspaper articles to videos to radio transcripts to full-length books. This research allowed her to situate her argument within the larger historical context of boomtowns while also quoting contemporary residents of North Dakota oil communities. Kate’s research also allowed her to consider her argument from multiple perspectives: if existing communities in North Dakota are undermined by the sudden economic influx of an oil boom, then the people who arrive to work in the oil fields also report feeling dislocated and lonely. In this sense, Kate’s writing helps us understand how there are always multiple perspectives on disaster.

— *Sarah Dimick*

Writer's Memo

The skills I learned in English 100 have helped me to become a much better writer because I learned the basics of how to compose a good paper, not just how to write to meet the requirements for a specific paper. When told that we would write the last paper of the semester about a contested place, I had no idea what I would write about. In class, we read several pieces from various sources that gave us an idea of what a contested place could look like. I asked my parents for some examples and one of them mentioned hydrolytic fracking in North Dakota. I didn't know much about the topic but I liked that it was a contested place in the U.S. Determining a topic to write about was one of the hardest parts of the paper for me, but I took the idea and looked at a specific aspect within the place — the communities.

I knew very little about what was happening in the oil boomtowns in North Dakota, and even less about the communities within them. In class, we learned how to: gather information and utilize library resources, integrate quotations, write a thesis, and structure an essay and the paragraphs in it; all of which made writing the paper less intimidating. I met with my teacher periodically throughout the writing process, which in turn helped me stay on top of the paper and do the necessary work to write a great paper.

I have never enjoyed writing and have instead dreaded it, generally finding it to be intimidating and overwhelming. However, after learning skills to write a good paper, meeting consistently with my teacher, and working at a steady pace, I began to enjoy writing and I eventually produced a paper I am truly proud of. Different from many of the papers I had written before, I also enjoyed researching about the community destruction in North Dakota oil boomtowns. I found the topic fascinating, so much so that I wanted to share what I had learned with others, and get involved in some way to help address the problems in the oil boomtowns.

The most challenging part of the paper was identifying what I wanted the paper to be about, and narrowing a broad idea into a specific focus that I could form into a thesis statement. I identified the main points I wanted to use, compared them and looked at what they had in common; then, my teacher helped me narrow down and look at the big picture and I determined the specific focus of the paper. After developing a thesis, the rest of the paper was easy. I realized that sometimes the thesis statement comes later on in the process, and it may change several times before it is right. The process of writing this paper has turned me into a much better writer, and I continue to use the skills I learned in English 100 for all my papers.

— Katharine Berry

Student Writing Award: Critical/Analytical Essay

This essay was previously published in the 9th edition of CCC.

Previous: Siegert, Boys Who Fall

Next: Look Out for Killer Tomatoes!

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LICENSE

UNDERSTANDING MASS INCARCERATION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN

Ruthie Sherman

You open your eyes to concrete walls, three roommates, a couple square feet of space, and a toilet about a foot from your bed. You sit up, only to slam your head on the body of your bunkmate, resulting in a large red mark. You slowly stand up because you really have to go to the bathroom and 3:45 a.m. is the only time the guards are too tired to stare at you while you go. This hypothetical situation might seem terrifying, but it is like the common experience of millions of prisoners every day in the U.S. While most Americans are unaware of and desensitized from the consequences of being in prison, incarcerated Americans have to deal with overcrowding, lack of privacy, and isolation on a daily basis. How did this become the norm? How have so many Americans become so unjustifiably desensitized? How is this situation affecting different groups of people in the United States? To begin with, how did we decide that the punishment for crime should be incarceration?

Today, the concept of incarceration is normal. Most people would not think twice when a person is sentenced to time in jail or prison. However, this was not always the case. In The Historical Origin of the Prison System in America, Harry Elmer Barnes chronicles the evolution of criminal justice in the United States. Starting with the Colonial period, Barnes attributes the origin of the modern penal system to two institutions: jails and prisons, which he considers one institution, and workhouses. During the Colonial period, jails and prisons were locations meant only to hold prisoners until a punishment was decided after their trial, creating the practice of placing criminals in separate spaces from the majority of society. Workhouses were designed to repress people of lower class, especially poor people, and were not meant to punish criminals. However, the practice of forcing labor on lower class citizens originated with workhouses. For a long time, these two institutions existed in isolation from each other, containing the group they were constructed to manage.

American Quakers are credited with combining the practices of each institution. According to Barnes, "they originated both the idea of imprisonment as the typical mode of punishing crime, and the doctrine that this imprisonment should not be in idleness but at hard labor" (36). Without knowing it, Quakers transformed the perception and implementation of prison systems in the United States. They took the premise of prisons, isolation of criminals as punishment, and the premise of workhouses, making active use of unproductive members of society, to produce the modern practices of imprisonment and incarceration (Barnes, 36). However, the Quakers had no means of predicting how these principles and practices would become the platform for a dehumanized perspective on criminals.

When prisons were established on the belief that criminals should be isolated based on deviance, the perception of criminality and punishment shifted. Instead of a societal responsibility, there was an invisible solution. Criminals were put out of sight, barricading issues of criminal justice and punishment from the daily concerns of the majority of Americans. This enabled a dependency on criminal justice policies that absolved the larger society of responsibility or of being conscious of actively pursuing social reform for people who had committed crimes. As this dependency grew and became more institutionalized, criminals became viewed as mere shells strictly defined by crime instead of complex human beings with backgrounds and identities that could contextualize their criminal activity (Meares, 8).

According to Christina Meares, some of the invisible dynamics that could contextualize the experiences of incarcerated individuals include, "homelessness, unemployment, drug addiction, illiteracy and dependency on welfare." She continues, "These are only a few of the problems that disappear from public view when the human beings contending with them are relegated to cages" (8). *When people perceive criminals, not only are such dynamics generally unacknowledged, but the multifaceted ways they impact each person depending on their identities are ignored as well. As a consequence, society's dependence on prisons to reform members of society has ignored the dynamics that were enabling and reinforcing crime among certain groups of people* (Meares, 8). *An unfair practice of criminal justice was established. Prisons were expected to change and reform criminals, even while society remained silent about the contexts maintaining and reinforcing criminal behavior. The silence surrounding these dynamics, which allowed individuals to be strictly defined by their crime, along with the concentration of criminals into prisons became the foundation for a dehumanized perception of the incarcerated population. And this perception of criminals fed the rise of mass incarceration, the extreme rates of imprisonment, and the manifestation of a dehumanized and racialized perception of criminals that ignores the contexts of institutional issues of poverty and race* (Stevenson, 15).

While the perception of criminals has evolved since the Colonial period, mass incarceration emerged relatively recently. During the 1980s, the dynamics that society surrounded with silence, most noticeably drug use, became the defining factors that would directly lead to the rise in incarceration. Although crime was decreasing at the beginning of that decade, President Reagan started his "War on Drugs" against the use of crack cocaine (Alexander, 3). *In the introduction to her book The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness, Michelle Alexander describes how this war was not necessarily founded on an actual widespread drug problem. She writes, "[T]here is no truth to the notion that the War on Drugs was launched in response to crack cocaine. President Ronald Reagan officially announced the current drug war in* 1982, *before crack became an issue in the media or a crisis in poor black neighborhoods"* (3).

Subsequently, the Reagan administration even hired staff to produce a media campaign demonizing crack cocaine, which succeeded almost immediately in gaining support from both the public and the government. Unsurprisingly, many of the images used in this campaign displayed men of color wearing stereotypical inner city clothing, implying they were the villains of the crack cocaine story. Since the public had been conditioned for nearly the entire history of the United States to depend on prisons to act as social reformers, Reagan's so-called War on Drugs could then easily and swiftly mass incarcerate the poor people of color in the United States (Alexander, 3).

The current debate surrounding mass incarceration is dominated by discussions of how this issue impacts men of color or poor white men. But it is important to see that American patriarchal society has empowered another destructive force within the emergence of mass incarceration, namely, ignoring how this phenomenon has affected women. In Bryan Stevenson's book Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption, the twelfth chapter, entitled "Mother, Mother," grapples with the mass incarceration of women in the United States. Stevenson writes, "In the United States, the number of women sent to prison increased 646 percent between 1980 and 2010, a rate 1.5 times higher than the rate of men" (235–36). Stevenson credits two key components in the high rate for the mass incarceration of women: the criminalization of infant mortality and the enactment of the "Three Strikes" law, which increased sentences to life in prison for a crime when an offender had committed two or more serious crimes in the past (236). While the attitude towards criminals generally is defined purely by their crime, the attitude toward gender for female prisoners also shows that these prisoners are being subjected to strict and decontextualized definitions using the crime of the prisoner. Rather than just being criminals, drug users, thieves, or murderers, the attitude is that women prisoners are also sluts, horrible mothers, abusive mothers, and undeserving of help from society.

Stevenson notes, "[W]e've created a new class of 'untouchables' in American society, made up of our most vulnerable mothers and their children" (237). Rather than consider the circumstances that may have put these women in the position of committing crimes, society defined these women as despicable and abominable (Codd, 8). Once again, society is depending on prisons to deal with the larger social issues that remain out of sight, reinforcing a dehumanized and decontextualized perception of female prisoners. While defining these women as "untouchable" because of one set of actions is entirely unjustified, this perception has been particularly destructive for women of color, especially African American women.

The intersectionality of African American women's identities and experiences reveal how they are subjected to the worst consequences of mass incarceration. Intersectionality, the inseparable nature of one's multiple identities and how those identities simultaneously filter one's experience, acknowledges historical influences on stereotypes and discrimination that construct these women's experiences. In Disappearing Acts: The Mass Incarceration of African American Women, *Christina Meares described her research on white and black women's experiences in the Georgia prisons, which aimed to quantitatively assess intersectionality as it pertains to African American women. According to Meares "The sentence inequality of black women is the result of the cumulative effects of being members of a disadvantaged race, class and gender" (2). The mass incarceration of African American women cannot be credited or understood through just one of the identities they can claim, but must be understood through a careful examination of how their identities intersect to craft their experiences. These intersecting "disadvantaged" identities reveal the unique devastating consequences of mass incarceration for African American women.*

*African American women experience potentially the worst consequences of mass incarceration, directly and indirectly. While the culture of incarceration in the United States has conditioned society to define prisoners strictly by their crimes, mass incarceration has embedded stereotypes and perceptions of African American women that reinforce institutions of oppression and domination. In "*Black Women's Prison Narratives and the Intersection of Race, Gender, and Sexuality in US Prisons*," Breea Willingham describes how black women use writing to try to escape experiences of sexual abuse, silenced self-identity, and ostracism. Willingham quotes the writing of black female prisoners that describe sexual abuse from prison guards, a lack of support from family and friends, and a sense of isolation that extends beyond the physical prison. All three of these kinds of experiences reinforce the stereotypes that contextualized how these women arrived in prison. They support the misperception of black women as sexual objects and as less significant than other women (Willingham,* 63*). While examining why these black women use writing to escape their experiences, Willingham highlights the larger issue that is a relatively unique consequence for African American women: silence. She writes, "…what is different about the incarcerated black woman's story is that it allows some of these women to express themselves and define their existence—to tell us that they still matter despite their absence"* (64).

African American women's relative absence from mainstream society in combination with their almost non-existent social power eliminates any potential for this group to be defined by its members. Rather, the conditioned perception of incarceration, the stereotypes of African American women, and the combination of these two socially embedded perceptions allows the dominant members of society the power to define African American women. This reinforces systemic oppression and domination of African American women, resulting in a group that exists in society without the capacity to present their own definition of their identity. The inability to construct a definition of oneself because of the intersecting membership between two disadvantaged groups is an unprecedented and unjustified consequence that uniquely impacts African American women due to mass incarceration. This complex understanding of the issue lacks the magnification received largely by African American men in mass media, further silencing African American women and distancing them from control over how they are perceived. While these issues cannot be solved merely by media attention, extending the conversation of this issue to its impact on African American women could create more opportunities for collaboration between groups to fight against discrimination and oppression. However, the mass incarceration of African American women requires a critical examination of the history of this group in the United States in order to attempt to dismantle oppressive institutional structures.

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Instructor's Memo

As the final major writing assignment for our English 100 class, part of a First-Year Interest Group whose theme was the Immigrant Experience in Education, students were asked to write an argumentative paper addressing an issue of social or cultural importance to a marginalized group. As an extra wrinkle, students were required to choose a group to which they did not belong, so that the task of advocating for the issue necessitated cultural empathy, or imagining the lived experience of people with whom one might have very little in common. The class, a diverse cohort of students who had spent the semester discussing issues of discrimination and appropriation in all of their FIG classes, including English 100, worked together to develop the theme and requirements of the final paper, which included a companion presentation/ multimedia project.

Ruthie's essay, "Understanding Mass Incarceration of African American Women," is an excellent example of a writer framing, analyzing and making a forceful argument about an issue concerning a very specific social group. One of the most powerful moments in the piece comes in its very first paragraph. "You open your eyes to concrete walls," she writes, immediately placing the reader within the lived experience of an incarcerated person through vivid, concrete imagery and the deft use of second-person point of view. Throughout the process of drafting and revising, Ruthie took note of the fact that she had learned to be unafraid to use such techniques, normally associated with more "creative" or narrative forms of writing, in an argumentative, academic piece of writing. Doing so here allows the author to ease the reader into the more analytical, idea-driven parts of the paper by touching on an often- overlooked truth: abstract issues have a significant impact on real human lives.

Ruthie structures this paper in a simple and powerful way. She begins by tracing the history of the more problematic trends in the American prison system, then advances her argument by narrowing her focus, first to the ways in which mass incarceration disproportionately harms African-Americans, then to the fact that black women in particular, because of the intersectionality of their race, class and gender, "experience the worst consequences of mass incarceration, directly and indirectly."

Perhaps the most impressive thing about Ruthie's essay is that she was able to use sources and data that did not directly pertain to her topic to make a highly persuasive argument. Early in the process, she expressed frustration with the fact that though many of the sources she was reading dealt with issues of mass incarceration, racism and dehumanization, hardly any spoke to the world of the marginalized group she had chosen to write about, incarcerated African American women. She discovered that she wasn't researching poorly or in the wrong places. The sad fact was that hardly any scholar before her had addressed the incarceration of black women in a substantive way. Instead of taking the easy way out and broadening her topic, Ruthie decided that she would fill the missing research space—with her own paper. In the essay's second half, she quite effectively uses the concept of intersectionality to tie the broader issues to those of her group. The result, I believe, is a powerful example of what can happen when a writer-researcher trusts her own voice in telling the story she intends to tell.

— Walter B. Thompson

Writer's Memo

From the outset of my final assignment of my English 100 course, I was pretty excited about the endeavor because the professor gave the class some freedom in terms of the subject. There were only two real requirements when it came to the topic: it had to be about a marginalized group in American society and you could not be a member of that group. I chose to focus on the impact of mass incarceration of African American women because the discourse surrounding mass incarceration almost solely focuses on African American men. I already knew I was very passionate about criminal justice and wanted to use that passion as my momentum for working through this assignment.

Since I chose a subject that I knew was so interesting to me, the actual project of researching and writing was incredibly fluid. The larger challenge occurred in outlining how I wanted to present my research. As the details and context for my subject was so vast, I found it very difficult to eliminate information and narrow my focus. However, a meeting with two of my peers during an English 100 class proved very useful in this dilemma. During our discussion of my paper, we talked through distinguishing between information that is important because it isn't well known and information that is important to the argument I was making in the paper. Although my excitement about my subject definitely made the writing process easier, my excitement at times overwhelmed my ability to outline the paper and differentiate the key points that supported my argument from the points that I felt were important.

This final assignment for English 100 was one of my first major research papers as an undergraduate. As such, the experience taught a few important lessons about researching and writing. First, if you have the option, pick a topic that fascinates you. I have found that if I am hungry to learn about something, the excitement and passion about a topic can fuel the process of a project. Second, research projects need and take time. DO NOT try to do this stuff overnight. Not only does that hurt your assignment, but it hurts your ability to absorb the information and grow from what you learn. Third, use your peers to help you. Peer reviews can seem tedious at first, but hearing another point of view about your work can help you see it in a different light to change the work for the better; also, the ability to give and receive construct criticism is a priceless skill. Doing this assignment also reaffirmed something I have learned a lot throughout my life: the more you put into something, the more you get out of it. Throwing yourself into your work can really change your work ethic as well as your perspective, so try to take advantage of these opportunities for growth.

— Ruthie Sherman

Student Writing Award: Informative Essay
Previous: An Accessible Campus
Next: Walleye War

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RECOGNIZING PTSD'S EFFECTS ON HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

Sarah Lutz

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) *is an "anxiety disorder that occurs as a result of experiencing, witnessing, or being confronted with an emotionally traumatic event. A traumatic event is defined as a situation so extreme, so severe and so powerful that it threatens to overwhelm a person's ability to cope"* (Adriaenssens, 2016, *p.* 1411).

When PTSD is discussed, it is almost always accompanied by a veteran's horrific story from war or the mental struggles one is facing after being involved in a personal and traumatic event. Seldom do people associate the risk of developing PTSD with normal, everyday jobs such as being a doctor or a nurse, yet individuals in these professions experience PTSD as well. A study conducted in 2007 by the American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine found that "24 percent of ICU nurses and 14 percent of general nurses tested positive for symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder" (Yu, 2016). *Even so, PTSD within the healthcare profession is rarely talked about. PTSD is a serious consequence of having a high stress job that encounters trauma and suffering daily, and it can take on many forms. Yet the reasons why many health care professionals suffer from this condition and the toll this is having on their mental health and job satisfaction is rarely acknowledged.*

Health care professionals, specifically nurses, are routinely confronted with stressful conditions and traumatic events. According to a review of research by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, "nursing has long been considered one of the most stressful professions" (Yu, 2016). *Additionally, according to Jef Adriaenssens, a researcher on stress and healthcare at Leiden University, "almost one out of three nurses met sub-clinical levels of anxiety, depression and somatic complaints and 8.5% met clinical levels of PTSD"* (1411). *This is due to obvious reasons such as long work hours, high patient demand, and, potentially, understaffing in some hospitals. Another aspect of the profession that causes high amounts of stress is the types of traumatic events nurses are routinely faced with.*

All nurses, at some point, have to deal with potentially traumatizing situations. Specifically, emergency room nurses — who, according to Adriaenssens, *have the highest incidence of* PTSD *symptoms compared to other nursing specialties — are especially vulnerable to post-traumatic stress reactions. This can be attributed to repeated exposure to work-related traumatic events, such as witnessing the survivors of horrific accidents or "death or serious injury of a child/adolescent" which was "perceived as the most traumatizing event." Emergency room nurses are "routinely confronted with severe injuries, death, suicide and suffering" due mainly to the fact that they are often the first to respond to situations and are often confronted with the worst injuries and the most hectic work environments* (Adriaenssens, 2012, *p.* 1411)*. By working in such conditions and witnessing horrific injuries at such a rapid pace, emergency room nurses are prone to experiencing symptoms associated with* PTSD *brought on merely by witnessing the results of tragic events.*

High rates of PTSD *among military veterans occur for more obvious reasons. They are under extreme amounts of stress and are especially prone to experiencing trauma firsthand. However,* PTSD *in health care professionals is usually a little different. More often than not, doctors and nurses are witnessing the results of horrific and tragic events instead of having the event happen directly to them. "The natural consequent behaviors and emotions resulting from knowing about a traumatizing event experienced by a significant other – the stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person" is known as secondary traumatic stress. In simpler terms, secondary traumatic stress occurs when* PTSD *symptoms, such as anxiety, depression, flashbacks, or nightmares, occur in caregivers as a response to seeing individuals who have been involved in traumatic events* (Collins *and* Long, 2003, *p.* 418)*. Individuals, such as doctors and nurses, can become so empathetic to the suffering of others that they begin to experience classic* PTSD *symptoms, almost as if the traumatic event happened directly to them.*

While secondary traumatic stress is the most common form of PTSD in health care providers, vicarious trauma can also occur. Vicarious traumatization is "the cumulative effect of working with survivors of traumatic life events. Anyone who engages empathetically with victims or survivors is vulnerable" (Collins and Long, 2003, p. 417). Vicarious traumatization is extremely similar to secondary traumatic stress because empathizing with the victim can cause the care provider to experience symptoms of PTSD, as if the event happened to them directly. Vicarious traumatization is different from secondary traumatic stress because of the way individuals cope after. After a potentially disruptive event occurs, the beliefs and assumptions of an individual are challenged and they begin to perceive their world differently, a phenomenon known as posttraumatic growth. The metaphor of an earthquake has been utilized to illustrate posttraumatic growth: "The traumatic experience needs to be seismic, such as an earthquake, to severely shake an individual's comprehension of the world. These shaken assumptions may be the person's understanding of the meaning of life; belief that things that happen are fair…" (Beck, 2016). After caring for an individual who has been through a particularly traumatic event, the health care provider begins to make new assumptions about the world and reassess their beliefs as a way of coping with the extreme amounts of trauma and stress. "Posttraumatic growth is viewed as a positive illusion that is an adaptive function to help a person cope with trauma. A positive illusion is a positively distorted belief a person creates when faced with a traumatic experience" (Beck, 2016).

As an example, vicarious posttraumatic growth can be observed in labor and delivery nurses. The Association of Women's Health, Obstetric, and Neonatal Nurses sent out a survey to members who were labor and delivery nurses and asked them to describe any positive changes in their ways of thinking about the world or their beliefs as a result of caring for women who had undergone very traumatic births. The study concluded that labor and delivery nurses who took care of women during traumatic births "reported a moderate amount of vicarious posttraumatic growth…Appreciation of Life was the dimension of the Posttraumatic Growth Inventory that reflected the highest growth, followed by Relating to Others, Personal Strength, Spiritual Change, and New Possibilities" (Beck, 2016). After experiencing a traumatic birth, these labor and delivery nurses were beginning to alter their ideas about life as a way of coping with the stress they endured.

Even though these nurses were altering their ideas about life in seemingly positive ways, there is little evidence that vicarious posttraumatic growth is actually a healthy and long-term, effective way to cope. One explanation is that posttraumatic growth really isn't growth at all. Anthony Mancini, an associate professor of psychology at Pace University, explains posttraumatic growth as a "motivated positive illusion, whose purpose is to protect us from the possibility that we may have been damaged." He further goes on to explain an experimental study that found "when an event threatens our sense of self, we are more likely to believe that the event made us better in some way" (Mancini, 2016). Posttraumatic growth can be viewed as a positive way to temporarily cope with an especially disturbing event, however, it often proves to only act temporarily and rarely actually alters the individuals' thoughts and perceptions for the long-term.

While posttraumatic growth is a way that nurses cope with the extreme stress they endure, there is very little attention on PTSD within healthcare professionals. Yet, job dissatisfaction and burn-out are becoming prevalent, especially within the nursing profession. According to mental health researchers Collins and Long, burnout can be described as "a state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion caused by long-term involvement in emotionally demanding situations" (Collins and Long, 2003, p. 420). This makes sense when discussing post-traumatic stress disorder. As nurses are exposed to potentially upsetting and very traumatic events over a long period of time, it is going to start taking a toll on them both physically and emotionally. As Laurie Barkin, a registered nurse, described, "nursing school does not prepare nurses for the experience of witnessing pain and suffering." She goes on to discuss her story of beginning to experience symptoms such as nightmares, anxiety, and palpitations. She later learned that "my symptoms had a name: vicarious trauma… Unfortunately, appeals that I had made to the director of our consult service to allow staff process time were dismissed" (Barkin, 2014). Laurie Barkin's symptoms began to control her life, and she eventually resigned from her job after the director of her consult service failed to give staff adequate time to process their emotions in a healthy way. This is a perfect example of how hospitals often dismiss symptoms of post-traumatic stress and vicarious trauma, and this dismissal could be leading to high levels of burnout and nurses being unsatisfied with their jobs.

PTSD is a serious, and often life altering condition, that health care professionals are faced with. The fact that PTSD is rarely acknowledged and discussed during nursing school and beyond is having adverse effects on nurses who find themselves faced with this disorder. With the prevalence of PTSD, secondary traumatic stress, and vicarious trauma soaring, new policies and practices must be put in place both in nursing schools and hospitals in order to aid the nurses affected. By acknowledging that PTSD is real in nurses and their feelings are valid, burnout and job dissatisfaction could be addressed, and nurses could find themselves more satisfied in their profession and living happier lives.

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Instructor's Memo

Sarah's research paper was submitted for a section of English 100 linked to a First-Year Interest Group for students interested in a possible nursing career. For earlier assignments, students had researched and read what could be termed "professional testimonial" writing about the working life of nurses––narratives from social media sites and from an excellent anthology of personal essays titled, I Wasn't Strong Like This When I Started Out: True Stories of Becoming a Nurse (L. Gutkind, ed., 2013). These narratives provide vivid and sometimes disconcerting testimony about the singular stresses that nurses may face, especially witnessing the aftermath of traumas suffered by their patients, either before they seek medical care or during treatment. One author (Schwarz) recounts a harrowing anecdote from the early days of his training, his memory of wheeling a patient with an apparently minor complaint down the hall, and looking on helplessly as the man suddenly coughs violently, vomits "a wave of blood," and dies within moments, sitting in his wheelchair.

From the beginning of the semester, then, we were having conversations about the possibility that some nurses might very well suffer post-traumatic stress disorder as a simple condition of their daily work lives. These early readings also allowed students to critically examine some of the lasting clichés attached to the nursing profession, including expectations that nurses will be exceptionally compassionate and selfless, quietly shouldering the daily psychological burden of caring for those experiencing severe pain and suffering. Later in the semester we read articles about the national nursing shortage and the challenges that many medical facilities face because of the regular burnout of their nursing staff. Sarah's choice of research topic for her final research paper was thus an ingenious way of drawing together several important threads of learning generated from our semester of research and writing.

For the final paper assignment, students who are interested in a similar topic work collaboratively in small research groups to gather a range of sources about that topic––including peer-reviewed studies, articles from trade publications (targeted to those in the nursing profession), and news sources for the general public, such as national magazines or public radio. Students are able to pool their resources and learn research techniques from one another through this process. They also discuss the articles they have found in order to identify ways of narrowing down that broad topic to find a research focus appropriate for a short paper. Sarah selected the challenge of synthesizing several peer-reviewed studies, specifically those that explain the intricate breakdown of post-traumatic symptoms for those ministering to patients in the context of trauma. In this essay she is able to integrate those more advanced scholarly studies with insights provided by mainstream journalists and the author of a professional website. It's not an easy matter to make all these different voices "speak" to one another in an analytical paper. But Sarah draws evidence from all of these sources to offer a compelling critique about the lack of attention to PTSD within the nursing profession. Hopefully by the time she begins her own training in the field, there will be greater awareness about the mental health needs of nurses themselves.

–Julia Garrett

Writer's Memo

As a pre-nursing student, I found myself fascinated with researching different aspects of the nursing profession, from the different fields of nursing to the daily duties and responsibilities to the attributes of a good nurse. As I began my critical analysis on the more cliché and positive side to nursing, I began to receive feedback and suggestions from my peers and instructor on delving into the more unspoken side of nursing, the hardships that accompany the demanding job. I decided to follow this suggestion and focus my research on a dimension of nursing that is seldom discussed: PTSD. Nursing is usually not associated with this disorder, and for that reason I at first found it hard to find credible research that covered the topic. In the end I was very glad I stuck with the very specific topic of PTSD, because through my research I gained valuable insight into the profession.

As far as revisions go, I found it most helpful to have as many people as possible read the entire paper, or even just certain sections I was stuck on, and then leave their feedback and revisions. I then would go back and read their revision suggestions multiple times and on different days, which allowed me to formulate additional thoughts and interpret their comments in new ways, ultimately adding to my paper in ways I had not originally thought of. Additionally, with a complex and very specific topic like this, I found it very easy to want to incorporate every small detail I learned about PTSD in healthcare, regardless of whether it was relevant, and lose sight of where the main focus of the paper was going. So I made sure I created a very strict and specific outline and only gathered information relevant to the topics outlined. This helped the paper maintain a nice flow between topics and remain coherent.

Before going through this process and writing this paper, I was not a huge fan of writing critical analysis research papers. After gaining the tools, knowledge, and appreciation for gathering dependable research, utilizing the research in a way that best benefits the argument of the paper, and choosing best how to articulate and present the research in a coherent way, I learned how enjoyable it can be to pick a topic you're passionate about and want to share with others.

–Sarah Lutz

Student Writing Award: Critical/Analytical Essay

Previous: Walleye War
Next: A Dude Story

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GENETIC TESTING: A QUESTION OF MORALITY

Madeline Longo

What would you do if you could find out what your medical future has in store for you? Would you want to find out or would you rather wait until the time comes? What if finding out could possibly save your life or could at least enhance the quality of your life? What if you found out something that you did not want to know? What if you learned something detrimental and there was nothing you could do about it? These are questions people think about before undergoing genetic testing. There are no correct answers, but different responses could result in many different outcomes.

Since the early 1900s, scientists have recognized the connection between inherited diseases and chromosomes. But it wasn't until the 1950s that scientists started to develop tests for genetic conditions like Down syndrome (Trisomy 21), cystic fibrosis, and Duchenne's muscular dystrophy (Dept. of Health & Human Services 1). Today, more than five hundred laboratories offer genetic testing for over two thousand rare and common conditions (1). By looking at the different perspectives of geneticists, patients, consumers, doctors, and ethicists, the many benefits of genetic testing can be shown as well as the lack of prevalence of negative outcomes associated with genetic testing.

There are two different categories of genetic testing: clinical genetic tests and research genetic tests. Diagnostic tests, pre- symptomatic tests, carrier tests, prenatal tests, newborn screening and pharmacogenomics tests all fall under the category of clinical genetic tests. These tests are ordered by a healthcare professional and are done in certified labs. Research genetic tests are volunteer based for exploratory studies. Both clinical genetic tests and research genetic tests look at DNA strands to find abnormalities that can put a person at greater risk to develop a disease. In the past, only one gene could be tested at a time, but today geneticists can screen thousands of genes simultaneously (Univ. of Iowa 2). Most people choose to have a genetic test performed to find the cause of a disease, to find out if they are a carrier of a disease, or to see if their children will develop the disease. Healthcare providers can use this information to find the best treatment and the most appropriate counseling to prepare a person for their future.

The genetic testing process can be broken down into six steps. As detailed by the University of Iowa, the first step is talking to a genetic counselor or a doctor to learn about insurance coverage and the possibility of insurance discrimination. In the office, the doctor will typically take a blood sample and send it to the lab. The next step is getting the DNA from the sample, which is followed by sequencing the DNA to look for abnormalities. The lab will then take the DNA and put it into a DNA sequencer which will collect data on the patients' genetic makeup. The fourth and fifth steps include analyzing the DNA and then interpreting what it means. Finally, the lab will give back the results to the genetic counselor or doctor and they will share the information with the patient (3). The information provided from genetic testing can be very useful in planning for the future, but it can also be a burden to those who are not ready to accept what the future holds.

In order to evaluate the benefit of genetic testing relative to the possible burdens it could pose for a patient, it is important to look at the causes and the need for genetic testing. Genetic testing can be most useful for diagnosing prenatal abnormalities, cancer, and Alzheimer's. Prenatal genetic testing is a way for the parent to find out if the fetus has a genetic condition. Typically, most people who are participating in prenatal genetic testing are looking to see if the fetus has a chance of developing autism, Down syndrome, cystic fibrosis, Tay-Sachs disease, or sickle cell anemia (Chen 125). This information can help the parents of the fetus to make an informed decision about whether or not to continue the pregnancy and allow for early interventions with affected newborns. Predispositions to cancer can also be predicted using genetic testing, and with the prevalence of cancer in today's society, early testing and treatment of cancer can save countless lives.

Genetic testing for cancer can have many outcomes. In the article "The Breast Cancer Gene and Me" published in the New York Times on September 25, 2015, Elizabeth Wurtzel shares her experience with genetic testing for breast cancer. Elizabeth Wurtzel is a descendent of the Ashkenazi Jews. Biologically, that means she has a one in forty chance of being breast cancer or BRCA-positive, which is ten times the rate of the rest of the population. Unfortunately, she was diagnosed with breast cancer before these tests were available and had to go through eight rounds of chemotherapy and a double mastectomy. All of these treatments might have been avoided if she had been tested for a genetic abnormality earlier because she could have chosen to have a mastectomy with reconstruction to keep the cancer from spreading. Wurtzel's experience suggests how useful genetic testing can be because it would have clearly benefited her health as well as the quality of her life. She serves as an excellent example for why many who have a history of diseases in family or cultural lines from genetic abnormalities should get preemptive genetic testing.

Another predictive genetic test can be conducted for Alzheimer's. By looking at the experience Jane Neilson had with predictive testing for Alzheimer's disease, the benefits of genetic testing become even clearer. In the article, "A Patient's Perspective on Genetic Counseling and Predictive Testing for Alzheimer's Disease," Neilson offers her opinions on genetic testing and shares her story. Neilson comes from a family with a history of Alzheimer's disease and was concerned with her own susceptibility. This led her to request information about predictive genetic testing. She describes how she thought long and hard about the possible outcomes with her husband, and ultimately agreed to continue with the process because it would be better to know ahead of time if she will be affected by the disease so she could plan accordingly. Unfortunately, Neilson learned at her first appointment that she was not qualified for the specific DNA test because of her family history. In the article, she writes "after all my introspection on the subject, there were no clear answers, only fog. I went through agony and soul searching only to be cheated. No tests were available for me. I was also relieved. I didn't have to go through with it." Neilson continued to describe how she came to terms with temporarily not knowing her medical future, but she's optimistic that a test will be available for her someday. Neilson's case acts as an example of the negative side of genetic testing and its potential burden on a patient for future health problems. Neilson's case also acts as an example of how genetic testing is not always an option for patients, despite a person's interest in finding out their genetic predispositions and medical future.

Besides the patients who directly benefit from genetic testing, the families of people with genetic diseases can benefit as well. If a person has been established as at-risk to a disease, family members can also undergo the process of genetic testing. They can have the same benefit of knowing what their future holds and having a chance to prepare for what is to come. They will then also have the possibility of stopping or slowing the progression of the disease. Stephen Post and Peter Whitehouse write about the possibility of someone experiencing "relief from not carrying the familial variant" in "The Clinical Introduction of Genetic Testing for Alzheimer's Disease." A family member finding out they do not carry the variant could provide an even greater benefit to the patient and other family members. That is because it would determine the disease is not genetic and most likely stems from an environmental or lifestyle issue. In turn, this could give researchers and care providers more information on the progression of the specific disease.

The patients and families mentioned here so far all see the value in genetic testing, because of the benefit it promises in terms of planning for their futures and the possibility of controlling the full effects of a known disease before it can get worse. In addition, people without a specific disease concern have shown an interest in knowing about themselves and their genetic DNA makeup, and genetic testing can allow for this. Today, many people feel like they have a right to their DNA information and believe they have ownership of their genetic makeup. Now that the means for testing is available, it is more common for people to "seek such testing 'out of curiosity,' for the 'fun factor,' because they self-identify as early adopters of new technologies or because they want to contribute to genomics research" (Bunnik, Janssens, Schermer). This shift in attitudes towards the adoption of genetic testing shows that testing isn't only for a patient's use, but for an interested consumer to use as well. The consumer notion is that genetic testing has psychological, social, and emotional benefits.

Since there has been a tremendous consumer interest in genetic testing as a social and psychological trend, labs have started to offer direct-to-consumer (DTC) genetic testing. This at-home genetic test is a way for someone to find out their genetic information without a genetic counselor or a doctor involved. Typically, one who purchases the kit will either take a cotton swab sample from the inside of their cheek or collect their saliva in a test tube and send it to the lab. The consumer will be notified when their results are ready. The problem with this method is that the average consumer will not know how to read their results accurately. A person might, for example, assume they have a life threatening disease when they don't. Also, at-home genetic testing does not look at environmental factors, lifestyle choices, or family medical history, all of which can play a large role in the probability of developing a disease. One study on DTC genetic testing has this to say: "the present findings suggest that general practitioners should have the ability to clarify for interested individuals the way in which different genetic mutations are characterized by different risk probabilities, and the meaning attributed to these risk probabilities" by showing the "inconsistencies in the extent and quality of information provided by DTC testing" (Sherman 712). What this means is that the DTC at- home genetic tests cannot provide information as accurate as lab performed tests, and thus it is important to contact a professional to go over the results if they are not clear.

In general, professionals who can evaluate genetic results value the life of the patient and want to provide them with the best healthcare possible. Doctors see value in genetic testing because it provides them with a greater understanding of an individual patient, and it can help them direct the patient down the appropriate path given the specific set of circumstances. In a study of 363 doctors, ninety-eight percent said they would refer their patients to a genetic counselor, and ninety-five percent believed that the doctor has the responsibility to counsel patients about genetic testing (Menasha, Schechter, Willned 144). This significant number shows the value healthcare providers see in genetic testing and how they want to support their patients throughout the genetic testing process. More specifically, Stephen Post and Peter Whitehouse argue that more government funding should be given to genetic testing research because it can be so beneficial for the patients (835). With more funding, geneticists would be able to do more research on other diseases which, in turn, could help more people detect such diseases, slow their progression, and possibly stop the disease completely.

Both patients and healthcare providers see value in genetic testing, but one of the main issues with genetic testing is the ethics surrounding it. In "Ethical Language and Themes in News Coverage of Genetic Testing," David Craig breaks down the issues of genetic testing into four different categories: (1) whether you want to know your likely medical future, (2) what you would do with the information, (3) the complexity of the choices people face because of developments in genetic testing, and (4) the possibility of discrimination based on genetic information (165–166). It could be argued that whether or not you want to know your likely medical future is not related to ethics as closely as the other three categories. Whether or not a person wants to know what their medical future holds is a personal choice, and genetic testing is very black and white. It is what people choose to do with the information from genetic testing that brings ethics into question and causes genetic testing to enter a grey area.

As an example of the grey area of genetic testing, let's look at a situation involving a pregnant woman. A pregnant woman can decide whether or not to find out if the fetus she is carrying has Down syndrome before a child is born. Ethics comes into play when a woman finds out that her fetus does have Down syndrome, and is deciding whether or not to terminate the pregnancy based on this new information. Another example of a genetic testing controversy would be undergoing genetic testing for a specific disease that does not have a cure. Knowing that you are a carrier of a disease and not being able to do anything about it except wait for it to worsen seems awful and could put the patient into a state of depression. A third ethical controversy surrounds genetic testing and stem cell research. Because of developments in genetic testing, scientists are able to alter embryonic stem cells, which can lead to the possibility that parents will someday be able to modify their children's physical appearance and create what is called a "designer baby." This example alone brings in a whole new level of ethics to the idea of genetic testing.

As for the ethics of non-patient choices regarding genetic screening, tests are added to one's medical profile, and this can lead to the risk that genetic discrimination could increase dramatically. The National Human Genome Research Institute says that "Genetic discrimination occurs if people are treated unfairly because of differences in their DNA that increase their chances of getting a certain disease." This includes a health insurer refusing to give coverage to a woman who has a DNA difference that raises her odds of getting breast cancer. Another example provided by The National Human Genome Research Institute is that employers could use DNA information to decide whether to hire or fire employees. In fact, the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008 (GINA) was passed to protect Americans from being treated unfairly. This law aims to prevent discrimination from both health insurers and employers. It was put in place to ease concerns about discrimination that might keep some people from getting genetic testing. It also enables people to take part in genetic research studies without fear that the information could later be used against them.

By looking at the many perspectives from geneticists, patients, consumers, doctors, and ethicists, I believe the major benefits of genetic testing outweigh the possible negatives. I'm especially persuaded by the fact that genetic testing is very important for those who have a family history of disease because the detection of predisposed diseases can help slow or prevent disease progression. In a beautiful conclusion to her article, Jane Neilson writes "genetic testing is more than genes. It tests personal beliefs about life, disease and healing. Use your gifts of knowledge, professionalism, and caring with patience."

Essentially Neilson is saying that there is so much to be considered with genetic testing, and that genetic testing can lead a person to question their own personal beliefs. It also leads people to think about their finances and about how they want to spend the rest of their life. Knowing this information, do you think you would undergo genetic testing? In reality, there is no correct answer to the question, but I know that I would want to know what my medical future has in store for me. It wouldn't matter whether or not it's something detrimental. I believe the possibility of knowing ahead of time would only enhance the quality of my life.

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Instructor's Memo

This paper is Maddy's response to a "contextual analysis" assignment—a longer paper requiring students to unpack a culturally relevant topic from different perspectives. Students contextualized the topic of their choice through the lenses provided by various stakeholders. Maddy wanted to tackle a controversial issue in order to understand more fully why it sparks such fiery debate. While she eventually changed her topic from reproductive health to genetic testing, she maintained her attention on a controversial topic that she wanted to understand better.

I like the way that Maddy uses this paper to weave together an opening background on genetic testing in general with a more substantial consideration of multiple different perspectives on this issue. She writes about genetic testing's influence on patients and patients' families, the manner in which it's approached by the consumer genetic testing market, some doctors' opinion on this issue, and what ethicists have said about it as well. There is a lot of ground to cover across all these perspectives, and Maddy's careful organization makes it all clear. One of my favorite parts is when she dives into the ethical considerations of genetic testing and uses the David Craig piece to divide these arguments into different categories that she then connects with specific examples. In so doing, she provides an excellent example of merging outside sources with original content in order to make sense of a very complex issue.

— Matthew Fledderjohann

Writer's Memo

This paper is a response to a contextual analysis assignment. We were asked to pick a culturally relevant theme and evaluate the topic through at least three different perspectives. Originally, I planned to write about Planned Parenthood and reproductive health. I wanted to work with a topic that was controversial and would challenge me to learn about multiple sides of the debate. After completing some preliminary research, my interests evolved from reproductive rights to learning more about genetic testing.

I had very little knowledge on the subject prior to this project, but I liked that it was a relatively new field of medicine. Before looking into scholarly sources, I spent time reading relevant opinion editorial articles published on the New York Times website. I was able to learn about what genetic testing specifically entails from the perspective of patients and patients' families, doctors, ethicists, and the consumer genetic testing market. My next step was finding scholarly articles to support the opinions through the specified UW- Madison databases. Although genetic testing is a relatively new science there was a lot of helpful information from a variety of perspectives. After completing my research and crafting a thesis statement that would allow me to incorporate multiple perspectives, I created an outline for the paper and started writing and then rewriting based on the feedback I received from my peers and instructor to create my final piece. I've had time to revisit my work on this project and have not identified any significant changes, although I will continue to monitor new research on this very interesting topic.

— Madeline Longo

Student Writing Award: Critical/Analytical Essay

Previous: The Fight Continues
Next: Introductory Science Courses

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101. Sample Writing Assignments

Below are some sample assignments that can be used for "Writing to Inquire."

Essay One: Exploratory Research

By Liza Long

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Our first essay is an open topic, APA style research essay that answers a specific research question. Your instructor must approve your research question in advance.

Guidelines

- 1500-2000 words (6-8 pages, not including references or cover page), typed, double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font
- Minimum of five sources of at least two kinds (basic internet, magazine, newspaper, academic journal, book, personal interview, etc.). One of the sources must be from an academic journal.
- Follows APA 7th edition guidelines for format, in-text citations, and References page.
- Addresses a topic of interest to the student that is narrow enough for a relatively short essay.
- Should be an "exploratory" essay rather than an argumentative one. While you may suggest a solution or viewpoint, the essay's purpose is not to persuade but to answer the research question (inform).
- The essay should use a mix of first and third person points-of-view. Use "I" when sharing about your connection to the topic, and otherwise use third person. Do not use the informal second person pronoun ("you").

Grading and Major Due Dates

- 100 points for PeerGrade writing and review tasks (weeks 2-5)
- 25 points for draft submitted to Blackboard (week 5)
- 100 points for revised essay as part of your final portfolio—see the essay rubric for specifics (week 16)

Success Tips

1. Choose a topic that really engages you—for example, *Star Trek*'s influence on the development of technology or hot spring conservation in Idaho.
2. Make sure your topic is narrow and focused enough for a short essay—for example, the history of the death penalty is too broad, but the application of the death penalty to a specific type of crime or population would be appropriate.
3. Read examples of exploratory essays in our Unit One Readings Folder:

Here is a student example of an exploratory research essay: "Does Texting Affect Writing?" http://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/write/writesite/Web_Essays/Cullington2015.pdf

Basic Rubric

This is used to help determine whether the PeerGrade tasks and essay draft will earn full, partial, or no credit.

Format & length check:

- Final paper is complete and correctly formatted. Yes / No

Topic—The essay is on topic and contains a clear research question and answer

- The research question is focused and neither too narrow nor too broad

Yes / No

Quality

"They Say/I Say"—The essay summarizes five quality sources that address the research question.

- The sources are applicable to the research question. Yes / No
- The essay uses "They Say" templates to summarize and quote sources. Yes / No
- The essay includes "I Say" templates to agree, disagree, or both. Yes / No
- The essay includes personal experience where relevant. Yes / No

Research

- The author uses at least **five** high-quality, reliable sources. Yes / No
- Sources are integrated correctly; any quotes are explained (use quote sandwiches) Yes / No
- Source are cited for all "how do I know this?" information Yes / No

Organization

- The essay is thesis-driven (the thesis should answer the research question) Yes / No
- The essay has an effective introduction and conclusion Yes / No
- Paragraphs are organized around topic sentences Yes / No
- The paper uses transitions to connect ideas logically Yes / No

Citation and Mechanics

- All sources are properly cited in the text. Yes / No
- Errors in References entries are few and minor. Yes / No

- There are few errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
  Yes / No

PART XIV

WRITING FOR EMPLOYMENT

102. Introduction to Employment Writing

AMY MINERVINI

Overview

by Amy Minervini

Some jobs require a simple application followed by an interview. However, other employers require more information from you, such as a more extended work history that you would provide on a resume. A resume tends to be about 1-page long and nutshell the most recent and relevant work experience, education, certifications, and soft skills. Once you more experience under your belt, resumes can become quite a bit longer. These are known as Curriculum Vitaes (CVs) and illustrate a more detailed picture of your academic credentials, relevant classes that you have taken, internships, etc. Unless you have a lot of work experience and multiple degrees, most people can get by with just submitting a basic resume. With resumes, just remember that simpler is better. Some resumes are never even read by a human but rather scanned by applicant tracking systems that electronically assess your resume by use of keywords. Therefore, it's important to cater each resume to a specific position by embedding keywords from the position announcement. Your document should be easy to read, look aesthetically pleasing, and highlight your strengths and talents. A resume is never a place for inauthentic information or exaggerations. Everything should be verifiable.

Some employers, especially when you are applying for jobs after graduation (or applying to graduate schools), require not only a resume but also a cover letter. Think of a cover letter as your elevator pitch. This is an opportunity to expand upon any relevant work experience or special skills mentioned in your resume. This opportunity to sell yourself should showcase your unique personality and enthusiasm for the job to which you're applying. Furthermore, the letter should address the specific ways in which *you* can offer to the company. When there are dozen or even hundreds of applicants for the same position, the cover letter is a great way to set yourself apart from the crowd.

Finally, the thank you note is a nice gesture following the sending of a resume + cover letter or after a personal or phone/Skype/Zoom interview. Most people do not send a thank you note or email, so again, it's an additional opportunity to distinguish your submission from other applicants'.

Whether you are applying for a part-time job, internship, graduate school, or full-time employment, your writing skills will be on display. Make a great first impression by submitting documents that are coherent, meticulous, and polished. Good luck getting that job!

What's in this chapter:

- Resume writing
- Cover letter writing
- Thank you notes

103. Resumes

> *"The most important tool you have on a résumé is language."* – Jay Samit

A résumé is a "selfie" for business purposes. It is a written picture of who you are—it's a marketing tool, a selling tool, and a promotion of you as an ideal candidate for any job you may be interested in.

The word *résumé* comes from the French word *résumé*, which means "a summary." Leonardo da Vinci is credited with writing one of the first known résumés, although it was more of a letter that outlined his credentials for a potential employer, Ludovico Sforza. The résumé got da Vinci the job, though, and Sforza became a longtime patron of da Vinci and later commissioned him to paint *The Last Supper*.

Résumés and cover letters work together to represent you in the most positive light to prospective employers. With a well-composed résumé and cover letter, you stand out—which may get you an interview and then a good shot at landing a job.

In this section, we discuss résumés and cover letters as key components of your career development tool kit. We explore some of the many ways you can design and develop them for the greatest impact in your job search.

Your Résumé: Purpose and Contents

Your résumé is an inventory of your education, work experience, job-related skills, accomplishments, volunteer history, internships, residencies, and/or more. It's a professional autobiography in outline form to give the person who reads it a quick, general idea of who you are, and what skills, abilities, and experiences you have to offer. With a better idea of who you are, prospective employers can see how well you might contribute to their workplace.

As a college student or recent graduate, though, you may be unsure about what to put in your résumé, especially if you don't have much employment history. Still, employers don't expect recent grads to have significant work experience. And even with little work experience, you may still have a host of worthy accomplishments to include. It's all in how you present yourself.

The following video is an animated look at why résumés are so important. [Read a transcript of the video.]

Video: *Why Do I Need a Resume?*

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://idaho.pressbooks.pub/write/?p=302#oembed-1

Elements of Your Successful Résumé

Perhaps the hardest part of writing a résumé is figuring out what format to use to organize and present your information in the most effective way. There is no correct format, per se, but most résumés follow one of the four formats below. Which format do you think will best represent your qualifications?

1. **Reverse chronological résumé**: A reverse chronological résumé (sometimes also simply called a chronological résumé) lists your job experiences in reverse chronological order—that is, starting with the most recent job and working backward toward your first job. It includes starting and ending dates. Also included is a brief description of the work duties you performed for each job, and highlights of your formal education. The reverse chronological résumé may be the most common and perhaps the most conservative résumé format. It is most suitable for demonstrating a solid work history, and growth and development in your skills. It may not suit you if you are light on skills in the area you are applying to, or if you've changed employers frequently, or if you are looking for your first job. Reverse Chronological Résumé Examples
2. **Functional résumé**: A functional résumé is organized around your talents, skills, and abilities (more so than work duties and job titles, as with the reverse chronological résumé). It emphasizes specific professional capabilities, like what you have done or what you can do. Specific dates may be included but are not as important. So if you are a new graduate entering your field with little or no actual work experience, the functional résumé may be a good format for you. It can also be useful when you are seeking work in a field that differs from what you have done in the past. It's also well suited for people in unconventional careers. Functional Résumé Examples
3. **Hybrid résumé**: The hybrid résumé is a format reflecting both the functional and chronological approaches. It's also called a combination résumé. It highlights relevant skills, but it still provides information about your work experience. With a hybrid résumé, you may list your job skills as most prominent and then follow with a chronological (or reverse chronological) list of employers. This résumé format is most effective when your specific skills and job experience need to be emphasized. Hybrid Résumé Examples
4. **Video, infographic, and website résumé**: Other formats you

may wish to consider are the video résumé, the infographic résumé, or even a website résumé. These formats may be most suitable for people in multimedia and creative careers. Certainly with the expansive use of technology today, a job seeker might at least try to create a media-enhanced résumé. But the paper-based, traditional résumé is by far the most commonly used—in fact, some human resource departments may not permit submission of any format other than paper based. Video Resume Examples; Infographic Résumé Examples; Website Résumé Examples

An important note about formatting is that, initially, employers may spend only a few seconds reviewing each résumé—especially if there is a big stack of them or they seem tedious to read. That's why it's important to choose your format carefully so it will stand out and make the first cut.

Résumé Contents and Structure

For many people, the process of writing a résumé is daunting. After all, you are taking a lot of information and condensing it into a very concise form that needs to be both eye-catching and easy to read. Don't be scared off, though! Developing a good résumé can be fun, rewarding, and easier than you think if you follow a few basic guidelines. In the following video, a résumé-writing expert describes some keys to success.

Video: *Resume Tutorial*

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://idaho.pressbooks.pub/write/?p=302#oembed-2

Contents and Components To Include

1. **Your contact information**: name, address (note that some recommend not sharing for security purposes, others recommend sharing to be complete), phone number, professional email address
2. **A summary of your skills**: 5–10 skills you have gained in your field
3. **Work experience**: depending on the résumé format you choose, you may list your most recent job first; include the title of the position, employer's name, location, employment dates (beginning, ending); Working for a family business is valid work experience and should definitely be on a resume.
4. **Volunteer experience:** can be listed in terms of hours completed or months/years involved. Use the same format as that used to list work experience.
5. **Education and training**: formal and informal experiences matter; include academic degrees, professional development, certificates, internships, etc.
6. **Other sections**: may include a job objective, a brief profile, a branding statement, a summary statement, additional accomplishments, and any other related experiences

Caution

Résumés resemble snowflakes in as much as no two are alike. Although you can benefit from giving yours a stamp of individuality, you will do well to steer clear of personal details that might elicit a negative response. It is advisable to omit any confidential information or details that could make you vulnerable to discrimination, for instance. Your résumé will likely be viewed by a number of employees in an organization, including human resource personnel, managers, administrative staff, etc. By aiming to please all reviewers, you gain maximum advantage.

- Do not mention your age, gender, height or weight.
- Do not include your social security number.
- Do not mention religious beliefs or political affiliations, unless they are relevant to the position.
- Do not include a photograph of yourself or a physical description.
- Do not mention health issues.
- Do not use first-person references (I, me).
- Do not include wage/salary expectations.
- Do not use abbreviations.
- Proofread carefully—absolutely no spelling mistakes are acceptable.

Top Ten Tips for a Successful Résumé

1. Aim to make a résumé that's 1–2 pages long on letter-size paper.
2. Make it visually appealing.
3. Use action verbs and phrases.
4. Proofread carefully to eliminate any spelling, grammar, punctuation, and typographical errors.

5. Include highlights of your qualifications or skills to attract an employer's attention.
6. Craft your letter as a pitch to people in the profession you plan to work in.
7. Stand out as different, courageous.
8. Be positive and reflect only the truth.
9. Be excited and optimistic about your job prospects!
10. Keep refining and reworking your résumé; it's an ongoing project.

Remember that your résumé is your professional profile. It will hold you in the most professional and positive light, and it's designed to be a quick and easy way for a prospective employer to evaluate what you might bring to a job. When written and formatted attractively, creatively, and legibly, your résumé is what will get your foot in the door. You can be proud of your accomplishments, even if they don't seem numerous. Let your résumé reflect your personal pride and professionalism. A resume is also a "living document" and will change as your experiences and skills change.

In the following video, *Résumé Tips for College Students From Employers*, several college graduate recruiters summarize the most important points about crafting your résumé. Download a transcript of the video.

Video: *Résumé Tips for College Students From Employers*

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://idaho.pressbooks.pub/write/?p=302#oembed-3

Résumé Writing Resources

	WEBSITE	DESCRIPTION
2	The Online Resume Builder (from My Perfect resume)	The online résumé builder is easy to use. Choose your résumé design from the library of professional designs, insert prewritten examples, then download and print your new résumé.
3	Résumé Builder (from Live Career)	This site offers examples and samples, templates, tips, videos, and services for résumés, cover letters, interviews, and jobs.
4	Résumé Samples for College Students and Graduates (from About Careers)	This site offers a plethora of sample résumés for college students and graduates. Listings are by type of student and by type of job. Résumé templates are also provided.
5	Job Search Minute Videos (from College Grad)	This site offers multiple to-the-point one-minute videos on topics such as print résumés, video résumés, cover letters, interviewing, tough interview questions, references, job fairs, and Internet job searching.
6	Student [Career] Services (from Employment Ontario—Community Employment Services)	—Buzzwords and Skills to Include in your résumé—Action Words and Phrases for résumé Development —Checklist of Personal Skills
7	42 Résumé Dos and Don’ts Every Job Seeker Should Know (from The Muse)	A comprehensive list of résumé dos and don’ts, which includes traditional rules as well as new rules to polish your résumé.

Activity: Create Your Résumé

Objectives:

- Compile data reflecting your professional and educational skills and accomplishments.
- Assess the main résumé formats and select one that meets your needs.
- Create a first draft of your professional résumé.

Directions:

1. Compile all needed information for your résumé, including your contact information, a summary of your skills, your work experience and volunteer experience, education and training (including your intended degree, professional development activities, certificates, internships, etc.). Optionally you may wish to include job objective, a brief profile, a branding statement, additional accomplishments, and any other related experiences.
2. Select one of the résumé builder tools listed above in the Résumé Writing Resources table.
3. Create your résumé, following instructions at your selected site.
4. Save your document as a PDF file.
5. Follow instructions from your instructor on how to submit your work.

104. Cover Letters

Your Cover Letter

A cover letter is a letter of introduction, usually 3–4 paragraphs in length, that you attach to your résumé. It's a way of introducing yourself to a potential employer and explaining why you are suited for a position. Employers may look for individualized and thoughtfully written cover letters as an initial method of screening out applicants who may who lack necessary basic skills, or who may not be sufficiently interested in the position.

Cover Letter Examples

Often an employer will request or require that a cover letter be included in the materials an applicant submits. There are also occasions when you might submit a cover letter uninvited (also called a letter of interest). For example, if you are initiating an inquiry about possible work or asking someone to send you information or provide other assistance.

With each résumé you send out, always include a cover letter specifically addressing your purposes.

Characteristics of an Effective Cover Letter

Cover letters should accomplish the following:

- Get the attention of the prospective employer
- Set you apart from any possible competition
- Identify the position you are interested in
- Specify how you learned about the position or company
- Present highlights of your skills and accomplishments

- Reflect your genuine interest
- Please the eye and ear

The following video features Aimee Bateman, founder of Careercake.com, who explains how you can create an incredible cover letter. Download a transcript of the video.

Video: *5 Steps to an Incredible Cover Letter*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mxOli8laZos

Cover Letter Resources

	WEBSITE	DESCRIPTION
1	Student Cover Letter Samples (from About Careers)	This site contains sample student/recent graduate cover letters (especially for high school students and college students and graduates seeking employment) as well as cover letter templates, writing tips, formats and templates, email cover letter examples, and examples by type of applicant.
2	How to Write Cover Letters (from CollegeGrad)	This site contains resources about the reality of cover letters, using a cover letter, the worst use of the cover letter, the testimonial cover letter technique, and a cover letter checklist.
4	Cover Letters (from the Yale Office of Career Strategy)	This site includes specifications for the cover letter framework (introductory paragraph, middle paragraph, concluding paragraph), as well as format and style.

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Foundations of Academic Success: Words of Wisdom essay removed (exists elsewhere in this work).

Adaptions: Relocated learning objectives. Image of helping write a resume removed. Image of piles of paper on a table removed.

105. Thank You Letters

Thank You Letters

Sending a thank you letter to a potential employer, mentor, or an individual who may help you obtain an internship, is an opportunity to express your appreciation for their time and remind that person about you and your job interests. The letter can reinforce your qualifications, mention something that you forgot to say in an interview, and show that you are very interested in a position. It also demonstrates that you are also considerate and appreciative of the time they spent with you. The following information can help you draft a thank-you letter to someone who interviews you for a position.

What is the purpose of the thank you letter?

- To thank the person for his or her time and for providing you with information about the job and the organization.
- To demonstrate you know something about the company by complimenting the employer on the organization's plans, programs and any thing else that was interesting to you or that impressed you. Be sure to be genuine about this. *This requires you conduct research about the organization, be attentive in an interview, pay attention to your surroundings, and take time to checkout display, signs and if you liked what you saw, say that in your thank you letter.*
- To highlight your qualifications that make you a good candidate for the position.

What format should your letter be in?

- If your letter is very short you may hand write it. You could buy a simple thank you card and write a short message.
- You could write a formal letter. Use standard, professional business letter format.

When should I send a thank-you letter?

- Thank you letters should be sent within 24 hours of an interview, when it is still fresh in your mind and the employer's mind.

Example of a Thank-You Letter

Have I Included Everything?

The Effective Thank You Letter

INSIDE ADDRESS AND SALUTATION	FIRST PARAGRAPH	SECOND/ THIRD PARAGRAPH	FINAL PARAGRAPH AND CLOSING	OVERAL EDITING
Who is your donor? An individual? A business? A nonprofit organization? If your donor is a business or foundation, was your scholarship funded by an individual or by the business or foundation as a whole? In some cases, you will not write to a specific donor, but will instead write an "impact" letter. In that case, you will not include an inside address, and your salutation will read, "To whom it may concern."	Does the letter recipient immediately know who you are and why you are writing (without stating "My name is…" or "I am writing because…")? Do you refer to your scholarship/ fellowship by its entire, proper name?	This is the "meat" of your letter. In one or two paragraphs, does the reader get a deeper sense of who you are?	From the content in your final paragraph, does the reader finish your letter with a clear understanding of how the scholarship impacted your decision to attend the Bush School? Did it also impact your ability to pursue a public service career? What does the scholarship mean in terms of your student debt load?	Does the formattin letter str the temp included "Thank-Y Letters" t Bush Sch Writing w Does the spacing n of the ter Does the exceed th page max length?
Are you writing to the actual donor or to the donor's representative? For instance, if your donor is a foundation, are you writing to the foundation president or designated representative?	Do you state that you are a first- or second-year student at the Bush School? Do you explain that you are either an INTA or an MPSA student, and include your track and concentration (if applicable)?	Have you asked yourself what the reader might want to know about you upon learning that you received a scholarship that he or she (or his or her organization) funded?	What are your future plans? How does this opportunity to study at the Bush School impact those plans? How does this translate into helping others nearby and around the world?	After fine the conte you chec grammat errors? Is punctuat correct? everythin correctly

Is the date accurate and formatted correctly? (The date is not needed with an impact letter.) Is the inside address accurate, complete and formatted correctly?	Are you careful to thank the actual donor and not necessarily the letter recipient?	After reading this portion of your letter, will the reader know where you are from, where you received your undergraduate degree and why you are choosing to go into public service?	If applicable, did you thank your donor for his or her (or the foundation's) own public service contributions? Did you avoid thanking your donor again for the scholarship since you already did so in the first paragraph?	A few cap pointers: – The I School of Governm Public – the I School – Mast Internati Affairs degre – mast degree in internati affairs – "I ma political s (name not capit
What courtesy title is appropriate for your donor? Ms.? Mrs.? Mr.? Dr.? Are you addressing the letter recipient by courtesy title and last name only?	If you were instructed to write an impact letter, is your gratitude focused not toward a specific individual or group, but rather on the fact that you received the scholarship?	Have you stated your future plans? Have you included other information that will give the letter recipient a better idea of who you are (service activities, family background, key moments that inspired your public service pursuits, etc.)?	Did you close your letter with either "sincerely" or "sincerely yours," avoiding more casual terms like "Gig 'em"? Before your letter is mailed, is your name signed clearly?	Is the tex paragrap organized your sent clear and instead o Do your p seamless from one other? D avoid rep text?

If the letter recipient is a current or former ambassador, or is an elected official, is he/she addressed as "The Honorable" in the inside address? Is "Ambassador," "Congressman," "Congresswoman" or "Senator" used in the salutation?	Does the recipient now know some basic information about you? Will he or she know you are appreciative of the gift with language that is clear, but not too over-the-top "flowery"?	After reading this section, will the reader feel good about funding your scholarship in particular and about supporting the Bush School in general?	Did you write the name of the Bush School correctly and in its entirety? Did you do the same with the name of your master's degree? Is your class year correct?	Is this let professio appearan content? somethin you can b Does it p represen School st body?

106. Sample Writing Assignments

Resume Writing Activities

First read about the types of resume and tips for a scannable resume from the *Business Communication for Success* textbook below and then complete the writing activities as needed:

Types of Résumés

Type	Function	Advantage	Disadvantage
1. Reverse Chronological	Reverse chronological résumés (also called reverse time order) focus on work history.	Demonstrates a consistent work history	It may be difficult to highlight skills and experience.
2. Functional	Functional résumés (also called competency-based résumés) focus on skills.	Demonstrates skills that can clearly link to job functions or duties	It is often associated with people who have gaps in their employment history.
3. Combination	A combination résumé lists your skills and experience first, then employment history and education.	Highlights the skills you have that are relevant to the job and provides a reverse chronological work history	Some employers prefer a reverse chronological order.
4. Targeted	A targeted résumé is a custom document that specifically highlights the experience and skills that are relevant to the job.	Points out to the reader how your qualifications and experience clearly match the job duties	Custom documents take additional time, preparation, analysis of the job announcement, and may not fit the established guidelines.
5. Scannable	A scannable résumé is specifically formatted to be read by a scanner and converted to digital information.	Increasingly used to facilitate search and retrieval, and to reduce physical storage costs	Scanners may not read the résumé correctly.

You may choose to include references at the end of your résumé, though “references upon request” is common. You may also be tempted to extend your résumé to more than one page, but don’t exceed that limit unless the additional page will feature specific, relevant information that represents several years of work that directly relates to the position. The person reading your résumé may be sifting through many applicants and will not spend time reading extra pages. Use the one-page format to put your best foot forward, remembering that you may never get a second chance to make a good first impression.

Maximize Scannable Résumé Content

Use Key Words

Just as there are common search terms, and common words in relation to each position, job description, or description of duties, your scannable résumé needs to mirror these common terms. Use of nonstandard terms may not stand out, and your indication of “managed employees” may not get the same attention as the word “supervision” or “management.”

Follow Directions

If a job description uses specific terms, refers to computer programs, skills, or previous experience, make sure you incorporate that language in your scannable résumé. You know that when given a class assignment, you are expected to follow directions; similarly, the employer is looking for specific skills and experience. By mirroring the employer’s language and submitting your application documents in accord with their instructions, you convey a spirit of cooperation and an understanding of how to follow instructions.

Insert a Key Word Section

Consider a brief section that lists common words associated with the position as a skills summary: customer service, business communication, sales, or terms and acronyms common to the business or industry.

Make It Easy to Read

You need to make sure your résumé is easy to read by a computer, including a character recognition program. That means no italics, underlining, shading, boxes, or lines. Choose a sans serif (without serif, or decorative end) font like Arial or Tahoma that won't be misread. Simple, clear fonts that demonstrate no points at which letters may appear to overlap will increase the probability of the computer getting it right the first time. In order for the computer to do this, you have to consider your audience—a computer program that will not be able to interpret your unusual font or odd word choice. A font size of eleven or twelve is easier to read for most people, and while the computer doesn't care about font size, the smaller your font, the more likely the computer is to make the error of combining adjacent letters.

RESUME ACTIVITIES

1. Find a job announcement with specific duties that represents a job that you will be prepared for upon graduation. Choose a type of résumé and prepare your résumé to submit to the employer as a class assignment. Your instructor may also request a scannable version of your résumé.
2. Conduct an online search for a functional or chronological résumé. Please post and share with your classmates.
3. Conduct an online search for job advertisements that detail positions you would be interested in, and note the key job duties and position requirements. Please post one example and share with your classmates.
4. When is a second page of your résumé justified? Explain.
5. Conduct an online search for resources to help you prepare your own résumé. Please post one link and a brief review of the Web site, noting what features you found useful and at least one recommendation for improvement.

cover letter Writing Activity

Directions: Use this format or one similar from the Cover Letter Writing section to compose a cover letter to the job that you wrote the resume in the previous exercise:

Your name
Your address
Your state/zip

Contact Name or Department
Company Name
Address
State/zip

Date

Dear Name or Dear Sir or Madam,

Job Title and Job Reference Number

Paragraph one should consist of your interest in applying for the post and how you saw the post advertised. This should be followed by the reason why you are interested in both the position **AND** the company – be specific. Do research on the company – what is it about this particular company that attracts you? Perhaps their culture and reputation, do they have particular vision and mission statement, are they recognised for their training and development opportunities? Have they recently introduced new technology that interests you? What is it about the position that interests you? How could this role enable you to contribute to the company?

Paragraph two is for you to demonstrate how your knowledge and experience relate to the position and company – the skills you have and examples of how you put these skills into practice. This does not have to be in huge detail as more information will be provided on your CV and/or application form but put your best case forward in the first few lines to capture their attention and invite them to read further. Be passionate! If you recognise you have a skills gap against the job description be honest and acknowledge it, but show you are willing and enthusiastic to learn.

Paragraph three should be a conclusion of the first two paragraphs. Bring what they are looking for and what you can deliver together; concluding that you would be delighted to hear from them with an opportunity to discuss your application further.

Yours sincerely, OR Best,

Signature

Name

Enc (if you have enclosed details)
Att (if you have attached details)

interviewing & Thank you Note writing activity

Invite a friend to conduct a mock employment interview with you for a job you select from an Internet posting. Then switch roles.

1. Write about what you learned about yourself and your approach to interviews.
2. What was the most challenging part of the interview process? The easiest?
3. Check out this sample thank you note. Then write a thank you

note to your ‘mock employer,’ using the rubric below as a guide to ensure you have included everything, from formatting to content to conventions:

Thank you Letter Rubric

	Exemplary	Proficient	Minimal	Inadequate
Heading and Signature	Salutation is professional, in the correct format, and addresses a specific individual. Signature is in the correct format	1 requirement missing.	2 requirements missing.	No salutation given.
Organization	Letter is very well organized. Transitions are used beautifully and make the letter flow.	Letter is organized and transitions are used but could have been better.	Some sections are organized, but information is just listed. Transitions are used but they are confusing or not in a logical order	Essay is disorganized with no or few transitions.
Highlighting of skills	Letter highlights skills that the employee has, reiterating them in the context of the letter seamlessly.	Letter mentions skills that the employee has, but could have been integrated better.	Skills are present, but are just listed.	No skills or attributes are present in the letter.
Specific reference to items discussed in the interview	The letter mentions a specific detail that was brought up in the interview, expands upon it, and ties into a positive attribute of the employee.	A specific detail was mentioned, but could have been integrated better.	A detail was mentioned, but it is vague or confusing as to why it was included in the letter.	The letter does not reference anything from the interview.

Mechanics	Spelling, punctuation, and capitalization contains no errors	Contains few errors in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization and they do not affect the letter.	Contains many errors in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.	So many errors in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization that the letter is difficult to read or understand.

PART XV

PLANNING AN ORAL PRESENTATION

107. Functions of Informative Speeches

People encounter a number of formal and informal informative presentations throughout their day, and these presentations have several consequences. First, informative presentations *provide people with knowledge*. When others share facts or circumstances associated with some topic, our comprehension, awareness or familiarity is increased. The speaker imparts information, and this information is turned into knowledge. A music teacher describes the difference between a note and chord as an introduction to music. When issuing a warning to a teenager, a police officer explains the nature of the moving violation. A travel agent clarifies for customers the policies for airline ticket refunds. Participants at a cultural fair are enlightened by a shaman explaining her spiritual practices. Knowledge helps us to understand the world around us, enables us to make connections, and helps us to predict the future.

> All men by nature desire knowledge. – Aristotle

Second, informative presentations *shape our perceptions*. These presentations can affect how people see a subject by bringing it to light, or may influence what is seen as important by virtue of directing attention to the subject (Osborn & Osborn, 1991). Information helps us to interpret our experiences, it shapes our values and beliefs, it may alter our self-concept, and it gives meaning to situations. Imagine you meet your new boss, and she is very curt and pre-occupied during the first staff meeting. You may at first perceive her as being rude, unless later you find out that just before your meeting with her she learned that her father had been hospitalized with a stroke. Learning this new information allowed you to see the situation from a different perspective. In the same way, informative presentations enable us to get a sense of "the big picture" and improve our ability to think and evaluate.

Some informative presentations may be aimed at helping listeners understand the number, variety, and quality of alternatives available to them (Hogan et al., 2010). Consequently, informative presentations also serve to *articulate alternatives*. A car sales associate might explain to you the features of one car in comparison to another car in order to help you differentiate between the models. A doctor might explain to your grandmother her treatment options for arthritis. A fitness trainer may demonstrate to you several types of exercises to help you strengthen your abdominal muscles and reduce your waistline. If you go to a temporary employment agency, a staff member may provide you will a range of job options that fit your qualifications. Successful informative presentations provide information which improves listeners' ability to make wise decisions, because they understand all of their options (Jaffe, 1998).

Finally, informative presentations *enhance our ability to survive and evolve*. Our existence and safety depend upon the successful communication of facts and knowledge. An informative speech "helps keep countries developing, communicates valuable and useful information in thousands of areas, and continues to change, improve or upgrade the lives of audiences" (Wilbur, 2000, p. 99). For thousands of years, cultural and technical knowledge was passed from generation to generation orally. Even today with the presence of the internet, you are still likely to get a good amount of information verbally. We have all seen "how to" YouTube videos, and although these have a significant visual components, the "experts" still have to give a verbal explanation. Through meetings, presentations and face-to-face interactions, we gain information about how to perform and improve in our jobs. To keep our children safe, we don't give them an instruction manual, we sit down with them and explain things. All of the knowledge we accumulate while we live will be passed down to (hopefully) improve on the lives of those who come after us. Much of this information will be passed down in the form of a presentation.

108. Speaking Competencies

We assume you are reading this book or chapter because you wish to improve your speaking skills – a worthy goal. As Ayn Rand alludes to in her quote, a desire to succeed is the first step in achieving this objective. Nevertheless, you cannot hit a target unless you know what it is. Thus, the final portion of this chapter is devoted to an overview of eleven speaking competencies which we consider to be the standards for evaluating a variety of presentations at every level of mastery. These are based on the *Public Speaking Competence Rubric* [PSCR].[1] A complete copy of the rubric can be found at Activities.

1. Useful topic. The first speaking competency is to *select a topic that is appropriate to the audience and the occasion.* An advanced speaker selects a worthwhile topic that engages the audience. His topic also presents the audience with new information that they did not know before the speech. A beginning speaker selects a topic that lacks originality or is out of date. His topic provides no new information to the audience. An ineffective speaker may give a speech in which a single topic cannot be deduced by the audience.

1. [2]
2. [1]

2. Engaging introduction. To *formulate an introduction that orients the audience to the topic and the speaker* is the second speaking competency. An advanced speaker writes an introduction that contains an excellent attention-getter. She firmly establishes her credibility. She provides a sound orientation to the topic, states her thesis clearly, and previews her points in a cogent and memorable way. For the beginning speaker, her attention-getter is mundane and she somewhat develops her credibility. Her thesis is awkwardly composed and she provides little direction for the audience. The ineffective speaker has no opening technique, no credibility statement and provides no background on the topic. In addition she has no thesis statement and no preview of her points.


"Untitled" by Krystle.

3. Clear organization. Competency three is to *use an effective organizational pattern*. An advanced speaker is very well organized and delivers a speech with clear main points. His points are mutually exclusive and directly related to the thesis. Further, he employs effective transitions and signposts to help the speech flow well. The beginning speaker has main points that are somewhat organized, but the content of these points may overlap. Transitions may also be present in his speech, but they are not particularly effective. In the ineffective speaker's speech, there is no clear organizational pattern, there are no transitions, and it sounds as if the information is randomly presented.

> Don't leave inferences to be drawn when evidence can be presented. -Richard Wright

4. Well-supported ideas. Fourth on the list of speaking competencies is to *locate, synthesize, and employ compelling* *supporting materials*. In the advanced speaker's speech, her key points are well supported with a variety of credible materials, and her sources provide excellent support for her thesis. In addition, all of her sources are clearly cited. A beginning speaker has points that are generally supported with a fair mix of materials. Only some of her evidence supports her thesis, and her source citations need to be clarified. An ineffective speaker gives a speech with no supporting materials or no source citations.

5. Closure in conclusion. The fifth speaking competency is to *develop a conclusion that reinforces the thesis and provides psychological closure*. The advanced speaker provides a clear and memorable summary of his points, and he refers back to the thesis or big picture. His speech also ends with a strong clincher or call to action. A beginning speaker provides some summary of his points, but there is no clear reference back to his thesis. The closing technique of his speech can also be strengthened. In an ineffective speaker's speech, there is no conclusion. His speech ends abruptly and without closure.

"Speaking Out – Public speaking made easy" by Christian Heilmann. CC-BY.

6. Clear and vivid language. *To demonstrate a careful choice of words* is the sixth speaking competency. An advanced speaker's language is exceptionally clear, imaginative and vivid. Her language is also completely free from bias, grammatical errors and inappropriate usage. The beginning speaker selects language that is adequate to make her point. She has some errors in grammar and occasionally uses slang, jargon or awkward sentence structure. The ineffective speaker has many errors in her grammar and syntax. She also mispronounces words and extensively uses slang, jargon, and/or sexist or racist terms.

7. Suitable vocal expression. Competency number seven is to *effectively use vocal expression and paralanguage to engage the audience*. Excellent use of vocal variation, intensity and pacing are characteristics of the advanced speaker. His vocal expression is also natural and enthusiastic, and he avoids fillers. Some vocal variation is evident in the beginning speaker's speech. He also enunciates clearly, speaks audibly, and generally avoids fillers (e.g., "um," "uh," "like," etc.). An ineffective speaker is inaudible, enunciates poorly, and speaks in a monotone voice. His speech also has poor pacing, and he distracts listeners with fillers.

8. Corresponding nonverbals. Eighth on the list of competencies is to *demonstrate nonverbal behavior that supports the verbal message.* An advanced speaker has posture, gestures, facial expression and eye contact that are natural, well developed, and display high levels of poise and confidence. Some reliance on notes is seen with the beginning speaker, but she has adequate eye contact. She also generally avoids distracting mannerisms. The ineffective speaker usually looks down and avoids eye contact. She has nervous gestures and other nonverbal behaviors that distract from or contradict the message.

> Body language is a very powerful tool. We had body language before we had speech, and apparently, 80% of what you understand in a conversation is read through the body, not the words. – Deborah Bull

9. Adapted to the audience. The ninth speaking competency is to *successfully adapt the presentation to the audience*. The advanced speaker shows how information is important to audience members, and his speech is tailored to their beliefs, values and attitudes. He may also make allusions to culturally shared experiences. A beginning speaker assumes but does not articulate the importance of the topic. His presentation is minimally adapted to the audience, and some of the ideas presented in the speech are removed from the audience's frame of reference or experiences. An ineffective speaker's speech is contrary to the audience's beliefs, values and attitudes. His message may be generic or canned and no attempt is made to establish common ground.

10. Adept use of visual aids. To skillfully make use of visual aids is the tenth competency. Exceptional explanation and presentation of visual aids is characteristic of the advanced speaker. Her speech has visuals that provide powerful insight into the speech topic, and her visuals are of high professional quality. The beginning speaker's visual aids are generally well developed and explained, although there may be minor errors present in the visuals. An ineffective speaker uses visual aids that distract from her speech. Her visuals may not be relevant, or her visuals may be of poor professional quality.

"Space Apps NYC Hackathon-2014" by jonny goldstein. CC-BY.

11. Convincing persuasion. The eleventh and final speaking competency is to *construct an effectual persuasive message with credible evidence and sound reasoning*. An advanced speaker articulates the problem and solution in a clear, compelling manner. He supports his claims with powerful and credible evidence while completely avoiding reasoning fallacies. His speech also contains a memorable call to action. In the beginning speaker's speech, the problem and solution are evident, and most claims are supported with evidence. He also has generally sound reasoning and a recognizable call to action. For the ineffective speaker, the problem and/or solution are not defined. His claims are not supported with evidence, his speech contains poor reasoning, and there is no call to action. Readers should note that the competencies listed above are not all inclusive. Ultimately one must adjust, expand, and apply these competencies as best fits the requirements of the speaking situation. But they do provide a starting point for new or less experienced speakers to begin to understand all of the interrelated components of a speech.

Being ignorant is not so much a shame, as being unwilling to learn. – Benjamin Franklin

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1. Schreiber, L., Paul, G. & Shibley, L. R. (2012). The development and test of the Public Speaking Competence Rubric. *Communication Education*, 61(3), 205–233 ↵

109. Benefits of Public Speaking

According to the Association of American Colleges and Universities, there are a core set of skills that are necessary "both for a globally engaged democracy and for a dynamic, innovation fueled economy."[1] In the category of "Intellectual and practical skills" **public speaking** is listed as one of these core skills. This is not particularly surprising given that communication skills are critical for intellectual development, career trajectory, and civic engagement. Public speaking is universally applicable to all types of majors and occupations and is seen by U.S. employers as a critical employability skill for job seekers.[3] No matter what your ambitions and interests are, developing speaking skills will benefit your personal, professional, and public life.

Personal

People don't just give presentations on the job and in classes. At times we are called upon to give speeches in our personal lives. It may be for a special event, such as a toast at a wedding. We may be asked to give a eulogy at a funeral for a friend or loved one. As a part of volunteer work, one may have to introduce a guest speaker at an event or present or accept an award for service. Developing the

1. [2]
2. [1]
3. [4]
4. [2]

skill to give these types of speeches can help us to fulfill essential roles in our family and community. Another great personal benefit of public speaking is that it builds self- confidence. It's no surprise that speaking in public is scary, but by engaging in the activity you will build self-confidence through the experience.

Professional

"Alice Walker" by Virginia DeBolt. CC-BY-SA.

TV announcers, teachers, lawyers, and entertainers must be able to speak well, but most other professions require or at the very least can benefit from the skills found in public speaking. It is believed 70% of jobs today involve some form of public speaking.[5] With the recent economic shift from manufacturing to service careers, the ability to communicate with others has become crucial. Top CEOs advise that great leaders must be able to communicate ideas effectively, they must be able to persuade, build support, negotiate and speak effectively in public.[7] The chapters on "Informative Speaking" and "Persuasive Speaking" can help readers understand how to write presentations that enhance their

5. [6]
6. [3]
7. [8]
8. [4]

leadership skills. But before you even start a career, you have to get a job. Effective speaking skills make you more attractive to employers, enhancing your chances of securing employment and later advancing within your career. Employers, career counselors, and the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) all list good communication skills at the top of the list of qualities sought in potential employees. According to NACE's executive director, Marilyn Mackes, the Job Outlook 2013 Report found that employers are looking for people who can communicate effectively.[9] Monster.com advises, "articulating thoughts clearly and concisely will make a difference in both a job interview and subsequent job performance."[11]

> Action is a great restorer and builder of confidence. Inaction is not only the result, but the cause, of fear. Perhaps the action you take will be successful; perhaps different action or adjustments will have to follow. But any action is better than no action at all. – Norman Vincent Peale

Public

Learning about public speaking will allow you to participate in democracy at its most basic level. Public speaking is important in creating and sustaining a society, which includes informed, active participants. Even if you do not plan to run for office, learning about public speaking helps you to listen more carefully to and critically evaluate other's speeches. Listening and critical thinking allow you

9. [10]
10. [5]
11. [12]
12. [6]

to understand public dilemmas, form an opinion about them, and participate in resolving them. The progress of the past century involving segregation, women's rights and environmental protection are the result of people advancing new ideas and speaking out to others to persuade them to adopt changes.

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Source: Principles of Public Speaking
CC LICENSED CONTENT, SHARED PREVIOUSLY

110. Developing Informative Speeches

The first sections of this chapter explained the importance of informative speaking, the functions of informative speeches, the role of the informative speaker, and the four major types of informative speeches. This final section of the chapter discusses three goals in developing informative speeches and advice for increasing the effectiveness of your speech. These three goals include 1) arousing the interest of your audience, 2) presenting information in a way that can be understood, and 3) helping the audience remember what you have said (Fujishin, 2000).

Generate and Maintain Interest

Use Attention-Getting Elements

Before you capture the interest of an audience, you have to get their attention. As you know, attention getters are used in the introduction of a speech, but **attention getters** can also be used throughout your speech to maintain an audience's attention. There are a number of techniques you can use that will naturally draw listeners' attention (German, et al., 2010).

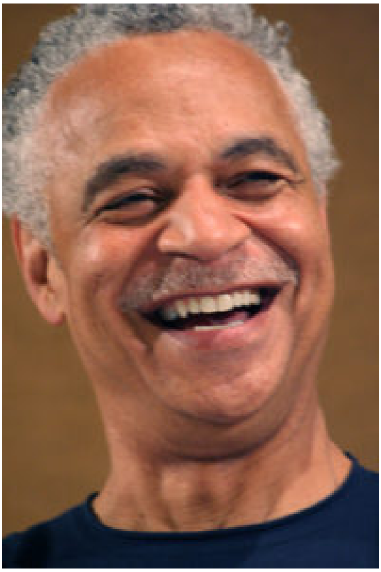
Intensity refers to something that has a high or extreme degree of emotion, color, volume, strength or other defining characteristic. In a speech about sharks' senses, showing how sharks smell 10,000 times better than humans would be an example of the intensity principle.

Novelty involves those things that are new or unusual. Discussing the recent invention of the flesh-eating mushroom death suit developed by Jae Rhim Lee would be novel. This suit is designed to help bodies decompose naturally above ground to avoid the use of dangerous embalming chemicals.

Contrast can also be used to draw attention through comparison to something that is different or opposite. This works best when the differences are significant. If you were showing the audience how to make hot sauce, and you showed a bar graph comparing the scoville units (level of hotness) of different chili peppers, this would be contrast. Jalapenos rate at 2500–8000 scoville units, habaneros rate at 100,000–350,000, and the naga jolokia rates at 855,000–1,041,241.

Audiences will also attend to movement or **Activity**. To employ this technique, the speaker can either use action words, well-chosen movements, an increased rate of speech, or s/he can show action with video. A speech describing or showing extreme sports with high levels of risk, a fast pace, or amazing stunts could be used to illustrate activity.

Finally, **Humor** can be used to draw attention to a subject or point, but be sure that it is relevant and in good taste. In a speech about the devotion of Trekkies (Star Trek fans), you could share the example of Tony Alleyne who designed and outfitted his flat in England as a replica of the deck of the Voyager. You could also direct the audience's attention to couples who have wedding ceremonies spoken in Klingon.



Tell a Story

Story telling is not only the basis for most of our entertainment; it is also one of the best ways to teach an audience (Carlson, 2005). Also known as narratives, stories typically have a beginning in which the characters and setting are introduced, a rise in action, some complication or problem, and a resolution. Stories with compelling characters can be used in a creative way to weave facts otherwise dry and technical facts together (Walters, 1995), as in a speech about preparing a space shuttle for take-off from a mouse's perspective. Jaffe (1998) differentiates between three types of narratives that can be used in informative speeches. The first type of story is a natural reality in which natural or scientific facts are brought together in chronological accounts, as in the formation of the Grand Canyon. The second narrative involves social realities which detail historic events, and the development of cultures and institutions. The last kind of story, the ultimate reality, is focused on profound philosophical and spiritual questions like “Where do we come from?” and “What happens to us when we die?”

Nursery rhymes and song lyrics familiar to the audience can also be used in an interactive way to get listeners interested in the topic (Maxey & O’Connor, 2006). In a speech about the global population explosion, you could ask audience to finish the phrase “There was an old woman who lived in a shoe…” Common commercials, lyrics to Beatles songs, holiday songs, and children’s games are universal.

> The wisest mind has something yet to learn. – George Santayna

Commercial jingles and song lyrics also work to get the audience involved. You could start a speech on boating safety with these lyrics: Just sit right back / And you’ll hear a tale / A tale of a fateful trip / That started from this tropic port / Aboard this tiny ship (from *Gilligan’s Island*). Depending on the make-up of your audience, you might use lyrics from Johnny Cash, Billy Holiday, The Doors, The Beatles, JayZ, The Judds or the Arctic Monkeys. Just remember you probably can’t read all of the lyrics, you need to make sure the lyrics are directly linked to your topic, and you should be sure to cite the artist and song title.

Just for fun, can you name the artist who sang the lyrics below? Can you think of a speech topic that would correspond to the lyrics? (Answer at the end of the chapter)

Lyric	Artist	Speech Topic
Money, get away. Get a good job with good pay and you're okay. Money, it's a gas. Grab that cash with both hands and make a stash. New car, caviar, four star daydream Think I'll buy me a football team.		

Be Creative

Speakers who are different are memorable (Maxey & O'Connor, 2006). To give your speech impact, be imaginative and dare to push the envelope of conformity. When you have spent time researching a topic, you may be able to envision ways to incorporate surprising facts, props or visuals that make your presentation different from others, and therefore more memorable. You could dress like a Shakespearian actor for a speech about the famous playwright. You could have the audience move their chairs and take part in a yoga demonstration. Or you might use your own audience plants to help with a speech entitled "Behind the Scenes of TV Talk Shows." When one student got up to speak, he drew a row of houses on the blackboard and then began to drink a glass of water and speak about the life giving properties of water. After making a few comments, he threw the glass of water on the blackboard—erasing most of the houses. Then he began his speech on the devastating effects of a flood (be sure to get your professor's permission before you do something like this!). Another student giving a speech about "Clowning" had two actual clowns wait in the hall until she was ready to bring them in and show off their make-up and costumes. The speaker was wise to have her cohorts in the room just long enough to make the point (but not the entire time which would distract from the speaker), and the audience was attentive and grateful for the variety. Hanks and Parry (1991) explain that anyone can be creative, if s/he wants to be and is willing to make the effort. For some tips on how to foster your creativity, see Table 16.2. However, you need to remember that creativity is just a tool to help you teach your audience. Do not overlook the requirements of the occasion, the content of your research, or the needs of your audience in your zeal to be creative.

TABLE 16.2 TIPS FOR JUMP STARTING YOUR CREATIVITY FROM EVERYDAY CREATIVITY BY CARLIN FLORA (2009)

- Take a different way to work
- Collaborate with others with complementary skills
- Seek inspiration in beautiful surroundings
- Start working on the problem right away
- Work in a blue room (it boosts creativity)
- Get a hobby or play music
- Think about your problem right before falling asleep

The worst enemy to creativity is self-doubt. – Sylvia Plath

Stimulate Audience Intellect

Most people have a genuine desire to understand the world around them, to seek out the truth, and learn how to solve problems. The role of the informative speaker is to satisfy this desire to learn and know. To illustrate our quest for knowledge, consider the success of the Discovery Channel, the Learning Channel, the History Channel, the Food Network and other educational broadcasts. So how do we appeal to the minds of listeners? Think about all of the information we encounter every day but do not have time to pursue. Think about subjects that you would like to know more about. Ask what information would be universally interesting and useful for listeners. Many people fly on airplanes, but do they know how to survive a plane crash? People also share many ordinary illnesses, so what are some common home remedies? All of the people on earth originated someplace, so who were our ancient ancestors?

In addition to finding topics that relate to listeners, the information we supply should be up to date. For instance, Egypt recently had a revolution, and if you are giving a speech on traveling to the Pyramids, you should be aware of this. When you are talking about a topic that your audience is familiar with, you should share little known facts or paint the subject in a new light. In a speech about a famous person, you might depict what they are like behind the scenes, or what they were like growing up. In a speech about a new technology, you might also talk about the inventors. In a speech about a famous city, you could discuss the more infamous landmarks and attractions.

Create Coherence

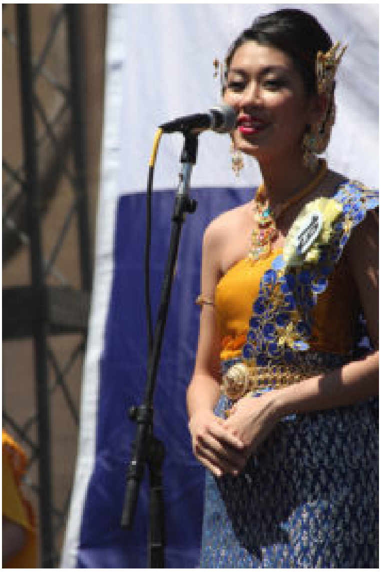
Organize Logically

Several types of organizational patterns are discussed in the *Selecting and Arranging Main Points* chapter. Using these as a starting point, you should make sure the overall logic of the speech is well thought out. If you were giving speech best suited to chronological order, but presented the steps out of order, it would be very difficult to follow. Those of you who have seen the movie *Memento* (which presented the sequence of events backwards), may have noticed how difficult it was to explain the plot to others. In a logical speech, the points you are trying to draw are obvious, the supporting materials are coherent and correspond exactly to the thesis, and the main points are mutually exclusive and flow naturally from start to finish. Clarity of thought is critical in presenting information. As Peggy Noonan (1998, p. 64) argues:

The most moving thing in a speech is always the logic. It's never the flowery words and flourishes, it's not sentimental exhortations, it's never the faux poetry we're all subjected to these days. It's the logic; it's the thinking behind your case. A good case well argued and well said is inherently moving. It shows respect for the brains of the listeners. There is an implicit compliment in it. It shows that you are a serious person and that you are talking to other serious persons.

When planning your speech, ask questions like: What information needs to come first? What organizational pattern best suits the topic? What information must be shared or omitted to aid in audience understanding? What points or sub-points should be grouped together to aid listeners' understanding?

Use Simple Language



One common mistake that speech writers make when they are writing their speech is to use the same language that they would use in a written document. Experienced speech writers know that simple language and ideas are easier to understand than complex ones. "Clear speaking is not an alternative to intelligent discourse, but rather an enabler of intelligent discourse" (Carlson, 2005, p. 79). Did you know that Lincoln's Gettysburg address contains only 271 words, and 251 of these words only have one or two syllables (Hughes & Phillips, 2000)? Another benefit of using simple language is that you are less likely to trip over or mispronounce simple words.

Table 16.3 Simplify Your Language

Low Impact	High Impact
Under the present circumstances	Currently
At the present time	Now
Are in agreement with	Agree
Due to the fact that	Because
Is fully operational	Works
In close proximity to	Near
Of sufficient magnitude	Big enough
In the event of	If
Each and everyone	Each
In the course of	During
Never before or since	Never
Deciduous trees (jargon)	Trees that lose their leaves
Somnolent (jargon)	Drowsy
Awesome (slang)	Impressive
Put the bit on (slang)	Borrow
No brainer (cliché)	Easy decision
An arm and a leg	Expensive
Vertically challenged (euphemism)	Short
Gone to the great beyond (euphemism)	Dead

Instead of "protracted," say "drawn out." Instead of "conundrum," say "puzzle." And instead of "loquacious," say "talkative." As you are writing your speech you also want to avoid technical jargon, slang, clichés, and euphemisms. This type of language is difficult to understand and tends to be low impact. Compare the *Low Impact* language column with the *High Impact* column in Table 16.3 above to see examples of ways to make your language more powerful.

Avoid Information Overload

No one is given an unlimited amount of time to speak. You can't cover everything that there is to know about your topic. And even if you could speak forever about everything there was to know about a subject, your listeners would never be able to take it all in. **Information overload** occurs when a person feels that they are faced with an overwhelming amount of information, with the effect that they are unable to process it all or unable to make decision. So whether you have five minutes to give a presentation or three eight-hour days, you will need to narrow and focus your speech topic and objectives. If you know that you have ten minutes to speak, you will not be able to cover "Car Maintenance for Dummies," but you probably could give a good speech entitled "How to Change the Oil in Your Car." When planning your speech, be sure to determine the amount of information that can reasonably be covered in the time allowed. In fact, rather than taking the entire allotted speaking time, you should get into the practice of speaking only for 90—95% of the time that you are given (Reynolds, 2008). More is not always better—and your audience will appreciate it if you can skillfully make your point with time to spare.

> Today knowledge has power. It controls access to opportunity and advancement. – Peter Drucker

Make Your Speech Memorable

Build in Repetition

Audience retention is determined by a number of factors including listeners' interest, knowledge, physical and emotional state, level of stress, background, and other competing demands (Fujishin, 2000). One way to help your audience remember the content of your speech is by repetition (Hughes & Phillips, 2000). There are three ways to incorporate repetition into your speech. The first form repetition involves restating your main points in your introduction, body and conclusion. When you do this, you will restate your points using different language—not repeat the points word for word. The second form of repetition is where a word or a phrase is repeated in a poetic way, either throughout the speech or at a critical point in the speech. One example of this would be Abraham Lincoln's "government of the people, by the people, for the people." Another example can be found in Sojourner Truth's speech, delivered in 1851 at a women's rights convention.

… That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man—when I could get it—and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my

mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman?

The final way to use repetition in your speech is through nonverbal communication. When you say the word "four" and you hold up four fingers, or when you verbally agree with a point and nod your head at the same time, you are reinforcing the idea verbally and nonverbally.

Appeal to Different Ways of Learning

Individuals have different learning styles, so some people are visual [V] learners, some are aural [A] learners, some learn by reading [R] and writing, and some learn kinesthetically [K] (Fleming, 2001). You can test your own learning style at www.varklearn.com. Understanding your own and others' learning styles is useful for two reasons. First, you will find that you tend to teach others using your own learning style. Second, regardless of your own learning styles, you need to appeal to as many different learning styles as possible in your informative speech. To see how each learning style prefers to be taught, see the table below.

Unfortunately, since the ear alone is a very poor information gathering device, steps must be taken to improve retention. Typically listeners only retain only a small fraction of what is explained to them verbally. The first way to enhance retention is to appeal to as many of the senses as possible. Studies show that audiences retain 20 percent of what they hear, 30 percent of what they see, and 50 percent of what they hear *and* see (Westerfield, 2002). When the audience has an opportunity to *do* something (adding the kinesthetic sense), their retention increases to 80 percent (Walters, 1995). Or, if participation is not possible, a handout will raise retention to an impressive 85 percent—if the audience can review the handout at least once (Slutsky & Aun, 1997).

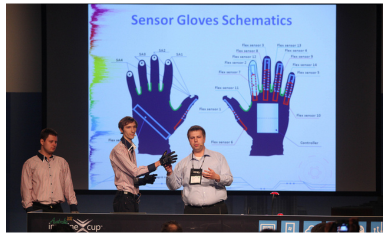
Table 16.4 The VARK Model of Learning

Learning Style	Approach the Learner With…
Visual Learners	Maps, charts, graphs, diagrams, brochures, flow charts, highlighters, different colors, pictures, word pictures, and different spatial arrangements
Aural Learners	Explanations of new ideas, large and small group discussions, lectures, audio recordings, stories, and jokes
Read/Write Learners	Lists, essays, reports, textbooks, definitions, printed handouts, readings, manuals, and web pages
Kinesthetic Learners	Field trips, hands-on projects, sensory stimulations, laboratories, recipes and solutions to problems, and collections of samples

From Hawk and Shaw (2007, *p.* 7) *and Fleming* (2001).

Another way to help your listeners remember is by the use of techniques like *association*, linking the new topic to things that the audience knows about or already understands. If you were giving a speech about rugby, you might compare it to soccer and football to help the audience understand the rules. The use of *acronyms* also aids retention. On the "*Krusty Krab Training Video*" episode of Spongebob Squarepants (a spoof on corporate training videos), they use the acronym "POOP." When I asked my then eight-year-old son if he remembered (several weeks after watching the episode) what "POOP" stood for, he immediately and correctly answered "People Order Our Patties." The final technique to help audiences remember information is the *simplicity criterion.* Information is best retained when it is explained from top to bottom (rather than bottom to top), when events are presented from first to last (rather than last to first), and when information is presented in the positive voice (rather than in the negative voice) (Devito, 1981).

Use Visuals



Visual aids can be a very powerful and efficient way to present facts that might otherwise be difficult to convey verbally. The benefits of visuals used for informative speeches include increasing interest, understanding, retention, and the speed at which your audience can understand complex facts. We live in a mediated culture, where people are visually oriented. This means that they expect to be visually stimulated with pictures, graphs, maps, video images and objects. Speakers who do not make use of visuals may be at a disadvantage when compared to speakers who use them. This is assuming of course that the visuals enhance what you are saying and that you use them well. As you know, plenty of people use Power Point, and it does not necessarily make their speech better or more memorable.

Perhaps the best reason to use visuals aids during an informative speech is to help your audience understand a concept that may be difficult to understand just by explaining it. In a speech about heart bypass surgery, would it be better to verbally describe the parts of the human heart, or to show a picture of it? How about a model of the heart? How about an actual human heart? Be sure to consider your audience! What if your speech is about an abstract concept that does not lend itself well to slick graphic representations? One way trainers get their audiences involved and make their presentations memorable is to provide handouts which the listeners complete (in part) themselves. You could use fill-in-the blank statements (where you provide the answer), open-ended questions where listeners can write their thoughts, and activities like matching or crossword puzzles. Regardless of the type of visual media you select for your speech, just make sure that it does not overpower you or the subject. Work to keep the audience's attention on you and what you are saying, and use the visual to complement what *you* have to say.

- past present future. **Authored by**: fosco lucarelli. **Located at**: https://www.flickr.com/photos/fosco/3915752142/. **License**: *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*
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111. Outlining Your Speech

Most speakers and audience members would agree that an organized speech is both easier to present as well as more persuasive. Public speaking teachers especially believe in the power of organizing your speech, which is why they encourage (and often require) that you create an outline for your speech. **Outlines**, or textual arrangements of all the various elements of a speech, are a very common way of organizing a speech before it is delivered. Most extemporaneous speakers keep their outlines with them during the speech as a way to ensure that they do not leave out any important elements and to keep them on track. Writing an outline is also important to the speechwriting process since doing so forces the speakers to think about the main points and sub-points, the examples they wish to include, and the ways in which these elements correspond to one another. In short, the outline functions both as an organization tool and as a reference for delivering a speech.

Outline Types

"Alpena Mayor Carol Shafto Speaks at 2011 Michigan Municipal League Convention" by Michigan Municipal League. CC-BY-ND.

There are two types of outlines. The first outline you will write is called the **preparation outline**. Also called a working, practice, or rough outline, the preparation outline is used to work through the various components of your speech in an inventive format. Stephen E. Lucas[1] put it simply: "The preparation outline is just what its name implies—an outline that helps you prepare the speech" (p. 248). When writing the preparation outline, you should focus on finalizing the purpose and thesis statements, logically ordering your main points, deciding where supporting material should be included, and refining the overall organizational pattern of your speech. As you write the preparation outline, you may find it necessary to rearrange your points or to add or subtract supporting material. You may also realize that some of your main points are sufficiently supported while others are lacking. The final draft of your preparation outline should include full sentences, making up a complete script of your entire speech. In most cases, however, the preparation outline is reserved for planning purposes only and is translated into a speaking outline before you deliver the speech.

A **speaking outline** is the outline you will prepare for use when delivering the speech. The speaking outline is much more succinct than the preparation outline and includes brief phrases or words

1. [2]
2. [1]

that remind the speakers of the points they need to make, plus supporting material and signposts.[3] The words or phrases used on the speaking outline should briefly encapsulate all of the information needed to prompt the speaker to accurately deliver the speech. Although some cases call for reading a speech verbatim from the full-sentence outline, in most cases speakers will simply refer to their speaking outline for quick reminders and to ensure that they do not omit any important information. Because it uses just words or short phrases, and not full sentences, the speaking outline can easily be transferred to index cards that can be referenced during a speech.

Outline Structure

Because an outline is used to arrange all of the elements of your speech, it makes sense that the outline itself has an organizational hierarchy and a common format. Although there are a variety of outline styles, generally they follow the same pattern. Main ideas are preceded by Roman numerals (I, II, III, etc.). Sub-points are preceded by capital letters (A, B, C, etc.), then Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, etc.), and finally lowercase letters (a, b, c, etc.). Each level of subordination is also differentiated from its predecessor by indenting a few spaces. Indenting makes it easy to find your main points, sub-points, and the supporting points and examples below them. Since there are three sections to your speech— introduction, body, and conclusion— your outline needs to include all of them. Each of these sections is titled and the main points start with Roman numeral I.

3. [4]
4. [2]

OUTLINE FORMATTING GUIDE

Title: Organizing Your Public Speech

Topic: Organizing public speeches

Specific Purpose Statement: To inform listeners about the various ways in which they can organize their public speeches.

Thesis Statement: A variety of organizational styles can used to organize public speeches.

Introduction
Paragraph that gets the attention of the audience, establishes goodwill with the audience, states the purpose of the speech, and previews the speech and its structure.

(Transition)

Body

I. Main point

A. Sub-point
B. Sub-point
C. Sub-point

1. Supporting point
2. Supporting point

(Transition)

Conclusion
Paragraph that prepares the audience for the end of the

speech, presents any final appeals, and summarizes and wraps up the speech.

Bibliography

In addition to these formatting suggestions, there are some additional elements that should be included at the beginning of your outline: the title, topic, specific purpose statement, and thesis statement. These elements are helpful to you, the speechwriter, since they remind you what, specifically, you are trying to accomplish in your speech. They are also helpful to anyone reading and assessing your outline since knowing what you want to accomplish will determine how they perceive the elements included in your outline. Additionally, you should write out the transitional statements that you will use to alert audiences that you are moving from one point to another. These are included in parentheses between main points. At the end of the outlines, you should include bibliographic information for any outside resources you mention during the speech. These should be cited using whatever citations style your professor requires. The textbox entitled “Outline Formatting Guide” provides an example of the appropriate outline format.

> If you do not change direction, you may end up where you are heading. – Lao Tzu

Preparation Outline

This chapter contains the preparation and speaking outlines for a short speech the author of this chapter gave about how small organizations can work on issues related to climate change (see appendices). In this example, the title, specific purpose, thesis, and list of visual aids precedes the speech. Depending on your instructor's requirements, you may need to include these details plus additional information. It is also a good idea to keep these details at the top of your document as you write the speech since they will help keep you on track to developing an organized speech that is in line with your specific purpose and helps prove your thesis. At the end of the chapter, in Appendix A, you can find a full length example of a Preparation (Full Sentence) Outline.

Speaking Outline

In Appendix B, the Preparation Outline is condensed into just a few short key words or phrases that will remind speakers to include all of their main points and supporting information. The introduction and conclusion are not included since they will simply be inserted from the Preparation Outline. It is easy to forget your catchy attention-getter or final thoughts you have prepared for your audience, so it is best to include the full sentence versions even in your speaking outline.

Using the Speaking Outline

"TAG speaks of others first" by Texas Military Forces. CC-BY-ND.

Once you have prepared the outline and are almost ready to give your speech, you should decide how you want to format your outline for presentation. Many speakers like to carry a stack of papers with them when they speak, but others are more comfortable with a smaller stack of index cards with the outline copied onto them. Moreover, speaking instructors often have requirements for how you should format the speaking outline. Whether you decide to use index cards or the printed outline, here are a few tips. First, write large enough so that you do not have to bring the cards or pages close to your eyes to read them. Second, make sure you have the cards/pages in the correct order and bound together in some way so that they do not get out of order. Third, just in case the cards/pages do get out of order (this happens too often!), be sure that you number each in the top right corner so you can quickly and easily get things organized. Fourth, try not to fiddle with the cards/pages when you are speaking. It is best to lay them down if you have a podium or table in front of you. If not, practice reading from them in front of a mirror. You should be able to look down quickly, read the text, and then return to your gaze to the audience.

Any intelligent fool can make things bigger and more complex… It takes a touch of genius – and a lot of courage to move in the opposite direction. – Albert Einstein

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1. Lucas, Stephen E. (2004). *The art of public speaking* (8th edition). New York: McGraw-Hill. ↲
2. Beebe, S. A. & Beebe, S. J. (2003). *The public speaking handbook* (5th edition). Boston: Pearson. ↲

112. Effective Visual Aids

Before you just open up PowerPoint and begin creating slides, you should stop for a moment and consider what type of visual aid will best serve your purpose and if you even need an aid at all. Select a visual aid that adds to your presentation in a meaningful way, not merely something pretty to look at or a substitute for thorough preparation. Visuals are not there for you to hide behind when you are in front of your audience. Because of the tendency for novice speakers to use visuals as a crutch in their speeches, it has even been suggested that beginner speakers be forbidden from using visual aids while they are learning to present.[1]

Visual aids serve a unique role in a presentation, and you should consider the specific purpose and desired outcome of your speech when determining if, when, to what extent, and in what format you use visual aids.

Visuals can spark interest, build emotional connections, clarify your words, explain abstract ideas, help draw conclusions, or increase understanding. For instance, a speaker may show a stacks of books to represent the amount of data storage in a speech about the evolution of computers; or demonstrate the proper use of ear plugs by distributing ear plugs, showing how to insert them, and then blasting an air horn in a speech about preventing hearing loss in order to make the value of ear protection more memorable and concrete. Done well—simple, visible, relevant, memorable, and audience-focused— visual aids can have a profound impact on your audience and your overall message.

Visual aids can be an important part of conveying your message effectively since people learn far more by hearing and seeing than

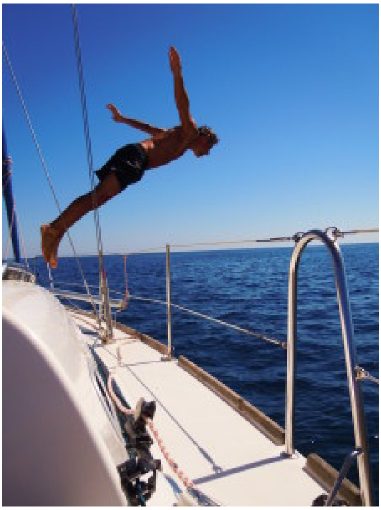
1. [2]
2. [1]

through hearing or seeing alone.[3] The brain processes verbal and visual information separately. By helping the audience build visual and verbal memories, they are more likely to be able to remember the information at a later time.[5] If you can find a visual aid to complement what you are saying, you will help your audience understand the information you are presenting and remember your message. For example, a speaker might show the proper and improper ways to bow when being introduced in Japan while at the same time talking about the movements and also displaying a slide with the appropriate angles and postures for bowing. By using multiple modes in concert with each other, the message is strengthened by the pairing of words, images, and movement.

Not just any visual will do, however. Each visual should be relevant to your message, convey an important point, be clearly understandable, and be visible by your entire audience. Visuals should be used to make concepts easier to understand and to reinforce your message. They should illustrate important points that are otherwise hard to understand.[7]

3. [4]
4. [2]
5. [6]
6. [3]
7. [8]
8. [4]

Use visuals for speeches about processes, products, or demonstrations of how to do something, such as a diagram of how email is delivered in a speech about computer security. Use visuals when you need to explain things you cannot see because they are hidden or abstract, like a model of your internal organs in a speech about gastric bypass surgery. Use them when you need to grab your audience's attention or stir their emotions. A speaker could use a photo of a starving child and a bag of rice that represents the daily calorie intake of a poor child in a speech about food insecurity to create a visceral reaction in the audience. As they say, a picture is worth a thousand words, so use images to tell a story or create a visual metaphor. Visual metaphors are useful when trying to evoke an emotion, such as showing an image of someone running or diving into a pool when you want to evoke action on the part of your audience. The images convey the message to "get going" or "dive in." When talking about numbers or statistics, use visuals to provide context, comparison, and to help your audience understand the meaning of data. Done well, graphs can convey data.[9] While there are many possible reasons to use visuals in your presentation, your guiding principle should be: does this make the message clearer or more memorable? If you cannot



"Diving in the Adriatic" by melschmitz. morgueFile license.

9. [10]
10. [5]

answer with a resounding "YES!" then re-think the plan for your visuals and begin again.

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1. Palmer, E. (2011). *Well spoken: Teaching speaking to all students*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers. ↲
2. Vasile, A. J. (2004). *Speak with confidence: A practical guide* (9th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson. ↲
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113. Techniques for Building Confidence

Prepare Well

The correlation between preparation and nervousness is consistent. More practice results in less nervousness. The best, most consistent and direct way to minimize the level of nervousness you feel is through effective preparation. This is always true. Importantly, the best sort of practice is the kind that prepares you properly.

Michael Jordan at Boston Garden

Michael Jordan was once asked the best way to learn how to shoot free throws. He said that you cannot learn to shoot free throws by walking into a gym with a ball, walking up to the line, and shooting. Instead, he described how the first step in learning to shoot free throws is to run sprints. Most importantly, his advice was to run until your body was under the same stress as it would be in a game when you needed to make those free throws—because only under those conditions would your practice become truly productive. *Only then* do you pick up the ball and shoot. And when you managed to catch your breath? All types of preparation and practice yield some benefits, but there is a significant difference between practice that is merely *helpful* and practice that is *sufficient*.

There is a difference between "knowing what you are talking about," and "knowing what you are going to say." Thinking about your presentation can be helpful, but that sort of preparation will not give you a sense of what you are actually going to say. Athletes know that the best practices will re-create game conditions and test their abilities to perform in real-life scenarios. Studying a playbook? This is helpful, but not sufficient. Going over a speech in your mind? Again, it is helpful, but not sufficient.

Many students do not practice effectively, and this can result in the wrong idea that practice isn't helpful. Unfortunately, these same students usually have had little, if any, training in how one might prepare for a presentation, and so they employ the scholastic training they are most familiar with—how to write a paper. This is not the same activity as presenting, and so the lack of proper preparation only contributes to the lack of confidence. Let's look at a few elements of effective practice.

Visualize Success

Athletes and performers are often coached to visualize what they are trying to do as a way to perform correctly. Baseball players need to anticipate what they will do if the ball is hit their way so that they are ready to perform without having to make split-second choices. Football and basketball players must envision how each member of the team will move during a particular play because team success depends on speedy and flawless coordination between individuals. Dancers and divers are trained to visualize the form and positioning of their bodies as they execute their moves. Golfers are coached to visualize the flight and arc of the shot they are about to attempt. Engaging the imagination in this way can be beneficial to performance.

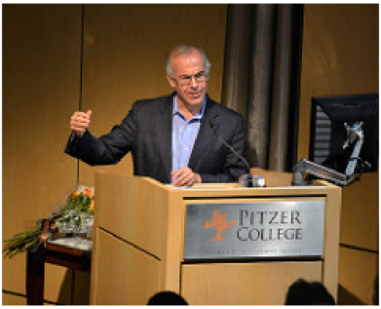
> I visualize things in my mind before I have to do them. It's like having a mental workshop. – Jack Youngblood

Speakers too, should visualize success. As you practice, visualize yourself presenting with confidence to a receptive audience. "See" your relaxed facial expressions and "hear" your confident vocal tone. Imagine yourself moving gracefully, complementing what you say with expressive gestures. Imagine the audience reacting appropriately—nodding appreciatively and giving thoughtful consideration to your points. Imagine the gratification of watching the audience really "get it." When you can honestly envision yourself performing at this level, you are taking an important step toward achieving that goal.

Avoid Gimmicks

Some acting coaches (and speech teachers) encourage their students to practice in front of mirrors, so that they can watch themselves perform and evaluate how they move. In acting, this can be very useful; but in speaking, it is less so. When you practice your presentation, the most important element is expressiveness. You want to become more familiar with the volume of material, the order in which you plan to present it, and the phrasing you think would be most effective to express it. Watching yourself perform in a mirror will focus your attention on your appearance first—and on what you express second. This makes using a mirror during practice a distraction from what the practice ought to achieve.

Plus, consider what you are seeing in the mirror as you practice. Obviously, it is you! But more to the point, what you see in the mirror (your reflection) will not resemble, in any way, the audience that you would see while delivering your presentation. Just as you want to visualize success in yourself as part of your preparation; you also want to visualize success in your audience—which means that you want to imagine the members of your audience reacting positively to your presentation, paying close attention and nodding their heads as you make your points.



For some reason, the myth persists that imagining your audience in their pajamas—or something similarly silly—is an effective way to make standing in front of them seem less scary. Many of my students have discussed hearing "tips" like imagining the audience wearing pink bunny-ears as a way to make them less intimidating. These sorts of gimmicks don't work! In fact, concentrating on anything other than what you are doing is distracting and not beneficial at all. Do your best to avoid such advice. Visualize success!

> Breathe. Let go. And remind yourself that this very moment is the only one you know you have for sure. – Oprah Winfrey

Breathe and Release

One type of pre-presentation exercise that might be helpful is based on a therapeutic idea called **systematic de-sensitization**, which is a multi-stage regimen to help patients deal with phobias through coping mechanisms. Going through both the cognitive and behavioral aspects of systematic desensitization often requires weeks of concerted effort to overcome the body's involuntary reactions to stress. That sort of psychological therapy involves gradual exposure to what produces the anxiety, long-term self-reflection, and mental discipline. Here, we will discuss a shortened version called "**breathe and release**." This is a short-cut relaxation technique that could be useful for nervous speakers—especially those who are concerned with the physical manifestations of nervousness, such as shaky hands or knees. The key to "breathe and release" is to understand that when nervous tension results in minor trembling, the effort of trying to keep one's hands from shaking can contribute to the whole situation—that is, trying to stop literally can make it worse! Therefore, the best approach is through relaxation.

"Breathe and Release" involves three steps:

1. Imagine the nervousness within your body. Imagine that energy bubbling inside you, like liquid being cooked.
2. Draw that energy to a high point within your body with a deep, cleansing breath. Imagine this cleansing breath to be acting like a vacuum—drawing up all of the bubbling liquid.
3. Release the energy by deliberately relaxing the entirety of your upper extremities—not just your hands, or even your hands and arms—but all the way from your fingertips to the bottom edges of your shoulder blades. Imagine how keeping any part of your upper extremities tense would result in a "kink" in the release valve, and so complete relaxation is the key to success. Remember: Relax *everything* from the fingertips to the very bottom edges of your shoulder blades.

"Breathe and Release" is something that can be done even as one walks to the front of the classroom or boardroom to begin speaking. Many speakers, especially those who are concerned about the physical manifestations of nervousness, have used this relaxation technique effectively.

> I've a grand memory for forgetting. – Robert Louis Stevenson

Minimize What You Memorize

One important hint for speech preparation involves avoiding the writing of an entirely scripted version of the presentation. Many people have the impression that writing a script of the entire speech is the necessary first step in preparation; that practicing can only happen after you are done writing the entire speech. Unfortunately, this common impression is mistaken. Remember that lunch with your friends? When you were describing the movie plot, you were being ***conversant*** in a prepared way. This means that you knew what you were describing, but you were not concerned with the specific words you were using. Being ***conversant*** is *the condition of being prepared to discuss an issue intelligently*. Fans of sports are conversant about their favorite teams. Experts are *conversant* in their fields. A well-prepared speaker is *conversant* with regard to her topic. Consider how being *conversant* in this manner allows freer, more fluid communication, with no stress associated with your ability to remember what words you wanted to use. Being conversant also gives the speaker the best chance to recognize and react to audience feedback. If you are completely focused on the integrity of scripted comments, then you will be unable to read and react to your audience in any meaningful way. Imagine how frustrating it would be for your friends at that lunch if you would not respond to any of their questions until you were finished reading a few descriptive paragraphs about the movie. They would probably just wait until you were done reading and then try to engage you in a conversation!

> If you wish to forget anything on the spot, make a note that this thing is to be remembered. – Edgar Allan Poe

Many people have had experience being in a stage play or some other type of performance that involved memorized recitation of a script. Many of us might recall moments during rehearsals when our minds would “freeze” and we might need just a quick reminder—the next word or phrase, the next few notes—to get back on track. This is because people do not memorize in units, but in phrases or chunks. The mind attaches to a rhythm—not to each individual unit, word, or note. This is why it is best to minimize what you memorize. Prepare your opening carefully so that you start smoothly. Prepare your closing comments so that you can end sharply and with style. But avoid preparing and then memorizing an entire script.

Preparing for a speech by memorizing a written script engages your mind at a different level from that of a *conversant* speaker. Concentrating on remembering words is different from paying attention to how one’s audience is reacting. The pressure that arises from trying to remember the next word can be considerable, yet that pressure is entirely avoidable. The goal of public speaking should never be about loyal recreation of a script—it is about getting the appropriate response from your audience. Trying to remember an entirely scripted speech can result in the rather ironic situation of a person being able confidently and smoothly to discuss the topic in casual conversation, but still quite stressed about their ability to remember their scripted comments.

Many students forget their lines while discussing topics like their families and hometowns. Of course they knew what they were talking about, but their minds were focused on the task of remembering specific words—a task different from effective speaking. So, should you write any prepared comments at all? Yes, of course ,you should. Specifically, the feedback you should be most concerned with will happen during the body of the speech—when you are discussing the substance of your presentation. It is during the body of the speech when you need especially to retain the ability to adjust to how your audience reacts. Thus, memorizing your entire speech is ultimately detrimental to your ability to react to your audience. However, during the introduction and conclusion of your speech, the primary concerns are about connecting with your audience personally; which is something best assured through consistent eye contact. So, carefully preparing the introduction and the conclusion of your speech is a smart strategy—but don't make the mistake of scripting everything that you plan to say. The best rule here: Minimize what you memorize—familiarize instead!

> If I don't train enough, of course I'm nervous. – Haile Gebrselassie

Practice Out Loud

Remember the very first time you tried to do anything—a game, a sport, an activity, anything at all. How good were you out of the gate? Perhaps you had talent or were gifted with a "feel" for what you were doing. But even then, didn't you get better with more experience? Nobody does anything the very best they can on their very first attempt, and everyone—even the most talented among us—will benefit from effective practice.

Speaking in public is no different from any other activity in this way. To maximize the chance that your presentation will come out smooth and polished, you will need to hear it all the way through. By practicing out loud, from the beginning to the ending, you will be able to listen to your whole speech and properly gauge the flow of your entire presentation. Additionally, without at least one complete *out-loud practice*, there will be no way to accurately estimate the length of your speech and your preparation will remain insufficient. When dealing with CA, the last thing you want is to leave some questions unanswered in your own mind! The out-loud "dress rehearsal" is the single, most important element to your preparation. Without it, you will be delivering your presentation in full for the first time when it counts the most. Putting yourself at that sort of disadvantage isn't wise, and is easily avoided.

Consider your current method of preparing a public presentation. At some point, you will have gathered notes and information together. That represents an opportune moment for your first out-loud practice. You might even consider trying that initial practice without the benefit of any notes. Stand up; start speaking; see what comes out! Such a practice can serve as an "oral first draft" in the same vein as any written first draft of a paper, and can answer a number of questions for you:

1. Where, during your presentation, are you most—and least—conversant?
2. Where, during your presentation, are you most in need of supportive notes?
3. What do your notes need to contain?

Prepare for your public presentation by speaking and listening to yourself, rather than by writing, editing, and rewriting. Remember that when you are having a conversation, you never use the same sort of language and syntax as you do when you are writing a formal paper. Practice with the goal of becoming *conversant* in your topic, not fluent with a script.

> You can't hire someone to practice for you. – H. Jackson Brown, Jr.

Customize Your Practice

We've discussed a variety of techniques in this chapter; from the importance of out-loud practice to suggestions of when, during your preparation, you should start the out-loud practice. We've discussed Cognitive Restructuring as a means of changing your attitude about presenting in a positive way. Depending on your personal brand of CA, you may choose to implement these hints in different ways. Take a moment to reflect on what causes your CA. Do you dislike the feeling of being the center of attention? Are you more concerned with who is in the audience and what they might think of you? Or are you worried about "freezing" in front of the audience and forgetting what you wanted to say? Write some of these concerns down and put them into a priority order. If you are worried about a particular issue or problem, how might you prepare to minimize the chance of that issue arising?

Then consider your current method of preparation. Do you prepare more for a written paper than for an oral presentation? Do you have the goal of presenting a scripted message? Do you practice out loud? When, during your process, do you practice aloud? Do you practice at all *before* you begin to compose your speaking notes; or do you only practice after? Remember that dealing with CA often involves the breaking of a mental habit. It is a good idea to change what you have done previously. Be deliberate. Observe what works for your situation.

Recall what was discussed at the beginning of this chapter: CA is a condition unique to each person dealing with it. CA is the result of many varied causes—some internal and personal, some external and experiential. Dealing with anxiety may be as much dealing with your attitude as with your skills, as much a struggle with perception as with ability. Because of this, *you* are in the best position to know how to deal with your particular brand of CA. As stated earlier in the chapter: Each individual deals with CA most effectively through increased self-awareness and a willingness to take each of the steps in the entire process. After you acknowledge your reality, then you take the steps necessary to overcome apprehension. When you've read about the ways to overcome the debilitating impact of CA, the next steps in your process involve seeing what works best for you. Do not continue to prepare in exactly the same way as before. Speak more; write and revise less. Be sure to practice out-loud at least once during your preparation, in order to prepare yourself sufficiently. Reflect on your personal concerns and try Cognitive Restructuring on those concerns. Take your time. Do the work. Have confidence that your preparation will yield positive results.

> Nothing in the affairs of men is worthy of great anxiety. – Plato

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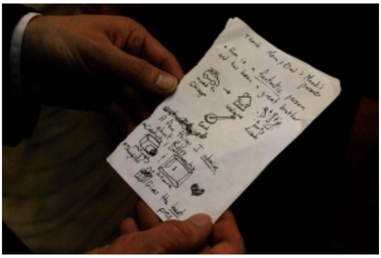
114. Preparation, Practice, and Delivery

Preparing Notes

Once you have created a comprehensive outline and have thought through your speech, you should be able to create your note cards or whatever you might be using (notes or an iPad for instance). Every speaker is a bit different, and different speech topics and organizational patterns may require different notation techniques.

Your note cards (or cue sheets) must have enough information on them to be able to deliver the speech without missing details and organized in the precise order that you have planned. A common technique is to print the outline in a font that is large enough to be read from a distance.



"Best man's speech notes" by stacey shintani.

You should be able to glance at the cards, get your bearings, and look back at the audience. If you are reading the cards word-for-word, there are too many words on them, unless it is an extended exact quote, or group of statistics that must be delivered precisely.

Be sure your notes or cards are numbered (e.g., boldly in the upper right hand corner), so you can keep them organized. Color-coding is often done to easily distinguish the cards at a glance. Losing your place can be very stressful to you and distracting to the audience.

Avoid writing or printing on two sides; flipping a page or card is distracting to the audience. The audience should not be aware of the notes. It is best to simply slide the cards aside to advance to the next card.

Rehearse your speech using the notes that you will bring to the podium. Be sure you can glance at the notes, get your information, and look up to have eye contact with the audience.

> All the real work is done in the rehearsal period. – Donald Pleasence

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Figure 12.1: Rehearsal Checklist

- Rehearse a few days before you are to deliver your speech
- Use the note sheets or cards you will be using or delivery
- Practice with the presentation aids you will be using for delivery
- Practice with the presentation aids you will be using
- Time your speech and cut or expand it if needed
- Rehearse with a colleague or an audience if possible
- If you can, rehearse in the room with the podium you will use
- Plan what you will do with your hands
- Plan and practice your opening and closing carefully, so you can deliver them exactly

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Rehearsing the Speech

Remember how to get to Carnegie Hall. Rehearse your speech—aloud and ideally with a colleague or fellow student as an audience. Rehearse in front of a mirror if needed. There are some students who record a rehearsal speech so they can get a real sense of what the audience will hear. If you are using presentation aids, rehearse with them for timing and familiarity so you only have to glance at the screen or easel. Time the speech to be sure it within the assigned time. Phrase the speech as you will phrase it in the actual delivery (and listen for the verbal fillers, awkward pauses, and other non- fluencies). Plan what to do with your hands.

You should also know exactly how your speech will begin and end.

Regardless of how dependent on notes the speaker may be, here is one constant word of advice: know exactly how you are going to begin your speech. Not just an idea, but verbatim, with every inflection, every gesture, every eye contact with the audience. The first few sentences should be so ingrained, that you could perform it during an earthquake without batting an eye.

A memorized introduction accomplishes several goals. First, it gives you the opportunity to breathe, and realize it's not so bad to be up there after all! Second, it lets the audience know you are prepared. Third, it signals to the audience that what you are about to say is important. Finally, it gives you the opportunity for direct eye contact (because you are not reading) and commands the audience's attention. Eye contact is a signal to the audience that you care about them!

The conclusion of your speech is equally important. In show business parlance, the end of a song or a scene is called a "button." It is a "TAH-DAH" moment that lets the audience know you are finished, and that it is their turn to applaud. The ending impression your speech leaves with the audience is greatly affected by how effective the ending is. The content and structure notwithstanding, you should also know exactly how you will end (verbatim), so there is no hesitation, no stumbling, no tentative "I guess that's all" feeling. A confident and decisive beginning will draw the audience to you; a confident logical ending will be very effective in preserving a lasting impression on the audience.

> Stress is an important dragon to slay — or at least tame — in your life. – Marilu Henner

Managing Stress

As William Ball noted in his book for actors and directors, A *Sense of Direction*, getting in front of a group and speaking is people's greatest fear (greater than fear of death). Fear and stress result in psychological and physical manifestations that can affect a speech.

"Is it a bad sign when work starts handing these out?" *by skittledog.*

Stress physically causes muscles to tighten, often including vocal cords. This raises, and often limits, the vocal pitch of the speaker under stress. The tempo of the speech may also be affected. Novice speakers tend to rush as though to be anxious to "get it over with." It is a factor to remember in a corporate or business meeting: the speaker should speak slowly enough because what he has to say is important, and the audience should listen. Remember, as noted above, rushing gives the impression that the speaker thinks the message is not worth the time.

Stress can accelerate perspiration. It is wise to have a facial tissue or small towel handy for dabbing for comfort. Stress can also make the mouth and throat feel dry. Sipping water is a simple solution.

There are a myriad of solutions to relieving a speaker's stress: from hypnosis to imagining the audience to be naked. Among the simplest and most effective is to do a moderate amount of exercise prior to the speech, even as basic as walking. Exercising helps to naturally chemically relieve the tension; and helps deepen the breathing that supports the voice.

Simultaneously while exercising the body, it is a good idea to warm up the voice. The vocal cords are muscles, which should not be jump-started.

Physical exercises will likely help relaxing for better posture and hand and body gestures. As part of the relaxation process, actors "warm up" physically before performances and often do relaxation exercises to help concentration and relieve stress.

The best antidote for stress is to be well prepared and confident.

Delivering the Speech

You have taken all of the right steps before stepping up to the podium or lectern. You have selected a good topic. You have researched the topic. You have organized the best information in a compelling way. You have rehearsed your speech. You have received feedback on your rehearsal from an objective listener. You have carefully constructed your notes and practiced with them. You have planned and practiced your speech introduction and conclusion verbatim. You have checked out the room and the equipment. You did something to reduce your stress before your speech. You did vocal warm-ups. You chose the perfect outfit to wear. You made sure your gum was discarded and your hair pulled back. You arrived at least 15 minutes before your speech. You leapt to the podium with great enthusiasm when introduced.

Now you must deliver. If you look up the word "deliver," you will find it means more than to just "give." To "give" is a willingness to offer something without obligation or the expectation of something in return. To "give" also implies a pre-determined responsibility. You have a responsibility as a speaker to "deliver" information that will help your audience or enlighten them in some way. Speeches are delivered.

Figure 12.2: Steps for Effective Delivery

1. Approach the podium as you rehearsed.
2. Stand with confident posture.
3. Deliver your brilliant opening.
4. Realize you are a hit with the audience.
5. Breathe.
6. Spontaneously interject a humorous observation related to your topic.
7. Make all your points without hesitation, "*um*s," "*like*s," or "*uh*s."

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115. Video: CC Licensed Student Example Speeches

These students volunteered to share their speeches with a Creative Commons license.

Drew Lawson demonstrating wakeboarding – CC BY

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Joanne Eller demonstrating how to make chocolate covered strawberries filled with Grand Marnier. – CC BY NC

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Heather Pederson demonstrating how to make Kimbap – CC BY NC ND

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PART XVI

APA AND MLA DOCUMENTATION AND FORMATTING

This Part is from *Writing for Success*, Chapter 13

116. Formatting a Research Paper

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the major components of a research paper written using American Psychological Association (APA) style.
2. Apply general APA style and formatting conventions in a research paper.

In this chapter, you will learn how to use APA style, the documentation and formatting style followed by the American Psychological Association, as well as MLA style, from the Modern Language Association. There are a few major formatting styles used in academic texts, including AMA, Chicago, and Turabian:

- AMA (American Medical Association) for medicine, health, and biological sciences
- APA (American Psychological Association) for education, psychology, and the social sciences
- Chicago—a common style used in everyday publications like magazines, newspapers, and books
- MLA (Modern Language Association) for English, literature, arts, and humanities
- Turabian—another common style designed for its universal application across all subjects and disciplines

While all the formatting and citation styles have their own use and applications, in this chapter we focus our attention on the two styles you are most likely to use in your academic studies: APA and MLA.

If you find that the rules of proper source documentation are difficult to keep straight, you are not alone. Writing a good research paper is, in and of itself, a major intellectual challenge. Having to follow detailed citation and formatting guidelines as well may seem like just one more task to add to an already-too-long list of requirements.

Following these guidelines, however, serves several important purposes. First, it signals to your readers that your paper should be taken seriously as a student's contribution to a given academic or professional field; it is the literary equivalent of wearing a tailored suit to a job interview. Second, it shows that you respect other people's work enough to give them proper credit for it. Finally, it helps your reader find additional materials if he or she wishes to learn more about your topic.

Furthermore, producing a letter-perfect APA-style paper need not be burdensome. Yes, it requires careful attention to detail. However, you can simplify the process if you keep these broad guidelines in mind:

- **Work ahead whenever you can.** Chapter 11 "Writing from Research: What Will I Learn?" includes tips for keeping track of your sources early in the research process, which will save time later on.
- **Get it right the first time.** Apply APA guidelines as you write, so you will not have much to correct during the editing stage. Again, putting in a little extra time early on can save time later.
- **Use the resources available to you.** In addition to the guidelines provided in this chapter, you may wish to consult the APA website at http://www.apa.org or the Purdue University Online Writing lab at http://owl.english.purdue.edu, which regularly updates its online style guidelines.

General Formatting Guidelines

This chapter provides detailed guidelines for using the citation and formatting conventions developed by the American Psychological Association, or APA. Writers in disciplines as diverse as astrophysics, biology, psychology, and education follow APA style. The major components of a paper written in APA style are listed in the following box.

These are the major components of an APA-style paper:

1. Title page
2. Abstract
3. Body, which includes the following:
    - Headings and, if necessary, subheadings to organize the content
    - In-text citations of research sources
4. References page

All these components must be saved in one document, not as separate documents.

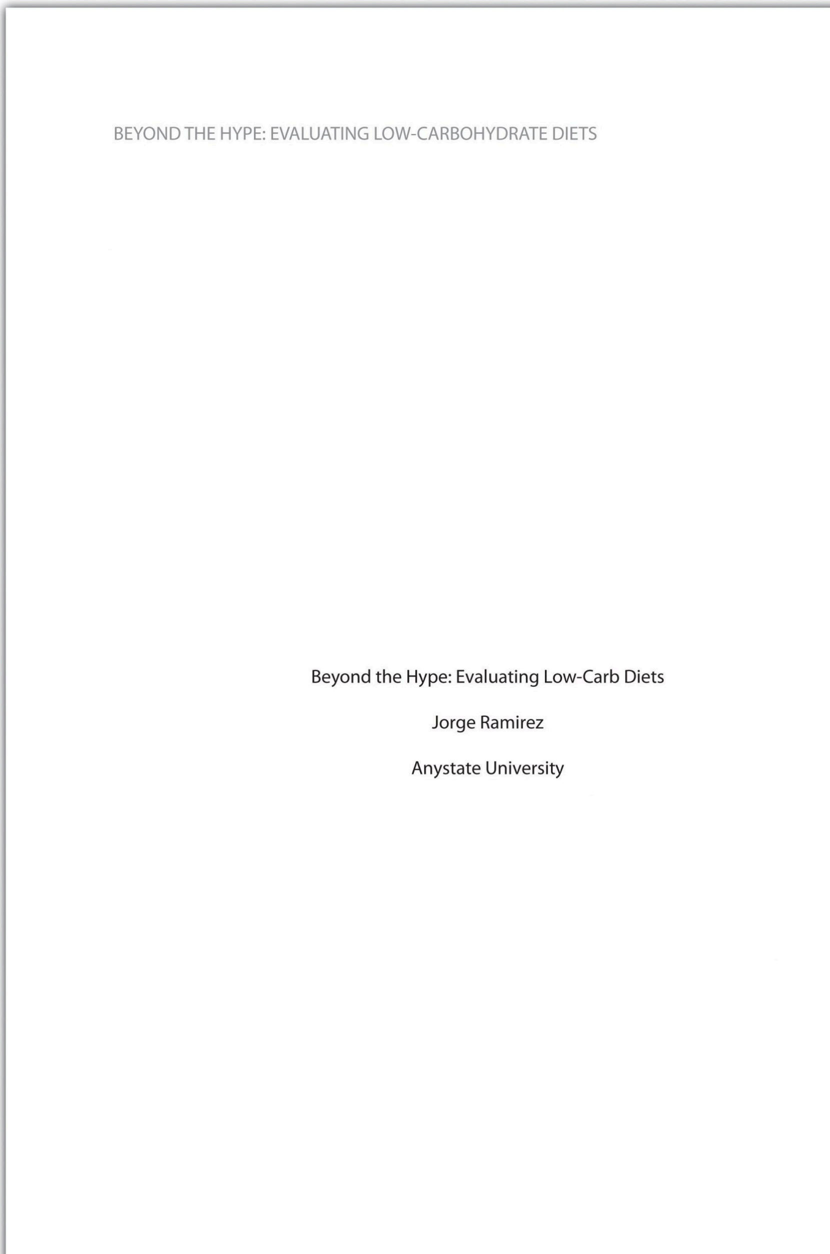
Title Page

The title page of your paper includes the following information:

- Title of the paper
- Author's name
- Name of the institution with which the author is affiliated

- Header at the top of the page with the paper title (in capital letters) and the page number (If the title is lengthy, you may use a shortened form of it in the header.)

List the first three elements in the order given in the previous list, centered about one third of the way down from the top of the page. Use the headers and footers tool of your word-processing program to add the header, with the title text at the left and the page number in the upper-right corner. Your title page should look like the following example.


BEYOND THE HYPE: EVALUATING LOW-CARBOHYDRATE DIETS

Beyond the Hype: Evaluating Low-Carb Diets

Jorge Ramirez

Anystate University

Abstract

The next page of your paper provides an abstract, or brief summary of your findings. An abstract does not need to be provided in every paper, but an abstract should be used in papers that include a hypothesis. A good abstract is concise—about one hundred fifty to two hundred fifty words—and is written in an objective, impersonal style. Your writing voice will not be as apparent here as in the body of your paper. When writing the abstract, take a just-the-facts approach, and summarize your research question and your findings in a few sentences.

In Chapter 12 "Writing a Research Paper", you read a paper written by a student named Jorge, who researched the effectiveness of low-carbohydrate diets. Read Jorge's abstract. Note how it sums up the major ideas in his paper without going into excessive detail.

BEYOND THE HYPE: EVALUATING LOW-CARBOHYDRATE DIETS

Abstract

Low-carbohydrate diets have become increasingly popular. Supporters claim they are nota more effective than other diets for weight loss and provide other health benefits such as lower blood pressure and improved cholesterol levels; however, some doctors believe thes diets carry potential long-term health risks. A review of the available research literature indicates that low-carbohydrate diets are highly effective for short-term weight loss but tha their long-term effectiveness is not significantly greater than other common diet plans. The long-term effects on cholesterol levels and blood pressure are unknown; research literatur suggests some potential for negative health outcomes associated with increased consump of saturated fat. This conclusion points to the importance of following a balanced, moderat diet appropriate for the individual, as well as the need for further research.

Exercise 1

Write an abstract summarizing your paper. Briefly introduce the topic, state your findings, and sum up what conclusions you can draw from your research. Use the word count feature of your word-processing program to make sure your abstract does not exceed one hundred fifty words.

Tip

Depending on your field of study, you may sometimes write research papers that present extensive primary research, such as your own experiment or survey. In your abstract, summarize your research question and your findings, and briefly indicate how your study relates to prior research in the field.

Margins, Pagination, and Headings

APA style requirements also address specific formatting concerns, such as margins, pagination, and heading styles, within the body of the paper. Review the following APA guidelines.

Use these general guidelines to format the paper:

1. Set the top, bottom, and side margins of your paper at 1 inch.
2. Use double-spaced text throughout your paper.
3. Use a standard font, such as Times New Roman or Arial, in a legible size (10- to 12-point).
4. Use continuous pagination throughout the paper, including the title page and the references section. Page numbers appear flush right within your header.
5. Section headings and subsection headings within the body of your paper use different types of formatting depending on the level of information you are presenting. Additional details from Jorge's paper are provided.

BEYOND THE HYPE: EVALUATING LOW-CARBOHYDRATE DIETS

Beyond the Hype: Evaluating Low-Carbohydrate Diets

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BEYOND THE HYPE: EVALUATING LOW-CARBOHYDRATE DIETS

Abstract

Low-carbohydrate diets have become increasingly popular. Supporters claim they are nota more effective than other diets for weight loss and provide other health benefits such as lower blood pressure and improved cholesterol levels; however, some doctors believe thes diets carry potential long-term health risks. A review of the available research literature indicates that low-carbohydrate diets are highly effective for short-term weight loss but tha their long-term effectiveness is not significantly greater than other common diet plans. The long-term effects on cholesterol levels and blood pressure are unknown; research literature suggests some potential for negative health outcomes associated with increased consump of saturated fat. This conclusion points to the importance of following a balanced, moderat diet appropriate for the individual, as well as the need for further research.

Exercise 2

Begin formatting the final draft of your paper according to APA guidelines. You may work with an existing document or set up a new document if you choose. Include the following:

- Your title page
- The abstract you created in Note 13.8 "Exercise 1"
- Correct headers and page numbers for your title page and abstract

Headings

APA style uses section headings to organize information, making it easy for the reader to follow the writer's train of thought and to know immediately what major topics are covered. Depending on the length and complexity of the paper, its major sections may also be divided into subsections, sub-subsections, and so on. These smaller sections, in turn, use different heading styles to indicate different levels of information. In essence, you are using headings to create a hierarchy of information.

The following heading styles used in APA formatting are listed in order of greatest to least importance:

1. Section headings use centered, boldface type. Headings use title case, with important words in the heading capitalized.
2. Subsection headings use left-aligned, boldface type. Headings

use title case.
3. The third level uses left-aligned, indented, boldface type. Headings use a capital letter only for the first word, and they end in a period.
4. The fourth level follows the same style used for the previous level, but the headings are boldfaced and italicized.
5. The fifth level follows the same style used for the previous level, but the headings are italicized and **not** boldfaced.

Visually, the hierarchy of information is organized as indicated in Table 13.1 "Section Headings".

Table 13.1 Section Headings

Level of Information	Text Example
Level 1	**Heart Disease**
Level 2	**Lifestyle Factors That Reduce Heart Disease Risk**
Level 3	**Exercising regularly.**
Level 4	***Aerobic exercise.***
Level 5	*Country line dancing.*

A college research paper may not use all the heading levels shown in Table 13.1 "Section Headings", but you are likely to encounter them in academic journal articles that use APA style. For a brief paper, you may find that level 1 headings suffice. Longer or more complex papers may need level 2 headings or other lower-level headings to organize information clearly. Use your outline to craft your major section headings and determine whether any subtopics are substantial enough to require additional levels of headings.

Exercise 3

Working with the document you developed in Note 13.11 "Exercise 2", begin setting up the heading structure of the final draft of your research paper according to APA guidelines. Include your title and at least two to three major section headings, and follow the formatting guidelines provided above. If your major sections should be broken into subsections, add those headings as well. Use your outline to help you.

Because Jorge used only level 1 headings, his Exercise 3 would look like the following:

Level of Information	Text Example
Level 1	**Purported Benefits of Low-Carbohydrate Diets**
Level 1	**Research on Low-Carbohydrate Diets and Weight Loss**
Level 1	**Other Long-Term Health Outcomes**
Level 1	**Conclusion**

Citation Guidelines

In-Text Citations

Throughout the body of your paper, include a citation whenever you quote or paraphrase material from your research sources. As you learned in Chapter 11 "Writing from Research: What Will I Learn?", the purpose of citations is twofold: to give credit to others for their ideas and to allow your reader to follow up and learn more about the topic if desired. Your in-text citations provide basic information about your source; each source you cite will have a longer entry in the references section that provides more detailed information.

In-text citations must provide the name of the author or authors and the year the source was published. (When a given source does not list an individual author, you may provide the source title or the name of the organization that published the material instead.) When directly quoting a source, it is also required that you include the page number where the quote appears in your citation.

This information may be included within the sentence or in a parenthetical reference at the end of the sentence, as in these examples.

> Epstein (2010) points out that "junk food cannot be considered addictive in the same way that we think of psychoactive drugs as addictive" (p. 137).

Here, the writer names the source author when introducing the quote and provides the publication date in parentheses after the author's name. The page number appears in parentheses **after** the closing quotation marks and **before** the period that ends the sentence.

> Addiction researchers caution that "junk food cannot be considered addictive in the same way that we think of psychoactive drugs as addictive" (Epstein, 2010, p. 137).

Here, the writer provides a parenthetical citation at the end of the sentence that includes the author's name, the year of publication, and the page number separated by commas. Again, the parenthetical citation is placed **after** the closing quotation marks and **before** the period at the end of the sentence.

> As noted in the book *Junk Food, Junk Science* (Epstein, 2010, p. 137), "junk food cannot be considered addictive in the same way that we think of psychoactive drugs as addictive."

Here, the writer chose to mention the source title in the sentence (an optional piece of information to include) and followed the title with a parenthetical citation. Note that the parenthetical citation is placed **before** the comma that signals the end of the introductory phrase.

> David Epstein's book *Junk Food, Junk Science* (2010) pointed out that "junk food cannot be considered addictive

> in the same way that we think of psychoactive drugs as addictive" (p. 137).

Another variation is to introduce the author and the source title in your sentence and include the publication date and page number in parentheses within the sentence or at the end of the sentence. As long as you have included the essential information, you can choose the option that works best for that particular sentence and source.

Citing a book with a single author is usually a straightforward task. Of course, your research may require that you cite many other types of sources, such as books or articles with more than one author or sources with no individual author listed. You may also need to cite sources available in both print and online and nonprint sources, such as websites and personal interviews. Chapter 13 "APA and MLA Documentation and Formatting", Section 13.2 "Citing and Referencing Techniques" and Section 13.3 "Creating a References Section" provide extensive guidelines for citing a variety of source types.

Writing at Work

APA is just one of several different styles with its own guidelines for documentation, formatting, and language usage. Depending on your field of interest, you may be exposed to additional styles, such as the following:

- **MLA style.** Determined by the Modern Languages Association and used for papers in literature, languages, and other disciplines in the humanities.
- **Chicago style.** Outlined in the *Chicago Manual of Style* and sometimes used for papers in the humanities and the sciences; many professional organizations use this style for publications as well.
- **Associated Press (AP) style.** Used by professional journalists.

References List

The brief citations included in the body of your paper correspond to the more detailed citations provided at the end of the paper in the references section. In-text citations provide basic information—the author's name, the publication date, and the page number if necessary—while the references section provides more extensive bibliographical information. Again, this information allows your reader to follow up on the sources you cited and do additional reading about the topic if desired.

The specific format of entries in the list of references varies slightly for different source types, but the entries generally include the following information:

- The name(s) of the author(s) or institution that wrote the source
- The year of publication and, where applicable, the exact date of publication
- The full title of the source
- For books, the city of publication
- For articles or essays, the name of the periodical or book in which the article or essay appears
- For magazine and journal articles, the volume number, issue number, and pages where the article appears
- For sources on the web, the URL where the source is located

The references page is double spaced and lists entries in alphabetical order by the author's last name. If an entry continues for more than one line, the second line and each subsequent line are indented five spaces. Review the following example. (Chapter 13 "APA and MLA Documentation and Formatting", Section 13.3 "Creating a References Section" provides extensive guidelines for formatting reference entries for different types of sources.)

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issue/id/34757

Tip

In APA style, book and article titles are formatted in sentence case, not title case. Sentence case means that only the first word is capitalized, along with any proper nouns.

Key Takeaways

- Following proper citation and formatting guidelines helps writers ensure that their work will be taken seriously, give proper credit to other authors for their work, and provide valuable information to readers.
- Working ahead and taking care to cite sources correctly the first time are ways writers can save time during the editing stage of writing a research paper.
- APA papers usually include an abstract that concisely summarizes the paper.

- APA papers use a specific headings structure to provide a clear hierarchy of information.
- In APA papers, in-text citations usually include the name(s) of the author(s) and the year of publication.
- In-text citations correspond to entries in the references section, which provide detailed bibliographical information about a source.

117. Citing and Referencing Techniques for APA Style

Learning Objective

1. Apply American Psychological Association (APA) style formatting guidelines for citations.

This section covers the nitty-gritty details of in-text citations for APA Style. You will learn how to format citations for different types of source materials, whether you are citing brief quotations, paraphrasing ideas, or quoting longer passages. You will also learn techniques you can use to introduce quoted and paraphrased material effectively. Keep this section handy as a reference to consult while writing the body of your paper.

Formatting Cited Material: The Basics

As noted in previous sections of this book, in-text citations usually provide the name of the author(s) and the year the source was published. For direct quotations, the page number must also be included. Use past-tense verbs when introducing a quote—"Smith found…" and not "Smith finds…."

Formatting Brief Quotations

For brief quotations—fewer than forty words—use quotation marks to indicate where the quoted material begins and ends, and cite the name of the author(s), the year of publication, and the page number where the quotation appears in your source. Remember to include commas to separate elements within the parenthetical citation. Also, avoid redundancy. If you name the author(s) in your sentence, do not repeat the name(s) in your parenthetical citation. Review following the examples of different ways to cite direct quotations.

> Chang (2008) emphasized that "engaging in weight-bearing exercise consistently is one of the single best things women can do to maintain good health" (p. 49).

The author's name can be included in the body of the sentence or in the parenthetical citation. Note that when a parenthetical citation appears at the end of the sentence, it comes **after** the closing quotation marks and **before** the period. The elements within parentheses are separated by commas.

> *Weight Training for Women* (Chang, 2008) claimed that "engaging in weight-bearing exercise consistently is one of the single best things women can do to maintain good health" (p. 49).

Weight Training for Women claimed that "engaging in weight-bearing exercise consistently is one of the single best things women can do to maintain good health" (Chang, 2008, p. 49).

Including the title of a source is optional.

In Chang's 2008 text *Weight Training for Women*, she asserts, "Engaging in weight-bearing exercise is one of the single best things women can do to maintain good health" (p. 49).

The author's name, the date, and the title may appear in the body of the text. Include the page number in the parenthetical citation. Also, notice the use of the verb *asserts* to introduce the direct quotation.

"Engaging in weight-bearing exercise," Chang asserts, "is one of the single best things women can do to maintain good health" (2008, p. 49).

You may begin a sentence with the direct quotation and add the author's name and a strong verb before continuing the quotation.

Formatting Paraphrased and Summarized Material

When you paraphrase or summarize ideas from a source, you follow the same guidelines previously provided, except that you are not required to provide the page number where the ideas are located. If you are summing up the main findings of a research article, simply providing the author's name and publication year may suffice, but if you are paraphrasing a more specific idea, consider including the page number.

Read the following examples.

> Chang (2008) pointed out that weight-bearing exercise has many potential benefits for women.

Here, the writer is summarizing a major idea that recurs throughout the source material. No page reference is needed.

> Chang (2008) found that weight-bearing exercise could help women maintain or even increase bone density through middle age and beyond, reducing the likelihood that they will develop osteoporosis in later life (p. 86).

Although the writer is not directly quoting the source, this passage paraphrases a specific detail, so the writer chose to include the page number where the information is located.

Tip

Although APA style guidelines do not require writers to provide page numbers for material that is not directly quoted, your instructor may wish you to do so when possible.

Check with your instructor about his or her preferences.

Formatting Longer Quotations

When you quote a longer passage from a source—forty words or more—use a different format to set off the quoted material. Instead of using quotation marks, create a block quotation by starting the quotation on a new line and indented five spaces from the margin. Note that in this case, the parenthetical citation comes **after** the period that ends the sentence. Here is an example:

In recent years, many writers within the fitness industry have emphasized the ways in which women can benefit from weight-bearing exercise, such as weightlifting, karate, dancing, stair climbing, hiking, and jogging. Chang (2008) found that engaging in weight-bearing exercise regularly significantly reduces women's risk of developing osteoporosis. Additionally, these exercises help women maintain muscle mass and overall strength, and many common forms of weight-bearing exercise, such as brisk walking or stair climbing, also provide noticeable cardiovascular benefits. (p. 93)

Exercise 1

Review the places in your paper where you cited, quoted, and paraphrased material from a source with a single author. Edit your citations to ensure that

- each citation includes the author's name, the date of publication, and, where appropriate, a page reference;
- parenthetical citations are correctly formatted;
- longer quotations use the block-quotation format.

If you are quoting a passage that continues into a second paragraph, indent five spaces again in the first line of the second paragraph. Here is an example:

In recent years, many writers within the fitness industry have emphasized the ways in which women can benefit from weight-bearing exercise, such as weightlifting, karate, dancing, stair climbing, hiking, and jogging. Chang (2008) found that engaging in weight-bearing exercise regularly significantly reduces women's risk of developing osteoporosis. Additionally, these exercises help women maintain muscle mass and overall strength, and many common forms of weight-bearing exercise, such as brisk walking or stair climbing, also provide noticeable cardiovascular benefits.

It is important to note that swimming cannot be considered a weight-bearing exercise, since the water supports and cushions the swimmer. That doesn't mean swimming isn't great exercise, but it should be considered one part of an integrated fitness program. (p. 93)

Tip

Be wary of quoting from sources at length. Remember, your ideas should drive the paper, and quotations should be used to support and enhance your points. Make sure any lengthy quotations that you include serve a clear purpose. Generally, no more than 10–15 percent of a paper should consist of quoted material.

Introducing Cited Material Effectively

Including an introductory phrase in your text, such as “Jackson wrote” or “Copeland found,” often helps you integrate source material smoothly. This citation technique also helps convey that you are actively engaged with your source material. Unfortunately, during the process of writing your research paper, it is easy to fall into a rut and use the same few dull verbs repeatedly, such as “Jones said,” “Smith stated,” and so on.

Punch up your writing by using strong verbs that help your reader understand how the source material presents ideas. There is a world of difference between an author who “suggests” and one who “claims,” one who “questions” and one who “criticizes.” You do not need to consult your thesaurus every time you cite a source, but do think about which verbs will accurately represent the ideas and make your writing more engaging. The following chart shows some possibilities.

Strong Verbs for Introducing Cited Material		
ask	suggest	question
explain	assert	claim
recommend	compare	contrast
propose	hypothesize	believe
insist	argue	find
determine	measure	assess
evaluate	conclude	study
warn	point out	sum up

Exercise 2

Review the citations in your paper once again. This time, look for places where you introduced source material using a signal phrase in your sentence.

1. Highlight the verbs used in your signal phrases, and make note of any that seem to be overused throughout the paper.
2. Identify at least three places where a stronger verb could be used.
3. Make the edits to your draft.

Writing at Work

It is important to accurately represent a colleague's ideas or communications in the workplace. When writing professional or academic papers, be mindful of how the words you use to describe someone's tone or ideas carry certain connotations. Do not say a source *argues* a particular point unless an argument is, in fact, presented. Use lively language, but avoid language that is emotionally charged. Doing so will ensure you have represented your colleague's words in an authentic and accurate way.

Formatting In-Text Citations for Other Source Types

These sections discuss the correct format for various types of in-text citations. Read them through quickly to get a sense of what is covered, and then refer to them again as needed.

Print Sources

This section covers books, articles, and other print sources with one or more authors.

A Work by One Author

For a print work with one author, follow the guidelines provided in Chapter 13 "APA and MLA Documentation and Formatting", Section 13.1 "Formatting a Research Paper". Always include the author's name and year of publication. Include a page reference whenever you quote a source directly. (See also the guidelines presented earlier in this chapter about when to include a page reference for paraphrased material.)

> Chang (2008) emphasized that "engaging in weight-bearing exercise consistently is one of the single best things women can do to maintain good health" (p. 49).

> Chang (2008) pointed out that weight-bearing exercise has many potential benefits for women.

Two or More Works by the Same Author

At times, your research may include multiple works by the same author. If the works were published in different years, a standard in-text citation will serve to distinguish them. If you are citing multiple works by the same author published in the same year, include a lowercase letter immediately after the year. Rank the sources in the order they appear in your references section. The source listed first includes an *a* after the year, the source listed second includes a *b*, and so on.

Rodriguez (2009a) criticized the nutrition-supplement industry for making unsubstantiated and sometimes misleading claims about the benefits of taking supplements. Additionally, he warned that consumers frequently do not realize the potential harmful effects of some popular supplements (Rodriguez, 2009b).

Tip

If you have not yet created your references section, you may not be sure which source will appear first. See Chapter 13 "APA and MLA Documentation and Formatting", Section 13.3 "Creating a References Section" for guidelines—or assign each source a temporary code and highlight the in-text citations so you remember to double-check them later on.

Works by Authors with the Same Last Name

If you are citing works by different authors with the same last name, include each author's initials in your citation, whether you mention them in the text or in parentheses. Do so even if the publication years are different.

J. S. Williams (2007) believes nutritional supplements can be a useful part of some diet and fitness regimens. C. D.

Williams (2008), however, believes these supplements are overrated.

According to two leading researchers, the rate of childhood obesity exceeds the rate of adult obesity (K. Connelley, 2010; O. Connelley, 2010).

Studies from both A. Wright (2007) and C. A. Wright (2008) confirm the benefits of diet and exercise on weight loss.

A Work by Two Authors

When two authors are listed for a given work, include both authors' names each time you cite the work. If you are citing their names in parentheses, use an ampersand (&) between them. (Use the word *and*, however, if the names appear in your sentence.)

As Garrison and Gould (2010) pointed out, "It is never too late to quit smoking. The health risks associated with this habit begin to decrease soon after a smoker quits" (p. 101).

As doctors continue to point out, "It is never too late to quit smoking. The health risks associated with this habit begin to decrease soon after a smoker quits" (Garrison & Gould, 2010, p. 101).

A Work by Three to Five Authors

If the work you are citing has three to five authors, list all the authors' names the first time you cite the source. In subsequent citations, use the first author's name followed by the abbreviation et al. (*Et al.* is short for *et alia*, the Latin phrase for "and others.")

Henderson, Davidian, and Degler (2010) surveyed 350 smokers aged 18 to 30.

One survey, conducted among 350 smokers aged 18 to 30, included a detailed questionnaire about participants' motivations for smoking (Henderson, Davidian, & Degler, 2010).

Note that these examples follow the same ampersand conventions as sources with two authors. Again, use the ampersand only when listing authors' names in parentheses.

As Henderson et al. (2010) found, some young people, particularly young women, use smoking as a means of appetite suppression.

Disturbingly, some young women use smoking as a means of appetite suppression (Henderson et al., 2010).

Note how the phrase *et al.* is punctuated. No period comes after *et*, but *al.* gets a period because it is an abbreviation for a longer Latin word. In parenthetical references, include a comma after *et al.* but not before. Remember this rule by mentally translating the citation to English: "Henderson and others, 2010."

A Work by Six or More Authors

If the work you are citing has six or more authors, list only the first author's name, followed by *et al.*, in your in-text citations. The other authors' names will be listed in your references section.

Researchers have found that outreach work with young people has helped reduce tobacco use in some communities (Costello et al., 2007).

A Work Authored by an Organization

When citing a work that has no individual author(s) but is published by an organization, use the organization's name in place of the author's name. Lengthy organization names with well-known abbreviations can be abbreviated. In your first citation, use the full name, followed by the abbreviation in square brackets. Subsequent citations may use the abbreviation only.

It is possible for a patient to have a small stroke without even realizing it (American Heart Association [AHA], 2010).

Another cause for concern is that even if patients realize that they have had a stroke and need medical attention, they may not know which nearby facilities are best equipped to treat them (AHA, 2010).

Exercise 3

1. Review the places in your paper where you cited material from a source with multiple authors or with an organization as the author. Edit your citations to ensure that each citation follows APA guidelines for the inclusion of the authors' names, the use of

ampersands and *et al.*, the date of publication, and, where appropriate, a page reference.

2. Mark any additional citations within your paper that you are not sure how to format based on the guidelines provided so far. You will revisit these citations after reading the next few sections.

A Work with No Listed Author

If no author is listed and the source cannot be attributed to an organization, use the title in place of the author's name. You may use the full title in your sentence or use the first few words—enough to convey the key ideas—in a parenthetical reference. Follow standard conventions for using italics or quotations marks with titles:

- Use italics for titles of books or reports.
- Use quotation marks for titles of articles or chapters.

"Living With Diabetes: Managing Your Health" (2009) recommends regular exercise for patients with diabetes.

Regular exercise can benefit patients with diabetes ("Living with Diabetes," 2009).

Rosenhan (1973) had mentally healthy study participants claim to be experiencing hallucinations so they would be admitted to psychiatric hospitals.

A Work Cited within Another Work

To cite a source that is referred to within another secondary source, name the first source in your sentence. Then, in parentheses, use the phrase *as cited in* and the name of the second source author.

Rosenhan's study "On Being Sane in Insane Places" (as cited in Spitzer, 1975) found that psychiatrists diagnosed schizophrenia in people who claimed to be experiencing hallucinations and sought treatment—even though these patients were, in fact, imposters.

Two or More Works Cited in One Reference

At times, you may provide more than one citation in a parenthetical reference, such as when you are discussing related works or studies with similar results. List the citations in the same order they appear in your references section, and separate the citations with a semicolon.

Some researchers have found serious flaws in the way Rosenhan's study was conducted (Dawes, 2001; Spitzer, 1975).

Both of these researchers authored works that support the point being made in this sentence, so it makes sense to include both in the same citation.

A Famous Text Published in Multiple Editions

In some cases, you may need to cite an extremely well-known work that has been repeatedly republished or translated. Many works of literature and sacred texts, as well as some classic nonfiction texts, fall into this category. For these works, the original date of publication may be unavailable. If so, include the year of publication or translation for your edition. Refer to specific parts or chapters if you need to cite a specific section. Discuss with your instructor whether he or she would like you to cite page numbers in this particular instance.

In *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, Freud explains that the "manifest content" of a dream—what literally takes place—is separate from its "latent content," or hidden meaning (trans. 1965, lecture XXIX).

Here, the student is citing a classic work of psychology, originally written in German and later translated to English. Since the book is a collection of Freud's lectures, the student cites the lecture number rather than a page number.

An Introduction, Foreword, Preface, or Afterword

To cite an introduction, foreword, preface, or afterword, cite the author of the material and the year, following the same format used for other print materials.

Electronic Sources

Whenever possible, cite electronic sources as you would print sources, using the author, the date, and where appropriate, a page number. For some types of electronic sources—for instance, many online articles—this information is easily available. Other times, however, you will need to vary the format to reflect the differences in online media.

Online Sources without Page Numbers

If an online source has no page numbers but you want to refer to a specific portion of the source, try to locate other information you can use to direct your reader to the information cited. Some websites number paragraphs within published articles; if so, include the paragraph number in your citation. Precede the paragraph number with the abbreviation for the word *paragraph* and the number of the paragraph (e.g., para. 4).

> As researchers have explained, "Incorporating fresh fruits and vegetables into one's diet can be a challenge for residents of areas where there are few or no easily accessible supermarkets" (Smith & Jones, 2006, para. 4).

Even if a source does not have numbered paragraphs, it is likely to have headings that organize the content. In your citation, name the section where your cited information appears, followed by a paragraph number.

> The American Lung Association (2010) noted, "After smoking, radon exposure is the second most common cause of lung cancer" (What Causes Lung Cancer? section, para. 2).

This student cited the appropriate section heading within the website and then counted to find the specific paragraph where the cited information was located.

If an online source has no listed author and no date, use the source title and the abbreviation *n.d.* in your parenthetical reference.

> It has been suggested that electromagnetic radiation from cellular telephones may pose a risk for developing certain cancers ("Cell Phones and Cancer," n.d.).

Personal Communication

For personal communications, such as interviews, letters, and e-mails, cite the name of the person involved, clarify that the material is from a personal communication, and provide the specific date the communication took place. Note that while in-text citations correspond to entries in the references section, personal communications are an exception to this rule. They are cited only in the body text of your paper.

J. H. Yardley, M.D., believes that available information on the relationship between cell phone use and cancer is inconclusive (personal communication, May 1, 2009).

Writing at Work

At work, you may sometimes share information resources with your colleagues by photocopying an interesting article or forwarding the URL of a useful website. Your goal in these situations and in formal research citations is the same. The goal is to provide enough information to help your professional peers locate and follow up on potentially useful information. Provide as much specific information as possible to achieve that goal, and consult with your professor as to what specific style he or she may prefer.

Exercise 4

Revisit the problem citations you identified in Note 13.55 "Exercise 3"—for instance, sources with no listed author or other oddities. Review the guidelines provided in this section and edit your citations for these kinds of sources according to APA guidelines.

Key Takeaways

- In APA papers, in-text citations include the name of the author(s) and the year of publication whenever possible.
- Page numbers are always included when citing quotations. It is optional to include page numbers when citing paraphrased material; however, this should be done when citing a specific portion of a work.

- When citing online sources, provide the same information used for print sources if it is available.
- When a source does not provide information that usually appears in a citation, in-text citations should provide readers with alternative information that would help them locate the source material. This may include the title of the source, section headings and paragraph numbers for websites, and so forth.
- When writing a paper, discuss with your professor what particular standards he or she would like you to follow.

118. Creating a References Section for APA

Learning Objective

1. Apply American Psychological Association (APA) style and formatting guidelines for a references section.

This section provides detailed information about how to create the references section of your paper. You will review basic formatting guidelines and learn how to format bibliographical entries for various types of sources. Like the previous chapter, this is meant to be used as a reference tool while you write.

Formatting the References Section: The Basics

At this stage in the writing process, you may already have begun setting up your references section. This section may consist of a single page for a brief research paper or may extend for many pages in professional journal articles. As you create this section of your paper, follow the guidelines provided here.

Formatting the References Section

To set up your references section, use the insert page break feature of your word-processing program to begin a new page. Note that the header and margins will be the same as in the body of your paper, and pagination continues from the body of your paper. (In other words, if you set up the body of your paper correctly, the correct header and page number should appear automatically in your references section.) See additional guidelines below.

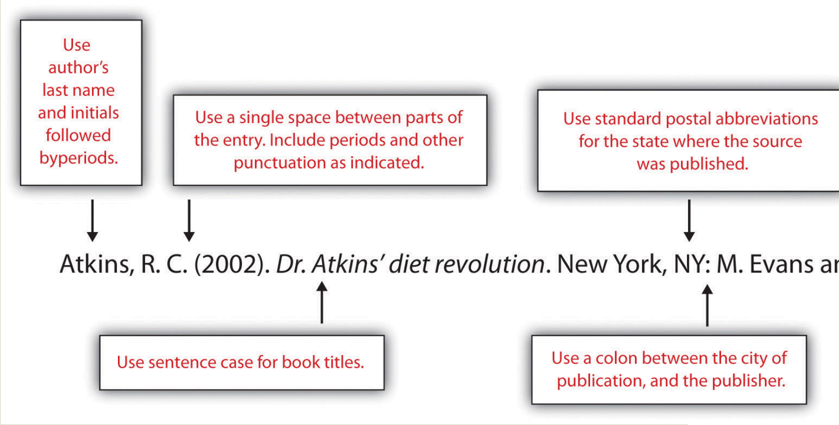
Formatting Reference Entries

Reference entries should include the following information:

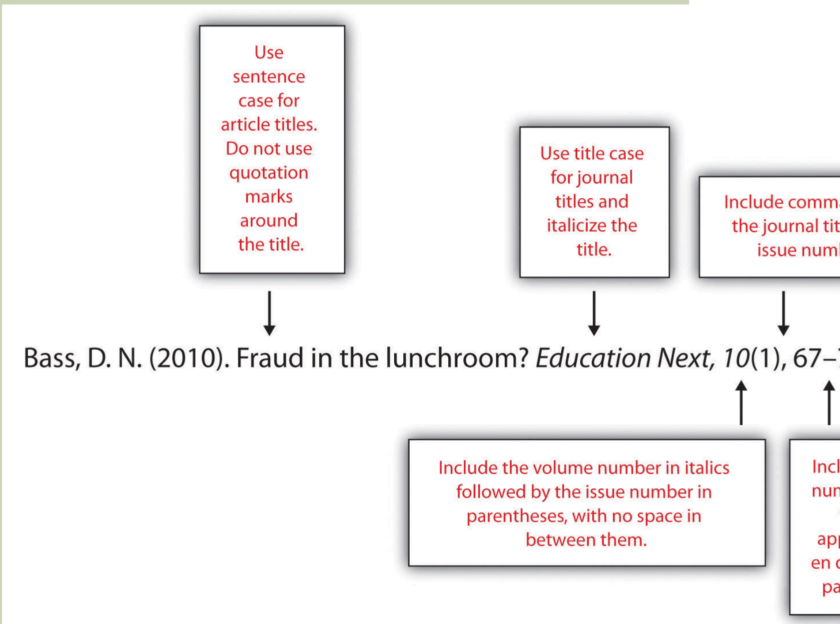
- The name of the author(s)
- The year of publication and, where applicable, the exact date of publication
- The full title of the source
- For books, the city of publication
- For articles or essays, the name of the periodical or book in which the article or essay appears
- For magazine and journal articles, the volume number, issue number, and pages where the article appears
- For sources on the web, the URL where the source is located

See the following examples for how to format a book or journal article with a single author.

Sample Book Entry



Sample Journal Article Entry



The following box provides general guidelines for formatting the reference page. For the remainder of this chapter, you will learn about how to format bibliographical entries for different source types, including multiauthor and electronic sources.

Formatting the References Section: APA General Guidelines

1. Include the heading *References*, centered at the top of the page. The heading should not be boldfaced, italicized, or underlined.
2. Use double-spaced type throughout the references section, as in the body of your paper.
3. Use hanging indentation for each entry. The first line should be flush with the left margin, while any lines that follow should be indented five spaces. Note that hanging indentation is the opposite of normal indenting rules for paragraphs.
4. List entries in alphabetical order by the author's last name. For a work with multiple authors, use the last name of the first author listed.
5. List authors' names using this format: Smith, J. C.
6. For a work with no individual author(s), use the name of

the organization that published the work or, if this is unavailable, the title of the work in place of the author's name.

7. For works with multiple authors, follow these guidelines:

- For works with up to seven authors, list the last name and initials for each author.
- For works with more than seven authors, list the first six names, followed by ellipses, and then the name of the last author listed.
- Use an ampersand before the name of the last author listed.

8. Use title case for journal titles. Capitalize all important words in the title.

9. Use sentence case for all other titles—books, articles, web pages, and other source titles. Capitalize the first word of the title. Do not capitalize any other words in the title except for the following:

- Proper nouns
- First word of a subtitle
- First word after a colon or dash

10. Use italics for book and journal titles. Do not use italics, underlining, or quotation marks for titles of shorter works, such as articles.

Exercise 1

Set up the first page of your references section and begin adding entries, following the APA formatting guidelines provided in this section.

1. If there are any simple entries that you can format completely using the general guidelines, do so at this time.
2. For entries you are unsure of how to format, type in as much information as you can, and highlight the entries so you can return to them later.

Formatting Reference Entries for Different Source Types

As is the case for in-text citations, formatting reference entries becomes more complicated when you are citing a source with multiple authors, citing various types of online media, or citing sources for which you must provide additional information beyond the basics listed in the general guidelines. The following guidelines show how to format reference entries for these different situations.

Print Sources: Books

For book-length sources and shorter works that appear in a book, follow the guidelines that best describes your source.

A Book by Two or More Authors

List the authors' names in the order they appear on the book's title page. Use an ampersand before the last author's name.

Campbell, D. T., & Stanley, J. C. (1963). *Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for research.* Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

An Edited Book with No Author

List the editor or editors' names in place of the author's name, followed by *Ed.* or *Eds.* in parentheses.

Myers, C., & Reamer, D. (Eds.). (2009). *2009 nutrition index.* San Francisco, CA: HealthSource, Inc.

An Edited Book with an Author

List the author's name first, followed by the title and the editor or editors. Note that when the editor is listed after the title, you list the initials before the last name.

Dickinson, E. (1959). *Selected poems & letters of Emily Dickinson*. R. N. Lin

Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

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Tip

The previous example shows the format used for an edited book with one author—for instance, a collection of a famous person's letters that has been edited. This type of source is different from an anthology, which is a collection of articles or essays by different authors. For citing works in anthologies, see the guidelines later in this section.

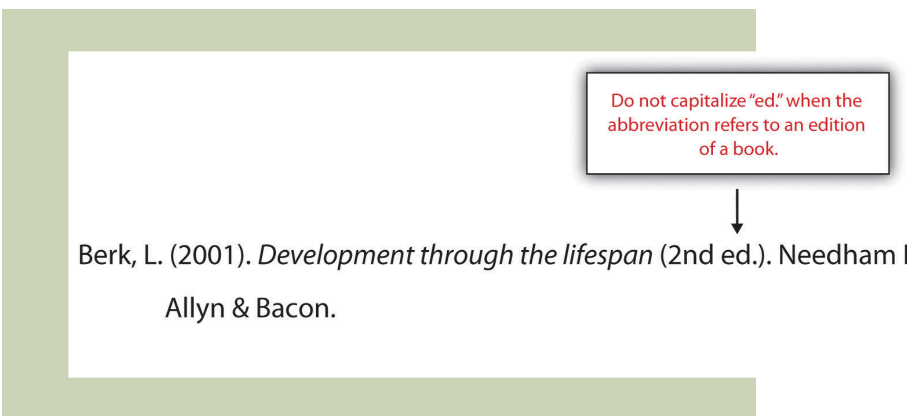
A Translated Book

Include the translator's name after the title, and at the end of the citation, list the date the original work was published. Note that for the translator's name, you list the initials before the last name.

Freud, S. (1965). *New introductory lectures on psycho-analysis* (J. Strachey, Trans.). New York, NY: W. W. Norton. (Original work published 1933).

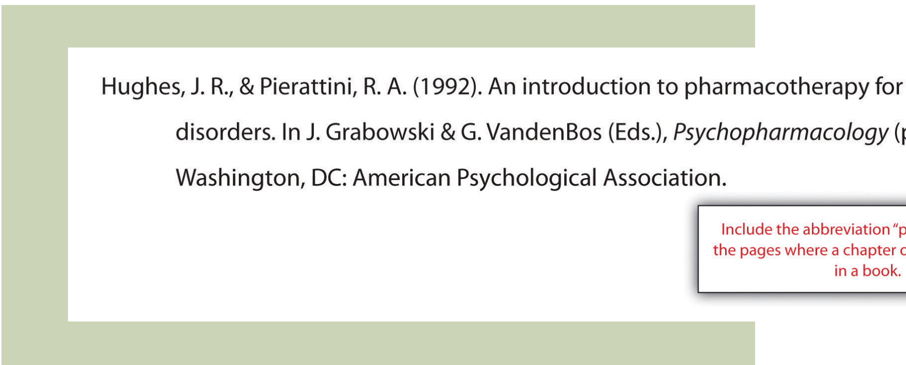
A Book Published in Multiple Editions

If you are using any edition other than the first edition, include the edition number in parentheses after the title.



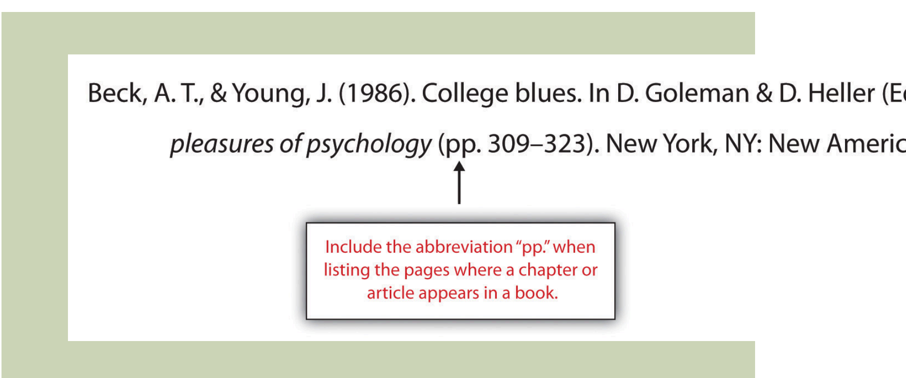
A Chapter in an Edited Book

List the name of the author(s) who wrote the chapter, followed by the chapter title. Then list the names of the book editor(s) and the title of the book, followed by the page numbers for the chapter and the usual information about the book's publisher.



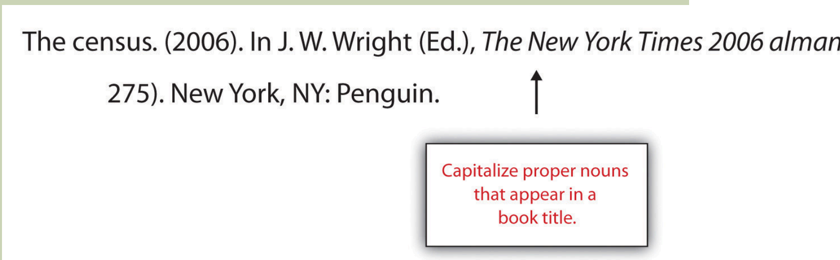
A Work That Appears in an Anthology

Follow the same process you would use to cite a book chapter, substituting the article or essay title for the chapter title.



An Article in a Reference Book

List the author's name if available; if no author is listed, provide the title of the entry where the author's name would normally be listed. If the book lists the name of the editor(s), include it in your citation. Indicate the volume number (if applicable) and page numbers in parentheses after the article title.


The census. (2006). In J. W. Wright (Ed.), *The New York Times 2006 alman*

275). New York, NY: Penguin.

Two or More Books by the Same Author

List the entries in order of their publication year, beginning with the work published first.

Swedan, N. (2001). *Women's sports medicine and rehabilitation.* Gaithersburg, MD: Aspen Publishers.

Swedan, N. (2003). *The active woman's health and fitness handbook.* New York, NY: Perigee.

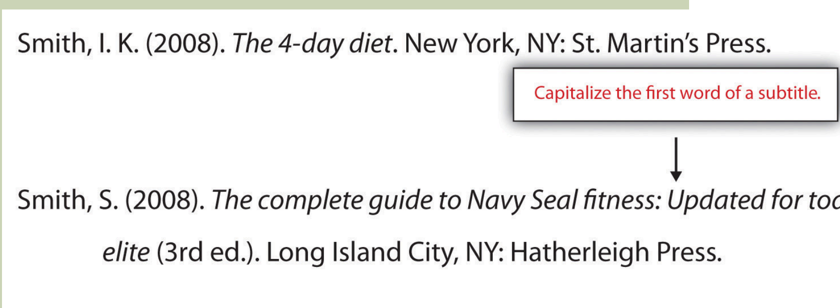
If two books have multiple authors, and the first author is the same but the others are different, alphabetize by the second author's last name (or the third or fourth, if necessary).

Carroll, D., & Aaronson, F. (2008). *Managing type II diabetes*. Chicago, IL: Southwick Press.

Carroll, D., & Zuckerman, N. (2008). *Gestational diabetes*. Chicago, IL: Southwick Press.

Books by Different Authors with the Same Last Name

Alphabetize entries by the authors' first initial.


Smith, I. K. (2008). *The 4-day diet*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

Capitalize the first word of a subtitle.

Smith, S. (2008). *The complete guide to Navy Seal fitness: Updated for toc*
elite (3rd ed.). Long Island City, NY: Hatherleigh Press.

A Book Authored by an Organization

Treat the organization name as you would an author's name. For the purposes of alphabetizing, ignore words like *The* in the organization's name. (That is, a book published by the American Heart Association would be listed with other entries whose authors' names begin with A.)

American Psychiatric Association. (1994). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders DSM-IV* (4th ed.). Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publishing.

A Book-Length Report

Format technical and research reports as you would format other book-length sources. If the organization that issued the report assigned it a number, include the number in parentheses after the title. (See also the guidelines provided for citing works produced by government agencies.)

Jameson, R., & Dewey, J. (2009). *Preliminary findings from an evaluation of the president's physical fitness program in Pleasantville school district.* Pleasantville, WA: Pleasantville Board of Education.

A Book Authored by a Government Agency

Treat these as you would a book published by a nongovernment organization, but be aware that these works may have an identification number listed. If so, include it in parentheses after the publication year.

U.S. Census Bureau. (2002). *The decennial censuses from 1790 to 2000* (Publication No. POL/02-MA). Washington, DC: US Government Printing Offices.

Exercise 2

Revisit the references section you began to compile in Note 13.73 "Exercise 1". Use the guidelines provided to format any entries for book-length print sources that you were unable to finish earlier.

Review how Jorge formatted these book-length print sources:

Atkins, R. C. (2002). *Dr. Atkins' diet revolution*. New York, NY: M. Evans and Company.

Agatson, A. (2003). *The South Beach diet*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Griffin.

Print Sources: Periodicals

An Article in a Scholarly Journal

Include the following information:

- Author or authors' names
- Publication year
- Article title (in sentence case, without quotation marks or italics)
- Journal title (in title case and in italics)
- Volume number (in italics)
- Issue number (in parentheses)
- Page number(s) where the article appears

DeMarco, R. F. (2010). Palliative care and African American women living with HIV. *Journal of Nursing Education*, *49*(5), 1–4.

An Article in a Journal Paginated by Volume

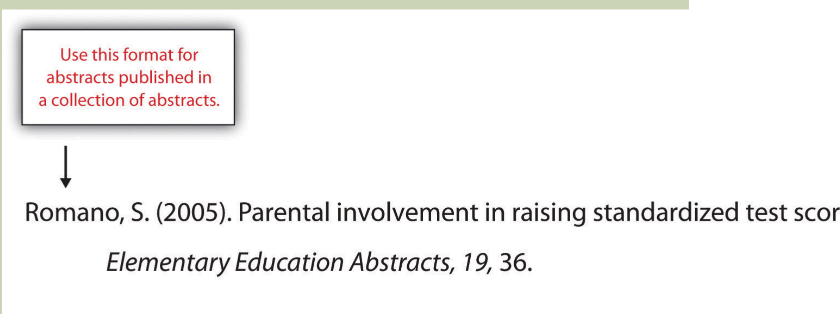
In these types of journals, page numbers for one volume continue across all the issues in that volume. For instance, the winter issue may begin with page 1, and in the spring issue that follows, the page numbers pick up where the previous issue left off. (If you have ever wondered why a print journal did not begin on page 1, or wondered why the page numbers of a journal extend into four digits, this is why.) Omit the issue number from your reference entry.

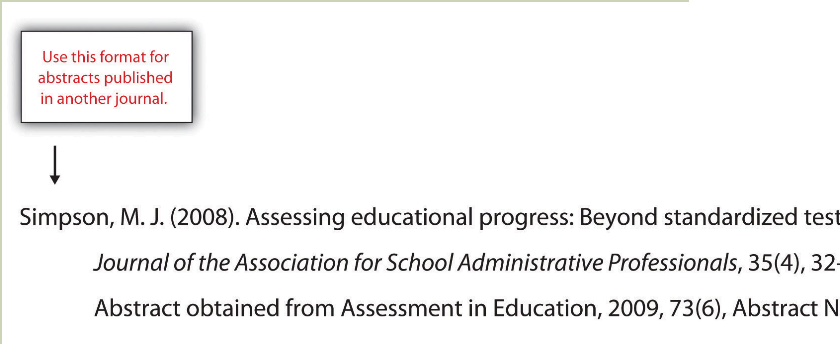
Wagner, J. (2009). Rethinking school lunches: A review of recent literature. *American School Nurses' Journal*, 47, 1123–1127.

An Abstract of a Scholarly Article

At times you may need to cite an abstract—the summary that appears at the beginning—of a published article. If you are citing the abstract only, and it was published separately from the article, provide the following information:

- Publication information for the article
- Information about where the abstract was published (for instance, another journal or a collection of abstracts)





A Journal Article with Two to Seven Authors

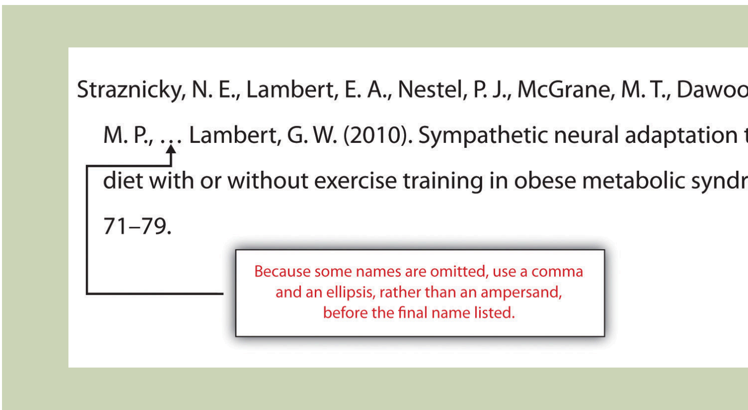
List all the authors' names in the order they appear in the article. Use an ampersand before the last name listed.

Barker, E. T., & Bornstein, M. H. (2010). Global self-esteem, appearance satisfaction, and self-reported dieting in early adolescence. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 30(2), 205–224.

Tremblay, M. S., Shields, M., Laviolette, M., Craig, C. L., Janssen, I., & Gorber, S. C. (2010). Fitness of Canadian children and youth: Results from the 2007–2009 Canadian Health Measures Survey. *Health Reports*, 21(1), 7–20.

A Journal Article with More Than Seven Authors

List the first six authors' names, followed by a comma, an ellipsis, and the name of the last author listed. The article in the following example has sixteen listed authors; the reference entry lists the first six authors and the sixteenth, omitting the seventh through the fifteenth.



Writing at Work

The idea of an eight-page article with sixteen authors may seem strange to you—especially if you are in the midst of writing a ten-page research paper on your own. More often than not, articles in scholarly journals list multiple authors. Sometimes, the authors actually did collaborate on writing and editing the published article. In other instances, some of the authors listed may have contributed to the research in some way while being only minimally involved in the process of writing the article. Whenever you collaborate with colleagues to produce a written product, follow your profession's conventions for giving everyone proper credit for their contribution.

A Magazine Article

After the publication year, list the issue date. Otherwise, treat these as you would journal articles. List the volume and issue number if both are available.

List the month after the year. For weekly magazines, list the full date, e.g. "March 8, 2010."

Marano, H. E. (2010, March/April). Keen cuisine: Dairy queen. *Psycho*

43(2), 58.

A Newspaper Article

Treat these as you would magazine and journal articles, with one important difference: precede the page number(s) with the abbreviation *p.* (for a single-page article) or *pp.* (for a multipage article). For articles whose pagination is not continuous, list all the pages included in the article. For example, an article that begins on page A1 and continues on pages A4 would have the page reference A1, A4. An article that begins on page A1 and continues on pages A4 and A5 would have the page reference A1, A4–A5.

Corwin, C. (2009, January 24). School board votes to remove soda machines f

schools. *Rockwood Gazette*, pp. A1–A2.

Include the section in your page reference.

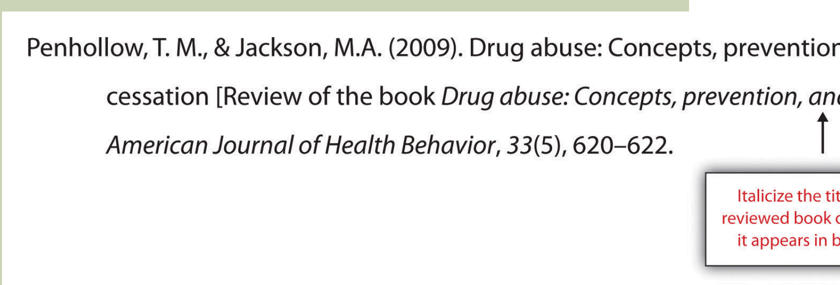
A Letter to the Editor

After the title, indicate in brackets that the work is a letter to the editor.

Jones, J. (2009, January 31). Food police in our schools [Letter to the editor]. *Rockwood Gazette*, p. A8.

A Review

After the title, indicate in brackets that the work is a review and state the name of the work being reviewed. (Note that even if the title of the review is the same as the title of the book being reviewed, as in the following example, you should treat it as an article title. Do not italicize it.)


Penhollow, T. M., & Jackson, M.A. (2009). Drug abuse: Concepts, preventior cessation [Review of the book *Drug abuse: Concepts, prevention, an* *American Journal of Health Behavior*, *33*(5), 620–622.

Exercise 3

Revisit the references section you began to compile in Note 13.73 "Exercise 1". Use the guidelines provided above to format any entries for periodicals and other shorter print sources that you were unable to finish earlier.

Electronic Sources

Citing Articles from Online Periodicals: URLs and Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs)

Whenever you cite online sources, it is important to provide the most up-to-date information available to help readers locate the source. In some cases, this means providing an article's URL, or web address. (The letters *URL* stand for uniform resource locator.) Always provide the most complete URL possible. Provide a link to the specific article used, rather than a link to the publication's homepage.

As you know, web addresses are not always stable. If a website is updated or reorganized, the article you accessed in April may move to a different location in May. The URL you provided may become a dead link. For this reason, many online periodicals, especially scholarly publications, now rely on DOIs rather than URLs to keep track of articles.

A DOI is a Digital Object Identifier—an identification code provided for some online documents, typically articles in scholarly journals. Like a URL, its purpose is to help readers locate an article. However, a DOI is more stable than a URL, so it makes sense to include it in your reference entry when possible. Follow these guidelines:

- If you are citing an online article with a DOI, list the DOI at the end of the reference entry.
- If the article appears in print as well as online, you do not need to provide the URL. However, include the words *Electronic version* after the title in brackets.
- In other respects, treat the article as you would a print article. Include the volume number and issue number if available. (Note, however, that these may not be available for some online periodicals).

An Article from an Online Periodical with a DOI

List the DOI if one is provided. There is no need to include the URL if you have listed the DOI.

> Bell, J. R. (2006). Low-carb beats low-fat diet for early losses but not long term. *OBGYN News*, *41*(12), 32. doi:10.1016/S0029-7437(06)71905-X

An Article from an Online Periodical with No DOI

List the URL. Include the volume and issue number for the periodical if this information is available. (For some online periodicals, it may not be.)

Note that if the article appears in a print version of the publication, you do not need to list the URL, but do indicate that you accessed the electronic version.

Robbins, K. (2010, March/April). Nature's bounty: A heady feast [Electronic version]. *Psychology Today*, 43(2), 58.

A Newspaper Article

Provide the URL of the article.

McNeil, D. G. (2010, May 3). Maternal health: A new study challenges benefits of vitamin A for women and babies. *The*

New York Times. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/04/health/04glob.html?ref=health

An Article Accessed through a Database

Cite these articles as you would normally cite a print article. Provide database information only if the article is difficult to locate.

Tip

APA style does not require writers to provide the item number or accession number for articles retrieved from databases. You may choose to do so if the article is difficult to locate or the database is an obscure one. Check with your professor to see if this is something he or she would like you to include.

An Abstract of an Article

Format these as you would an article citation, but add the word *Abstract* in brackets after the title.

Bradley, U., Spence, M., Courtney, C. H., McKinley, M. C., Ennis, C. N., McCance, D. R.…Hunter, S. J. (2009). Low-fat versus low-carbohydrate weight reduction diets: Effects on weight loss, insulin resistance, and cardiovascular risk: A randomized control trial [Abstract]. *Diabetes*, 58(12), 2741–2748. http://diabetes.diabetesjournals.org/content/early/2009/08/23/db00098.abstract

A Nonperiodical Web Document

The ways you cite different nonperiodical web documents may vary slightly from source to source, depending on the information that is available. In your citation, include as much of the following information as you can:

- Name of the author(s), whether an individual or organization
- Date of publication (Use *n.d.* if no date is available.)
- Title of the document
- Address where you retrieved the document

If the document consists of more than one web page within the site, link to the homepage or the entry page for the document.

American Heart Association. (2010). *Heart attack, stroke, and cardiac arrest warning signs*. Retrieved from http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=3053

An Entry from an Online Encyclopedia or Dictionary

Because these sources often do not include authors' names, you may list the title of the entry at the beginning of the citation. Provide the URL for the specific entry.

Addiction. (n.d.) In *Merriam-Webster's online dictionary*. Retrieved from http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/addiction

Data Sets

If you cite raw data compiled by an organization, such as statistical data, provide the URL where you retrieved the information. Provide the name of the organization that sponsors the site.

US Food and Drug Administration. (2009). N*ationwide evaluation of X-ray trends*: NEXT *surveys performed* [Data file]. Retrieved from http://www.fda.gov/Radiation-EmittingProducts/RadiationSafety/NationwideEvaluationofX- RayTrendsNEXT/ucm116508.htm

Graphic Data

When citing graphic data—such as maps, pie charts, bar graphs, and so on—include the name of the organization that compiled the information, along with the publication date. Briefly describe the contents in brackets. Provide the URL where you retrieved the information. (If the graphic is associated with a specific project or document, list it after your bracketed description of the contents.)

US Food and Drug Administration. (2009). [Pie charts showing the percentage breakdown of the FDA's budget for fiscal year 2005]. 2005 FDA *budget summary*. Retrieved from mhttp://www.fda.gov/AboutFDA/ReportsManualsForms/Reports/BudgetReports/2005FDABudgetSummary/ucm117231.htm

An Online Interview (Audio File or Transcript)

List the interviewer, interviewee, and date. After the title, include bracketed text describing the interview as an “Interview transcript” or “Interview audio file,” depending on the format of the interview you accessed. List the name of the website and the URL where you retrieved the information. Use the following format.

Davies, D. (Interviewer), & Pollan, M. (Interviewee). (2008). *Michael Pollan offers president food for thought* [Interview transcript]. Retrieved from National Public Radio website: http://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=100755362

An Electronic Book

Electronic books may include books available as text files online or audiobooks. If an electronic book is easily available in print, cite it as you would a print source. If it is unavailable in print (or extremely difficult to find), use the format in the example. (Use the words *Available from* in your citation if the book must be purchased or is not available directly.)

Chisholm, L. (n.d.). *Celtic tales*. Retrieved from http://www.childrenslibrary.org/icdl/BookReader?bookid=

chicelt_00150014&twoPage=false&route=text&size=0&fullscreen=false&pnum1=1&lang= English&ilang=English

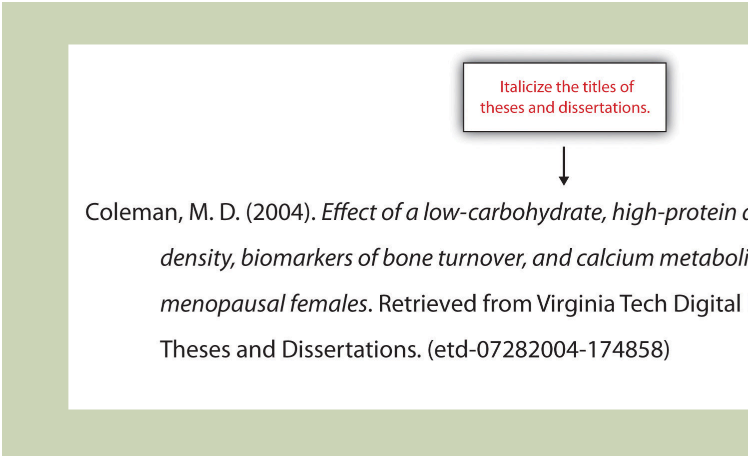
A Chapter from an Online Book or a Chapter or Section of a Web Document

These are treated similarly to their print counterparts with the addition of retrieval information. Include the chapter or section number in parentheses after the book title.

Hart, A. M. (1895). Restoratives—Coffee, cocoa, chocolate. In *Diet in sickness and in health* (VI). Retrieved from http://www.archive.org/details/dietinsicknessin00hartrich

A Dissertation or Thesis from a Database

Provide the author, date of publication, title, and retrieval information. If the work is numbered within the database, include the number in parentheses at the end of the citation.



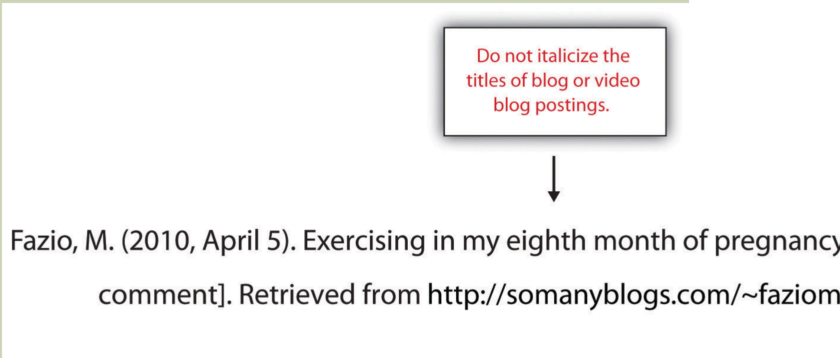
Computer Software

For commonly used office software and programming languages, it is not necessary to provide a citation. Cite software only when you are using a specialized program, such as the nutrition tracking software in the following example. If you download software from a website, provide the version and the year if available.

Internet Brands, Inc. (2009). FitDay PC (Version 2) [Software]. Available from http://www.fitday.com/Pc/PcHome.html?gcid=14

A Post on a Blog or Video Blog

Citation guidelines for these sources are similar to those used for discussion forum postings. Briefly describe the type of source in brackets after the title.



Writing at Work

Because the content may not be carefully reviewed for accuracy, discussion forums and blogs should not be relied upon as a major source of information. However, it may be appropriate to cite these sources for some types of research. You may also participate in discussion forums or comment on blogs that address topics of personal or professional interest. Always keep in mind that when you post, you are making your thoughts public—and in many cases, available through search engines. Make sure any posts that can easily be associated with your name are appropriately professional, because a potential employer could view them.

A Television or Radio Broadcast

Include the name of the producer or executive producer; the date, title, and type of broadcast; and the associated company and location.

West, Ty. (Executive producer). (2009, September 24). *PBS special report*: *Health care reform* [Television broadcast]. New York, NY, and Washington, DC: Public Broadcasting Service.

A Television or Radio Series or Episode

Include the producer and the type of series if you are citing an entire television or radio series.

Couture, D., Nabors, S., Pinkard, S., Robertson, N., & Smith, J. (Producers). (1979). *The Diane Rehm show* [Radio series]. Washington, DC: National Public Radio.

To cite a specific episode of a radio or television series, list the name of the writer or writers (if available), the date the episode aired, its title, and the type of series, along with general information about the series.

Bernanke, J., & Wade, C. (2010, January 10). Hummingbirds: Magic in the air [Television series episode]. In F. Kaufman (Executive producer), *Nature*. New York, NY: WNET.

A Motion Picture

Name the director or producer (or both), year of release, title, country of origin, and studio.

Spurlock, M. (Director/producer), Morley, J. (Executive producer), & Winters. H. M. (Executive producer). (2004). *Super size me*. United States: Kathbur Pictures in association with Studio on Hudson.

A Recording

Name the primary contributors and list their role. Include the recording medium in brackets after the title. Then list the location and the label.

Smith, L. W. (Speaker). (1999). *Meditation and relaxation* [CD]. New York, NY: Earth, Wind, & Sky Productions.

Székely, I. (Pianist), Budapest Symphony Orchestra (Performers), & Németh, G. (Conductor). (1988). *Chopin piano concertos no. 1 and 2* [CD]. Hong Kong: Naxos.

A Podcast

Provide as much information as possible about the writer, director, and producer; the date the podcast aired; its title; any organization or series with which it is associated; and where you retrieved the podcast.

Kelsey, A. R. (Writer), Garcia, J. (Director), & Kim, S. C. (Producer). (2010, May 7). Lies food labels tell us. *Savvy* *consumer podcasts* [Audio podcast]. Retrieved from http://www.savvyconsumer.org/podcasts/050710

Exercise 4

Revisit the references section you began to compile in Note 13.73 "Exercise 1".

1. Use the APA guidelines provided in this section to format any entries for electronic sources that you were unable to finish earlier.
2. If your sources include a form of media not covered in the APA guidelines here, consult with a writing tutor or review a print or online reference book. You may wish to visit the website of the American Psychological Association at http://www.apa.org or the Purdue University Online Writing lab at http://owl.english.purdue.edu, which regularly updates its online style guidelines.
3. Give your paper a final edit to check the references section.

Key Takeaways

- In APA papers, entries in the references section include as much of the following information as possible:
    - **Print sources.** Author(s), date of publication, title, publisher, page numbers (for shorter works), editors (if applicable), and periodical title (if applicable).
    - **Online sources (text-based).** Author(s), date of publication, title, publisher or sponsoring organization, and DOI or URL (if applicable).
    - **Electronic sources (non-text-based).** Provide details about the creator(s) of the work, title, associated company or series, and date the work was produced or broadcast. The specific details provided will vary depending on the medium and the information that is available.
    - **Electronic sources (text-based).** If an electronic source is also widely available in print form, it is sometimes unnecessary to provide details about how to access the electronic version. Check the guidelines for the specific source type.

119. Citing Sources in Modern Language Association (MLA) Style

JOEL GLADD

In academic essays, the most common reason why we use information from outside sources is to 1) provide important context or 2) bolster our own ideas with evidence. Evidence includes some of the following, in order of least convincing to most convincing:

- personal anecdotes
- expert testimony
- case studies
- statistical data
- facts derived from sources
- basic facts most people agree on

Notice that many of these forms derive from **outside sources**: expert testimony, case studies, and statistical data. Even personal anecdotes can be borrowed from outside sources, so most of our evidence is often derived from research.

There's a famous latin saying that expresses this phenomenon: *nanos giantum humeris insidentes*, or "standing on the shoulders of giants." According to the book *Strategic Source in the New Economy*, this metaphor can be traced to Bernard of Chartres in the twelfth century, but Isaac Newton made it popular after using it in 1676 (Keith et al 1).[1]

1. meta point: notice how I attributed this fancy saying to a

However, when using sources in essays geared towards an academic audience, writers are expected to 1) clearly signal *that* they're relying on other writers, and then 2) cite the proper information that allows the reader to locate the original source.

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce students to the conventions of citing information in MLA Style.

Review: The Purpose of In-Text Citations

There are two functions of in-text citations:

1. **In-text citations signal to the reader when an idea or piece of information from your essay is *not your own***, but rather derived from something you've come across in research (whether a text, video or audio clip). In-text citations tell the reader: *This is something I've taken from an outside source! It's not my original idea*. They protect you from plagiarism. Keep in mind *all* information from an outside source must be cited and not just direct quotations.
2. **In-text citations also tell the reader where they can locate the original source**. For example, in my quote above about "standing on the shoulders of giants," I included an in-text citation at the end, like this: (Keith, et al 1). That tells the reader this particular bit of information was from page 1 of the book, whose authors were Keith et al[2], and they can find out more

published book, and that source refers to the original source? I even included the page number in parentheses. That's precisely an example of "standing on the shoulders of giants"!

2. et al simple means "and others." Et al is used in in-text

> about how to locate the source by looking for the Keith, et al entry in the Works Cited page.

The second point is crucial. It's important to keep in mind that in-text citations always connect the reader to the Works Cited page, where all of the technical information about the source can be found. The main purpose of the in-text citation is simply point out *which* particular Works Cited item is relevant.

citations when there are more than two authors for the work.

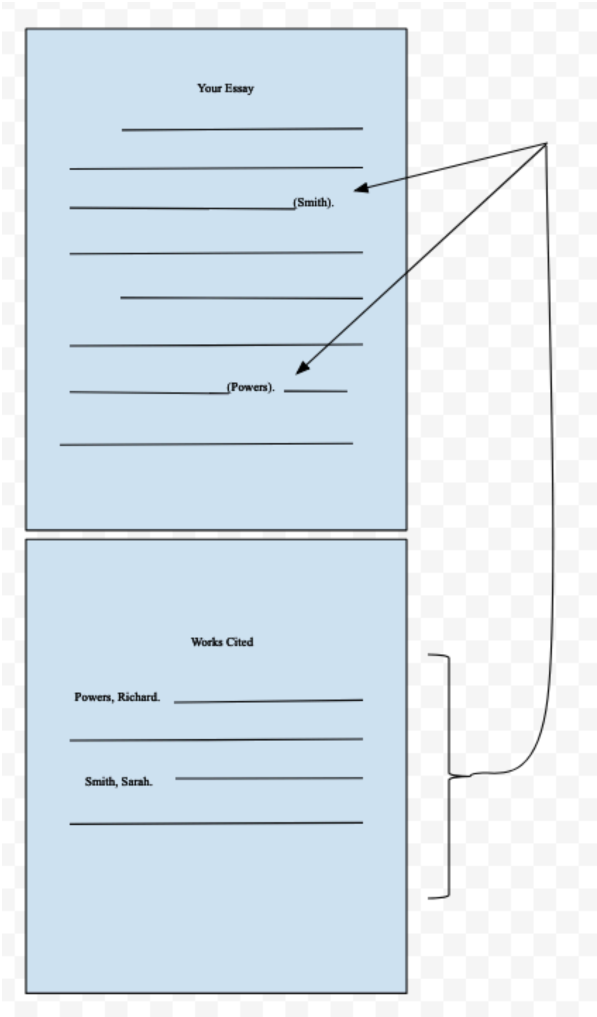


Image the illustrates the connection between in-text citations and a Works Cited page.

How to punctuate in-text citations

In the chapter, "Basics of Integration," we learned the basic rules of punctuation when including things like direct quotations. All of those rules still apply. However, whenever an in-text citation appears, the end quotation mark comes before the parenthetical citation and final punctuation comes after it.

Below is an example of passage that includes direct quotations and some summary:

> In parts of Alaska, some native trees are becoming entirely extinct (Williams 15). Recent research suggests this is due to "a fundamental shift in climate" (17).

Notice in the passage above how both the direct quotation and the summarized information are both cited? It's important to remember that any information—whether paraphrased, summarized, or quoted directly—needs to be cited properly.

What information goes inside in-text citations (MLA)?

This section is unique to MLA. For APA Style, refer to the previous chapters for what information to include.

Before jumping into MLA conventions, it might help to understand why fields have different styles at all. Most students eventually realize that there are some key differences between MLA vs. APA especially, but not many appreciate why these differences exist.

When creating in-text citations, MLA asks for the author + location (Smith 12), whereas APA asks for author + year of publication (Springer, 2018). Why?

This difference in citations shows how different fields appreciate textual artifacts in different ways. APA is typically used in the sciences, where experts emphasize the date something was published. More recent publications tend to have higher weight, because scientific fields believe strongly in the progress that comes with experimental studies.

MLA is used in the Humanities, where experts practice a lot of close reading and emphasize contextual information that surrounds evidence. This text-based emphasize prioritizes the location of the information, rather than the date. The assumption is that a typical Humanities reader will want to track down the precise place where a quote or piece of information is found, because close readers care a lot about context.

Most common MLA in-text citation: Author + Location

When citing a source in an MLA-formatted essay, the most common information to include is the author's last name and the location of the information (usually the page number). For online sources, the most common in-text citation is simply the author's last name.

> According to the book *String Theory*, modern physics has trouble combining general relativity with quantum mechanics (Powers 81).
>
> The Author is: Powers
>
> The location is: page 81

The in-text citation above includes a number because that particular source happens to have page numbers. But many online articles either don't have authors or obvious locations. Below offers a longer list of how to do MLA in-text citations. First, though, here are some key points:

- The most common in-text citation for print sources, academic articles, and reports is (Author + location), where the location is a page number. Example: (Powers 81).
- It's common for online articles to not have page numbers or stable locations. If there's no location, just include the last name of the author. Example: (Smith).
- If there's no author, include the title of the article. Example: ("Rising Rates of Caffeine Use Among U.S. Teens").

Sources that have already been introduced

In the chapter on the Basics of Integration, we learned that it's often helpful to use signal phrases when introducing key quotes from a source. Since a signal phrase—which always includes the author's last name—clearly signals where the information is from, it's no longer necessary to include that information in the in-text citation.

> According to Jeffrey Blankship, the fork is "an inferior way to pick up meat" (5).
>
> Some argue the fork is "an inferior way to pick up meat" (Blankship 5).

Sources with no known author

When a source has no known author, use a shortened title of the work instead of an author name. For shorter works such as articles, the convention is to place it in quotes. For longer works, use italics.

> Within the past decade, sugar intake has sky-rocketed among teens. For most, this increased consumption is from soda (“Sugar Drink Fact Sheet”).

Multiple authors

When citing two authors, list the last names either in the text or in the parenthetical citation.

> Williams and Powers attempted to show that string theory was a viable way to combine general relativity and quantum mechanics (9).
>
> Some have argued that string theory is a viable way to combine general relativity and quantum mechanics (Williams and Powers 9).

Source with three or more authors

Use the first author's last name, followed by et al.

According to Weston et al., "Recent sales are due more to government stimulus than increased demand" (19).

Some argue that "[r]ecent sales are due more to government stimulus than increased demand" (Weston et al. 19).

Time-based media sources

When creating in-text citations for media, such as a podcast or video, include the author information along with a time stamp. (Smith 00:02:15-00:02:35).

In her TED Talk, Camila Bogsworth suggests that modern cosmetics are "entirely sourced by unsustainable ingredients" (00:01:05-00:01:07).

When a citation is not needed

Not *every* piece of information needs to be cited. Here are some exceptions:

- well-known quotations
- common proverbs (such as the Golden Rule)
- common knowledge (e.g., about gravity)
- commonly-accepted facts (e.g., when Julius Caesar was born)

When incorporating "common knowledge," however, keep your audience in mind. Specialized audiences may view certain common ideas with more skepticism than others.

Video Tutorial for In-Text Citations

Formatting MLA in-text citations can seem overwhelming at first. It may help to watch a video, such as this one:

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://idaho.pressbooks.pub/write/?p=341#oembed-1

MLA Works Cited

A Works Cited page supplements in-text citations. This page comes at the end of your essay and it contains a list of bibliographic citations for all of the sources. The citations are organized alphabetically by first word of the citation. Here's an example Works Cited page in MLA Style:

Example Works Cited in MLA Style

Freeman 8

Works Cited

Buchanan, Wyatt. "More Same-Sex Couples Want Kids: Survey Looks at Trends among Homosexuals." *SF Gate*, Hearst Communications, 25 Apr. 2006, www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/NATION-More-same-sex-couples-want-kids-Survey-2499131.php.

Coontz, Stephanie. "Not Much Sense in Those Census Numbers." *Uncommon Threads: Reading and Writing about Contemporary America*, edited by Robert D. Newman et al., Longman, 2003, pp. 146-48.

"Developments in the Law: The Law of Marriage and Family." *Harvard Law Review*, vol. 116, no. 7, 2003, pp. 1996-2122. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/1342754.

Hymowitz, Kay S. "The Incredible Shrinking Father." *City Journal*, Spring 2007, www.city-journal.org/html/17_2_artificial_insemination.html.

Marcotty, Josephine, and Chen May Yee. "New World of Fertility Medicine Is a Big-Money Marketplace." *Seacoastonline.com*, Local Media Group, 30 Oct. 2007, www.seacoastonline.com/article/20071030/PARENTS/71029007.

According to the official MLA Style Center, there are certain "core elements" that should be included for each source in your Works Cited page. These include:

1. Author.
2. Title of source.
3. Title of container,
4. Other contributors,
5. Version,
6. Number,
7. Publisher/Sponsor,

8. Publication date,
9. Location.

Notice how each of the elements above is followed by a period or comma? That provides hints for how to format your citations. Let's look at one of the examples above, from the sample Works Cited page, to see how this works.

> Marcotty, Josephine, and Chen May Yee. "New World of Fertility Medicine Is a Big-Money Marketplace." *Seacoastonline.com*, Local Media Group, 30 Oct. 2007, https://www.seacoastonline.com/article/20071030/PARENTS/71029007.

Here are the core elements from the sample citation:

1. Author = Marcotty, Joseph, and Chen May Yee.
2. Title of source = "New World of Fertility Medicine Is a Big-Money Marketplace."
3. Title of container = *Seacoastonline.com*,
4. Other contributors, [NA]
5. Version, [NA]
6. Number, [NA]
7. Publisher/Sponsor = Local Media Group,
8. Publication date = 30 Oct. 2007,
9. Location = https://www.seacoastonline.com/article/20071030/PARENTS/71029007.

The citation doesn't have elements 4, 5, or 6 because it's not a journal article. Unless you're citing journal articles (which tend to include bibliographic citations automatically), your source will probably look will similar to the one above. Here are some additional explanations:

- The title of the source is in quotes because it's an article, which is considered a "shorter" work. Longer works, such as full-length books, should be in italics.
- The title of the container should be in italics.
- The publication date uses European formatting (day month year) rather than U.S. conventions.
- Unless you're citing a print book, your source will have a URL location.

Online websites to help with bibliographic citations

The fastest and most efficient way to complete your bibliographic citations is to use a free website. I recommend one of the following resources. Warning: Links like Easybib and Zotero can help complete citations very quickly. However, you will need to verify the information is correct. If there is an edit option (or manual entry), select it, and then plug in all the information. The websites often miss information.

- Easybib: This website is easy to use because you can start by simply plugging in the web link. Make sure MLA 8 is selected, select your source type (book, journal, report, etc.), then click "Cite." Note that there are many other websites like this! Go with whichever one you find the most intuitive.
- Zotero: Zotero and Easybib (above) are similar, but Zotero is open source and does not have advertising.

How to identify the "Container"

Even when relying on free web apps such as EasyBib, you may need to occasionally identify certain pieces of information to complete your bibliographic citation. The most common—and most important—parts you should always be able to identify are the Container and Sponsor.

Unlike earlier versions, the 8th edition of MLA refers to "containers," which are the larger wholes in which the source is located. For example, if you want to cite a poem that is listed in a collection of poems, the individual poem is the source, while the larger collection is the container. The title of the container is usually italicized and followed by a comma, since the information that follows next describes the container.

Tips for Identifying the Sponsor/Publisher

The sponsor/publisher produces or distributes the source to the public. If there is more than one publisher, and they are all are relevant to your research, list them in your citation, separated by a forward slash (/). On most websites, the sponsor is found either in the About page or by scrolling to the very bottom of the article. The publisher/ sponsor can be verified by looking for the copyright symbol ©.

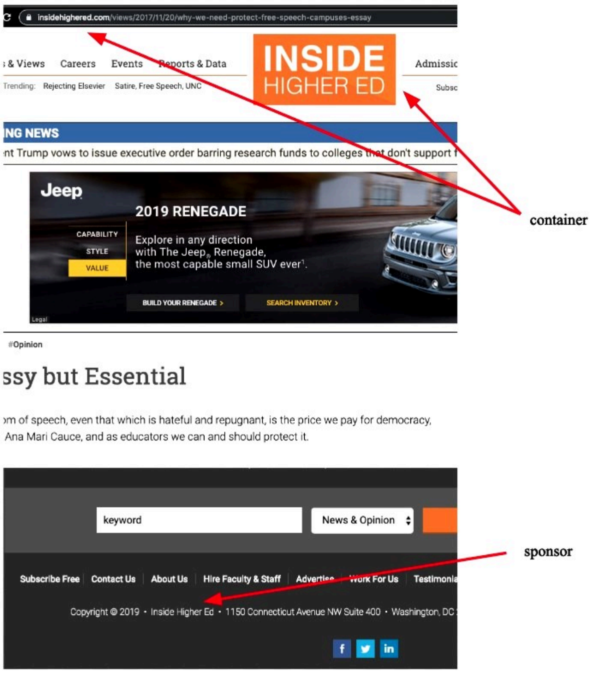


Illustration of the "container" vs. "sponsor"

Video introduction to bibliographic citations in MLA 8

Since citation conventions can seem overwhelming at first, it may help to watch a video introduction, such as this one:

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://idaho.pressbooks.pub/write/?p=341#oembed-2

Review Exercise

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://idaho.pressbooks.pub/write/?p=341#h5p-4

120. APA and MLA Documentation and Formatting: End-of-Chapter Exercises

[AUTHOR REMOVED AT REQUEST OF ORIGINAL PUBLISHER]

Exercises

1. In this chapter, you learned strategies for using APA and MLA style documentation and formatting in a research paper. Locate a source that uses APA or MLA style, such as an article in a professional journal in the sciences or social sciences. Identify these key components of an APA or MLA paper in your example: the abstract, section heads, in-text citations, and references list.

2. Check one of your assignments for correct APA or MLA formatting and citations. (You may wish to conduct this activity in two sessions—one to edit the body of the paper and one to edit the references section.) Check for the following:

- All components of an APA or MLA paper are included.
- The title page (or title block) and body of the paper are correctly formatted.

- In-text, or parenthetical, citations are complete and correctly formatted.
- Sources cited within the paper match the sources listed in the references or works cited section.
- The references or works cited section uses correct formatting and lists entries in alphabetical order.

3. As electronic media continually change, guidelines for citing electronic sources are continually updated. Identify three new or emerging forms of electronic media not listed in this text—for instance, virtual communities, such as Second Life, or social networking sites, such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and MySpace. Answer the following questions:

- Under what circumstances would this media be a useful source of information for a research paper? How might students use these sources to conduct research five or ten years from now?
- What information would a student need to provide if citing this source? Why?
- Develop brief guidelines for how to cite the emerging media source types you identified.

PART XVII

WRITING BASICS: WHAT MAKES A GOOD SENTENCE?

This entire Part is from *Writing for Success*, Chapter 2

121. Sentence Writing

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the components of a basic sentence.
2. Identify the four most serious writing errors.

Imagine you are reading a book for school. You need to find important details that you can use for an assignment. However, when you begin to read, you notice that the book has very little punctuation. Sentences fail to form complete paragraphs and instead form one block of text without clear organization. Most likely, this book would frustrate and confuse you. Without clear and concise sentences, it is difficult to find the information you need.

For both students and professionals, clear communication is important. Whether you are typing an e-mail or writing a report, it is your responsibility to present your thoughts and ideas clearly and precisely. Writing in complete sentences is one way to ensure that you communicate well. This section covers how to recognize and write basic sentence structures and how to avoid some common writing errors.

Components of a Sentence

Clearly written, complete sentences require key information: a subject, a verb and a complete idea. A sentence needs to make sense on its own. Sometimes, complete sentences are also called independent clauses. A clause is a group of words that may make up a sentence. An independent clause is a group of words that may stand alone as a complete, grammatically correct thought. The following sentences show independent clauses.

Independent Clause **Independent Clause**

{We went to the store.}{We bought the ingredients on our list},

Independent Clause

and then {we went home.}

All complete sentences have at least one independent clause. You can identify an independent clause by reading it on its own and looking for the subject and the verb.

Subjects

When you read a sentence, you may first look for the subject, or what the sentence is about. The subject usually appears at the beginning of a sentence as a noun or a pronoun. A noun is a word that identifies a person, place, thing, or idea. A pronoun is a word that replaces a noun. Common pronouns are *I*, *he*, *she*, *it*, *you*, *they*, and *we*. In the following sentences, the subject is underlined once.

> Malik is the project manager for this project. He will give us our assignments.

In these sentences, the subject is a person: *Malik*. The pronoun *He* replaces and refers back to *Malik*.

The computer lab is where we will work. It will be open twenty-four hours a day.

In the first sentence, the subject is a place: *computer lab*. In the second sentence, the pronoun *It* substitutes for *computer lab* as the subject.

The project will run for three weeks. It will have a quick turnaround.

In the first sentence, the subject is a thing: *project*. In the second sentence, the pronoun *It* stands in for the *project*.

Tip

In this chapter, please refer to the following grammar key:

Subjects are underlined once.

Verbs are underlined twice.

LV means linking verb, HV means helping verb, and V means action verb.

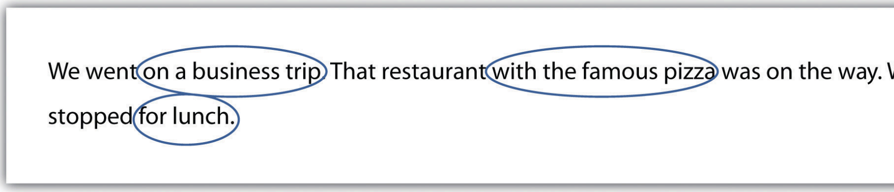
Compound Subjects

A sentence may have more than one person, place, or thing as the subject. These subjects are called compound subjects. Compound subjects are useful when you want to discuss several subjects at once.

Desmond and Maria have been working on that design for almost a year. Books, magazines, and online articles are all good resources.

Prepositional Phrases

You will often read a sentence that has more than one noun or pronoun in it. You may encounter a group of words that includes a preposition with a noun or a pronoun. Prepositions connect a noun, pronoun, or verb to another word that describes or modifies that noun, pronoun, or verb. Common prepositions include *in*, *on*, *under*, *near*, *by*, *with*, and *about*. A group of words that begin with a preposition is called a prepositional phrase. A prepositional phrase begins with a preposition and modifies or describes a word. It cannot act as the subject of a sentence. The following circled phrases are examples of prepositional phrases.


We went on a business trip. That restaurant with the famous pizza was on the way. W
stopped for lunch.

Exercise 1

Read the following sentences. Underline the subjects, and circle the prepositional phrases.

1. The gym is open until nine o'clock tonight.
2. We went to the store to get some ice.
3. The student with the most extra credit will win a homework pass.
4. Maya and Tia found an abandoned cat by the side of the road.
5. The driver of that pickup truck skidded on the ice.
6. Anita won the race with time to spare.
7. The people who work for that company were surprised about the merger.
8. Working in haste means that you are more likely to make mistakes.
9. The soundtrack has over sixty songs in languages from around the world.
10. His latest invention does not work, but it has inspired the rest of us.

Verbs

Once you locate the subject of a sentence, you can move on to the next part of a complete sentence: the verb. A verb is often an action word that shows what the subject is doing. A verb can also link the subject to a describing word. There are three types of verbs that you can use in a sentence: action verbs, linking verbs, or helping verbs.

Action Verbs

A verb that connects the subject to an action is called an action verb. An action verb answers the question *what is the subject doing*? In the following sentences, the action verbs are in italics.

The dog *barked* at the jogger.
He *gave* a short speech before we ate.

Linking Verbs

A verb can often connect the subject of the sentence to a describing word. This type of verb is called a linking verb because it links the subject to a describing word. In the following sentences, the linking verbs are in italics.

The coat *was* old and dirty.
The clock *seemed* broken.

If you have trouble telling the difference between action verbs and linking verbs, remember that an action verb shows that the subject is doing something, whereas a linking verb simply connects the subject to another word that describes or modifies the subject. A few verbs can be used as either action verbs or linking verbs.

Action Verb: The boy *looked* for his glove.
Linking Verb: The boy *looked* tired.

Although both sentences use the same verb, the two sentences have completely different meanings. In the first sentence, the verb describes the boy's action. In the second sentence, the verb describes the boy's appearance.

Helping Verbs

A third type of verb you may use as you write is a helping verb. Helping verbs are verbs that are used with the main verb to describe a mood or tense. Helping verbs are usually a form of *be*, *do*, or *have*. The word *can* is also used as a helping verb.

The restaurant *is known* for its variety of dishes.
She *does speak up* when prompted in class.
We *have seen* that movie three times.
She *can tell* when someone walks on her lawn.
(is, does, have, and can are helping verbs and known, speak up, seen, and tell are verbs)

Tip

Whenever you write or edit sentences, keep the subject and verb in mind. As you write, ask yourself these questions to keep yourself on track:

Subject: Who or what is the sentence about?

Verb: Which word shows an action or links the subject to a description?

Exercise 2

Copy each sentence onto your own sheet of paper and underline the verb(s) twice. Name the type of verb(s) used in the sentence in the space provided (LV, HV, or V).

1. The cat sounds ready to come back inside. _________
2. We have not eaten dinner yet. _________
3. It took four people to move the broken-down car. _________

4. The book was filled with notes from class. _________
5. We walked from room to room, inspecting for damages. _________
6. Harold was expecting a package in the mail. _________
7. The clothes still felt damp even though they had been through the dryer twice. _________
8. The teacher who runs the studio is often praised for his restoration work on old masterpieces. _________

Sentence Structure, Including Fragments and Run-ons

Now that you know what makes a complete sentence—a subject and a verb—you can use other parts of speech to build on this basic structure. Good writers use a variety of sentence structures to make their work more interesting. This section covers different sentence structures that you can use to make longer, more complex sentences.

Sentence Patterns

Six basic subject-verb patterns can enhance your writing. A sample sentence is provided for each pattern. As you read each sentence, take note of where each part of the sentence falls. Notice that some sentence patterns use action verbs and others use linking verbs.

Subject–Verb

Computers (subject) *hum* (verb)

Subject–Linking Verb–Noun

Computers (subject) *are* (linking verb) tool (noun)

Subject–Linking Verb–Adjective

Computers (subject) *are* (linking verb) expensive (adjective)

Subject–Verb–Adverb

Computers (subject) *calculate* (verb) quickly (adverb)

Subject–Verb–Direct Object

When you write a sentence with a direct object (DO), make sure that the DO receives the action of the verb.

> Sally (subject) rides (verb) a motorcycle (direct object)

Subject–Verb–Indirect Object–Direct Object

In this sentence structure, an indirect object explains *to whom* or *to what* the action is being done. The indirect object is a noun or pronoun, and it comes before the direct object in a sentence.

> My coworker (subject) *gave* (verb) me (indirect object) the reports (direct object)

Exercise 3

Use what you have learned so far to bring variety in your writing. Use the following lines or your own sheet of paper to write six sentences that practice each basic sentence pattern. When you have finished, label each part of the sentence (S, V, LV, N, Adj, Adv, DO, IO).

1. __________________________________

____

2. _____________________________________
____

3. _____________________________________
____

4. _____________________________________
____

5. _____________________________________
____

6. _____________________________________
____

Collaboration

Find an article in a newspaper, a magazine, or online that interests you. Bring it to class or post it online. Then, looking at a classmate's article, identify one example of each part of a sentence (S, V, LV, N, Adj, Adv, DO, IO). Please share or post your results.

Fragments

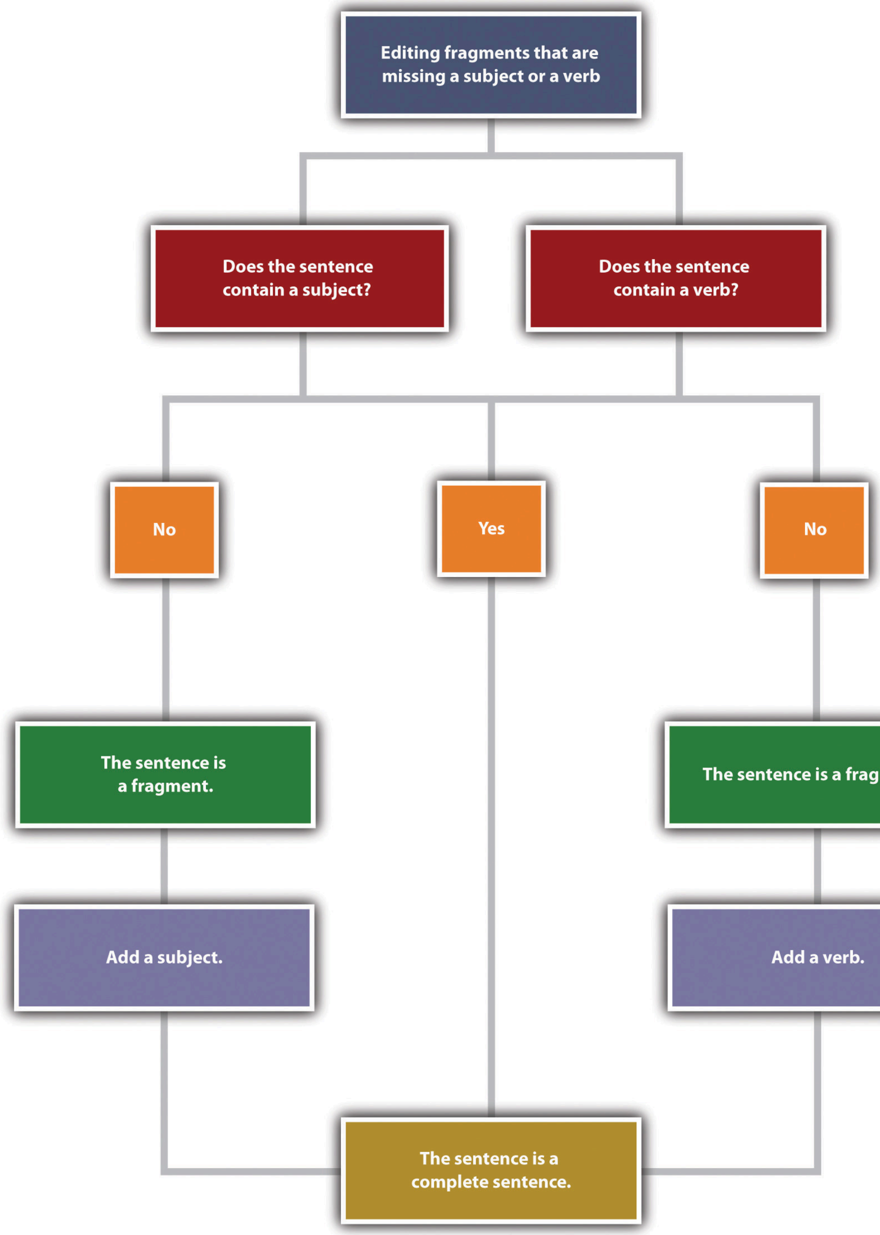
The sentences you have encountered so far have been independent clauses. As you look more closely at your past writing assignments, you may notice that some of your sentences are not complete. A sentence that is missing a subject or a verb is called a fragment. A fragment may include a description or may express part of an idea, but it does not express a complete thought.

Fragment: Children helping in the kitchen.

Complete sentence: Children helping in the kitchen **often make a mess**.

You can easily fix a fragment by adding the missing subject or verb. In the example, the sentence was missing a verb. Adding *often make a mess* creates an S-V-N sentence structure.

Figure 2.1 Editing Fragments That Are Missing a Subject or a Verb



Editing fragments that are missing a subject or a verb
Does the sentence contain a subject?
Does the sentence contain a verb?
No
Yes
No
The sentence is a fragment.
The sentence is a frag
Add a subject.
Add a verb.
The sentence is a complete sentence.

See whether you can identify what is missing in the following fragments.

Fragment: Told her about the broken vase.

Complete sentence: I told her about the broken vase.

Fragment: The store down on Main Street.

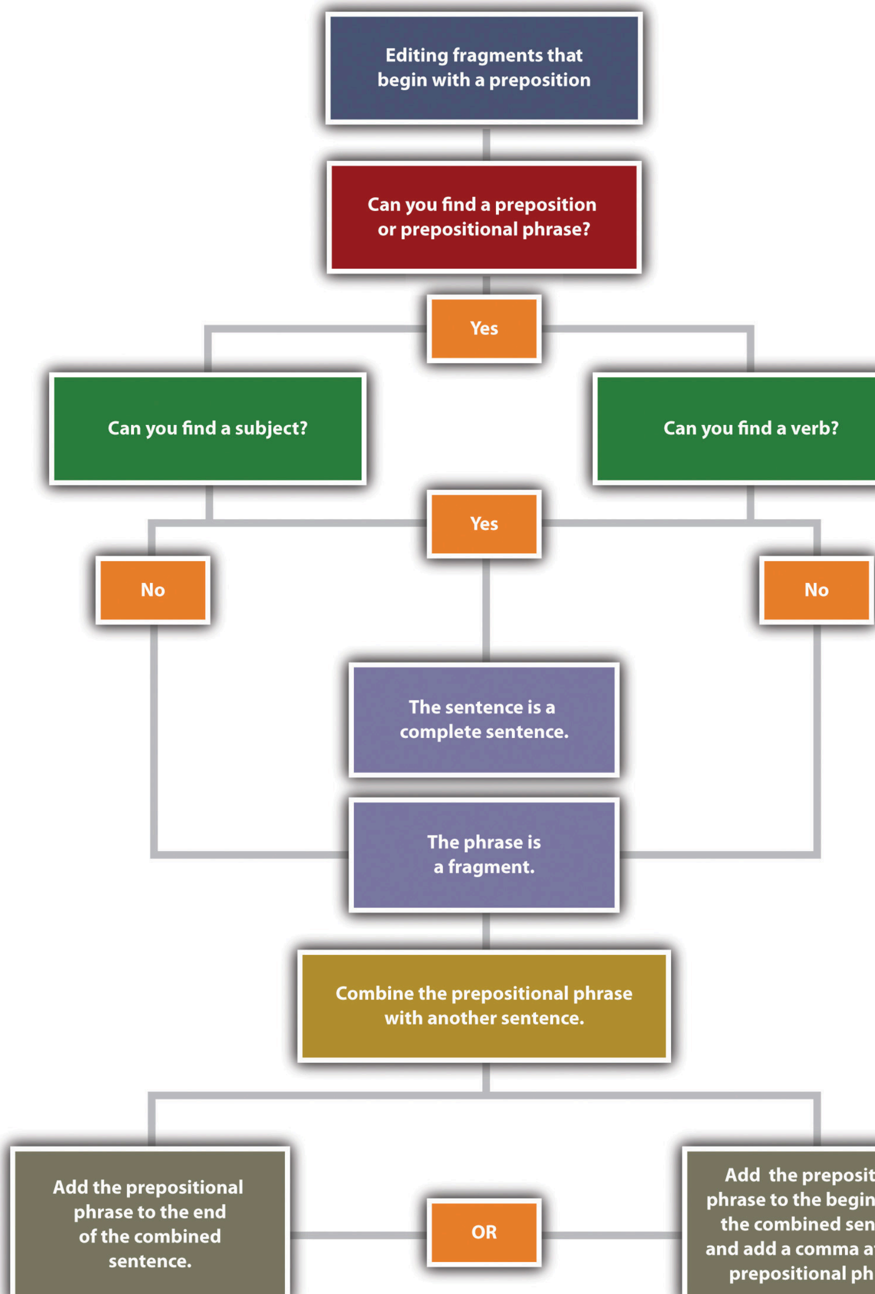
Complete sentence: The store down on Main Street **sells music**.

Common Sentence Errors

Fragments often occur because of some common error, such as starting a sentence with a preposition, a dependent word, an infinitive, or a gerund. If you use the six basic sentence patterns when you write, you should be able to avoid these errors and thus avoid writing fragments.

When you see a preposition, check to see that it is part of a sentence containing a subject and a verb. If it is not connected to a complete sentence, it is a fragment, and you will need to fix this type of fragment by combining it with another sentence. You can add the prepositional phrase to the end of the sentence. If you add it to the beginning of the other sentence, insert a comma after the prepositional phrase.

Figure 2.2 Editing Fragments That Begin with a Preposition


Editing fragments that begin with a preposition
Can you find a preposition or prepositional phrase?
Yes
Can you find a subject?
Can you find a verb?
Yes
No
No
The sentence is a complete sentence.
The phrase is a fragment.
Combine the prepositional phrase with another sentence.
Add the prepositional phrase to the end of the combined sentence.
OR

Example A

Incorrect: After walking over two miles. John remembered his wallet.
Correct: After walking over two miles, John remembered his wallet.
Correct: John remembered his wallet ~~After~~ after walking over two miles.

Example B

Incorrect: The dog growled at the vacuum cleaner. When it was switched on.
Correct: When the vacuum cleaner was switched on, the dog growled.
Correct: The dog growled at the vacuum cleaner ~~When~~ when it was switched on.

Clauses that start with a dependent word—such as *since*, *because*, *without*, or *unless*—are similar to prepositional phrases. Like prepositional phrases, these clauses can be fragments if they are not connected to an independent clause containing a subject and a verb. To fix the problem, you can add such a fragment to the beginning or end of a sentence. If the fragment is added at the beginning of a sentence, add a comma.

Incorrect: Because we lost power. The entire family overslept.
Correct: Because we lost power, the entire family overslept.
Correct: The entire family overslept ~~Because~~ because we lost power.

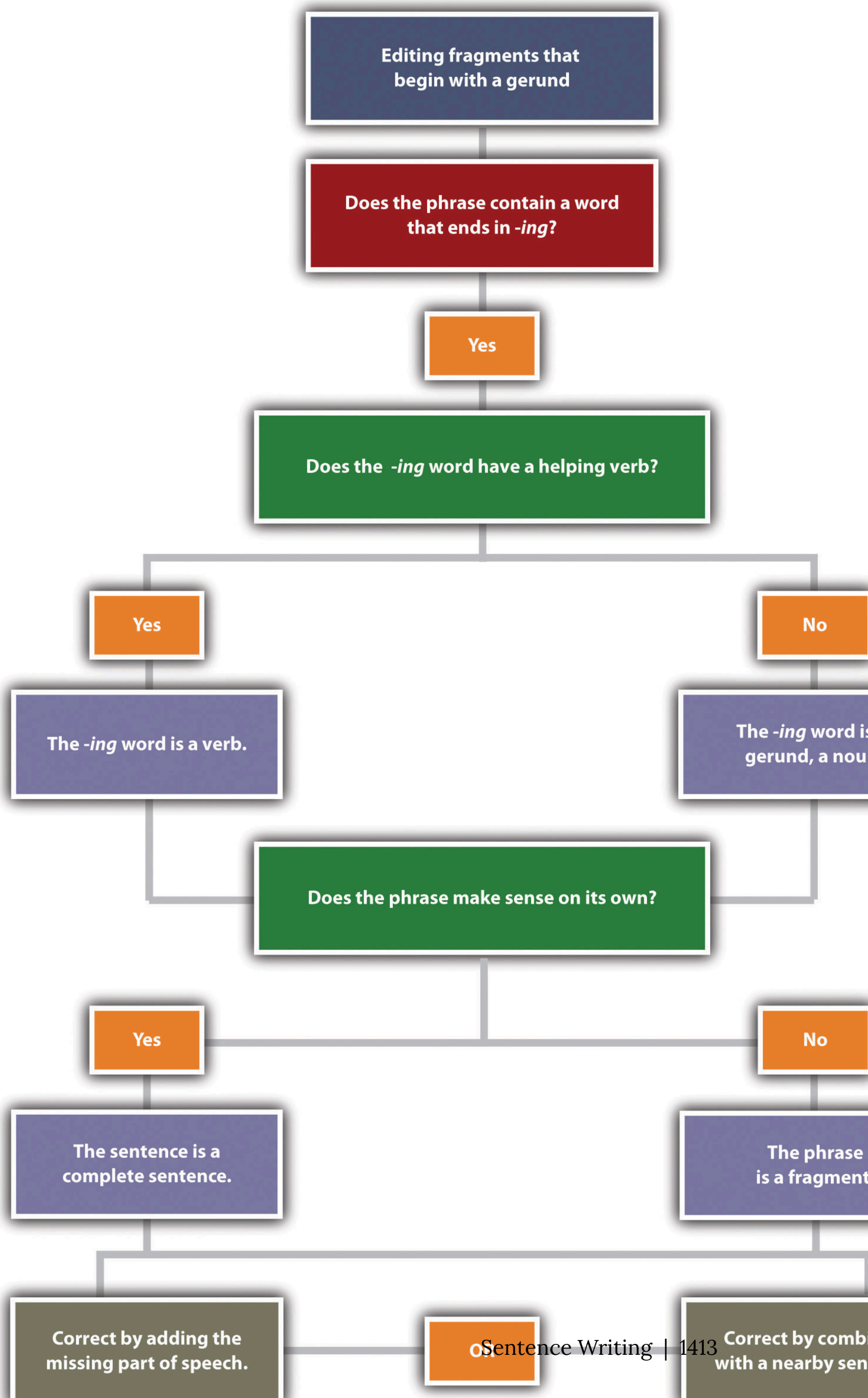
Incorrect: He has been seeing a physical therapist. Since his accident.
Correct: Since his accident, he has been seeing a physical therapist.
Correct: He has been seeing a physical therapist ~~Since~~ since his accident.

When you encounter a word ending in *-ing* in a sentence, identify whether or not this word is used as a verb in the sentence. You may also look for a helping verb. If the word is not used as a verb or if no helping verb is used with the *-ing* verb form, the verb is being used as a noun. An *-ing* verb form used as a noun is called a gerund.

Verb: I *was* (helping verb) *working* (verb) on homework until midnight.
Noun: <u>Working</u> until midnight makes me tired the next morning.

Once you know whether the *-ing* word is acting as a noun or a verb, look at the rest of the sentence. Does the entire sentence make sense on its own? If not, what you are looking at is a fragment. You will need to either add the parts of speech that are missing or combine the fragment with a nearby sentence.

Figure 2.3 Editing Fragments That Begin with Gerunds


Editing fragments that begin with a gerund
Does the phrase contain a word that ends in -ing?
Yes
Does the -ing word have a helping verb?
Yes
No
The -ing word is a verb.
The -ing word is
gerund, a nou
Does the phrase make sense on its own?
Yes
No
The sentence is a complete sentence.
The phrase
is a fragment
Correct by adding the missing part of speech.
or
Correct by comb
with a nearby sen

Incorrect: Taking deep breaths. Saul prepared for his presentation.

Correct: Taking deep breaths**,** Saul prepared for his presentation.

Correct: Saul prepared for his presentation. He **was taking** deep breaths.

Incorrect: Congratulating the entire team. Sarah raised her glass to toast their success.

Correct: She was congratulating the entire team. Sarah raised her glass to toast their success.

Correct: Congratulating the entire team**,** Sarah raised her glass to toast their success.

Another error in sentence construction is a fragment that begins with an infinitive. An infinitive is a verb paired with the word *to*; for example, *to run*, *to write*, or *to reach*. Although infinitives are verbs, they can be used as nouns, adjectives, or adverbs. You can correct a fragment that begins with an infinitive by either combining it with another sentence or adding the parts of speech that are missing.

Incorrect: We needed to make three hundred more paper cranes. To reach the one thousand mark.

Correct: We needed to make three hundred more paper cranes **to** reach the one thousand mark.

Correct: We needed to make three hundred more paper cranes. **We wanted to** reach the one thousand mark.

Exercise 4

Copy the following sentences onto your own sheet of paper and circle the fragments. Then combine the fragment with the independent clause to create a complete sentence.

1. Working without taking a break. We try to get as much work done as we can in an hour.
2. I needed to bring work home. In order to meet the deadline.
3. Unless the ground thaws before spring break. We won't be planting any tulips this year.
4. Turning the lights off after he was done in the kitchen. Robert tries to conserve energy whenever possible.
5. You'll find what you need if you look. On the shelf next to the potted plant.
6. To find the perfect apartment. Deidre scoured the classifieds each day.

Run-on Sentences

Just as short, incomplete sentences can be problematic, lengthy sentences can be problematic too. Sentences with two or more independent clauses that have been incorrectly combined are known as run-on sentences. A run-on sentence may be either a fused sentence or a comma splice.

Fused sentence: A family of foxes lived under our shed young foxes played all over the yard.

Comma splice: We looked outside, the kids were hopping on the trampoline.

When two complete sentences are combined into one without any punctuation, the result is a fused sentence. When two complete sentences are joined by a comma, the result is a comma splice. Both errors can easily be fixed.

Punctuation

One way to correct run-on sentences is to correct the punctuation. For example, adding a period will correct the run-on by creating two separate sentences.

Run-on: There were no seats left, we had to stand in the back.
Correct: There were no seats left. ~~we~~ We had to stand in the back.

Using a semicolon between the two complete sentences will also correct the error. A semicolon allows you to keep the two closely related ideas together in one sentence. When you punctuate with a semicolon, make sure that both parts of the sentence are independent clauses. For more information on semicolons, see Section 2.4.2 "Capitalize Proper Nouns".

Run-on: The accident closed both lanes of traffic we waited an hour for the wreckage to be cleared.

Complete sentence: The accident closed both lanes of traffic; we waited an hour for the wreckage to be cleared.

When you use a semicolon to separate two independent clauses, you may wish to add a transition word to show the connection between the two thoughts. After the semicolon, add the transition word and follow it with a comma. For more information on transition words, see Chapter 8 "The Writing Process: How Do I Begin?".

Run-on: The project was put on hold we didn't have time to slow down, so we kept working.

Complete sentence: The project was put on hold**;** **however,** we didn't have time to slow down, so we kept working.

Coordinating Conjunctions

You can also fix run-on sentences by adding a comma and a coordinating conjunction. A coordinating conjunction acts as a link between two independent clauses.

Tip

These are the seven coordinating conjunctions that you can use: *for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, and *so*. Use these words appropriately when you want to link the two independent clauses. The acronym FANBOYS will help you remember this group of coordinating conjunctions.

Run-on: The new printer was installed, no one knew how to use it.

Complete sentence: The new printer was installed**, but** no one knew how to use it.

Dependent Words

Adding dependent words is another way to link independent clauses. Like the coordinating conjunctions, dependent words show a relationship between two independent clauses.

Run-on: We took the elevator, the others still got there before us.

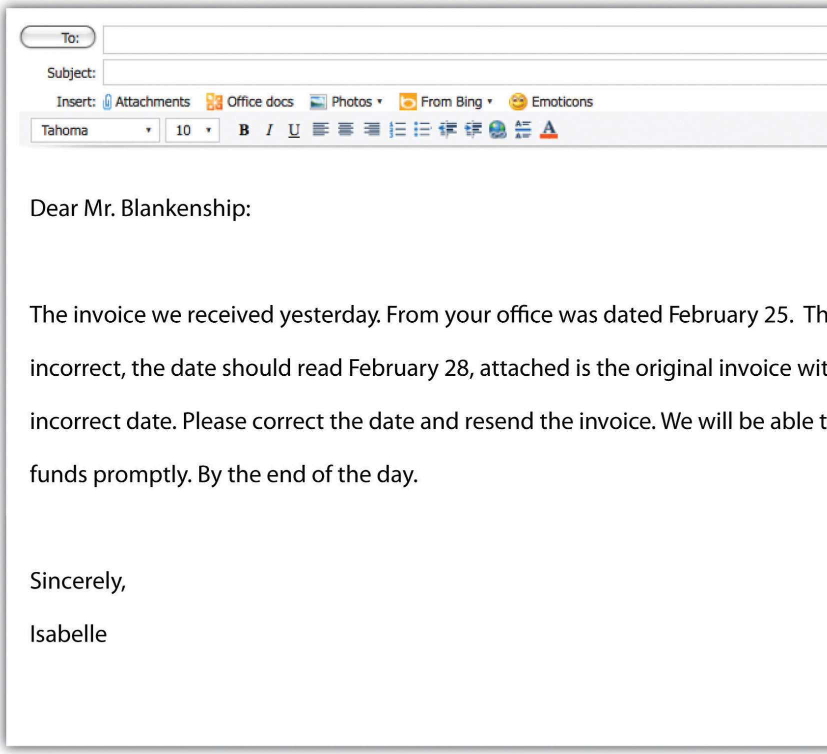
Complete sentence: Although we took the elevator, the others got there before us.

Run-on: Cobwebs covered the furniture, the room hadn't been used in years.

Complete sentence: Cobwebs covered the furniture **because** the room hadn't been used in years.

Writing at Work

Figure 2.4 Sample e-mail



Dear Mr. Blankenship:

The invoice we received yesterday. From your office was dated February 25. Th
incorrect, the date should read February 28, attached is the original invoice wit
incorrect date. Please correct the date and resend the invoice. We will be able t
funds promptly. By the end of the day.

Sincerely,

Isabelle

Isabelle's e-mail opens with two fragments and two run-on sentences containing comma splices. The e-mail ends with another fragment. What effect would this e-mail have on Mr. Blankenship or other readers? Mr. Blankenship or other readers may not think highly of Isaebelle's communication skills or—worse—may not understand the message at all! Communications written in precise, complete sentences are not only more professional but also easier to understand. Before you hit the "send" button, read your e-mail carefully to make sure that the sentences are complete, are not run together, and are correctly punctuated.

Exercise 5

A reader can get lost or lose interest in material that is too dense and rambling. Use what you have learned about run-on sentences to correct the following passages:

1. The report is due on Wednesday but we're flying back from Miami that morning. I told the project manager that we would be able to get the report to her later that day she suggested that we come back a day early to get the report done and I told her we had meetings until our flight took off. We e-mailed our contact who said that they would check with his boss, she said that the project could afford a delay as long as they wouldn't have to make any edits or changes to the file our new deadline is next Friday.
2. Anna tried getting a reservation at the restaurant, but when she called they said that there was a waiting list so she put our names down on the list when the day of our reservation arrived we only had to wait thirty minutes because a table opened up unexpectedly which was good because we were able to catch a movie after dinner in the time we'd expected to wait to be seated.
3. Without a doubt, my favorite artist is Leonardo da Vinci, not because of his paintings but because of his

fascinating designs, models, and sketches, including plans for scuba gear, a flying machine, and a life-size mechanical lion that actually walked and moved its head. His paintings are beautiful too, especially when you see the computer enhanced versions researchers use a variety of methods to discover and enhance the paintings' original colors, the result of which are stunningly vibrant and yet delicate displays of the man's genius.

Key Takeaways

- A sentence is complete when it contains both a subject and verb. A complete sentence makes sense on its own.
- Every sentence must have a subject, which usually appears at the beginning of the sentence. A subject may be a noun (a person, place, or thing) or a pronoun.
- A compound subject contains more than one noun.
- A prepositional phrase describes, or modifies, another word in the sentence but cannot be the subject of a sentence.
- A verb is often an action word that indicates what the subject is doing. Verbs may be action verbs, linking verbs, or helping verbs.
- Variety in sentence structure and length improves writing by making it more interesting and more

complex.

- Focusing on the six basic sentence patterns will enhance your writing.
- Fragments and run-on sentences are two common errors in sentence construction.
- Fragments can be corrected by adding a missing subject or verb. Fragments that begin with a preposition or a dependent word can be corrected by combining the fragment with another sentence.
- Run-on sentences can be corrected by adding appropriate punctuation or adding a coordinating conjunction.

Writing Application

Using the six basic sentence structures, write one of the following:

1. A work e-mail to a coworker about a presentation.
2. A business letter to a potential employer.
3. A status report about your current project.

4. A job description for your résumé.

122. Subject-Verb Agreement

[AUTHOR REMOVED AT REQUEST OF ORIGINAL PUBLISHER]

Learning Objectives

1. Define subject-verb agreement.
2. Identify common errors in subject-verb agreement.

In the workplace, you want to present a professional image. Your outfit or suit says something about you when meeting face-to-face, and your writing represents you in your absence. Grammatical mistakes in your writing or even in speaking make a negative impression on coworkers, clients, and potential employers. Subject-verb agreement is one of the most common errors that people make. Having a solid understanding of this concept is critical when making a good impression, and it will help ensure that your ideas are communicated clearly.

Agreement

Agreement in speech and in writing refers to the proper grammatical match between words and phrases. Parts of sentences must agree, or correspond with other parts, in number, person, case, and gender.

- **Number.** All parts must match in singular or plural forms.
- **Person.** All parts must match in first person (*I*), second person (*you*), or third person (*he*, *she*, *it*, *they*) forms.
- **Case.** All parts must match in subjective (*I*, *you*, *he*, *she*, *it*, *they*, *we*), objective (*me*, *her*, *him*, *them*, *us*), or possessive (*my*, *mine*, *your*, *yours*, *his*, *her*, *hers*, *their*, *theirs*, *our*, *ours*) forms. For more information on pronoun case agreement, see Section 2.5.1 "Pronoun Agreement".
- **Gender.** All parts must match in male or female forms.

Subject-verb agreement describes the proper match between subjects and verbs.

Because subjects and verbs are either singular or plural, the subject of a sentence and the verb of a sentence must agree with each other in number. That is, a singular subject belongs with a singular verb form, and a plural subject belongs with a plural verb form. For more information on subjects and verbs, see Section 2.1 "Sentence Writing".

Singular: The cat *jumps* over the fence.
Plural: The cats *jump* over the fence.

Regular Verbs

Regular verbs follow a predictable pattern. For example, in the third person singular, regular verbs always end in -s. Other forms of regular verbs do not end in -s. Study the following regular verb forms in the present tense.

	Singular Form	**Plural Form**
First Person	I live.	We live.
Second Person	You live.	You live.
Third Person	He/She/It live**s**.	They live.

Tip

Add an -*es* to the third person singular form of regular verbs that end in -*sh*, -*x*, -*ch*, and -*s*. (I wish/He wishes, I fix/She fixes, I watch/It watches, I kiss/He kisses.)

Singular: I *read* every day.
Plural: We *read* every day.

In these sentences, the verb form stays the same for the first person singular and the first person plural.

Singular: You *stretch* before you go to bed.
Plural: You *stretch* before every game.

In these sentences, the verb form stays the same for the second person singular and the second person plural. In the singular form, the pronoun *you* refers to one person. In the plural form, the pronoun *you* refers to a group of people, such as a team.

Singular: My mother *walks* to work every morning.

In this sentence, the subject is *mother*. Because the sentence only refers to one mother, the subject is singular. The verb in this sentence must be in the third person singular form.

Plural: My friends *like* the same music as I do.

In this sentence, the subject is *friends*. Because this subject refers to more than one person, the subject is plural. The verb in this sentence must be in the third person plural form.

Tip

Many singular subjects can be made plural by adding an -s. Most regular verbs in the present tense end with an –s in the third person singular. This does not make the verbs plural.

Singular subject, singular verb: The cat *races* across the yard.
Plural subject, plural verb: The cats *race* across the yard.

Exercise 1

On your own sheet of paper, write the correct verb form for each of the following sentences.

1. I (brush/brushes) my teeth twice a day.

2. You (wear/wears) the same shoes every time we go out.
3. He (kick/kicks) the soccer ball into the goal.
4. She (watch/watches) foreign films.
5. Catherine (hide/hides) behind the door.
6. We (want/wants) to have dinner with you.
7. You (work/works) together to finish the project.
8. They (need/needs) to score another point to win the game.
9. It (eat/eats) four times a day.
10. David (fix/fixes) his own motorcycle.

Irregular Verbs

Not all verbs follow a predictable pattern. These verbs are called irregular verbs. Some of the most common irregular verbs are *be*, *have*, and *do*. Learn the forms of these verbs in the present tense to avoid errors in subject-verb agreement.

Be

Study the different forms of the verb *to be* in the present tense.

	Singular Form	Plural Form
First Person	I am.	We are.
Second Person	You are.	You are.
Third Person	He/She/It is.	They are.

Have

Study the different forms of the verb *to have* in the present tense.

	Singular Form	Plural Form
First Person	I have.	We have.
Second Person	You have.	You have.
Third Person	He/She/It has.	They have.

Do

Study the different forms of the verb *to do* in the present tense.

	Singular Form	Plural Form
First Person	I do.	We do.
Second Person	You do.	You do.
Third person	He/She/It does.	They do.

Exercise 2

Complete the following sentences by writing the correct present tense form of *be*, *have*, or *do*. Use your own sheet of paper to complete this exercise.

1. I _________ sure that you will succeed.
2. They _________ front-row tickets to the show.
3. He _________ a great Elvis impersonation.

4. We _________ so excited to meet you in person!
5. She _________ a fever and a sore throat.
6. You _________ not know what you are talking about.
7. You _________ all going to pass this class.
8. She _________ not going to like that.
9. It _________ appear to be the right size.
10. They _________ ready to take this job seriously.

Errors in Subject-Verb Agreement

Errors in subject-verb agreement may occur when

- a sentence contains a compound subject;
- the subject of the sentence is separate from the verb;
- the subject of the sentence is an indefinite pronoun, such as *anyone* or *everyone*;
- the subject of the sentence is a collective noun, such as *team* or *organization*;
- the subject appears after the verb.

Recognizing the sources of common errors in subject-verb agreement will help you avoid these errors in your writing. This section covers the subject-verb agreement errors in more detail.

Compound Subjects

A compound subject is formed by two or more nouns and the coordinating conjunctions *and*, *or*, or *nor*. A compound subject can be made of singular subjects, plural subjects, or a combination of singular and plural subjects.

Compound subjects combined with *and* take a plural verb form.

Two singular subjects: Alicia and Miguel *ride* their bikes to the beach.
Two plural subjects: The girls and the boys *ride* their bikes to the beach.
Singular and plural subjects: Alicia and the boys *ride* their bikes to the beach.

Compound subjects combined with *or* and *nor* are treated separately. The verb must agree with the subject that is nearest to the verb.

Two singular subjects: Neither Elizabeth nor Rianna *wants* to eat at that restaurant.
Two plural subjects: Neither the kids nor the adults *want* to eat at that restaurant.
Singular and plural subjects: Neither Elizabeth nor the kids *want* to eat at that restaurant.
Plural and singular subjects: Neither the kids nor Elizabeth *wants* to eat at that restaurant.

Two singular subjects: Either you or Jason *takes* the furniture out of the garage.
Two plural subjects: Either you or the twins *take* the furniture out of the garage.

Singular and plural subjects: Either Jason or the twins *take* the furniture out of the garage.
Plural and singular subjects: Either the twins or Jason *takes* the furniture out of the garage.

Tip

If you can substitute the word *they* for the compound subject, then the sentence takes the third person plural verb form.

Separation of Subjects and Verbs

As you read or write, you may come across a sentence that contains a phrase or clause that separates the subject from the verb. Often, prepositional phrases or dependent clauses add more information to the sentence and appear between the subject and the verb. However, the subject and the verb must still agree.

If you have trouble finding the subject and verb, cross out or ignore the phrases and clauses that begin with prepositions or dependent words. The subject of a sentence will never be in a prepositional phrase or dependent clause.

The following is an example of a subject and verb separated by a prepositional phrase:

> The students with the best grades *win* the academic awards.
> The puppy under the table *is* my favorite.

The following is an example of a subject and verb separated by a dependent clause:

> The car that I bought *has* power steering and a sunroof.
> The representatives who are courteous *sell* the most tickets.

Indefinite Pronouns

Indefinite pronouns refer to an unspecified person, thing, or number. When an indefinite pronoun serves as the subject of a sentence, you will often use a singular verb form.

However, keep in mind that exceptions arise. Some indefinite pronouns may require a plural verb form. To determine whether to use a singular or plural verb with an indefinite pronoun, consider the noun that the pronoun would refer to. If the noun is plural, then use a plural verb with the indefinite pronoun. View the chart to see a list of common indefinite pronouns and the verb forms they agree with.

Indefinite Pronouns That Always Take a Singular Verb	**Indefinite Pronouns That Can Take a Singular or Plural Verb**
anybody, anyone, anything	All
each	Any
everybody, everyone, everything	None
much	Some
many	
nobody, no one, nothing	
somebody, someone, something	

Singular: Everybody in the kitchen *sings* along when that song comes on the radio.

The indefinite pronoun *everybody* takes a singular verb form because *everybody* refers to a group performing the same action as a single unit.

Plural: All the people in the kitchen *sing* along when that song comes on the radio.

The indefinite pronoun *all* takes a plural verb form because *all* refers to the plural noun *people*. Because *people* is plural, *all* is plural.

Singular: All the cake *is* on the floor.

In this sentence, the indefinite pronoun *all* takes a singular verb form because *all* refers to the singular noun *cake*. Because *cake* is singular, *all* is singular.

Collective Nouns

A collective noun is a noun that identifies more than one person, place, or thing and considers those people, places, or things one singular unit. Because collective nouns are counted as one, they are singular and require a singular verb. Some commonly used collective nouns are *group*, *team*, *army*, *flock*, *family*, and *class*.

> **Singular:** The class *is* going on a field trip.

In this sentence, *class* is a collective noun. Although the class consists of many students, the class is treated as a singular unit and requires a singular verb form.

The Subject Follows the Verb

You may encounter sentences in which the subject comes after the verb instead of before the verb. In other words, the subject of the sentence may not appear where you expect it to appear. To ensure proper subject-verb agreement, you must correctly identify the subject and the verb.

Here or There

In sentences that begin with *here* or *there*, the subject follows the verb.

Here *is* my wallet!
There *are* thirty dolphins in the water.

If you have trouble identifying the subject and the verb in sentences that start with *here* or *there*; it may help to reverse the order of the sentence so the subject comes first.

My wallet *is* here!
Thirty dolphins *are* in the water.

Questions

When you ask questions, a question word (*who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why*, or *how*) appears first. The verb and then the subject follow.

Who *are* the people you are related to?
When *am* I going to go to the grocery store?

Tip

If you have trouble finding the subject and the verb in questions, try answering the question being asked.

> When *am* I going to the grocery store? I *am* going to the grocery store tonight!

Exercise 3

Correct the errors in subject-verb agreement in the following sentences. If there are no errors in subject-verb agreement, write OK. Copy the corrected sentence or the word OK on your own sheet of notebook paper.

1. My dog and cats chases each other all the time.

____
____

2. The books that are in my library is the best I have ever read.

____
____

3. Everyone are going to the concert except me.

____
____

4. My family are moving to California.

____
____

5. Here is the lake I told you about.

____
____

6. There is the newspapers I was supposed to deliver.

____
____

7. Which room is bigger?

____
____

8. When are the movie going to start?

____
____

9. My sister and brother cleans up after themselves.

____

10. Some of the clothes is packed away in the attic.

____

Exercise 4

Correct the errors in subject-verb agreement in the following paragraph. Copy the paragraph on a piece of notebook paper and make corrections.

> Dear Hiring Manager,
>
> I feels that I am the ideal candidate for the receptionist position at your company. I has three years of experience as a receptionist in a company that is similar to yours. My phone skills and written communication is excellent. These skills, and others that I have learned on the job, helps me understand that every person in a company helps make the business a success. At my current job, the team always say that I am very helpful. Everyone appreciate when I go the extra mile to get the job done right. My current employer and coworkers feels that I am an asset to the team. I is efficient

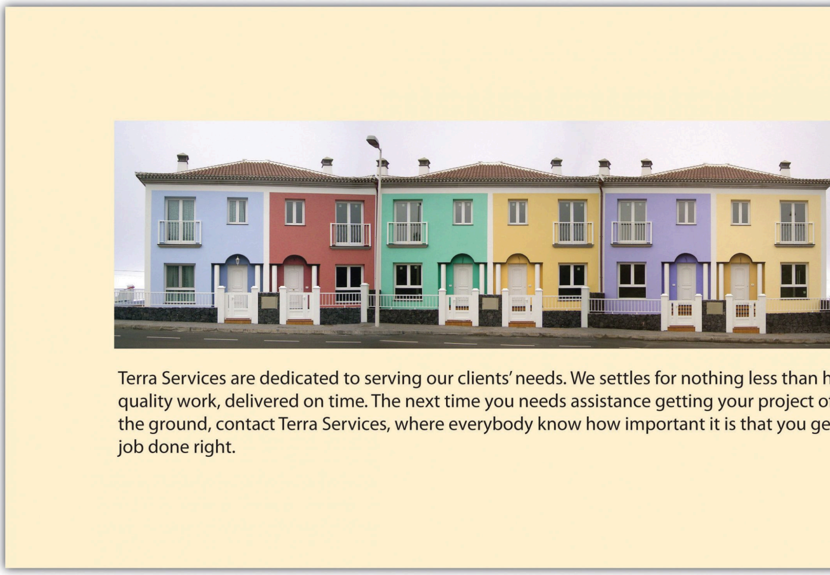
and organized. Is there any other details about me that you would like to know? If so, please contact me. Here are my résumé. You can reach me by e-mail or phone. I looks forward to speaking with you in person.

Thanks,

Felicia Fellini

Writing at Work

Figure 2.5 Advertisement



Imagine that you are a prospective client and that you saw this ad online. Would you call Terra Services to handle your next project? Probably not! Mistakes in subject-verb agreement can cost a company business. Paying careful attention to grammatical details ensures professionalism that clients will recognize and respect.

Key Takeaways

- Parts of sentences must agree in number, person, case, and gender.
- A verb must always agree with its subject in

number. A singular subject requires a singular verb; a plural subject requires a plural verb.

- Irregular verbs do not follow a predictable pattern in their singular and plural forms. Common irregular verbs are *to be*, *to have*, and *to do*.
- A compound subject is formed when two or more nouns are joined by the words *and*, *or*, or *nor*.
- In some sentences, the subject and verb may be separated by a phrase or clause, but the verb must still agree with the subject.
- Indefinite pronouns, such as *anyone*, *each*, *everyone*, *many*, *no one*, and *something*, refer to unspecified people or objects. Most indefinite pronouns are singular.
- A collective noun is a noun that identifies more than one person, place, or thing and treats those people, places, or things one singular unit. Collective nouns require singular verbs.
- In sentences that begin with *here* and *there*, the subject follows the verb.
- In questions, the subject follows the verb.

Writing Application

Use your knowledge of subject-verb agreement to write one of the following:

1. An advertisement for a potential company
2. A memo to all employees of a particular company
3. A cover letter describing your qualifications to a potential employer

Be sure to include at least the following:

- One collective noun
- One irregular verb
- One question

123. Verb Tense

[AUTHOR REMOVED AT REQUEST OF ORIGINAL PUBLISHER]

Learning Objectives

1. Use the correct regular verb tense in basic sentences.
2. Use the correct irregular verb tense in basic sentences.

Suppose you must give an oral presentation about what you did last summer. How do you make it clear that you are talking about the past and not about the present or the future? Using the correct verb tense can help you do this.

It is important to use the proper verb tense. Otherwise, your listener might judge you harshly. Mistakes in tense often leave a listener or reader with a negative impression.

Regular Verbs

Verbs indicate actions or states of being in the past, present, or future using tenses. Regular verbs follow regular patterns when shifting from the present to past tense. For example, to form a past-tense or past-participle verb form, add -*ed* or -*d* to the end of a verb. You can avoid mistakes by understanding this basic pattern.

Verb tense identifies the time of action described in a sentence.

Verbs take different forms to indicate different tenses. Verb tenses indicate

- an action or state of being in the present,
- an action or state of being in the past,
- an action or state of being in the future.

Helping verbs, such as *be* and *have*, also work to create verb tenses, such as the future tense.

Present Tense: Time *walks* to the store. (Singular subject)
Present Tense: Sue and Kimmy *walk* to the store. (Plural subject)
Past Tense: Yesterday, they *walked* to the store to buy some bread. (Singular subject)

Exercise 1

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct form of the verb in simple present, simple past, or simple future tenses. Write the corrected sentence on your own sheet of paper.

1. The Dust Bowl (is, was, will be) a name given to a period of very destructive dust storms that occurred in the United States during the 1930s.
2. Historians today (consider, considered, will consider) The Dust Bowl to be one of the worst weather of events in American history.
3. The Dust Bowl mostly (affects, affected, will affect)

the states of Kansas, Colorado, Oklahoma, Texas, and New Mexico.

4. Dust storms (continue, continued, will continue) to occur in these dry regions, but not to the devastating degree of the 1930s.
5. The dust storms during The Dust Bowl (cause, caused, will cause) irreparable damage to farms and the environment for a period of several years.
6. When early settlers (move, moved, will move) into this area, they (remove, removed, will remove) the natural prairie grasses in order to plant crops and graze their cattle.
7. They did not (realize, realized, will realize) that the grasses kept the soil in place.
8. There (is, was, will be) also a severe drought that (affects, affected, will affect) the region.
9. The worst dust storm (happens, happened, will happen) on April 14, 1935, a day called Black Sunday.
10. The Dust Bowl era finally came to end in 1939 when the rains (arrive, arrived, will arrive).
11. Dust storms (continue, continued, will continue) to affect the region, but hopefully they will not be as destructive as the storms of the 1930s.

Irregular Verbs

The past tense of irregular verbs is not formed using the patterns that regular verbs follow. Study Table 2.1 "Irregular Verbs", which lists the most common irregular verbs.

Tip

The best way to learn irregular verbs is to memorize them. With the help of a classmate, create flashcards of irregular verbs and test yourselves until you master them.

Table 2.1 Irregular Verbs

Simple Present	Past	Simple Present	Past
be	was, were	lose	lost
become	became	make	made
begin	began	mean	meant
blow	blew	meet	met
break	broke	pay	paid
bring	brought	put	put
build	built	quit	quit
burst	burst	read	read
buy	bought	ride	rode
catch	caught	ring	rang
choose	chose	rise	rose
come	came	run	ran
cut	cut	say	said
dive	dove (dived)	see	saw
do	did	seek	sought
draw	drew	sell	sold
drink	drank	send	sent
drive	drove	set	set
eat	ate	shake	shook
fall	fell	shine	shone (shined)
feed	fed	shrink	shrank (shrunk)
feel	felt	sing	sang
fight	fought	sit	sat
find	found	sleep	slept
fly	flew	speak	spoke
forget	forgot	spend	spent
forgive	forgave	spring	sprang
freeze	froze	stand	stood
get	got	steal	stole

Simple Present	Past	Simple Present	Past
give	gave	strike	struck
go	went	swim	swam
grow	grew	swing	swung
have	had	take	took
hear	heard	teach	taught
hide	hid	tear	tore
hold	held	tell	told
hurt	hurt	think	thought
keep	kept	throw	threw
know	knew	understand	understood
lay	laid	wake	woke
lead	led	wear	wore
leave	left	win	won
let	let	wind	wound

Here we consider using irregular verbs.

Present Tense: Lauren *keeps* all her letters.
Past Tense: Lauren *kept* all her letters.
Future Tense: Lauren *will keep* all her letters.

Exercise 2

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct form of the irregular verb in simple present, simple past, or simple future tense. Copy the corrected sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. Marina finally (forgived, forgave, will forgive) her sister for snooping around her room.
2. The house (shook, shaked, shakes) as the airplane rumbled overhead.
3. I (buyed, bought, buy) several items of clothing at the thrift store on Wednesday.
4. She (put, putted, puts) the lotion in her shopping basket and proceeded to the checkout line.
5. The prized goose (layed, laid, lay) several golden eggs last night.
6. Mr. Batista (teached, taught, taughted) the class how to use correct punctuation.
7. I (drink, drank, will drink) several glasses of sparkling cider instead of champagne on New Year's Eve next year.
8. Although Hector (growed, grew, grows) three inches in one year, we still called him "Little Hector."
9. Yesterday our tour guide (lead, led, will lead) us through the maze of people in Times Square.
10. The rock band (burst, bursted, bursts) onto the music scene with their catchy songs.

Exercise 3

On your own sheet of paper, write a sentence using the correct form of the verb tense shown below.

1. Throw (past)
2. Paint (simple present)
3. Smile (future)
4. Tell (past)
5. Share (simple present)

Maintaining Consistent Verb Tense

Consistent verb tense means the same verb tense is used throughout a sentence or a paragraph. As you write and revise, it is important to use the same verb tense consistently and to avoid shifting from one tense to another unless there is a good reason for the tense shift. In the following box, see whether you notice the difference between a sentence with consistent tense and one with inconsistent tense.

Inconsistent tense:
The crowd *starts* cheering as Melina *approached* the finish line.
Consistent tense:
The crowd *started* cheering as Melina *approached* the finish line.
Consistent tense:
The crowd *starts* cheering as Melina *approaches* the finish line.

Tip

In some cases, clear communication will call for different tenses. Look at the following example:

> When I was a teenager, I *wanted* to be a fire fighter, but not I *am studying* computer science.

If the time frame for each action or state is different, a tense shift is appropriate.

Exercise 4

Edit the following paragraph by correcting the inconsistent verb tense. Copy the corrected paragraph onto your own sheet of paper.

In the Middle Ages, most people lived in villages and work as agricultural laborers, or peasants. Every village has a "lord," and the peasants worked on his land. Much of what they produce go to the lord and his family. What little food was leftover goes to support the peasants' families. In return for their labor, the lord offers them protection. A peasant's day usually began before sunrise and involves long hours of backbreaking work, which includes plowing the land, planting seeds, and cutting crops for harvesting. The working life of a peasant in the Middle Ages is usually demanding and exhausting.

Writing at Work

Read the following excerpt from a work e-mail:

I would like to highlight an important concern that comes up after our meeti
week. During the meeting, we agree to conduct a series of interviews over th
several months in which we hired new customer service representatives. Bef
do that, however, I would like to review your experiences with the Custome
Relationship Management Program. Please suggest a convenient time next
for us to meet so that we can discuss this important matter.

The inconsistent tense in the e-mail will very likely distract the reader from its overall point. Most likely, your coworkers will not correct your verb tenses or call attention to grammatical errors, but it is important to keep in mind that errors such as these do have a subtle negative impact in the workplace.

Key Takeaways

- Verb tense helps you express when an event takes place.
- Regular verbs follow regular patterns when shifting from present to past tense.
- Irregular verbs do not follow regular, predictable patterns when shifting from present to past tense.
- Using consistent verb tense is a key element to effective writing.

Writing Application

Tell a family story. You likely have several family stories to choose from, but pick the one that you find most interesting to write about. Use as many details as you can in the telling. As you write and proofread, make sure your all your verbs are correct and the tenses are consistent.

124. Capitalization

[AUTHOR REMOVED AT REQUEST OF ORIGINAL PUBLISHER]

Learning Objectives

1. Learn the basic rules of capitalization.
2. Identify common capitalization errors.

Text messages, casual e-mails, and instant messages often ignore the rules of capitalization. In fact, it can seem unnecessary to capitalize in these contexts. In other, more formal forms of communication, however, knowing the basic rules of capitalization and using capitalization correctly gives the reader the impression that you choose your words carefully and care about the ideas you are conveying.

Capitalize the First Word of a Sentence

Incorrect: the museum has a new butterfly exhibit.
Correct: The museum has a new butterfly exhibit.
Incorrect: cooking can be therapeutic.
Correct: Cooking can be therapeutic.

Capitalize Proper Nouns

Proper nouns—the names of specific people, places, objects, streets, buildings, events, or titles of individuals—are always capitalized.

Incorrect: He grew up in <u>h</u>arlem, <u>n</u>ew <u>y</u>ork.
Correct: He grew up in <u>H</u>arlem, <u>N</u>ew <u>Y</u>ork.
Incorrect: The <u>s</u>ears <u>t</u>ower in <u>c</u>hicago has a new name.
Correct: The <u>S</u>ears <u>T</u>ower in <u>C</u>hicago has a new name.

Tip

Always capitalize nationalities, races, languages, and religions. For example, American, African American, Hispanic, Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and so on.

Do not capitalize nouns for people, places, things, streets, buildings, events, and titles when the noun is used in general or common way. See the following chart for the difference between proper nouns and common nouns.

Common Noun	**Proper Noun**
museum	The Art Institute of Chicago
theater	Apollo Theater
country	Malaysia
uncle	Uncle Javier
doctor	Dr. Jackson
book	*Pride and Prejudice*
college	Smith College
war	the Spanish-American War
historical event	The Renaissance

Exercise 1

On your own sheet of paper, write five proper nouns for each common noun that is listed. The first one has been done for you.

Common noun: river

1. Nile River
2.
3.
4.
5.

Common noun: musician

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Common noun: magazine

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Capitalize Days of the Week, Months of the Year, and Holidays

Incorrect: On wednesday, I will be traveling to Austin for a music festival.
Correct: On Wednesday, I will be traveling to Austin for a music festival.
Incorrect: The fourth of july is my favorite holiday.
Correct: The Fourth of July is my favorite holiday.

Capitalize Titles

Incorrect: The play, *fences*, by August Wilson is one of my favorites.

Correct: The play, *Fences*, by August Wilson is one of my favorites.
Incorrect: The president of the united states will be speaking at my university.
Correct: The President of the United States will be speaking at my university.

Tip

Computer-related words such as "Internet" and "World Wide Web" are usually capitalized; however, "e-mail" and "online" are never capitalized.

Exercise 2

Edit the following sentences by correcting the capitalization of the titles or names.

1. The prince of england enjoys playing polo.
2. “Ode to a nightingale” is a sad poem.
3. My sister loves to read magazines such as the new yorker.
4. *The house on Mango street* is an excellent novel written by Sandra Cisneros.
5. My physician, dr. alvarez, always makes me feel comfortable in her office.

Exercise 3

Edit the following paragraphs by correcting the capitalization.

> david grann’s *the lost City of Z* mimics the snake-like winding of the amazon River. The three distinct Stories that are introduced are like twists in the River. First, the Author describes his own journey to the amazon in the present day, which is contrasted by an account of percy fawcett’s voyage in 1925 and a depiction of James Lynch’s expedition in 1996. Where does the river lead these explorers? the answer is one that both the Author and the reader are hungry to discover.
>
> The first lines of the preface pull the reader in immediately because we know the author, david grann, is lost in the amazon. It is a compelling beginning not only because it’s thrilling but also

because this is a true account of grann's experience. grann has dropped the reader smack in the middle of his conflict by admitting the recklessness of his decision to come to this place. the suspense is further perpetuated by his unnerving observation that he always considered himself A Neutral Witness, never getting personally involved in his stories, a notion that is swiftly contradicted in the opening pages, as the reader can clearly perceive that he is in a dire predicament—and frighteningly involved.

Writing at Work

Did you know that, if you use all capital letters to convey a message, the capital letters come across like shouting? In addition, all capital letters are actually more difficult to read and may annoy the reader. To avoid "shouting" at or annoying your reader, follow the rules of capitalization and find other ways to emphasize your point.

Key Takeaways

- Learning and applying the basic rules of capitalization is a fundamental aspect of good writing.
- Identifying and correcting errors in capitalization is an important writing skill.

Writing Application

Write a one-page biography. Make sure to identify people, places, and dates and use capitalization correctly.

125. Inclusive Pronoun Rules

By Erin Kelly, Sara Humphreys, Natalie Boldt, and Nancy Ami

Rules to consider are those that vary not just based on the particular group to whom you are writing, but also those that are open to debate. A good example of this sort of rule is the case of what is now called "singular they."

If you were learning English grammar in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries (the 1700s or the 1800s), you would have been taught that a **pronoun** must agree with its antecedent. In plain English: a **pronoun** is a word that stands in for a **noun**—it needs to match that noun in some important ways. This rule leads to the following sorts of examples:

- CORRECT: The **box** is heavy, so **it** will break the table. ("It" agrees with "box" in that it is singular in number—there is ONE box—and it stands in for things, like boxes but not people.)
- CORRECT: **Students** must bring **their** books to class. ("Their" agrees with "students" in that there is more than one student and they/their/them stands in for people.)
- CORRECT: **Thomas** doesn't like to read; **he** prefers to play cricket. ("He" agrees with "Thomas" in that it is singular in number and gender. Thomas is traditionally a male name, and he is a pronoun for male people.)

So far, so good. But what if you want to refer to one person in a group that includes both men and women and some non-binary people?

According to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century rules, you would be given the following examples:

- ERROR: **Each writer** must bring to the act of writing poetry **their** wit and imagination.
- CORRECT: **Each writer** must bring to the act of writing poetry **his** wit and imagination.
- ERROR: **Each writer** must bring to the act of writing poetry **her** wit and imagination.

The logic underpinning these examples is that "each writer" is singular (one writer), so "their" is a mistake because it doesn't agree in number. But what's wrong with "her"? After all, there were male and female poets in the 1600s and 1700s. Had you asked this question, a teacher might have patiently explained to you that the **male singular pronoun** (**he/his**) is universal—it can stand in for a singular male person (like Thomas) or for a generic, neutral human being who might happen to be male or female. The **female singular pronoun** can't do the same thing. Popular thinking at the time was that gender doesn't matter when it comes to **pronouns** in the same way it does in relation to people. "He" can stand in for any person.

By the twentieth century, feminists had persuaded a lot of people that it is problematic to see the **male pronoun** as "universal." If it's okay to have a singular pronoun stand in for any example of a person, some asked, why does it need to always and only be the male pronoun? Doesn't this sort of language suggest to women that they don't really count (much in the same way that terms like "fireman" or "chairman" imply that the jobs we now more commonly refer to as "firefighter" or "chair" are only for men)? In their efforts to create more **gender inclusive** (sometimes also called **gender neutral**) language, they offered the following alternatives:

- CORRECT: Each writer must bring to the act of writing poetry **his or her** wit and imagination. (Adding "or her" makes the sentence more gender inclusive, and both "his" and "her" are singular, just like "Each writer.")
- CORRECT: Each writer must bring to the act of writing poetry **his/her** wit and imagination. (The slash in "his/her" here stands in for "or" and thus conveys the same meaning as the previous example—but in a more concise way.)
- CORRECT: Each writer must bring to the act of writing poetry **her/his** wit and imagination. (The slash in "her/his" here stands in for "or" and has the same significance as in the previous example—but putting "her" first implies that the male pronoun doesn't always need to take precedence, much less be seen as universal.)
- CORRECT: Each writer must bring to the act of writing poetry **her** wit and imagination. (Here the pronoun matches the referent in number; both are singular. And if the "gender" of a pronoun doesn't really matter, then why not use "her"?)
- CORRECT: **All writers** must bring to the act of writing poetry **their** wit and imagination. (An easy easy way to make English sentences more gender inclusive is to revise to make the nouns being referred to plural—that way, one can use "they/their": a pronoun that is not only plural but also

doesn't indicate gender. A group of men, a group of women, or a group of men and women can all be referred to as "they.")

For most readers, gender-biased language (such as referring to all people as "he") seems odd, maybe even wrong. But there may still be some debates about which of the "correct" options above is best—some find **"his or her**" unnecessarily wordy while others find **"his/her**" awkward.

And in the past twenty years or so, truly **gender-neutral** singular pronouns have been suggested as a way of allowing writers and speakers to refer to an individual person whose gender is not known or who identifies as non-binary. You might see or hear the following:

- Ze, xe, se, ey, vey, ver, tey, e, ou (instead of he or she)
- Zim, xem, sie, em, ver, ter, eir, hir (instead of him or her)[1]

The development that seems most likely to stick is the use of the **existing pronoun "they"** as a **gender-neutral singular**. This change means seeing the following examples as correct:

- CORRECT: **Each writer** must bring to the act of writing poetry **their** wit and imagination.

1. [2]
2. [1]

- CORRECT: When **a student** writes a successful essay, the instructor will ask **them** to submit this piece of work for the annual writing award.
- CORRECT: **A scientist** can get into trouble by being too sure of what **they** can do alone.
- CORRECT: My friend **Blake** takes **their** schoolwork very seriously.

In all of these cases, the **pronoun** "they" (or variations on it like "their" and "them") refers back to a person (singular) whose gender is unknown and/or to a person who identifies as non-binary. Depending on your reading experiences, these sentences might seem unremarkable, strange, or even examples of grammatical errors.

But **singular they** is not only becoming more widely accepted but also allowed (and increasingly endorsed) by some important style guides for academic and journalistic writing such as APA, AP, and MLA.[3] A further example is that most university style guides[5] (for writing internal memos, marketing materials and so on) follow inclusive grammar protocols. Of course, you need to make your decisions based on the rhetorical situation and context. This is where your rhetorical skills come into play along with your knowledge of grammar.

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3. [4]
4. [2]
5. [6]
6. [3]

1. If you want to see more options and learn more about the history, dating back at least to the nineteenth century, to create a widely accepted gender-neutral singular pronoun in English, read Dennis E. Barron's article "The Epicene Pronoun: The Word that Failed" in *American Speech* 56, no. 2 (1981): 83-97, DOI: 10.2307/455007 or his more recent article in *The Globe and Mail*: "The Canadian Politics—and History—of 'He,' 'She' and 'They,'" February 21, 2020, https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-the-canadian-politics-and-history-of-he-she-and-they/. ↵
2. See, for example, the following statements issued by these organisations: "Singular They," APA Style, American Psychological Association, accessed September 14, 2020, https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/grammar/singular-they; Karen Hare, "AP Style Change: Singular They is Acceptable in 'Limited Cases,'" *Poynter*, March 24, 2017, https://www.poynter.org/reporting-editing/2017/ap-style-change-singular-they-is-acceptable-in-limited-cases/; "How Do I Use Singular They?" MLA Style Center, Modern Language Association, March 4, 2020, https://style.mla.org/using-singular-they/. ↵
3. By way of example, check out the University of Victoria's "Editorial Style Guide": https://www.uvic.ca/communicationsmarketing/assets/docs/style-guide-web.pdf ↵

126. Pronouns

[AUTHOR REMOVED AT REQUEST OF ORIGINAL PUBLISHER]

Learning Objectives

1. Identify pronouns and their antecedents.
2. Use pronouns and their antecedents correctly.

If there were no pronouns, all types of writing would be quite tedious to read. We would soon be frustrated by reading sentences like *Bob said that Bob was tired* or *Christina told the class that Christina received an* A. Pronouns help a writer avoid constant repetition. Knowing just how pronouns work is an important aspect of clear and concise writing.

Pronoun Agreement

A pronoun is a word that takes the place of (or refers back to) a noun or another pronoun. The word or words a pronoun refers to is called the antecedent of the pronoun.

1. *Lani* complained that *she* was exhausted. [use when you know that Lani (or whoever is the subject of the sentence) uses pronouns she/her/hers]

- *She* refers to *Lani*.
- *Lani* is the antecedent of *she*.

2. *Jeremy* left the party early, so I did not see *him* until Monday at work. [use when you know that Jeremy (or whoever is the subject of the sentence) uses pronouns he/him/his]

- *Him* refers to Jeremy.
- *Jeremy* is the antecedent of *him.*

3. *Crina and Rosalie* have been best friends ever since *they* were freshman in high school.

- *They* refers to *Crina and Rosalie.*
- *Crina and Rosalie* is the antecedent of *they*.

Pronoun agreement errors occur when the pronoun and the antecedent do not match or agree with each other. In other words, you know that Lani uses pronouns she/her/hers and then refer to her as a him. Or you know that Jeremy uses pronouns he/him/his and refer to him as a her. In addition, there are several types of pronoun agreement, but we must also keep in mind the ways in which we use pronouns in a more inclusive way.

Agreement in Number

If the pronoun takes the place of or refers to a singular noun, the pronoun is singular but can also be singular plural (they/them/their) when you're not sure of someone's gender or want to include non-binary people–see previous chapter on Inclusive Pronoun Rules for more information on the "singular they."

Correct: If a *student* (sing.) wants to return a book to the bookstore, *he or she* (sing.) must have a receipt.
*If it seems too wordy to use *he or she*, change the antecedent to a plural noun.
Correct: If *students* (plur.) want to return a book to the bookstore, *they* (plur.) must have a receipt.
Also Correct: If a student (sing.) wants to return a book to the bookstore, they (plur.) must have a receipt.

Agreement in Person

	Singular Pronouns			**Plural Pronouns**		
First Person	I	me	my (mine)	we	us	our (ours)
Second Person	you	you	your (yours)	you	you	your (your)
Third Person	he, she, it, they	him, her, it, them	his, her, its	they	them	their (theirs)

If you use a consistent person, your reader is less likely to be confused.

Incorrect: When a *person* (3rd) goes to a restaurant, *you* (2nd) should leave a tip.
Correct: When a *person* (3rd) goes to a restaurant, *he or she* (3rd) should leave a tip.
Correct: When a person (3rd) goes to a restaurant, they (3rd) should leave a tip.
Correct: When *we* (1st) go to a restaurant, *I should* (1st) should leave a tip.

Exercise 1

Please read the following paragraph. If you know that Diana goes by pronouns she/her/hers, then correct the pronoun agreement errors in number and person. If Diana is non-binary or you're not sure, then please explain why you would not change the "singular they."

> Over spring break I visited my older cousin, Diana, and they took me to a butterfly exhibit at a museum. Diana and I have been close ever since she was young. Our mothers are twin sisters, and she is inseparable! Diana knows how much I love butterflies, so it was their special present to me. I have a soft spot for caterpillars too. I love them because something about the way it transforms is so interesting to me. One summer my grandmother gave me a butterfly growing kit, and you got to see the entire life cycle of five Painted Lady butterflies. I even got to set it free. So when my cousin said they wanted to take me to the butterfly exhibit, I was really excited!

Indefinite Pronouns and Agreement

Indefinite pronouns do not refer to a specific person or thing and are usually singular. However, as stated in the previous chapter Inclusive Pronoun Rules, the "singular they" is also appropriate when used with indefinite singular pronouns. The following are some common indefinite singular and plural pronouns.

Common Indefinite Pronouns				
all	each one	few	nothing	several
any	each other	many	one	some
anybody	either	neither	one another	somebody
anything	everybody	nobody	oneself	someone
both	everyone	none	other	something
each	everything	no one	others	anyone

Indefinite pronoun agreement

Correct: *Everyone* (sing.) should do what *they* (plur.) can to help.

Correct: *Everyone* (sing.) should do what *he or she* (sing.) can to help.

Correct: *Someone* (sing.) left *their* (plur.) backpack in the library.

Correct: *Someone* (sing.) left *his or her* (sing.) backpack in the library.

Collective Nouns

Collective nouns suggest more than one person but are usually considered singular. Look over the following examples of collective nouns.

Common Collective Nouns		
audience	faculty	public
band	family	school
class	government	society
committee	group	team
company	jury	tribe

Collective noun agreement

Incorrect: Lara's *company* (sing.) will have *their* (plur.) annual picnic next week. (we know it's just one company and not more than one [count])

Correct: Lara's *company* (sing.) will have *its* (sing.) annual picnic next week.

Exercise 2

Complete the following sentences by inserting an appropriate pronoun. Copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper. Then circle the noun the pronoun replaces.

1. In the current economy, nobody wants to waste _________ money on frivolous things.
2. If anybody chooses to go to medical school, _________ must be prepared to work long hours.
3. The plumbing crew did _________ best to repair the broken pipes before the next ice storm.

4. If someone is rude to you, try giving _________ a smile in return.
5. My family has _________ faults, but I still love them no matter what.
6. The school of education plans to train _________ students to be literacy tutors.
7. The commencement speaker said that each student has a responsibility toward _________.
8. My mother's singing group has _________ rehearsals on Thursday evenings.
9. No one should suffer _________ pains alone.
10. I thought the flock of birds lost _________ way in the storm.

Subject and Object Pronouns

Subject pronouns function as subjects in a sentence. Object pronouns function as the object of a verb or of a preposition.

Singular Pronouns		**Plural Pronouns**	
Subject	**Object**	**Subject**	**Object**
I	me	we	us
you	you	you	you
he, she, it, they	him, her, it, them	they	them

The following sentences show pronouns as subjects:

1. *She* loves the Blue Ridge Mountains in the fall.
2. Every summer, *they* picked up litter from national parks.

The following sentences show pronouns as objects:

1. Marie leaned over and kissed *him*.
2. Jane moved *it* to the corner.

Tip

Note that a pronoun can also be the object of a preposition.

Near *them*, the children played.

My mother stood between *us*.

The pronouns *us* and *them* are objects of the prepositions *near* and *between*. They answer the questions *near* whom? And *between* whom?

Compound subject pronouns are two or more pronouns joined by a conjunction or a preposition that function as the subject of the sentence.

The following sentences show pronouns with compound subjects:

Incorrect: *Me and Harriet* visited the Grand Canyon last summer.

Correct: *Harriet and I* visited the Grand Canyon last summer.

Correct: Jenna accompanied *Harriet and me* on our trip.

Tip

Note that object pronouns are never used in the subject position. One way to remember this rule is to remove the other subject in a compound subject, leave only the pronoun, and see whether the sentence makes sense. For example, *Me visited the Grand Canyon last summer* sounds immediately incorrect.

Compound object pronouns are two or more pronouns joined by a conjunction or a preposition that function as the object of the sentence.

Incorrect: I have a good feeling about *Janice and* I.

Correct: I have a good feeling about *Janice and me*.

Tip

It is correct to write *Janice and me*, as opposed to *me and Janice*. Just remember it is more polite to refer to yourself last.

Writing at Work

In casual conversation, people sometimes mix up subject and object pronouns. For instance, you might say, “Me and Donnie went to a movie last night.” However, when you are writing or speaking at work or in any other formal situation, you need to remember the distinctions between subject and object pronouns and be able to correct yourself. These subtle grammar corrections will enhance your professional image and reputation.

Exercise 3

Revise the following sentences in which the subject and object pronouns are used incorrectly. Copy the revised sentence onto your own sheet of paper. Write a C for each sentence that is correct.

1. Meera and me enjoy doing yoga together on Sundays.

____
____

2. She and him have decided to sell their house.

____
____

3. Between you and I, I do not think Jeffrey will win the election.

____
____

4. Us and our friends have game night the first Thursday of every month.

____
____

5. They and I met while on vacation in Mexico.

____
____

6. Napping on the beach never gets boring for Alice and I.

____
____

7. New Year's Eve is not a good time for she and I to have a serious talk.

____
____

8. You exercise much more often than me.

____
____

9. I am going to the comedy club with Yolanda and she.

____
____

10. The cooking instructor taught her and me a lot.

____
____

Who versus *Whom*

Who or *whoever* is always the subject of a verb. Use *who* or *whoever* when the pronoun performs the action indicated by the verb.

Who won the marathon last Tuesday?

I wonder *who* came up with that terrible idea!

On the other hand, *whom* and *whomever* serve as objects. They are used when the pronoun does *not* perform an action. Use *whom* or *whomever* when the pronoun is the direct object of a verb or the object of a preposition.

Whom did Frank marry the third time? (direct object of verb)

From *whom* did you buy that old record player? (object of preposition)

Tip

If you are having trouble deciding when to use *who* and *whom*, try this trick. Take the following sentence:

Who/Whom do I consider my best friend?

Reorder the sentence in your head, using either *he* or *him* in place of *who* or *whom*.

I consider *him* my best friend.

I consider *he* my best friend.

Which sentence sounds better? The first one, of course. So the trick is, if you can use *him*, you should use *whom*.

Exercise 4

Complete the following sentences by adding *who* or *whom*. Copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. _________ hit the home run?
2. I remember _________ won the Academy Award for Best Actor last year.
3. To _________ is the letter addressed?
4. I have no idea _________ left the iron on, but I am going to find out.
5. _________ are you going to recommend for the internship?
6. With _________ are you going to Hawaii?
7. No one knew _________ the famous actor was.
8. _________ in the office knows how to fix the copy machine?
9. From _________ did you get the concert tickets?
10. No one knew _________ ate the cake mom was saving.

Key Takeaways

- Pronouns and their antecedents need to agree in number and person.
- Most indefinite pronouns are singular.

- Collective nouns are usually singular.
- Pronouns can function as subjects or objects.
- Subject pronouns are never used as objects, and object pronouns are never used as subjects.
- *Who* serves as a subject of a verb.
- *Whom* serves as an object of a sentence or the object of a preposition.

Writing Application

Write about what makes an ideal marriage or long-term relationship. Provide specific details to back up your assertions. After you have written a few paragraphs, go back and proofread your paper for correct pronoun usage.

127. Gender-Inclusive Language

What this handout is about?

This handout will help you make decisions about using gendered language in your writing.

What is gendered language, and why should you be aware of it?

You have probably encountered documents that use masculine nouns and pronouns to refer to subject(s) whose gender is unclear or variable, or to groups that contain people who are not actually men. For example, the U.S. Declaration of Independence states that "all men are created equal." Generations of Americans have been taught that in this context, the word "men" should be read as including both men and women. Other common instances of gendered language include words that assume connections between jobs or roles and gender (like "policeman") and language conventions that differ depending on the gender of the person being discussed (like using titles that indicate a person's marital status).

English has changed since the Declaration of Independence was written. Most readers no longer understand the word "man" to be synonymous with "person," so clear communication requires writers to be more precise. And using gender-neutral language has become standard practice in both journalistic and academic writing, as you'll see if you consult the style manuals for different academic disciplines (APA, MLA, and Chicago, for example).

Tackling gendered references in your writing can be challenging, especially since there isn't (and may never be) a universally agreed upon set of concrete guidelines on which to base your decisions. But there are a number of different strategies you can "mix and match" as necessary.

Gendered nouns

"Man" and words ending in "-man" are the most commonly used gendered nouns in English. These words are easy to spot and replace with more neutral language, even in contexts where many readers strongly expect the gendered noun. For example, Star Trek writers developing material for contemporary viewers were able to create a more inclusive version of the famous phrase "where no man has gone before" while still preserving its pleasing rhythm: Star Trek explorers now venture "where no one has gone before."

Here's a list of gendered nouns and some alternatives listed below. Check a thesaurus for alternatives to gendered nouns not included in this list.

Gendered noun	Gender-neutral noun
man	person, individual
mankind	people, human beings, humanity
freshman	first-year student
man-made	machine-made, synthetic, artificial
the common man	the average person
chairman	chair, chairperson, coordinator, head
mailman	mail carrier, letter carrier, postal worker
policeman	police officer
steward, stewardess	flight attendant
actor, actress	actor
congressman	legislator, congressional representative
Sir (in "Dear Sir," etc.)	Dear Sir or Madam, Dear Editor, Dear Members of the Se

Sometimes writers modify nouns that refer to jobs or positions to indicate the sex of the person holding that position. This happens most often when the sex of the person goes against conventional expectations. For example, some people may assume, perhaps unconsciously, that doctors are men and that nurses are women. Sentences like "The female doctor walked into the room" or "The male nurse walked into the room" reinforce such assumptions. Unless the sex of the subject is important to the meaning of the sentence, it should be omitted. (Here's an example where the health care professional's sex might be relevant: "Some women feel more comfortable seeing female gynecologists.")

Titles and names

Another example of gendered language is the way the titles "Mr.," "Miss," and "Mrs." are used. "Mr." can refer to any man, regardless of whether he is single or married, but "Miss" and "Mrs." define women by whether they are married, which until quite recently meant defining them by their relationships with men. A simple alternative when addressing or referring to a woman is "Ms." (which doesn't indicate marital status).

Another note about titles: some college students are in the habit of addressing most women older than them, particularly teachers, as "Mrs.," regardless of whether the woman in question is married. It's worth knowing that many female faculty and staff (including married women) prefer to be addressed as "Ms." or, if the term applies, "Professor" or "Dr."

Writers sometimes refer to women using only their first names in contexts where they would typically refer to men by their full names, last names, or titles. But using only a person's first name is more informal and can suggest a lack of respect. For example, in academic writing, we don't refer to William Shakespeare as "William" or "Will"; we call him "Shakespeare" or "William Shakespeare." So we should refer to Jane Austen as "Austen" or "Jane Austen," not just "Jane."

Similarly, in situations where you would refer to a man by his full title, you should do the same for a woman. For example, if you wouldn't speak of American President Reagan "Ronald" or "Ronnie," avoid referring to British Prime Minister Thatcher as "Margaret" or "Maggie."

Pronouns

A pronoun is a word that substitutes for a noun. The English language provides pronoun options for references to masculine nouns (for example, "he" can substitute for "Juan"), feminine nouns ("she" can replace "Keisha"), and neutral/non-human nouns ("it" can stand in for "a tree"). But English offers no widely-accepted pronoun choice for gender-neutral, third-person singular nouns that refer to people ("the writer," "a student," or "someone"). As we discussed at the beginning of this handout, the practice of using masculine pronouns ("he," "his," "him") as the "default" is outdated and will confuse or offend many readers.

So what can you do when you're faced with one of those gender-neutral or gender-ambiguous language situations? You have several options.

1. Use more than one pronoun

In situations where a pronoun needs to refer to a person whose gender isn't known, writers sometimes use "he or she" or "he/she" (or even "s/he"), "her/him," etc., as we did in the example just above. Putting the masculine form first is more conventional; "she or he" may distract readers but does make the point that women are not just being added onto the generic "he."

Here are some examples:

While this solution specifically includes women and men and works well in many situations, some readers find it stylistically awkward, especially when "she or he" or "she/he" is repeated many times throughout a piece of writing. Also, by going out of its way to refer to multiple genders, this approach risks calling attention to gender in situations where it's not relevant. And using "she or he" or similar constructions can also inadvertently exclude people who do not refer to themselves using either pronoun.

2. Alternate genders and pronouns

Another strategy for gender-aware writers is alternating genders, using masculine pronouns in some places and feminine ones in others. This option will work only in certain situations, though—usually hypothetical situations in which the referent is equally likely to be male or female. For example, students of all genders use the Writing Center's services, so the author of our staff manual chose to alternate between masculine and feminine pronouns when writing the items in a list of guidelines for writing coaches:

Of course, our staff manual writer had other options, like including both pronouns in each sentence by using "her/his" or "her/him." In this case, though, alternating "he" and "she" conveys the same sense of gender variability and is likely a little easier on the reader, who won't have to pause to process several different options every time a gendered pronoun is needed in the sentence.

Another approach would be to simply repeat "the student," but "ask the student to describe the student's purpose and audience and show how the student has taken them into account in the student's writing" doesn't sound very good. The writer could have used plural forms, like "respond as a reader, explaining what you were thinking as you read their texts so that they can discover where a reader might struggle with their writing," but that sentence doesn't capture the emphasis on one-on-one conversation between writing coach and writer. The switch to "a reader" is jarring when the other nouns are plural. And the writing coach is a particular reader, not a representative for all readers, so switching to "where readers might struggle" doesn't work.

Our staff manual writer's situation is a great example of how useful it is to know several strategies so you can choose the one that best fits your current writing context.

3. Try making the nouns and pronouns plural

If it works for your particular sentence, using plural forms is often an excellent option. Here's an example of a sentence that can easily be rephrased:

If we make "student" plural and adjust the rest of the sentence accordingly, there's no need for gendered language (and no confusion or loss of meaning):

4. Use "they" as a singular pronoun

Most of the time, the word "they" refers to a plural antecedent. For example,

But using "they" with a singular antecedent is not a new phenomenon, and while it remains uncommon in formal writing, it has become quite common in speech. In a conversation, many people would not even notice how "they" is being used here:

Some people are strongly opposed to the use of "they" with singular antecedents and are likely to react badly to writing that uses this approach. Others argue that "they" should be adopted as English's standard third-person, gender-neutral pronoun in all writing and speaking contexts. Keep your audience in mind as you decide whether the singular "they" is a good solution for any gender-related problems in your writing.

What if you're not sure of someone's gender?

You may sometimes find yourself needing to refer to a person whose gender you're uncertain of. Perhaps you are writing a paper about the creator of an ancient text or piece of art whose identity (and therefore gender) is unknown–for example, we are not certain who wrote the 6th-century epic poem "Beowulf." Perhaps you're participating in an online discussion forum where the participants are known only by usernames like “PurpleOctopus25” or “I Love Big Yellow Fish.” You could be writing about someone you don’t personally know whose name is not clearly associated with a particular gender–someone named Sam Smith might be Samuel, Samantha, Samson, or something else–or the person’s name might be in a language you’re unfamiliar with (for example, if English is the only language you speak and read, you might have difficulty guessing the gender associated with a Chinese name). Or maybe you’re discussing a person whose gender identity has changed (like when athlete Bruce Jenner, who was previously regarded as a man, became Caitlyn Jenner, a woman) or is fluid. Perhaps your subject does not fit neatly into the categories of “man” and “woman” or rejects those categories entirely.

In these situations, you may not be able to use “he” or “she”–but “they” also feels a little odd, since you are talking about a specific individual. **Here are some strategies to try in such cases:**

- Refer to the person using a descriptive word or phrase: the writer of Beowulf is frequently referred to as “The Beowulf poet” or (in contexts where “Beowulf” is the only poem being discussed) “the poet.”
- If the person is known to you only by a username, repeat the username or follow the standard practices of the forum–PurpleOctopus25 might become Purple or P.O. in subsequent references. (Advice columnists often use a similar strategy; if “I Love Big Yellow Fish” wrote to ask for advice, the columnist’s response might begin with “Dear Fish Lover.”)
- If the person’s name is known, keep using the name rather than substituting a pronoun. Rephrase as necessary to reduce the number of times you must repeat it: “Blogger Sam Smith’s cats have apparently destroyed Smith’s furniture, stolen Smith’s sandwiches, and terrorized Smith, Smith’s dogs, and Smith’s housemate” could become “Blogger Sam Smith’s cats have apparently destroyed couches, stolen sandwiches, and

terrorized their human and canine housemates."

- Do a little research: if you are writing about a public figure of any kind, chances are that others have also written about that person; you may be able to follow their lead. If you see multiple practices, imitate the ones that seem most respectful.

If you're writing about someone you are in contact with, you can ask how that person would like to be referred to.

What about the content of the paper?

Much discussion about gendered language focuses on choosing the right words, but the kinds of information writers include or omit can also convey values and assumptions about gender. For example, think about the ways Barack and Michelle Obama have been presented in the media. Have you seen many discussions of Barack's weight, hairstyle, and clothing? Many readers and viewers have pointed out that the appearance of female public figures (not just politicians, but actors, writers, activists, athletes, etc.) is discussed more often, more critically, and in far more detail than the appearance of men in similar roles. This pattern suggests that women's appearance matters more than men's does and is interesting and worthy of attention, regardless of the context.

Similarly, have you ever noticed patterns in the way that men's and women's relationships with their families are discussed (in person, online, or elsewhere)? When someone describes what a male parent does for his children as "babysitting" or discusses family leave policies without mentioning how they apply to men, you may wonder whether the speaker or writer is assuming that men are not interested in caring for their children.

These kinds of values and assumptions about gender can weaken arguments. In many of your college writing assignments, you'll be asked to analyze something (an issue, text, event, etc.) and make an evidence-based argument about it. Your readers will critique your arguments in part by assessing the values and assumptions your claims rely on. They may look for evidence of bias, overgeneralization, incomplete knowledge, and so forth. Critically examining the role that gender has played in your decisions about the content of your paper can help you make stronger, more effective arguments that will be persuasive to a wide variety of readers, no matter what your topic is or what position you take.

Checklist for gender-related revisions

As you review your writing, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Have you used "man" or "men" or words containing them to refer to people who may not be men?
2. Have you used "he," "him," "his," or "himself" to refer to people who may not be men?
3. If you have mentioned someone's sex or gender, was it necessary to do so?
4. Do you use any occupational (or other) stereotypes?
5. Do you provide the same kinds of information and descriptions when writing about people of different genders?

Perhaps the best test for gender-inclusive language is to imagine a diverse group of people reading your paper. Would each reader feel respected? Envisioning your audience is a critical skill in every writing context, and revising with a focus on gendered language is a perfect opportunity to practice.

Works Consulted

We consulted these works while writing 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 additional publications. Please do not use this list as a model for the format of your own reference list, as it may not match the citation style you are using. For guidance on formatting citations, please see the UNC Libraries citation tutorial. We revise these tips periodically and welcome feedback.

American Psychological Association. 2010. *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. 6th ed. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

University of Chicago Press. 2017. *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 17th ed. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press.

Essay

A Letter to a Teacher Who Refers to Students as "Ladies and Gentlemen"

by Dylan Kane

Hi! I want to talk to you about something. I've heard you referring to groups of students as "ladies and gentlemen", as in, "let's quiet down ladies and gentlemen" or "alright ladies and gentlemen have a great day". When you use those words, you make an implicit assumption that all of the individuals you are addressing identify as either ladies or gentlemen. Some may identify as transgender, gender nonconforming, genderqueer, or other identities that resonate with them more than male or female. Even if no students in the room use those identifiers, your assumption impacts how they see themselves and how those young people form their identities in the future.

Equity work is a process of becoming thoughtful and purposeful about things that were subconscious before. Language shapes how we think. It's not easy to change, and it takes time. But it's worth doing.

Have you ever taught a transgender student? It was hard to change the pronouns I instinctively wanted to use. I unintentionally misgendered them, often at first, but I got better over time. I noticed that an adult at my school who often referred to students as "ladies and gentlemen" was also the adult who had the most trouble referring to that student by their correct pronouns. It was tough for everyone, but he struggled far longer and often misgendered them publicly. I can't say for sure that one was the cause of the other, but it struck me as a useful object lesson of what can often seem like an abstract idea.

While changing your language to words like "folks" and "y'all" is not likely to change the world, I see it as a microcosm of the change the world does need. For thousands of years, human social norms have changed on a time scale of generations. Change happened slowly. People grew up exposed to different perspectives and as older generations passed on new ideas took root.

Today we have a clearer view of the equitable and empowering world we want for everyone. We can also see how far away we are from that world. Generational change will not be enough; we need action that will change hearts and habits today. And while language is only one piece of the puzzle, a willingness to work consciously to change behavior and construct new social mores is the work that will make the world a better place, one step at a time.

I hope that this letter does not feel angry or resentful. That's not how I feel. Change is hard, but it hope it can also feel empowering. When you become more thoughtful about your language, you are also influencing the way others think and speak, and embracing the potential of every student who enters your classroom. I hope you feel empowered about your role in creating a better world, one microcosm at a time.

128. Adjectives and Adverbs

[AUTHOR REMOVED AT REQUEST OF ORIGINAL PUBLISHER]

Learning Objectives

1. Identify adjectives and adverbs.
2. Use adjectives and adverbs correctly.

Adjectives and adverbs are descriptive words that bring your writing to life.

Adjectives and Adverbs

An adjective is a word that describes a noun or a pronoun. It often answers questions such as *which one*, *what kind*, or *how many*?

1. The *green* sweater belongs to Iris.
2. She looks *beautiful*.

- In sentence 1, the adjective *green* describes the noun *sweater*.
- In sentence 2, the adjective *beautiful* describes the pronoun *she*.

An adverb is a word that describes a verb, an adjective, or another adverb. Adverbs frequently end in *-ly*. They answer questions such as *how*, *to what extent*, *why*, *when*, and *where*.

3. Bertrand sings *horribly*.
4. My sociology instructor is *extremely* wise.

5. He threw the ball *very* accurately.

- In sentence 3, *horribly* describes the verb *sings*. How does Bertrand sing? He sings *horribly*.
- In sentence 4, *extremely* describes the adjective *wise*. How *wise* is the instructor? They are *extremely* wise.
- In sentence 5, *very* describes the adverb *accurately*. How *accurately* did he throw the ball? *Very* accurately.

Sample List of Adjectives & Adverbs	
Adjective	*Adverb*
quiet	quietly
nervous	nervously
hungry	hungrily
curious	curiously
kind	kindly
wild	wildly
suspicious	suspiciously
perfect	perfectly
calm	calmly
exquisite	exquisitely

Exercise 1

Complete the following sentences by adding an appropriate adjective or adverb from the sample list in the previous section. Identify the word as an adjective or an adverb (Adj, Adv). Some words can be used more than once if they fit the context.

1. Frederick _________ choked on the piece of chicken when he saw Margaret walk through the door.
2. His _________ eyes looked at everyone and everything as if they were specimens in a biology lab.
3. Despite her pessimistic views on life, Lauren believes that most people have _________ hearts.
4. Although Stefan took the criticism _________, he was stewing inside.
5. The child developed a _________ imagination because they read a lot of books.
6. Madeleine spoke _________ while she was visiting her grandmother in the hospital.
7. Hector's most _________ possession was his father's bass guitar from the 1970s.
8. My definition of a _________ afternoon is walking to the park on a beautiful day, spreading out my blanket, and losing myself in a good book.
9. She _________ eyed her new neighbor and wondered if she was single.
10. At the party, Denise _________ devoured two pieces of pepperoni pizza and several slices of cantaloupe.

Comparative versus Superlative

Comparative adjectives and adverbs are used to compare two people or things.

1. Jorge is *thin*.
2. Steven is *thinner* than Jorge.

- Sentence 1 describes Jorge with the adjective *thin*.
- Sentence 2 compares Jorge to Steven, stating that Steven is *thinner*. So *thinner* is the comparative form of *thin*.

Form comparatives in one of the following two ways:

1. If the adjective or adverb is a one syllable word, add *-er* to it to form the comparative. For example, *big*, *fast*, and *short* would become *bigger*, *faster*, and *shorter* in the comparative form.
2. If the adjective or adverb is a word of two or more syllables, place the word *more* in front of it to form the comparative. For example, *happily*, *comfortable*, and *jealous* would become *more happily*, *more comfortable*, and *more jealous* in the comparative.

Superlative adjectives and adverbs are used to compare more than two people or two things.

1. Jackie is the *loudest* cheerleader on the squad.
2. Kenyatta was voted the *most confident* student by her graduating class.

- Sentence 1 shows that Jackie is not just *louder* than one other person, but she is the *loudest* of all the cheerleaders on the squad.
- Sentence 2 shows that Kenyatta was voted the *most confident* student of all the students in her class.

Form superlatives in one of the following two ways:

1. If the adjective or adverb is a one-syllable word, add -*est* to form the superlative. For example, *big*, *fast*, and *short* would become *biggest*, *fastest*, and *shortest* in the superlative form.
2. If the adjective or adverb is a word of two or more syllables, place the word *most* in front of it. For example, *happily*, *comfortable*, and *jealous* would become *most happily*, *most comfortable*, and *most jealous* in the superlative form.

Tip

Remember the following exception: If the word has two syllables and ends in -*y*, change the -*y* to an -*i* and add -*est*. For example, *happy* would change to *happiest* in the superlative form; *healthy* would change to *healthiest*.

Exercise 2

Edit the following paragraph by correcting the errors in comparative and superlative adjectives.

Our argument started on the most sunny afternoon that I have ever experienced. Max and I were sitting on my front stoop when I started it. I told him that my dog, Jacko, was more smart than his dog, Merlin. I could not help myself. Merlin never came when he was called, and he chased his tail and barked at rocks. I told Max that Merlin was the most dumbest dog on the block. I guess I was angrier about a bad grade that I received, so I decided to pick on poor little Merlin. Even though Max insulted Jacko too, I felt I had been more mean. The next day I apologized to Max and brought Merlin some of Jacko's treats. When Merlin placed his paw on my knee and licked my hand, I was the most sorry person on the block.

Collaboration

Share and compare your answers with a classmate.

Irregular Words: *Good*, *Well*, *Bad*, and *Badly*

Good, *well*, *bad*, and *badly* are often used incorrectly. Study the following chart to learn the correct usage of these words and their comparative and superlative forms.

		Comparative	Superlative
Adjective	good	better	best
Adverb	well	better	best
Adjective	bad	worse	worst
Adverb	badly	worse	worst

Good versus *Well*

Good is always an adjective—that is, a word that describes a noun or a pronoun. The second sentence is correct because *well* is an adverb that tells how something is done.

> **Incorrect:** Cecilia felt that she had never done so *good* on a test.
>
> **Correct:** Cecilia felt that she had never done so *well* on a test.

Well is always an adverb that describes a verb, adverb, or adjective. The second sentence is correct because *good* is an adjective that describes the noun *score*.

> **Incorrect:** Cecilia's team received a *well* score.
>
> **Correct:** Cecilia's team received a *good* score.

Bad versus *Badly*

Bad is always an adjective. The second sentence is correct because *badly* is an adverb that tells how the speaker did on the test.

> **Incorrect:** I did *bad* on my accounting test because I didn't study.
>
> **Correct:** I did *badly* on my accounting test because I didn't study.

Badly is always an adverb. The second sentence is correct because *bad* is an adjective that describes the noun *thunderstorm*.

> **Incorrect:** The coming thunderstorm looked *badly*.
>
> **Correct:** The coming thunderstorm looked *bad*.

Better and *Worse*

The following are examples of the use of *better* and *worse*:

> Tyra likes sprinting *better* than long distance running.
>
> The traffic is *worse* in Chicago than in Atlanta.

Best and *Worst*

The following are examples of the use of *best* and *worst*:

Tyra sprints *best* of all the other competitors.

Peter finished *worst* of all the runners in the race.

Tip

Remember *better* and *worse* compare two persons or things. *Best* and *worst* compare three or more persons or things.

Exercise 3

Write *good*, *well*, *bad*, or *badly* to complete each sentence.

Copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. Donna always felt _________ if she did not see the sun in the morning.
2. The school board president gave a _________ speech for once.
3. Although my dog, Comet, is mischievous, he always behaves _________ at the dog park.
4. I thought my back injury was _________ at first, but it turned out to be minor.
5. Steve was shaking _________ from the extreme cold.
6. Apple crisp is a very _________ dessert that can be made using whole grains instead of white flour.
7. The meeting with my son's math teacher went very _________.
8. Juan has a _________ appetite, especially when it comes to dessert.
9. Magritte thought the guests had a _________ time at the party because most people left early.
10. She _________ wanted to win the writing contest prize, which included a trip to New York.

Exercise 4

Write the correct comparative or superlative form of the word in parentheses. Copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. This research paper is _________ (good) than my last one.
2. Tanaya likes country music _________ (well) of all.
3. My motorcycle rides _________ (bad) than it did last summer.
4. That is the _________ (bad) joke my father ever told.
5. The hockey team played _________ (badly) than it did last season.
6. Tracey plays guitar _________ (well) than she plays the piano.
7. It will go down as one of the _________ (bad) movies I have ever seen.
8. The deforestation in the Amazon is _________ (bad) than it was last year.
9. Movie ticket sales are _________ (good) this year than last.
10. My husband says mystery novels are the _________ (good) types of books.

Writing at Work

The irregular words *good*, *well*, *bad*, and *badly* are often misused along with their comparative and superlative forms *better*, *best*, *worse*, and *worst*. You may not hear the difference between *worse* and *worst*, and therefore type it incorrectly. In a formal or business-like tone, use each of these words to write eight separate sentences. Assume these sentences will be seen and judged by your current or future employer.

Key Takeaways

- Adjectives describe a noun or a pronoun.
- Adverbs describe a verb, adjective, or another adverb.
- Most adverbs are formed by adding *-ly* to an adjective.
- Comparative adjectives and adverbs compare two persons or things.

- Superlative adjectives or adverbs compare more than two persons or things.
- The adjectives *good* and *bad* and the adverbs *well* and *badly* are unique in their comparative and superlative forms and require special attention.

Writing Application

Using the exercises as a guide, write your own ten-sentence quiz for your classmate(s) using the concepts covered in this section. Try to include two questions from each subsection in your quiz. Exchange papers and see whether you can get a perfect score.

129. Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers

[AUTHOR REMOVED AT REQUEST OF ORIGINAL PUBLISHER]

Learning Objectives

1. Identify modifiers.
2. Learn how to correct misplaced and dangling modifiers.

A modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that clarifies or describes another word, phrase, or clause. Sometimes writers use modifiers incorrectly, leading to strange and unintentionally humorous sentences. The two common types of modifier errors are called misplaced modifiers and dangling modifiers. If either of these errors occurs, readers can no longer read smoothly. Instead, they become stumped trying to figure out *what* the writer meant to say. A writer's goal must always be to communicate clearly and to avoid distracting the reader with strange sentences or awkward sentence constructions. The good news is that these errors can be easily overcome.

Misplaced Modifiers

A misplaced modifier is a modifier that is placed too far from the word or words it modifies. Misplaced modifiers make the sentence awkward and sometimes unintentionally humorous.

Incorrect: She wore a bicycle helmet on her head *that was too large*.

Correct: She wore a bicycle helmet *that was too large* on her head.

- Notice in the incorrect sentence it sounds as if her head was too large! Of course, the writer is referring to the helmet, not to the person's head. The corrected version of the sentence clarifies the writer's meaning.

Look at the following two examples:

Incorrect: They bought a kitten for my brother *they call Shadow*.

Correct: They bought a kitten *they call Shadow* for my brother.

- In the incorrect sentence, it seems that the brother's name is *Shadow*. That's because the modifier is too far from the word it modifies, which is *kitten*.

Incorrect: The patient was referred to the physician *with stomach pains*.

Correct: The patient *with stomach pains* was referred to the physician.

- The incorrect sentence reads as if it is the physician who has stomach pains! What the writer means is that the patient has stomach pains.

Tip

Simple modifiers like *only*, *almost*, *just*, *nearly*, and *barely* often get used incorrectly because writers often stick them in the wrong place.

Confusing: Tyler *almost* found fifty cents under the sofa cushions.

Repaired: Tyler found *almost* fifty cents under the sofa cushions.

- How do you *almost* find something? Either you find it or you do not. The repaired sentence is much clearer.

Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the following sentences to correct the misplaced modifiers.

1. The young lady was walking the dog on the telephone.
2. I heard that there was a robbery on the evening news.
3. Uncle Louie bought a running stroller for the baby that he called "Speed Racer."
4. Rolling down the mountain, the explorer stopped the boulder with his powerful foot.
5. We are looking for a babysitter for our precious six-year-old who doesn't drink or smoke and owns a car.
6. The teacher served cookies to the children wrapped in aluminum foil.
7. The mysterious woman walked toward the car holding an umbrella.
8. We returned the wine to the waiter that was sour.
9. Charlie spotted a stray puppy driving home from work.
10. I ate nothing but a cold bowl of noodles for dinner.

Dangling Modifiers

A dangling modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that describes something that has been left out of the sentence. When there is nothing that the word, phrase, or clause can modify, the modifier is said to dangle.

Incorrect: *Riding in the sports car*, the world whizzed by rapidly.

Correct: As Jane was *riding in the sports car*, the world whizzed by rapidly.

- In the incorrect sentence, *riding in the sports car* is dangling. The reader is left wondering who is riding in the sports car. The writer must tell the reader!

Incorrect: *Walking home at night*, the trees looked like spooky aliens.

Correct: As Jonas was *walking home at night*, the trees looked like spooky aliens.

Correct: The trees looked like spooky aliens as Jonas was *walking home at night*.

- In the incorrect sentence *walking home at night* is dangling. Who is walking home at night? Jonas. Note that there are two different ways the dangling modifier can be corrected.

Incorrect: To win the spelling bee, Luis and Gerard should join our team.

Correct: If we want to win the spelling bee this year, Luis and Gerard should join our team.

- In the incorrect sentence, *to win the spelling bee* is dangling. Who wants to win the spelling bee? We do!

Tip

The following three steps will help you quickly spot a dangling modifier:

1. Look for an *-ing* modifier at the beginning of your sentence or another modifying phrase:

   Painting for three hours at night, the kitchen was finally finished by Maggie. (*Painting* is the *-ing* modifier.)

2. Underline the first noun that follows it:

   Painting for three hours at night, the kitchen was finally finished by Maggie.

3. Make sure the modifier and noun go together logically. If they do not, it is very likely you have a dangling modifier.

After identifying the dangling modifier, rewrite the sentence.

Painting for three hours at night, Maggie finally finished the kitchen.

Exercise 2

Rewrite the following the sentences onto your own sheet of paper to correct the dangling modifiers.

1. Bent over backward, the posture was very challenging.
2. Making discoveries about new creatures, this is an interesting time to be a biologist.
3. Walking in the dark, the picture fell off the wall.
4. Playing a guitar in the bedroom, the cat was seen under the bed.
5. Packing for a trip, a cockroach scurried down the hallway.
6. While looking in the mirror, the towel swayed in the breeze.
7. While driving to the veterinarian's office, the dog nervously whined.
8. The priceless painting drew large crowds when

walking into the museum.

9. Piled up next to the bookshelf, I chose a romance novel.
10. Chewing furiously, the gum fell out of my mouth.

Exercise 3

Rewrite the following paragraph correcting all the misplaced and dangling modifiers.

> I bought a fresh loaf of bread for my sandwich shopping in the grocery store. Wanting to make a delicious sandwich, the mayonnaise was thickly spread. Placing the cold cuts on the bread, the lettuce was placed on top. I cut the sandwich in half with a knife turning on the radio. Biting into the sandwich, my favorite song blared loudly in my ears. Humming and chewing, my sandwich went down smoothly. Smiling, my sandwich will be made again, but next time I will add cheese.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Key Takeaways

- Misplaced and dangling modifiers make sentences difficult to understand.
- Misplaced and dangling modifiers distract the reader.
- There are several effective ways to identify and correct misplaced and dangling modifiers.

Writing Application

See how creative and humorous you can get by writing ten sentences with misplaced and dangling modifiers. This is a deceptively simple task, but rise to the challenge. Your writing will be stronger for it. Exchange papers with a classmate, and rewrite your classmate's sentences to correct any misplaced modifiers.

130. Writing Basics: End-of-Chapter Exercises

[AUTHOR REMOVED AT REQUEST OF ORIGINAL PUBLISHER]

Learning Objectives

1. Use the skills you have learned in the chapter.
2. Work collaboratively with other students.

Exercises

1. On your own sheet of paper, identify each sentence as a fragment, a run-on, or correct (no error). Then rewrite the paragraph by correcting the sentence fragments and run-ons.

    My favorite book is *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, he was born in 1894 and died in 1963 _________. Written in 1931 _________. A futuristic society where humans are born out of test tubes and kept in rigid social classes _________. This may not seem like a humorous premise for a novel, but Huxley uses satire, which is a type of humor that is used to make a serious point _________. The humans in *Brave New World* learn through sleep teaching, Huxley calls this "hypnopedia" _________. Everyone is kept "happy" in the brave new world by taking a pill called soma, there is one character named John the Savage who does not take soma _________. because he comes from a different part of the world where there is no technology, and he believes in natural ways of living _________. It turns out that John has a big problem with the brave new world and how people live there _________. Will he be able to survive living there, well you will have to read the novel to find out _________. *Brave New World* is considered a classic in English literature, it is one of the best novels I have ever read _________.

2. Each sentence contains an error in subject-verb agreement, irregular verb form, or consistent verb tense. Identify the type of error. Then, on your own sheet of paper, rewrite the sentence correctly.

   a. Maria and Ty meets me at the community center for cooking classes on Tuesdays.

   ____

   b. John's ability to laugh at almost anything amaze me.

____
____

c. Samantha and I were walking near the lake when the large, colorful bird appears.

____
____

d. I builded my own telescope using materials I bought at the hardware store.

____
____

e. My mother freezed the remaining tomatoes from her garden so that she could use them during the winter.

____
____

f. Bernard asked the stranger sitting next to him for the time, and she says it was past midnight.

____
____

g. My mother and brother wears glasses, but my father and sister do not.

____

h. We held our noses as the skunk runs away.

____

i. Neither Soren nor Andrew are excited about the early morning swim meet.

____

j. My hands hurted at the thought of transcribing all those notes.

____

k. The police questioned the suspect for hours but she gives them no useful information.

____

l. Terry takes short weekend trips because her job as a therapist was very emotionally draining.

____

m. She criticize delicately, making sure not to hurt anyone’s feelings.

____________________________________ _________________________________

n. Davis winded the old clock and set it atop his nightstand.

____________________________________ _________________________________

o. Cherie losed four poker hands in a row before realizing that she was playing against professionals.

____________________________________ _________________________________

p. Janis and Joan describes their trip to the Amazon in vivid detail.

____________________________________ _________________________________

q. You should decides for yourself whether or not to reduce the amount of processed foods in your diet.

____________________________________ _________________________________

r. The oil rig exploded and spills millions of gallons of oil into the ocean.

____

s. The handsome vampire appeared out of nowhere and smiles at the smitten woman.

____

t. The batter swinged at the ball several times but never hit it.

____

3. Correct the capitalization errors in the following fictional story. Copy the corrected paragraph onto your own sheet of paper.

> lance worthington signed a Recording Contract with Capitol records on june 15, 2007. Despite selling two million copies of his Debut Album, nothing to lose, lance lost quite a bit as his tax returns from the irs revealed. lance did not think it was fair that the Record Company kept so much of his earnings, so he decided to hire robert bergman, a prominent music Attorney with a Shark-like reputation. bergman represented lance all the way to the supreme court, where lance won the case against capitol records. Lance worthington

was instrumental in changing intellectual property rights and long standing Record Company practices. All artists and musicians can thank him for his brave stance against record companies. Lance subsequently formed his own independent record label called worthy records. worthy is now a successful Label based out of chicago, illinois, and its Artists have appeared on well known shows such as The tonight show and Saturday night live. Lance worthington is a model for success in the do-it-yourself World that has become the Music Industry.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

4. Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct comparative or superlative adjective or adverb. Then copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

a. Denise has a (cheerful) _________ outlook on life than her husband.
b. I don't mean to brag, but I think I am the (good) _________ cook in my family.
c. Lydia is the (thoughtful) _________ person I know.
d. Italy experienced the (bad) _________ heat wave in its history last year.
e. My teacher, Ms. Beckett, is the (strange) _________ person I know, and I like that.

f. Dorian's drawing skills are (good) _________ this semester than last.
g. My handwriting is the (sloppy) _________ of all my classmates.
h. Melvin's soccer team played (badly) _________ than it did last season.
i. Josie's pen writes (smooth) _________ than mine.
j. I felt (lucky) _________ than my sister because I got in to the college of my choice.

PART XVIII

WRITING BASICS: PUNCTUATION

This entire Part is from *Writing for Success*, Chapter 3

131. Commas

[AUTHOR REMOVED AT REQUEST OF ORIGINAL PUBLISHER]

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the uses of commas.
2. Correctly use commas in sentences.

One of the punctuation clues to reading you may encounter is the comma. The comma is a punctuation mark that indicates a pause in a sentence or a separation of things in a list. Commas can be used in a variety of ways. Look at some of the following sentences to see how you might use a comma when writing a sentence.

- **Introductory word:** Personally, I think the practice is helpful.
- **Lists:** The barn, the tool shed, and the back porch were destroyed by the wind.
- **Coordinating adjectives:** He was tired, hungry, and late.
- **Conjunctions in compound sentences:** The bedroom door was closed, so the children knew their mother was asleep.
- **Interrupting words:** I knew where it was hidden, of course, but I wanted them to find it themselves.
- **Dates, addresses, greetings, and letters:** The letter was postmarked December 8, 1945.

Commas after an Introductory Word or Phrase

You may notice a comma that appears near the beginning of the sentence, usually after a word or phrase. This comma lets the reader know where the introductory word or phrase ends and the main sentence begins.

Without spoiling the surprise, we need to tell her to save the date.

In this sentence, *without spoiling the surprise* is an introductory phrase, while *we need to tell her to save the date* is the main sentence. Notice how they are separated by a comma. When only an introductory word appears in the sentence, a comma also follows the introductory word.

Ironically, she already had plans for that day.

Exercise 1

Look for the introductory word or phrase. On your own sheet of paper, copy the sentence and add a comma to correct the sentence.

1. Suddenly the dog ran into the house.

2. In the blink of an eye the kids were ready to go to the movies.
3. Confused he tried opening the box from the other end.
4. Every year we go camping in the woods.
5. Without a doubt green is my favorite color.
6. Hesitating she looked back at the directions before proceeding.
7. Fortunately the sleeping baby did not stir when the doorbell rang.
8. Believe it or not the criminal was able to rob the same bank three times.

Commas in a List of Items

When you want to list several nouns in a sentence, you separate each word with a comma. This allows the reader to pause after each item and identify which words are included in the grouping. When you list items in a sentence, put a comma after each noun, then add the word *and* before the last item. However, you do not need to include a comma after the last item.

We'll need to get flour, tomatoes, and cheese at the store.

The pizza will be topped with olives, peppers, and pineapple chunks.

Commas and Coordinating Adjectives

You can use commas to list both adjectives and nouns. A string of adjectives that describe a noun are called coordinating adjectives. These adjectives come before the noun they modify and are separated by commas. One important thing to note, however, is that unlike listing nouns, the word *and* does not always need to be before the last adjective.

> It was a bright, windy, clear day.
>
> Our kite glowed red, yellow, and blue in the morning sunlight.

Exercise 2

On your own sheet of paper, use what you have learned so far about comma use to add commas to the following sentences.

1. Monday Tuesday and Wednesday are all booked with meetings.
2. It was a quiet uneventful unproductive day.
3. We'll need to prepare statements for the Franks Todds and Smiths before their portfolio reviews next week.
4. Michael Nita and Desmond finished their report last Tuesday.

5. With cold wet aching fingers he was able to secure the sails before the storm.
6. He wrote his name on the board in clear precise delicate letters.

Commas before Conjunctions in Compound Sentences

Commas are sometimes used to separate two independent clauses. The comma comes after the first independent clause and is followed by a conjunction, such as *for*, *and*, or *but*. For a full list of conjunctions, see Chapter 2 "Writing Basics: What Makes a Good Sentence?".

He missed class today, and he thinks he will be out tomorrow, too.

He says his fever is gone, but he is still very tired.

Exercise 3

On your own sheet of paper, create a compound sentence by combining the two independent clauses with a comma and a coordinating conjunction.

1. The presentation was scheduled for Monday. The weather delayed the presentation for four days.

   ____
2. He wanted a snack before bedtime. He ate some fruit.

   ____
3. The patient is in the next room. I can hardly hear anything.

   ____
4. We could go camping for vacation. We could go to the beach for vacation.

   ____
5. I want to get a better job. I am taking courses at night.

   ____
6. I cannot move forward on this project. I cannot afford to stop on this project.

   ____

7. Patrice wants to stop for lunch. We will take the next exit to look for a restaurant.

    ____

8. I've got to get this paper done. I have class in ten minutes.

    ____

9. The weather was clear yesterday. We decided to go on a picnic.

    ____

10. I have never dealt with this client before. I know Leonardo has worked with them. Let's ask Leonardo for his help.

    ____

Commas before and after Interrupting Words

In conversations, you might interrupt your train of thought by giving more details about what you are talking about. In a sentence, you might interrupt your train of thought with a word or phrase called interrupting words. Interrupting words can come at the beginning or middle of a sentence. When the interrupting words appear at the beginning of the sentence, a comma appears after the word or phrase.

> If you can believe it, people once thought the sun and planets orbited around Earth.
>
> Luckily, some people questioned that theory.

When interrupting words come in the middle of a sentence, they are separated from the rest of the sentence by commas. You can determine where the commas should go by looking for the part of the sentence that is not essential for the sentence to make sense.

> An Italian astronomer, Galileo, proved that Earth orbited the sun.
>
> We have known, for hundreds of years now, that the Earth and other planets exist in a solar system.

Exercise 4

On your own sheet of paper, copy the sentence and insert commas to separate the interrupting words from the rest of the sentence.

1. I asked my neighbors the retired couple from Florida to bring in my mail.

2. Without a doubt his work has improved over the last few weeks.
3. Our professor Mr. Alamut drilled the lessons into our heads.
4. The meeting is at noon unfortunately which means I will be late for lunch.
5. We came in time for the last part of dinner but most importantly we came in time for dessert.
6. All of a sudden our network crashed and we lost our files.
7. Alex hand the wrench to me before the pipe comes loose again.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Commas in Dates, Addresses, and the Greetings and Closings of Letters

You also use commas when you write the date, such as in cover letters and e-mails. Commas are used when you write the date, when you include an address, and when you greet someone.

If you are writing out the full date, add a comma after the day and before the year. You do not need to add a comma when you write the month and day or when you write the month and the year. If you need to continue the sentence after you add a date that includes the day and year, add a comma after the end of the date.

The letter is postmarked May 4, 2001.

Her birthday is May 5.

He visited the country in July 2009.

I registered for the conference on March 7, 2010, so we should get our tickets soon.

You also use commas when you include addresses and locations. When you include an address in a sentence, be sure to place a comma after the street and after the city. Do not place a comma between the state and the zip code. Like a date, if you need to continue the sentence after adding the address, simply add a comma after the address.

We moved to 4542 Boxcutter Lane, Hope, Missouri 70832.

After moving to Boston, Massachusetts, Eric used public transportation to get to work.

Greetings are also separated by commas. When you write an e-mail or a letter, you add a comma after the greeting word or the person's name. You also need to include a comma after the closing, which is the word or phrase you put before your signature.

Hello,
I would like more information about your job posting.

Thank you,
Anita Al-Sayf

Dear Mrs. Al-Sayf,
Thank you for your letter. Please read the attached document for details.
Sincerely,
Jack Fromont

Exercise 5

On your own sheet of paper, use what you have learned about using commas to edit the following letter.

March 27 2010
Alexa Marché
14 Taylor Drive Apt. 6
New Castle Maine 90342
Dear Mr. Timmons
Thank you for agreeing to meet with me. I am available on Monday the fifth. I can stop by your office at any time. Is your address still 7309 Marcourt Circle #501? Please get back to me at your earliest convenience.
Thank you
Alexa

Exercise 6

On your own sheet of paper, use what you have learned about comma usage to edit the following paragraphs.

1. My brother Nathaniel is a collector of many rare unusual things. He has collected lunch boxes limited edition books and hatpins at various points of his life. His current collection of unusual bottles has over fifty pieces. Usually he sells one collection before starting another.
2. Our meeting is scheduled for Thursday March 20. In that time we need to gather all our documents together. Alice is in charge of the timetables and schedules. Tom is in charge of updating the guidelines. I am in charge of the presentation. To prepare for this meeting please print out any e-mails faxes or documents you have referred to when writing your sample.
3. It was a cool crisp autumn day when the group set out. They needed to cover several miles before they made camp so they walked at a brisk pace. The leader of the group Garth kept checking his watch and their GPS location. Isabelle Raoul and Maggie took turns carrying the equipment while Carrie took notes about the wildlife they saw. As a result no one noticed the darkening sky until the first drops of rain splattered on their faces.
4. Please have your report complete and filed by April 15 2010. In your submission letter please include your contact information the position you are applying for

and two people we can contact as references. We will not be available for consultation after April 10 but you may contact the office if you have any questions. Thank you HR Department.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Key Takeaways

- Punctuation marks provide visual cues to readers to tell them how to read a sentence. Punctuation marks convey meaning.
- Commas indicate a pause or a list in a sentence.
- A comma should be used after an introductory word to separate this word from the main sentence.
- A comma comes after each noun in a list. The word *and* is added before the last noun, which is not followed by a comma.
- A comma comes after every coordinating adjective except for the last adjective.
- Commas can be used to separate the two independent clauses in compound sentences as long as a conjunction follows the comma.
- Commas are used to separate interrupting words from the rest of the sentence.
- When you write the date, you add a comma between the day and the year. You also add a comma

after the year if the sentence continues after the date.

- When they are used in a sentence, addresses have commas after the street address, and the city. If a sentence continues after the address, a comma comes after the zip code.
- When you write a letter, you use commas in your greeting at the beginning and in your closing at the end of your letter.

132. Semicolons

[AUTHOR REMOVED AT REQUEST OF ORIGINAL PUBLISHER]

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the uses of semicolons.
2. Properly use semicolons in sentences.

Another punctuation mark that you will encounter is the semicolon (;). Like most punctuation marks, the semicolon can be used in a variety of ways. The semicolon indicates a break in the flow of a sentence, but functions differently than a period or a comma. When you encounter a semicolon while reading aloud, this represents a good place to pause and take a breath.

Semicolons to Join Two Independent Clauses

Use a semicolon to combine two closely related independent clauses. Relying on a period to separate the related clauses into two shorter sentences could lead to choppy writing. Using a comma would create an awkward run-on sentence.

Correct: Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview; appearances are important.

Choppy: Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview. Appearances are important.

Incorrect: Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview, appearances are important.

In this case, writing the independent clauses as two sentences separated by a period is correct. However, using a semicolon to combine the clauses can make your writing more interesting by creating a variety of sentence lengths and structures while preserving the flow of ideas.

Semicolons to Join Items in a List

You can also use a semicolon to join items in a list when the items in the list already require commas. Semicolons help the reader distinguish between items in the list.

Correct: The color combinations we can choose from are black, white, and grey; green, brown, and black; or red, green, and brown.

Incorrect: The color combinations we can choose from are black, white, and grey, green, brown, and black, or red, green, and brown.

By using semicolons in this sentence, the reader can easily distinguish between the three sets of colors.

Tip

Use semicolons to join two main clauses. Do not use semicolons with coordinating conjunctions such as *and*, *or*, and *but*.

Exercise 1

On your own sheet of paper, correct the following sentences by adding semicolons. If the sentence is correct as it is, write OK.

1. I did not notice that you were in the office I was behind the front desk all day.
2. Do you want turkey, spinach, and cheese roast beef, lettuce, and cheese or ham, tomato, and cheese?
3. Please close the blinds there is a glare on the screen.
4. Unbelievably, no one was hurt in the accident.
5. I cannot decide if I want my room to be green,

brown, and purple green, black, and brown or green, brown, and dark red.

6. Let’s go for a walk the air is so refreshing.

Key Takeaways

- Use a semicolon to join two independent clauses.
- Use a semicolon to separate items in a list when those items already require a comma.

133. Colons

[AUTHOR REMOVED AT REQUEST OF ORIGINAL PUBLISHER]

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the uses of colons.
2. Properly use colons in sentences.

The colon (:) is another punctuation mark used to indicate a full stop. Use a colon to introduce lists, quotes, examples, and explanations. You can also use a colon after the greeting in business letters and memos.

Dear Hiring Manager:

To: Human Resources

From: Deanna Dean

Colons to Introduce a List

Use a colon to introduce a list of items. Introduce the list with an independent clause.

> The team will tour three states: New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland.
>
> I have to take four classes this semester: Composition, Statistics, Ethics, and Italian.

Colons to Introduce a Quote

You can use a colon to introduce a quote.

> Mark Twain said it best: "When in doubt, tell the truth."

If a quote is longer than forty words, skip a line after the colon and indent the left margin of the quote five spaces. Because quotations longer than forty words use line spacing and indentation to indicate a quote, quotation marks are not necessary.

> My father always loved Mark Twain's words:
>
> > There are basically two types of people. People who accomplish things, and people who claim to have accomplished things. The first group is less crowded.

Tip

Long quotations, which are forty words or more, are called block quotations. Block quotations frequently appear in longer essays and research papers. For more information about block quotations, see Chapter 11 "Writing from Research: What Will I Learn?".

Colons to Introduce Examples or Explanations

Use a colon to introduce an example or to further explain an idea presented in the first part of a sentence. The first part of the sentence must always be an independent clause; that is, it must stand alone as a complete thought with a subject and verb. Do not use a colon after phrases like *such as* or *for example*.

Correct: Our company offers many publishing services: writing, editing, and reviewing.

Incorrect: Our company offers many publishing services, such as: writing, editing, and reviewing.

Tip

Capitalize the first letter following a colon for a proper noun, the beginning of a quote, or the first letter of another independent clause. Do NOT capitalize if the information following the colon is not a complete sentence.

Proper noun: We visited three countries: Belize, Honduras, and El Salvador.

Beginning of a quote: My mother loved this line from *Hamlet*: "To thine own self be true."

Two independent clauses: There are drawbacks to modern technology: My brother's cell phone died and he lost a lot of phone numbers.

Incorrect: The recipe is simple: Tomato, basil, and avocado.

Exercise 1

On your own sheet of paper, correct the following sentences by adding semicolons or colons where needed. If the sentence does not need a semicolon or colon, write OK.

1. Don't give up you never know what tomorrow brings.

   ____

2. Our records show that the patient was admitted on March 9, 2010 January 13, 2010 and November 16, 2009.

   ____

3. Allow me to introduce myself I am the greatest ice-carver in the world.

   ____

4. Where I come from there are three ways to get to the grocery store by car, by bus, and by foot.

____

5. Listen closely you will want to remember this speech.

   ____

6. I have lived in Sedona, Arizona Baltimore, Maryland and Knoxville, Tennessee.

   ____

7. The boss's message was clear Lateness would not be tolerated.

   ____

8. Next semester, we will read some more contemporary authors, such as Vonnegut, Miller, and Orwell.

   ____

9. My little sister said what we were all thinking "We should have stayed home."

   ____

10. Trust me I have done this before.

____
____

Key Takeaways

- Use a colon to introduce a list, quote, or example.
- Use a colon after a greeting in business letters and memos.

134. Quotes

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Learning Objectives

1. Identify the uses of quotes.
2. Correctly use quotes in sentences.

Quotation marks (“ ”) set off a group of words from the rest of the text. Use quotation marks to indicate direct quotations of another person’s words or to indicate a title. Quotation marks always appear in pairs.

Direct Quotations

A direct quotation is an exact account of what someone said or wrote. To include a direct quotation in your writing, enclose the words in quotation marks. An indirect quotation is a restatement of what someone said or wrote. An indirect quotation does not use the person’s exact words. You do not need to use quotation marks for indirect quotations.

Direct quotation: Carly said, **“**I’m not ever going back there again.**”**

Indirect quotation: Carly said that she would never go back there.

Writing at Work

Most word processsing software is designed to catch errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. While this can be a useful tool, it is better to be well acquainted with the rules of punctuation than to leave the thinking to the computer. Properly punctuated writing will convey your meaning clearly. Consider the subtle shifts in meaning in the following sentences:

- The client said he thought our manuscript was garbage.
- The client said, "He thought our manuscript was garbage."

The first sentence reads as an indirect quote in which the client does not like the manuscript. But did he actually use the word "garbage"? (This would be alarming!) Or has the speaker paraphrased (and exaggerated) the client's words?

The second sentence reads as a direct quote from the client. But who is "he" in this sentence? Is it a third party?

Word processing software would not catch this because the sentences are not grammatically incorrect. However, the meanings of the sentences are not the same. Understanding punctuation will help you write what you mean, and in this case, could save a lot of confusion around the office!

Punctuating Direct Quotations

Quotation marks show readers another person's exact words. Often, you will want to identify who is speaking. You can do this at the beginning, middle, or end of the quote. Notice the use of commas and capitalized words.

Beginning: Madison said**, "L**et's stop at the farmers market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner.**"**

Middle: "Let's stop at the farmers market**,"** Madison said**,** **"**to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner.**"**

End: "Let's stop at the farmers market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner**,"** Madison said.

Speaker not identified: "Let's stop at the farmers market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner.**"**

Always capitalize the first letter of a quote even if it is not the beginning of the sentence. When using identifying words in the middle of the quote, the beginning of the second part of the quote does not need to be capitalized.

Use commas between identifying words and quotes. Quotation marks must be placed *after* commas and periods. Place quotation marks after question marks and exclamation points only if the question or exclamation is part of the quoted text.

Question is part of quoted text: The new employee asked**,** "When is lunch**?**"

Question is not part of quoted text: Did you hear her say you were "the next Picasso"**?**

Exclamation is part of quoted text: My supervisor beamed**,** "Thanks for all of your hard work**!**"

Exclamation is not part of quoted text: He said I "single-handedly saved the company thousands of dollars"**!**

Quotations within Quotations

Use single quotation marks (‘ ’) to show a quotation within in a quotation.

Theresa said, "I wanted to take my dog to the festival, but the man at the gate said, ‘No dogs allowed.’"

"When you say, ‘I can't help it,’ what exactly does that mean?"

"The instructions say, ‘Tighten the screws one at a time.’"

Titles

Use quotation marks around titles of short works of writing, such as essays, songs, poems, short stories, and chapters in books. Usually, titles of longer works, such as books, magazines, albums, newspapers, and novels, are italicized.

"Annabelle Lee" is one of my favorite romantic poems.

The *New York Times* has been in publication since 1851.

Writing at Work

In many businesses, the difference between exact wording and a paraphrase is extremely important. For legal purposes, or for the purposes of doing a job correctly, it can be important to know exactly what the client, customer, or supervisor said. Sometimes, important details can be lost when instructions are paraphrased. Use quotes to indicate exact words where needed, and let your coworkers know the source of the quotation (client, customer, peer, etc.).

Exercise 1

Copy the following sentences onto your own sheet of paper, and correct them by adding quotation marks where necessary. If the sentence does not need any quotation marks, write OK.

1. Yasmin said, I don't feel like cooking. Let's go out to eat.

   ____

2. Where should we go? said Russell.

   ____

3. Yasmin said it didn't matter to her.

   ____

4. I know, said Russell, let's go to the Two Roads Juice Bar.

   ____

5. Perfect! said Yasmin.

   ____

6. Did you know that the name of the Juice Bar is a reference to a poem? asked Russell.

____
____

7. I didn't! exclaimed Yasmin. Which poem?

____
____

8. The Road Not Taken, by Robert Frost Russell explained.

____
____

9. Oh! said Yasmin, Is that the one that starts with the line, Two roads diverged in a yellow wood?

____
____

10. That's the one said Russell.

____
____

Key Takeaways

- Use quotation marks to enclose direct quotes and titles of short works.
- Use single quotation marks to enclose a quote within a quote.

- Do not use any quotation marks for indirect quotations.

135. Apostrophes

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Learning Objectives

1. Identify the uses of apostrophes.
2. Correctly use apostrophes in sentences.

An apostrophe (’) is a punctuation mark that is used with a noun to show possession or to indicate where a letter has been left out to form a contraction.

Possession

An apostrophe and the letter *s* indicate who or what owns something. To show possession with a singular noun, add ’s.

Jen**’s** dance routine mesmerized everyone in the room.

The dog**’s** leash is hanging on the hook beside the door.

Jess**’s** sister is also coming to the party.

Notice that singular nouns that end in *s* still take the apostrophe *s* (’s) ending to show possession.

To show possession with a plural noun that ends in *s*, just add an apostrophe (’). If the plural noun does not end in *s*, add an apostrophe and an *s* (’*s*).

Plural noun that ends in *s***:** The drummers**’** sticks all moved in the same rhythm, like a machine.

Plural noun that does not end in *s***:** The people**’s** votes clearly showed that no one supported the management decision.

Contractions

A contraction is a word that is formed by combining two words. In a contraction, an apostrophe shows where one or more letters have been left out. Contractions are commonly used in informal writing but not in formal writing.

I do not like ice cream.

I **don’t** like ice cream.

Notice how the words *do* and *not* have been combined to form the contraction *don’t*. The apostrophe shows where the *o* in *not* has been left out.

We will see you later.

We'll see you later.

Look at the chart for some examples of commonly used contractions.

aren't	are not
can't	cannot
doesn't	does not
don't	do not
isn't	is not
he'll	he will
I'll	I will
she'll	she will
they'll	they will
you'll	you will
it's	it is, it has
let's	let us
she's	she is, she has
there's	there is, there has
who's	who is, who has

Tip

Be careful not to confuse *it's* with *its*. *It's* is a contraction of the words *it* and *is*. *Its* is a possessive pronoun.

It's cold and rainy outside. (It is cold and rainy outside.)

The cat was chasing its tail. (Shows that the tail belongs to the cat.)

When in doubt, substitute the words *it is* in a sentence. If sentence still makes sense, use the contraction *it's*.

Exercise 1

On your own sheet of paper, correct the following sentences by adding apostrophes. If the sentence is correct as it is, write OK.

1. "What a beautiful child! She has her mothers eyes."
2. My brothers wife is one of my best friends.
3. I couldnt believe it when I found out that I got the

job!

4. My supervisors informed me that I wouldnt be able to take the days off.
5. Each of the students responses were unique.
6. Wont you please join me for dinner tonight?

Key Takeaways

- Use apostrophes to show possession. Add ’s to singular nouns and plural nouns that do not end in s. Add ’ to plural nouns that end in s.
- Use apostrophes in contractions to show where a letter or letters have been left out.

136. Parentheses

[AUTHOR REMOVED AT REQUEST OF ORIGINAL PUBLISHER]

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the uses of parentheses.
2. Properly use parentheses in sentences.

Parentheses ( ) are punctuation marks that are always used in pairs and contain material that is secondary to the meaning of a sentence. Parentheses must never contain the subject or verb of a sentence. A sentence should make sense if you delete any text within parentheses and the parentheses.

Attack of the Killer Potatoes has to be the worst movie I have seen **(**so far**)**.

Your spinach and garlic salad is one of the most delicious **(**and nutritious**)** foods I have ever tasted!

Exercise 1

On your own sheet of paper, clarify the following sentences by adding parentheses. If the sentence is clear as it is, write OK.

1. Are you going to the seminar this weekend I am?
2. I recommend that you try the sushi bar unless you don't like sushi.
3. I was able to solve the puzzle after taking a few moments to think about it.
4. Please complete the questionnaire at the end of this letter.
5. Has anyone besides me read the assignment?
6. Please be sure to circle not underline the correct answers.

Key Takeaways

- Parentheses enclose information that is secondary to the meaning of a sentence.
- Parentheses are always used in pairs.

137. Dashes

[AUTHOR REMOVED AT REQUEST OF ORIGINAL PUBLISHER]

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the uses of dashes.
2. Correctly use dashes in sentences.

A dash (—) is a punctuation mark used to set off information in a sentence for emphasis. You can enclose text between two dashes, or use just one dash. To create a dash in Microsoft Word, type two hyphens together. Do not put a space between dashes and text.

Arrive to the interview early—but not too early.

Any of the suits—except for the purple one—should be fine to wear.

Exercise 1

On your own sheet of paper, clarify the following sentences by adding dashes. If the sentence is clear as it is, write OK.

1. Which hairstyle do you prefer short or long?
2. I don't know I hadn't even thought about that.
3. Guess what I got the job!
4. I will be happy to work over the weekend if I can have Monday off.
5. You have all the qualities that we are looking for in a candidate intelligence, dedication, and a strong work ethic.

Key Takeaways

- Dashes indicate a pause in text.
- Dashes set off information in a sentence to show emphasis.

138. Hyphens

[AUTHOR REMOVED AT REQUEST OF ORIGINAL PUBLISHER]

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the uses of hyphens.
2. Properly use hyphens in sentences.

A hyphen (-) looks similar to a dash but is shorter and used in different ways.

Hyphens between Two Adjectives That Work as One

Use a hyphen to combine words that work together to form a single description.

The fifty-five-year-old athlete was just as qualified for the marathon as his younger opponents.

My doctor recommended against taking the medication, since it can be habit-forming.

My study group focused on preparing for the midyear review.

Hyphens When a Word Breaks at the End of a Line

Use a hyphen to divide a word across two lines of text. You may notice that most word-processing programs will do this for you. If you have to manually insert a hyphen, place the hyphen between two syllables. If you are unsure of where to place the hyphen, consult a dictionary or move the entire word to the next line.

> My supervisor was concerned that the team meet–
>
> ing would conflict with the client meeting.

Key Takeaways

- Hyphens join words that work as one adjective.
- Hyphens break words across two lines of text.

139. Punctuation: End-of-Chapter Exercises

[AUTHOR REMOVED AT REQUEST OF ORIGINAL PUBLISHER]

Learning Objectives

1. Use the skills you have learned in this chapter.
2. Work collaboratively with other students.

Exercises

1. Each sentence contains a punctuation error. On your own sheet of paper, correct each sentence by adding the correct punctuation. The headings will let you know which type of punctuation mistakes to look for. If the sentence does not need corrections, write OK.

   Commas

   a. The wedding will be July 13 2012.
   b. The date by the way is the anniversary of the day that they met.
   c. The groom the bride and their parents are all planning the event.

d. Actually all of their friends and relatives are involved in the planning.
e. The bride is a baker so she will be making the wedding cake herself.
f. The photography the catering and the music will all be friends.

Semicolons

a. Some people spend a lot of money hiring people for wedding services they are lucky to have such talented friends.
b. The flowers will be either roses, daisies, and snapdragons orchids, tulips, and irises or peonies and lilies.

Colons

a. There will be three colors for the wedding: white, black, and gold.
b. They've finally narrowed down the dinner choices salmon, steak, and a vegan stew.
c. Their wedding invitations contained the following quote from the Roman poet Ovid If you want to be loved, be lovable.

Quotes

a. The invitations said that the wedding would be "outdoor casual."
b. "What exactly does 'outdoor casual' mean?" I asked the bride.
c. She told me to dress comfortably and wear shoes that do not sink into the ground.

Apostrophes

a. On the day of the wedding, were going to rent a limo.
b. My brothers wife will make the arrangements.
c. Shes a great party organizer.

Parentheses

a. On the day of the wedding, the bride looked more beautiful than ever and I've known her for fifteen years.
b. All the details were perfect in my opinion.

Dashes

a. Everyone danced at the wedding except my mother.
b. It was to be expected she just had hip surgery.

Hyphens

a. The groom danced with his new mother in law.
b. It was a spectacular, fun filled day for everyone.

2. Each sentence contains a punctuation error. On your own sheet of paper, correct each sentence by adding commas, semicolons, colons, apostrophes, parentheses, hyphens, and dashes as needed.

a. My mothers garden is full of beautiful flowers.
b. She has carefully planted several species of roses peonies and irises.
c. She is especially proud of her thirty year old Japanese maple tree.
d. I am especially proud of the sunflowers I planted them!
e. You should see the birds that are attracted to the garden hummingbirds, finches, robins, and sparrows.

f. I like to watch the hummingbirds they are my favorite.
g. We spend a lot of time in the garden planting weeding and just enjoying the view.
h. Each flower has its own personality some seem shy and others seem bold.
i. Arent gardens wonderful?
j. You should come visit sometime Do you like to garden?

3. The following paragraph contains errors in punctuation. On your own sheet of paper, correct the paragraph by adding commas, semicolons, colons, apostrophes, parentheses, hyphens, and dashes as needed. There may be more than one way to correct the paragraph.

May 18 2011

Dear Hiring Manager

Allow me to introduce myself in my previous position I was known as the King of Sales. I hope to earn the same title within your company. My name is Frances Fortune. I have thirteen years experience in corporate sales and account management. I have been the top rated seller for two years in a row in my previous position. Clients recognize me as dependable honest and resourceful. I have a strong work ethic and great interpersonal skills. I excel at goal setting and time management. However you don’t have to take my word for it I will be happy to provide personal and professional references upon request. Youre welcome to contact my previous employer to inquire about my work performance. I look forward to speaking with you in person in the near future.

Sincerely

Frances Fortune

4. Read the following paragraph. Edit by adding apostrophes, parentheses, dashes, and hyphens where needed. There may be more than one correct way to edit some sentences. Consider how the punctuation you choose affects the meaning of the sentence.

   I was a little nervous about the interview it was my first in years. I had to borrow my roommates suit, but it fit me well. A few days ago, I started to research the companys history and mission. I felt like I was well qualified for the job. When I arrived, I shook hands with the interviewer she had a strong grip! It nearly caught me off guard, but I did my best to smile and relax. I was a little distracted by all the books in the womans office she must have had a hundred books in that tiny room. However, I think my responses to her questions were good. Ill send her an e-mail to thank her for her time. Hopefully shell call me soon about the position.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Writing Application

Review some of the recent or current assignments you have completed for school or work. Look through recent business and personal e-mails. Does your work contain any errors in punctuation? Correct the errors and compile a list of the types of errors you are correcting (commas, semicolons, colons, apostrophes, quotation marks, parentheses, dashes, hyphens, etc.). Use this list as a reference for the types of punctuation marks that you should review and practice.

If you do not find many errors—great! You can still look for ways to add interest to your writing by using dashes, semicolons, colons, and parentheses to create a variety of sentence lengths and structures.

PART XIX

WRITING BASICS: WORD CHOICE

This entire Part is from *Writing for Success*, Chapter 4

4.1 Commonly Confused Words
4.2 Spelling
4.3 Word Choice
4.4 Prefixes and Suffixes
4.5 Synonyms and Antonyms
4.6 Using Context Clues
4.7 Working with Words: End-of-Chapter Exercises

140. Commonly Confused Words

[AUTHOR REMOVED AT REQUEST OF ORIGINAL PUBLISHER]

Learning Objectives

1. Identify commonly confused words.
2. Use strategies to avoid commonly confused words.

Just as a mason uses bricks to build sturdy homes, writers use words to build successful documents. Consider the construction of a building. Builders need to use tough, reliable materials to build a solid and structurally sound skyscraper. From the foundation to the roof and every floor in between, every part is necessary. Writers need to use strong, meaningful words from the first sentence to the last and in every sentence in between.

You already know many words that you use everyday as part of your writing and speaking vocabulary. You probably also know that certain words fit better in certain situations. Letters, e-mails, and even quickly jotted grocery lists require the proper selection of vocabulary. Imagine you are writing a grocery list to purchase the ingredients for a recipe but accidentally write down cilantro when the recipe calls for parsley. Even though cilantro and parsley look remarkably alike, each produces a very different effect in food. This seemingly small error could radically alter the flavor of your dish!

Having a solid everyday vocabulary will help you while writing, but learning new words and avoiding common word errors will make a real impression on your readers. Experienced writers know that deliberate, careful word selection and usage can lead to more polished, more meaningful work. This chapter covers word choice and vocabulary-building strategies that will improve your writing.

Commonly Confused Words

Some words in English cause trouble for speakers and writers because these words share a similar pronunciation, meaning, or spelling with another word. These words are called commonly confused words. For example, read aloud the following sentences containing the commonly confused words *new* and *knew*:

> I liked her *new* sweater.
>
> I *knew* she would wear that sweater today.

These words may sound alike when spoken, but they carry entirely different usages and meanings. *New* is an adjective that describes the sweater, and *knew* is the past tense of the verb *to know*. To read more about adjectives, verbs, and other parts of speech see Chapter 2 "Writing Basics: What Makes a Good Sentence?".

Recognizing Commonly Confused Words

New and *knew* are just two of the words that can be confusing because of their similarities. Familiarize yourself with the following list of commonly confused words. Recognizing these words in your own writing and in other pieces of writing can help you choose the correct word.

Commonly Confused Words

A, An, And

- A (article). Used before a word that begins with a consonant.

  a key, **a** mouse, **a** screen

- *An* (article). Used before a word that begins with a vowel.

  an airplane, **an** ocean, **an** igloo

- *And* (conjunction). Connects two or more words together.

  peanut butter **and** jelly, pen **and** pencil, jump **and** shout

Accept, Except

- *Accept* (verb). Means to take or agree to something offered.

  They **accepted** our proposal for the conference.

- *Except* (conjunction). Means only or but.

  We could fly there **except** the tickets cost too much.

Affect, Effect

- *Affect* (verb). Means to create a change.

  Hurricane winds **affect** the amount of rainfall.

- *Effect* (noun). Means an outcome or result.

  The heavy rains will have an **effect** on the crop growth.

Are, Our

- *Are* (verb). A conjugated form of the verb *to be*.

  My cousins **are** all tall and blonde.

- *Our* (pronoun). Indicates possession, usually follows the pronoun *we*.

  We will bring **our** cameras to take pictures.

By, Buy

- *By* (preposition). Means next to.

  My glasses are **by** the bed.

- *Buy* (verb). Means to purchase.

  I will **buy** new glasses after the doctor's appointment.

Its, It's

- *Its* (pronoun). A form of *it* that shows possession.

  The butterfly flapped **its** wings.

- *It's* (contraction). Joins the words *it* and *is*.

  It's the most beautiful butterfly I have ever seen.

Know, No

- *Know* (verb). Means to understand or possess knowledge.

  I **know** the male peacock sports the brilliant feathers.

- *No*. Used to make a negative.

  I have **no** time to visit the zoo this weekend.

Loose, Lose

- *Loose* (adjective). Describes something that is not tight or is detached.

  Without a belt, her pants are **loose** on her waist.

- *Lose* (verb). Means to forget, to give up, or to fail to earn something.

  She will **lose** even more weight after finishing the marathon training.

Of, Have

- *Of* (preposition). Means *from* or *about*.

  I studied maps **of** the city to know where to rent a new apartment.

- *Have* (verb). Means to possess something.

  I **have** many friends to help me move.

- *Have* (linking verb). Used to connect verbs.

  I should **have** helped her with that heavy box.

Quite, Quiet, Quit

- *Quite* (adverb). Means *really* or *truly*.

  My work will require **quite** a lot of concentration.

- *Quiet* (adjective). Means not loud.

  I need a **quiet** room to complete the assignments.

- *Quit* (verb). Means to stop or to end.

  I will **quit** when I am hungry for dinner.

Right, Write

- *Right* (adjective). Means proper or correct.

  When bowling, she practices the **right** form.

- *Right* (adjective). Also means the opposite of left.

  The ball curved to the **right** and hit the last pin.

- *Write* (verb). Means to communicate on paper.

  After the team members bowl, I will **write** down their scores.

Set, Sit

- *Set* (verb). Means to put an item down.

She **set** the mug on the saucer.

- *Set* (noun). Means a group of similar objects.

  All the mugs and saucers belonged in a **set**.

- *Sit* (verb). Means to lower oneself down on a chair or another place

  I'll **sit** on the sofa while she brews the tea.

Suppose, Supposed

- *Suppose* (verb). Means to think or to consider

  I **suppose** I will bake the bread, because no one else has the recipe.

- *Suppose* (verb). Means to suggest.

  Suppose we all split the cost of the dinner.

- *Supposed* (verb). The past tense form of the verb suppose, meaning required or allowed.

  She was **supposed** to create the menu.

Than, Then

- *Than* (conjunction). Used to connect two or more items when comparing

  Registered nurses require less schooling **than** doctors.

- *Then* (adverb). Means next or at a specific time.

  Doctors first complete medical school and **then** obtain a residency.

Their, They’re, There

- *Their* (pronoun). A form of *they* that shows possession.

  The dog walker feeds **their** dogs everyday at two o’clock.

- *They’re* (contraction). Joins the words *they* and *are*.

  They’re the sweetest dogs in the neighborhood.

- *There* (adverb). Indicates a particular place.

  The dogs’ bowls are over **there**, next to the pantry.

- *There* (pronoun). Indicates the presence of something

  There are more treats if the dogs behave.

To, Two, Too

- *To* (preposition). Indicates movement.

  Let’s go **to** the circus.

- *To*. A word that completes an infinitive verb.

  to play, **to** ride, **to** watch.

- *Two*. The number after one. It describes how many.

  Two clowns squirted the elephants with water.

- *Too* (adverb). Means *also* or *very*.

  The tents were **too** loud, and we left.

Use, Used

- *Use* (verb). Means to apply for some purpose.

  We **use** a weed whacker to trim the hedges.

- *Used*. The past tense form of the verb *to use*

  He **used** the lawnmower last night before it rained.

- *Used to*. Indicates something done in the past but not in the present

  He **used to** hire a team to landscape, but now he landscapes alone.

Who's, Whose

- *Who's* (contraction). Joins the words *who* and either *is* or *has.*

  Who's the new student? **Who's** met him?

- *Whose* (pronoun). A form of *who* that shows possession.

  Whose schedule allows them to take the new student on a campus tour?

Your, You're

- *Your* (pronoun). A form of *you* that shows possession.

  Your book bag is unzipped.

- *You're* (contraction). Joins the words *you* and *are.*

  You're the girl with the unzipped book bag.

The English language contains so many words; no one can say for certain how many words exist. In fact, many words in English are borrowed from other languages. Many words have multiple meanings and forms, further expanding the immeasurable number of English words. Although the list of commonly confused words serves as a helpful guide, even these words may have more meanings than shown here. When in doubt, consult an expert: the dictionary!

Exercise 1

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct word.

1. My little cousin turns _________(to, too, two) years old tomorrow.
2. The next-door neighbor's dog is _________(quite, quiet, quit) loud. He barks constantly throughout the night.
3. _________(Your, You're) mother called this morning to talk about the party.
4. I would rather eat a slice of chocolate cake _________(than, then) eat a chocolate muffin.
5. Before the meeting, he drank a cup of coffee and _________(than, then) brushed his teeth.
6. Do you have any _________(loose, lose) change to pay the parking meter?
7. Father must _________(have, of) left his briefcase at the office.
8. Before playing ice hockey, I was _________(suppose, supposed) to read the contract, but I only skimmed it and signed my name quickly, which may _________(affect, effect) my

understanding of the rules.

9. Tonight she will _________(set, sit) down and _________(right, write) a cover letter to accompany her résumé and job application.
10. It must be fall, because the leaves _________(are, our) changing, and _________(it’s, its) getting darker earlier.

Strategies to Avoid Commonly Confused Words

When writing, you need to choose the correct word according to its spelling and meaning in the context. Not only does selecting the correct word improve your vocabulary and your writing, but it also makes a good impression on your readers. It also helps reduce confusion and improve clarity. The following strategies can help you avoid misusing confusing words.

1. **Use a dictionary.** Keep a dictionary at your desk while you write. Look up words when you are uncertain of their meanings or spellings. Many dictionaries are also available online, and the Internet’s easy access will not slow you down. Check out your cell phone or smartphone to see if a dictionary app is available.
2. **Keep a list of words you commonly confuse.** Be aware of the words that often confuse you. When you notice a pattern of confusing words, keep a list

nearby, and consult the list as you write. Check the list again before you submit an assignment to your instructor.

3. **Study the list of commonly confused words.** You may not yet know which words confuse you, but before you sit down to write, study the words on the list. Prepare your mind for working with words by reviewing the commonly confused words identified in this chapter.

Tip

Figure 4.1 A Commonly Misused Word on a Public Sign

Commonly confused words appear in many locations, not just at work or at school. Be on the lookout for misused words wherever you find yourself throughout the day. Make a mental note of the error and remember its correction for your own pieces of writing.

Writing at Work

All employers value effective communication. From an application to an interview to the first month on the job, employers pay attention to your vocabulary. You do not need a large vocabulary to succeed, but you do need to be able to express yourself clearly and avoid commonly misused words.

When giving an important presentation on the effect of inflation on profit margins, you must know the difference between *effect* and *affect* and choose the correct word. When writing an e-mail to confirm deliveries, you must know if the shipment will arrive in *to* days, *too* days, or *two* days. Confusion may arise if you choose the wrong word.

Consistently using the proper words will improve your communication and make a positive impression on your boss and colleagues.

Exercise 2

The following paragraph contains eleven errors. Find each misused word and correct it by adding the proper word.

> The original United States Declaration of Independence sets in a case at the Rotunda for the Charters of Freedom as part of the National Archives in Washington, DC. Since 1952, over one million visitors each year of passed through the Rotunda too snap a photograph to capture they're experience. Although signs state, "No Flash Photography," forgetful tourists leave the flash on, an a bright light flickers for just a millisecond. This millisecond of light may not seem like enough to effect the precious document, but supposed how much light could be generated when all those milliseconds are added up. According to the National Archives administrators, its enough to significantly damage the historic document. So, now, the signs display quit a different message: "No Photography." Visitors continue to travel to see the Declaration that began are country, but know longer can personal pictures serve as mementos. The administrators' compromise, they say, is a visit to the gift shop for a preprinted photograph.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Key Takeaways

- In order to write accurately, it is important for writers to be aware of commonly confused words.
- Although commonly confused words may look alike or sound alike, their meanings are very different.
- Consulting the dictionary is one way to make sure you are using the correct word in your writing. You may also keep a list of commonly confused words nearby when you write or study the chart in this book.
- Choosing the proper words leaves a positive impression on your readers.

Writing Application

Review the latest assignment you completed for school or for work. Does it contain any commonly confused words? Circle each example and use the circled words to begin your own checklist of commonly confused words. Continue to add to your checklist each time you complete an assignment and find a misused word.

141. Spelling

[AUTHOR REMOVED AT REQUEST OF ORIGINAL PUBLISHER]

Learning Objectives

1. Identify common spelling rules.
2. Identify commonly misused homonyms.
3. Identify commonly misspelled words.

One essential aspect of good writing is accurate spelling. With computer spell checkers, spelling may seem simple, but these programs fail to catch every error. Spell checkers identify some errors, but writers still have to consider the flagged words and suggested replacements. Writers are still responsible for the errors that remain.

For example, if the spell checker highlights a word that is misspelled and gives you a list of alternative words, you may choose a word that you never intended even though it is spelled correctly. This can change the meaning of your sentence. It can also confuse readers, making them lose interest. Computer spell checkers are useful editing tools, but they can never replace human knowledge of spelling rules, homonyms, and commonly misspelled words.

Common Spelling Rules

The best way to master new words is to understand the key spelling rules. Keep in mind, however, that some spelling rules carry exceptions. A spell checker may catch these exceptions, but knowing them yourself will prepare you to spell accurately on the first try. You may want to try memorizing each rule and its exception like you would memorize a rhyme or lyrics to a song.

Write *i* before *e* except after *c*, or when pronounced *ay* like “neighbor” or “weigh.”

- achieve, niece, alien
- receive, deceive

When words end in a consonant plus *y*, drop the *y* and add an *i* before adding another ending.

- happy + er = happier
- cry + ed = cried

When words end in a vowel plus *y*, keep the *y* and add the ending.

- delay + ed = delayed

Memorize the following exceptions to this rule: *day*, *lay*, *say*, *pay* = *daily*, *laid*, *said*, *paid*

When adding an ending that begins with a vowel, such as –*able*, –*ence*, –*ing*, or –*ity*, drop the last *e* in a word.

- write + ing = writing
- pure + ity = purity

When adding an ending that begins with a consonant, such as –*less*, –*ment*, or –*ly*, keep the last *e* in a word.

- hope + less = hopeless
- advertise + ment = advertisement

For many words ending in a consonant and an *o*, add –*s* when using the plural form.

- photo + s = photos
- soprano + s = sopranos

Add –*es* to words that end in *s*, *ch*, *sh*, and *x*.

- church + es = churches
- fax + es = faxes

Exercise 1

Identify and correct the nine misspelled words in the following paragraph.

> Sherman J. Alexie Jr. was born in October 1966. He is a Spokane/Coeur d'Alene Indian and an American writer, poet, and filmmaker. Alexie was born with hydrocephalus, or water on the brain. This condition led doctors to predict that he would likly suffer long-term brain damage and possibly mental retardation. Although Alexie survived with no mental disabilitys, he did suffer other serious side effects from his condition that plagud him throughout his childhood. Amazingly, Alexie learned to read by the age of three, and by age five he had read novels such as John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*. Raised on an Indian reservation, Alexie often felt aleinated from his peers due to his avid love for reading and also from the long-term effects of his illness, which often kept him from socializeing with his peers on the reservation. The reading skills he displaid at such a young age foreshadowed what he would later become. Today Alexie is a prolific and successful writer with several story anthologeis to his credit, noteably *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven* and *The Toughest Indian in the World*. Most of his fiction is about contemporary Native Americans who are influenced by pop culture and pow wows and everything in between. His work is sometimes funny but always thoughtful and full of richness and depth.

Alexie also writes poetry, novels, and screenplays. His latest collection of storys is called *War Dances*, which came out in 2009.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Tip

Eight Tips to Improve Spelling Skills

1. **Read the words in your assignment carefully, and avoid skimming over the page.** Focusing on your written assignment word by word will help you pay close attention to each word's spelling. Skimming quickly, you may overlook misspelled words.
2. **Use mnemonic devices to remember the correct spelling of words.** Mnemonic devices, or memory techniques and learning aids, include inventive sayings or practices that help you remember. For

example, the saying "It is important to be a beautiful person inside and out" may help you remember that *beautiful* begins with "be a." The practice of pronouncing the word *Wednesday* Wed-nes-day may help you remember how to spell the word correctly.

3. **Use a dictionary.** Many professional writers rely on the dictionary—either in print or online. If you find it difficult to use a regular dictionary, ask your instructor to help you find a "poor speller's dictionary."
4. **Use your computer's spell checker.** The spell checker will not solve all your spelling problems, but it is a useful tool. See the introduction to this section for cautions about spell checkers.
5. **Keep a list of frequently misspelled words.** You will often misspell the same words again and again, but do not let this discourage you. All writers struggle with the spellings of certain words; they become aware of their spelling weaknesses and work to improve. Be aware of which words you commonly misspell, and you can add them to a list to learn to spell them correctly.
6. **Look over corrected papers for misspelled words.** Add these words to your list and practice writing each word four to five times each. Writing teachers will especially notice which words you frequently misspell, and it will help you excel in your classes if they see your spelling improve.
7. **Test yourself with flashcards.** Sometimes the old-fashioned methods are best, and for spelling, this tried and true technique has worked for many students. You can work with a peer or alone.

8. **Review the common spelling rules explained in this chapter.** Take the necessary time to master the material; you may return to the rules in this chapter again and again, as needed.

Tip

Remember to focus on spelling during the editing and revising step of the writing process. Start with the big ideas such as organizing your piece of writing and developing effective paragraphs, and then work your way down toward the smaller—but equally important—details like spelling and punctuation. To read more about the writing process and editing and revising, see Chapter 8 "The Writing Process: How Do I Begin?".

Homonyms

Homonyms are words that sound like one another but have different meanings.

Commonly Misused Homonyms

Principle, Principal

- **Principle (noun).** A fundamental concept that is accepted as true.

  The **principle** of human equality is an important foundation for all nations.

- **Principal (noun).** The original amount of debt on which interest is calculated.

  The payment plan allows me to pay back only the **principal** amount, not any compounded interest.

- **Principal (noun).** A person who is the main authority of a school.

The **principal** held a conference for both parents and teachers.

Where, Wear, Ware

- **Where (adverb).** The place in which something happens.

  Where is the restaurant?

- **Wear (verb).** To carry or have on the body.

  I will **wear** my hiking shoes when go on a climb tomorrow morning.

- **Ware (noun).** Articles of merchandise or manufacture (usually, *wares*).

  When I return from shopping, I will show you my **wares**.

Lead, Led

- **Lead (noun).** A type of metal used in pipes and batteries.

  The **lead** pipes in my homes are old and need to be replaced.

- **Led (verb).** The past tense of the verb *lead.*

  After the garden, she **led** the patrons through the museum.

Which, Witch

- **Which (pronoun).** Replaces one out of a group.

  Which apartment is yours?

- **Witch (noun).** A person who practices sorcery or who has supernatural powers.

  She thinks she is a **witch**, but she does not seem to have any powers.

Peace, Piece

- **Peace (noun).** A state of tranquility or quiet.

  For once, there was **peace** between the argumentative brothers.

- **Piece (noun).** A part of a whole.

  I would like a large **piece** of cake, thank you.

Passed, Past

- **Passed (verb).** To go away or move.

  He **passed** the slower cars on the road using the left lane.

- **Past (noun).** Having existed or taken place in a period before the present.

  The argument happened in the **past**, so there is no use in dwelling on it.

Lessen, Lesson

- **Lessen (verb).** To reduce in number, size, or degree.

  My dentist gave me medicine to **lessen** the pain of my aching tooth.

- **Lesson (noun).** A reading or exercise to be studied by a student.

Today's **lesson** was about mortgage interest rates.

Patience, Patients

- **Patience (noun).** The capacity of being patient (waiting for a period of time or enduring pains and trials calmly).

  The novice teacher's **patience** with the unruly class was astounding.

- **Patients (plural noun).** Individuals under medical care.

  The **patients** were tired of eating the hospital food, and they could not wait for a home-cooked meal.

Sees, Seas, Seize

- **Sees (verb).** To perceive with the eye.

  He **sees** a whale through his binoculars.

- **Seas (plural noun).** The plural of sea, a great body of salt water.

  The tidal fluctuation of the oceans and **seas** are influenced by the moon.

- **Seize (verb).** To possess or take by force.

  The king plans to **seize** all the peasants' land.

Threw, Through

- **Threw (verb).** The past tense of *throw*.

  She **threw** the football with perfect form.

- **Through (preposition).** A word that indicates movement.

  She walked **through** the door and out of his life.

Exercise 2

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct homonym.

1. Do you agree with the underlying _________(principle, principal) that ensures copyrights are protected in the digital age?
2. I like to _________(where, wear, ware) unique clothing from thrift stores that do not have company logos on them.
3. Marjorie felt like she was being _________(led, lead) on a wild goose chase, and she did not like it one bit.
4. Serina described _________(witch, which) house was hers, but now that I am here, they all look the same.
5. Seeing his friend without a lunch, Miguel gave her a _________(peace, piece) of his apple.
6. Do you think that it is healthy for mother to talk about the _________(passed, past) all the time?
7. Eating healthier foods will _________(lessen, lesson) the risk of heart disease.
8. I know it sounds cliché, but my father had the

_________(patients, patience) of a saint.

9. Daniela _________(sees, seas, seize) possibilities in the bleakest situations, and that it is why she is successful.
10. Everyone goes _________(through, threw) hardships in life regardless of who they are.

Commonly Misspelled Words

Below is a list of commonly misspelled words. You probably use these words every day in either speaking or writing. Each word has a segment in bold type, which indicates the problem area of the word that is often spelled incorrectly. If you can, use this list as a guide before, during, and after you write.

Tip

Use the following two tricks to help you master these troublesome words:

1. Copy each word a few times and underline the problem area.
2. Copy the words onto flash cards and have a friend test you.

Table 4.1 Commonly Misspelled Words

a**c**ross	dis**app**oint	in**teg**ration	partic**u**lar	sep**ara**te
a**ddr**ess	disa**pp**rove	in**tell**igent	**per**form	sim**ilar**
ans**w**er	do**es**n’t	int**ere**st	**per**haps	**sin**ce
arg**u**ment	eig**hth**	int**er**fere	perso**nn**el	sp**ee**ch
a**thl**ete	emba**rr**ass	jew**el**ry	po**ssess**	stren**gth**
begi**nn**ing	envir**on**ment	jud**gm**ent	po**ss**ible	su**cc**ess
beha**vi**or	exa**gg**erate	knowle**d**ge	**pre**fer	**sur**prise
cal**e**nd**a**r	fam**ili**ar	maint**ain**	pre**jud**ice	**tau**ght
ca**r**ee**r**	fina**lly**	math**e**matics	privil**ege**	temper**a**ture
cons**cie**nce	gove**rn**ment	me**a**nt	pro**bab**ly	th**orou**gh
crow**ded**	gramm**a**r	ne**ce**ssary	**psy**cholo**gy**	though**t**
def**ini**te	hei**gh**t	nerv**ous**	p**ur**sue	tire**d**
d**es**cribe	**ill**egal	o**cc**asion	ref**er**ence	unt**il**
desp**er**ate	immed**iate**ly	opin**ion**	**rhy**th**m**	weig**ht**
di**ffe**rent	import**ant**	opt**i**mist	ridic**ul**ous	wri**tt**en

Exercise 3

Identify and correct the ten commonly misspelled words in the following paragraph.

Brooklyn is one of the five boroughs that make up New York City. It is located on the eastern shore of Long Island directly accross the East River from the island of Manhattan. Its beginings stretch back to the sixteenth century when it was founded by the Dutch who originally called it “Breuckelen.” Immedietely after the Dutch settled Brooklyn, it came under British rule. However, neither the Dutch nor the British were Brooklyn's first inhabitants. When European settlers first arrived, Brooklyn was largely inhabited by the Lenapi, a collective name for several organized bands of Native American people who settled a large area of land that extended from upstate New York through the entire state of New Jersey. They are sometimes referred to as the Delaware Indians. Over time, the Lenapi succumbed to European diseases or conflicts between European settlers or other Native American enemies. Finalley they were pushed out of Brooklyn completely by the British.

In 1776, Brooklyn was the site of the first importent battle of the American Revolution known as the Battle of Brooklyn. The colonists lost this battle, which was led by George Washington, but over the next two years they would win the war, kicking the British out of the colonies once and for all.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Brooklyn grew to be a city in its own right. The completion of the Brooklyn Bridge was an ocasion for celebration; transportation and commerce between Brooklyn and Manhattan now became much easier. Eventually, in 1898, Brooklyn lost its seperate identity as an independent city and became one of five boroughs of New York City. However, in some people's opinien, the intagration into New York City should have never happened; they though Brooklyn should have remained an independent city.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Writing at Work

In today's job market, writing e-mails has become a means by which many people find employment. E-mails to prospective employers require thoughtful word choice, accurate spelling, and perfect punctuation. Employers' inboxes are inundated with countless e-mails daily. If even the subject line of an e-mail contains a spelling error, it will likely be overlooked and someone else's e-mail will take priority.

The best thing to do after you proofread an e-mail to an employer and run the spell checker is to have an additional set of eyes go over it with you; one of your teachers may be able to read the e-mail and give you suggestions for improvement. Most colleges and universities have writing centers, which may also be able to assist you.

Key Takeaways

- Accurate, error-free spelling enhances your credibility with the reader.
- Mastering the rules of spelling may help you become a better speller.
- Knowing the commonly misused homonyms may prevent spelling errors.
- Studying the list of commonly misspelled words in this chapter, or studying a list of your own, is one way to improve your spelling skills.

Writing Application

What is your definition of a successful person? Is it based on a person's profession or is it based on his or her character? Perhaps success means a combination of both. In one paragraph, describe in detail what you think makes a person successful. When you are finished, proofread your work for spelling errors. Exchange papers with a partner and read each other's work. See if you catch any spelling errors that your partner missed.

142. Word Choice

[AUTHOR REMOVED AT REQUEST OF ORIGINAL PUBLISHER]

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the reasons why using a dictionary and thesaurus is important when writing.
2. Identify how to use proper connotations.
3. Identify how to avoid using slang, clichés, and overly general words in your writing.

Effective writing involves making conscious choices with words. When you prepare to sit down to write your first draft, you likely have already completed some freewriting exercises, chosen your topic, developed your thesis statement, written an outline, and even selected your sources. When it is time to write your first draft, start to consider which words to use to best convey your ideas to the reader.

Some writers are picky about word choice as they start drafting. They may practice some specific strategies, such as using a dictionary and thesaurus, using words and phrases with proper connotations, and avoiding slang, clichés, and overly general words.

Once you understand these tricks of the trade, you can move ahead confidently in writing your assignment. Remember, the skill and accuracy of your word choice is a major factor in developing your writing style. Precise selection of your words will help you be more clearly understood—in both writing and speaking.

Using a Dictionary and Thesaurus

Even professional writers need help with the meanings, spellings, pronunciations, and uses of particular words. In fact, they rely on dictionaries to help them write better. No one knows every word in the English language and their multiple uses and meanings, so all writers, from novices to professionals, can benefit from the use of dictionaries.

Most dictionaries provide the following information:

- **Spelling.** How the word and its different forms are spelled.
- **Pronunciation.** How to say the word.
- **Part of speech.** The function of the word.
- **Definition.** The meaning of the word.
- **Synonyms.** Words that have similar meanings.
- **Etymology.** The history of the word.

Look at the following sample dictionary entry and see which of the preceeding information you can identify:

> **myth**, mith, *n.* [Gr. *mythos*, a word, a fable, a legend.] A fable or legend embodying the convictions of a people as to their gods or other divine beings, their own beginnings and early history and the heroes connected with it, or the origin of the world; any invented story; something or someone having no existence in fact.—**myth • ic**, **myth • i • cal**

Like a dictionary, a thesaurus is another indispensable writing tool. A thesaurus gives you a list of synonyms, words that have the same (or very close to the same) meaning as another word. It also lists antonyms, words with the opposite meaning of the word. A thesaurus will help you when you are looking for the perfect word with just the right meaning to convey your ideas. It will also help you learn more words and use the ones you already know more correctly.

precocious *adj*, *She's such a precocious little girl!*: uncommonly smart, mature, advanced, smart, bright, brilliant, gifted, quick, clever, apt.

Ant. slow, backward, stupid.

Using Proper Connotations

A denotation is the dictionary definition of a word. A connotation, on the other hand, is the emotional or cultural meaning attached to a word. The connotation of a word can be positive, negative, or neutral. Keep in mind the connotative meaning when choosing a word.

Scrawny

- **Denotation:** Exceptionally thin and slight or meager in body or size.
- **Word used in a sentence:** Although he was a premature baby and a **scrawny** child, Martin has developed into a strong man.
- **Connotation:** (Negative) In this sentence the word *scrawny* may have a negative connotation in the

readers' minds. They might find it to mean a weakness or a personal flaw; however, the word fits into the sentence appropriately.

Skinny

- **Denotation:** Lacking sufficient flesh, very thin.
- **Word used in a sentence: Skinny** jeans have become very fashionable in the past couple of years.
- **Connotation:** (Positive) Based on cultural and personal impressions of what it means to be skinny, the reader may have positive connotations of the word *skinny*.

Lean

- **Denotation:** Lacking or deficient in flesh; containing little or no fat.
- **Word used in a sentence:** My brother has a **lean** figure, whereas I have a more muscular build.
- **Connotation:** (Neutral) In this sentence, *lean* has a neutral connotation. It does not call to mind an overly skinny person like the word *scrawny*, nor does imply the positive cultural impressions of the word *skinny*. It is merely a neutral descriptive word.

Notice that all the words have a very similar denotation; however, the connotations of each word differ.

Exercise 1

In each of the following items, you will find words with similar denotations. Identify the words' connotations as positive, negative, or neutral by writing the word in the appropriate box. Copy the chart onto your own piece of paper.

1. curious, nosy, interested
2. lazy, relaxed, slow
3. courageous, foolhardy, assured
4. new, newfangled, modern
5. mansion, shack, residence
6. spinster, unmarried woman, career woman
7. giggle, laugh, cackle
8. boring, routine, prosaic
9. noted, notorious, famous
10. assertive, confident, pushy

Positive	Negative	Neutral

Avoiding Slang

Slang describes informal words that are considered nonstandard

English. Slang often changes with passing fads and may be used by or familiar to only a specific group of people. Most people use slang when they speak and in personal correspondences, such as e-mails, text messages, and instant messages. Slang is appropriate between friends in an informal context but should be avoided in formal academic writing.

Writing at Work

Frequent exposure to media and popular culture has desensitized many of us to slang. In certain situations, using slang at work may not be problematic, but keep in mind that words can have a powerful effect. Slang in professional e-mails or during meetings may convey the wrong message or even mistakenly offend someone.

Exercise 2

Edit the following paragraph by replacing the slang words and phrases with more formal language. Rewrite the paragraph on your own sheet of paper.

> I felt like such an airhead when I got up to give my speech. As I walked toward the podium, I banged my knee on a chair. Man, I felt like such a klutz. On top of that, I kept saying "like" and "um," and I could not stop fidgeting. I was so stressed out about being up there. I feel like I've been practicing this speech 24/7, and I still bombed. It was ten minutes of me going off about how we sometimes have to do things we don't enjoy doing. Wow, did I ever prove my point. My speech was so bad I'm surprised that people didn't boo. My teacher said not to sweat it, though. Everyone gets nervous his or her first time speaking in public, and she said, with time, I would become a whiz at this speech giving stuff. I wonder if I have the guts to do it again.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Avoiding Clichés

Clichés are descriptive expressions that have lost their effectiveness because they are overused. Writing that uses clichés often suffers from a lack of originality and insight. Avoiding clichés in formal writing will help you write in original and fresh ways.

- **Clichéd:** Whenever my brother and I get into an argument, he always says something that makes my **blood boil**.
- **Plain:** Whenever my brother and I get into an argument, he always says something that makes me really angry.
- **Original:** Whenever my brother and I get into an argument, he always says something that makes me want to go to the gym and punch the bag for a few hours.

Tip

Think about all the cliché phrases that you hear in popular music or in everyday conversation. What would happen if these clichés were transformed into something unique?

Exercise 3

On your own sheet of paper, revise the following sentences by replacing the clichés with fresh, original descriptions.

1. She is writing a memoir in which she will air her family's dirty laundry.
2. Fran had an ax to grind with Benny, and she planned to confront him that night at the party.
3. Mr. Muller was at his wit's end with the rowdy class of seventh graders.
4. The bottom line is that Greg was fired because he missed too many days of work.
5. Sometimes it is hard to make ends meet with just one paycheck.
6. My brain is fried from pulling an all-nighter.
7. Maria left the dishes in the sink all week to give Jeff a taste of his own medicine.
8. While they were at the carnival Janice exclaimed, "Time sure does fly when you are having fun!"
9. Jeremy became tongue-tied after the interviewer asked him where he saw himself in five years.
10. Jordan was dressed to the nines that night.

Avoiding Overly General Words

Specific words and images make your writing more interesting to read. Whenever possible, avoid overly general words in your writing;

instead, try to replace general language with particular nouns, verbs, and modifiers that convey details and that bring yours words to life. Add words that provide color, texture, sound, and even smell to your writing.

- **General:** My new puppy is cute.
- **Specific:** My new puppy is a ball of white fuzz with the biggest black eyes I have ever seen.

- **General:** My teacher told us that plagiarism is bad.
- **Specific:** My teacher, Ms. Atwater, created a presentation detailing exactly how plagiarism is illegal and unethical.

Exercise 4

Revise the following sentences by replacing the overly general words with more precise and attractive language. Write the new sentences on your own sheet of paper.

1. Reilly got into her car and drove off.
2. I would like to travel to outer space because it would be amazing.
3. Jane came home after a bad day at the office.
4. I thought Milo's essay was fascinating.
5. The dog walked up the street.
6. The coal miners were tired after a long day.
7. The tropical fish are pretty.
8. I sweat a lot after running.

9. The goalie blocked the shot.
10. I enjoyed my Mexican meal.

Key Takeaways

- Using a dictionary and thesaurus as you write will improve your writing by improving your word choice.
- Connotations of words may be positive, neutral, or negative.
- Slang, clichés, and overly general words should be avoided in academic writing.

Writing Application

Review a piece of writing that you have completed for school. Circle any sentences with slang, clichés, or overly general words and rewrite them using stronger language.

143. Prefixes and Suffixes

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Learning Objectives

1. Identify the meanings of common prefixes.
2. Become familiar with common suffix rules.

The English language contains an enormous and ever-growing number of words. Enhancing your vocabulary by learning new words can seem overwhelming, but if you know the common prefixes and suffixes of English, you will understand many more words.

Mastering common prefixes and suffixes is like learning a code. Once you crack the code, you can not only spell words more correctly but also recognize and perhaps even define unfamiliar words.

Prefixes

A prefix is a word part added to the beginning of a word to create a new meaning. Study the common prefixes in Table 4.2 "Common Prefixes".

Tip

The main rule to remember when adding a prefix to a word is **not** to add letters or leave out any letters. See Table 4.2 "Common Prefixes" for examples of this rule.

Table 4.2 Common Prefixes

Prefix	Meaning	Example
dis	not, opposite of	dis + satisfied = dissatisfied
mis	wrongly	mis + spell = misspell
un	not	un + acceptable = unacceptable
re	again	re + election = reelection
inter	between	inter + related = interrelated
pre	before	pre + pay = prepay
non	not	non + sense = nonsense
super	above	super + script = superscript
sub	under	sub + merge = submerge
anti	against, opposing	anti + bacterial = antibacterial

Exercise 1

Identify the five words with prefixes in the following paragraph, and write their meanings on a separate sheet of paper.

> At first, I thought one of my fuzzy, orange socks disappeared in the dryer, but I could not find it in there. Because it was my favorite pair, nothing was going to prevent me from finding that sock. I looked all around my bedroom, under the bed, on top of the bed, and in my closet, but I still could not find it. I did not know that I would discover the answer just as I gave up my search. As I sat down on the couch in the family room, my Dad was reclining on his chair. I laughed when I saw that one of his feet was orange and the other blue! I forgot that he was color-blind.

Next time he does laundry I will have to supervise him while he folds the socks so that he does not accidentally take one of mine!

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Exercise 2

Add the correct prefix to the word to complete each sentence. Write the word on your own sheet of paper.

1. I wanted to ease my stomach _________comfort, so I drank some ginger root tea.
2. Lenny looked funny in his _________matched shirt and pants.
3. Penelope felt _________glamorous at the party because she was the only one not wearing a dress.
4. My mother said those _________aging creams do not work, so I should not waste my money on them.
5. The child's _________standard performance on the test alarmed his parents.
6. When my sister first saw the meteor, she thought it was a _________natural phenomenon.
7. Even though she got an excellent job offer, Cherie did not want to _________locate to a different country.

8. With a small class size, the students get to _________act with the teacher more frequently.
9. I slipped on the ice because I did not heed the _________cautions about watching my step.
10. A _________combatant is another word for civilian.

Suffixes

A suffix is a word part added to the end of a word to create a new meaning. Study the suffix rules in the following boxes.

Rule 1

When adding the suffixes *−ness* and *−ly* to a word, the spelling of the word does not change.

Examples:

- dark + ness = darkness
- scholar + ly = scholarly

Exceptions to Rule 1

When the word ends in *y*, change the *y* to *i* before adding *−ness* and *−ly*.

Examples:

- ready + ly = readily
- happy + ness = happiness

Rule 2

When the suffix begins with a vowel, drop the silent *e* in the root word.

Examples:

- care + ing = caring
- use + able = usable

Exceptions to Rule 2

When the word ends in *ce* or *ge*, keep the silent *e* if the suffix begins with *a* or *o*.

Examples:

- replace + able = replaceable
- courage + ous = courageous

Rule 3

When the suffix begins with a consonant, keep the silent *e* in the original word.

Examples:

- care + ful = careful
- care + less = careless

Exceptions to Rule 3

Examples:

- true + ly = truly

- argue + ment = argument

Rule 4

When the word ends in a consonant plus *y*, change the *y* to *i* before any suffix not beginning with *i*.

Examples:

- sunny + er = sunnier
- hurry + ing = hurrying

Rule 5

When the suffix begins with a vowel, double the final consonant only if (1) the word has only one syllable or is accented on the last syllable and (2) the word ends in a single vowel followed by a single consonant.

Examples:

- tan + ing = tanning (one syllable word)
- regret + ing = regretting (The accent is on the last syllable; the word ends in a single vowel followed by a single consonant.)
- cancel + ed = canceled (The accent is not on the last syllable.)
- prefer + ed = preferred

Exercise 3

On your own sheet of paper, write correctly the forms of the words with their suffixes.

1. refer + ed
2. refer + ence
3. mope + ing
4. approve + al
5. green + ness
6. benefit + ed
7. resubmit + ing
8. use + age
9. greedy + ly
10. excite + ment

Key Takeaways

- A prefix is a word part added to the beginning of a word that changes the word's meaning.
- A suffix is a word part added to the end of a word that changes the word's meaning.
- Learning the meanings of prefixes and suffixes will help expand your vocabulary, which will help improve your writing.

Writing Application

Write a paragraph describing one of your life goals. Include five words with prefixes and five words with suffixes. Exchange papers with a classmate and circle the prefixes and suffixes in your classmate's paper. Correct each prefix or suffix that is spelled incorrectly.

144. Synonyms and Antonyms

[AUTHOR REMOVED AT REQUEST OF ORIGINAL PUBLISHER]

Learning Objectives

1. Recognize how synonyms improve writing.
2. Identify common antonyms to increase your vocabulary.

As you work with your draft, you will want to pay particular attention to the words you have chosen. Do they express exactly what you are trying to convey? Can you choose better, more effective words? Familiarity with synonyms and antonyms can be helpful in answering these questions.

Synonyms

Synonyms are words that have the same, or almost the same, meaning as another word. You can say an "easy task" or a "simple task" because *easy* and *simple* are synonyms. You can say Hong Kong is a "large city" or a "metropolis" because *city* and *metropolis* are synonyms.

However, it is important to remember that not all pairs of words in the English language are so easily interchangeable. The slight but important differences in meaning between synonyms can make a big difference in your writing. For example, the words *boring* and *insipid* may have similar meanings, but the subtle differences between the two will affect the message your writing conveys. The word *insipid* evokes a scholarly and perhaps more pretentious message than *boring*.

The English language is full of pairs of words that have subtle distinctions between them. All writers, professionals and beginners alike, face the challenge of choosing the most appropriate synonym to best convey their ideas. When you pay particular attention to synonyms in your writing, it comes across to your reader. The sentences become much more clear and rich in meaning.

Writing at Work

Any writing you do at work involves a careful choice of words. For example, if you are writing an e-mail to your employer regarding your earnings, you can use the word *pay*, *salary*, or hourly *wage*. There are also other synonyms to choose from. Just keep in mind that the word you choose will have an effect on the reader, so you want to choose wisely to get the desired effect.

Exercise 1

Replace the underlined words in the paragraph with appropriate synonyms. Write the new paragraph on your own sheet of paper.

> When most people think of the Renaissance, they might think of artists like Michelangelo, Raphael, or Leonardo da Vinci, but they often overlook one of the very important figures of the Renaissance: Filippo Brunelleschi. Brunelleschi was born in Florence, Italy in 1377. He is considered the very best architect and engineer of the Renaissance. His impressive accomplishments are a testament to following one's dreams, persevering in the face of obstacles, and realizing one's vision.
>
> The most difficult undertaking of Brunelleschi's career was the dome of Florence Cathedral, which took sixteen years to construct. A major blow to the progress of the construction happened in 1428. Brunelleschi had designed a special ship to carry the one hundred tons of marble needed for the dome. He felt this would be the most inexpensive way to transport the marble, but the unthinkable happened. The ship went down to the bottom of the water, taking all the marble with it to the bottom of the river. Brunelleschi was really sad. Nevertheless, he did not give up. He held true to his vision of the completed dome. Filippo Brunelleschi completed construction of the dome of Florence Cathedral in 1446. His influence on artists and architects alike was

felt strongly during his lifetime and can still be felt in this day and age.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Exercise 2

On your own sheet of paper, write a sentence with each of the following words that illustrates the specific meaning of each synonym.

1. leave, abandon
2. mad, insane
3. outside, exterior
4. poor, destitute
5. quiet, peaceful
6. riot, revolt
7. rude, impolite
8. talk, conversation
9. hug, embrace
10. home, residence

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Antonyms

Antonyms are words that have the opposite meaning of a given word. The study of antonyms will not only help you choose the most appropriate word as you write; it will also sharpen your overall sense of language. Table 4.3 “Common Antonyms” lists common words and their antonyms.

Table 4.3 Common Antonyms

Word	**Antonym**	**Word**	**Antonym**
absence	presence	frequent	seldom
accept	refuse	harmful	harmless
accurate	inaccurate	horizontal	vertical
advantage	disadvantage	imitation	genuine
ancient	modern	inhabited	uninhabited
abundant	scarce	inferior	superior
artificial	natural	intentional	accidental
attractive	repulsive	justice	injustice
borrow	lend	knowledge	ignorance
bravery	cowardice	landlord	tenant
create	destroy, demolish	likely	unlikely
bold	timid, meek	minority	majority
capable	incapable	miser	spendthrift
combine	separate	obedient	disobedient
conceal	reveal	optimist	pessimist
common	rare	permanent	temporary
decrease	increase	plentiful	scarce
definite	indefinite	private	public
despair	hope	prudent	imprudent
discourage	encourage	qualified	unqualified
employer	employee	satisfactory	unsatisfactory
expand	contract	tame	wild
forget	remember	vacant	occupied

Tip

Learning antonyms is an effective way to increase your vocabulary. Memorizing words in combination with or in relation to other words often helps us retain them.

Exercise 3

Correct the following sentences by replacing the underlined words with an antonym. Write the antonym on your own sheet of paper.

1. The pilot who landed the plane was a coward because no one was injured.
2. Even though the botany lecture was two hours long, Gerard found it incredibly dull.
3. My mother says it is impolite to say thank you like you really mean it.
4. Although I have learned a lot of information through textbooks, it is life experience that has given

me ignorance.

5. When our instructor said the final paper was compulsory, it was music to my ears!
6. My only virtues are coffee, video games, and really loud music.
7. Elvin was so bold when he walked in the classroom that he sat in the back row and did not participate.
8. Maria thinks elephants who live in freedom have a sad look in their eyes.
9. The teacher filled her students' minds with gloomy thoughts about their futures.
10. The guest attended to every one of our needs.

Key Takeaways

- Synonyms are words that have the same, or almost the same, meaning as another word.
- Antonyms are words that have the opposite meaning of another word.
- Choosing the right synonym refines your writing.
- Learning common antonyms sharpens your sense of language and expands your vocabulary.

Writing Application

Write a paragraph that describes your favorite dish or food. Use as many synonyms as you can in the description, even if it seems too many. Be creative. Consult a thesaurus, and take this opportunity to use words you have never used before. Be prepared to share your paragraph.

145. Using Context Clues

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Learning Objectives

1. Identify the different types of context clues.
2. Practice using context clues while reading.

Context clues are bits of information within a text that will assist you in deciphering the meaning of unknown words. Since most of your knowledge of vocabulary comes from reading, it is important that you recognize context clues. By becoming more aware of particular words and phrases surrounding a difficult word, you can make logical guesses about its meaning. The following are the different types of context clues:

- Brief definition or restatement
- Synonyms and antonyms
- Examples

Brief Definition or Restatement

Sometimes a text directly states the definition or a restatement of the unknown word. The brief definition or restatement is signaled by a word or a punctuation mark. Consider the following example:

> If you visit Alaska, you will likely see many glaciers, or slow moving masses of ice.

In this sentence, the word *glaciers* is defined by the phrase that follows the signal word *or*, which is *slow moving masses of ice*.

In other instances, the text may restate the meaning of the word in a different way, by using punctuation as a signal. Look at the following example:

> Marina was indignant—fuming mad—when she discovered her brother had left for the party without her.

Although *fuming mad* is not a formal definition of the word *indignant*, it does serve to define it. These two examples use signals—the word *or* and the punctuation dashes—to indicate the meaning of the unfamiliar word. Other signals to look for are the words *is*, *as*, *means*, *known as*, and *refers to*.

Synonyms and Antonyms

Sometimes a text gives a synonym of the unknown word to signal the meaning of the unfamiliar word:

> When you interpret an image, you actively question and examine what the image connotes and suggests.

In this sentence the word *suggests* is a synonym of the word *connotes*. The word *and* sometimes signals synonyms.

Likewise, the word *but* may signal a contrast, which can help you define a word by its antonym.

> I abhor clothes shopping, but I adore grocery shopping.

The word *abhor* is contrasted with its opposite: *adore*. From this context, the reader can guess that *abhor* means to dislike greatly.

Examples

Sometimes a text will give you an example of the word that sheds light on its meaning:

> I knew Mark's ailurophobia was in full force because he began trembling and stuttering when he saw my cat, Ludwig, slink out from under the bed.

Although *ailurophobia* is an unknown word, the sentence gives an example of its effects. Based on this example, a reader could confidently surmise that the word means a fear of cats.

Tip

Look for signal words like *such as*, *for instance*, and *for example*. These words signal that a word's meaning may be revealed through an example.

Exercise 1

Identify the context clue that helps define the underlined words in each of the following sentences. Write the context clue on your own sheet of paper.

1. Lucinda is very adroit on the balance beam, but Constance is rather clumsy.
2. I saw the entomologist, a scientist who studies insects, cradle the giant dung beetle in her palm.
3. Lance's comments about politics were irrelevant and meaningless to the botanist's lecture on plant

reproduction.

4. Before I left for my trip to the Czech Republic, I listened to my mother's sage advice and made a copy of my passport.
5. His rancor, or hatred, for socializing resulted in a life of loneliness and boredom.
6. Martin was mortified, way beyond embarrassment, when his friends teamed up to shove him into the pool.
7. The petulant four-year-old had a baby sister who was, on the contrary, not grouchy at all.
8. The philosophy teacher presented the students with several conundrums, or riddles, to solve.
9. Most Americans are omnivores, people that eat both plants and animals.
10. Elena is effervescent, as excited as a cheerleader, for example, when she meets someone for the first time.

Exercise 2

On your own sheet of paper, write the name of the context clue that helps to define the underlined words.

> Maggie was a precocious child to say the least. She produced brilliant watercolor paintings by the age of three. At first, her parents were flabbergasted—utterly blown away—by their

daughter's ability, but soon they got used to their little painter. Her preschool teacher said that Maggie's dexterity, or ease with which she used her hands, was something she had never before seen in such a young child. Little Maggie never gloated or took pride in her paintings; she just smiled contentedly when she finished one and requested her parents give it to someone as a gift. Whenever people met Maggie for the first time they often watched her paint with their mouths agape, but her parents always kept their mouths closed and simply smiled over their "little Monet."

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Tip

In addition to context clues to help you figure out the meaning of a word, examine the following word parts: prefixes, roots, and suffixes.

Writing at Work

Jargon a type of shorthand communication often used in the workplace. It is the technical language of a special field. Imagine it is your first time working as a server in a restaurant and your manager tells you he is going to "eighty-six" the roasted chicken. If you do not realize that "eighty-six" means to remove an item from the menu, you could be confused.

When you first start a job, no matter where it may be, you will encounter jargon that will likely be foreign to you. Perhaps after working the job for a short time, you too will feel comfortable enough to use it. When you are first hired, however, jargon can be baffling and make you feel like an outsider. If you cannot decipher the jargon based on the context, it is always a good policy to ask.

Key Takeaways

- Context clues are words or phrases within a text that help clarify vocabulary that is unknown to you.
- There are several types of context clues including brief definition and restatement, synonyms and antonyms, and example.

Writing Application

Write a paragraph describing your first job. In the paragraph, use five words previously unknown to you. These words could be jargon words or you may consult a dictionary or thesaurus to find a new word. Make sure to provide a specific context clue for understanding each word. Exchange papers with a classmate and try to decipher the meaning of the words in each other's paragraphs based on the context clues.

146. Working with Words: End-of-Chapter Exercises

[AUTHOR REMOVED AT REQUEST OF ORIGINAL PUBLISHER]

Learning Objectives

1. Use the skills you have learned in the chapter.
2. Work collaboratively with other students.

Exercises

1. Proofread the paragraph and correct any commonly confused words and misspelled words.

    Grunge, or the Seattle sound, is a type of rock music that became quiet popular in the late 1980s and early 1990s. It began in Seattle, Washington. Grunge musicians rejected the dramatic an expensive stage productions that were trendy at the time. There music was striped down with an emphasis on distorted electric guitars. Grunge musicians did not ware makeup or sport extravagent hairstyles like many of the day's rock musicians and bands. Many grunge musicians would by they're clothes from secondhand stores. The lyrics too grunge songs were also quit different compared two what was populer at the time. Grunge lyrics are charecterized by dark or socially conscience themes. Grunge music is still admired today buy music lovers of all ages.

2. Complete the following sentences by filling in the blank line with the correct homonym or frequently misspelled word.

a. Kevin asked me a serious question and _________(then, than) interrupted me when I attempted to answer.
b. A hot compress will _________(lessen, lesson) the pain of muscle cramps.
c. Jason was not a graceful _________(looser, loser) because he knocked his chair over and stormed off the basketball court.
d. Please consider the _________(effects, affects) of not getting enough green vegetables in your diet.
e. _________(Except, Accept) for Ajay, we all had our tickets to the play.
f. I am _________(threw, through) with this magazine, so you can read it if you like.
g. I don't care _________(whose, who's) coming to the party and _________(whose, who's) not.
h. Crystal could _________(sea, see) the soaring hawk through her binoculars.
i. The _________(principal, principle) gave the students a very long lecture about peer pressure.
j. Dr. Frankl nearly lost his _________(patience,

patients) with one of his _________(patience, patients).

3. Rewrite the following personal essay by replacing the slang, clichés, and overly general language with stronger, more precise language.

> My biggest regret happened in high school. I had always felt like a fish out of water, so during my sophomore year I was determined to fit in with the cool people. Man, was that an uphill battle. I don't even know why I tried, but hindsight is 20/20 I guess. The first thing I did was change the way I dressed. I went from wearing clothes I was comfortable in to wearing stuff that was so not me. Then I started wearing a ton of makeup, and my brother was all like, "What happened to your face?" Not only did my looks change, my personality changed a lot too. I started to act all stuck up and bossy with my friends, and they didn't know how to respond to this person that used to be me. Luckily, this phase didn't last more than a couple of months. I decided it was more fun to be me than to try to be someone else. I guess you can't fit a square peg in a round hole after all.

4. Write the correct synonym for each word.

a. lenient _________(relaxed, callous)
b. abandon _________(vacate, deceive)
c. berate _________(criticize, encourage)

d. experienced _________(callow, matured)
e. spiteful _________(malevolent, mellow)
f. tame _________(subdued, wild)
g. tasty _________(savory, bland)
h. banal _________(common, interesting)
i. contradict _________(deny, revolt)
j. vain _________(boastful, simple)

PART XX

WRITING BASICS: HELP FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

This entire Part is from *Writing for Success*, Chapter 5

147. Word Order

[AUTHOR REMOVED AT REQUEST OF ORIGINAL PUBLISHER]

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the basic structures of sentences.
2. Determine ways to turn sentences into questions.
3. Define adjectives and how they are used.

If your first language is not English, you will most likely need some extra help when writing in Standard, or formal, English. New students of Standard English often make similar kinds of errors. Even if you have been speaking English for a long time, you may not feel as confident in your written English skills. This chapter covers the most common errors made by English language learners and helps you avoid similar mistakes in your writing.

Basic Sentence Structures

The most basic sentence structure in English is a subject plus a verb. A subject performs the action in the sentence, and the verb identifies the action. Keep in mind that in some languages, such as Spanish and Italian, an obvious subject does not always perform the action in a sentence; the subject is often implied by the verb. However, every sentence in English must have a subject and a verb to express a complete thought.

subject + verb
Samantha sleeps.

Not all sentences are as simple as a subject plus a verb. To form more complex sentences, writers build upon this basic structure. Adding a prepositional phrase to the basic sentence creates a more complex sentence. A preposition is a part of speech that relates a noun or a pronoun to another word in a sentence. It also introduces a prepositional phrase. If you can identify a preposition, you will be able to identify a prepositional phrase.

subject + verb + prepositional phrase
Samantha sleeps on the couch.

On is the preposition. *On the couch* is the prepositional phrase.

Common Prepositions		
about	beside	off
above	between	on
across	by	over
after	during	through
against	except	to
along	for	toward
among	from	under
around	in	until
at	into	up
before	like	with
behind	of	without

Exercise 1

Copy the following sentences onto your own sheet of paper and underline the prepositional phrases.

1. Linda and Javier danced under the stars.
2. Each person has an opinion about the topic.
3. The fans walked through the gates.
4. Jamyra ran around the track.
5. Maria celebrated her birthday in January.

Another sentence structure that is important to understand is subject + verb + object. There are two types of objects: direct objects and indirect objects.

A direct object receives the action of the verb.

subject + verb + direct object
Janice writes a letter.

The letter directly receives the action of the verb *writes*.

Tip

A quick way to find the direct object is to ask *what*? or *who*?

Sentence: Maurice kicked the ball.

What did Maurice kick? The direct object, *ball*.

Sentence: Maurice kicked Tom by accident.

Who did Maurice kick? The direct object, *Tom*.

An indirect object does not receive the action of the verb.

subject + verb + indirect object
Janice writes me a letter

The action (*writes*) is performed for or to the indirect object (*me*).

Tip

Even though the indirect object is not found after a preposition in English, it can be discovered by asking *to whom*? or *for whom*? after the verb.

Sentence: Dad baked the children some cookies.

For whom did Dad bake the cookies? The indirect object, *children*.

Exercise 2

On a separate sheet of paper, identify the subject, verb, direct object, and indirect object in the following sentences.

1. Captain Kirk told the crew a story.
2. Jermaine gave his girlfriend a dozen yellow tulips.
3. That hospital offers nurses better pay.
4. Dad served Grandma a delicious dinner.
5. Mom bought herself a new car.

Exercise 3

On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the sentences in the correct order. If the sentence is correct as it is, write OK.

1. The pizza Jeannine burnt.
2. To the Mexican restaurant we had to go for dinner.
3. Jeannine loved the food.
4. So full were we during the walk home.
5. I will make the pizza next time.

Questions

English speakers rely on the following two common ways to turn sentences into questions:

1. Move the helping verb and add a question mark.
2. Add the verb *do*, *does*, or *did* and add a question mark.

Move the helping verb and add a question mark.

Sentence: Sierra can pack these boxes.

Question: Can Sierra pack these boxes**?**

Add the verb *do*, *does*, or *did*, and add a question mark:

Sentence: Jolene skated across the pond.

Question: Did Jolene skate across the pond**?**

Exercise 4

On a separate sheet of paper, create questions from the following sentences.

1. *Slumdog Millionaire* is a film directed by Danny Boyle.
2. The story centers on a character named Jamal Malik.
3. He and his older brother find different ways to escape the slums.
4. His brother, Salim, pursues a life of crime.
5. Jamal ends up on the game show *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?*

Adjectives

An adjective is a kind of descriptive word that describes a noun or a pronoun. It tells *which one*, *what kind*, and *how many*. Adjectives make your writing more lively and interesting. Keep in mind, a common error that English language learners make is misplacing the adjectives in a sentence. It is important to know where to place the adjective in a sentence so that readers are not confused.

If you are using more than one adjective to describe a noun, place the adjectives in the following order before the noun:

1. **Opinion:** an interesting book, a boring movie, a fun ride
2. **Size:** a large box, a tiny turtle, a tall woman
3. **Shape:** a round ball, a long hose, a square field
4. **Age:** a new day, an old horse, a modern building
5. **Color:** an orange sunset, a green jacket, a red bug
6. **Ethnicity:** Italian cheese, French wine, Chinese tea
7. **Material:** silk shirt, wool socks, a cotton dress

Tip

Adjectives can also be placed at the end of a sentence if they describe the subject of a sentence and appear after the verb.

Sentence: My English teacher is excellent.

Exercise 5

On a separate sheet of paper, place the following sets of adjectives in the correct order before the noun. The first one has been done for you.

1. book: old, small, Spanish

   a small old Spanish book (age, size, ethnicity)
2. photograph: new, strange
3. suit: wool, green, funny
4. opinion: refreshing, new
5. dress: fashionable, purple

Key Takeaways

- The most basic sentence structure is a subject plus a verb that expresses a complete thought.
- Adding a prepositional phrase or a direct or indirect object to a sentence makes it more complex.
- English speakers change a sentence into a question in one of the following two ways: moving the helping verb and adding a question mark or adding the verb *do*, *does*, or *did* and adding a question mark.
- Adjectives follow a particular order before the noun they describe. The order is opinion, size, shape, age, color, ethnicity, and material.

Writing Application

Write a paragraph about a memorable family trip. Use at least two adjectives to describe each noun in your paragraph. Proofread your paragraph, and then exchange papers with a classmate. Check your classmate's use of adjectives to make sure they are correct.

148. Negative Statements

[AUTHOR REMOVED AT REQUEST OF ORIGINAL PUBLISHER]

Learning Objectives

1. Identify a negative statement.
2. Write negative statements.

Negative statements are the opposite of positive statements and are necessary to express an opposing idea. The following charts list negative words and helping verbs that can be combined to form a negative statement.

Negative Words		
never	no	hardly
nobody	none	scarcely
no one	not	barely
nowhere		rarely

Common Helping Verbs		
am	is	are
was	were	be
being	been	have
has	had	do
does	did	can
could	may	might
must	will	should
would	ought to	used to

The following examples show several ways to make a sentence negative in the present tense.

1. A helping verb used with the negative word *not*.

   Sentence: My guests are arriving now.

   Negative: My guests **are not** arriving now.

2. The negative word *no*.

   Sentence: Jennie has money.

   Negative: Jennie **has no** money.

3. The contraction *n't*.

   Sentence: Janetta does miss her mom.

   Negative: Janetta **doesn't** miss her mom.

4. The negative adverb *rarely*.

   Sentence: I always go to the gym after work.

   Negative: I **rarely** go to the gym after work.

5. The negative subject *nobody*.

Sentence: Everybody gets the day off.

Negative: Nobody gets the day off.

Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the positive sentences as negative sentences. Be sure to keep the sentences in the present tense.

1. Everybody is happy about the mandatory lunch.
2. Deborah likes to visit online dating sites.
3. Jordan donates blood every six months.
4. Our writing instructor is very effective.
5. That beautiful papaya is cheap.

The following sentences show you the ways to make a sentence negative in the past tense.

Sentence: Paul called me yesterday.

Negative: Paul **did not** call me yesterday.

Sentence: Jamilee went to the grocery store.

Negative: Jamilee **never went** to the grocery store.

Sentence: Gina laughed when she saw the huge pile of laundry.

Negative: Gina **did not laugh** when she saw the huge pile of laundry.

Notice that when forming a negative in the past tense, the helping verb *did* is what signals the past tense, and the main verb *laugh* does not have an *-ed* ending.

Exercise 2

Rewrite the following paragraph by correcting the errors in the past-tense negative sentences.

> Celeste no did call me when she reached North Carolina. I was worried because she not drove alone before. She was going to meet her friend, Terry, who lived in a town called Asheville, North Carolina. I did never want to worry, but she said she was going to call when she reached there. Finally, four hours later, she called and said, "Mom, I'm sorry I did not call. I lost track of time because I was so happy to see Terry!" I was relieved.
>
> **Collaboration**
>
> Once you have found all the errors you can, please share with a classmate and compare your answers. Did your partner find an error you missed?

Did you find an error your partner missed? Compare with your instructor's answers.

Double negatives are two negatives used in the same phrase or sentence. They are considered incorrect in Standard English. You should avoid using double negatives in all formal writing. If you want to say something negative, use only one negative word in the sentence. Return to the beginning of this section for a list of negative words, and then study the following examples.

Double negative (incorrect)	**Single negative (correct)**
neg. + neg. I couldn't find no paper	neg. I couldn't find any paper.
neg. + neg. I don't want nothing.	neg. I don't want anything.

Tip

Ain't is considered a contraction of *am not*. Although some may use it in everyday speech, it is considered incorrect in Standard English. Avoid using it when speaking and writing in formal contexts.

Exercise 3

On your own sheet of paper, correct the double negatives and rewrite the following sentences.

1. Jose didn't like none of the choices on the menu.
2. Brittany can't make no friends with nobody.
3. The Southwest hardly had no rain last summer.
4. My kids never get into no trouble.
5. I could not do nothing about the past.

Key Takeaways

- Negatives are usually formed using a negative word plus a helping verb.
- Double negatives are considered incorrect in Standard English.
- Only one negative word is used to express a negative statement.

Writing Application

Write a paragraph describing your favorite meal. Use rich, colorful language to describe the meal. Exchange papers with a classmate and read his or her paragraph. Then rewrite each sentence of your classmate's paragraph using negatives. Be sure to avoid double negatives. Share your negative paragraphs with each other.

149. Count and Noncount Nouns and Articles

Learning Objectives

1. Define and use count and noncount nouns.
2. Recognize and use definite and indefinite articles.

Nouns are words that name things, places, people, and ideas. Right now, you may be surrounded by desks, computers, and notebooks. These are called count nouns because you can count the exact number of desks, computers, and notebooks—three desks, one computer, and six notebooks, for example.

On the other hand, you may be carrying a small amount of money in your wallet and sitting on a piece of furniture. These are called noncount nouns. Although you can count the pieces of furniture or the amount of money, you cannot add a number in front of *money* or *furniture* and simply add –s to the end of the noun. Instead, you must use other words and phrases to indicate the quantity of money and furniture.

Incorrect: five moneys, two furnitures

Correct: some money, two pieces of furniture

By the end of Section 5.3.1 "Count and Noncount Nouns", you will grasp the difference between the two types of nouns and be able to use them confidently in speaking and writing.

Count and Noncount Nouns

A count noun refers to people, places, and things that are separate units. You make count nouns plural by adding –s.

Table 5.1 Count Nouns

Count Noun	**Sentence**
Quarter	It takes six quarters to do my laundry.
Chair	Make sure to push in your chairs before leaving class.
Candidate	The two candidates debated the issue.
Adult	The three adults in the room acted like children.
Comedian	The two comedians made the audience laugh.

A noncount noun identifies a whole object that cannot separate and count individually. Noncount nouns may refer to concrete objects or abstract objects. A concrete noun identifies an object you can see, taste, touch, or count. An abstract noun identifies an object that you cannot see, touch, or count. There are some exceptions, but most abstract nouns cannot be made plural, so they are noncount nouns. Examples of abstract nouns include anger, education, melancholy, softness, violence, and conduct.

Table 5.2 Types of Noncount Nouns

Type of Noncount Noun	Examples	Sentence
Food	sugar, salt, pepper, lettuce, rice	Add more sugar to my coffee, please.
Solids	concrete, chocolate, silver, soap	The ice cream was covered in creamy chocolate.
Abstract Nouns	peace, warmth, hospitality, information	I need more information about the insurance policy.

Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, label each of the following nouns as count or noncount.

1. Electricity _________
2. Water _________
3. Book _________
4. Sculpture _________
5. Advice _________

Exercise 2

On a separate sheet of paper, identify whether the italicized noun in the sentence is a count or noncount noun by writing **C** or **NC** above the noun.

1. The amount of *traffic* on the way home was terrible.
2. *Forgiveness* is an important part of growing up.
3. I made caramel sauce for the organic *apples* I bought.
4. I prefer film *cameras* instead of digital ones.
5. My favorite subject is *history*.

Definite and Indefinite Articles

The word *the* is a definite article. It refers to one or more specific things. For example, *the woman* refers to not any woman but a particular woman. The definite article *the* is used before singular and plural count nouns.

The words *a* and *an* are indefinite articles. They refer to one nonspecific thing. For example, *a woman* refers to any woman, not a specific, particular woman. The indefinite article *a* or *an* is used before a singular count noun.

Definite Articles (*The*) and Indefinite Articles (*A/An*) with Count Nouns

I saw **the** concert. (singular, refers to a specific concert)

I saw **the** concerts. (plural, refers to more than one specific concert)

I saw **the** U2 concert last night. (singular, refers to a specific concert)

I saw **a** concert. (singular, refers to any nonspecific concert)

Exercise 3

On a separate sheet of paper, write the correct article in the blank for each of the following sentences. Write OK if the sentence is correct.

1. (A/An/The) camel can live for days without water. _________
2. I enjoyed (a/an/the) pastries at the Bar Mitzvah. _________
3. (A/An/The) politician spoke of many important issues. _________
4. I really enjoyed (a/an/the) actor's performance in the play. _________
5. (A/An/The) goal I have is to run a marathon this year. _________

Exercise 4

Correct the misused or missing articles and rewrite the paragraph.

Stars are large balls of spinning hot gas like our sun. The stars look tiny because they are far away. Many of them are much larger than sun. Did you know that a Milky Way galaxy has between two hundred billion and four hundred billion stars in it? Scientists estimate that there may be as many as five hundred billion galaxies in an entire universe! Just like a human being, the star has a life cycle from birth to death, but its lifespan is billions of years long. The star is born in a cloud of cosmic gas and dust called a nebula. Our sun was born in the nebula nearly five billion years ago. Photographs of the star-forming nebulas are astonishing.

Collaboration

Once you have found all the errors you can, share with a classmate and compare your answers. Did your partner find an error you missed? Did you find an error your partner missed? Compare with your instructor's answers.

Key Takeaways

- You can make count nouns plural by adding -s.
- Count nouns are individual people, places, or things that can be counted, such as politicians, deserts, or

candles.

- Noncount nouns refer to whole things that cannot be made plural, such as salt, peace, or happiness.
- *The* is a definite article and is used to refer to a specific person, place, or thing, such as **the** Queen of England.
- A and *an* are indefinite articles, and they refer to nonspecific people, places, or things, such as **an** apple or **a** bicycle.

Writing Application

Write five sentences using the definite article *the*. Write five sentences using the indefinite article *a* or *an*. Exchange papers with a classmate and check each other's work.

150. Verb Tenses

Learning Objectives

1. Identify simple verb tenses.
2. Recognize *to be*, *to have*, and *to do* verbs.
3. Use perfect verb tenses.
4. Apply progressive verb tenses.
5. Define gerunds and infinitives.

You must always use a verb in every sentence you write. Verbs are parts of speech that indicate actions or states of being. The most basic sentence structure is a subject followed by a verb.

Simple Verb Tenses

Verb tenses tell the reader when the action takes place. The action could be in the past, present, or future.

Past	← Present →	Future
Yesterday I **jumped**.	Today I **jump**.	Tomorrow I **will jump**.

Simple present verbs are used in the following situations:

1. When the action takes place now
   I **drink** the water greedily.

2. When the action is something that happens regularly
   I **always cross** my fingers for good luck.

3. When describing things that are generally true

College tuition **is** very costly.

Table 5.4 Regular Simple Present Tense Verbs

Verb	I	He/She/It	You	We	They
ask	ask	asks	ask	ask	ask
bake	bake	bakes	bake	bake	bake
cook	cook	cooks	cook	cook	cook
cough	cough	coughs	cough	cough	cough
clap	clap	claps	clap	clap	clap
dance	dance	dances	dance	dance	dance
erase	erase	erases	erase	erase	erase
kiss	kiss	kisses	kiss	kiss	kiss
push	push	pushes	push	push	push
wash	wash	washes	wash	wash	wash

When it is *he*, *she*, or *it* doing the present tense action, remember to add −s, or −*es* to the end of the verb or to change the *y* to −*ies*.

Simple past verbs are used when the action has already taken place and is now finished:

- I **washed** my uniform last night.
- I **asked** for more pie.
- I **coughed** loudly last night.

Table 5.5 Regular Simple Past Tense Verbs

Verb	I	He/She/It	You	We	They
ask	asked	asked	asked	asked	asked
bake	baked	baked	baked	baked	baked
cook	cooked	cooked	cooked	cooked	cooked
cough	coughed	coughed	coughed	coughed	coughed
clap	clapped	clapped	clapped	clapped	clapped
dance	danced	danced	danced	danced	danced
erase	erased	erased	erased	erased	erased
kiss	kissed	kissed	kissed	kissed	kissed
push	pushed	pushed	pushed	pushed	pushed
wash	washed	washed	washed	washed	washed

When *he*, *she*, or *it* is doing the action in the past tense, remember to add –*d* or –*ed* to the end of regular verbs.

Simple future verbs are used when the action has not yet taken place:

- I **will work** late tomorrow.
- I **will kiss** my boyfriend when I see him.
- I **will erase** the board after class.

Table 5.6 Regular Simple Future Tense Verbs

Verb	I	He/She/It	You	We	They
ask	will ask	will ask	will ask	will ask	will ask
bake	will bake	will bake	will bake	will bake	will bake
cook	will cook	will cook	will cook	will cook	will cook
cough	will cough	will cough	will cough	will cough	will cough
clap	will clap	will clap	will clap	will clap	will clap
dance	will dance	will dance	will dance	will dance	will dance
erase	will erase	will erase	will erase	will erase	will erase
kiss	will kiss	will kiss	will kiss	will kiss	will kiss
push	will push	will push	will push	will push	will push
wash	will wash	will wash	will wash	will wash	will wash

Going to can also be added to the main verb to make it future tense:

- I am **going to** go to work tomorrow.

Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by adding the verb in the correct simple tense.

1. Please do not (erase, erased, will erase) what I have written on the board.
2. They (dance, danced, will dance) for hours after the party was over.

3. Harrison (wash, washed, will wash) his laundry after several weeks had passed.
4. Yesterday Mom (ask, asked, will ask) me about my plans for college.
5. I (bake, baked, will bake) several dozen cookies for tomorrow's bake sale.

Exercise 2

Correct the verb tense mistakes in the following paragraph.

> Last summer, I walk around Walden Pond. Walden Pond is in Concord, Massachusetts. It is where the philosopher Henry David Thoreau will live during the mid-nineteenth century. During his time there, he wrote a book called *Walden*. *Walden* is a book of Thoreau's reflections on the natural environment. It will be consider a classic in American literature. I did not know that Walden Pond is consider the birthplace of the environmental movement. It was very relaxing there. I will listen to birds, frogs, and crickets, not to mention the peaceful sound of the pond itself.
>
> **Collaboration**
>
> Once you have found all the errors you can, please share with a classmate and compare your

answers. Did your partner find an error you missed? Did you find an error your partner missed? Compare with your instructor's answers.

To Be, *To Do*, and *To Have*

There are some irregular verbs in English that are formed in special ways. The most common of these are the verbs *to be*, *to have*, and *to do*.

Table 5.7 Verb Forms of *To Be*, *To Do*, and *To Have*

Base Form	**Present Tense Form**	**Past Tense Form**	**Future Tense Form**
be	am/is/are	was/were	will be
do	do/does	did	will do
have	have/has	had	will have

Tip

Memorize the present tense forms of *to be*, *to do*, and *to have*. A song or rhythmic pattern will make them easier to memorize.

Review these examples of *to be*, *to do*, *and to have* used in sentences.

Past	**← Present →**	**Future**
To Be		
Yesterday I **was** angry.	Today I **am** not angry.	Tomorrow I **will be** angry.
To Do		
I **did** my best yesterday.	I **do** my best every day.	Tomorrow I **will do** my best.
To Have		
Yesterday I **had** ten dollars.	Today I **have** ten dollars.	Tomorrow I **will have** ten dollars.

Remember the following uses of *to be*, *to have* and *to do*:

To Be

- I → am/was/will be
- you/we/they → are/were/will be
- he/she/it → is/was/will be

To Have

- I/you/we/they → have/had/will have
- he/she/it → has/had/will have

To Do

- I/you/we/they → do/did/will do
- he/she/it → does/did/will do

Tip

Remember, if you have a compound subject like *Marie and Jennifer*, think of the subject as *they* to determine the correct verb form.

- Marie and Jennifer (*they*) have a house on Bainbridge Island.

Similarly, single names can be thought of as *he*, *she*, or *it*.

- LeBron (*he*) has scored thirty points so far.

Exercise 3

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by circling the correct form of the verbs *to be*, *to have*, and *to do* in the three simple tenses.

1. Stefan always (do, does, will do) his taxes the day before they are due.
2. We (are, is, was) planning a surprise birthday party for my mother.
3. Turtles (have, had, has) the most beautiful patterns on their shells.
4. I always (do, did, will do) my homework before dinner, so I can eat in peace.
5. You (is, are, was) so much smarter than you think!

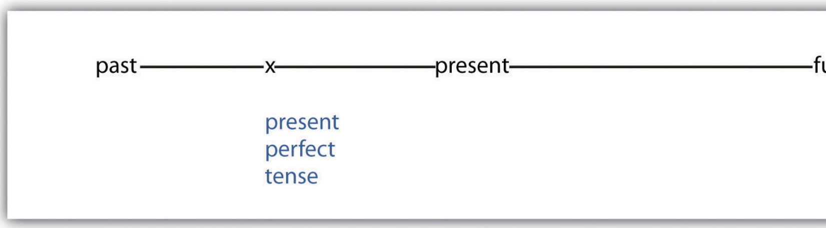
Perfect Verb Tenses

Up to this point, we have studied the three simple verb tenses—simple present, simple past, and simple future. Now we will add three more tenses, which are called perfect tenses. They are present perfect, past perfect, and future perfect. These are the three basic tenses of English. A past participle is often called the *–ed* form of a verb because it is formed by adding *–d* or *–ed* to the base form of regular verbs. Past participles can also end in *-t* or *-en*. Keep in mind, however, the past participle is also formed in various other ways for irregular verbs. The past participle can be used to form the present perfect tense.

Review the following basic formula for the present perfect tense:

Subject	+	**has or have**	+	**past participle**
I		have		helped

The present perfect tense has a connection with the past and the present.



Use the present perfect tense to describe a continuing situation and to describe an action that has just happened.

- I **have worked** as a caretaker since June.

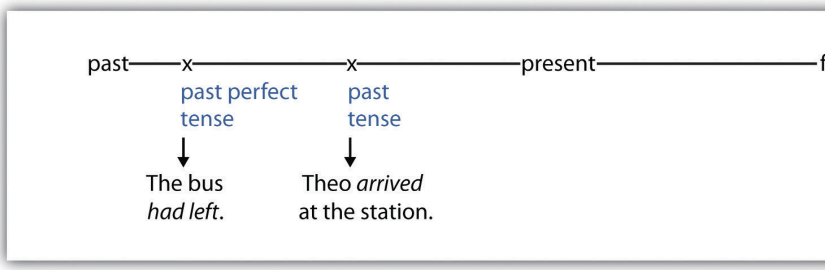
  This sentence tells us that the subject has worked as a caretaker in the past and is still working as a caretaker in the present.

- Dmitri **has** just **received** an award from the Dean of Students.

  This sentence tells us that Dmitri has very recently received the award. The word *just* emphasizes that the action happened very recently.

Study the following basic formula for the past perfect tense:

Subject	+	had or have	+	past participle
I		had		listened

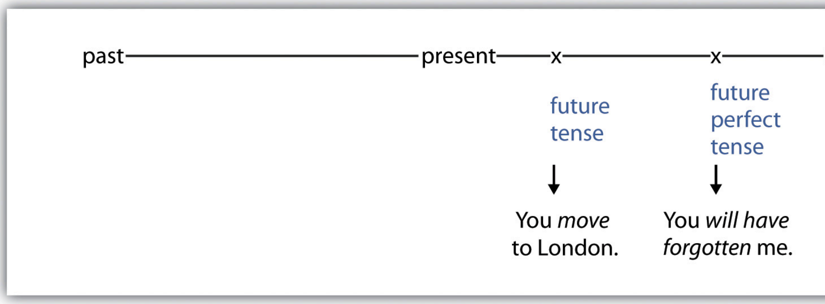


- The bus **had left** by the time Theo **arrived** at the station.

  Notice that both actions occurred entirely in the past, but one action occurred before the other. At some time in the past, Theo *arrived* (simple past tense) at the station, but at some time before that, the bus *had left* (past perfect).

Look at the following basic formula for the future perfect tense:

Subject	+	will have	+	past participle
I		will have		graduated



The future perfect tense describes an action from the past in the future, as if the past event has already occurred. Use the future perfect tense when you anticipate completing an event in the future, but you have not completed it yet.

- You **will have forgotten** me after you **move** to London.

  Notice that both actions occur in the future, but one action will occur before the other. At some time in the future, the subject (*you*) *will move* (future tense) to London, and at some time after that, the subject *will have forgotten* (future perfect tense) the speaker, *me*.

Exercise 4

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by using the correct perfect verb tense for the verb in parentheses.

1. I plan to start a compost bin because I _________ (to want) one for a long time now.
2. My brother told me he _________ (to argue) with his friend about politics.
3. By the time we reach the mountain top the sun _________ (to set).
4. Denise _________ (to walk) several miles in the past three hours.
5. His mother _________ (to offer) to pay him to work in her office.

Progressive Verb Tenses

Progressive verb tenses describe a continuing or unfinished action, such as I *am going*, I *was going*, or I *will be going*.

The present progressive tense describes an action or state of being that takes place in the present and that continues to take place.

To make verbs in the present progressive tense, combine these two parts:

Present tense form of *to be*	+	*-ing* **(present participle)**
am/is/are	help	helping

You should use the present progressive tense to describe a planned activity, to describe an activity that is recurring right now, and to describe an activity that is in progress, although not actually occurring at the time of speaking:

- Preeti **is starting** school on Tuesday.

  This sentence describes a planned activity.

- Janetta **is getting** her teeth cleaned right now.

  This sentence describes an activity that is occurring right now.

- I **am studying** ballet at school.

  This sentence describes an activity that is in progress but not actually occurring at the time of speaking.

The past progressive tense describes an action or state of being that took place in the past and that continues to take place.

To make verbs in the past progressive tense, combine these two parts:

Past tense form of *to be*	+	-ing (present participle)
was/were		helping

You should use the past progressive tense to describe a continuous action in the past, to describe a past activity in progress while another activity occurred, or to describe two past activities in progress at the same time:

- Ella and I **were planning** a vacation.

  This sentence describes a continuous action in the past.

- I **was helping** a customer when I smelled delicious fried chicken.

  This sentence describes a past activity in progress while another activity occurred.

- While I **was finishing** my homework, my wife **was talking** on the phone.

  This sentence describes two past activities in progress at the same time.

The future progressive tense describes an action or state of being that will take place in the future and that will continue to take place. The action will have started at that future moment, but it will not have finished at that moment.

To make verbs in the future progressive tense, combine these parts:

Future tense form of *to be*	+	-ing (present participle)
will be		helping

Use the future progressive tense to describe an activity that will be in progress in the future:

- Samantha and I **will be dancing** in the school play next week.
- Tomorrow Agnes **will be reading** two of her poems.

Exercise 5

On a separate sheet of paper, revise the following sentences, written in simple tenses, using the progressive tenses indicated in parentheses.

1. He prepared the food while I watched. (past progressive tense)
2. Jonathan will speak at the conference. (future progressive)
3. Josie traveled to Egypt last July. (past progressive tense)
4. My foot aches, so I know it will rain. (present

progressive tense)

5. Micah will talk a lot when I see him. (future progressive)
6. I yawn a lot because I feel tired. (present progressive tense)

Similar to the present perfect tense, the present perfect progressive tense is used to indicate an action that was begun in the past and continues into the present. However, the present perfect progressive is used when you want to stress that the action is ongoing.

To make verbs in the present perfect progressive tense, combine the following parts:

Present tense form of *to have*	+	**Been**	+	**-ing (present participle)**
has or have		been		helping

- She **has been talking** for the last hour.

  This sentence indicates that *she* started talking in the past and is continuing to talk in the present.

- I **have been feeling** tired lately.

  This sentence indicates that I started feeling tired in the past, and *I* continue to feel tired in the present. Instead of indicating time, as in the first sentence, the second sentence uses the adverb *lately*. You can also use the adverb *recently* when using the present perfect progressive tense.

Similar to the past perfect tense, the past perfect progressive tense is used to indicate an action that was begun in the past and continued until another time in the past. The past perfect progressive does not continue into the present but stops at a designated moment in the past.

To make verbs in the past perfect progressive tense, combine the following parts:

Past tense form of *to have*	+	**been**	+	**-ing (present participle)**
had		been		helping

- The employees **had been talking** until their boss arrived.

  This sentence indicates that the employees were talking in the past and they stopped talking when their boss arrived, which also happened in the past.

- I **had been working** all day.

  This sentence implies that I was working in the past. The action does not continue into the future, and the sentence implies that the subject stopped working for unstated reasons.

The future perfect progressive tense is rarely used. It is used to indicate an action that will begin in the future and will continue until another time in the future.

To make verbs in the future perfect progressive tense, combine the following parts:

Future tense form of *to have*	+	**been**	+	**-ing (present participle)**
will have		Been		helping

- By the end of the meeting, I **will have been hearing** about mortgages and taxes for eight hours.

  This sentence indicates that in the future I will hear about mortgages and taxes for eight hours, but it has not happened yet. It also indicates the action of *hearing* will continue until *the end of the meeting*, something that is also in the future.

Gerunds

A gerund is a form of a verb that is used as a noun. All gerunds end in *-ing*. Since gerunds function as nouns, they occupy places in a sentence that a noun would, such as the subject, direct object, and object of a preposition.

You can use a gerund in the following ways:

1. As a **subject**

   Traveling is Cynthia's favorite pastime.

2. As a **direct object**
   I enjoy **jogging**.

3. As an **object of a proposition**
   The librarian scolded me for **laughing**.

Often verbs are followed by gerunds. Study Table 5.8 "Gerunds and Verbs" for examples.

Table 5.8 Gerunds and Verbs

Gerund	Verb Followed by a Gerund
moving	Denise **considered moving** to Paris.
cleaning	I **hate cleaning** the bathroom.
winning	Nate **imagines winning** an Oscar one day.
worrying	Mom says she **has stopped worrying**.
taking	She **admitted taking** the pumpkin.

Infinitives

An infinitive is a form of a verb that comes after the word *to* and acts as a noun, adjective, or adverb.

to + verb = infinitive

Examples of infinitives include to move, to sleep, to look, to throw, to read, and to sneeze.

Often verbs are followed by infinitives. Study Table 5.9 "Infinitives and Verbs" for examples.

Table 5.9 Infinitives and Verbs

Infinitive	Verb Followed by Infinitive
to help	Jessica **offered to help** her move.
to arrive	Mick **expects to arrive** early.
to win	Sunita **wants to win** the writing contest.
to close	He **forgot to close** the curtains.
to eat	She **likes to eat** late.

You may wonder which verbs can be followed by gerunds and which verbs can be followed by infinitives. With the following verbs, you can use either a gerund or an infinitive.

Table 5.10 Infinitives and Gerunds Verbs

Base Form of Verb	**Sentences with Verbs Followed by Gerunds *and* Infinitives**
begin	1. John **began crying**. 2. John **began to cry**.
hate	1. Marie **hated talking** on the phone. 2. Marie **hated to talk** on the phone.
forget	1. Wendell **forgot paying** the bills. 2. Wendell **forgot to pay** the bills.
like	1. I **liked leaving** messages. 2. I **liked to leave** messages.
continue	1. He **continued listening** to the news. 2. He **continued to listen** to the news.
start	1. I **will start recycling** immediately. 2. I **will start to recycle** immediately.
try	1. Mikhail **will try climbing** the tree. 2. Mikhail **will try to climb** the tree.
prefer	1. I **prefer baking**. 2. I **prefer to bake**.
love	1. Josh **loves diving**. 2. Josh **loves to dive**.

Exercise 6

On your own sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by choosing the correct infinitive or gerund.

1. I meant _________ (to kiss, kissing) my kids before they left for school.
2. The children hoped (to go, going) to a restaurant

for dinner.

3. Do you intend _________ (to eat, eating) the entire pie?
4. Crystal postponed _________ (to get dressed, getting dressed) for the party.
5. When we finish _________ (to play, playing) this game, we will go home.

Key Takeaways

- Verb tenses tell the reader when the action takes place.
- Actions could be in the past, present, or future.
- There are some irregular verbs in English that are formed in special ways. The most common of these irregular verbs are the verbs *to be*, *to have*, and *to do*.
- There are six main verb tenses in English: *simple present*, *simple past*, *simple future*, *present perfect*, *past perfect*, and *future perfect*.
- Verbs can be followed by either gerunds or infinitives.

Writing Application

Write about a lively event that is either remembered or imagined. Ask yourself the following three questions: What happened during the event? What happened after the event? Looking back, what do you think of the event now? Answer each question in a separate paragraph to keep the present, past, and future tense verbs separate.

Appendix: Common Irregular Verbs and Their Forms

Infinitive	Past Simple	Past Participle
be	was / were	been
become	became	become
begin	began	begun
bring	brought	brought
buy	bought	bought
choose	chose	chosen
come	came	come
do	did	done
drink	drank	drunk
drive	drove	driven
eat	ate	eaten
fall	fell	fallen
feel	felt	felt
find	found	found
fly	flew	flown
forget	forgot	forgotten
get	got	got (gotten in USA)
give	gave	given
go	went	gone
have	had	had
hear	heard	heard
keep	kept	kept
know	knew	known
leave	left	left
lend	lent	lent
let	let	let
lose	lost	lost
make	made	made
meet	met	met

pay	paid	paid
put	put	put
read	read (pronounced /red/)	read (pronounced /red/)
run	ran	run
say	said	said
see	saw	seen
sell	sold	sold
send	sent	sent
sing	sang	sung
sit	sat	sat
sleep	slept	slept
speak	spoke	spoken
stand	stood	stood
swim	swam	swum
take	took	taken
teach	taught	taught
tell	told	told
think	thought	thought
understand	understood	understood
wear	wore	worn
write	wrote	written

151. Modal Auxiliaries

Learning Objectives

1. Define and identify modal auxiliaries.
2. Learn how and when to use modal auxiliaries.

We all need to express our moods and emotions, both in writing and in our everyday life. We do this by using modal auxiliaries.

Modal Auxiliaries

Modal auxiliaries are a type of helping verb that are used only with a main verb to help express its mood.

The following is the basic formula for using a modal auxiliary:

Subject	+	modal auxiliary	+	main verb
James		may		call

There are ten main modal auxiliaries in English.

Table 5.11 Modal Auxiliaries

Modal Auxiliary	Use	Modal Auxiliary + Main Verb
can	Expresses an ability or possibility	I **can lift** this forty-pound box. (ability) We **can embrace** green sources of energy. (possibility)
could	Expresses an ability in the past; a present possibility; a past or future permission	I **could beat** you at chess when we were kids. (past ability) We **could bake** a pie! (present possibility) **Could** we **pick** some flowers from the garden? (future permission)
may	Expresses uncertain future action; permission; ask a yes-no question	I **may attend** the concert. (uncertain future action) You **may begin** the exam. (permission) **May** I **attend** the concert? (yes-no questions)
might	Expresses uncertain future action	I **might attend** the concert (uncertain future action—same as *may*)
shall	Expresses intended future action	I **shall** go to the opera. (intended future action)
should	Expresses obligation; ask if an obligation exists	I **should mail** my RSVP. (obligation, same as *ought to*) **Should** I **call** my mother? (asking if an obligation exists)
will	Expresses intended future action; ask a favor; ask for information	I **will get** an A in this class. (intended future action) **Will** you **buy** me some chocolate? (favor) **Will** you **be finished** soon? (information)

Modal Auxiliary	Use	Modal Auxiliary + Main Verb
would	States a preference; request a choice politely; explain an action; introduce habitual past actions	I **would like** the steak, please. (preference) **Would** you **like** to have breakfast in bed? (request a choice politely) I **would go** with you if I didn't have to babysit tonight. (explain an action) He **would write** to me every week when we were dating. (habitual past action)
must	Expresses obligation	We **must be** on time for class.
ought to	Expresses obligation	I **ought to mail** my RSVP. (obligation, same as may)

Tip

Use the following format to form a yes-no question with a modal auxiliary:

Modal auxiliary	+	subject	+	main verb
Should		I		drive?

Be aware of these four common errors when using modal auxiliaries:

1. Using an infinitive instead of a base verb after a modal
   Incorrect: I can to move this heavy table.
   Correct: I **can move** this heavy table.

2. Using a gerund instead of an infinitive or a base verb after a modal
   Incorrect: I could moving to the United States.
   Correct: I **could move** to the United States.

3. Using two modals in a row
   Incorrect: I should must *renew* my passport.
   Correct: I **must renew** my passport.
   Correct: I **should renew** my passport.

4. Leaving out a modal
   Incorrect: I renew my passport.
   Correct: I **must renew** my passport.

Exercise 1

Edit the following paragraph by correcting the common modal auxiliary errors.

> I may to go to France on vacation next summer. I shall might visit the Palace of Versailles. I would to drive around the countryside. I could imagining myself living there; however, I will not move to France because my family should miss me very much.

Modals and Present Perfect Verbs

In the previous section, we defined present perfect verb tense as describing a continuing situation or something that has just happened.

subject + has or have + past participle

↓	↓	↓
I	have	helped
He	has	helped

Remember, when a sentence contains a modal auxiliary before the verb, the helping verb is always *have*.

subject + modal auxiliary+ have + past participle

↓	↓	↓	↓
I	could	have	helped
He	could	have	helped
He	might	have	helped
He	may	have	helped
He	should	have	helped

Be aware of the following common errors when using modal auxiliaries in the present perfect tense:

1. Using *had* instead of *have*
   Incorrect: Jamie would had attended the party, but he was sick.

Correct: Jamie **would have attended** the party, but he was sick.

2. Leaving out *have*

   Incorrect: Jamie would attended the party, but he was sick.

   Correct: Jamie **would have attended** the party, but he was sick.

Exercise 2

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by changing the given verb form to a modal auxiliary in present perfect tense.

1. The man _________ (laugh).
2. The frogs _________ (croak).
3. My writing teacher _________ (smile).
4. The audience _________ (cheer) all night.
5. My best friend _________ (giggled).

Key Takeaways

- The basic formula for using a modal auxiliary is

subject	+	modal auxiliary	+	main verb

- There are ten main modal auxiliaries in English: *can*, *could*, *may*, *might*, *shall*, *should*, *will*, *would*, *must*, and *ought to*.
- The four common types of errors when using modals include the following: using an infinitive instead of a base verb after a modal, using a gerund instead of an infinitive or a base verb after a modal, using two modals in a row, and leaving out a modal.
- In the present perfect tense, when a sentence has a modal auxiliary before the verb, the helping verb is always *have*.
- The two common errors when using modals in the present perfect tense include using *had* instead of *have* and leaving out *have*.

Writing Application

On a separate sheet of paper, write ten original sentences using modal auxiliaries.

152. Prepositions

Learning Objectives

1. Identify prepositions.
2. Learn how and when to use prepositions.

A preposition is a word that connects a noun or a pronoun to another word in a sentence. Most prepositions such as *above*, *below*, and *behind* usually indicate a location in the physical world, but some prepositions such as *during*, *after*, and *until* show location in time.

In, *At*, and *On*

The prepositions *in*, *at*, and *on* are used to indicate both location and time, but they are used in specific ways. Study Table 5.12, Table 5.13, and Table 5.14 to learn when to use each one.

Table 5.12 *In*

Preposition	Time	Example	Place	Example
in	year	in 1942	country	in Zimbabwe
	month	in August	state	in California
	season	in the summer	city	in Chicago
	time of day (not with *night*)	in the afternoon		

Table 5.13 *On*

Preposition	Time	Example	Place	Example
on	day	on Monday	surfaces	on the table
	date	on May 23	streets	on 124th Street
	specific days/ dates	on Monday	modes of transportation	on the bus

Table 5.14 *At*

Preposition	Time	Example	Place	Example
at	time	at five o'clock	addresses	at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
	with *night*	at night	location	at Rooney's Grill

Exercise 1

Edit the following letter from a resident to her landlord by correcting errors with *in*, *at*, and *on*.

> Dear Mrs. Salazar,
>
> I am writing this letter to inform you that I will be vacating apartment 2A in 356 Maple Street at Wednesday, June 30, 2010. I will be cleaning the apartment at the Monday before I leave. I will return the keys to you on 5 p.m., sharp, at June 30. If you have any questions or specific instructions for me, please contact me in my office. I have enjoyed living at Austin, Texas, but I want to explore other parts of the country now.
>
> Sincerely,
>
> Milani Davis

Prepositions after Verbs

Prepositions often follow verbs to create expressions with distinct meanings. These expressions are sometimes called prepositional verbs. It is important to remember that these expressions cannot be separated.

Table 5.15 Verbs + Prepositions

Verb + Preposition	Meaning	Example
agree with	to agree with something or someone	My husband always **agrees with** me.
apologize for	to express regret for something, to say sorry about something	I **apologize for** being late.
apply for	to ask for something formally	I will **apply for** that job.
believe in	to have a firm conviction in something; to believe in the existence of something	I **believe in** educating the world's women.
care about	to think that someone or something is important	I **care about** the health of our oceans.
hear about	to be told about something or someone	I **heard about** the teachers' strike.
look after	to watch or to protect someone or something	Will you **look after** my dog while I am on vacation?
talk about	to discuss something	We will **talk about** the importance of recycling.
speak to, with	to talk to/with someone	I will **speak to** his teacher tomorrow.
wait for	to await the arrival of someone or something	I will **wait for** my package to arrive.

Tip

It is a good idea to memorize these combinations of verbs plus prepositions. Write them down in a notebook along with the definition and practice using them when you speak.

Exercise 2

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by writing the correct preposition after the verb.

1. Charlotte does not _________ (apologize for, believe in) aliens or ghosts.
2. It is impolite to _________ (hear about, talk about) people when they are not here.
3. Herman said he was going to _________ (believe in, apply for) the internship.
4. Jonas would not _________ (talk about, apologize for) eating the last piece of cake.

5. I ________ (care about, agree with) the environment very much.

Prepositions after Adjectives

Similar to prepositions after verbs, prepositions after adjectives create expressions with distinct meanings unique to English. Remember, like prepositional verbs, these expressions also cannot be separated.

Table 5.16 Adjectives + Prepositions

Adjective + Preposition	Meaning	Example
angry at, about	to feel or show anger toward (or about) someone or something	I am **angry about** the oil spill in the ocean.
confused about	to be unable to think with clarity about someone or something.	Shawn was **confused about** the concepts presented at the meeting.
disappointed in, with	to feel dissatisfaction with someone or something	I was **disappointed in** my husband because he voted for that candidate.
dressed in	to clothe the body	He was **dressed in** a pin-striped suit.
happy for	to show happiness for someone or something	I was **happy for** my sister who graduated from college.
interested in	giving attention to something, expressing interest	I am **interested in** musical theater.
jealous of	to feel resentful or bitter toward someone or something (because of their status, possessions, or ability)	I was **jealous of** her because she always went on vacation.
thankful for	to express thanks for something	I am **thankful for** my wonderful friends.
tired of	to be disgusted with, have a distaste for	I was **tired of** driving for hours without end.
worried about	to express anxiety or worry about something	I am **worried about** my father's health.

Exercise 3

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by writing the correct preposition after the verb.

1. Meera was deeply _________ (interested in,

thankful for) marine biology.

2. I was _________ (jealous of, disappointed in) the season finale of my favorite show.
3. Jordan won the race, and I am _________ (happy for, interested in) him.
4. The lawyer was _________ (thankful for, confused about) the details of the case.
5. Chloe was _________ (dressed in, tired of) a comfortable blue tunic.

Tip

The following adjectives are always followed by the preposition *at*:

- Good

  She is really **good at** chess.

- Excellent

  Henry is **excellent at** drawing.

- Brilliant

  Mary Anne is **brilliant at** playing the violin.

Key Takeaways

- The prepositions *in*, *at*, and *on* are used to indicate both location and time, but they are used in specific ways.
- The preposition *in* is used when expressing the following: year, month, season, time of day (not with *night*), country, state, and city.
- The preposition *on* is used to express day, date, and specific days or dates and surfaces, streets, and transportation modes.
- The preposition *at* is used for expressions of time, with *night*, and with addresses and locations.
- Prepositions often follow verbs to create expressions with distinct meanings that are unique to English.
- Prepositions also follow adjectives to create expressions with distinct meanings that are unique to English.

Writing Application

Write about a happy childhood memory using as many prepositions followed by verbs and adjectives as you can. Use at least ten. When you are finished, exchange papers with a classmate and correct any preposition errors you find.

153. Slang and Idioms

Learning Objectives

1. Recognize slang and idioms.
2. Learn to avoid using slang and idioms in formal writing.

Words are the basis of how a reader or listener judges you, the writer and speaker. When you write an academic paper or speak in a business interview, you want to be sure to choose your words carefully. In our casual, everyday talk, we often use a lot of "ums," "likes," "yeahs," and so on. This everyday language is not appropriate for formal contexts, such as academic papers and business interviews. You should switch between different ways of speaking and writing depending on whether the context is formal or informal.

Slang

Hey guys, let's learn about slang and other cool stuff like that! It will be awesome, trust me. This section is off the hook!

What do you notice about the previous set of sentences?

First, you might notice that the writer or speaker has used the phrase "guys." You want to avoid gendered language and embrace more inclusive language, replacing guys (because there may be women or non-binary people you're addressing) with "folks," "all," "friends," "team," or "y'all." See the chapter on Gender-Inclusive Language for more information.

Secondly, you might notice that the language sounds informal, or casual, like someone might talk with a friend or family member. The paragraph also uses a lot of slang. Slang is a type of language that is informal and playful. It often changes over time. The slang of the past is different than the slang of today, but some slang has carried over into the present. Slang also varies by region and culture. The important thing to understand is that slang is casual talk, and you should avoid using it in formal contexts. There are literally thousands of slang words and expressions. Table 5.17 "Slang Expressions" explains just a few of the more common terms.

Table 5.17 Slang Expressions

Slang Word or Phrase	Meaning
check it out, check this out	v. look at, watch, examine
chocoholic, workaholic, shopaholic	n. a person who loves, is addicted to chocolate/work/shopping
stuff	n. things (used as a singular, noncount noun)
taking care of business	doing things that need to be done
pro	n. a person who is a professional
crack up	v. to laugh uncontrollably
veg (sounds like the *veg* in *vegetable*)	v. relax and do nothing
dude, man	n. person, man
all-nighter	n. studying all night
cool	adj. good, fashionable
gross, nasty	adj. disgusting
pig out	v. eat a lot, overeat
screw up	v. make a mistake
awesome	adj. great

Exercise 1

Edit the business e-mail by replacing any gendered language and slang words and phrases with more formality and appropriateness.

> Dear Ms. O'Connor:
> I am writing to follow up on my interview from last week. First of all, it was awesome to meet you. You are a really cool lady. I believe I would be a pro at all the stuff you mentioned that would be required

of me in this job. I am not a workaholic, but I do work hard and "take care of business." Haha. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

M. Ernest Anderson

Idioms

Idioms are expressions that have a meaning different from the dictionary definitions of the individual words in the expression. Because English contains many idioms, nonnative English speakers have difficulties making logical sense of idioms and idiomatic expressions. The more you are exposed to English, however, the more idioms you will come to understand. Until then, memorizing the more common idioms may be of some help.

Table 5.18 Idioms

Idiom	**Definition**
a blessing in disguise	a good thing you do not recognize at first
a piece of cake	easy to do
better late than never	it is better to do something late than not at all
get over it	recover from something (like a perceived insult)
I have no idea	I don't know
not a chance	it will definitely not happen
on pins and needles	very nervous about something that is happening
on top of the world	feeling great
pulling your leg	making a joke by tricking another person
the sky is the limit	the possibilities are endless

What if you come across an idiom that you do not understand? There are clues that can help you. They are called context clues. Context clues are words or phrases around the unknown word or phrase that may help you decipher its meaning.

1. **Definition or explanation clue.** An idiom may be explained immediately after its use.
   Sentence: I felt like I was sitting *on pins and needles* **I was so nervous**.

2. **Restatement or synonym clues.** An idiom may be simplified or restated.
   Sentence: The young girl felt as though she had been *sent to the dog house* when her mother **punished her** for fighting in school.

3. **Contrast or Antonym clues.** An idiom may be clarified by a contrasting phrase or antonym that is near it.
   Sentence: Chynna thought the 5k marathon would be *a piece of cake*, *but* **it turned out to be very difficult**.

Pay attention to the signal word *but*, which tells the reader that an opposite thought or concept is occurring.

Key Takeaways

- Informal language is not appropriate in formal writing or speaking contexts.
- Slang and idioms might not make logical sense to nonnative speakers of English.
- Be cognizant in adopting gender-neutral or inclusive language.
- It is good to be aware of slang and idioms so they do not appear in your formal writing.

Writing Application

Write a short paragraph about yourself to a friend. Write another paragraph about yourself to an employer. Examine and discuss the differences in language between the two paragraphs.

154. Help for English Language Learners: End-of-Chapter Exercises

Learning Objectives

1. Use the skills you have learned in the chapter.
2. Work collaboratively with other students.

Exercises

1. On a separate sheet of paper, create questions from the following sentences.

   a. My daughter will have to think about her college options.
   b. Otto is waiting in the car for his girlfriend.
   c. The article talks about conserving energy.
   d. We need to reduce our needs.
   e. Rusha is always complaining about her work.

2. Underline the prepositional phrase in each of the following sentences.

   a. Monica told us about her trip.

b. I hope we have sunshine throughout the summer.
c. The panther climbed up the tree.
d. The little boy was standing behind his mother's legs.
e. We stayed awake until dawn.

3. Place the following sets of adjectives in the correct order before the noun.

   a. eyes: black, mesmerizing
   b. jacket: vintage, orange, suede
   c. pineapple: ripe, yellow, sweet
   d. vacation: fun, skiing
   e. movie: hilarious, independent

4. On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the positive sentences as negative sentences. Be sure to keep the sentences in the present tense.

   a. Sometimes I work on Saturdays.
   b. The garden attracts butterflies and bees.
   c. He breathes loudly at night.
   d. I chew on blades of grass in the summer time.
   e. I communicate well with my husband.

5. On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the following paragraph by correcting the double negatives.

   That morning it was so hot Forrest felt like he couldn't hardly breathe. Ain't nothing would get him out the door into that scorching heat. Then he remembered his dog, Zeus, who started whining right then. Zeus was whining and barking so much that Forrest didn't have no choice but to get off the couch and face the day. That dog didn't do nothing but sniff

> around the bushes and try to stay in the shade while Forrest was sweating in the sun holding the leash. He couldn't not wait for winter to come.

Collaboration

Once you have found all the errors you can, please share with a classmate and compare your answers. Did your partner find an error you missed? Did you find an error your partner missed? Compare with your instructor's answers.

PART XXI

COLLECTED READINGS FOR WRITING AND RHETORIC

The resources provided here are linked throughout our book but may also be used as stand-alone chapters. Some of these essays will be more useful for instructors; some may be appropriate for students. Each chapter is licensed separately.

155. Listening to Sources, Talking to Sources

FROM: https://milnepublishing.geneseo.edu/writing-in-college-from-competence-to-excellence/chapter/listening-to-sources-talking-to-sources/

Listening to Sources, Talking to Sources

Theses and sources

Everyone knows that a thorough analysis and persuasive argument needs strong evidence. The credibility of sources, addressed in Chapter 4, is one key element of strong evidence, but it also matters how sources are used in the text of the paper. Many students are accustomed to thinking of sources simply as expert corroboration for their own points. As a result, they tend to comb texts to find statements that closely parallel what they want to say and then incorporate quotes as evidence that a published author agrees with them. That's one way to use sources, but there is a lot more to it.

Recall from prior chapters that writing academic papers is about joining a conversation. You're contributing your own original thinking to some complex problem, be it interpretive, theoretical, or practical. Citing sources helps situate your ideas within that ongoing conversation. Sometimes you're citing a research finding that provides strong evidence for your point; at other times you're summarizing someone else's ideas in order to explain how your own opinion differs or to note how someone else's concept applies to a new situation. Graff and Birkenstein[1] encourage you to think about writing with sources is a "They Say/I Say" process. You first report what "they" say; "they" being published authors, prevalent ideas in society at large, or maybe participants in some kind of political or social debate. Then you respond by explaining what you think: Do you agree? Disagree? A little of both?

This "They Say/I Say" approach can help student writers find balance in their use of sources. On one extreme, some students think that they aren't allowed to make any claims without citing one or more expert authors saying the same thing. When their instructors encourage them to bring more original thinking into their writing, they're confused about how to do it. On the other extreme, some students tend to describe, more or less accurately, what sources say about a topic but then go on to state opinions that seem unrelated to the claims they just summarized. For example, a student writer may draw on expert sources to explain how the prevention and early detection of cancer has saved lives[2] but then argue for more funding for curing advanced cancer without making any explicit link to the points about prevention and screening. On one extreme, the sources are allowed to crowd out original thinking; on the other, they have seemingly no impact on the author's conclusions.

How can you know when you're avoiding both of these extremes? In other words, what kinds of theses ("I Say") can count as an original claim and still be grounded in the sources ("They Say")? Here are five common strategies:

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

claim about their implications. You might review papers that explore various factors shaping voting behavior to argue that a particular voting-reform proposal will likely have positive impacts.

3. *Identify underlying areas of agreement*. You may argue that the literature on cancer and the literature on violence both describe the unrecognized importance of prevention and early intervention in order to claim that insights about one set of problems may be useful for the other.
4. *Identify underlying areas of disagreement*. You may find that the controversies surrounding educational reform—and its debates about accountability, curricula, school funding—ultimately stem from different assumptions about the role of schools in society.
5. *Identify unanswered questions*. Perhaps you review studies of the genetic and behavioral contributors to diabetes in order to highlight unknown factors and argue for more in-depth research on the role of the environment.

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

Incorporating sources

Here's a passage of academic writing (an excerpt, not a complete paper) that illustrates several ways that sources can figure into a "They Say/I Say" approach[3]:

> Willingham (2011) draws on cognitive science to explain that students must be able to regulate their emotions in order to learn. Emotional self-regulation enables students to ignore

distractions and channel their attention and behaviors in appropriate ways. Other research findings confirm that anxiety interferes with learning and academic performance because it makes distractions harder to resist (Perkins and Graham-Bermann, 2012; Putwain and Best, 2011).

Other cognitive scientists point out that deep learning is itself stressful because it requires people to think hard about complex, unfamiliar material instead of relying on cognitive short-cuts.

Kahneman (2011) describes this difference in terms of two systems for thinking: one fast and one slow. Fast thinking is based on assumptions and habits and doesn't require a lot of effort. For example, driving a familiar route or a routine grocery-shopping trip are not usually intellectually taxing activities. Slow thinking, on the other hand, is what we do when we encounter novel problems and situations. It's effortful, and it usually feels tedious and confusing. It is emotionally challenging as well because we are, by definition, incompetent while we're doing it, which provokes some anxiety. Solving a tough problem is rewarding, but the path itself is often unpleasant.

These insights from cognitive science enable us to critically assess the claims made on both sides of the education reform debate. On one hand, they cast doubt on the claims of education reformers that measuring teachers' performance by student test scores is the best way to improve education. For example, the Center for Education Reform promotes "the implementation of strong, data-driven, performance-based accountability systems that ensure teachers are rewarded, retained and advanced based on how they perform in adding value to the students who they teach, measured predominantly by student achievement" (http://www.edreform.com/issues/teacher-quality/#what-we-believe). The research that Willingham (2011) and Kahneman (2011) describe suggests that frequent

> high-stakes testing may actually work against learning by introducing greater anxiety into the school environment.
> At the same time, opponents of education reform should acknowledge that these research findings should prompt us to take a fresh look at how we educate our children. While Stan Karp of Rethinking Schools is correct when he argues that "data-driven formulas [based on standardized testing] lack both statistical credibility and a basic understanding of the human motivations and relationships that make good schooling possible" (http://www.rethinkingschools.org/archive/26_03/26_03_karp.shtm), it doesn't necessarily follow that all education reform proposals lack merit. Challenging standards, together with specific training in emotional self-regulation, will likely enable more students to succeed.[4]

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

I think the most important lesson for me to learn about sources was that the best way to use them is to create a new point. What I mean by this is instead of using them only to back up your points, create your own conclusion from what your sources say. As a psychology major, I look at a lot of data from researchers who have created a conclusion from a meta-analysis (a combination of many studies about the same thing). So that's how I like to think of using sources, I will look at many articles about the same subject and then come up with my own opinion. After using your sources, it is very important to cite them correctly. Personally, I want to be a respected and trustworthy scholar. However, if any of my papers were to be found without proper citations, all of my hard work would be for nothing and people would be wary about the rest of my work. –Aly Button

As you can see, there are times when you should quote or paraphrase sources that you don't agree with or do not find particularly compelling. They may convey ideas and opinions that help explain and justify your own argument. Similarly, when you cite sources that you agree with, you should choose quotes or paraphrases that serve as building blocks within your own argument. Regardless of the role each source plays in your writing, you certainly don't need to find whole sentences or passages that express your thinking. Rather, focus on what each of those sources is claiming, why, and how exactly their claims relate to your own points.

The remainder of this chapter explains some key principles for incorporating sources, principles which follow from the general point that academic writing is about entering an ongoing conversation.

Principle 1: Listen to your sources

Have you ever had the maddening experience of arguing with someone who twisted your words to make it seem like you were saying something you weren't? Novice writers sometimes inadvertently misrepresent their sources when they quote very minor points from an article or even positions that the authors of an article disagree with. It often happens when students approach their sources with the goal of finding snippets that align with their own opinion. For example, the passage above contains the phrase "measuring teachers' performance by student test scores is the best way to improve education." An inexperienced writer might include that quote in a paper without making it clear that the author(s) of the source actually dispute that very claim. Doing so is not intentionally fraudulent, but it reveals that the paper-writer isn't really thinking about and responding to claims and arguments made by others. In that way, it harms his or her credibility.

Academic journal articles are especially likely to be misrepresented by student writers because their literature review sections often summarize a number of contrasting viewpoints. For example, sociologists Jennifer C. Lee and Jeremy Staff wrote a paper in which they note that high-schoolers who spend more hours at a job are more likely to drop out of school.[5] However, Lee and Staff's analysis finds that working more hours doesn't actually make a student more likely to drop out. Instead, the students who express less interest in school are both more likely to work a lot of hours *and* more likely to drop out. In short, Lee and Staff argue that disaffection with school causes students to drop-out, not working at a job. In reviewing prior research about the impact of work on dropping out, Lee and Staff write "Paid work, especially when it is considered intensive, reduces grade point averages, time spent on homework, educational aspirations, and the likelihood of completing high school"[6]. If you included that quote without explaining how it fits into Lee and Staff's actual argument, you would be misrepresenting that source.

Principle 2: Provide context

Another error beginners often make is to drop in a quote without any context. If you simply quote, "Students begin preschool with a set of self-regulation skills that are a product of their genetic inheritance and their family environment" (Willingham, 2011, p.24), your reader is left wondering who Willingham is, why he or she is included here, and where this statement fits into his or her larger work. The whole point of incorporating sources is to situate your own insights in the conversation. As part of that, you should provide some kind of context the first time you use that source. Some examples:

> Willingham, a cognitive scientist, claims that …

> Research in cognitive science has found that … (Willingham, 2011).

> Willingham argues that "Students begin preschool with a set of self-regulation skills that are a product of their genetic inheritance and their family environment" (Willingham, 2011, p.24). Drawing on findings in cognitive science, he explains "…"

As the second example above shows, providing a context doesn't mean writing a brief biography of every author in your bibliography—it just means including some signal about why that source is included in your text.

Even more baffling to your reader is when quoted material does not fit into the flow of the text. For example, a novice student might write,

> Schools and parents shouldn't set limits on how much teenagers are allowed to work at jobs. "We conclude that intensive work does not affect the likelihood of high school dropout among youths who have a high propensity to spend long hours on the job" (Lee and Staff, 2007, p. 171). Teens should be trusted to learn how to manage their time.

The reader is thinking, who is this sudden, ghostly "we"? Why should this source be believed? If you find that passages with quotes in your draft are awkward to read out loud, that's a sign that you need to contextualize the quote more effectively. Here's a version that puts the quote in context:

> Schools and parents shouldn't set limits on how much

> teenagers are allowed to work at jobs. Lee and Staff's carefully designed study found that "intensive work does not affect the likelihood of high school dropout among youths who have a high propensity to spend long hours on the job" (2007, p. 171). Teens should be trusted to learn how to manage their time.

In this latter example, it's now clear that Lee and Staff are scholars and that their empirical study is being used as evidence for this argumentative point. Using a source in this way invites the reader to check out Lee and Staff's work for themselves if they doubt this claim.

Many writing instructors encourage their students to contextualize their use of sources by making a "quotation sandwich"; that is, introduce the quote in some way and then follow it up with your own words. If you've made a bad habit of dropping in unintroduced quotes, the quotation sandwich idea may help you improve your skills, but in general you don't need to approach every quote or paraphrase as a three-part structure to have well integrated sources. You should, however, avoid ending a paragraph with a quotation. If you're struggling to figure out what to write after a quote or close paraphrase, it may be that you haven't yet figured out what role the quote is playing in your own analysis. If that happens to you a lot, try writing the whole first draft in your own words and then incorporate material from sources as you revise with "They Say/I Say" in mind.

Principle 3: Use sources efficiently

Some student writers are in a rut of only quoting whole sentences. Some others, like myself as a student, get overly enamored of extended block quotes and the scholarly look they give to the page.[7] These aren't the worst sins of academic writing, but they get in the way of one of the key principles of writing with sources: shaping quotes and paraphrases efficiently. Efficiency follows from the second principle, because when you fully incorporate sources into your own explicit argument, you zero in on the phrases, passages, and ideas that are relevant to your points. It's a very good sign for your paper when most quotes are short (key terms, phrases, or parts of sentences) and the longer quotes (whole sentences and passages) are clearly justified by the discussion in which they're embedded. Every bit of every quote should feel indispensable to the paper. An overabundance of long quotes usually means that your own argument is undeveloped. The most incandescent quotes will not hide that fact from your professor.

Also, some student writers forget that quoting is not the only way to incorporate sources. Paraphasing and summarizing are sophisticated skills that are often more appropriate to use than direct quoting. The first two paragraphs of the example passage above do not include any quotations, even though they are both clearly focused on presenting the work of others. Student writers may avoid paraphrasing out of fear of plagiarizing, and it's true that a poorly executed paraphrase will make it seem like the student writer is fraudulently claiming the wordsmithing work of others as his or her own. Sticking to direct quotes seems safer. However, it is worth your time to master paraphasing because it often helps you be more clear and concise, drawing out only those elements that are relevant to the thread of your analysis.

For example, here's a passage from a hypothetical paper with a block quote that is fully relevant to the argument but, nevertheless, inefficient:

> Drawing on a lifetime of research, Kahneman concludes our brains are prone to error:[8]

System 1 registers the cognitive ease with which it processes information, but it does not generate a warning signal when it becomes unreliable. Intuitive answers come to mind quickly and confidently, whether they originate from skills or from heuristics.

There is no simple way for System 2 to distinguish between a skilled and a heuristic response. Its only recourse is to slow down and attempt to construct an answer on its own, which it is reluctant to do because it is indolent. Many suggestions of System 1 are casually endorsed with minimal checking, as in the bat-and-ball problem.

> While people can get better at recognizing and avoiding these errors, Kahneman suggests, the more robust solutions involve developing procedures within organizations to promote careful, effortful thinking in making important decisions and judgments.

Even a passage that is important to reference and is well contextualized in the flow of the paper will be inefficient if it introduces terms and ideas that aren't central to the analysis within the paper. Imagine, for example, that other parts of this hypothetical paper use Kahneman's other terms for System 1 (fast thinking) and System 2 (slow thinking); the sudden encounter of "System 1" and "System 2" would be confusing and tedious for your reader. Similarly, the terms "heuristics" and "bat-and-ball problem" might be unfamiliar to your reader. Their presence in the block quote just muddies the waters. In this case, a paraphrase is a much better choice. Here's an example passage that uses a paraphrase to establish the same points more clearly and efficiently:

> Drawing on a lifetime of research, Kahneman summarizes that our brains are prone to error because they necessarily rely on cognitive shortcuts that may or may not yield valid judgments.[9] We have the capacity to stop and examine our assumptions, Kahneman points out, but we often want to avoid that hard work. As a result, we tend to accept our quick, intuitive responses. While people can get better at recognizing and avoiding these errors, Kahneman suggests that the more robust solutions involve developing procedures within organizations to promote careful, effortful thinking in making important decisions and

> judgments.

Not only is the paraphrased version shorter (97 words versus 151), it is clearer and more efficient because it highlights the key ideas, avoiding specific terms and examples that aren't used in the rest of the paper. If other parts of your paper did refer to Kahneman's System 1 and System 2, then you might choose to include some quoted phrases to make use of some of Kahneman's great language. Perhaps something like this:

> Drawing on a lifetime of research, Kahneman summarizes that our brains are prone to error because they necessarily rely on cognitive shortcuts that may or may not yield valid judgments.[10] System 1, Kahneman explains, "does not generate a warning signal when it becomes unreliable."[11] System 2 can stop and examine these assumptions, but it usually wants to avoid that hard work. As a result, our quick, intuitive responses are "casually endorsed with minimal checking."[12] While people can get better at recognizing and avoiding these errors, Kahneman suggests, the more robust solutions involve developing procedures within organizations to promote careful, effortful thinking in making important decisions and judgments.

Whether you choose a long quote, short quote, paraphrase or summary depends on the role that the source in playing in your analysis. The trick is to make deliberate, thoughtful decisions about how to incorporate ideas and words from others.

Paraphrasing, summarizing, and the mechanical conventions of quoting take a lot of practice to master. Numerous other resources (like those listed at the end of this chapter) explain these practices clearly and succinctly. Bookmark some good sources and refer to them as needed. If you suspect that you're in a quoting rut, try out some new ways of incorporating sources.

Principle 4: Choose precise verbs of attribution

It's time to get beyond the all-purpose "says." And please don't look up "says" in the thesaurus and substitute verbs like "proclaim" (unless there was actually a proclamation) or "pronounce" (unless there was actually a pronouncement). Here's a list of 15 useful alternatives:[13]

- Claims
- Asserts
- Relates
- Recounts
- Complains
- Reasons
- Proposes
- Suggests (if the author is speculating or hypothesizing)
- Contests (disagrees)
- Concludes
- Shows
- Argues
- Explains
- Indicates
- Points out
- Offers

More precise choices like these carry a lot more information than "says", enabling you to relate more with fewer words. For one thing, they can quickly convey what kind of idea you're citing: a speculative one ("postulates")? A conclusive one ("determines")? A controversial one ("counters")? You can further show how you're incorporating these sources into your own narrative. For example, if you write that an author "claims" something, you're presenting yourself as fairly neutral about that claim. If you instead write that the author "shows" something, then you signal to your reader that you find that evidence more convincing. "Suggests" on the other hand is a much weaker endorsement. As I'll discuss in Chapter 8, saying more with less makes your writing much more engaging.

Sources are your best friend. They either help you reaffirm your thesis or offer a differing opinion that you can challenge in your paper. The biggest thing to worry about, when it comes to sources, is citing. However, there are a multitude of resources to help you cite properly. My personal favorite is called Knightcite.com. You just pick the type of resource, fill in the information on it and voila, you have a perfectly cited resource! –Kaethe Leonard

Conclusion

Like so many things in adult life, writing in college is often both more liberating and burdensome than writing in high school and before. On the one hand, I've had students tell me that their high-school experiences made it seem that their own opinions didn't matter in academic writing, and that they can't make any claims that aren't exactly paralleled by a pedigreed quotation. Writing papers based on their own insights and opinions can seem freeing in contrast. At the same time, a college student attending full time may be expected to have original and well considered ideas about pre-Columbian Latin American history, congressional redistricting, sports in society, post-colonial literatures, and nano-technology, all in about two weeks. Under these conditions, it's easy to see why some would long for the days when simple, competent reporting did the job. You probably won't have an authentic intellectual engagement with every college writing assignment, but approaching your written work as an opportunity to dialogue with the material can help you find the momentum you need to succeed with this work.

156. Finding the Good Argument OR Why Bother With Logic?

Rebecca Jones

The word argument often means something negative. In Nina Paley's cartoon (see Figure 1), the argument is literally a cat fight. Rather than envisioning argument as something productive and useful, we imagine intractable sides and use descriptors such as "bad," "heated," and "violent." We rarely say, "Great, argument. Thanks!" Even when we write an academic "argument paper," we imagine our own ideas battling others.

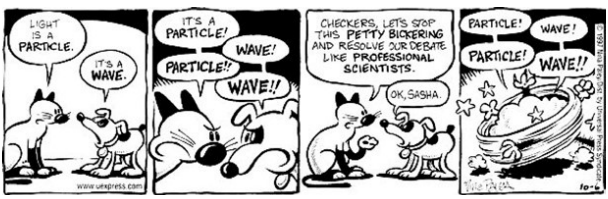


Figure 1. This cartoon demonstrates the absurdity of either/or arguments. (© 1997-1998 Nina Paley. Image available under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike license.

Linguists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson explain that the controlling metaphor we use for argument in western culture is war:

> It is important to see that we don't just *talk* about arguments

> in terms of war. We actually win or lose arguments. We see the person we are arguing with as an opponent. We attack his positions and we defend our own. We gain and lose ground. We plan and use strategies. If we find a position indefensible, we can abandon it and take a new line of attack. Many of the things we *do* in arguing are partially structured by the concept of war. (4)

If we follow the war metaphor along its path, we come across other notions such as, "all's fair in love and war." If all's fair, then the rules, principles, or ethics of an argument are up for grabs. While many warrior metaphors are about honor, the "all's fair" idea can lead us to arguments that result in propaganda, spin, and, dirty politics. The war metaphor offers many limiting assumptions: there are only two sides, someone must win decisively, and compromise means losing. The metaphor also creates a false opposition where argument (war) is action and its opposite is peace or inaction. Finding better arguments is not about finding peace—the opposite of antagonism. Quite frankly, getting mad can be productive. Ardent peace advocates, such as Jane Addams, Mahatma Gandhi, and Martin Luther King, Jr., offer some of the most compelling arguments of our time through concepts like civil disobedience that are hardly inactive. While "argument is war" may be the default mode for Americans, it is not the only way to argue. Lakoff and Johnson ask their readers to imagine something like "argument is dance" rather than "argument is war" (5). While we can imagine many alternatives to the war metaphor, concepts like argument as collaboration are more common even if they are not commonly used. Argument as collaboration would be more closely linked to words such as *dialogue* and *deliberation*, cornerstone concepts in the history of American democracy.

However, argument as collaboration is not the prevailing metaphor for public argumentation we see/hear in the mainstream media. One can hardly fault the average American for not being able to imagine argument beyond the war metaphor. Think back to the coverage of the last major election cycle in 2008. The opponents on either side (democrat/republican) dug in their heels and defended every position, even if it was unpopular or irrelevant to the conversation at hand. The political landscape divided into two sides with no alternatives. In addition to the entrenched positions, blogs and websites such as FactCheck.org flooded us with lists of inaccuracies, missteps, and plain old fallacies that riddled the debates. Unfortunately, the "debates" were more like speeches given to a camera than actual arguments deliberated before the public. These important moments that fail to offer good models lower the standards for public argumentation.

On an average news day, there are entire websites and blogs dedicated to noting ethical, factual, and legal problems with public arguments, especially on the news and radio talk shows. This is not to say that all public arguments set out to mislead their audiences, rather that the discussions they offer masquerading as arguments are often merely opinions or a spin on a particular topic and not carefully considered, quality arguments. What is often missing from these discussions is research, consideration of multiple vantage points, and, quite often, basic logic.

On news shows, we encounter a version of argument that seems more like a circus than a public discussion. Here's the visual we get of an "argument" between multiple sides on the average news show. In this example (see Figure 2), we have a four ring circus.

While all of the major networks use this visual format, multiple speakers in multiple windows like *The Brady Bunch* for the news, it is rarely used to promote ethical deliberation. These talking heads offer a simulation of an argument. The different windows and figures pictured in them are meant to represent different views on a topic, often "liberal" and "conservative." This is a good start because it sets up the possibility for thinking through serious issues in need of solutions. Unfortunately, the people in the windows never actually engage in an argument (see Thinking Outside the Text). As we will discuss below, one of the rules of good argument is that participants in an argument agree on the primary standpoint and that individuals are willing to concede if a point of view is proven wrong. If you watch one of these "arguments," you will see a spectacle where prepared speeches are hurled across the long distances that separate the participants. Rarely do the talking heads respond to the actual ideas/arguments given by the person pictured in the box next to them on the screen unless it is to contradict one statement with another of their own.

Figure 2. This mock up of a typical news show created by Colin Charlton offers a visual of the attempt to offer many "sides" of an argument.

Even more troubling is the fact that participants do not even seem to agree about the point of disagreement. For example, one person might be arguing about the congressional vote on health care while another is discussing the problems with Medicaid. While these are related, they are different issues with different premises. This is not a good model for argumentation despite being the predominant model we encounter. Activity: Thinking Outside the Text

Watch the famous video of Jon Stewart on the show *Crossfire*: ([http:// www.youtube.com/watch?v=vmj6JADOZ-8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vmj6JADOZ-8)).

- What is Stewart's argument?
- How do the hosts of *Crossfire* respond to the very particular argument that Stewart makes?

- Why exactly are they missing the point?

These shallow public models can influence argumentation in the classroom. One of the ways we learn about argument is to think in terms of pro and con arguments. This replicates the liberal/conservative dynamic we often see in the papers or on television (as if there are only two sides to health care, the economy, war, the deficit). This either/or fallacy of public argument is debilitating. You are either for or against gun control, for or against abortion, for or against the environment, for or against everything. Put this way, the absurdity is more obvious. For example, we assume that someone who claims to be an "environmentalist" is pro every part of the green movement. However, it is quite possible to develop an environmentally sensitive argument that argues against a particular recycling program. While many pro and con arguments are valid, they can erase nuance, negate the local and particular, and shut down the very purpose of having an argument: the possibility that you might change your mind, learn something new, or solve a problem. This limited view of argument makes argumentation a shallow process. When all angles are not explored or fallacious or incorrect reasoning is used, we are left with ethically suspect public discussions that cannot possibly get at the roots of an issue or work toward solutions.

Activity: Finding Middle Ground

Outline the pro and con arguments for the following issues:

1. Gun Control
2. Cap and Trade
3. Free Universal Healthcare

In a group, develop an argument that finds a compromise or middle ground between two positions.

Rather than an either/or proposition, argument is multiple and complex. An argument can be logical, rational, emotional, fruitful, useful, and even enjoyable. As a matter of fact, the idea that argument is necessary (and therefore not always about war or even about winning) is an important notion in a culture that values democracy and equity. In America, where nearly everyone you encounter has a different background and/or political or social view, skill in arguing seems to be paramount, whether you are inventing an argument or recognizing a good one when you see it.

The remainder of this chapter takes up this challenge—inventing and recognizing good arguments (and bad ones). From classical rhetoric, to Toulmin's model, to contemporary pragma-dialectics, this chapter presents models of argumentation beyond pro and con. Paying more addition to the details of an argument can offer a strategy for developing sound, ethically aware arguments.

What Can We Learn from Models of Argumentation?

So far, I have listed some obstacles to good argument. I would like to discuss one other. Let's call it the mystery factor. Many times I read an argument and it seems great on the surface, but I get a strange feeling that something is a bit off. Before studying argumentation, I did not have the vocabulary to name that strange feeling. Additionally, when an argument is solid, fair, and balanced, I could never quite put my finger on what distinguished it from other similar arguments. The models for argumentation below give us guidance in revealing the mystery factor and naming the qualities of a logical, ethical argument.

Classical Rhetoric

In James Murphy's translation of Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*, he explains that "Education for Quintilian begins in the cradle, and ends only when life itself ends" (xxi). The result of a life of learning, for Quintilian, is a perfect speech where "the student is given a statement of a problem and asked to prepare an appropriate speech giving his solution" (Murphy xxiii). In this version of the world, a good citizen is always a PUBLIC participant. This forces the good citizen to know the rigors of public argumentation: "Rhetoric, or the theory of effective communication, is for Quintilian merely the tool of the broadly educated citizen who is capable of analysis, reflection, and powerful action in public affairs" (Murphy xxvii). For Quintilian, learning to argue in public is a lifelong affair. He believed that the "perfect orator . . . cannot exist unless he is above all a good man" (6). Whether we agree with this or not, the hope for ethical behavior has been a part of public argumentation from the beginning.

The ancient model of rhetoric (or public argumentation) is complex. As a matter of fact, there is no single model of ancient argumentation. Plato claimed that the Sophists, such as Gorgias, were spin doctors weaving opinion and untruth for the delight of an audience and to the detriment of their moral fiber. For Plato, at least in the Phaedrus, public conversation was only useful if one applied it to the search for truth. In the last decade, the work of the Sophists has been redeemed. Rather than spin doctors, Sophists like Isocrates and even Gorgias, to some degree, are viewed as arbiters of democracy because they believed that many people, not just male, property holding, Athenian citizens, could learn to use rhetoric effectively in public.

Aristotle gives us a slightly more systematic approach. He is very concerned with logic. For this reason, much of what I discuss below comes from his work. Aristotle explains that most men participate in public argument in some fashion. It is important to note that by "men," Aristotle means citizens of Athens: adult males with the right to vote, not including women, foreigners, or slaves. Essentially this is a homogenous group by race, gender, and religious affiliation. We have to keep this in mind when adapting these strategies to our current heterogeneous culture. Aristotle explains,

> . . . for to a certain extent all men attempt to discuss statements and to maintain them, to defend themselves and to attack others. Ordinary people do this either at random or through practice and from acquired habit. Both ways being possible, the subject can plainly be handled systematically, for it is possible to inquire the reason why some speakers succeed through practice and others spontaneously; and every one will at once agree that such an inquiry is the function of an art. (Honeycutt, "Aristotle's *Rhetoric*" 1354a I i)

For Aristotle, inquiry into this field was artistic in nature. It required both skill and practice (some needed more of one than the other). Important here is the notion that public argument can be systematically learned.

Aristotle did not dwell on the ethics of an argument in *Rhetoric* (he leaves this to other texts). He argued that "things that are true and things that are just have a natural tendency to prevail over their opposites" and finally that " . . . things that are true and things that are better are, by their nature, practically always easier to prove and easier to believe in" (Honeycutt, "Aristotle's Rhetoric" 1355a I i). As a culture, we are skeptical of this kind of position, though I think that we do often believe it on a personal level. Aristotle admits in the next line that there are people who will use their skills at rhetoric for harm. As his job in this section is to defend the use of rhetoric itself, he claims that everything good can be used for harm, so rhetoric is no different from other fields. If this is true, there is even more need to educate the citizenry so that they will not be fooled by unethical and untruthful arguments.

For many, logic simply means reasoning. To understand a person's logic, we try to find the structure of their reasoning. Logic is not synonymous with fact or truth, though facts are part of evidence in logical argumentation. You can be logical without being truthful. This is why more logic is not the only answer to better public argument.

Our human brains are compelled to categorize the world as a survival mechanism. This survival mechanism allows for quicker thought. Two of the most basic logical strategies include inductive and deductive reasoning. **Deductive reasoning** (see Figure 3) starts from a premise that is a generalization about a large class of ideas, people, etc. and moves to a specific conclusion about a smaller category of ideas or things (All cats hate water; therefore, my neighbor's cat will not jump in our pool). While the first premise is the most general, the second premise is a more particular observation. So the argument is created through common beliefs/observations that are compared to create an argument. For example:

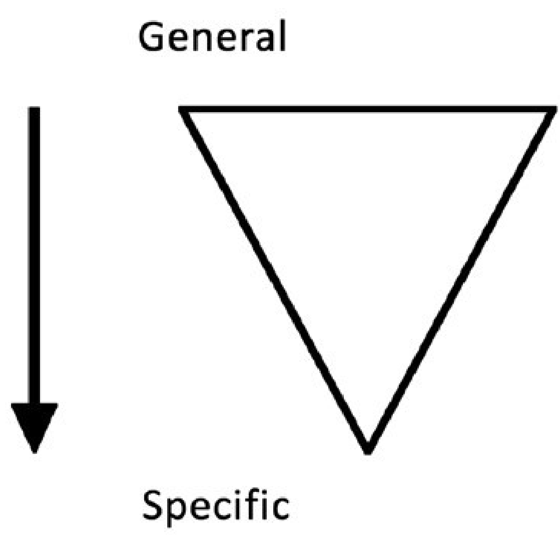


Figure 3. Deductive Reasoning

People who burn flags are unpatriotic. **Major Premise**

Sara burned a flag. **Minor Premise**

Sara is unpatriotic. **Conclusion**

The above is called a syllogism. As we can see in the example, the major premise offers a general belief held by some groups and the minor premise is a particular observation. The conclusion is drawn by comparing the premises and developing a conclusion. If you work hard enough, you can often take a complex argument and boil it down to a syllogism. This can reveal a great deal about the argument that is not apparent in the longer more complex version.

Stanley Fish, professor and *New York Times* columnist, offers the following syllogism in his July 22, 2007, blog entry titled "Democracy and Education": "The syllogism underlying these comments is (1) America is a democracy (2) Schools and universities are situated within that democracy (3) Therefore schools and universities should be ordered and administrated according to democratic principles."

Fish offered the syllogism as a way to summarize the responses to his argument that students do not, in fact, have the right to free speech in a university classroom. The responses to Fish's standpoint were vehemently opposed to his understanding of free speech rights and democracy. The responses are varied and complex. However, boiling them down to a single syllogism helps to summarize the primary rebuttal so that Fish could then offer his extended version of his standpoint (see link to argument in Question #1 at the end of the text).

Inductive reasoning moves in a different direction than deductive reasoning (see Figure 4). Inductive reasoning starts with a particular or local statement and moves to a more general conclusion. I think of inductive reasoning as a stacking of evidence. The more particular examples you give, the more it seems that your conclusion is correct.

Inductive reasoning is a common method for arguing, especially when the conclusion is an obvious probability. Inductive reasoning is the most common way that we move around in the world. If we experience something habitually, we reason that it will happen again. For example, if we walk down a city street and every person smiles, we might reason that this is a "nice town." This seems logical.

We have taken many similar, particular experiences (smiles) and used them to make a general conclusion (the people in the town are nice). Most of the time,

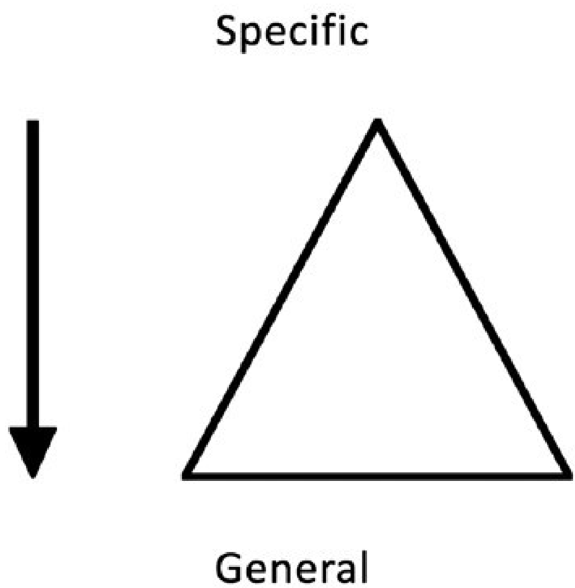


Figure 4. Inductive Reasoning

this reasoning works. However, we know that it can also lead us in the wrong direction. Perhaps the people were smiling because we were wearing inappropriate clothing (country togs in a metropolitan city), or perhaps only the people living on that particular street are "nice" and the rest of the town is unfriendly. Research papers sometimes rely too heavily on this logical method. Writers assume that finding ten versions of the same argument somehow prove that the point is true.

Here is another example. In Ann Coulter's most recent book, *Guilty: Liberal "Victims" and Their Assault on America*, she makes her (in)famous argument that single motherhood is the cause of many of America's ills. She creates this argument through a piling of evidence. She lists statistics by sociologists, she lists all the single moms who killed their children, she lists stories of single mothers who say outrageous things about their life, children, or marriage in general, and she ends with a list of celebrity single moms that most would agree are not good examples of motherhood. Through this list, she concludes, "Look at almost any societal problem and you will find it is really a problem of single mothers" (36). While she could argue, from this evidence, that being a single mother is difficult, the generalization that single motherhood is the root of social ills in America takes the inductive reasoning too far. Despite this example, we need inductive reasoning because it is the key to analytical thought (see Activity: Applying Inductive and Deductive Reasoning). To write an "analysis paper" is to use inductive reasoning.

Activity: Applying Deductive and Inductive Reasoning For each standpoint, create a deductive argument AND an inductive argument. When you are finished, share with your group members and decide which logical strategy offers a more successful, believable, and/or ethical argument for the particular standpoint. Feel free to modify the standpoint to find many possible arguments.

1. Affirmative Action should continue to be legal in the United States.
2. Affirmative Action is no longer useful in the United States.
3. The arts should remain an essential part of public education.
4. Chose a very specific argument on your campus (parking, tuition, curriculum) and create deductive and inductive arguments to support the standpoint.

Most academic arguments in the humanities are inductive to some degree. When you study humanity, nothing is certain. When observing or making inductive arguments, it is important to get your evidence from many different areas, to judge it carefully, and acknowledge the flaws. Inductive arguments must be judged by the quality of the evidence since the conclusions are drawn directly from a body of compiled work.

The Appeals

"The appeals" offer a lesson in rhetoric that sticks with you long after the class has ended. Perhaps it is the rhythmic quality of the words (ethos, logos, pathos) or, simply, the usefulness of the concept. Aristotle imagined logos, ethos, and pathos as three kinds of artistic proof. Essentially, they highlight three ways to appeal to or persuade an audience: "(1) to reason logically, (2) to understand human character and goodness in its various forms, (3) to understand emotions" (Honeycutt, *Rhetoric* 1356a).

While Aristotle and others did not explicitly dismiss emotional and character appeals, they found the most value in logic. Contemporary rhetoricians and argumentation scholars, however, recognize the power of emotions to sway us. Even the most stoic individuals have some emotional threshold over which no logic can pass. For example, we can seldom be reasonable when faced with a crime against a loved one, a betrayal, or the face of an adorable baby.

The easiest way to differentiate the appeals is to imagine selling a product based on them. Until recently, car commercials offered a prolific source of logical, ethical, and emotional appeals.

Logos: Using logic as proof for an argument. For many students this takes the form of numerical evidence. But as we have discussed above, logical reasoning is a kind of argumentation.

Car Commercial: (Syllogism) Americans love adventure—Ford Escape allows for off road adventure— Americans should buy a Ford Escape.

OR

The Ford Escape offers the best financial deal.

Ethos: Calling on particular shared values (patriotism), respected figures of authority (MLK), or one's own character as a method for appealing to an audience.

Car Commercial: Eco-conscious Americans drive a Ford Escape.

OR

[Insert favorite movie star] drives a Ford Escape.

Pathos: Using emotionally driven images or language to sway your audience.

Car Commercial: Images of a pregnant women being safely rushed to a hospital. Flash to two car seats in the back seat. Flash to family hopping out of their Ford Escape and witnessing the majesty of the Grand Canyon.

OR

After an image of a worried mother watching her sixteen-year-old daughter drive away: "Ford Escape takes the fear out of driving."

The appeals are part of everyday conversation, even if we do not use the Greek terminology (see Activity: Developing Audience Awareness). Understanding the appeals helps us to make better rhetorical choices in designing our arguments. If you think about the appeals as a choice, their value is clear.

Activity: Developing Audience Awareness

Imagine you have been commissioned by your school food service provider to create a presentation encouraging the consumption of healthier foods on campus.

1. How would you present this to your friends: consider the media you would use, how you present yourself, and how you would begin.
2. How would you present this same material to parents of incoming students?
3. Which appeal is most useful for each audience? Why? Toulmin: Dissecting the Everyday Argument

Philosopher Stephen Toulmin studies the arguments we make in our everyday lives. He developed his method out of frustration with logicians (philosophers of argumentation) that studied argument in a vacuum or through mathematical formulations:

All A are B.

All B are C.

Therefore, all A are C. (Eemeren, et al. 131)

Instead, Toulmin views argument as it appears in a conversation, in a letter, or some other context because real arguments are much more complex than the syllogisms that make up the bulk of Aristotle's logical program. Toulmin offers the contemporary writer/reader a way to map an argument. The result is a visualization of the argument process. This map comes complete with vocabulary for describing the parts of an argument. The vocabulary allows us to see the contours of the landscape—the winding rivers and gaping caverns. One way to think about a "good" argument is that it is a discussion that hangs together, a landscape that is cohesive (we can't have glaciers in our desert valley). Sometimes we miss the faults of an argument because it sounds good or appears to have clear connections between the statement and the evidence, when in truth the only thing holding the argument together is a lovely sentence or an artistic flourish.

For Toulmin, argumentation is an attempt to justify a statement or a set of statements. The better the demand is met, the higher the audience's appreciation. Toulmin's vocabulary for the study of argument offers labels for the parts of the argument to help us create our map.

Claim: The basic standpoint presented by a writer/ speaker.

Data: The evidence which supports the claim.

Warrant: The justification for connecting particular data to a particular claim. The warrant also makes clear the assumptions underlying the argument.

Backing: Additional information required if the warrant is not clearly supported.

Rebuttal: Conditions or standpoints that point out flaws in the claim or alternative positions.

Qualifiers: Terminology that limits a standpoint. Examples include applying the following terms to any part of an argument: sometimes, seems, occasionally, none, always, never, etc.

The following paragraphs come from an article reprinted in UTNE magazine by Pamela Paxton and Jeremy Adam Smith titled: “Not Everyone Is Out to Get You.” Charting this excerpt helps us to understand some of the underlying assumptions found in the article.

> “Trust No One”
>
> That was the slogan of *The X-Files*, the TV drama that followed two FBI agents on a quest to uncover a vast government conspiracy. A defining cultural phenomenon during its run from 1993–2002, the show captured a mood of growing distrust in America.
>
> Since then, our trust in one another has declined even further. In fact, it seems that “Trust no one” could easily have been America’s motto for the past 40 years—thanks to, among other things, Vietnam, Watergate, junk bonds, Monica Lewinsky, Enron, sex scandals in the Catholic Church, and the Iraq war.
>
> The General Social Survey, a periodic assessment of Americans’ moods and values, shows an 11-point decline from 1976–2008 in the number of Americans who believe other people can generally be trusted. Institutions haven’t fared any better. Over the same period, trust has declined in the press (from 29 to 9 percent), education (38–29 percent), banks (41 percent to 20 percent), corporations (23–16 percent), and organized religion (33–20 percent). Gallup’s 2008 governance survey showed that trust in the government was as low as it was during the Watergate era.
>
> The news isn’t all doom and gloom, however. A growing body of research hints that humans are hardwired to trust, which is why institutions, through reform and high performance, can still stoke feelings of loyalty, just as disasters and mismanagement can inhibit it. The catch is that while humans want, even need, to trust, they won’t trust blindly and foolishly.

Figure 5 demonstrates one way to chart the argument that Paxton and Smith make in "Trust No One." The remainder of the article offers additional claims and data, including the final claim that there is hope for overcoming our collective trust issues. The chart helps us to see that some of the warrants, in a longer research project, might require additional support. For example, the warrant that TV mirrors real life is an argument and not a fact that would require evidence.

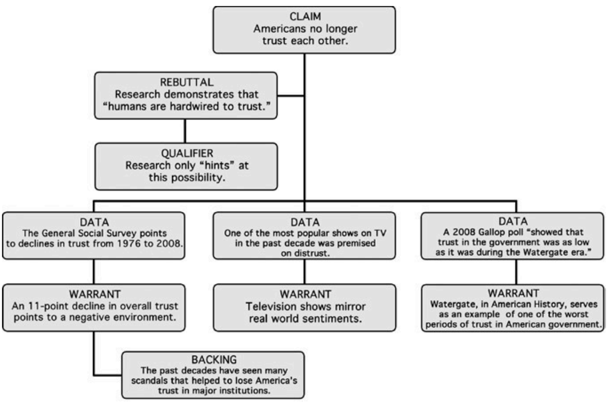


Figure 5. This chart demonstrates the utility of visualizing an argument.

Charting your own arguments and others helps you to visualize the meat of your discussion. All the flourishes are gone and the bones revealed. Even if you cannot fit an argument neatly into the boxes, the attempt forces you to ask important questions about your claim, your warrant, and possible rebuttals. By charting your argument you are forced to write your claim in a succinct manner and admit, for example, what you are using for evidence. Charted, you can see if your evidence is scanty, if it relies too much on one kind of evidence over another, and if it needs additional support. This charting might also reveal a disconnect between your claim and your warrant or cause you to reevaluate your claim altogether.

Pragma-Dialectics: A Fancy Word for a Close Look at Argumentation

The field of rhetoric has always been interdisciplinary and so it has no problem including argumentation theory. Developed in the Speech Communication Department at the University of Amsterdam, pragma-dialectics is a study of argumentation that focuses on the ethics of one's logical choices in creating an argument. In *Fundamentals of Argumentation Theory: A Handbook of Historical Backgrounds and Contemporary Developments*, Frans H. van Eemeren and Rob Grootendorst describe argumentation, simply, as "characterized by the use of language for resolving a difference of opinion" (275). While much of this work quite literally looks at actual speech situations, the work can easily be applied to the classroom and to broader political situations.

While this version of argumentation deals with everything from ethics to arrangement, what this field adds to rhetorical studies is a new approach to argument fallacies. Fallacies are often the cause of the mystery feeling we get when we come across faulty logic or missteps in an argument.

What follows is an adaptation of Frans van Eemeren, Rob Grootendorst, and Francesca Snoeck Henkemans' "violations of the rules for critical engagement" from their book *Argumentation: Analysis, Evaluation, Presentation* (109). Rather than discuss rhetorical fallacies in a list (ad hominem, straw man, equivocation, etc.), they argue that there should be rules for proper argument to ensure fairness, logic, and a solution to the problem being addressed. Violating these rules causes a fallacious argument and can result in a standoff rather than a solution.

While fallacious arguments, if purposeful, pose real ethical problems, most people do not realize they are committing fallacies when they create an argument. To purposely attack someone's character rather than their argument (ad hominem) is not only unethical, but demonstrates lazy argumentation. However, confusing cause and effect might simply be a misstep that needs fixing. It is important to admit that many fallacies, though making an argument somewhat unsound, can be rhetorically savvy. While we know that appeals to pity (or going overboard on the emotional appeal) can often demonstrate a lack of knowledge or evidence, they often work. As such, these rules present argumentation as it would play out in a utopian world where everyone is calm and logical, where everyone cares about resolving the argument at hand, rather than winning the battle, and where everyone plays by the rules. Despite the utopian nature of the list, it offers valuable insight into argument flaws and offers hope for better methods of deliberation.

What follows is an adaptation of the approach to argumentation found in Chapters 7 and 8 of *Argumentation: Analysis, Evaluation, Presentation* (Eemeren, et al. 109-54). The rule is listed first, followed by an example of how the rule is often violated.

1. The Freedom Rule

"Parties must not prevent each other from putting forward standpoints or casting doubt on standpoints" (110).

There are many ways to stop an individual from giving her own argument. This can come in the form of a physical threat but most often takes the form of a misplaced critique. Instead of focusing on the argument, the focus is shifted to the character of the writer or speaker (ad hominem) or to making the argument (or author) seem absurd (straw man) rather than addressing its actual components. In the past decade, "Bush is stupid" became a common ad hominem attack that allowed policy to go unaddressed. To steer clear of the real issues of global warming, someone might claim "Only a fool would believe global warming is real" or "Trying to suck all of the CO2 out of the atmosphere with giant greenhouse gas machines is mere science fiction, so we should look at abandoning all this green house gas nonsense."

2. The Burden-of-Proof Rule

“A party who puts forward a standpoint is obliged to defend it if asked to do so” (113).

This is one of my favorites. It is clear and simple. If you make an argument, you have to provide evidence to back it up. During the 2008 Presidential debates, Americans watched as all the candidates fumbled over the following question about healthcare: “How will this plan actually work?” If you are presenting a written argument, this requirement can be accommodated through quality, researched evidence applied to your standpoint.

3. The Standpoint Rule

“A party’s attack on a standpoint must relate to the standpoint that has indeed been advanced by the other party” (116).

Your standpoint is simply your claim, your basic argument in a nutshell. If you disagree with another person’s argument or they disagree with yours, the actual standpoint and not some related but more easily attacked issue must be addressed. For example, one person might argue that the rhetoric of global warming has created a multi-million dollar green industry benefiting from fears over climate change. This is an argument about the effects of global warming rhetoric, not global warming itself. It would break the standpoint rule to argue that the writer/speaker does not believe in global warming. This is not the issue at hand.

4. The Relevance Rule

“A party may defend his or her standpoint only by advancing argumentation related to that standpoint” (119).

Similar to #3, this rule assures that the evidence you use must actually relate to your standpoint. Let’s stick with the same argument: global warming has created a green industry benefiting from fears over climate change. Under this rule, your evidence would need to offer examples of the rhetoric and the resulting businesses that have developed since the introduction of green industries. It would break the rules to simply offer attacks on businesses who sell “eco-friendly” products.

5. The Unexpressed Premise Rule

“A party may not falsely present something as a premise that has been left unexpressed by the other party or deny a premise that he or she has left implicit” (121).

This one sounds a bit complex, though it happens nearly every day. If you have been talking to another person and feel the need to say, “That’s NOT what I meant,” then you have experienced a violation of the unexpressed premise rule. Overall, the rule attempts to keep the argument on track and not let it stray into irrelevant territory. The first violation of the rule, to falsely present what has been left unexpressed, is to rephrase someone’s standpoint in a way that redirects the argument. One person might argue, “I love to go to the beach,” and another might respond by saying “So you don’t have any appreciation for mountain living.” The other aspect of this rule is to camouflage an unpopular idea and deny that it is part of your argument. For example, you might argue that “I have nothing against my neighbors. I just think that there should be a noise ordinance in this part of town to help cut down on crime.” This clearly shows that the writer does believe her neighbors to be criminals but won’t admit it.

6. The Starting Point Rule

“No party may falsely present a premise as an accepted starting point, or deny a premise representing an accepted starting point” (128).

Part of quality argumentation is to agree on the opening standpoint. According to this theory, argument is pointless without this kind of agreement. It is well known that arguing about abortion is nearly pointless as long as one side is arguing about the rights of the unborn and the other about the rights of women. These are two different starting points.

7. The Argument Scheme Rule

"A standpoint may not be regarded as conclusively defended if the defense does not take place by means of an appropriate argument scheme that is correctly applied" (130).

This rule is about argument strategy. Argument schemes could take up another paper altogether. Suffice it to say that schemes are ways of approaching an argument, your primary strategy. For example, you might choose emotional rather than logical appeals to present your position. This rule highlights the fact that some argument strategies are simply better than others. For example, if you choose to create an argument based largely on attacking the character of your opponent rather than the issues at hand, the argument is moot.

Argument by analogy is a popular and well worn argument strategy (or scheme). Essentially, you compare your position to a more commonly known one and make your argument through the comparison. For example, in the "Trust No One" argument above, the author equates the Watergate and Monica Lewinsky scandals. Since it is common knowledge that Watergate was a serious scandal, including Monica Lewinsky in the list offers a strong argument by analogy: the Lewinsky scandal did as much damage as Watergate. To break this rule, you might make an analogy that does not hold up, such as comparing a minor scandal involving a local school board to Watergate. This would be an exaggeration, in most cases.

8. The Validity Rule

"The reasoning in the argumentation must be logically valid or must be capable of being made valid by making explicit one or more unexpressed premises" (132).

This rule is about traditional logics. Violating this rule means that the parts of your argument do not match up. For example, your cause and effect might be off: If you swim in the ocean today you will get stung by a jelly fish and need medical care. Joe went to the doctor today. He must have been stung by a jelly fish. While this example is obvious (we do not know that Joe went swimming), many argument problems are caused by violating this rule.

9. The Closure Rule

"A failed defense of a standpoint must result in the protagonist retracting the standpoint, and a successful defense of a standpoint must result in the antagonist retracting his or her doubts" (134).

This seems the most obvious rule, yet it is one that most public arguments ignore. If your argument does not cut it, admit the faults and move on. If another writer/speaker offers a rebuttal and you clearly counter it, admit that the original argument is sound. Seems simple, but it's not in our public culture. This would mean that George W. Bush would have to have a press conference and say, "My apologies, I was wrong about WMD," or for someone who argued fervently that Americans want a single payer option for healthcare to instead argue something like, "The polls show that American's want to change healthcare, but not through the single payer option. My argument was based on my opinion that single payer is the best way and not on public opinion." Academics are more accustomed to retraction because our arguments are explicitly part of particular conversations. Rebuttals and renegotiations are the norm. That does not make them any easier to stomach in an "argument is war" culture.

10. The Usage Rule

"Parties must not use any formulations that are insufficiently clear or confusingly ambiguous, and they must interpret the formulations of the other party as carefully and accurately as possible" (136).

While academics are perhaps the worst violators of this rule, it is an important one to discuss. Be clear. I notice in both student and professional academic writing that a confusing concept often means confusing prose, longer sentences, and more letters in a word. If you cannot say it/write it clearly, the concept might not yet be clear to you. Keep working. Ethical violations of this rule happen when someone is purposefully ambiguous so as to confuse the issue. We can see this on all the "law" shows on television or though deliberate propaganda.

Activity: Following the Rules

1. Choose a topic to discuss in class or as a group (ex. organic farming, campus parking, gun control).
2. Choose one of the rules above and write a short argument (a sentence) that clearly violates the rule. Be prepared to explain WHY it violates the rule.
3. Take the fallacious argument you just created in exercise a) and correct it. Write a solid argument that conforms to the rule.

Food for thought: The above rules offer one way to think about shaping an argument paper. Imagine that the argument for your next paper is a dialogue between those who disagree about your topic. After doing research, write out the primary standpoint for your paper. For example: organic farming is a sustainable practice that should be used more broadly. Next, write out a standpoint that might offer a refutation of the argument. For example: organic farming cannot supply all of the food needed by the world's population. Once you have a sense of your own argument and possible refutations, go through the rules and imagine how you might ethically and clearly provide arguments that support your point without ignoring the opposition.

Even though our current media and political climate do not call for good argumentation, the guidelines for finding and creating it abound. There are many organizations such as America Speaks (www. americaspeaks.org) that are attempting to revive quality, ethical deliberation. On the personal level, each writer can be more deliberate in their argumentation by choosing to follow some of these methodical approaches to ensure the soundness and general quality of their argument. The above models offer the possibility that we can imagine modes of argumentation other than war. The final model, pragma-dialectics, especially, seems to consider argument as a conversation that requires constant vigilance and interaction by participants. Argument as conversation, as new metaphor for public deliberation, has possibilities.

Additional Activities

1. Read Stanley Fish's blog entry titled "Democracy and Education" (http://fish.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/07/22/democracy-andeducation/#more-57). Choose at least two of the responses to Fish's argument that students are not entitled to free speech rights in the classroom and compare them using the different argumentation models listed above.
2. Following the pragma-dialectic rules, create a fair and balanced rebuttal to Fish's argument in his "Democracy and Education" blog entry.
3. Use Toulmin's vocabulary to build an argument. Start with a claim and then fill in the chart with your own research, warrants, qualifiers, and rebuttals.

Note

1. I would like to extend a special thanks to Nina Paley for giving permission to use this cartoon under Creative Commons

licensing, free of charge. Please see Paley's great work at www.ninapaley.com.

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157. Annoying Ways People Use Sources by Kyle D. Stedman

How Slow Driving Is Like Sloppy Writing

I hate slow drivers. When I'm 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 don't 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. Or,
2. They know the guidelines but don't care.

But here's 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's 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've 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're 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'll 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 don't know the generally accepted practices of using sources (especially in academic writing) in the U.S. Or,
2. You know the guidelines but don't care.

And it will be a lot harder for readers to take you seriously if they think you're 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 don't 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'll 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're 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'm not saying that there's 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's why they're *conventions* and not *rules*.

The Annoyances

Because I'm 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

Everyone in the car hears it: buh-BUMP. *dropping in a quotation* The driver insists to the passengers, "But *without introducing it* that armadillo—I didn't see it! It just came *first* 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 won’t experience the same level of grief and regret when surprised by a quotation as opposed to an armadillo, I submit that there’s 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’s an example of what I’m 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’s going to be written by Max Brooks, and I know I’m 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’s 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 isn't a hard and fast rule—I've seen it broken by the best of writers, I admit—but it's a wise standard to hold yourself to unless you have a reason not to.

Dating Spider-Man

An annoyance that's closely connected to *Dating Spider-Man:* Armadillo Roadkill is the tendency writers sometimes have of starting or ending paragraphs with quotations. This isn't technically *wrong*, and there are situations when the effect of surprise is what you're going for. But often, a paragraph-beginning or paragraph-closing quotation feels rushed, unexplained, disjointed.

It's like dating Spider-Man. You're 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's too late—he's already moved on. Later, he suddenly jumps off a balcony and is by your side again, and he starts talking about something you don't understand. You're 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's 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's 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 didn't 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 doesn't feel thoughtless, like it would feel if I continued to be whisked to quotations without preparation throughout the essay. But please don't 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

You probably know someone like this 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're 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're 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's 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) wouldn't please anyone—except maybe Uncle Barry.

Am I in the Right Movie?

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 doesn't 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 didn't plan to see. Here are two examples of what I'm talking about. Read them out loud, and you'll 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's 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's probably something you can adjust in your lead-in sentence to make the two fit together well. Maybe you'll 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'll have to scrap what you first wrote and start over. On occasion you'll 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'll 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's 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 Can't Find the Stupid Link

You've been in this situation: you're on a website that seems like it might be interesting and you want to learn more about it. But the home page doesn't 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 can't find the stupid link. This is usually the fault of web designers, who don't always take the time to test their sites as much as they should with actual users.

The communication failure here is simple: you're used to finding certain kinds of basic information in the places people usually put it. If it's not there, you're 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're 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's 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's 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 doesn't 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's 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, "Don't imagine you'll be unscathed by the methods you use. The end may justify the means. . . . But there's a price to pay, and the price does tend to be oneself."

I Swear I Did Some Research!

Let's look in depth at this potentially annoying passage from a hypothetical student paper:

> It's 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 aren't clean answers to a question like that. What we read and what we know sometimes meld together so unnoticeably that we don't know which ideas and pieces of information are "ours" and which aren't. 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 aren't going to say, "I understand that I couldn't 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're 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’s 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’s 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’ll 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’s 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's like saying to your potentially skeptical readers, "Look, you might be wondering if I'm a quack. But I can prove I'm 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's 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've 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 doesn't 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 didn't. 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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158. Beyond Black on White: Document Design and Formatting in the Writing Classroom

by Michael J. Klein and Kristi L. Shackelford

You've received your first assignment in a college writing course. You've created an outline, done the necessary research, and written a first draft of your paper. Now it's time for you to revise your work so you can submit the paper. However, writing a paper for a course involves more than simply generating content and turning it into your instructor. Equally important as the words you write is how the appearance of your document influences the way readers interpret your ideas.

Most people think of design as the arrangement of images on the page. This is only half true: Graphics can convey concepts that you can't express in writing. If you were writing an article about an oil spill and the damage it caused, one powerful photograph could make your point more persuasively than pages of writing. Good document design integrates the words on the page with appropriate imagery to fully illustrate your meaning. An image of the Deep Horizon oil spill won't have the same impact if the image isn't coupled with a sentence about the scope of the spill.

An often-overlooked element of design is the visual treatment of text itself. In this definition of text, text does not include your word choice or the structure of your argument. Instead, it refers to the look of the words on the page. Are all the fonts the same? Are key ideas written in a text larger than other text? Are some words in bold? All of these choices influence the way your document looks and is perceived by your readers. Depending on the type of paper your instructor has assigned and the preparation rules or style guide required, subtle variations in text might be your only design option.

In a typical first-year writing course, you'll be focusing—of course—on writing. If the intent of writing is to communicate an idea, the way you present your writing is also important. You can greatly improve a standard research paper on climate change with the addition of an image showing differences in ice caps over a period of years. You can strengthen data supporting your position in an opinion paper if you present it in a graph rather than a narrative format. However, include graphics in written assignments with care: they should supplement, not replace, your writing. When you are creating, don't think of design features as only images. Remember that visual design applies to the style of the text you use to convey ideas. The remainder of this chapter focuses on the use of text as a design element.

What You Should Know about Design Choices and Elements

You can talk about design in a multitude of ways. What some designers call white space, for example, others call negative space. In both cases, they are referring to areas of a page free from text or objects, such as the white space that makes up the margins around the text of this paragraph. A designer may talk about the use of alignment in a design, while someone else will describe how textual elements "line up" on a page. All theories and methods of design include the same basic ideas, just expressed in different terms. The names of elements on a page are much less important than their function. The definitions below will help you understand the way we use these terms.

Text and Type

Typeface refers to the look of your text. It typically includes the font family (e.g., Times New Roman), the type size (e.g., 12 point) and type emphasis (e.g., bold). Spacing is the amount of space around a line of text within a document. The amount of space between lines of text is called leading (pronounced *led*) or line spacing. Leading is typically the size of the font plus two points. For example, standard leading for 12-point type is 14 points, indicated as 12/14 point; this paragraph uses 11 point Adobe Garamond Pro with 13.2 point leading. Increasing the amount of leading, or size of line spacing, can increase readability. Large amounts of text are often set with a leading of twice the text (12/24 point), also called double-spacing.

Images

The visual elements of a design range from simple boxes to the use of color photographs. Designers often use the term "images" to refer to the wide range of visual elements available—photographs, line drawings, technical illustrations, graphs, charts, and so on. Not all images are appropriate for all uses. A color photo of the beach, for instance, may have more persuasive power than a black-and-white drawing because the photograph evokes a more complete and personal reaction. A technical illustration that allows a reader to see the inside of a device can demonstrate the proper assembly of equipment in more detail than an actual photograph. In some cases, though, images can distract from the meaning of your text. You should not include random clip art of a tree, for example, to supplement a paper on the importance of environmental sustainability. In contrast, you may strengthen your position on environmental sustainability with a graph showing the cumulative effects of non-recycled materials.

Design Elements

Like the combination of text and images, the integration of four key design elements—Contrast, Repetition, Alignment and Proximity—gives a design power. You can remember these elements by the acronym CRAP. Don't let the name influence you, though—following these principles is one of the best ways to ensure your document looks its best. It is sometimes difficult to differentiate among these concepts because they influence each other.

Contrast

Contrast refers to the visual differences in elements on a page. These differences highlight the significance of the individual items, as well as draw the reader's attention to different areas of a page. In a magazine layout, for example, the largest photograph is more noticeable because of its larger size in comparison to others on a spread. Color in a design can also provide noticeable contrast.

In text, you see contrast through different uses of formatting options. This might include choosing different typefaces to visually separate headings from your main text. Contrast may also be visible in the differing sizes or emphasis applied to a text. If you apply bold formatting to keywords in your document, they stand out from others and indicate that they are significant. If every other word in your document is bold, however, the effect of the contrast is lost. A similar effect occurs when you overuse a highlighter when marking a textbook: important information gets lost rather than being easier to find.

Look at the first page of this chapter. You can immediately see the name "Document Design" and recognize that it is the title of the chapter. Your eye is immediately drawn to it because it is the biggest item on the page. Just below the title, the authors' names are in smaller, italicized text. The contrast between the size and emphasis in the two lines of text quickly illustrates that they are providing different information.

Repetition

Repetition involves the use of consistency to visually group multiple items that express similar ideas or are somehow related. You can apply this design element to graphics, including the use of shapes and color. For example, many of your textbooks may include a section summarizing key ideas from the text. By placing all summaries in a similarly shaped box or highlighted by the same color, you can tell that these items have something in common. Once you realize that all summaries in your political science textbook are in green boxes, you can find them at glance.

You can apply repetition simply by formatting text in different ways. When you look at a restaurant menu, you'll see that the larger categories—like "Appetizers" and "Desserts"—are presented in the same font and size as each other, which is different from the listing of the food items themselves. This repeated format shows that those categories are equivalent. It also indicates that a new section is beginning, as do the headings that divide sections of this chapter. In papers written for a class, you express repetition in text primarily through placement, such as always putting page numbers in the same place on the page. On a Works Cited page, the organization of citation materials (such as the author's name and book title) makes information easier to locate. Repetition makes your intent more obvious to readers.

Repetition lets you quickly glance through this book and find information, even in sections you haven't already read. To find the first page of a chapter, you look for a large title with lots of white space above it. If you're looking for a specific page in the book, you know to look at the outside corners to locate the page numbers.

Alignment

In design, alignment refers to the placement of elements on a page. While everything on a page is aligned in that it has been placed somewhere, some alignment strategies are better than others. You can think of it as asking a sick friend, “Do you have a temperature?” Of course, everyone has a temperature; what you’re asking is if your friend has an elevated or abnormal temperature. In the same way, when document designers talk about alignment, they typically mean consistent alignment. For example, text that is left justified or graphics that run along the edge of the page are considered properly aligned.

Aligning elements creates a cleaner, more attractive design and emphasizes the consistency of information on a page. Alignment also helps readers access and process information in a publication. Appropriately aligned text clarifies for the reader where ideas begin and end. It also increases readability by allowing the reader’s eye to return to a consistent location on the page while reading. Breaking the alignment scheme is also a valuable design tool. When a block quote is indented, it is quickly apparent that the text has a slightly different meaning than the text above and below it.

The text alignment throughout this chapter indicates when a topic is changing and how a large piece of text (the chapter) can be broken into smaller chunks (the sections). Main headings within the text are centered over justified body text. To find the idea you’re looking for, you can look for the centered text and know that a new idea is being introduced.

Proximity

Proximity is the grouping of elements that have something in common. Often a layout involves a single idea, and the designer uses the entire page to place thematically related text and graphics. When multiple ideas are included on a single page, the reader can tell which are related based on how close—or far—they are from each other. An obvious example is a box including a photo and its caption.

In academic writing and formatting, the placement of text often illustrates proximity. You place headings that identify the content of a section directly above that section, cuing the reader to a shift. This proximity also allows readers to quickly find related information based on the heading of a section.

Look at the image labeled as Fig. 1. As soon as you see the graphic, you can look immediately below it, see what it is named and why it is included. What if that label was on the next page? Placing related elements together is an efficient way to make sure they are properly understood.

For More Information

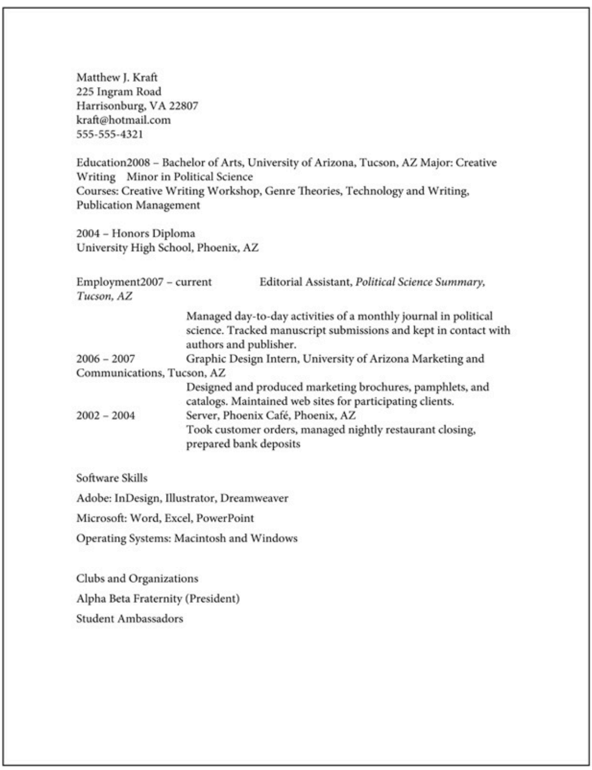
Design texts aren't just for professional designers! You can find examples of the principles discussed here in a variety of design books. Look for a basic book that covers designing with images and text to learn more. A good one to start with is Robin Williams *Non-Designer's Design Book*; many of the ideas in this chapter are based on ones presented in her book.

How You Can Apply These Design Principles

Incorporating design principles into a publication has an immediate and compelling effect. Even text-heavy documents, such as academic papers or resumes, become more appealing and comprehensible with even minor restructuring.

The example in Fig. 140.1 shows an unformatted resume. The lack of repetition, contrast, alignment, and proximity make the document unattractive as well as difficult to follow. There is no way to easily distinguish important information, like the applicant's name and contact information. Sections run together, and no key ideas are clear.

Fig. 140.2 shows the same content using the previously discussed design elements. The document is more visually appealing as well as being easier to review. Each individual design principle is involved, and their combination leads to a stronger design.



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Education2008 – Bachelor of Arts, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ Major: Creative Writing Minor in Political Science
Courses: Creative Writing Workshop, Genre Theories, Technology and Writing, Publication Management

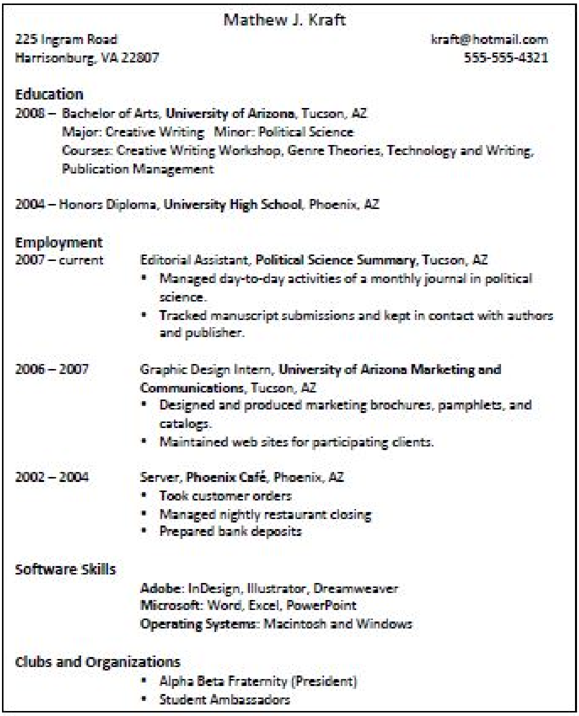
2004 – Honors Diploma
University High School, Phoenix, AZ

Employment2007 – current Editorial Assistant, *Political Science Summary, Tucson, AZ*
Managed day-to-day activities of a monthly journal in political science. Tracked manuscript submissions and kept in contact with authors and publisher.
2006 – 2007 Graphic Design Intern, University of Arizona Marketing and Communications, Tucson, AZ
Designed and produced marketing brochures, pamphlets, and catalogs. Maintained web sites for participating clients.
2002 – 2004 Server, Phoenix Café, Phoenix, AZ
Took customer orders, managed nightly restaurant closing, prepared bank deposits

Software Skills
Adobe: InDesign, Illustrator, Dreamweaver
Microsoft: Word, Excel, PowerPoint
Operating Systems: Macintosh and Windows

Clubs and Organizations
Alpha Beta Fraternity (President)
Student Ambassadors

Fig. 140.1 An unformatted resume



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Education

2008 – Bachelor of Arts, **University of Arizona**, Tucson, AZ
Major: Creative Writing Minor: Political Science
Courses: Creative Writing Workshop, Genre Theories, Technology and Writing, Publication Management

2004 – Honors Diploma, **University High School**, Phoenix, AZ

Employment

2007 – current Editorial Assistant, **Political Science Summary**, Tucson, AZ
- Managed day-to-day activities of a monthly journal in political science.
- Tracked manuscript submissions and kept in contact with authors and publisher.

2006 – 2007 Graphic Design Intern, **University of Arizona Marketing and Communications**, Tucson, AZ
- Designed and produced marketing brochures, pamphlets, and catalogs.
- Maintained web sites for participating clients.

2002 – 2004 Server, **Phoenix Café**, Phoenix, AZ
- Took customer orders
- Managed nightly restaurant closing
- Prepared bank deposits

Software Skills

Adobe: InDesign, Illustrator, Dreamweaver
Microsoft: Word, Excel, PowerPoint
Operating Systems: Macintosh and Windows

Clubs and Organizations
- Alpha Beta Fraternity (President)
- Student Ambassadors

Fig. 140.2 A formatted resume

Repetition is shown through the consistent emphasis and text used in the various sections of the resume. There is contrast between the size of the author's name and the contact information, clearly highlighting the most significant information. School and business names shown in bold create strong contrast within lines of text. Text is firmly and consistently aligned. Text is easy to read from the left justification, and the author's name is highlighted as the only centered text on the page. Proximity makes finding information simple, as section headings are placed directly above their supporting information.

The Basics of Style Guides

Style guides are collections of conventions on everything from word choice to format gathered into one place and used in writing. Their primary purpose is to ensure that all documents in a given environment adhere to a certain look and consistent use of language, but they serve a much broader purpose.

Style guides eliminate the guesswork in areas of writing that have multiple options. For example, both advisor and adviser are accurate spellings of a word; a style guide specifies which instance is preferred for the document you are writing. Style guides assure consistency in an organization's publications, such as placing the titles and page numbers in the same area of the page for all documents. Finally, they make reading and comprehension easier for the audience by presenting similar information in similar ways. Readers who want to view the source material you've used in a paper, for example, will refer to your list of authors and publications. The format and even the title of this section will vary depending on the style guide you've chosen. The "Works Cited" or "Reference" pages provide the information on all referenced documents in a presentation different from the main text, making it easy to identify.

Most academic disciplines follow a style guide. In addition, many companies and academic institutions establish their own style guides to supplement established style guides. In most writing courses, as well as other courses in the humanities, we use the Modern Language Association (MLA) style.

A Primer on MLA Style

The Modern Language Association produced their first "MLA style sheet" in 1951 as a way to ensure consistency within documents shared in the academic community. The style sheet evolved into the first edition of the *MLA Handbook* in 1977. Now in its seventh edition, the *MLA Handbook* is the primary source for stylistic choices made in writing for the humanities.

Style guides reflect the items of importance in writing for a particular community. The types and structure in information shown in the MLA style guide differ from those in other disciplines. For example, the American Psychological Association (APA)—used by many of the sciences—has its own style guide. Even popular media, including newspapers and magazines have their own style guide: the Associated Press (AP) guide.

Writers using a specific style guide will emphasize different pieces of information. For example, citations in MLA emphasize the author as primary focus, while the APA style guide features dates (see Fig. 3).

Style guides are dynamic documents, and they change to reflect evolutions in technology for both research and production. When MLA style was first developed, it did not include a style for referencing Internet sources.

MLA Style In-Text Citation (8th edition)

Johnson felt that "there was a lack of trust amongst people when it came to money" (234).

Some researchers argue that money creates "a lack of trust amongst people" (Johnson 234).

MLA Style Works Cited

Crowley, Sharon, and Debra Hawhee. *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students.* 3rd ed. New York: Pearson Education, 2004.

APA Style In--Text Citation

Johnson (2003) felt that “there was a lack of trust amongst people when it came to money” (234).

Some researchers argue that money creates “a lack of trust amongst people” (Johnson 2003: 234).**APA Style Reference**

Crowley, S. & Hawhee, D. (2004). *Ancient rhetorics for contemporary students*. (3rd ed.) New York, NY: Pearson Education.

As online media became an increasingly significant means of sharing resources, the style guide was adapted to incorporate references for Web sites, online journals, and print journals retrieved online. Changes in production options for writers and publishers also influenced changes to style guides. When authors typed papers using traditional typewriters, they were unable to use italics to indicate the name of a publication; instead, the underlining of text indicated these documents. Modern word processing programs allow the author to control type at a much more precise level, allowing italics as well as control of spacing and line breaks.

Like most style guides, MLA style changes over time. The guidelines presented here are appropriate for the seventh edition of the MLA Style Guide. You should check to make sure you are using the most current version. In the college courses you take, your individual instructors may impose additional style choices or ones that conflict with the style guide for the academic discipline. Be sure to follow the special style instructions for the assignments in that course.

Applying MLA Style in Your Own Papers

The way you use words and place text on a page influence the audience's ability to comprehend information. Much the way the shape of a stop sign indicates the same meaning as "STOP" to a driver, readers understand information in part through its placement and format. As a result, there is consistency among the papers submitted within a writing classroom and established journals in an academic field. This consistency allows readers to become accustomed to certain conventions and increases readability. When a professor reviews multiple papers formatted in the same way, for example, she can easily find the author's name and class section on all of the papers. Likewise, students in an English class will be able to find a source from the information given in an academic journal because they can understand in-text citation and bibliographic reference.

MLA-formatted papers for a class rarely include graphic elements, like illustrations or tables. In fact, MLA style limits the use of design in formatting to ensure that the focus remains on the text. Settings specified by MLA incorporate the design principles reviewed above. The remainder of the chapter discusses MLA formatting of academic papers, like the research papers you'll develop in your writing classes, as opposed to writing for publication, such as professional journals.

The primary use of repetition in MLA format is to indicate that text formatted in the same way throughout a paper signifies a similar use. Contrast is important in separating distinct sections of a paper from one another. Alignment in MLA increases readability by providing a common starting point for the reader. Proximity helps readers follow related ideas. For example, section headers are located directly over the text they introduce, allowing readers to quickly find information.

Margins

Margins are the distance from the edge of the paper to where the text starts. They define the amount of white space around the text on the page. They are important because they emphasize the text through contrast (black text on a white page) and increase readability through consistent alignment (headings and text line up to the left margin). Margins also contribute to readability by providing a place for the reader's eyes to rest: they ensure appropriate white space to prevent a page from becoming too dense with text.

The MLA style guide requires specific margins of one inch (1") on all four sides of a page (see Fig. 4).

See section 4.1 of the *MLA Handbook* for information on margins.

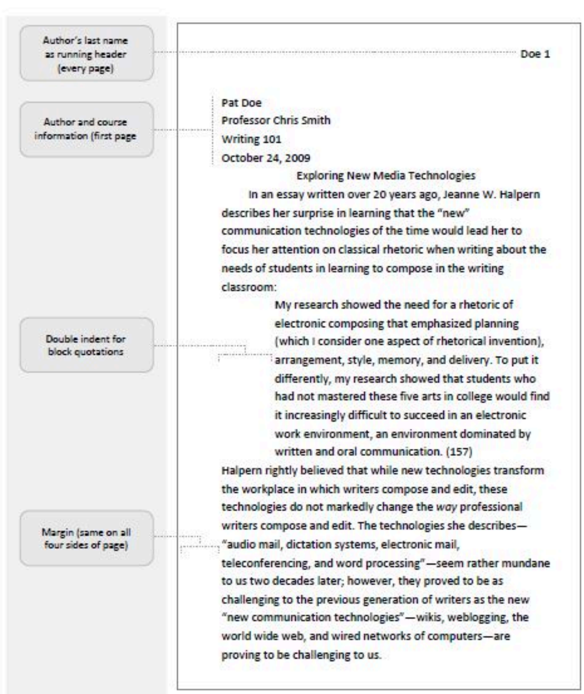


Fig. 3 The first page of a paper formatted according to MLA style.

Typeface and Spacing

Appropriate typeface usage involves all design elements. The repetition of a single font throughout a document shows the reader that each section of the paper is part of a single whole. The strong visual color contrast of black text on a white background increases readability. Black text, for example, is easier to read than gray text, a difference you may notice when your printer is low on ink. Alignment indicates a separation of ideas or the introduction of a new concept. The title of the paper centered over the left-aligned text shows the beginning of the paper's content. The placement of section titles illustrates proximity. Each one is adjacent to its respective text directly above the first paragraph of a section.

MLA requires a serif font (like Times New Roman) in 12-point type. A serif font is one that has edges or "feet" on the ends of letters. A sans-serif font (like Arial) is straighter, without edges or flares as part of its shape. Serif fonts are traditionally easier to read, though this distinction has decreased as desktop publishing programs and font qualities have improved.

All text, from the initial header through the reference page, must be double-spaced (see Fig. 5). There is no additional spacing before or after headings. Each new paragraph is indented by ½ inch. The consistent spacing within the document makes reading easier as well as providing a reviewer with room for notes. The indention of each paragraph clearly indicates the beginning of a new idea.

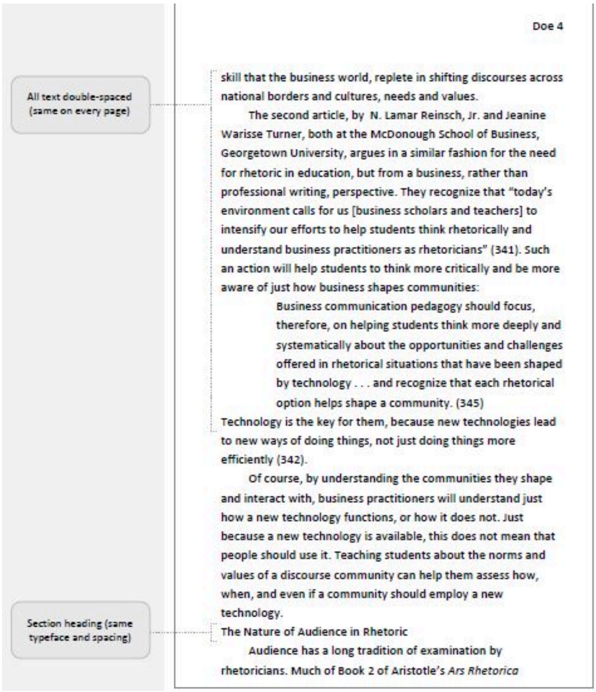
See section 4.2 of the *MLA Handbook* for information on typeface and spacing.

Title and Headings

A title and internal headings help to separate the body of the paper into smaller, more specific, sections. They break text into shorter, more readable sections, or chunk information in the paper into reasonable portions. In addition, headings allow the reader to quickly skim through a document in search of specific ideas. Headings are described in levels, meaning their hierarchal structure in the paper. A second level heading must follow a first level heading. For example, after reading this entire chapter, you can easily find information on a specific element by looking for the appropriate heading.

Within MLA style, the title refers to the entire paper, while headings refer to individual sections within the paper. The contrast in MLA titles and headings comes mainly from alignment. Both students writing in the classroom and professionals writing for publication use MLA style. Limiting the amount of formatting—like adding italics or bold for emphasis—and focusing on alignment helps ensure that headings remain consistent when different fonts are used. The title is centered over the main text; headings are left justified over body text that is indented (see Fig. 5).

See section 4.3 of the *MLA Handbook* for information on titles and headings.



Doe 4

skill that the business world, replete in shifting discourses across national borders and cultures, needs and values.

The second article, by N. Lamar Reinsch, Jr. and Jeanine Warisse Turner, both at the McDonough School of Business, Georgetown University, argues in a similar fashion for the need for rhetoric in education, but from a business, rather than professional writing, perspective. They recognize that "today's environment calls for us [business scholars and teachers] to intensify our efforts to help students think rhetorically and understand business practitioners as rhetoricians" (341). Such an action will help students to think more critically and be more aware of just how business shapes communities:

> Business communication pedagogy should focus, therefore, on helping students think more deeply and systematically about the opportunities and challenges offered in rhetorical situations that have been shaped by technology . . . and recognize that each rhetorical option helps shape a community. (345)

Technology is the key for them, because new technologies lead to new ways of doing things, not just doing things more efficiently (342).

Of course, by understanding the communities they shape and interact with, business practitioners will understand just how a new technology functions, or how it does not. Just because a new technology is available, this does not mean that people should use it. Teaching students about the norms and values of a discourse community can help them assess how, when, and even if a community should employ a new technology.

The Nature of Audience in Rhetoric

Audience has a long tradition of examination by rhetoricians. Much of Book 2 of Aristotle's *Ars Rhetorica*

Fig. 4. A page formatted in MLA style showing double-spacing and a section heading.

Headers and Page Numbers

Headers are a user service, providing information to readers regarding their location in the text. The header includes the author's last name and the page number (see Fig. 4). Because the header information is formatted consistently and placed in the exact location on each page, this use of repetition helps readers easily find and identify document information.

On the initial page of a research paper, the header also includes the author's name, the date of submission, course instructor's name and course designation, usually left justified (see Fig. 4). This information, but not its placement, may vary depending on your course. Always check with your professor or refer to handouts provided in class for specifics.

Subsequent pages of the paper require that the author's last name and page number be placed in the upper, right-hand corner of the page, one-half inch (0.5") from the top edge of the page and one inch (1") from the right edge of the paper.

See section 4.4 of the *MLA Handbook* for information on page numbers.

Illustrations

Illustrations, including photographs, line drawings, maps, or graphs, help your readers better understand the information you are communicating. Sometimes illustrations support the function of the text. For example, we use the illustrations in this chapter to help you better understand the concepts we are writing about. Understanding the importance of graphics would be much harder with no illustrations as support. In other instances, the illustrations themselves are the primary pieces of information. For instance, a simple graph can be far more dramatic and comprehensible than a long paragraph full of numbers and percentages.

With MLA style, illustrations should be labeled *Figure* (usually abbreviated as *Fig.*), numbered consecutively, and given a brief caption following the label. As we have done with the illustrations in this chapter, the caption should readily identify the key feature of the illustration. Place the illustration as close as possible to the text where you first reference it to help readers understand why you included it.

Writers frequently use illustrations created by others to supplement their writing. If you find an image on a website, you cannot use it without permission. And while some websites explicitly give permission to use their images, you must still cite the source in your own work.

While you can use others' properly attributed illustrations, sometimes you will create the illustrations yourself. For example, you may want to capture an image of your computer's desktop to add to a document about computer systems. To copy a screenshot of your computer to the clipboard, press <Ctrl-Shift-Command> (Apple)-3 on Mac OS X or <Print Screen> on Windows. Once on the clipboard, the image will be available for you to manipulate with an image editing software or paste unaltered into almost any type of graphics program.

While some images may already be exactly the way you need them, most of the time you will need to make changes to images before you can use them. Two free image editing software packages are GIMP— the GNU Image Manipulation Program—for Mac OS X and Windows systems (available at <http://www.gimp.org/>) and Paint.NET for use only on Windows systems (available at <getpaint.net>). Other things to remember when using illustrations:

- *Always use visuals of good quality.* A bad illustration can distract your reader and lessen the credibility of your argument.
- *Don't distort the image.* Keep the image in proportion by holding the <Shift> key as you are adjusting the image in your word processor.
- *Make sure the image is of the right quality and resolution.* An image that looks great on a website may not look as good when printed. Check the resolution of the image before enlarging it so there is no loss of quality.
- *Use the image at the appropriate size.* Don't try to force a full-page PowerPoint slide into a one-inch square space.
- *Crop images to remove extraneous material.* Keep the focus on the important part of the illustration, just like you do with text. For example, if including a web browser screenshot of a web page in a paper, readers do not need to see the browser window frame or your favorites/bookmarks menu in the visual used in the document.

See section 4.5 of the MLA *Handbook* for information on working with illustrations.

Conclusion

While not every class, assignment or topic lends itself to the inclusion of graphics, you can still design your documents to be appealing to your reader. Good design choices can also make your document more accessible to your readers. A clean design with graphic and typographical indicators of content gives your readers more opportunities to engage with and understand your intention.

Style guides define typographical and design rules for you as a writer and a reader. MLA is the most commonly used style guide in first-year writing, but most disciplines have their own. All style guides answer the questions you commonly encounter as a writer—Should page numbers be at the top or bottom of the page? How do I cite an article from a magazine's Web site? When you answer these questions, you can concentrate on the writing itself and developing your ideas. As a reader, you will be able to identify an established style and use it to your advantage. Finding the information you want (paper topics, authors cited) is easier when you know where to look (headings, reference pages). While the reasoning behind the rules in a style guide may not be intuitive, following them leads to better-designed documents.

Discussion

1. What style guides have you used in the past? How did following a style guide influence your writing? In what different writing situations do you think a style guide would be most effective? Least effective?

2. In what ways does the appearance of a document affect your perception of the message and of the author?

3. How can you integrate the design elements of contrast, repetition, alignment and proximity into class assignments? What documents would benefit most from good design principles?

4. How much value does including an image add to a traditional academic paper? What types of images do you think are appropriate? In what ways can images detract from the impact or intent of an academic paper?

Works Cited

Modern Language Association of America. *The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers.* 7th ed. New York: MLA, 2009. Print.

About the Authors

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159. 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

I will be assessing your papers 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 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 courses, 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 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 student's 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 does 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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160. 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 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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161. On the Other Hand: The Role of Composition Courses Antithetical Writing in First Year

Steven D. Krause

Besides my own experiences as a student many years ago in courses similar to the ones you and your classmates are in now, I think the most important influence on how I have approached research and argumentative writing came from academic debate. Debate taught me at least two ways to approach an argument that were not part of my formal schooling. First, academic policy debate1 taught me that argumentation is a contest—a sport, not at all different from tennis or basketball or figure skating or gymnastics, an activity where you have to work with a team, you have to practice, and the goal is to "win." And winning in academic debate happens: while it is a sport that is judged, it is an activity, like gymnastics or figure skating, where the rules for judging are surprisingly well codified. I will admit that seeing a debate or argument as something "to be won" has not always served me well in life, for there are any number of situations in which the framework for an argument is perhaps better perceived as an opportunity to listen and to compromise than to score points.

Second, because of the way that academic debate is structured, I learned quickly the importance of being able to perceive and argue multiple and opposing views on the same issue. Not unlike other sports where players play both offense and defense—baseball and basketball immediately come to mind—debaters have to argue both for and against the year's resolution, which was the broad proposition that framed all of the particular cases debate teams put forward for the entire season. In fact, it was not at all uncommon for a team to strenuously advocate for a controversial position one round—"the U.S. should engage in one-on-one talks with North Korea"—only to strenuously argue the opposite position—"the U.S. should *not* engage in one-on-one talks with North Korea"—the very next round. Seeing "multiple positions" was not simply a good idea; it was one of the rules of the game.

I've brought these past experiences into my current teaching in a number of ways, including one of the exercises I am discussing here, what my students and I call antithesis writing. These exercises will help you gain a better understanding of how to shape an argument, how to more fully explore a topic, and how to think more carefully about your different audiences.

In this essay, I borrow heavily from my own online textbook, *The Process of Research Writing*, which is available for free at http://stevendkrause.com/tprw. You might want to visit that site for additional information about this exercise and other exercises I've put together for teaching the research writing process.

Thesis Doesn't Have to Be a Bad Thing (Or Why Write Antithesis Essays in the First Place)

Somewhere along the way, "thesis" became a dirty word in a lot of writing courses, inherently bound up and attached to all that is wrong with what composition historians and the writing scholars call the "Current-Traditional" paradigm of writing instruction. Essentially, this approach emphasizes the product and forms of writing (in most nineteenth-century American rhetoric textbooks, these forms were Exposition, Description, Narration, and Argument), issues of syntax and grammar, correctness, and so forth. It didn't matter so much what position a writer took; what mattered most was that the writer got the form correct.

"Thesis" is often caught in/lumped into this current-traditional paradigm, I think mainly because of the rigid role and placement of a thesis in the classic form of the five-paragraph essay. Most of you and your classmates already know about this: in the five-paragraph formula, the thesis is the last sentence of the introduction, is divided into three parts, and it rigidly controls the structure of the following four paragraphs. Certainly this overly prescriptive and narrow definition of thesis is not useful. Jasper Neel describes this sort of formula in his book *Plato, Derrida, and Writing* as "anti-writing," and I think that Sharon Crowley is correct in arguing that the kind of teaching exemplified by the five-paragraph essay is more akin to filling out a form than it is to actual "writing."

But when I discuss "thesis" here, I mean something much more broad and organic. I mean an initial direction that every research writing project must take. A thesis advocates a specific and debatable position, is not a statement of fact nor a summary of events, and it answers the questions "what's your point?" and "why should I care?" You should begin with a working thesis that attempts to answer these questions simply as a way of getting your research process started. True, these initial working theses are usually broad and unwieldy, but the emphasis here is on *working*, because as you research and think more carefully, you will inevitably change your thesis. *And this is good*— change is the by-product of learning, and seeing a working thesis differently is both the purpose and the opportunity of the antithesis exercise.

So, I think the first and probably most important reason to consider antithesis writing is to test and strengthen the validity of the working thesis. After all, there isn't much "debatable" about a working thesis like "crime is bad" or "cleaning up the environment is good," which suggests that there probably isn't a viable answer to the questions "what's your point?" and "why should I care?" Considering opposing and differing views can help you find the path to make a vague generalization like "crime is bad" into a more pointed, researchable, and interesting observation.

The second general value for antithesis exercises is to raise more awareness of your audience—the potential readers who would disagree with your working thesis, along with readers who are more favorable to your point. Sometimes, readers won't be convinced no matter what evidence or logic a writer presents; but it seems to me that writers have an obligation to at least try.

Generating Antithetical Points in Five Easy Steps

I've already discussed this step in some detail:

Step 1: Have a Working Thesis and Make Sure You Have Begun the Research Process.

Developing a good antithetical argument is not something you can do as a "first step" in the research process. Generally, you need to have already developed a basic point and need some evidence and research to develop that point. In other words, the process of developing an antithetical position has to come *after* you develop an initial position in the first place.

Step 2: Consider the Direct Opposite of Your Working Thesis. This is an especially easy step if your working thesis is about a controversial topic:

Working thesis:

To prevent violence on campus, students, staff, and faculty should not be allowed to carry concealed weapons.

Antithesis:

To prevent violence on campus, students, staff, and faculty should be allowed to carry concealed weapons.

Working thesis:

Drug companies should be allowed to advertise prescription drugs on television.

Antithesis:

Drug companies should not be allowed to advertise prescription drugs on television.

This sort of simple change of qualifiers also exposes weak theses, because, generally speaking, the opposite position of a proposition that everyone accepts as true is one that everyone easily accepts as false. For example, if you begin with a working thesis like "Drunk driving is bad" or "Teen violence is bad" to their logical opposites, you end up with an opposite that is ridiculous—"Drunk driving is good" or "Teen violence is good." What that signals is that it is probably time to revisit your original working thesis.

Usually though, considering the opposite of a working thesis is a little more complicated. For example:

Working Thesis:

Many computer hackers commit serious crimes and represent a major expense for internet-based businesses.

Antitheses:

Computer hackers do not commit serious crimes. Computer hacking is not a major expense for internet-based businesses.

Both of the antithetical examples are the opposite of the original working theses, but each focuses on different aspects of the working thesis.

Step 3: Ask "Why" about Possible Antithetical Arguments.

Creating antitheses by simply changing the working thesis to its opposite typically demands more explanation. The best place to develop more details with your antithesis is to ask "why." For example:

Why should drug companies not be allowed to advertise prescription drugs? Because . . .

- The high cost of television advertising needlessly drives up the costs of prescriptions.
- Advertisements too often confuse patients and offer advice that contradicts the advice of doctors.

Why are the crimes committed by computer hackers not serious? Because . . .

- They are usually pranks or acts of mischief.
- Computer hackers often expose problems for Internet

businesses before serious crimes result.

The point here is to dig a little further into your antithetical argument.

Asking "why" is a good place to begin that process.

Step 4: Examine Alternatives to Your Working Thesis.

Often, the best antithetical arguments aren't about "the opposite" so much as they are about alternatives. For example, the working thesis "To prevent violence on campus, students, staff, and faculty should not be allowed to carry concealed weapons" presumes that a serious potential cause for violence on campuses is the presence of guns. However, someone could logically argue that the more important cause of violence on college campuses is alcohol and drug abuse. Certainly the number of incidents involving underage drinking and substance abuse outnumber those involving firearms on college campuses, and it is also probably true that many incidents of violence on college campuses involve drinking or drugs.

Now, unlike the direct opposite of your working thesis, the alternatives do not necessarily negate your working thesis. There is no reason why a reader couldn't believe that *both* concealed weapons *and* alcohol and substance abuse contribute to violence on campuses. But in considering alternatives to your working thesis, the goal is to "weigh" the positions against each other. I'll return to this matter of "weighing your position" later.

Step 5: Imagine Hostile Audiences.

Whenever you are trying to develop a clearer understanding of the antithesis of your working thesis, you need to think about the kinds of audiences who would disagree with you. By thinking about the opposites and alternatives to your working thesis, you are already starting to do this because the opposites and the alternatives are what a hostile audience might think.

Sometimes, potential readers are hostile to a particular working thesis because of ideals, values, or affiliations they hold that are at odds with the point being advocated by the working thesis. For example, people who identify themselves as being "pro-choice" on the issue of abortion would certainly be hostile to an argument for laws that restrict access to abortion; people who identify themselves as being "prolife" on the issue of abortion would certainly be hostile to an argument for laws that provide access to abortion.

At other times, audiences are hostile to the arguments of a working thesis because of more crass and transparent reasons. For example, the pharmaceutical industry disagrees with the premise of the working thesis "Drug companies should not be allowed to advertise prescription drugs on TV" because they stand to lose billions of dollars in lost sales. Advertising companies and television broadcasters would also be against this working thesis because they too would lose money. You can probably easily imagine some potential hostile audience members who have similarly selfish reasons to oppose your point of view.

Of course, some audiences will oppose your working thesis based on a different interpretation of the evidence and research. This sort of difference of opinion is probably most common with research projects that are focused on more abstract and less definitive subjects. But there are also different opinions about evidence for topics that you might think would have potentially more concrete "right" and "wrong" interpretations. Different researchers and scholars can look at the same evidence about a subject like gun control and arrive at very different conclusions.

Regardless of the reasons why your audience might be hostile to the argument you are making with your working thesis, it is helpful to try to imagine your audience as clearly as you can. What sort of people are they? What other interests or biases might they have? Are there other political or social factors that you think are influencing their point of view? If you want to persuade at least some members of this hostile audience that your point of view and your interpretation of the research is correct, you need to know as much about your hostile audience as you possibly can.

Strategies for Answering Antithetical Arguments

It might not seem logical, but directly acknowledging and addressing positions that are different from the one you are holding in your research can actually make your position stronger. When you take on the antithesis in your research project, it shows you have thought carefully about the issue at hand and you acknowledge that there is no clear and easy “right” answer. There are many different ways you might incorporate the antithesis into your research to make your own thesis stronger and to address the concerns of those readers who might oppose your point of view. For now, focus on three basic strategies: directly refuting your opposition, weighing your position against the opposition, and making concessions.

Directly Refuting Your Opposition

Perhaps the most obvious approach, one way to address those potential readers who might raise objections to your arguments, is to simply refute their objections with better evidence and reasoning. Of course, this is an example of yet another reason why it is so important to have good research that supports your position: when the body of evidence and research is on your side, it is usually a lot easier to make a strong point.

Answering antithetical arguments with research that supports your point of view is also an example of where you as a researcher might need to provide a more detailed evaluation of your evidence. The sort of questions you should answer about your own research—who wrote it, where was it published, when was it published, etc.—are important to raise in countering antithetical arguments that you think come from suspicious sources.

Weighing Your Position Against the Opposition

Readers who oppose the argument you are trying to support with your research might do so because they value or "weigh" the implications of your working thesis differently than you do. For example, those opposed to a working thesis like "Drug companies should not be allowed to advertise prescription drugs on TV" might think this because they think the advantages of advertising drugs on television—increased sales for pharmaceutical companies, revenue for advertising agencies and television stations, and so forth—are more significant than the disadvantages of advertising drugs on television.

Besides recognizing and acknowledging the different ways of comparing the advantages and disadvantages suggested by your working thesis, the best way of answering these antithetical arguments in your own writing is to clearly explain how you weigh and compare the evidence. This can be a challenging writing experience because it requires a subtle hand and a broad understanding of multiple sides of your topic. But if in acknowledging to your readers that you have carefully considered the reasons against your working thesis and you can demonstrate your position to be more persuasive, then this process of weighing positions can be very effective.

Making Concessions

In the course of researching and thinking about the antithesis to your working thesis and its potentially hostile audiences, it may become clear to you that these opposing views have a point. When this is the case, you may want to consider revising your working thesis or your approach to your research to make some concessions to these antithetical arguments.

Sometimes, my students working on this exercise "make concessions" to the point of changing sides on their working thesis—that is, in the process of researching, writing, and thinking about their topic, a researcher moves from arguing for their working thesis to arguing for their antithesis. This might seem surprising, but it makes perfect sense when you remember the purpose of research in the first place. When we study the evidence on a particular issue, we often realize that our initial and uninformed impression or feelings on an issue were simply wrong. That's why we research: we put more trust in opinions based on research than in things based on gut instinct or feelings.

But usually, most concessions to antithetical perspectives are less dramatic and can be accomplished in a variety of ways. You might want to employ some qualifying terms to hedge a bit. For example, the working thesis "Drug companies should not be allowed to advertise prescription drugs on TV" might be qualified to "Drug companies *should be closely regulated* about what they are allowed to advertise on TV." I think this is still a strong working thesis, but the revised working thesis acknowledges the objections some might have to the original working thesis.

Of course, you should use these sorts of concessions carefully. An over-qualified working thesis can be just as bad as a working thesis about something that everyone accepts as true: it can become so watered-down as to not have any real significance anymore. A working thesis like "Drug company television advertising is sometimes bad and sometimes good for patients" is over-qualified to the point of taking no real position at all.

But You Still Can't Convince Everyone . . .

I'd like to close by turning away a bit from where I started this essay, the influence of competitive debate on my early education about argument. In debate, an argument is part of the game, the catalyst for the beginning of a competition. The same is often true within college classrooms. Academic arguments are defined in terms of their hypothetical nature; they aren't actually real but rather merely an intellectual exercise.

But people in the real world do hold more than hypothetical positions, and you can't always convince everyone that you're right, no matter what evidence or logic you might have on your side. You probably already know this. We have all been in conversations with friends or family members where, as certain as we were that we were right about something and as hard as we tried to prove we were right, our friends or family were simply unwilling to budge from their positions. When we find ourselves in these sorts of deadlocks, we often try to smooth over the dispute with phrases like "You're entitled to your opinion" or "We will have to agree to disagree," and then we change the subject. In polite conversation, this is a good strategy to avoid a fight. But in academic contexts, these deadlocks can be frustrating and difficult to negotiate.

A couple of thousand years ago, the Greek philosopher and rhetorician Aristotle said that all of us respond to arguments based on three basic characteristics or appeals: logos or logic, pathos or emotional character, and ethos, the writer's or speaker's perceived character. Academic writing tends to rely most heavily on logos and ethos because academics tend to highly value arguments based on logical research and arguments that come from writers with strong character-building qualifications—things like education, experience, previous publications, and the like. But it's important to remember that pathos is always there, and particularly strong emotions or feelings on a subject can obscure the best research.

Most academic readers have respect for writers when they successfully argue for positions that they might not necessarily agree with. Along these lines, most college writing instructors can certainly respect and give a positive evaluation to a piece of writing they don't completely agree with as long as it uses sound logic and evidence to support its points. However, all readers—students, instructors, and everyone else—come to your research project with various preconceptions about the point you are trying to make. Some of them will already agree with you and won't need much convincing. Some of them will never completely agree with you, but will be open to your argument to a point. And some of your readers, because of the nature of the point you are trying to make and their own feelings and thoughts on the matter, will never agree with you, no matter what research evidence you present or what arguments you make. So, while you need to consider the antithetical arguments to your thesis in your research project to convince as many members of your audience as possible that the point you are trying to make is correct, you should remember that you will likely not convince all of your readers all of the time.

Discussion

1. When was the last time you had to argue for a specific position on an issue? What was the issue? Were you alone or did you have friends to back you up? How did you find evidence to support your position? Did you "win" the argument by getting your way or by convincing the opponents of you were right? Why did you win or not win?
2. What are some issues have you recently talked about in courses (other than writing)? What were some theses offered by students in those classes (or by the professor)? Pick one or two of the theses you found most intriguing (or that elicited the most conversation) and see if you can write the antithesis. Is this impossible without doing some research? Why or why not? What would you do next, if you needed to follow up on this thinking exercise as a writing project?
3. Because of research on a particular issue, have you ever changed your mind about what you believed was right? What was the issue? Why did you change your mind? Or why not?
4. When you've been in classes and not agreed with other

students or the professor, did you offer your differing opinion? Was that based on research or your gut instinct or your own experience? What was the most effective process you've used for participating in debate in classes? Or has this been something you're unwilling to be involved in? Why has that been the case?

Note

1. Explaining "academic policy debate" is not my goal in this essay. But I will say that academic debate bears almost no resemblance to "debates" between political candidates or to the stereotypical way debate tends to be depicted on television shows or in movies. Certainly debate involves a certain intellectual prowess; but I think it's fair to say that debate is a lot closer to a competitive sport than a classroom exercise. Two excellent introductions to the world of academic debate are the Wikipedia entry for "Policy Debate" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Policy_debate) and the 2007 documentary movie *Resolved.*

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162. Storytelling, Narration, and the "Who I Am" Story

Catherine Ramsdell

> *Green Eggs and Ham was the story of my life. I wouldn't eat a thing when I was a kid, but Dr. Seuss inspired me to try cauliflower!*
> *—Jim Carrey*
> *It's all storytelling, you know. That's what journalism is all about.—Tom Brokaw*
> *People have forgotten how to tell a story. Stories don't have a middle or an end any more. They usually have a beginning that never stops beginning.—Steven Spielberg*

Introduction

Are stories just a form of entertainment—like movies, television shows, books, and video games?* Or are they something more? This chapter takes the stance that stories are a fundamental and primary form of communication, and without them, we would lose an important way to teach our children, to train our employees, to sell our products, and to make information memorable to those of any age.

Consider a Jewish story Annette Simmons references in her book *The Story Factor: Inspiration, Influence, and Persuasion Through the Art of Storytelling:*

> Truth, naked and cold, had been turned away from every door in the village. Her nakedness frightened the people. When Parable found her she was huddled in a corner,

> shivering and hungry. Taking pity on her, Parable gathered her up and took her home. There, she dressed Truth in story, warmed her and sent her out again. Clothed in story, Truth knocked again at the doors and was readily welcomed into the villagers' houses. They invited her to eat at their tables and warm herself by their fires. (27)

Certainly stories can be a form of entertainment—a book to curl up with on a cold rainy afternoon, a movie to share with a best friend, a video game to conquer—but stories can also be much more and, as will be discussed at the end of the chapter, today stories can be found just about anywhere. Furthermore, because stories can be found anywhere from a movie theatre to a corporate boardroom, everyone should know how to tell a good story.

In her book, *The Story Factor: Inspiration, Influence, and Persuasion Through the Art of Storytelling*, Simmons talks about seven different kinds of stories everyone should learn how to tell. One of them is the "Who I Am" story. Simply put, a Who I Am story shows something about its author, and this type of story fits into the genre of memoir or creative nonfiction. Here is an example from Simmons' book:

> Skip looked into the sea of suspicious stockholders and wondered what might convince them to follow his leadership. He was 35, looked 13 and was third generation rich. He could tell they assumed he would be an unholy disaster as a leader. He decided to tell them a story. "My first job was drawing the electrical engineering plans for a boat building company. The drawings had to be perfect because if the wires were not accurately placed *before* the fiberglass form was poured, a mistake might cost a million dollars, easy. At 25, I already had two masters' degrees. I had been on boats all my life and frankly, I found drawing these plans a bit . . . mindless. One morning I got a call *at home* from a $6/hour worker asking me 'are you sure this is right?' I was incensed. Of course I was *sure*—'just pour the damn thing.'

When his supervisor called me an hour later and woke me up *again* and asked 'are you sure this is right?' I had even less patience. 'I said I was sure an hour ago and I'm still sure.'

It was the phone call from the president of the company that finally got me out of bed and down to the site. If I had to hold these guys by the hand, so be it. I sought out the worker who had called me first. He sat looking at my plans with his head cocked to one side. With exaggerated patience I began to explain the drawing. But after a few words my voice got weaker and *my* head started to cock to the side as well. It seems that I had (being left-handed) transposed starboard and port so that the drawing was an exact mirror image of what it should have been. *Thank God* this $6/hour worker had caught my mistake before it was too late. The next day I found this box on my desk. The crew bought me a remedial pair of tennis shoes for future reference. Just in case I got mixed up again— a red left shoe for port, and a green right one for starboard. These shoes don't just help me remember port and starboard. They help me remember to listen even when I think I know what's going on." As he held up the shoebox with one red and one green shoe, there were smiles and smirks. The stockholders relaxed a bit. If this young upstart had already learned this lesson about arrogance, then he might have learned a few things about running companies, too. (1–2)

This example shows some of the reasons why people tell Who I Am stories. Chances are that if Skip had gone into this meeting and said "Look, I know I'm young, but I've got a lot of experience, I know what I'm doing, I've learned a lot from my mistakes. Just trust me," he would not have won over his audience.

Please keep this example and the basic definition of the Who I Am story in mind while reading through the next section, which provides a little background and theory about the fine art of narration and storytelling.

Narrative Theory

Roland Barthes was arguably one of the most important literary theorists of the twentieth century. To begin, we'll look at his thoughts on narrative:

> The narratives of the world are numberless. Narrative is first and foremost a prodigious variety of genres, themselves distributed amongst different substances—as though any material were fit to receive man's stories. Able to be carried by articulated language, spoken or written, fixed or moving images, gestures, and the ordered mixture of all these substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting (think Carpaccio's *Saint Ursula*), stained-glass windows, cinema, comics, news items, conversation. Moreover, under this almost infinite discovery of forms, narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind and there nowhere is nor has been a people without narrative. All classes, all human groups, have their narratives, enjoyment of which is very often shared by men with different even opposing, cultural backgrounds. Caring nothing for the division between good and bad literature, narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself. (qtd. in Abbott 1–2)

In the forty-five years since Barthes penned this passage, nearly every book on storytelling or narrative theory has referenced this quote. Even if this quote is not referenced directly, often authors simply make a similar statement in their own words. For example, twenty-one years after Barthes voiced his thoughts on narrative, Luc Herman and Bart Vervaceck, authors of *The Handbook of Narrative Analysis*, stated:

> No single period or society can do without narratives. And, a good number of contemporary thinkers hasten to add, whatever you say and think about a certain time or place becomes a narrative in its own right. From the oldest myths and legends to postmodern fabulation, narration has always been central. Postmodern philosophers . . . also contend that everything amounts to a narrative, including the world and the self. If that is correct, then the study of narrative . . . unveils fundamental culture-specific opinions about reality and humankind, which are narrativized in stories and novels. (1)

Whether authors quote Barthes directly or voice the same sentiment in their own words, one of the few things almost all authors, scholars, and critics can agree on is that narrative is part of humankind, it always has been, and it always will be.

Of course, what Barthes and Herman call narration, many, myself included, call story. H. Porter Abbott notes in *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, "Many speakers of English grow up using story to mean what we [Abbott and Barthes among others] are referring to here as a narrative" (16). Technically, however, there are some differences between the words "story" and "narrative." In his book *The Classical Plot and Invention of Western Narrative*, N. J. Lowe talks about these differences using the terms *fabula* and *sjuzhet*:

> This distinction is a cornerstone of modern narrative theory, even though there has been huge disagreement over the precise definition of the two terms and the boundary between them, and scarcely less over how to present them in English. *Fabula* (in English, usually 'story') is the series of events the work recounts, but imagined stripped of all the artifices of storytelling: a series of actual events in their natural order, in what merely happens to be a fictional world. In contrast, *sjuzhet* is the account of those same events that we actually get, reordered and reshaped in the

> process of telling to reach and affect the audience or reader in a particular and deliberate way. (5)

As Lowe mentions, scholars and writers have disagreed over the exact meaning of words like story and narrative. Abbot, for example, talks about “three distinctions: narrative is the representation of events consisting of story and narrative discourse; story is the event or sequence of events (the action), and narrative discourse is those events as represented” (16). In this chapter, we’ll use these definitions: a story (or *fabula*) encompasses the events or action in the story, and narrative discourse (or *sjuzhet*) is the way these events or actions are related. For example, all stylistic choices or organizational strategies, such as flashback, are part of the narrative discourse. Narrative discourse can encompass numerous things, but story almost always includes two primary parts: events and characters. After all, what story does not have these two characteristics? A story by its very nature includes events, and as Abbott contends, “what are events but the actions or reactions of [characters]?” (17).

Characters and events (or actions) may seem inextricably linked, but which is more important has been debated since Aristotle’s time. Aristotle took the stance that action was most important. In *Poetics*, he states: “Now character determines men’s qualities, but it is by their actions that they are happy or reverse. Dramatic action, therefore, is not with a view to the representation of Character: character comes in as a subsidiary to the actions” (62–63). Still, character was important to Aristotle; he believed it was the second most important element in a drama and that character brought morality to a text (64). In the twentieth century, however, many authors started to think character was more important. For example, as author Andrew Horton notes, “Flannery O’Conner says ‘it is the character’s personality that creates the action of the story’ and not the other way around.” Horton goes on to state that usually the characters connect an audience emotionally to a story (2).

Because the purpose of a Who I Am story is to illustrate something about oneself, some might assume that character is the most important aspect of the Who I Am story, but in truth, as novelist Henry James asserts, both character and action are important in this type of story. James believes: "What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character? . . . It is an incident for a woman to stand up with her hand resting on the table and look out at you in a certain way; or if it be not an incident I think it will be hard to say what it is. At the same time it is the expression of character" (qtd. in Abbott 124).

Granted, thinking of the people in a Who I Am story as characters may seem odd because most likely they will be real people. However, consider Theodore A. Rees Cheney's thoughts:

Traditional nonfiction, particularly journalistic nonfiction, never concerned itself with developing characters. Fiction writers worked at characterization; nonfiction writers concentrated on events. Creative nonfiction writers say that because so many events occur as the result of human interactions, the event cannot be fully understood without also understanding something of the people (characters) surrounding it. (134)

So while thinking of yourself, friends, or family as characters may not feel completely natural, remember some similarities do exist between characters and real people in that the people/characters in a Who I Am story need to be developed, interesting, and understandable, just like characters in a fiction work. Of course, some differences exist as well. Since the characters in a Who I Am story are real people, you will not be creating characters, as a fiction writer does; instead, as Cheney notes, you will be revealing them:

When I write about character development, I'm talking about how the writer goes about revealing a person's character . . . The creative nonfiction writer does not 'create' characters; rather, he or she reveals them to the reader as honestly and accurately as possible. Like most contemporary fiction writers, creative nonfiction writers reveal character much as it happens in real life—bit by bit. (134)

Generally speaking, authors reveal their characters in two ways:

direct and indirect characterization. With direct characterization, the author simply tells the audience something about a character. The line "He was 35, looked 13 and was third generation rich" from the Who I Am story at the beginning of this chapter is an example of direct characterization. With indirect characterization, the audience learns about characters by watching or listening to them. Indirect characterization can also include descriptions of characters. The Who I Am story at the start of this chapter primarily utilizes indirect characterization. The entire story Skip tells about his first job, the mindless drawing, being upset about an hourly worker calling him at home—all indirect characterization. Since indirect characterization shows what a character does, indirect characterization often directly relates to the sequence of actions, again showing how character and action can intertwine.

Another important piece of a story and narrative discourse is the difference between real time and narrative time. Consider the following passage:

> Amy dropped a mug of coffee. It shattered on the kitchen floor. Coffee and shattered glass were everywhere. Amy got a towel and began cleaning up the mess.

This is real time, but if a few details are added, we get narrative time:

> Amy dropped a mug of coffee. It shattered with a loud crash onto the kitchen floor. She felt the hot liquid burn through her socks into her feet. Coffee and shattered glass were everywhere. Amy sighed; there was no more coffee in the pot, and she had really needed a caffeine burst. Moving carefully through the mess, Amy grabbed an old towel out of the drawer and began cleaning up the remains of her breakfast.

Abbott explains the difference between real (or clock) time and narrative time:

> Clock time . . . always relates back to itself, so that one

> speaks in terms of numbers or seconds or their multiples (minutes, hours) and fractions (nanoseconds). Narrative time, in contrast, relates to events or incidents. And while clock time is necessarily marked off by regular intervals of a certain length, narrative time is not necessarily any length at all. (4–5)

Abbott adds that writers can slow the "whole sequence down by simply adding details" and "conversely, we can make narrative time go like the wind" by using phrases like "in the following months" or "a few weeks later" (5).

The universality of narrative, *fabula* and *sjuzhet*, character and action, indirect and direct representation, real time and narrative time are just a few aspects of narrative theory, but these terms and this information will provide a solid foundation as we begin thinking more specifically about the Who I Am story.

Starting the "Who I Am" Story

Your Who I Am story should start to answer the question "who are you?" However, this story should only focus on one characteristic or aspect of your personality. Think back to Skip and the Who I Am story from the beginning of this chapter. His story helped prove he was ready to be a leader and ready to run a corporation.

As with most other types of writing, brainstorming can be a useful tool. To begin, you might just think about all the ways to finish the sentence "I am . . ." The word you choose to finish this sentence then becomes the subject of your Who I Am story. If a subject is not jumping out at you, think about the way your mother, best friend, significant other, or pet might describe you. Think about a characteristic that only the people closest to you see—for example, has anyone ever told you "when I first met you, I never would have guessed that you were so funny (or competitive or happy)"?

Once you have a characteristic in mind, keep brainstorming and think of one specific example or event that illustrates this characteristic. This example will become your story. Again, much like a topic, sometimes an example, or story, will just jump to mind. However, if you cannot think of an example right away, look through some old pictures, scrapbooks, or yearbooks. Reread journals or listen to favorite songs. All of these things can spark memories, and one of these memories can become the example or event on which your Who I Am story will focus. This event does not have to be exciting or flamboyant. Simple but heartfelt stories often are the most effective. Many things can be faked in life, but sincerity is generally not one of them.

Writing the "Who I Am" Story

Once you have the topic, just start writing. Writing a story is not like baking a cake—there is no formula or recipe that guarantees a perfect story. But here are some steps to consider:

1. **Ask some questions about the event you are going to write about.** When did this event take place? What are the starting and ending points? Where did this event take place? Who was there? Was there a conflict? A resolution?
2. **Write down everything you remember.** Of course, there are numerous ways to write a first draft, but for a Who I Am story, simply writing down everything you remember about the event is a good place to start. Usually, it is better to have more writing than what you need. So start by writing everything down in chronological order. Do not worry about any rhetorical strategies or making it sound good. Think about the concept of *fabula* and just write down the entire series of events or actions.
3. **Go do something else.** Once you have the entire story written

down, set it aside. Go take a nap or play with your dog, and come back to the story later. Then reread it and see if you left anything out. Time permitting, go through this process of putting the story aside and then rereading it several times.

4. **Summarize the main point of the story in one or two sentences.** Go through the story and eliminate everything that does not relate to this main point. Do not worry about length right now. Focus on quality and creating a unified story.
5. **Think about creating a dominant impression.** Is the story sad, thoughtful, sarcastic, or humorous? If you have trouble deciding on a dominant impression, think about setting the story to music. What song would you pick—Mozart's "Moonlight Sonata," something by the Violent Femmes, a sultry jazz tune—and what emotion does this song conjure up?
6. **Keeping the main point and dominant impression in mind, add details and expand the most important parts of your story.** Real time should now become narrative time. Add concrete details and imagery. Imagine the different senses to which the story could appeal. We are a very visual culture, but go beyond describing what things look like—consider incorporating smells or sounds. Think about the way something feels when touched. Also think about how these details can help draw a reader in. Consider this an example from a student's Who I Am story:

> At the beginning of every school year, I am obligated to introduce myself to a new sea of adolescent hormones swimming with impulsiveness, curiosity, and unfiltered Tourette-like verbal ejaculations. Sure, I could stand before the little urchins, and with trident in hand, I could dictate the rules of my class and cast off a long list of life experiences that made me the immortal that stands before them or I could let them place their expectations upon me creating an environment of perceived equality. Being a

> believer in a democratic classroom, I always opt for the latter.

Look at the way this student builds on the details: the words "sea," "swimming" and "trident" work beautifully together. And look at the choices the student made: using the words "adolescent hormones" and "urchins" instead of students; "unfiltered Tourette-like verbal ejaculations" could have simply been opinions or obnoxious comments. The story includes a lot of visual elements, but the phrase "verbal ejaculations" also appeals to the ears. These words, phrases, and ideas all work together to, as clichéd as it sounds, paint a picture of the author of this story.

The author of this story is a student, but she is also a middle-school teacher. The main point of the story is to show who she is as a teacher. Everything in this paragraph relates to that main point. We do not know the color of her hair, whether she is wearing a shirt or a sweater, or if she is tall or short. After all, none of these things relate to the point of this story. Great detail and description and emotions are very important to the Who I Am story. But they need to be the right details, descriptions, and emotions, and they need to be used at the right time.

7. Make certain the story shows and does not tell. The ultimate success of the Who I Am story depends on how well you show, not tell, who you are (i.e. use more indirect characterization than direct characterization). Have faith in your words and in the story you are telling. Trust that the story works and do not end the story with a statement like "clearly this event shows that I am a trustworthy person." Let the story do its job. Consider two more paragraphs from our middle-school teacher's story:

> On the first day of class last year, I allowed students to take seats at their leisure. I sat on my desk and when everyone was settled, I quietly commanded

their attention by placing a large black top hat upon my head. Conversations abruptly stopped as my curious audience took notice. ‘If I were to say that hats are a metaphor for the different roles we play in our lives, what do you think that means?’ I was met with blank stares. ‘What if I said that I play many roles every day? I am a teacher, a mother, a daughter, a coworker, and a friend. Are the expectations for those different roles the same or different?’ A hand raises and a girl with pale skin, lively eyes and thick auburn hair answers, ‘Of course they’re different. I don’t act the same around my friends as I do in front of my parents!’ She has a smug ‘as if’ expression.

‘You’re absolutely right,’ I acknowledge. ‘Now what if I were to ask you to define the expectations of my role as your teacher?’ Eyebrows rise as the class considers this. ‘I’m going to pass out sticky notes and I want each of you to write down a word or phrase that describes what my job is as your teacher. When you are done, I want you to place your note on the strip of blue paper that runs up the wall in the back of the room. Each of you should place your note above the note of the person that went before you so that we create a column of sticky notes. Does everyone understand?’ A thin-faced, black boy with large eyes and bright teeth pipes up, “So we get to tell you how to do your job?’ I thoughtfully pause before answering, ‘Well . . . yah!’ What do we learn about the author from reading this passage? What kind of teacher is she? We could describe her as creative, brave, caring, and dedicated. We could decide that she is not afraid to take some risks. We know that she loves her job. Does she directly state any of these things? No. But her story shows that she is all of these things.

8. Look at the introduction of your story. Will it grab a reader's attention? Think about sitting in a doctor's office or waiting for your car to be repaired. You pick up a magazine and start to thumb through it. How long do you give an article to grab your attention before turning the page? Some people flip to the next page if the title of the article does not interest them; other more generous readers will read the first sentence or two before deciding to continue reading or to move on to the next page. Something in the opening paragraph, hopefully in the first sentence or two, should grab the reader and make him or her want to read on. Here is an example from another student's Who I Am story:

> I thought by the time I was thirty I would know what I wanted to be when I grew up. But here I am on the eve of my thirty-first birthday, and I am still searching, searching for where I fit into the world, amidst all the titles I have been given such as Sydney's Mom, Tripp's Wife, and Janice's Daughter. Then there are all the roles I play: maid, chef, bookkeeper, personal shopper, and teacher. Of course that's just what I do and who I do it for. The real question remains, when you take all of that away, who am I?

This is the first paragraph of the student's Who I Am essay, and it does several things nicely. The conversational tone draws us in. We almost feel as if we are getting to peek inside the author's head. "Tripp's Wife," "Janice's Daughter," "chef," "personal shopper" are lovely specifics, and equally important, these are specifics to which most people can relate. Perhaps we are Bob's son or Suzie's boyfriend instead of a daughter or a wife, but we can still see the similarities between the author's life and our own. And because of that, we want to know how she answers the question "who am I?"

9. Treat this story like any other paper. Have a solid organizational scheme (chronological often works well), keep one main idea per paragraph, use transitional phrasing, vary the sentence structure, and make sure the ideas flow into each other. Reflect on word choice and particularly verb choices. Just think, for example, of all the different synonyms for the word walk. A character could strut, saunter, stroll, sashay, or skip. She could mosey, meander, or march. Powerful verbs are a great way to add panache and detail to a story without making it wordy or slowing the pace.

10. Proofread, edit, and proofread again. Give the story to a friend and ask them to read it. Do not tell them what the paper is about or what you are trying to accomplish. Instead just ask them what they learned or what three words they would use to describe your story.

11. And the last bit of advice—have fun. The best storytellers enjoy telling stories. When you are telling a story, pick a story that matters to you and a story that you really want to share. Let your love for that story come through, and let others see you through your story.

Looking Forward: Storytelling in the Professional World

As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, storytelling is not just for entertainment anymore. It's not just a mindless academic exercise either; storytelling is quickly becoming a cornerstone of the nonprofit and corporate worlds. Storytelling can be a part of corporate training, public relations, politics, journalism, and of course, the two industries we are going to focus on: grantwriting and advertising.

Cheryl Clarke's book *Storytelling for Grantseekers: A Creative Guide to Nonprofit Fundraising* has been highly praised by both grantwriters and grant readers. For decades grants have been notoriously boring— both to write and to read. Clarke's book is starting to change all that.

Clarke begins by noting the similarities between grantwriting and storytelling:

> Storytelling is a powerful art form. Stories entertain, educate, and enlighten. They have the ability to transport an audience to another location and teach them about issues and people they may know nothing about. The same is true of grantwriting. (xv)

Clarke continues by breaking down the different parts of the grantwriting process. She relates that often the grantwriting process starts with a letter of intent, a one to two page letter summarizing the request that is sent to the funding organization. If the funding organization thinks your request has merit, they will ask you (or your organization) to submit a full grant proposal. Clarke likens the letter of intent to a short story and the full grant proposal to a novel.

Like short stories and novels, grants should also have heroes, villains (or antagonists) and a conflict. The hero is, of course, the nonprofit agency. As Clarke notes,

> Nonprofit agencies do heroic work, and they are the heroes of every proposal we write. Throughout the world today, nonprofits are working diligently to feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, heal the sick, teach children, conserve the environment, save endangered species, and present music performances and art exhibitions, among other important activities. . . . As grantwriters, we have the opportunity to tell others these amazing stories. (52)

The antagonist is simply the need or problem. Hunger, global warming, abused animals, disease—any one of these could be the villain of the grant proposal. The nonprofit and the need become the characters in the story and supply the conflict and tension.

Clarke suggests giving these characters a voice, stating "quotes are especially powerful because through them the proposal reviewer 'hears' directly from your agency's clients in their own words" (81). These quotes become the dialogue in the story. Grant proposals often include other elements traditionally seen in novels, such as setting, back stories, and resolutions.

Clarke clearly shows the advantages of using storytelling techniques in grantwriting, and many believe storytelling is an equally important part of advertising as a close examination of the "1984" Macintosh commercial will indicate. In 1984, Apple was in trouble. As Richard Maxwell and Robert Dickman note in their book *The Elements of Persuasion: Use Storytelling to Pitch Better, Sell Faster and Win More Business:*

> at that time the computer industry was in transition . . . Apple had been a major player when computers were seen as expensive toys for hobbyists or learning platforms for children. But when corporations began seriously going digital, they naturally turned to a name they had come to trust—IBM. IBM PC computers became 'industry standard,' with all the purchasing and advertising muscle that implied. (11)

In response, Apple's CEO Steve Jobs created the Macintosh computer, but he needed an advertisement that would bring attention to this computer. The "1984" commercial did just that. The "1984" commercial (available on YouTube: [http://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=OYecfV3ubP8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OYecfV3ubP8)) shows a dystopia: a dismal gray world where Big Brother is seen (and heard) on every television screen. Row after row of people stare mindlessly at huge television screens, watching propaganda. A woman in red shorts runs through the crowd and hurls a hammer at the largest screen, destroying it and silencing Big Brother. The commercial closes with the tagline "On January 24, Apple Computer will introduce Macintosh. And you'll see why 1984 won't be like 1984."

The commercial ran only once nationally (during the 1984 Super

Bowl) and is generally credited with two things. The first is saving Apple. As Maxwell and Dickman note, “The result of this ad was explosive. Seven days later there wasn’t a Macintosh left unsold on any store shelf in America, and back orders were beginning to stretch out for months” (12). Second, many advertising gurus believe that the “1984” commercial was one of the first advertisements to use a story.

Much like the stories Clarke talks about, the “1984” commercial has a hero: the Macintosh computer, which is personified by the attractive blonde in the short red shorts. The villain is the status quo and corporate America, both of which are supposed to symbolize IBM. The smashing of the television screen ends the conflict and provides resolution. This story also has something else: passion. As Maxwell and Dickman note: “But at its cohesive core, what made this ad white-hot was Steve Job’s passionate belief that a computer was meant to be a tool to set people free” (12). And Maxwell and Dickman believe passion is another essential element of story.

This is, of course, only one example; today most commercials tell a story, and we can certainly see why. Maxwell and Dickman explain “A good story plays as well on TV as it does whispered to a guy in the back of a union meeting hall. It’s as powerful in the powder room as it is in the boardroom. People love a good story. We can’t get enough of them. And a good story is infectious. It spreads like wildfire” (46).

Again, storytelling now appears in many forms of professional and workplace communication; grantwriting and advertising are only two examples. So have fun telling your stories, enjoy them, learn to make them come alive. At the same time, you’ll be developing a marketable skill because, appropriately enough, storytelling has become a valuable commodity in corporate America.

Discussion

1. Maxwell and Dickman believe that “a story is a fact, wrapped in

an emotion that compels us to take an action that transforms our world." How would you define the term story? What do you think are the most important elements of a good story? What examples help support your thoughts?

2. How could stories and storytelling fit into your major field of study? What types of stories do you think professionals in your field might find useful?

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163. Grammar, Rhetoric, and Style

Craig Hulst

Overview

This chapter focuses on grammar, specifically on understanding that grammar is much more than just the rules that we have been taught. Rather, grammar can be used rhetorically—with an understanding of the writing situation and making appropriate choices regarding the structure of the sentences, the use of punctuation, using active or passive voice, etc. In other words, this chapter focuses on using grammar to influence a piece of writing's style, rather than focusing on the correctness of the grammar. Readers are encouraged to look at the writing that they see in their casual or research reading and evaluate the grammar of those pieces to gain a better understanding of how they can control their own use of grammar.

Grammar. The mere word makes adults weep, children run and hide, and dogs howl.* All right, perhaps I am exaggerating just a bit; not all of us hate grammar. There are even people who actually like grammar. However, the general aversion to the word "grammar" is such that the word is hardly ever used in polite company. And, if your composition professor is anything like me, she or he tries to avoid the word in your class.

Yet grammar should not be so disrespected. Believe it or not, most people like grammar until their junior high school English teacher gets ahold of them and presents grammar as a set of rules, a set of "Thou shalt not" commandments that you must abide by or be doomed to wander in the darkness of a poor grade. Max Morenberg, author of the book *Doing Grammar*, writes:

> We are born to love language and everything associated with it— rhythm, rhyme, word meanings, grammar. If you want to make a three-year-old child roll on the floor laughing, just tell her a riddle, or alliterative words, or read her Dr. Seuss's lilting rhythms and rhymes about cats in hats or elephants who are 'faithful, one hundred percent' or Sam I Am eating green eggs and ham on a boat with a goat. Listen to a child in a crib entertaining himself by repeating sounds and syllables, playing with language. Think about the games you played in kindergarten by creating strange words like Mary Poppins' supercalifragilisticexpialodotious. Keep a ten-year old entertained on a car trip by producing odd sentences in a 'Mad Libs' game. Then ask an eighth grader what subject she hates most. The answer invariably will be grammar. We're born to love grammar. We're taught to hate it. (vii-viii)

When young and learning how to use language, we learn grammar through trial and error. When my daughters were around two years old, they (constantly) wanted me to pick them up. They would come up to me, hold up their arms, and I would ask them, "Do you want me to hold you?" Eventually, they would come up to me, hold up their arms, and say, "hold you." They learned the construction "hold you" to mean "hold me." I would correct them and explain to them "if you want me to pick you up, you say 'hold me.'" Before too long they caught on and started saying "hold me" when they wanted me to pick them up. They learned by mirroring my speech and by receiving feedback on their grammar. As we grow older, we still learn through trial and error, but we also learn the rules. Now, instead of a parent's gentle correction, we are informed of our errors through the fiery correction of a teacher's red pen.

Grammar, the way that it is typically taught, is a collection of rules that we are supposed to follow, and it is these rules that most of us have issues with. After all, we know how to speak; we form words and sentences intuitively, and people understand our meaning. So, who are these rule-mongering grammarians that think that they can tell us that we are doing it wrong? Or who force us, as my middle school English teacher did, to endlessly diagram sentence after sentence? Why do they take something that we love as children and warp it to the point that we can't stand it?

Grammar doesn't have to be this way. It shouldn't be this way. We shouldn't need someone to tell us that we are wrong, and then to make us memorize a bunch of rules in order to speak or write. What grammar should be is a tool to help us better communicate with our audience—a tool that we are controlling, rather than one that controls us. Grammar should be a tool that we use to fit our language to our purpose and our audience.

Grammar and Its Rhetorical Use

The rules are there for a reason. Grammar rules are concerned with correctness—to make sure that we are following the accepted guidelines of the language. However, grammar isn't all about rules. Instead, grammar is about making meaning. People understand us because we are using grammar—we are arranging our words in a certain order, and because of that, our audience understands us. For example, if I said, "store went to Jim the," you'd probably ask, "What?" But if I used the same words and arranged the words according to the grammar that I absorbed at a young age, I would say, "Jim went to the store." By arranging the words according to what those listening to me expect from my grammar, my audience would know exactly what I meant. And this awareness of what the audience needs is the heart of what I am talking about—that grammar has a *rhetorical* use.

Grammar simply means “a system that puts words together into meaningful units” (Morenberg 4). We’ve already seen how that works in the earlier example of “Jim went to the store.” As we create lengthier and more complex sentences, we incorporate punctuation such as commas and semicolons, consider pronoun/antecedent connections, carefully think about verb shifts and a host of other issues that can affect the meaning of our words. This is what most people think of when they hear the word grammar. However, this doesn’t have to be that big of a concern, as grammar is best learned by using the language, rather than through systematic study of the rules. In fact, I have had many older, so-called non-traditional students in my composition classes throughout the years, and they are generally more adept at grammar usage than my “traditional” eighteen to twenty-year-old students. This is not because they have studied the rules of grammar more thoroughly; most of my older students confess that they haven’t thought about grammar for many years. This is simply because they have used the language, and have experience using it in many different contexts, for a greater length of time.

Rhetoric is a word that most of us have heard, but we may not really understand what it means. It is a word that is often thrown around negatively, and often in political discussions, such as, “Well, the president may think that way, but I’m not falling for his rhetoric.” But the term really shouldn’t have such a negative connotation. Simply defined, rhetoric is “a way of using language for a specific purpose.” The *rhetorical situation* of a piece of writing is everything surrounding it—who the audience is, the purpose for writing it, the genre of the writing, etc. Knowing this helps us know how to use language to accomplish the purpose of the writing, and grammar is part of that use of language. English professor Laura R. Micciche expands on the rhetorical role of grammar:

> The grammatical choices we make—including pronoun use, active or passive verb construction, and sentence construction—represent relations between writers and the

> world they live in. Word choice and sentence structure are an expression of the way we attend to the words of others, the way we position ourselves in relation to others. (719)

When we write, we can carefully choose the grammar that we use to make our writing effective at conveying our meaning, but also give the audience a sense of our own personality. This brings us to a third word that needs to be defined: *Style*.

Grammar and Style

Style is perhaps the most visual aspect of rhetoric—we see authors' style in their writing. Style refers to the choices that an author makes—choices about punctuation, word usage, and grammar—and those choices are influenced by the rhetorical situation that the author finds herself in. For example, consider the following sentences:

- Katelyn was concerned that Chloe worked late every night.
- It concerned Katelyn that every night Chloe worked late.
- Chloe worked late every night, and Katelyn was concerned.
- Every night Chloe worked late, and that concerned Katelyn.

Each of these sentences say the same thing, and the grammar is "correct" in each, but the sentence an author chooses depends on the style she wishes to use. The first sentence is the most straightforward, but the last two put the emphasis on Chloe rather than on Katelyn, which might be what the author wants to do. Sometimes the style within a specific rhetorical situation is prescribed for us; for example, we might be told that we cannot use "I" in a paper. Sometimes the style is expected, but we aren't necessarily told the rhetorical situation's rules; we might be expected to use the active voice rather than the passive voice in our papers. And sometimes the situation is wide open, allowing us to make the grammatical style choices we like.

Also wrapped up in this issue of style is the concept of standard and preferred usage. *Usage* is simply the way we expect words to be used—and this doesn't always follow the rules. For example, a famous line from the original *Star Trek* series tells us that the Enterprise's mission is "to boldly go where no man has gone before." This seems right—but there is a split infinitive in the phrase (no need to worry about what a split infinitive is right now). To abide by the rule, the line should say, "to go boldly where no man has gone before." But that doesn't sound as right to most of us, so a decision was made to break the rule and write the line according to the common usage of adding an adverb before the verb.

What usage is preferred is also dependent on the rhetorical situation of the text. As an example of the differences between standard and preferred usage, consider contractions. Most of the time when we speak, and often in informal writing, it is perfectly fine to use contractions like "can't," "isn't," or "aren't;" contractions are standard usage. You may have been told in your composition class that using contractions is okay in your papers, but using contractions is not preferred in many rhetorical situations, as in a formally written research paper. We use the words "I" and "you" all the time when we speak, but we will find many writing situations where they aren't acceptable (i.e. preferred). Knowing what usage is preferred takes a little insight into the rhetorical situation—you can read examples of the type of writing that you are asked to do, you can question friends who have already taken the course, you can seek advice from books or the internet, or you can ask your instructor. Since grammar, style, and usage are so closely related, and quite possibly they have already been introduced to you as the same thing, throughout this essay I will often refer to these types of style choices as grammar choices.

All Together Now

When we write, we are entering into a conversation with our reader, and the grammatical choices that we consciously make can show our readers that we understand what they want from us, and that we are giving them what they expect. In your academic writing, the rhetorical situation demands that you make grammar choices that are appropriate for college-level writers. Unfortunately, these grammar choices are not static; they will change—perhaps only slightly, perhaps greatly—as your writing situation changes, as you write for different teachers, courses, or disciplines. In your other writing, the rhetorical situation may call for an entirely different set of grammar choices.

Here's an example of how the rhetorical situation affects grammar usage. You need to express an idea concerning the need to recycle. In the first rhetorical situation, you are speaking to your friends, people that you have known since you were five years old. In such a situation, it might be acceptable for you to say, "It ain't rocket science, bonehead. Recycle that junk and save the Earth." If you're speaking to your mother, you might say, "Mom, that can go in the recycling bin instead. Let's save the planet." If you are writing about this for an academic audience, you might instead say, "We must always consider the consequences of our actions. Throwing recyclable materials in the trash results in overflowing landfills, land and water pollution, and an increased strain on raw materials. However, recycling glass, metal, and paper reduces our consumption of these materials as well as lowers the fossil fuel energy needed to create new products." The example should not suggest that longer sentences are more correct, although the academic audience example is considerably longer than the other two. Hopefully, if I have done it right, the academic audience example is longer simply because I am proving my point, not because I'm trying to sound smart by using more words. But the grammar has also changed. In the first example, I used "ain't," which is not considered grammatically correct for most academic audiences, but the use of which is quite common in many varieties of spoken English. In the second example I used the contraction "can't," which, again, in many academic writing situations would be frowned upon. In the final example, I have attempted to use "standard" grammar, the grammar that the academic rules say I should use, as I know that that particular audience would expect me to do so.

In many academic writing situations, the work is assessed, in part, on how well the writer adheres to the rules. If I used the style and grammar of the first example in a paper for my Environmental Science class, you can imagine what could happen. Writing an academic paper as if I was talking to my friends would probably negatively affect my grade. However, the poor grade wouldn't mean, "your grammar is wrong," even if my instructor phrased it that way. Instead, what the grade would mean is that I did not use the appropriate grammar required for the rhetorical situation.

Using Grammar Rhetorically for Style

Grammarian and textbook author Martha Kolln asks us to look at sentences as a series of slots into which we place words (5). We know what to put into certain slots; for example, in the "subject" slot we know we need a noun or a pronoun, and in the "verb" slot we need, well, a verb. Knowing just these two slots, I can make a good sentence: "I laughed." As sentences get more and more sophisticated, more slots become available. For example, adding an adverb slot, I can create the following sentence: "I laughed loudly." This is a basic element of the rules—the rules tell us what we are allowed to put into the slots.

So then, how do we move past the rules? How does a writer use grammar rhetorically? First and foremost, you use grammar this way by being conscious of the choices that you are making.

Remember, when you write, you aren't simply putting words on paper; you are constructing a conversation with a reader. You make conscious choices about your topic, your title, and your word choice, as well as many other choices, in order to carry on that conversation—grammar is just part of the many choices that you can use to your advantage when you are using language for your specific purpose. It might help you to see how this is done by looking at works that have been written for a variety of audiences and trying to figure out why the authors made the grammatical choices that they did.

Throughout the rest of this essay, I will present several examples of writing, and I will look at what each author has chosen to put into their sentence slots and why they made those choices. The first example is a paragraph from the manual for the video game *Fallout* 3:

> Nuclear war. The very words conjure images of mushroom clouds, gas masks, and bewildered children ducking and covering under their school desks. But it's the aftermath of such a conflict that truly captures our imagination, in large part because there's no real-world equivalent we can relate to. Mankind may have witnessed the horror of the atomic bomb, but thankfully we've somehow succeeded in not blowing up the entire planet. At least, not yet. (*Vault Dweller's Survival Guide* 3)

This paragraph violates many of the rules that I learned as a developing writer. For example, I see the contractions *it's*, *there's*, and *we've*, and a conjunction, *but*, starts a sentence. I see the preposition *to* ending a sentence—a definite no-no, if I remember my grammar rules. Also, as I write this on my computer, my word processor is very kindly informing me that there are two fragments in this paragraph. I believe that Ms. Herrema, my eighth grade English teacher, would cringe if she read this paragraph in a student paper. Yet I think it unlikely that you noticed all of these "errors" in the paragraph as you read it. Why didn't you? Is it because you are ignorant of the rules of grammar? Absolutely not! Assuming that you didn't notice them, you didn't notice them because taken all together, the paragraph flowed well. The fragment sentence, *Nuclear war*, didn't bother you—in fact, it probably grabbed your attention. The contractions didn't bother you because it sounded like someone was speaking to you. And they were.

The intended audience of the writer is those who would buy and play video games. (That might include you—it does include me.) As such, the author knowledgeably chose the language, the grammar, of the game manual in order to maintain the interest of the audience. We speak with contractions; the author uses contractions. We speak in fragments; the author uses them. Notice that the author is using the fragments ominously. He (or she, but probably they—much professional writing is team written) begins with *Nuclear war*. Culturally, we have, for the past seventy years or so, lived with the knowledge that a nuclear war could happen. Those two words conjure up such dark and depressing images that all the author needs to do is say them, and we're hooked. Likewise, the last sentence of the paragraph is also a fragment, ominous, and attention grabbing: *At least, not yet*. We have dodged this atomic bullet until now, but it could still happen—and that is what the author wishes to leave us with.

Let's look at how the commas are used in this paragraph. The first commas that we see are in the list: *mushroom clouds, gas masks, and bewildered children*. Why does the author put those commas there? Is it because the rules tell him to? Yes—and no. Sure, the rules tell us to put those commas in there, but if we're relying on the rhetorical use of grammar, we'll also use them in exactly the same way. A comma indicates a pause in a sentence, a pause that the audience needs in order to get the meaning the author intends to give them. Read that sentence out loud without the commas: *The very words conjure images of mushroom clouds gas masks and bewildered children ducking and covering under their school desks*. Without the commas, it sounds weird. Your audience might even see this as fiveitem list of mushroom, clouds, gas, masks, and bewildered children, rather than the three-item list that it is. If the author's meaning is for the audience to see mushroom clouds and gas masks and bewildered children, regardless of the rules, he would add a comma to make them pause, just a bit, at certain points.

Let's move from the popular to the academic in this next example:

> The typewriter is effectively a lost technology, occupying a strange, interstitial space in the broader field of media history, a fulcrum between the movable type of modern print culture and the malleable digital information of postmodern electronic culture. I argue that consideration of the typewriter as a writing system thus provides critical purchase on this field precisely to the extent that the machine itself is ephemeral and ultimately obsolete. (Benzon 93)

Did you get all that? You probably noticed the difference in vocabulary between this paragraph and the passage from game manual. This author is definitely writing for a different audience; in this case, he is writing for English scholars and educators. If we look at the first sentence as a series of slots, we see *typewriter* in the subject slot, *is* in the verb slot, and *technology* in the object slot. But we also see *effectively* and *lost* in the sentence, occupying two optional slots. *Lost* is positioned in an adjective slot and describes *technology*. What kind of technology? *Lost* technology. *Effectively* is positioned in an adverb slot, and as such it modifies the verb. *Is* what? Is *effectively*. We could have eliminated these two modifiers and the sentence would have made sense. But Benzon, the author, did not want to say that "The typewriter is a technology." He wanted to say that it was *effectively* a *lost* technology. Typewriters still exist, and people still use them, although they are *effectively a lost technology*.

Notice, too, that there are other optional slots that were not filled. *Typewriter*, as a noun, has an optional adjective slot, too. But instead of describing the typewriters, Benzon chooses not to fill in that slot. Doing so might restrict the noun—adding an adjective to describe what type of typewriters are lost technology could limit the meaning. Adding an adjective like *red*, *old*, or *dusty* would say that typewriters that are blue, new, or clean are not lost technology.

Benzon also chooses to use the grammatical device of parallelism in the phrase, “a fulcrum between the movable type of modern print culture and the malleable digital information of postmodern electronic culture.” *Movable type* runs parallel to *malleable digital information*. In both situations, we see nouns (*type* and *information*) preceded by filled adjective slots. *Movable* and *malleable* even sound similar. Benzon opted to fill in another adjective slot before *information* and told us that it was *digital* information but decided not to do so before *type*. This is acceptable, of course, because *type* does not need any additional description, but we certainly need to know what sort of information is malleable.

Finally, we see in this example that Benzon uses *I*. This convention is generally acceptable in the discipline of the humanities, and knowing that his audience would accept this, Benzon has decided to use *I*. He also uses the active voice, writing, “I argue that consideration of the typewriter as a writing system…” The author, *I*, is doing something, arguing. (In this case, my middle school English teacher’s advice to write in the active voice has been justified.) Had I not told you that both the use of *I* and the active voice were acceptable in the humanities, analyzing the previous paragraph would have shown that this was true.

And now let’s try one more, this time from an academic article from the sciences:

> Animals were randomly assigned to three treatment groups with five pigs per group in a completely randomized design. All pigs were fed the basal diet during the initial 7 day period. Pigs were then fed treatment diets during the next three 7 day periods and all pigs received the basal diet during the final two 7 day periods. (Stewart et al. 169)

This excerpt comes from an article in the *American Journal of*

Animal and Veterinary Sciences, so who do you think is the intended audience? If you said, "circus clowns," you might want to try again.

Obviously, we see vocabulary that is intended for veterinarians or students of veterinary medicine. The main reason that I have offered this passage to you, aside from the fact that I enjoy torturing people with language, is that we can see two differences between this piece of academic writing and the previous piece. The first is that there is no use of I. Why didn't the authors say, "*We fed* the pigs the basal diet during the initial 7 day period?" The reason is that, unlike in the humanities disciplines, the use of the personal pronoun is not expected by a science audience. Using it would be counter to the expectations of the audience, so it isn't used. (Score one for the middle school English teacher who told me not to use I.)

The second difference from the Benzon passage is that the subjects of the sentences aren't doing anything; this passage is written in the passive voice. Whereas Benzon could say, "I argue," which showed the active subject I doing something (arguing), in this piece, the pigs are passive receptors of the food. They sit there; food is given to them. If this was recast in active voice, we might end up with, "All pigs *ate* the basal diet during the initial 7 day period." Unlike the humanities disciplines, the sciences have a tendency to prefer the passive voice. Again, if I hadn't just told you these two conventions of science writing, had you rhetorically analyzed the piece, analyzed its audience, purpose, and grammar, you would have seen that these conventions exist.

If you'd like a fourth example, consider this essay that you are reading. Ask yourself why I made the grammatical choices that I did. I use "you," I use contractions, I tend to use the active voice. There a few fragment sentences in here—the first sentence of the essay is a fragment. Why would I write with these rule violations?

Did you notice the "errors" I listed above as you read through the paper? I am guessing that you did not, or at least you did not catch all of them. If I have done my job right, I have successfully entered into a conversation with you—a first year writing student—and spoken to you using a grammar that is comfortable and appropriate for you. How did I do?

With these four examples, I've only given you a taste of how looking at grammar choices rhetorically can help you understand an author's intended audience, that audience's expectations, and how the author, by choosing his or her grammar to reflect those needs, attempted to enter into a relationship with the audience. You could spend quite a bit of time on any of those examples and pull even more insights from the grammar that the authors use, but given the scope of this essay, I believe that I can now safely let you go, believing that you now have a solid understanding of how writers—and that includes you—make careful choices with their grammar and use it as a tool to more effectively communicate with their intended audience.

Note

1. Throughout this essay, I will use some simple grammar terms such as noun, pronoun, adjective, adverb, and so on. I am, perhaps wrongly, assuming that you will understand these terms. If I have erred in my assumption, please accept my apologies. There are many ways to discover the meanings of these terms, the first of which is your instructor. Other resources include handbooks, internet sources, and your friends.

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Teacher Resources for Grammar, Rhetoric, and Style by Craig Hulst

Overview and Teaching Strategies

When I ask my students about the weaknesses of their own writing, the vast majority state that grammar is an issue for them. Usually what they mean is that they do not remember the rules that they were taught and believe that without the rules, their writing must be weak. This essay is designed to be used to help students understand that grammar is more than just rules. Grammar can be used as a tool to influence the style of the piece, and students already implicitly have some understanding of how to use it that way.

This essay would best be used when a teacher is talking about either grammar or style. When talking about grammar, it could be linked with a discussion of why first year writing courses do not typically spend much time on the rules of grammar. When discussing style, it can be used in conjunction with understanding how the rhetorical situation influences style, and how grammar is one element of choosing an appropriate voice and style for that particular situation. It might be particularly useful when discussing revising, rather than drafting.

Questions

1. Before reading this piece, what was your reaction to hearing the word grammar? Did you like studying grammar? Did you hate it? After reading this piece, has your impression of the word changed at all?
2. Has grammar only been presented to you as a set of rules before? Why do you think it was taught that way?
3. In the personal example in the essay, the author wrote about his daughters learning to say "hold me" instead of "hold you" at two years old, but grammar is constantly developing as we are constantly developing our language. Do you remember any of the moments when you realized that the way that you used the language needed to be adjusted, or when you discovered that your grammar usage was not correct? What was it?
4. For the most part, it is less important that you understand all of the rules or grammatical terms than it is that you can recognize when something doesn't sound right. However, this "sounds right" part of grammar can trip you up if you are trying to complete grammar exercises, as that usually means that you are responding to usage (the way most people seem to be using the grammar) instead of correctness (following the rules). Usage and correctness are often the same, but many times they are not. Are there any times that you can remember where you were corrected for using grammar according to usage instead of correctness? Why do you think that the usage

is different from the rule? (Note to teacher: this question might best be used in conjunction with a grammar exercise to illustrate the difference of usage and correctness, possibly followed with a discussion of the style benefits of either).

5. Choose a passage from an essay that you have written. What grammatical choices did you make? What choices (word choice, the choice to fill in a slot or not, parallel structure, etc.) did you make? Which choices did you choose not to make? Should/can you continue to make choices that will give your audience what they expect to see?

Activities Rhetorical Grammar Analysis

There are essays in *Writing Spaces* that talk about reading rhetorically (See Mike Bunn's and/or Karen Rosenberg's essays, for example). Combining this essay with one of those, ask students to look specifically at the grammar of a chosen piece of writing. Starting simply, ask them to look at the use of pronouns or contractions. What does the way that those parts of speech are used (or not used) say about the author's choices, about the intended audience? Move on to modifiers and look at the use of adjectives and adverbs. Are they widely used or are they sparse? Are there two or three modifiers for a noun or one? What do those decisions say about the rhetorical situation? Choose any other element of grammar and continue the analysis.

Revising Grammar for Style

Have students take a paper that they are revising and have them specifically look at their grammar. Ask them to identify their audience and the expectations of their writing. If they have already tried their hands at the *Rhetorical Grammar Analysis* activity, they might be able to apply what they have learned about how the author used grammar to create an appropriate style to their own writing. Otherwise, ask them about the level of formality that is expected in their writing and whether or not their use of grammar (pronoun usage, including gender-specific pronouns; contractions; complexity of sentence construction; etc.) supports that. Students might choose specific sentences and rewrite them (making active voice passive, adding modifiers, changing the verb tense, etc.) to see how the style of the sentence can be altered by grammatical choices.

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164. Backpacks vs. Briefcases: Steps toward Rhetorical Analysis

Laura Bolin Carroll

First Impressions

Imagine the first day of class in first year composition at your university. The moment your professor walked in the room, you likely began analyzing her and making assumptions about what kind of teacher she will be. You might have noticed what kind of bag she is carrying—a tattered leather satchel? a hot pink polka-dotted backpack? a burgundy brief case? You probably also noticed what she is wearing—trendy slacks and an untucked striped shirt? a skirted suit? jeans and a tee shirt?

It is likely that the above observations were only a few of the observations you made as your professor walked in the room. You might have also noticed her shoes, her jewelry, whether she wears a wedding ring, how her hair is styled, whether she stands tall or slumps, how quickly she walks, or maybe even if her nails are done. If you don't tend to notice any of these things about your professors, you certainly do about the people around you—your roommate, others in your residence hall, students you are assigned to work with in groups, or a prospective date. For most of us, many of the people we encounter in a given day are subject to this kind of quick analysis.

Now as you performed this kind of analysis, you likely didn't walk through each of these questions one by one, write out the answer, and add up the responses to see what kind of person you are interacting with. Instead, you quickly took in the information and made an informed, and likely somewhat accurate, decision about that person. Over the years, as you have interacted with others, you have built a mental database that you can draw on to make conclusions about what a person's looks tell you about their personality. You have become able to analyze quickly what people are saying about themselves through the way they choose to dress, accessorize, or wear their hair.

We have, of course, heard that you "can't judge a book by its cover," but, in fact, we do it all the time. Daily we find ourselves in situations where we are forced to make snap judgments. Each day we meet different people, encounter unfamiliar situations, and see media that asks us to do, think, buy, and act in all sorts of ways. In fact, our saturation in media and its images is one of the reasons why learning to do rhetorical analysis is so important. The more we know about how to analyze situations and draw informed conclusions, the better we can become about making savvy judgments about the people, situations and media we encounter.

Implications of Rhetorical Analysis

Media is one of the most important places where this kind of analysis needs to happen. Rhetoric—the way we use language and images to persuade—is what makes media work. Think of all the media you see and hear every day: Twitter, television shows, web pages, billboards, text messages, podcasts. Even as you read this chapter, more ways to get those messages to you quickly and in a persuasive manner are being developed. Media is constantly asking you to buy something, act in some way, believe something to be true, or interact with others in a specific manner. Understanding rhetorical messages is essential to help us to become informed consumers, but it also helps evaluate the ethics of messages, how they affect us personally, and how they affect society.

Take, for example, a commercial for men's deodorant that tells you that you'll be irresistible to women if you use their product. This campaign doesn't just ask you to buy the product, though. It also asks you to trust the company's credibility, or ethos, and to believe the messages they send about how men and women interact, about sexuality, and about what constitutes a healthy body. You have to decide whether or not you will choose to buy the product and how you will choose to respond to the messages that the commercial sends.

Or, in another situation, a Facebook group asks you to support health care reform. The rhetoric in this group uses people's stories of their struggles to obtain affordable health care. These stories, which are often heart-wrenching, use emotion to persuade you—also called pathos. You are asked to believe that health care reform is necessary and urgent, and you are asked to act on these beliefs by calling your congresspersons and asking them to support the reforms as well.

Because media rhetoric surrounds us, it is important to understand how rhetoric works. If we refuse to stop and think about how and why it persuades us, we can become mindless consumers who buy into arguments about what makes us value ourselves and what makes us happy. For example, research has shown that only 2% of women consider themselves beautiful ("Campaign"), which has been linked to the way that the fashion industry defines beauty. We are also told by the media that buying more stuff can make us happy, but historical surveys show that US happiness peaked in the 1950s, when people saw as many advertisements in their lifetime as the average American sees in one year (Leonard).

Our worlds are full of these kinds of social influences. As we interact with other people and with media, we are continually creating and interpreting rhetoric. In the same way that you decide how to process, analyze or ignore these messages, you create them. You probably think about what your clothing will communicate as you go to a job interview or get ready for a date. You are also using rhetoric when you try to persuade your parents to send you money or your friends to see the movie that interests you. When you post to your blog or tweet you are using rhetoric. In fact, according to rhetorician Kenneth Burke, rhetoric is everywhere: "wherever there is persuasion, there is rhetoric. And wherever there is 'meaning,' there is 'persuasion.' Food eaten and digested is not rhetoric. But in the meaning of food there is much rhetoric, the meaning being persuasive enough for the idea of food to be used, like the ideas of religion, as a rhetorical device of statesmen" (71–72). In other words, most of our actions are persuasive in nature.

What we choose to wear (tennis shoes vs. flip flops), where we shop (Whole Foods Market vs. Wal-Mart), what we eat (organic vs. fast food), or even the way we send information (snail mail vs. text message) can work to persuade others.

Chances are you have grown up learning to interpret and analyze these types of rhetoric. They become so commonplace that we don't realize how often and how quickly we are able to perform this kind of rhetorical analysis. When your teacher walked in on the first day of class, you probably didn't think to yourself, "I think I'll do some rhetorical analysis on her clothing and draw some conclusions about what kind of personality she might have and whether I think I'll like her." And, yet, you probably were able to come up with some conclusions based on the evidence you had.

However, when this same teacher hands you an advertisement, photograph or article and asks you to write a rhetorical analysis of it, you might have been baffled or felt a little overwhelmed. The good news is that many of the analytical processes that you already use to interpret the rhetoric around you are the same ones that you'll use for these assignments.

The Rhetorical Situation, Or Discerning Context

One of the first places to start is context. Rhetorical messages always occur in a specific situation or context. The president's speech might respond to a specific global event, like an economic summit; that's part of the context. You choose your clothing depending on where you are going or what you are doing; that's context. A television commercial comes on during specific programs and at specific points of the day; that's context. A billboard is placed in a specific part of the community; that's context, too.

In an article called "The Rhetorical Situation," Lloyd Bitzer argues that there are three parts to understanding the context of a rhetorical moment: exigence, audience and constraints. Exigence is the circumstance or condition that invites a response; "imperfection marked by urgency; it is a defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done, a thing which is other than it should be" (Bitzer 304). In other words, rhetorical discourse is usually responding to some kind of problem. You can begin to understand a piece's exigence by asking, "What is this rhetoric responding to?" "What might have happened to make the rhetor (the person who creates the rhetoric) respond in this way?"

The exigence can be extremely complex, like the need for a new Supreme Court justice, or it can be much simpler, like receiving an email that asks you where you and your friends should go for your road trip this weekend. Understanding the exigence is important because it helps you begin to discover the purpose of the rhetoric. It helps you understand what the discourse is trying to accomplish.

Another part of the rhetorical context is audience, those who are the (intended or unintended) recipients of the rhetorical message. The audience should be able to respond to the exigence. In other words, the audience should be able to help address the problem. You might be very frustrated with your campus's requirement that all first-year students purchase a meal plan for on-campus dining. You might even send an email to a good friend back home voicing that frustration. However, if you want to address the exigence of the meal plans, the most appropriate audience would be the person/office on campus that oversees meal plans. Your friend back home cannot solve the problem (though she may be able to offer sympathy or give you some good suggestions), but the person who can change the meal plan requirements is probably on campus. Rhetors make all sorts of choices based on their audience. Audience can determine the type of language used, the formality of the discourse, the medium or delivery of the rhetoric, and even the types of reasons used the make the rhetor's argument. Understanding the audience helps you begin to see and understand the rhetorical moves that the rhetor makes.

The last piece of the rhetorical situation is the constraints. The constraints of the rhetorical situation are those things that have the power to "constrain decision and action needed to modify the exigence" (Bitzer 306). Constraints have a lot to do with how the rhetoric is presented. Constraints can be "beliefs, attitudes, documents, facts, traditions, images, interests, motives" (Bitzer 306). Constraints limit the way the discourse is delivered or communicated. Constraints may be something as simple as your instructor limiting your proposal to one thousand words, or they may be far more complex like the kinds of language you need to use to persuade a certain community.

So how do you apply this to a piece of rhetoric? Let's say you are flipping through a magazine, and you come across an advertisement that has a large headline that reads "Why Some People Say 'D'OH' When You Say 'Homer'" ("Why"). This ad is an Ad Council public service announcement (PSA) to promote arts education and is sponsored by Americans for the Arts and NAMM, the trade association of the international music products industry.

Since you want to understand more about what this ad means and what it wants you to believe or do, you begin to think about the rhetorical situation. You first might ask, "what is the ad responding to? What problem does it hope to address?" That's the exigence. In this case, the exigence is the cutting of arts funding and children's lack of exposure to the arts. According to the Ad Council's website, "the average kid is provided insufficient time to learn and experience the arts. This PSA campaign was created to increase involvement in championing arts education both in and out of school" ("Arts"). The PSA is responding directly to the fact that kids are not getting enough arts education.

Then you might begin to think about to whom the Ad Council targeted the ad. Unless you're a parent, you are probably not the primary audience. If you continued reading the text of the ad, you'd notice that there is information to persuade parents that the arts are helpful to their children and to let them know how to help their children become more involved with the arts. The ad tells parents that "the experience will for sure do more than entertain them. It'll build their capacity to learn more. In fact, the more art kids get, the smarter they become in subjects like math and science. And that's reason enough to make a parent say, 'D'oh!,' For Ten Simple Ways to instill art in your kids' lives visit AmericansForTheArts.org" ("Why"). Throughout the text of the ad, parents are told both what to believe about arts education and how to act in response to the belief.

There also might be a secondary audience for this ad—people who are not the main audience of the ad but might also be able to respond to the exigence. For example, philanthropists who could raise money for arts education or legislators who might pass laws for arts funding or to require arts education in public schools could also be intended audiences for this ad.

Finally, you might want to think about the constraints or the limitations on the ad. Sometimes these are harder to get at, but we can guess a few things. One constraint might be the cost of the ad. Different magazines charge differently for ad space as well as placement within the magazine, so the Ad Council could have been constrained by how much money they wanted to spend to circulate the ad. The ad is also only one page long, so there might have been a limitation on the amount of space for the ad. Finally, on the Ad Council's webpage, they list the requirements for organizations seeking the funding and support of the Ad Council. There are twelve criteria, but here are a few:

1. The sponsor organization must be a private non-profit 501(c)3 organization, private foundation, government agency or coalition of such groups.
2. The issue must address the Ad Council's focus on Health & Safety, Education, or Community. Applications that benefit children are viewed with favor—as part of the Ad Council's Commitment to Children.
3. The issue must offer a solution through an individual action.
4. The effort must be national in scope, so that the message has relevance to media audiences in communities throughout the nation. ("Become")

Each of these criteria helps to understand the limitations on both who can participate as rhetor and what can be said.

The exigence, audience and constraints are only one way to understand the context of a piece of rhetoric, and, of course, there are other ways to get at context. Some rhetoricians look at subject, purpose, audience and occasion. Others might look at the "rhetorical triangle" of writer, reader, and purpose.

An analysis using the rhetorical triangle would ask similar questions about audience as one using the rhetorical situation, but it would also ask questions about the writer and the purpose of the document. Asking questions about the writer helps the reader determine whether she or he is credible and knowledgeable. For example, the Ad Council has been creating public service announcements since 1942 ("Loose Lips Sink Ships," anyone?) and is a non-profit agency. They also document their credibility by showing the impact of their campaigns in several ways: "Destruction of our forests by wildfires has been reduced from 22 million acres to less than 8.4 million acres per year, since our Forest Fire Prevention campaign began" and "6,000 Children were paired with a mentor in just the first 18 months of our mentoring campaign" ("About"). Based on this information, we can assume that the Ad Council is a credible rhetor, and whether or not we agree with the rhetoric they produce, we can probably assume it contains reliable information. Asking questions about the next part of the rhetorical triangle, the purpose of a piece of rhetoric, helps you understand what the rhetor is trying to achieve through the discourse. We can discern the purpose by asking questions like "what does the rhetor want me to believe after seeing this message?" or "what does the rhetor want me to do?" In some ways, the purpose takes the exigence to the next step. If the exigence frames the problem, the purpose frames the response to that problem.

The rhetorical situation and rhetorical triangle are two ways to begin to understand how the rhetoric functions within the context you find it. The key idea is to understand that no rhetorical performance takes place in a vacuum. One of the first steps to understanding a piece of rhetoric is to look at the context in which it takes place. Whatever terminology you (or your instructor) choose, it is a good idea to start by locating your analysis within a rhetorical situation.

The Heart of the Matter—The Argument

The rhetorical situation is just the beginning of your analysis, though. What you really want to understand is the argument—what the rhetor wants you to believe or do and how he or she goes about that persuasion. Effective argumentation has been talked about for centuries. In the fourth century BCE, Aristotle was teaching the men of Athens how to persuade different kinds of audiences in different kinds of rhetorical situations. Aristotle articulated three "artistic appeals" that a rhetor could draw on to make a case—logos, pathos, and ethos.

Logos is commonly defined as argument from reason, and it usually appeals to an audience's intellectual side. As audiences we want to know the "facts of the matter," and logos helps present these—statistics, data, and logical statements. For example, on our Homer ad for the arts, the text tells parents that the arts will "build their capacity to learn more. In fact, the more art kids get, the smarter they become in subjects like math and science" ("Why"). You might notice that there aren't numbers or charts here, but giving this information appeals to the audience's intellectual side.

That audience can see a continuation of the argument on the Ad Council's webpage, and again much of the argument appeals to logos and draws on extensive research that shows that the arts do these things:

- Allow kids to express themselves creatively and bolster their self-confidence.
- Teach kids to be more tolerant and open.
- Improve kids' overall academic performance.
- Show that kids actively engaged in arts education are likely to have higher SAT scores than those with little to no arts involvement.
- Develop skills needed by the 21st century workforce: critical thinking, creative problem solving, effective communication, teamwork and more.
- Keep students engaged in school and less likely to drop out. ("Arts")

Each bullet above is meant to intellectually persuade parents that they need to be more intentional in providing arts education for their children.

Few of us are persuaded only with our mind, though. Even if we intellectually agree with something, it is difficult to get us to act unless we are also persuaded in our heart. This kind of appeal to emotion is called pathos. Pathetic appeals (as rhetoric that draws on pathos is called) used alone without logos and ethos can come across as emotionally manipulative or overly sentimental, but are very powerful when used in conjunction with the other two appeals.

Emotional appeals can come in many forms—an anecdote or narrative, an image such as a photograph, or even humor. For example, on their web campaign, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) uses an image of a baby chick and of Ronald McDonald wielding a knife to draw attention to their Chicken McCruely UnHappy Meal. These images are meant to evoke an emotional response in the viewer and, along with a logos appeal with the statistics about how cruelly chickens are treated, persuade the viewer to boycott McDonalds.

Pathos can also be a very effective appeal if the rhetor has to persuade the audience in a very short amount of time, which is why it is used heavily in print advertisements, billboards, or television commercials. An investment company will fill a 30-second commercial with images of families and couples enjoying each other, seeming happy, and surrounded by wealth to persuade you to do business with them.

The 30-second time spot does not allow them to give the 15-year growth of each of their funds, and pathetic appeals will often hold our interest much longer than intellectual appeals.

The ad promoting the importance of art uses humor to appeal to the audience's emotional side. By comparing the epic poet Homer to Homer Simpson and his classic "d'oh!" the ad uses humor to draw people into their argument about the arts. The humor continues as they ask parents if their kids know the difference between the Homers, "The only Homer some kids know is the one who can't write his own last name" ("Why"). The ad also appeals to emotion through its language use (diction), describing Homer as "one very ancient dude," and describing The Odyssey as "the sequel" to The Iliad. In this case, the humor of the ad, which occurs in the first few lines, is meant to draw the reader in and help them become interested in the argument before the ad gets to the logos, which is in the last few lines of the ad.

The humor also makes the organization seem real and approachable, contributing to the ethos. The humor might lead you to think that Americans for the Arts is not a stuffy bunch of suits, but an organization you can relate to or one that has a realistic understanding of the world. Ethos refers to the credibility of the rhetor—which can be a person or an organization. A rhetor can develop credibility in many ways. The tone of the writing and whether that tone is appropriate for the context helps build a writer's ethos, as does the accuracy of the information or the visual presentation of the rhetoric.

In the Homer ad, the ethos is built in several ways. The simple, humorous and engaging language, such as "Greek Gods. Achilles Heel. Trojan Horse. All of these icons are brought to us by one very ancient dude—Homer. In The Iliad and its sequel, The Odyssey, he presented Greek mythology in everyday language" ("Why") draws the audience in and helps the tone of the ad seem very approachable. Also, the knowledge of Greek mythology and the information about how the arts help children—which also contribute to the logos appeal—make the ad seem credible and authoritative. However, the fact that the ad does not use too many statistics or overly technical language also contributes to the ethos of the ad because often sounding too intellectual can come across as pompous or stuffy.

Aristotle's artistic appeals are not the only way to understand the argument of rhetoric. You might choose to look at the claim or the unstated assumptions of a piece; someone else might consider the visual appeal of the rhetoric, like the font, page layout, types of paper, or images; another person might focus on the language use and the specific word choice and sentence structure of a piece. Logos, pathos, and ethos can provide a nice framework for analysis, but there are numerous ways to understand how a piece of rhetoric persuades (or fails to persuade).

Looking at the context and components of a piece of rhetoric often isn't enough, though, because it is important to draw conclusions about the rhetoric—does it successfully respond to the exigence? Is it an ethical approach? Is it persuasive? These kinds of questions let you begin to create your own claims, your own rhetoric, as you take a stand on what other people say, do, or write.

Beginning to Analyze

Once you have established the context for the rhetoric you are analyzing, you can begin to think about how well it fits into that context. You've probably been in a situation where you arrived way underdressed for an occasion. You thought that the dinner was just a casual get together with friends; it turned out to be a far more formal affair, and you felt very out of place. There are also times when discourse fails to respond to the situation well—it doesn't fit. On the other hand, successful discourses often respond very well to the context. They address the problem, consider the audience's needs, provide accurate information, and have a compelling claim. One of the reasons you work to determine the rhetorical situation for a piece of discourse is to consider whether it works within that context. You can begin this process by asking questions like:

- Does the rhetoric address the problem it claims to address?
- Is the rhetoric targeted at an audience who has the power to make change?
- Are the appeals appropriate to the audience?
- Does the rhetor give enough information to make an informed decision?
- Does the rhetoric attempt to manipulate in any way (by giving incomplete/inaccurate information or abusing the audience's emotions)?
- What other sub-claims do you have to accept to understand the rhetor's main claim? (For example, in order to accept the Ad Council's claim that the arts boost math and science scores, you first have to value the boosting of those scores.)
- What possible negative effects might come from this rhetoric?

Rhetorical analysis asks how discourse functions in the setting in which it is found. In the same way that a commercial for denture cream seems very out of place when aired during a reality television show aimed at teenagers, rhetoric that does not respond well to its context often fails to persuade. In order to perform analysis, you must understand the context and then you must carefully study the ways that the discourse does and does not respond appropriately to that context.

The bottom line is that the same basic principles apply when you look at any piece of rhetoric (your instructor's clothing, an advertisement, the president's speech): you need to consider the context and the argument. As you begin to analyze rhetoric, there are lots of different types of rhetoric you might encounter in a college classroom, such as

- Political cartoon
- Wikipedia entry
- Scholarly article
- Bar Graph
- Op-Ed piece in the newspaper
- Speech
- YouTube video
- Book chapter
- Photograph
- PowerPoint Presentation

All of the above types of discourse try to persuade you. They may ask you to accept a certain kind of knowledge as valid, they may ask you to believe a certain way, or they may ask you to act. It is important to understand what a piece of rhetoric is asking of you, how it tries to persuade you, and whether that persuasion fits within the context you encounter it in. Rhetorical analysis helps you answer those questions.

Implications of Rhetorical Analysis, Or Why Do This Stuff Anyway?

So you might be wondering if you know how to do this analysis already—you can tell what kind of person someone is by their clothing, or what a commercial wants you to buy without carefully listening to it—why do you need to know how to do more formal analysis? How does this matter outside a college classroom?

Well, first of all, much of the reading and learning in college requires some level of rhetorical analysis: as you read a textbook chapter to prepare for a quiz, it is helpful to be able to distill the main points quickly; when you read a journal article for a research paper, it is necessary to understand the scholar's thesis; when you watch a video in class, it is useful to be able to understand how the creator is trying to persuade you. But college is not the only place where an understanding of how rhetoric works is important. You will find yourself in many situations—from boardrooms to your children's classrooms or churches to city council meetings where you need to understand the heart of the arguments being presented.

One final example: in November 2000, Campbell's Soup Company launched a campaign to show that many of their soups were low in calories and showed pre-pubescent girls refusing to eat because they were "watching their weight." A very small organization called Dads and Daughters, a group that fights advertising that targets girls with negative body images, contacted Campbell's explaining the problems they saw in an ad that encouraged young girls to be self-conscious about their weight, and asked Campbell's to pull the ad. A few days later, Campbell's Vice President for Marketing and Corporate Communications called. One of the dads says, "the Vice President acknowledged he had received their letter, reviewed the ad again, saw their point, and was pulling the ad," responding to a "couple of guys writing a letter" ("Media"). Individuals who understand rhetorical analysis and act to make change can have a tremendous influence on their world. Discussion

1. What are examples of rhetoric that you see or hear on a daily basis?
2. What are some ways that you create rhetoric? What kinds of messages are you trying to communicate?
3. What is an example of a rhetorical situation that you have found yourself in? Discuss exigence, audience, and constraints.

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165. "I need you to say 'I'": Why First Person Is Important in College Writing

Kate McKinney Maddalena

At this point in your development as a writer, you may have learned to write "I-less" prose, without first person.* I-less-ness is fine; writing habits, like all habits, are best simplified when first learned or re-learned. Jazz pianists learn strict scales before they are allowed to improvise. Someone might go on a strict diet and then return to a modified menu after the desired weight is lost, and the bad eating habits are broken. Constructing arguments without using "I" is good practice for formal "improvisation" at higher levels of thinking and writing. Avoiding personal pronouns forces you to be objective. It also "sounds" more formal; you're more likely to maintain an appropriate tone if you stay away from the personal.

But writing in various academic and professional contexts needs to be more flexible, sophisticated, and subtle than writing for high school English classes. In college, you should start using first-person pronouns in your formal academic writing, where appropriate. First person has an important place—an irreplaceable place—in texts that report research and engage scholarship. Your choices about where you place yourself as subject are largely determined by context and the conventions of the field in which you're writing. The key is making sure that your choices are appropriate for the context of your paper— whom you're writing it for, and the kind of information it's meant to communicate. Here I'll list some ways in which first person improves written argument and show you some examples of the ways scholars use first person, and then I'll propose places where it might be used appropriately in your own writing.

Why "I"?

First person can support the following characteristics of good written argument (and good writing in general).

1. Objectivity and Integrity

The main reason most teachers give for the discipline of I-lessness is that it keeps your writing "objective." They want to make sure that you don't rely on personal experiences or perspectives where you should be providing concrete, researched support for your arguments. Your best friend at summer camp doesn't "prove" a sociological theory. Your memory of a "fact"—the average rainfall in a town, the actions of a character in a film, the tendencies of groups of people to behave in certain ways, or the population of Kenya—is not a reliable source in academic contexts. You shouldn't write, "because I think so," or "I know that . . ." But if you consider some of the higher-level implications of perspective's effects on argument, there are some well-chosen places where "I" can give your argument more objectivity and intellectual integrity.

Take scientific writing, for example. Up until very recently, when writing observational and experimental reports, scientists, as a rule, avoided first person. Methodology was (and is still, in many cases) described in the passive voice. That is, instead of writing, "We took measurements of ice thickness on the first and 15th day of every month," scientists wrote, "Measurements of ice thickness were taken on the first and 15th day of every month." Taking out the "we" focuses the reader's attention on the phenomenon (object) being observed, not the observer taking the readings (subject). Or at least that was the reasoning behind passive voice in science writing.

But during the last half of the last century, mostly because of developments in physics, scientists have talked a lot about a thing called the "observer effect": while observing or experimenting with a social or even physical system, the scientist watching can affect the system's behavior. When particle physicists try to measure the motion of something as tiny as an electron, their very observation almost certainly changes that motion. Because of the observer effect, the passive voice convention I've described above has been called into question. Is it really honest to act like "measurements are taken" by some invisible hand? Is the picture minus the researcher the whole picture? Not really. The fact is, someone took the measurements, and those measurements might reflect that observer's involvement. It's more truthful, complete, and objective, then, to put the researchers in the picture. These days, it's much more common to "see" the researchers as subjects—"We measured ice thickness . . ."—in methodology sections.

That same kind of "whole picture" honesty applies to you making written claims, too. When you first learned to write an essay, you were probably taught to make claims as though they were true; write "The sky is blue," not "I think that the sky is blue." That second claim isn't arguable—who can disprove that you think something? But a much more sophisticated claim includes your perspective and implies the effect it may have on your stance: "From my position standing on the earth's surface in the daytime, I see the sky as blue." You can make that claim without using first person, of course, and in some contexts (i.e. for a scientific argument), you probably should. When you're taking a stance on an issue, though, first person just makes sense. Defining your perspective gives your reader context for your stance: "As a volunteer at a bilingual preschool, I can see that both language immersion and individualized language instruction have benefits," or "As a principal at an elementary school with a limited budget, I would argue that language immersion makes the most sense." Consider those two positions; without the "whole picture" that the statement of perspective implies, you might assume that the two claims disagree. The subtlety of the subject—who the writer is—lets you see quite a bit about why the claim is being made. If you asked the second writer to take a stance on the immersion/bilingual instruction issue with only learning objectives in mind, she might agree with the first writer. The "truth" might not be different, but the position it's observed from can certainly cast a different light on it.

2. Clarifying Who's Saying What

A clear description of your perspective becomes even more important when your stance has to incorporate or respond to someone else's. As you move into more advanced college writing, the claims you respond to will usually belong to scholars. Some papers may require you to spend almost as much time summarizing a scholarly conversation as they do presenting points of your own. By "signification," I mean little phrases that tell the reader, "This is my opinion," "This is my interpretation." You need them for two big reasons.

First of all, the more "voices" you add to the conversation, the more confusing it gets. You must separate your own interpretations of scholars' claims, the claims themselves, and your argument so as not to misrepresent any of them. If you've just paraphrased a scholar, making your own claim without quite literally claiming it might make the reader think that the scholar said it. Consider these two sentences: "Wagstaff et al. (2007) conclude that the demand for practical science writing that the layperson can understand is on the rise. But there is a need for laypeople people to increase their science literacy, as well." Is that second claim part of Wagstaff's conclusion, or is it your own reflection on the implications of Wagstaff's argument? By writing something like, "Wagstaff et al. (2007) conclude that the demand for practical science that the layperson can understand is on the rise. I maintain that there is a need for laypeople to increase their science literacy, as well," you avoid the ambiguity. First person can help you express, very simply, who "says" what.

Secondly, your perceptions, and therefore your interpretations, are not always perfect. Science writing can help me illustrate this idea, as well. In the imaginary observation report I refer to above, the researchers may or may not use first person in their methodology section out of respect for the observer effect, but they are very likely to use first person in the discussion/conclusion section. The discussion section involves interpretation of the data—that is, the researchers must say what they think the data means. The importance of perspective is compounded, here. They might not be right. And even if they are mostly right, the systems scientists study are usually incredibly complex; one observation report is not the whole picture. Scientists, therefore, often mark their own interpretations with first person pronouns. "We interpret these data to imply . . ." they might say, or, "We believe these findings indicate . . . ," and then they go on to list questions for further research. Even the experts know that their understanding is almost always incomplete.

3. Ownership, Intellectual Involvement, and Exigency

Citing scholarship contextualizes and strengthens your argument; you want to defer to "experts" for evidence of your claims when you can. As a student, you might feel like an outsider—unable to comment with authority on the concepts you're reading and writing about. But outsider status doesn't only mean a lack of expertise. Your own, well-defined viewpoint might shed new light on a topic that the experts haven't considered (or that your classmates haven't considered, or that your professor hasn't mentioned in class, or even, quite simply, that you hadn't thought of and so you're excited about). In that case, you want to say, "This is mine, it's a new way of looking at the issue, and

I'm proud of it."

Those kinds of claims are usually synthetic ones—you've put information and/or interpretations from several sources together, and you've actually got something to say. Whether your new spin has to do with a cure for cancer or an interpretation of Batman comics, pride in your own intellectual work is important on many levels. As a student, you should care; such investment can help you learn. Your school community should also care; good teachers are always looking for what we call "critical thinking," and when students form new ideas from existing ones, we know it's happening. On the larger scale, the scholarly community should care. Having something new to say increases the exigency of your argument in the larger, intellectual exchange of ideas. A scholarly reader should want to pay attention, because what you say may be a key to some puzzle (a cure for cancer) or way of thinking about the topic (interpreting Batman). That's the way scholars work together to form large bodies of knowledge: we communicate about our research and ideas, and we try to combine them when we can.

An emphatic statement like "Much discussion has addressed the topic of carbon emissions' relationship to climate change, but I would like to ask a question from a new perspective," will make your reader sit up and take notice. In I-less form, that might look like: "Much discussion has addressed the topic of carbon emissions' relationship to climate change, but some questions remain unconsidered." In this case, second sentence still sounds like summary—the writer is telling us that research is incomplete, but isn't giving us a strong clue that his or her (new! fresh!) argument is coming up next. Be careful, of course, not to sound arrogant. If the writer of the sentences above was worried about his or her lack of expertise in an assignment involving scholarly sources, he or she could write: "What scholarly discussion I have read so far has addressed the topic of carbon emissions' relationship to climate change, but I would like to ask a question from a new perspective." He or she can use first person to employ both deference and ownership/involvement in the same sentence.

4. Rhetorical Sophistication

Some writing assignments focus on one simple task at a time: "Summarize the following . . ." "Compare the readings . . ." "analyze," or "argue." When you write a simple five-paragraph essay, your mode rarely changes—you can write an introduction, thesis, body, and conclusion without explaining too many shifts in what the paper is “doing.” Writing at the college level and beyond often has to “do” a few things in the same text. Most involved writing assignments expect you to do at least two things. You may need to summarize/ report and respond, or (more likely) you’ll need to summarize/report, synthesize, and respond. A good introduction, as you’ve learned, needs to anticipate all of it so the reader knows what to expect. Anticipating the structure of a complex argument in I-less mode is tricky. Often, it comes out as a summary of the document that follows and is redundant. First person can clear that problem right up. Consider the introduction to this article; when I come to the part where I need to tell you what I’m going to do, I just . . . tell you what I’m going to do! My writing students usually find this rhetorical trick (or is it an un-trick?) refreshing and liberating. The same concept can be applied to transitions between sections and ideas: “Now that I’ve done this thing, I’d like to move into this other part of my argument . . .” I’ll use this type of transition, myself, when I move into the section of this text called, “When, and When not?”

Academic Examples

The fact is, using first person for rhetorical clarity and to ease transitions isn’t just easier—it’s common in many academic contexts. It’s accepted, even expected, in some cases, for scholarly writing such as abstracts, position papers, theses, and dissertations in many fields to employ first person in the ways I’ve just described. In almost all genres, formats, and fields, the scholarly writer is expected to describe the research done thus far by her peers and then make her own claims—a structure that lends itself to first person.

Robert Terrill, a cultural studies scholar, begins his article, “Put on a Happy Face: Batman as Schizophrenic Savior,” with an evaluation of Tim Burton’s movie’s box office success, and then spends several paragraphs discussing other scholars' applications of psychological frameworks to film studies. Throughout the literature review section, Terrill's own voice stays remote; he uses third person. But look at what happens when he is ready to begin his own argument:

> Because much of my analysis is grounded in the theories of Carl C. Jung, I will begin by outlining relevant aspects of that theory. Then I suggest that Gotham City is a dream world, a representative projection of image-centered dreams. Within the framework of Jung's model, I show the principal characters to be archetypal manifestations that erupt from Gotham's unconscious. Wayne/Batman is a splintered manifestation of a potential whole; his condition represents the schizophrenia required of a hero dedicated to preservation of the shattered psyche of Gotham. (321)

Terrill's move to first person separates his own claims from the scholars he's summarized in his introduction, and it allows him to take ownership of his main claim. The way he "maps out" his article is also typical of academic argument.

First person is used similarly in the sciences. Unlike Terrill, who argues for a certain interpretation of a text, psychologists Jennifer Kraemer and David Marquez report research findings in their article, "Psychosocial Correlates and Outcomes of Yoga or Walking Among Older Adults." Much like Terrill, however, their introduction consists of a review of literature in the third person. For almost three pages, Kraemer and Marquez describe studies which have explored health and injury patterns in old age, as well as studies which have investigated various fitness programs for the elderly. When it comes time for Kraemer and Marquez to describe their own study, they shift into first person:

> We hypothesized that an acute bout of yoga would be more effective at improving mood and reducing state anxiety among older adults when compared with acute bouts of walking. We further hypothesized that older adults who

> practice yoga would have lower levels of depression and higher quality of life when compared with those who walk for exercise. We did not make direct hypotheses for exercise barriers and barriers self-efficacy because, to date, there is no research that has examined those variables in this population. (393)

Kraemer and Marquez continue in first person as they describe their methodology. “We recruited a total of 51 participants (8 men, 43 women)” they write, “through classes at local yoga studios and mall walking groups” (393). The researchers themselves, in first person, are the subjects who “do” every action in the methods: “We asked questions on . . . We measured state anxiety by . . . We measured mood using . . .”(393–4). By putting themselves in the picture, Kraemer and Marquez acknowledge themselves as variables in their own study—a key aspect of any scientific methodology, and especially those which involve human subjects and use interviews to collect data.

On the other hand, some academic communities and genres stay away from first person. Susan Clark, a professor at Yale who writes about the communication and implementation of sustainable forestry practices, describes her study without putting herself in the picture. Where Kraemer and Marquez describe themselves “doing” the methods of their study, Clark has her article as the agent in her description of analysis:

> This article (a) describes the intelligence function in conceptual terms, including its sequential phases (as described by McDougal, Lasswell, & Reisman, 1981); (b) uses examples to illustrate the intelligence activity from Reading and Miller (2000), *Endangered Animals: A Reference Guide to Conflicting Issues*, which gives 70 cases by 34 authors in 55 countries that focus on species, ecosystem, and sustainability challenges; and employs a “problem-oriented” look at intelligence activities across all these cases (Lasswell,

> 1971). It does so by asking and answering five questions . . . (637)

Clark's methods are to analyze others' processes—hers, then, is metaanalysis. It's appropriate for her to remove herself rhetorically as she deals with many actions and many, diverse actors. She is more a describer than a "do-er."

At the very end of her article, in a "call to action" that directly applies her findings, Clark does finally use first person. "We can increase the possibility of better biodiversity and ecosystem conservation, and better sustainability overall," she writes, "if we choose to use an effective intelligence activity. Success is more likely if we increase the rationality of our own directed behavior" (659). Clark's "we" is different from Kraemer and Marquez's "we," though. It refers to Clark's audience—the community of sustainable forestry as a whole—and predicts future action in which she will be active.

When (and When Not) to Use First Person?

Now that I've convinced you to try first person in some of your academic writing, I should talk about how to use it appropriately. (See? I just used "I" for a clear transition to a new idea.) The key is: don't go "I" crazy. Remember the self-discipline you practiced with I-less writing.

Probably the best way to approach first person in an academic context is this: use it to make yourself clear. You'll need "I" for clarity when one of the ideals I described above is in question. Either 1) you'll need to describe an aspect of your personal perspective that will help the reader see (your) whole picture; 2) you'll need to make the divide between your voice and the scholars' as clear as possible in order to avoid misrepresenting the scholars' claims; 3) your own claim will need to stand apart from the other perspectives you've presented as something new; or 4) you'll need to guide your reader through the organization of your text in some way.

Below, I've listed a few common writing situations/assignments that first person can potentially support.

Try "I" when . . .

. . . the assignment asks you to. Personal position papers, personal narratives, and assignments that say "tell what you did/read and provide your reaction," all explicitly ask you to use first person.

. . . you're asked to "Summarize and respond." You might transition into the response part of the paper with "I."

. . . you're introducing a paper with a complicated structure: "I will summarize Wagstaff's argument, and then respond to a few key points with my own interpretation."

. . . you are proud of and intellectually invested in what you have to say, and you want to arrange it in reference to others' voices: "Many scholars have used psychological frameworks to interpret the Batman movies, but I would argue that a historical perspective is more productive . . ."

. . . you are unsure of your interpretation of a source, or you feel that the claim you're making may be bigger than your level of expertise: "If I read Wagstaff correctly, her conclusions imply . . ."

"I" Is a Bad Idea When . . .

. . . you use it only once. You don't want to overuse the first person, but if you're going to assert your position or make a transition with "I," give the reader a hint of your voice in the introduction. An introduction that anticipates structure with "I will," for instance, works well with transitions that use "I" as well. If you use first person only once, the tone shift will jar the reader.

. . . The assignment is a simple summary. In that case, you need only report; you are "eye," not "I."

. . . you're writing a lab report for a science class, as a general rule. But you might ask your teacher about the issues of objectivity I've addressed above, especially in terms of objective methodology. Discussion

1. Can you remember a writing task during which you struggled to avoid using the first person? What about the nature of the content made "I" hard to avoid? Can you link the difficulty to

one of the four values that first person "supports," according to this essay?

2. McKinney Maddalena claims that scientists use "I" more often in research reports, nowadays. Find a scientific article in your school's research databases that employs first person: "I" or "we." In what section is first person used, and how? Does its usage reflect one of the values this essay points out?

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About the Author

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166. So You've Got a Writing Assignment. Now What?

Corrine E. Hinton

It's the first day of the semester and you've just stepped foot into your Intro to American Politics class. You grab a seat toward the back as the instructor enters, distributes the syllabus, and starts to discuss the course schedule. Just before class ends, she grabs a thin stack of papers from her desk and, distributing them, announces, "This is your first writing assignment for the term. It's due two weeks from Thursday, so I suggest you begin early." Your stomach clenches. For some people, a writing assignment causes a little nervous energy, but for you, it's a deep, vomit-inducing fireball that shoots down your body and out your toes. As soon as the assignment sheet hits your hands, your eyes dart wildly about, frantically trying to decipher what you're supposed to do. How many pages is this thing supposed to be? What am I supposed to write about? What's Chicago style? When is it due? You know your instructor is talking about the assignment right now, but her voice fades into a murmur as you busy yourself with the assignment sheet. The sound of shuffling feet interrupts your thoughts; you look up and realize she's dismissed the class. You shove the assignment into your bag, convinced you're doomed before you've even started.

So you've got a writing assignment. Now what? First, don't panic. Writing assignments make many of us nervous, but this anxiety is especially prevalent in first year students. When that first writing assignment comes along, fear, anxiety, avoidance, and even anger are typical responses. However, negative emotional reactions like these can cloud your ability to be rational, and interpreting a writing assignment is a rational activity and a skill. You can learn and cultivate this skill with practice. Why is learning how to do it so important?

First, you can learn how to manage negative emotional responses to writing. Research indicates emotional responses can affect academic performance "over and above the influence of cognitive ability or motivation" (Pekrun 129). So, even when you have the knowledge or desire to accomplish a particular goal, your fear, anxiety, or boredom can have greater control over how you perform. Anything you can do to minimize these reactions (and potentially boost performance) benefits your personal and intellectual wellness.

Learning to interpret writing assignment expectations also helps encourage productive dialogue between you and your fellow classmates and between you and your instructor. You'll be able to discuss the assignment critically with your peers, ask them specific questions about information you don't know, or compare approaches to essays. You'll also be able to answer your classmates' questions confidently. Many students are too afraid or intimidated to ask their instructors for help, but when you understand an instructor's expectations for an assignment, you also understand the skills being assessed. With this method, when you do not understand a requirement or expectation, you'll have more confidence to approach your instructor directly, using him as valuable resource that can encourage you, clarify confusion, or strengthen your understanding of course concepts.

What follows is a series of practical guidelines useful for interpreting most college writing assignments. In my experience, many students already know and employ many of these strategies regularly; however, few students know or use all of them every time. Along the way, I'll apply some of these guidelines to actual assignments used in university classrooms. You'll also be able to get into the heads of other students as they formulate their own approaches to some of these assignments.1

Guidelines for Interpreting Writing Assignments

1. Don't Panic and Don't Procrastinate

Writing assignments should not incite panic, but it happens. We've already discussed how panicking and other negative reactions work against you by clouding your ability to analyze a situation rationally. So when your instructor gives you that writing assignment, don't try to read the whole assignment sheet at breakneck speed. Instead, take a deep breath and focus. If your instructor talks about the assignment, stop what you're doing and listen. Often, teachers will read through the assignment aloud and may even elaborate on some of the requirements. Write down any extra information or advice your instructor provides about the requirements, his or her expectations, changes, possible approaches, or topic ideas. This information will be useful to you as you begin thinking about the topic and formulating your approach. Also, pay attention to your classmates' questions. You might not need those answers now, but you may find them helpful later.

If you're an undergraduate student taking more than one class, it's not uncommon to have several writing assignments due within days of each other. Hence, you should avoid procrastinating. People procrastinate for different reasons. Maybe you wait because you've always been able to put together a decent paper the night before it's due. Perhaps you wait because avoiding the assignment until the last minute is your response to academic stress. Waiting until the last minute to complete a writing assignment in college is a gamble. You put yourself at risk for the unexpected: your printer runs out of ink, your laptop crashes and you didn't backup your work, the Internet in the library is down, the books you need are checked out, you can't locate any recent research on your topic, you have a last-minute emergency, or you have a question about the assignment you can't find the answer to. The common result of situations like these is that if the student is able to complete the assignment, it is often a poor representatatoin of her actual knowledge or abilities. Start your assignment as soon as possible and leave yourself plenty of time to plan for the unexpected.

2. Read the Assignment. Read It Again. Refer to It Often

The ability to read critically is a useful skill. When you read a textbook chapter for your history course, for example, you might skim it for major ideas first, re-read and then highlight or underline important items, make notes in the margins, look up unfamiliar terms, or compile a list of questions. These same strategies can be applied when reading writing assignments.

The assignment sheet is full of material to be deciphered, so attack it the same way you would attack your history book. When Bailey2, an undergraduate at a university in Los Angeles, was asked to respond to a biology writing assignment, here's what she had to say about where she would start:

When getting a writing assignment, you should read it more than once just to get a knowledge of what they're [the instructors] really asking for and underline important information, which is what I'm doing now. Before starting the assignment, always write some notes down to help you get started.

Here are some other strategies to help you become an active, critical reader of writing assignments:

1. Start by skimming, noting anything in particular that jumps out at you.
2. As soon as you have the time and the ability to focus, re-read the assignment carefully. Underline or highlight important features of the assignment or criteria you think you might forget about after you've started writing.
3. Don't be afraid to write on the assignment sheet. Use the available white space to list questions, define key terms or concepts, or jot down any initial ideas you have. Don't let the margins confine your writing (or your thoughts). If you're

running out of space, grab a fresh sheet of paper and keep writing. The sooner you starting thinking and writing about the assignment, the easier it may be to complete.

As you begin drafting, you should occasionally refer back to the official assignment sheet. Maintaining constant contact with your teacher's instructions will help keep you on the right track, may remind you of criteria you've forgotten, and it might even spark new ideas if you're stuck.

3. Know Your Purpose and Your Audience

Instructors give writing assignments so students can demonstrate their knowledge and/or their ability to apply knowledge. On the surface, it may seem like the instructor is simply asking you to answer some questions to demonstrate that you understand the material or to compare and contrast concepts, theorists, or approaches. However, assessing knowledge is usually just one reason for the assignment. More often than not, your instructor is also evaluating your ability to demonstrate other critical skills. For example, she might be trying to determine if you can apply a concept to a particular situation, if you know how to summarize complex material, or if you can think critically about an idea and then creatively apply that thinking to new situations. Maybe she's looking at how you manage large quantities of research or how you position expert opinions against one another. Or perhaps she wants to know if you can form and support a sound, credible argument rather than describing your opinion about a certain issue.

Instructors have different ways of conveying what they expect from their students in a writing assignment. Some detail explicitly what they intend to evaluate and may even provide a score sheet. Others may provide general (even vague) instructions and leave the rest up to you. So, what can you do to ensure you're on the right track? Keep reading through these guidelines, and you'll learn some ways to read between the lines. Once you identify all the intentions at work (that is, what your instructor is trying to measure), you'll be able to consider and address them.

Audience is a critical component to any writing assignment, and realistically, one or several different audiences may be involved when you're writing a paper in college. The person evaluating your essay is typically the audience most college students consider first. However, your instructor may identify a separate audience to whom you should tailor your response. Do not ignore this audience! If your business instructor tells you to write a research proposal that will be delivered to members of the local chamber of commerce, then adapt your response to them. If you're in an engineering course, and your instructor asks you to write a product design report about a piece of medical equipment geared toward medical practitioners (and not engineers), you should think differently about your terminology, use of background information, and what motivates this particular audience when they read your report. Analyzing the background (personal, educational, professional), existing knowledge, needs, and concerns of your audience will help you make more informed decisions about word choice, structure, tone, or other components of your paper.

4. Locate and Understand the Directive Verbs

One thing you should do when interpreting a writing assignment is to locate the directive verbs and know what the instructor means by them. Directive verbs tell you what you should do in order to formulate a written response. The following table lists common directive verbs used in writing assignments:

Table 1. Frequently used directive verbs.

analyze	defend	illustrate
apply	describe	investigate
argue	design	narrate
compare	discuss	show
consider	explain	summarize
contrast	explore	synthesize
create	evaluate	trace

You might notice that many of the directive verbs have similar general meanings. For example, although explore and investigate are not necessarily synonyms for one another, when used in writing assignments, they may be asking for a similar structural response. Understanding what those verbs mean to you and to your instructor may be the most difficult part of understanding a writing assignment. Take a look at this sample writing assignment from a philosophy course:

> Philosophy Writing Assignment *
>
> "History is what the historian says it is." Discuss.
>
> All papers are to be typed, spell-checked and grammar-checked. Responses should be 2000 words. They should be well written, with a logical flow of thought, and double-spaced with 1" margins on all sides. Papers should be typed in 12-pitch font, using Courier or Times Roman typeface. Indent the first line of each new paragraph five spaces. Also include a title page so that the instructor can identify the student, assignment and course number.
>
> Proper standard English is required. Do not use slang or a conversational style of writing. Always avoid contractions (e.g. "can't" for "cannot") in formal essays. Always write in complete sentences and paragraphs! Staple all papers in the upper left-hand corner and do not put them in a folder, binder or plastic cover.
>
> All written work, citations and bibliographies should conform to the rules of composition laid down in The Chicago Manual of Style (15th edition), or Charles Lipson's Doing Honest Work in College (chapter 5). A paper that lacks correct citations and/or a bibliography will receive an automatic 10% reduction in grade.
>
> * Sample undergraduate philosophy writing assignment, courtesy of Dr. Kenneth Locke, Religious Studies Department, University of the West.

You may interpret the word discuss in one way, while your instructor may have a different understanding. The key is to make certain that these two interpretations are as similar as possible. You can develop a mutual understanding of the assignment's directive verbs and calculate an effective response using the following steps:

1. Look up the verb in a dictionary and write down all of the definitions.
2. List all possible synonyms or related terms and look those up as well; then, see if any of these terms suggest a clearer interpretation of what the assignment is asking you to do.
3. Write down several methods you could use to approach the assignment. (Check out guideline eight in this essay for some common approaches.)
4. Consult with your instructor, but do not be discouraged if he/she is unwilling to clarify or provide additional information; your interpretation of the directions and subsequent approach to fulfilling the assignment criteria may be one of its purposes.
5. Consult a trusted peer or writing center tutor for assistance.
6. Figure out what you know.

When deciphering an assignment's purpose is particularly challenging, make a list. Think about what you know, what you think you know, and what you do not know about what the assignment is asking you to do. Putting this list into a table makes the information easier to handle. For example, if you were given an assignment that asked you to analyze presentations in your business ethics class, like the assignment in Figure 2, your table might look like Table 2 below:

> *Business Writing Assignment Presentation Analysis*
>
> During three weeks of class, you'll observe several small group presentations on business ethics given by your fellow classmates. Choose two of the presentations and write a

short paper analyzing them. For each presentation, be sure to do the following:

1. In one paragraph, concisely summarize the group's main conclusions
2. Analyze the presentation by answering any two of the following three:
    1. With which of the group's conclusions do you agree? Why? With which of the conclusions do you disagree? Why? (include specific examples of both)
    2. What particular issue of ethics did the group not address or only address slightly? Analyze this aspect from your perspective.
    3. In what way could you apply one or more of the group's conclusions to a particular situation? (The situation could be hypothetical, one from your personal or professional experience, or a real-world example).

The paper should be no more than 3 pages in length with 12-pt font, 1 ½ line spacing. It is due one week after the conclusion of presentations.

Your grade will depend upon

1. the critical thought and analytical skills displayed in the paper; 2. your use of ethical principles from chapter 7 of our textbook;
2. the professionalism, correctness, and logic of your writing.

Table 2. Sample knowledge table for undergraduate business writing assignment.

What I Know	What I Think I Know	What I Don’t Know
Need to observe and take notes on 2 presentations	Concisely means “short,” so my summaries should be shorter than the other parts of the paper.	What does the professor mean by “critical thought”?
Need to summa- rize each groups’ conclusions	I think I need to apply my own understanding of ethics to figure out which issue the group didn’t address	How does the professor evaluate “professionalism”? How do I demonstrate this?
2–3 pages long; 12 pt font and 1 ½ spacing	I think I understand everything from chapter 7	Do I need to apply both groups’ conclusions to the same situation or to two different ones?
Need to include personal opinion	I think it’s okay to say “I” in the paper.	How much personal opinion should I include and do I need specific examples to support my opinion?
Need to answer 2 of the 3 questions under part 2	I don’t think I need an introduction.	Should I separate my essay into two parts, one for each group I observed?

After reviewing the table, you can see that this student has a lot of thoughts about this assignment. He understands some of the general features. However, there are some critical elements that need clarification before he submits the assignment. For instance, he's unsure about the best structure for the paper and the way it should sound. Dividing your understanding of an assignment into a table or list can help you identify the confusing parts. Then, you can formulate specific questions that your instructor or a writing center consultant can help you answer.

6. Ask Yourself: Do I Need an Argument?

Perhaps one of the most important things to know is whether or not your instructor is asking you to formulate and support an argument. Sometimes this is easy to determine. For example, an assignment many instructors include in their courses is a persuasive paper where you're typically asked to choose an issue, take a position, and then support it using evidence. For many students, a persuasive paper is a well known assignment, but when less familiar assignment genres come up, some students may be confused about argument expectations. This confusion may arise because the instructor uses a directive verb that is easily misinterpreted. What about the verb explain? Does it make you think of words like summarize, review, or describe (which would suggest more facts and less opinion)? Or, do you associate it with words like debate, investigate, or defend (which imply the need for a well-supported argument)? You can also look for other clues in the assignment indicating a need for evidence. If your instructor mentions scholarly citations, you'll probably need it. If you need evidence, you'll probably need an argument. Still confused? Talk to your instructor.

7. Consider the Evidence

If your assignment mentions a minimum number of required sources, references a particular citation style, or suggests scholarly journals to review during your research, then these are telltale signs that you'll need to find and use evidence. What qualifies as evidence? Let's review some of the major types:

- Personal experience
- Narrative examples (historical or hypothetical)
- Statistics (or numerical forms of data) and facts
- Graphs, charts, or other visual representatives of data
- Expert opinion
- Research results (experimental or descriptive)

Each of these offers benefits and drawbacks when used to support an argument. Consider this writing assignment from a 200-level biology class on genetics:

> *Biology Writing Assignment Genes & Gene Research*
>
> Purpose:
> This writing assignment will ask you to familiarize yourself with genes, the techniques gene researchers use when working with genes, and the current research programs investigating genes. The report is worth 10% of your final grade in the course.
>
> In a research report of at least 1500 words, you should address the following:
>
> 1. Generally, what is a gene and what does it do? Create a universally applicable definition for a gene.
> 2. Choose a specific gene and apply your definition to it (i.e., what does this particular gene do and how does it work?)
> 3. Recreate the history of the gene you've chosen including the gene's discovery (and discoverer), the motivation behind the research into this gene,

outcomes of the research, and any medical, social, historical, or biological implications to its discovery.

4. Explore the current research available on your gene. Who is conducting the research, what are the goals (big/small; longterm/short-term) of the research, and how is the research being funded?

> Research should be properly documented using CSE (Council of Science Editors) style.
>
> The report should be typewritten, double spaced, in a font of reasonable size.

This instructor asks students to demonstrate several skills, including definition, summary, research, and application. Nearly all of these components should include some evidence, specifically scientific research studies on the particular gene the student has chosen. After reading it, here's what Bailey said about how she would start the assignment: "This assignment basically has to do with who you are, so it should be something simple to answer, not too difficult since you should know yourself." Ernest, another student, explains how he would approach the same assignment: "So, first of all, to do this assignment, I would go on the computer, like on the Internet, and I would . . . do research about genes first. And . . . everything about them, and then I would . . . start with the first question, second question, third and fourth, and that's it." For Bailey, using her own life as an example to illustrate genetic inheritance would be the best way to start responding to the assignment. Ernest, on the other hand, thinks a bit differently; he knows he needs "research about genes" to get started, and, like many students, figures the internet will tell him everything he needs to know. So, how do you know what evidence works best? Know the field you're writing in: what type(s) of evidence it values, why it's valuable, and what sources provide that evidence. Some other important questions you should ask yourself include

- Where, in the paper, is the most effective place for this

evidence?
- What type of evidence would support my argument effectively?
- What kind of evidence would most convince my audience?
- What's the best way to integrate this evidence into my ideas?
- What reference/citation style does this discipline use?

If your writing assignment calls for evidence, it is important that you answer these questions. Failure to do so could cost you major points—in your assignment and with your instructor.

8. Calculate the Best Approach

When you decide how to approach your paper, you're also outlining its basic structure. Structure is the way you construct your ideas and move from one idea to the next. Typical structural approaches include question/answer, comparison/contrast, problem/solution, methodology, cause/effect, narration/reflection, description/illustration, classification/division, thesis/support, analysis/synthesis, and theory/ application. These patterns can be used individually or in combination with each other to illustrate more complex relationships among ideas. Learning what structures are useful in particular writing situations starts with reviewing the assignment. Sometimes, the instructor clearly details how you should structure your essay. On the other hand, the assignment may suggest a particular structural pattern but may not actually reflect what the instructor expects to see. For example, if the prompt asks four questions, does that mean you're supposed to write a paragraph for each answer and then slap on an introduction and a conclusion? Not necessarily. Consider what structure would deliver your message accurately and effectively.

Knowing what structures are acceptable within the discipline is also important. Many students are uncomfortable with rigidity; they wonder why their chemistry lab reports must be presented "just so." Think about the last time you looked at a restaurant menu. If you're looking for appetizers, those items are usually listed at the front of the menu whereas desserts are closer to the back. If a restaurant menu listed the desserts up front, you might find the design unfamiliar and the menu difficult to navigate. The same can be said for formalized writing structures including lab reports or literature reviews, for example. Examining scholarly publications (journal articles or books) within that field will help you identify commonly used structural patterns and understand why those structures are acceptable within the discipline.

9. Understand and Adhere to Formatting and Style Guidelines

Writing assignments usually provide guidelines regarding format and/ or style. Requirements like word count or page length, font type or size, margins, line spacing, and citation styles fall into this category. Most instructors have clear expectations for how an assignment should look based on official academic styles, such as the Modern Language Association (MLA), the American Psychological Association (APA), the Chicago Manual of Style (CMS), or the Council of Science Editors (CSE). If your instructor specifically references a style then locate a copy of the manual, so you'll know how to cite source material and how to develop your document's format (font, spacing, margin size, etc.) and style (use of headings, abbreviations, capitalization).

Occasionally, an instructor may modify a standard style to meet her personal preferences. Follow any additional formatting or style guidelines your instructor provides. If you don't, you could lose points unnecessarily. They may also refer you to scholarly journals to use as models. Don't ignore these! Not only will you be able to review professional examples of the kinds of work you're doing (like lab reports, lit reviews, research reports, executive summaries, etc.), you'll also learn more about what style of writing a discipline values.

10. Identify Your Available Resources and Ask Questions

Even after following these steps, you may still have questions. When that happens, you should know who your resources are and what they do (and don't do). After Nicole read the business ethics assignment (provided earlier in this chapter), she said, "I would send a draft to [the instructor] and ask him if he could see if I'm on the right track." Nicole's instincts are right on target; your primary resource is your instructor. Professors may appear intimidating, but they are there to help. They can answer questions and may even offer research recommendations. If you ask ahead of time, many are also willing to review a draft of your project and provide feedback. However, don't expect your teacher to proofread your paper or give you the "right" answer. Writing assignments are one method by which instructors examine your decision making, problem solving, or critical thinking skills.

The library is another key resource. Reference librarians can help you develop an effective research process by teaching you how to use the catalog for books or general references, how to search the databases, and how to use library equipment (copy machines, microfiche, scanners, etc.). They will not choose your topic or conduct your research for you. Spending some time learning from a reference librarian is worthwhile; it will make you a more efficient and more effective student researcher, saving you time and frustration.

Many institutions have student support centers for writing and are especially useful for first year students. The staff is an excellent source of knowledge about academic expectations in college, about research and style, and about writing assignment interpretation. If you're having trouble understanding your assignment, go to the writing center for help. If you're working on a draft and you want to review it with someone, they can take a look. Your writing center tutor will not write your paper for you, nor will he serve as an editor to correct grammar mistakes. When you visit your university's writing center, you'll be able to discuss your project with an experienced tutor who can offer practical advice in a comfortable learning environment.

The above are excellent resources for student assistance. Your instructor, the librarians, and the writing center staff will not do the work for you. Instead, they'll teach you how to help yourself. The guidelines I've outlined here are meant to do exactly the same. So the next time you've got a writing assignment, what will you do? Discussion

1. Think about a previous writing assignment that was a challenge for you. What strategies did you use at the time? After reading the chapter, what other strategies do you think might have been useful?
2. Choose two verbs from the list of frequently used directive verbs (Table 1). Look up these verbs (and possible synonyms) in the dictionary and write down their definitions. If you saw these verbs in a writing assignment, what potential questions might you ask your professor in order to clarify what he/she means?
3. Choose two of the sample assignments from the chapter and create a chart similar to Table 2 for each assignment. What differences do you notice? If these were your assignments, what evidence do you think would best support your argument and why (review guideline seven for help)?
4. What advice would you give to first year college students about writing, writing assignments, or instructor expectations? Structure this advice in the form of a guideline similar to those included in the chapter.

Notes

1. My thanks to Dr. Kenneth Locke from University of the West for contributing a sample assignment to this project and to the

students who participated in this exercise; their interest, time, and enthusiasm helps bring a sense of realism to this essay, and I am indebted to them for their assistance.

2. The names of student participants in this document have been changed to retain confidentiality.

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167. What Is "Academic" Writing?

Lennie Irvin

Introduction: The Academic Writing Task

As a new college student, you may have a lot of anxiety and questions about the writing you'll do in college.* That word "academic," especially, may turn your stomach or turn your nose. However, with this first year composition class, you begin one of the only classes in your entire college career where you will focus on learning to write. Given the importance of writing as a communication skill, I urge you to consider this class as a gift and make the most of it. But writing is hard, and writing in college may resemble playing a familiar game by completely new rules (that often are unstated). This chapter is designed to introduce you to what academic writing is like, and hopefully ease your transition as you face these daunting writing challenges.

So here's the secret. Your success with academic writing depends upon how well you understand what you are doing as you write and then how you approach the writing task. Early research done on college writers discovered that whether students produced a successful piece of writing depended largely upon their representation of the writing task. The writers' mental model for picturing their task made a huge difference. Most people as they start college have wildly strange ideas about what they are doing when they write an essay, or worse—they have no clear idea at all. I freely admit my own past as a clueless freshman writer, and it's out of this sympathy as well as twenty years of teaching college writing that I hope to provide you with something useful. So grab a cup of coffee or a diet coke, find a comfortable chair with good light, and let's explore together this activity of academic writing you'll be asked to do in college. We will start by clearing up some of those wild misconceptions people often arrive at college possessing. Then we will dig more deeply into the components of the academic writing situation and nature of the writing task.

Myths about Writing

Though I don't imagine an episode of *MythBusters* will be based on the misconceptions about writing we are about to look at, you'd still be surprised at some of the things people will believe about writing. You may find lurking within you viral elements of these myths—all of these lead to problems in writing.

Myth #1: The "Paint by Numbers" myth

Some writers believe they must perform certain steps in a particular order to write "correctly." Rather than being a lock-step linear process, writing is "recursive." That means we cycle through and repeat the various activities of the writing process many times as we write.

Myth #2: Writers only start writing when they have everything figured out

Writing is not like sending a fax! Writers figure out much of what they want to write as they write it. Rather than waiting, get some writing on the page—even with gaps or problems. You can come back to patch up rough spots.

Myth #3: Perfect first drafts

We put unrealistic expectations on early drafts, either by focusing too much on the impossible task of making them perfect (which can put a cap on the development of our ideas), or by making too little effort because we don't care or know about their inevitable problems. Nobody writes perfect first drafts; polished writing takes lots of revision.

Myth #4: Some got it; I don't—the genius fallacy

When you see your writing ability as something fixed or out of your control (as if it were in your genetic code), then you won't believe you can improve as a writer and are likely not to make any efforts in that direction. With effort and study, though, you can improve as a writer. I promise.

Myth #5: Good grammar is good writing

When people say "I can't write," what they often mean is they have problems with grammatical correctness. Writing, however, is about more than just grammatical correctness. Good writing is a matter of achieving your desired effect upon an intended audience. Plus, as we saw in myth #3, no one writes perfect first drafts.

Myth #6: The Five Paragraph Essay

Some people say to avoid it at all costs, while others believe no other way to write exists. With an introduction, three supporting paragraphs, and a conclusion, the five paragraph essay is a format you should know, but one which you will outgrow. You'll have to gauge the particular writing assignment to see whether and how this format is useful for you.

Myth #7: Never use "I"

Adopting this formal stance of objectivity implies a distrust (almost fear) of informality and often leads to artificial, puffed-up prose. Although some writing situations will call on you to avoid using "I" (for example, a lab report), much college writing can be done in a middle, semi-formal style where it is ok to use "I."

The Academic Writing Situation

Now that we've dispelled some of the common myths that many writers have as they enter a college classroom, let's take a moment to think about the academic writing situation. The biggest problem

I see in freshman writers is a poor sense of the writing situation in general. To illustrate this problem, let's look at the difference between speaking and writing.

When we speak, we inhabit the communication situation bodily in three dimensions, but in writing we are confined within the twodimensional setting of the flat page (though writing for the web—or multimodal writing—is changing all that). Writing resembles having a blindfold over our eyes and our hands tied behind our backs: we can't see exactly whom we're talking to or where we are. Separated from our audience in place and time, we imaginatively have to create this context. Our words on the page are silent, so we must use punctuation and word choice to communicate our tone. We also can't see our audience to gauge how our communication is being received or if there will be some kind of response. It's the same space we share right now as you read this essay. Novice writers often write as if they were mumbling to themselves in the corner with no sense that their writing will be read by a reader or any sense of the context within which their communication will be received.

What's the moral here? Developing your "writer's sense" about communicating within the writing situation is the most important thing you should learn in freshman composition.

Figure 1, depicting the writing situation, presents the best image I know of describing all the complexities involved in the writing situation.

Figure 1. Source: "A Social Model of Writing." Writing@CSU. 2010. Web. 10 March 2010. Used by permission from Mike Palmquist.

Looking More Closely at the "Academic Writing" Situation

Writing in college is a fairly specialized writing situation, and it has developed its own codes and conventions that you need to have a keen awareness of if you are going to write successfully in college. Let's break down the writing situation in college:

Who's your audience?	Primarily the professor and possibly your classmates (though you may be asked to include a secondary outside audience).
What's the occasion or context?	An assignment given by the teacher within a learning context and designed to have you learn and demonstrate your learning.
What's your message?	It will be your learning or the interpretation gained from your study of the subject matter.
What's your purpose?	To show your learning and get a good grade (or to accomplish the goals of the writing assignment).
What documents/ genres are used?	The essay is the most frequent type of document used.

So far, this list looks like nothing new. You've been writing in school toward teachers for years. What's different in college? Lee Ann Carroll, a professor at Pepperdine University, performed a study of student writing in college and had this description of the kind of writing you will be doing in college:

> What are usually called 'writing assignments' in college might more accurately be called 'literacy tasks' because they require much more than the ability to construct correct sentences or compose neatly organized paragraphs with topic sentences. . . . Projects calling for high levels of critical literacy in college typically require knowledge of research skills, ability to read complex texts, understanding of key disciplinary concepts, and strategies for synthesizing, analyzing, and responding critically to new information, usually within a limited time frame. (3–4)

Academic writing is always a form of evaluation that asks you to demonstrate knowledge and show proficiency with certain disciplinary skills of thinking, interpreting, and presenting. Writing the paper is never "just" the writing part. To be successful in this kind of writing, you must be completely aware of what the professor expects you to do and accomplish with that particular writing task. For a moment, let's explore more deeply the elements of this college writing "literacy task."

Knowledge of Research Skills

Perhaps up to now research has meant going straight to Google and Wikipedia, but college will require you to search for and find more in-depth information. You'll need to know how to find information in the library, especially what is available from online databases which contain scholarly articles. Researching is also a process, so you'll need to learn how to focus and direct a research project and how to keep track of all your source information. Realize that researching represents a crucial component of most all college writing assignments, and you will need to devote lots of work to this researching.

The Ability to Read Complex Texts

Whereas your previous writing in school might have come generally from your experience, college writing typically asks you to write on unfamiliar topics. Whether you're reading your textbook, a short story, or scholarly articles from research, your ability to write well will be based upon the quality of your reading. In addition to the labor of close reading, you'll need to think critically as you read. That means separating fact from opinion, recognizing biases and assumptions, and making inferences. Inferences are how we as readers connect the dots: an inference is a belief (or statement) about something unknown made on the basis of something known. You smell smoke; you infer fire. They are conclusions or interpretations that we arrive at based upon the known factors we discover from our reading. When we, then, write to argue for these interpretations, our job becomes to get our readers to make the same inferences we have made.

The Understanding of Key Disciplinary Concepts

Each discipline whether it is English, Psychology, or History has its own key concepts and language for describing these important ways of understanding the world. Don't fool yourself that your professors' writing assignments are asking for your opinion on the topic from just your experience. They want to see you apply and use these concepts in your writing. Though different from a multiple-choice exam, writing similarly requires you to demonstrate your learning. So whatever writing assignment you receive, inspect it closely for what concepts it asks you to bring into your writing.

Strategies for Synthesizing, Analyzing, and Responding Critically to New Information

You need to develop the skill of a seasoned traveler who can be dropped in any city around the world and get by. Each writing assignment asks you to navigate through a new terrain of information, so you must develop ways for grasping new subject matter in order, then, to use it in your writing. We have already seen the importance of reading and research for these literacy tasks, but beyond laying the information out before you, you will need to learn ways of sorting and finding meaningful patterns in this information.

In College, Everything's an Argument: A Guide for Decoding College Writing Assignments

Let's restate this complex "literacy task" you'll be asked repeatedly to do in your writing assignments. Typically, you'll be required to write an "essay" based upon your analysis of some reading(s). In this essay you'll need to present an argument where you make a claim (i.e. present a "thesis") and support that claim with good reasons that have adequate and appropriate evidence to back them up. The dynamic of this argumentative task often confuses first year writers, so let's examine it more closely.

Academic Writing Is an Argument

To start, let's focus on argument. What does it mean to present an "argument" in college writing? Rather than a shouting match between two disagreeing sides, argument instead means a carefully arranged and supported presentation of a viewpoint. Its purpose is not so much to win the argument as to earn your audience's consideration (and even approval) of your perspective. It resembles a conversation between two people who may not hold the same opinions, but they both desire a better understanding of the subject matter under discussion. My favorite analogy, however, to describe the nature of this argumentative stance in college writing is the courtroom. In this scenario, you are like a lawyer making a case at trial that the defendant is not guilty, and your readers are like the jury who will decide if the defendant is guilty or not guilty. This jury (your readers) won't just take your word that he's innocent; instead, you must convince them by presenting evidence that proves he is not guilty. Stating your opinion is not enough—you have to back it up too. I like this courtroom analogy for capturing two importance things about academic argument: 1) the value of an organized presentation of your "case," and 2) the crucial element of strong evidence.

Academic Writing Is an Analysis

We now turn our attention to the actual writing assignment and that confusing word "analyze." Your first job when you get a writing assignment is to figure out what the professor expects. This assignment may be explicit in its expectations, but often built into the wording of the most defined writing assignments are implicit expectations that you might not recognize. First, we can say that unless your professor specifically asks you to summarize, you won't write a summary. Let me say that again: don't write a summary unless directly asked to. But what, then, does the professor want? We have already picked out a few of these expectations: You can count on the instructor expecting you to read closely, research adequately, and write an argument where you will demonstrate your ability to apply and use important concepts you have been studying. But the writing task also implies that your essay will be the result of an analysis. At times, the writing assignment may even explicitly say to write an analysis, but often this element of the task remains unstated.

So what does it mean to analyze? One way to think of an analysis is that it asks you to seek How and Why questions much more than What questions. An analysis involves doing three things:

1. Engage in an open inquiry where the answer is not known at first (and where you leave yourself open to multiple suggestions)
2. Identify meaningful parts of the subject
3. Examine these separate parts and determine how they relate to each other

An analysis breaks a subject apart to study it closely, and from this inspection, ideas for writing emerge. When writing assignments call on you to analyze, they require you to identify the parts of the subject (parts of an ad, parts of a short story, parts of Hamlet's character), and then show how these parts fit or don't fit together to create some larger effect or meaning. Your interpretation of how these parts fit together constitutes your claim or thesis, and the task of your essay is then to present an argument defending your interpretation as a valid or plausible one to make. My biggest bit of advice about analysis is not to do it all in your head. Analysis works best when you put all the cards on the table, so to speak. Identify and isolate the parts of your analysis, and record important features and characteristics of each one. As patterns emerge, you sort and connect these parts in meaningful ways. For me, I have always had to do this recording and thinking on scratch pieces of paper. Just as critical reading forms a crucial element of the literacy task of a college writing assignment, so too does this analysis process. It's built in.

Three Common Types of College Writing Assignments

We have been decoding the expectations of the academic writing task so far, and I want to turn now to examine the types of assignments you might receive. From my experience, you are likely to get three kinds of writing assignments based upon the instructor's degree of direction for the assignment. We'll take a brief look at each kind of academic writing task.

The Closed Writing Assignment

- Is Creon a character to admire or condemn?
- Does your advertisement employ techniques of propaganda, and if so what kind?
- Was the South justified in seceding from the Union?
- In your opinion, do you believe Hamlet was truly mad?

These kinds of writing assignments present you with two counter claims and ask you to determine from your own analysis the more valid claim. They resemble yes-no questions. These topics define the claim for you, so the major task of the writing assignment then is working out the support for the claim. They resemble a math problem in which the teacher has given you the answer and now wants you to "show your work" in arriving at that answer.

Be careful with these writing assignments, however, because often these topics don't have a simple yes/no, either/or answer (despite the nature of the essay question). A close analysis of the subject matter often reveals nuances and ambiguities within the question that your eventual claim should reflect. Perhaps a claim such as, "In my opinion, Hamlet was mad" might work, but I urge you to avoid such a simplistic thesis. This thesis would be better:

"I believe Hamlet's unhinged mind borders on insanity but doesn't quite reach it."

The Semi-Open Writing Assignment

- Discuss the role of law in Antigone.
- Explain the relationship between character and fate in Hamlet.
- Compare and contrast the use of setting in two short stories.
- Show how the Fugitive Slave Act influenced the Abolitionist Movement.

Although these topics chart out a subject matter for you to write upon, they don't offer up claims you can easily use in your paper. It would be a misstep to offer up claims such as, "Law plays a role in Antigone" or "In Hamlet we can see a relationship between character and fate." Such statements express the obvious and what the topic takes for granted. The question, for example, is not whether law plays a role in Antigone, but rather what sort of role law plays. What is the nature of this role? What influences does it have on the characters or actions or theme? This kind of writing assignment resembles a kind of archeological dig. The teacher cordons off an area, hands you a shovel, and says dig here and see what you find.

Be sure to avoid summary and mere explanation in this kind of assignment. Despite using key words in the assignment such as "explain," "illustrate," analyze," "discuss," or "show how," these topics still ask you to make an argument. Implicit in the topic is the expectation that you will analyze the reading and arrive at some insights into patterns and relationships about the subject. Your eventual paper, then, needs to present what you found from this analysis—the treasure you found from your digging. Determining your own claim represents the biggest challenge for this type of writing assignment.

The Open Writing Assignment

- Analyze the role of a character in Dante's The Inferno.
- What does it mean to be an "American" in the 21st Century?
- Analyze the influence of slavery upon one cause of the Civil War.
- Compare and contrast two themes within *Pride and Prejudice.*

These kinds of writing assignments require you to decide both your writing topic and you claim (or thesis). Which character in the Inferno will I pick to analyze? What two themes in Pride and Prejudice will I choose to write about? Many students struggle with these types of assignments because they have to understand their subject matter well before they can intelligently choose a topic. For instance, you need a good familiarity with the characters in The Inferno before you can pick one. You have to have a solid understanding defining elements of American identity as well as 21st century culture before you can begin to connect them. This kind of writing assignment resembles riding a bike without the training wheels on. It says, "You decide what to write about." The biggest decision, then, becomes selecting your topic and limiting it to a manageable size.

Picking and Limiting a Writing Topic

Let's talk about both of these challenges: picking a topic and limiting it. Remember how I said these kinds of essay topics expect you to choose what to write about from a solid understanding of your subject? As you read and review your subject matter, look for things that interest you. Look for gaps, puzzling items, things that confuse you, or connections you see. Something in this pile of rocks should stand out as a jewel: as being "do-able" and interesting. (You'll write best when you write from both your head and your heart.) Whatever topic you choose, state it as a clear and interesting question. You may or may not state this essay question explicitly in the introduction of your paper (I actually recommend that you do), but it will provide direction for your paper and a focus for your claim since that claim will be your answer to this essay question. For example, if with the Dante topic you decided to write on Virgil, your essay question might be: "What is the role of Virgil toward the character of Dante in The Inferno?" The thesis statement, then, might be this: "Virgil's predominant role as Dante's guide through hell is as the voice of reason." Crafting a solid essay question is well worth your time because it charts the territory of your essay and helps you declare a focused thesis statement.

Many students struggle with defining the right size for their writing project. They chart out an essay question that it would take a book to deal with adequately. You'll know you have that kind of topic if you have already written over the required page length but only touched one quarter of the topics you planned to discuss. In this case, carve out one of those topics and make your whole paper about it. For instance, with our Dante example, perhaps you planned to discuss four places where Virgil's role as the voice of reason is evident. Instead of discussing all four, focus your essay on just one place. So your revised thesis statement might be: "Close inspection of Cantos I and II reveal that Virgil serves predominantly as the voice of reason for Dante on his journey through hell." A writing teacher I had in college said it this way: A well tended garden is better than a large one full of weeds. That means to limit your topic to a size you can handle and support well.

Three Characteristics of Academic Writing

I want to wrap up this section by sharing in broad terms what the expectations are behind an academic writing assignment. Chris Thaiss and Terry Zawacki conducted research at George Mason

University where they asked professors from their university what they thought academic writing was and its standards. They came up with three characteristics:

1. Clear evidence in writing that the writer(s) have been persistent, open-minded, and disciplined in study. (5)
2. The dominance of reason over emotions or sensual perception. (5)
3. An imagined reader who is coolly rational, reading for information, and intending to formulate a reasoned response. (7) Your professor wants to see these three things in your writing when they give you a writing assignment. They want to see in your writing the results of your efforts at the various literacy tasks we have been discussing: critical reading, research, and analysis. Beyond merely stating opinions, they also want to see an argument toward an intelligent audience where you provide good reasons to support your interpretations.

The Format of the Academic Essay

Your instructors will also expect you to deliver a paper that contains particular textual features. The following list contains the characteristics of what I have for years called the "critical essay." Although I can't claim they will be useful for all essays in college, I hope that these features will help you shape and accomplish successful college essays. Be aware that these characteristics are flexible and not a formula, and any particular assignment might ask for something different.

Characteristics of the Critical Essay

"Critical" here is not used in the sense of "to criticize" as in find fault with. Instead, "critical" is used in the same way "critical thinking" is used. A synonym might be "interpretive" or "analytical."

1. It is an argument, persuasion essay that in its broadest sense MAKES A POINT and SUPPORTS IT. (We have already discussed this argumentative nature of academic writing at length.)
2. The point ("claim" or "thesis") of a critical essay is interpretive in nature. That means the point is debatable and open to interpretation, not a statement of the obvious. The thesis statement is a clear, declarative sentence that often works best when it comes at the end of the introduction.
3. Organization: Like any essay, the critical essay should have a clear introduction, body, and conclusion. As you support your point in the body of the essay, you should "divide up the proof," which means structuring the body around clear primary supports (developed in single paragraphs for short papers or multiple paragraphs for longer papers).
4. Support: (a) The primary source for support in the critical essay is from the text (or sources). The text is the authority, so using quotations is required. (b) The continuous movement of logic in a critical essay is "assert then support; assert then support." No assertion (general statement that needs proving) should be left without specific support (often from the text(s)). (c) You need enough support to be convincing. In general, that means for each assertion you need at least three supports. This threshold can vary, but invariably one support is not enough.

5. A critical essay will always "document" its sources, distinguishing the use of outside information used inside your text and clarifying where that information came from (following the rules of MLA documentation style or whatever

documentation style is required).

6. Whenever the author moves from one main point (primary support) to the next, the author needs to clearly signal to the reader that this movement is happening. This transition sentence works best when it links back to the thesis as it states the topic of that paragraph or section.
7. A critical essay is put into an academic essay format such as the MLA or APA document format.
8. Grammatical correctness: Your essay should have few if any grammatical problems. You'll want to edit your final draft carefully before turning it in.

Conclusion

As we leave this discussion, I want to return to what I said was the secret for your success in writing college essays: Your success with academic writing depends upon how well you understand what you are doing as you write and then how you approach the writing task. Hopefully, you now have a better idea about the nature of the academic writing task and the expectations behind it. Knowing what you need to do won't guarantee you an "A" on your paper—that will take a lot of thinking, hard work, and practice—but having the right orientation toward your college writing assignments is a first and important step in your eventual success.

Discussion

1. How did what you wrote in high school compare to what you have/will do in your academic writing in college?
2. Think of two different writing situations you have found yourself in. What did you need to do the same in those two

situations to place your writing appropriately? What did you need to do differently?

3. Think of a writing assignment that you will need to complete this semester. Who's your audience? What's the occasion or context? What's your message? What's your purpose? What documents/genres are used? How does all that compare to the writing you are doing in this class?

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168. Beyond "Good Job!": How Online Peer Review Platforms Improved My Students' Writing and Made My Life Easier

LIZA LONG

by Liza Long

"Good job!" "Nice work!" "I think you need a comma here."

Most instructors are familiar with these types of student comments during peer review. Nearly every composition instructor uses peer review in the classroom because we know that this activity is important. Brammer and Rees note that all experienced instructors recommend peer review to new instructors, yet both students and instructors are often unhappy with both the peer review process and the results. However, composition scholars have reached consensus that "the composing process is social, and peer review is an integral part of that process" (Brammer and Reese, 72). In an online environment, promoting student engagement can be especially challenging.

What does peer review look like in your classroom? In my face to face classes, I used to put students in groups and ask them to print out multiple copies of their drafts, then use a rubric that I created to have them check their peers' work, with a vague student-directed "workshop" style discussion after the rubrics were complete. In an online class, I used a peer review discussion board, asking students to post their drafts and complete those same instructor-created peer review templates on each other's work. But what were my students really learning through these peer review activities? Did peer review improve their writing? How could I make peer review a transferable skill?

One challenge I face with constructing meaningful peer review is that my students come from diverse backgrounds and reach my course with dramatically different previous academic experiences. I teach at the College of Western Idaho, the largest college in our state, with more than 24,000 students. Our two-year commuter college provides education to a wide variety of learners, from traditional students seeking a lower-cost option for their general education coursework to career and technical education students who are required to complete a written communication requirement. My English 102 Rhetoric and Composition classes, capped at 26 students, typically include a diverse mix from a variety of majors: traditional learners, adult learners, English language learners, and even dual credit high school students.

In 2017, on the recommendation of my colleague Meagan Newberry, I took a risk and tried out my first online peer review platform, Eli Review. I quickly learned that online platforms play an important role in facilitating more meaningful peer review experiences while also saving time for instructors. We are now feeling a new sense of urgency about online tools because the sudden shift to online learning precipitated by the COVID-19 pandemic during the Spring 2020 term made many of us rethink our traditional approaches to instruction. Online peer review is one tool that all instructors should consider. In a study of online peer review, Hicks et al. noted online platforms can provide engaging and enriching peer review experiences, but that the way instructors frame online peer review assignments is critical to the quality of feedback that student peers provide, and that "chunking" writing assignments leads to higher-quality feedback. In this essay, I'll share my experience with two online peer review tools and explain how the iterative and constructive process of online peer review has transformed my students' writing while also promoting critical thinking skills that prepare them for the workplace—and saving me time in the process.

Two Peer Review Platforms: Eli Review and Peergrade

After a colleague's enthusiastic recommendation as noted above, I began using Eli Review, an online peer review platform, in 2017 for both my online and hybrid classes. I later adopted it for face-to face classes as well, dedicating one classroom day each week to the peer review drafting and revising process. In 2019, I piloted a peer review platform called Peergrade, which is the platform I currently use. I currently use Peergrade in my English 101 Writing and Rhetoric I, English 102 Writing and Rhetoric II, and English 211 Literary Analysis (advanced writing requirement) course s. I use the peer review tool differently in each course. For English 101, where we are focusing on using sources to support arguments in academic essays, I use Peergrade as an iterative writing and feedback tool to help students learn to craft paragraphs and draft thesis statements. In English 211, I use it for a more traditional peer review, asking students to assess each other's literary analysis essay drafts using the grading rubric. Peergrade is a major component of my English 102 course design, so I will focus on that course as I share what has worked for me.

Both Eli Review and Peergrade function in similar ways. Eli Review is available as a low-cost subscription to students and offers a stand-alone website. Students purchase the subscription at the campus bookstore or online. According to Eli Review's website, a three month subscription to the service is $12.50 per student. I switched to Peergrade because we have an institutional license and it integrates with our LMS (Blackboard), which means that students can access the platform directly from our Blackboard class. At the College of Western Idaho, we do not currently pass the Peergrade license cost on to our students. For Peergrade, students are automatically enrolled. With Eli Review, they have to enroll in a course I create using their school email accounts. Both tools allow instructors to collect data on student engagement and performance. While I personally think that Eli Review is a slightly superior tool with a better graphical interface, data analytics, and user experience, the LMS integration and the lower cost for students made it easy to switch to Peergrade. Both platforms offer excellent client support and are responsive to instructor feedback.

Introducing the Online Peer Review Platform and Process

I introduce the online peer review platform on the first day of class. My students' first writing task for the platform is also my first week writing assessment:

In 2-3 paragraphs, describe how much experience you have with peer review and academic writing, how you worked with peers (in pairs, groups, etc.), and how you interacted (reading essays out loud, group conversations, etc.). Describe in detail the kinds of feedback you received from your reviewers, but also the kind of feedback you gave to the people you reviewed. Did you find that the feedback you received was useful? If not, what would make feedback more useful to you as a writer?

When I am teaching hybrid or face to face classes, we respond to this prompt in class together using our college's laptop cart, giving students the opportunity to try the online peer review platform with my support. For online classes, I provide and record a brief tutorial throughout my LMS to walk students through the submission process. This prompt gives me the opportunity to create a baseline of peer review experience and attitudes for the class. Hicks et al. note that this kind of background research into students' experiences with and cultural assumptions about peer review is an important first step in framing high-quality peer review tasks.

In our next class session (or the next week online), I introduce the peer review process and explain how it will work in our course. Teaching students what peer review is and how they are expected to do it is an evidence based practice. For example, Brammer and

Reese note that students who receive instruction in how to peer review feel more confident in their abilities and have more positive experiences with the peer review process. After discussing my students' writing submissions and addressing any concerns they have about peer review, I ask them to share examples of where they encounter reviews in their daily lives. In fact, reviews and surveys are nearly ubiquitous. We can't even purchase a new pen on Amazon without being asked to review our shopping experience. Students quickly generate workplace examples of peer review: for example, their work is reviewed by supervisors, or if they themselves are supervisors, they may have to review others. Through this initial discussion, students establish the "why" of peer review. They also start thinking about the "what." Are we just looking for misplaced commas? Or are we ensuring that the meaning of the essay is clear to the reader? As instructors who have created peer review rubrics know, establishing criteria for a review is not an easy task.

Using the Peer Review Platform for Writing and Revising

Each week, my students have an assigned writing task. They complete the writing task by Sunday for face to face and hybrid courses, then complete their assigned peer reviews before our next on-ground class. In online classes, I set a midweek deadline for writing tasks and a Sunday deadline for review tasks. Both Eli Review and Peergrade allow the instructor to set parameters for reviews, including the number of reviews required, whether or not the reviews will be anonymous, and whether late work is allowed. In my classes, we decide together whether to use anonymous feedback. In peer review, students are asked to identify required traits in their peers' essays, then evaluate the essays on defined criteria. I also ask students to provide a final comment using the "Describe-Evaluate-Suggest" model of peer feedback as explained by Eli Review here. While I do not comment on every assignment, I use some of these formative assignments to ensure that the students are on task and understand the goal of the essay we are working on. For an example of my exploratory research weekly tasks and rubrics, including a student-created essay draft rubric, see Appendix I.

Learning to rate each other's feedback has required norming exercises. Baker has noted that one area of concern for faculty is whether students are capable of giving high quality feedback. I ask students to rate each peer's final comment on the five-star helpfulness scale, based on how well it meets Eli Review's "Describe/Evaluate/Suggest" model for feedback.

- Five stars = Will transform the writer's draft: all three parts are included, are specific, and the reviewer went above and beyond.
- Three stars = Solid, helpful, specific, and includes all three pieces.
- One star = May not include any aspects of the model or be too vague to be helpful.

Initially, peer feedback scores tend to skew high. We look at anonymized examples to discuss the kinds of comments that are truly helpful. I also spotlight "feedback stars" with examples of high-quality feedback at the beginning of class when we debrief about the week's writing and review assignments.

The bulk of my students' course grade now comes from peer review. Rather than grading individual essay drafts, I assign 100 points to each essay's peer review tasks. Part of the grade depends on how students rate their peers' submissions, and another part of the grade depends on how their peers rate the quality of their feedback. Both Eli Review and Peergrade allow students to numerically assess each other's work and each other's feedback. As noted above, I expect that students will provide feedback that is helpful at a "three stars" level (out of five) to earn full credit for their reviews. Baker's study of a four-week peer review process supports this approach for high-quality feedback. See Appendix 2 for a rubric and examples of student feedback.

I do not provide an evaluative grade (other than complete/ incomplete) for any of my students' essays until they submit their final portfolios at the end of the semester. One of my colleagues, Meagan Newberry, uses a similar peer review approach with a grading contract proposed by Asao Inoue in his book *Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies*. In Newberry's class, students who complete their writing and review tasks at the expected "three star" level earn a B in the course; for an A, students must complete an additional assignment.

How Students Responded to Online Platforms

I have seen improvement in student engagement and satisfaction as I have become more familiar with these online tools. In Fall 2016, the semester before I started using online peer review platforms, only 50% (12/24) students completed the end of course survey, with 100% expressing that they were "satisfied" (17%) or "very satisfied" (83%) with the course. Their comments tended to focus more on me as an instructor and less on their own writing process. In the first semester in which I taught the course using an online peer review platform, my student evaluations were less positive: I had a 44% response rate for my end of course evaluations, and 90% of the students who completed the end-of-course survey expressed that they were "satisfied"(10%) or "very satisfied "(81%) with the course, and 9% rating their experience as "neutral."

In Spring 2018, after I had used online platforms for one year and refined the peer review feedback process, 60% (15/25) of my students completed the end of course survey, with 100% reporting that they were either "satisfied" (27%) or "very satisfied" (73%). Seven commenters specifically mentioned Eli Review as a reason that they enjoyed the course. In 2019, after I switched to the LMS-integrated PeerGrade platform, 67% (14/21) students completed their end of course survey, again with 100% reporting that they were "satisfied" (35%) or "very satisfied" (65%) with the course. While none of the students mentioned Peergrade in their comments, many of them commented on how their writing had improved. I think there's a possibility that students prefer the user experience of Eli Review to Peergrade, which may account for the lower numbers of "very satisfied" students as well as the fact that the online platform was not mentioned in student comments.

Spring 2020 was a special case for all of us, and I did not have high expectations for my course evaluations. While fewer students completed their end-of-course surveys, all three of my sections finished the year strong despite the challenges of COVID-19 and moving online. In one section, 13/22 students (59%) completed the end of course survey, with 100% reporting that they were very satisfied (53%) or satisfied (46%) with the course. Honestly, given the fact that none of these students had signed up for what became an online course, I am proud of this assessment. In their final comments, students noted that they had learned the revision process and that they were proud of their final portfolios and the work they had accomplished. Not a single student complained about the move from hybrid to online in their comments.

What I Have Learned from My Students' Online Peer Review Experiences

While I was initially hesitant to try this new tool because I was concerned about the time involved in learning a new system, using online peer review platforms has transformed the way I teach my English 102 courses. These platforms provide structure and organization to support student writing, and they foster a collaborative classroom experience in hybrid and online courses.

Here are some of my top takeaways after three years of using this type of peer review:

1. Using an online platform for peer review can provide engagement and accountability, allowing for more constructive feedback from classmates. When students write for an audience of their peers, they try harder. My students consistently report high levels of engagement with the course and each other. As Baker notes, “Research consistently demonstrates that engaging students in the feedback process improves the quality of students’ final submissions” (180).
2. For hybrid or online classes, these platforms are especially valuable. For example, during the quick switch from hybrid to fully online courses precipitated by COVID-19 in the Spring 2020 term, our peer review platform provided continuity and a simple way for me to check that students were completing their regular assignments. Students told me that my courses felt “normal” to them, which was reassuring in a time when so many other areas of their lives were changing.
3. The peer review process supports student writing because it reinforces the iterative nature of the writing process. Students break essay tasks into chunks, then incorporate these chunks into the larger essay project (Baker, Hicks et al.).
4. The online peer feedback platform provides an easy way for me to give early feedback on formative assessments so that I can intervene and make writing center referrals for students who were struggling with course concepts like thesis statements, source use, or paragraph unity.
5. Students learn to create their own assessment rubrics, enabling them to think more critically about their rhetorical process. This metacognition helps to reinforce the rhetorical situation for each essay that I teach (see Appendix I: Week Four Peer Review, Student Created Rubric).

Ultimately , I have concluded based on my experiences that using the online platform's writing and review process has led to stronger student essays with less time spent on my part Because students know that a large portion of their grade depends on their revisions, they feel free to take more creative risks with their work. They choose more difficult topics for their exploratory and persuasive essays, and they learn to embrace the idea that writing an academic essay is a process. Students have reported high levels of satisfaction with both Eli Review and Peergrade in every course where I have used these online platforms. Most importantly, these tools have saved me time as an instructor while also increasing students' perception of my engagement. Overall, I give online peer review platforms five out of five stars.

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Appendix I: Exploratory Research Essay Writing Tasks and Peer Review Rubrics

Week One Writing Task

Post your narrowed and focused research question for Essay One (Exploratory Research) here. Then write 2-3 paragraphs explaining why you chose this topic and what you expect to find in your research. Your instructor will provide you with feedback on this assignment.

Week One Peer Review Rubric

Trait Identification

- The research question is phrased as a single question. (Y/N)
- The research question is focused (not too broad, not too narrow) *Y/N)
- The research question is objective (does not take sides). Y/N
- The research question is appropriate for a 6-8 page college essay. Y/N Please comment on your response.

Evaluation

I would like to read a paper that answers this research question.

- Meh
- Sure
- Wow, this paper will change my life!

Please comment on any part of the research question that you think could be improved using the Describe-Evaluate-Suggest model. For example, is the question objective, or does it contain value statements (words that have positive or negative connotations)? Is the topic too broad or too narrow? If so, suggest a way to narrow or expand the topic. If you know of a good source for this question, feel free to share it! Your response must be at least 75 words in length.

Week Two Writing Task: Academic Article Summary and APA Style Reference

1. Choose one academic source you plan to use for your exploratory research essay.
2. Summarize the source in 5-6 sentences.
3. Use at least one template from Chapters 1-3 of *They Say/I Say* in your summary.
4. Include one direct quote from your source and cite the quote correctly in APA style.
5. Create the APA-style full reference for your source and place it at the bottom of your paragraph.
6. Check your paragraph for correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and academic style.

Week Two Peer Review Rubric

Trait Identification

- The summary used an appropriate academic source (not Wikipedia or a fake news site) Y/N
- The assignment summarized the article in 5-6 sentences. Y/N
- The summary used a They Say/I Say template from Chapters 1-3. If no, please suggest one. Y/N
- The summary included a direct quote with an APA style in-text source citation. Y/N
- The summary included an APA style full reference for the source at the end of the paragraph. Y/N
- After reading the summary paragraph, I understand the main ideas of the source. Y/N
- The summary paragraph displays the conventions of academic writing, including style, grammar, and correct punctuation/ spelling. Y/N

Please make sure that you include a final comment that your peer would rate as at least three stars for helpfulness here. Remember to like your peers' feedback if you would rate it as three stars or higher.

Week Three Writing Task: Introduction (aka "Hook")

How do you get your audience's attention? The introductory paragraph is one of the most important parts of your essay. An effective hook catches the reader's interest in a specific, concrete way. Look at the introductory paragraphs in the essay section of *They Say/I Say* for some examples of effective hooks.

- **Outrageous statement or exaggeration:** In “Don’t Blame the Eater” (p. 241), David Zinczenko invites the audience to consider a headline suitable for a Jay Leno monologue.
- **Question:** Zinczenko also uses a series of questions to get the reader’s attention. “Whatever happened to personal responsibility?” Richard Muller similarly uses the questioning technique in combination with a strong statement in “Nuclear Waste” (p. 252).
- **Strong statement:** In “Hidden Intellectualism” (p. 244), Gerald Graff states, “Everyone knows some young person who is impressively ‘street smart’ but does poorly in school.”
- **Anecdote:** In “The (Futile) Pursuit of the American Dream” (p. 260), Barbara Ehrenreich uses anecdote and vivid imagery to set the tone of her essay.
- **Vivid Imagery or unusual detail.** Flannery O’Connor starts off her short story “Everything that Rises Must Converge” (p. 272) with vivid imagery.

Other ways to start your essay include (with my examples):

- **A quotation**: In a 1965 sermon the day after nonviolent resisters faced police brutality in Selma, Alabama, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “Deep down in our non-violent creed is the conviction there are some things so dear, some things so precious, some things so eternally true, that they’re worth dying for.”
- **A statistic or fact**: According to the National Institute of Mental Health, one in five children under the age of 18 lives with a severe and debilitating mental disorder.

Choose at least one of these techniques to write a draft of your introductory paragraph(s) for Essay One.

- Remember that the purpose of your essay is exploratory and the tone should be objective, so some of these techniques may

be more appropriate than others.
- Avoid the second person pronoun *you* in your draft (you may use first and third person pronouns).
- Your hook should end with a thesis statement that answers your research question. For an example, see Michaela Cullington's essay, "Does Texting Affect Writing?" Her thesis statement comes at the end of paragraph three: "In fact, it seems likely that texting has no significant effect on student writing."

Week Three Peer Review Rubric

Trait Identification

- The introduction starts with a "hook" to catch the reader's interest. Y/N
- The introduction avoids the second person pronoun "you." Y/N
- The introduction is at least one paragraph in length. Y/N
- The introduction is specific and concrete. Y/N
- The introduction ends with a thesis statement that answers the research question. Y/N

Evaluation

This introduction makes me want to learn more about the topic.

- Meh
- Sure!
- I cannot wait to read this essay!

This introduction uses the conventions of academic style, including good grammar, punctuation, spelling, and academic tone. Please provide a brief comment to explain your answer.

- Needs some work

- Solid style
- Wow! You're an academic style pro!

Please make sure that you include a final comment that your peer would rate as at least three stars for helpfulness here. Remember to like your peers' feedback if you would rate it as three stars or higher.

Week Four Writing Task: Exploratory Research Paper Rough Draft

Writing task is due Sunday at 11:59 p.m. Reviews are due by Thursday before class. The final revised essay is due to Blackboard on the following Sunday at 11:59 p.m.

Note: The reviews for this assignment are not anonymous. You should have only two papers to review. I have also assigned a self-assessment for your essay, which means you will have the chance to check your own work against our class-created rubric.

Week Four Peer Review: Student-Created Rubric (Note: These differ by class)

Trait Identification

- The essay contains an effective hook and introduction.
- The essay contains five or more sources.
- The sources used are credible.
- The paper uses APA citation style.
- In text citations are mostly correct (author, date).
- The entire essay supported the research question and answer (thesis statement).
- The essay meets the length requirements.

- The essay includes an introduction, thesis statement, and conclusion.
- The essay is objective in tone (free from bias). If no, please comment.
- The essay does not use the second person pronoun “you” (except in direct quotes).
- The paper uses They Say/I Say templates.

Evaluations

The essay taught me something new.

- I didn’t learn anything I didn’t already know
- I already knew something about this topic, but I learned something new
- I hadn’t heard anything about this topic, and I learned something new

Evaluate the essay’s grammar and punctuation

- Needs a lot of work
- Has some issues
- Mostly effective

Evaluate how informative the essay is.

- Meh
- Gets persuasive or is slightly off topic
- I feel way more informed about this topic! Nice work!

The essay contains a good balance of sources and original ideas (They Say/I Say)

- Okay
- Good
- Great!

The paper is engaging and interesting

- Meh
- I was interested but it could be better
- I was so intrigued by this paper, I reread it!

How likely are you to recommend this essay to a friend? Please explain your response.

- I could not recommend this essay to anyone
- I might recommend this essay to someone
- I would definitely recommend this essay to someone.

Appendix II: Peer Review Grading Rubric and Examples of Student Feedback

Essay One	Points	Comments
Week 1	25	
Week 2	25	
Week 3	25	
Week 4	25	
	100	Nice work!

Possible Deductions for Each Week

- -5 submission score below 70%
- -5 reviewer score below 70%
- -5 for each missing review

Examples of Student Feedback

- I completely agree that many problems lurk on the internet. I also agree that parents should take the responsibility to protect their kids from harm of all kinds including those found on the internet. I like the idea of educating kids and holding them accountable with the contract. *Your Rating*: *One Star*
- Have you thought about having the parents take turns volunteering between their classes? If enough parents participated and volunteered in the program you are suggesting, maybe they could cover most of the time slots and get a break on their fees. Also, CWI and other schools offer online and/or hybrid classes (like this one that we are in), which allow students more freedom in scheduling their school work. Maybe online classes could be part of the "plan of action" that you were talking about. *Your Rating*: *Three Stars*
- I think everybody wants to fix this "very expensive health insurance" problem. All of us wish we could live a healthy life. I believe that without our health we can't live happily. It would be so sad if we couldn't see a doctor because we don't have health insurance. What I hear you saying is that we need a universal healthcare system. Since the assignment asks us to first prove there's a significant problem, I'm wondering which you plan to focus on? Will it be an insurance company or medical costs? It might be that both are connected, but if you focus on either one the problem of your argument will be more clear and strong. I would suggest finding evidence that convinces the reader how much the cost differences are between employer insurance and private insurance in Idaho. If you don't have a job you don't have insurance? You can't get any healthcare at all? You might be able to get useful information on the website for The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare. http://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Medical/tabid/61/Default.aspx *Your Rating*: *Five Stars*

169. Bad Ideas About Good Writing

Bad Ideas about Writing, Cheryl E. Ball and Drew Loue, https://textbooks.lib.wvu.edu/badideas/badideasaboutwriting-book.pdf

From the Introduction

The entries cohere around eight major categories of bad ideas about writing that are tied to the production, circulation, cultural use of, evaluation, and teaching of writing in multiple ways. The categories are bad ideas about:

- The features of good writing
- What makes good writers
- How grammar and style should be understood
- Which techniques or processes produce good writing
- Particular genres and occasions for writing
- How writing should be assessed
- How technology impacts writing
- Teachers of writing

Although we have categories (and there are thematic clusters visible within the larger categories), we encourage readers to read the entries with and against each other, looking for productive overlaps and disagreements. For instance, there are at least three entries on the five-paragraph essay—the genre perhaps most known by the various publics reading this book, and the most maligned by its writers—and each entry takes a different perspective, disagreeing as needed where the research and the writer's experience pertain.

Without forcing a weak consensus or flattening out the individuality of the chapters, together they offer a practical, action-oriented group of rational manifestos for discontinuing unhelpful or exclusionary ideas about a subject and activity that all have a stake in. We hope that the collection is a conversation-starter, not a conversation-stopper, and we hope that it provides a catalog of support for productive conversations about how and why to stop the bad ideas about writing and start the good.

170. Dash that Oxford Comma! Prestige and Stigma in Academic Writing

Christie Bogle

THE COMMON COMMA

Once upon a time, way back in the third grade, Mrs. MaGee told me never to put a comma before the "and" in my lists. She said that the "and" means the same thing as a comma.

And so I never did. I wrote "balls, bats and mitts."

Years later, another teacher told me that I should *always* put a comma before the "and" in my lists because it clarifies that the last two items in my list are not a set. He said to write "Amal, Mike, Jose, and Lin."

Logic told me that the third-grade teacher was right because, if the last two in the list were a set, the "and" would have come sooner as "balls and bats and mitts" or "Amal, Mike, and Jose and Lin." But that is also just odd. What if I really did mean to have two sets? Now I felt like I had to write "Balls. Also, bats and mitts." It felt like juggling.

If this is confusing, I'm pretty sure that I've made my point. These rigid rules felt so awkward! Things I can say effortlessly outloud are, all of a sudden, impossible on paper. Who wrote these rules?

That's actually a valid question. Who did write them? Novices to the study of language sometimes imagine that language started back in a day when there were pure versions of all the world languages that younger and lazier speakers continue to corrupt, generation after generation. They imagine a perfect book of grammar that we should all be able to reference. Nothing about that scenario is actually true.

HISTORY OF ENGLISH GRAMMAR

So, why and how did we get all those rules? Way back around the 1700s, we finally started to get some books written about the structure of language, specifically for teaching. These, even then, were vastly different from the work being done by linguists in the field who were interested in marking language as it is, not how they thought it should be. As time went on, people introduced writing rules that originated in other languages, like Latin, and imposed them on English. These misapplications have followed us into modern times. Many of the guidebooks for writing are filled with these exceptions to the natural ways that English once worked. They include, surprisingly, the rule against double negatives ("we don't need no stinking badges!") and other standard prohibitions against language that was quite normal long ago (and still is in non-standard varieties of English).

Some more of those gems include "never say 'I' in an essay," "don't use passive voice," and "don't start a sentence with 'and' or 'but.'" We can sprinkle in the Latin rule, "don't split infinitives" (think *Star Trek*'s "to boldly go") and unnecessary restrictions like "adverbs go after the verb, not before." These rules have interesting histories but the history doesn't necessarily support their persistence. In fact, most of them can be dismissed as simple preferences of some dead white guy from centuries ago. They don't obey any rule of logic, though some obey a system from a different language that has no application in English.

A great example is the double negative. In the 1700s the location of the royalty and their dialects determined what was "correct." The south of England used double negatives but the north of England (where royalty lived) did not use them. Something so simple as location dictated what went into the books. Then in 1762, Robert Lowth wrote *Short Introduction to English Grammar* and relegated the southern usage to "uncultivated speech" instead of what it really is, which is an emphasis on the negative point being made. The American usage that developed from before Lowth's writing is retained today in many dialects, but famously so in Southern varieties and African American Vernacular English (AAVE).

"GRAMMARS," NOT GRAMMAR

What is happening here? Am I arguing that grammar rules are okay to break sometimes? I am taking up an argument that seems to be at an academic impasse. Linguists believe that there is more than one grammar. We say "grammars." Stephen Pinker, a cognitive psychologist, offers his take on this phenomenon in an article for *The Guardian* called "Stephen Pinker: 10 'Grammar Rules' It's Okay to Break Sometimes." He characterizes the debate between descriptive and prescriptive grammarians like this:

> Prescriptivists prescribe how language ought to be used. They uphold standards of excellence and a respect for the best of our civilisation, and are a bulwark against relativism, vulgar populism and the dumbing down of literate culture. Descriptivists describe how language actually is used. They believe that the rules of correct usage are nothing more than

> the secret handshake of the ruling class, designed to keep the masses in their place. Language is an organic product of human creativity, say the Descriptivists, and people should be allowed to write however they please.

His point is that some think that every rule of grammar is worth preserving lest the language devolves out of existence. Others believe that the actual use of the language (any language) and the natural changes that occur are a good thing. Sometimes, as is the case with the double negative, before the rule against it was made, people used "incorrect" phrases all the time. So, the argument about preserving rules and allowing change is kind of mixed up. Pinker describes the conflict experts have, but it's even more complicated by the history.

Still, I reference Pinker because he is a cognitive psychologist that studies both linguistics and composition. Even more importantly, he is also a best-selling author of nonfiction. Pinker has made boring and dry topics like linguistics and neuroscience feel easy, even to the average reader. That's a kind of magic that I want to bottle and sell. So, I look to him on matters of writing. Pinker and I agree that when it comes to grammar, it should be addressed with the goal of being understood, not of being "right."

Navigating the rules of grammar is not just hard for those that speak in "dialects" (or different grammars) of English. It is hard even for those who grew up in a middle-class culture speaking a relatively standard form called Standard American English (SAE). Those born into families and communities speaking SAE struggle with the rules like these:

- *What do I do with commas and semicolons?*
- *Do I use who or whom?*
- *Which word: there, they're or their; too, two or to?*

And so forth.

Even your professors make common speech errors. Try my favorite test. See how many times members of college faculty say "there's" when they should have said "there are." No one speaks like a textbook.

One of my favorite debates, because it is so utterly pointless, is of the Oxford comma. This phenomenon is the one I opened with. Do you always or never put a comma before the "and" in the list? The Oxford comma is the one that says "yes, always." I was taught "no, never." So, who wins?

John McWhorter pleads a case that I buy. He says neither side wins. In his article "Should we give a damn about the Oxford comma?" he argues that "to treat the failure to use the Oxford comma as a mark of mental messiness is a handy way to look down on what will perhaps always be a majority of people attempting to write English." And that is a key argument for me. Much of what we do when looking down our nose at particular errors is to demonstrate disdain for our differences on the page. In fact, for the rest of this document, let's not call them "errors." Let's call them "varieties of speech/writing."

STIGMA AND PRESTIGE

As frustrating or embarrassing it is to be called to the carpet for your variety of speech, these grammar scuffles are mere annoyances when they occur between English speakers of the same general class, race, and economic status. However, when we approach minority English language speakers and English language learners, we pass into a new territory that borders on classism and racism.

To understand this, you must understand the terms *stigma* and *prestige*. These terms apply to a number of sociological situations. Prestige is, very simply, what we grant power and privilege to. Remember the history of the double negative from the 1700s? The book taught that single negation is a mark of *prestige*.

On the other hand, stigmatized varieties of English are those that people try to train you out of using. If you were raised in the Appalachian region of America, you may have some varieties of speech that other people dislike and hope you will lose. Things like "y'all" and "a-" prefixes on "a huntin' and a fishin'" are discouraged; some think it means the speaker is uneducated. By being negated, double negatives became *stigmatized.*

This distinction is "classist" because it assumes characteristics and abilities based on a person's variety of speech. It may sound strange, but speech is not a mark of intellect or ability. One famous example is of Eudora Welty, a renown Appalachian author. A story is told that during her stay in a college dormitory she was passed over by the headmistress for opportunities to have tickets to plays and cultured events. When she confronted the headmistress about the oversight, she explained that she had doubted Welty's interest in the theater because of her accent. Of course, now, Welty is an honored and prestigious author. Her variety of speech did not affect her ability to produce effective writing that communicates to her audience.

Some varieties of English are stigmatized because they represent racial minority speech patterns, even though they are legitimately home-grown American English. How many of us can easily hear and understand what is culturally Black English, Spanglish, or Chicano English, but know that those varieties won't go into your next essay for History 1700?

Students learning English, or even just Standard *American* English, will vary in their ability to represent prestigious language patterns, even though what they write or say is generally understood. For example, people from India may have grown up speaking a different variety of English. The same is true for some people from Hong Kong when it was a British holding. British English with a Chinese accent was their standard, and they struggle to be understood in America.

So, for multilingual and/or multivariety speakers, one challenge of writing is the expectation that they will sound as narrowly experienced in language as monolingual speakers. This is what Lippi-Green called *standard language ideology*. It's the practice of prestige and stigma. It is a rather bizarre sort of prestige to value evidence of less experience, but that's exactly what unaccented language is. A middle- to upper-class white American who travels nowhere and learns nothing of consequence can still sound perfectly prestigious merely by speaking their natural English variety. We actually prefer (or privilege) the appearance of ignorance.

There are a rare few that can perfectly compartmentalize languages. Linguistic geniuses (I use that term loosely) exist—those who can sound perfectly natural in several varieties or languages. It is an ability that only the teensiest percentage of people with just the right exposure, talent, age, and experience will ever achieve. The rest of us can increase our range of speech and writing contexts, but our own idiosyncrasies will always exist, and we will be (unnecessarily) embarrassed by them.

WHAT TEACHING EXPERTS KNOW

Teaching professionals continue to debate how to teach in a way that combats linguistic stigma and shifts toward preferring linguistic diversity. From the CCCC's Students' Right to Their Own Language (SRTOL) circa 1974, we read:

> We affirm the students' right to their own patterns and varieties of language—the dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style. Language scholars long ago denied that the myth of a standard American dialect has any validity. The claim that any one dialect is unacceptable amounts to an attempt of one social group to exert its dominance over another. Such a claim leads to false advice for speakers and writers, and

> immoral advice for humans. A nation proud of its diverse heritage and its cultural and racial variety will preserve its heritage of dialects. We affirm strongly that teachers must have the experiences and training that will enable them to respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language.

So, since before many of your teachers were born, an international body of composition instructors has acknowledged that students have a right to their own language. Ever since then, the struggle to maintain a standard and find ways to work with differences have played out in the profession. Today, we have experts in the field that suggest utilizing "vernacular speech" (that's your everyday speech) to improve the quality of writing, to a point. Peter Elbow writes in his book *Vernacular Eloquence: What Speech Can Bring to Writing* about the ways that we can utilize spoken, everyday language as a way of improving the readability of text and ease the writing process.

Steven Pinker (you know—the one whose writing skill we should bottle and sell), like Peter Elbow, believes a more conversational tone in writing can improve its quality. He says that there are ways of scientifically assessing clarity and ease for readers. For example, this type of research takes on the debate of whether or not a typist should place one or two spaces after periods. It may seem trivial, but it's a debate that has lasted since word processors were programmed to intelligently space punctuation. Researchers strapped people down in front of a computer screen and measured eye movement while reading to settle the debate. Much to my surprise, it turns out that two spaces are easier to read than one (Johnson).

WHAT YOU, THE STUDENT, SHOULD KNOW

I don't know if I would always go so far as to do scientific experimentation on readers in order to make writing decisions, but choosing rules that make things easier feels like a really good idea, doesn't it? The New SRTOL document authors argue, "it is one thing to help a student achieve proficiency in a written dialect and another thing to punish him for using variant expressions of that dialect." So, in modern times, teachers want you to recognize and utilize a standard in writing without punishing your speech. You want to learn how to do the same with yourself and others.

However useful it is to accept variations in classroom English, there are, in fact, varieties of English that are native to the United States (not spoken anywhere else) that are not so easy to understand. Some examples are Louisiana's Cajun creole and Hawai'ian Pidgin creole. Theorists that give nods of approval to teaching within varieties they understand may not be addressing a large enough group of English varieties. If we are suggesting a student use their native language ways to improve readability, sometimes the student's writing will be unintelligible to the teacher and peers. It's a whole different job to have everyone learn new languages in your composition class.

I assume that when CCCCs composed these sentences, "Language scholars long ago denied that the myth of a standard American dialect has any validity…We affirm strongly that teachers must have the experiences and training that will enable them to respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language," they were being sincere, but it might be a stretch. Your teachers are not experts on every variety of English or the many creoles. Neither are you. There is still a way to manage the goals we have.

The updated version of the *Students' Right to Their Own Language* makes a request of teachers when they say, "Since English teachers have been in large part responsible for the narrow attitudes of today's employers, changing attitudes toward dialect variations does not seem an unreasonable goal, for today's students will be tomorrow's employers." English faculty have continued to teach SAE (also called Educated American English or EAE) in one part because it's what *the rest of the country* thinks that educated writers should use for speech and writing. So, even though teachers accept that the standard is a myth, we find the standard useful and the prestige/stigma problem lingers because we continue to use it. This is where you—the students—can help. Let's revisit the value that standard language has and the work it does.

One of the undeniable benefits of a standard is that it is a *lingua franca.* This term roughly means "the language everyone shares." With so many variations of English, it is just clearer to write in one variety than to learn them all. This different idea of a standard is about ease and convenience, not prestige. Teaching within one standard is a system-wide rhetorical choice to be understood by the largest audience possible. Ignoring what that *should be* and focusing on what that *is* seems like a better way of determining what we call the standard. So, most of us aim for a sort of amalgam of language that is acceptable to most people without sticking rigidly to arbitrary rules.

LOSE THE 'TUDE

What you, the students, probably want to know is how to write. The more important point that I hope you will walk away with is this: STROL says, "The **attitudes** that [you] develop in the English class will often be the criteria [you] use for choosing [your] own employees," (emphasis mine). So, what you learn about writing in English class follows you as you make choices and impacts your options in the economy, but so do your attitudes about language and people. Spencer Kimball is often credited with this admonition, "Love people, not things; use things, not people." I would apply a similar sentiment to language.

- *Don't only use language with people you understand.*
- *Use language to understand people.*

As a student, you expect to leave school with more skills and greater flexibility. In that spirit, seeking diversity in your language education makes sense. As you become our future employers and employees, you will inherit the opportunity to reject stigma toward linguistic diversity.

You can do so by accepting these simple facts (adapted from Rosina Lippi-Green's "Linguistic Facts of Life"):

- Language is complex and diverse.
- Language is not a moral marker.
- Language is not an intellectual marker.
- Language serves to communicate between people.
- Language changes.

By embracing these facts, you can feel less shame or **stigma** in your own language and others'. If you accept language differences as natural, you might choose to expose yourself to and understand more languages and varieties. You will write aiming to be understood by a majority of readers for convenience, not for fear of judgment.

So, fine, Oxford Comma when you wanna—but dash linguistic stigma.

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171. Fair Use and Classroom Readings

LIZA LONG

Fair Use and Classroom Readings

By Liza Long

If you're like me, you probably want to offer your students a wide variety of voices and perspectives through the readings you choose for classroom use. But how do you determine what you can and cannot use? If your students purchase a textbook that includes readings, there's no question that you are complying with U.S. copyright laws through the use of these readings. But what about readings for teachers relying on open education resources?

First, a caveat: Just because it comes up in a Google search (perhaps with the search term "pdf" attached) does not automatically mean that you have the right to use a source in your classroom. Sources that are in the public domain (in the U.S., this designation applies to most things published at least 75 years ago*) are acceptable, but many of us try to focus on more current topics and rhetorical techniques when we teach first-year writing.

There are a variety of approaches to consider when choosing readings that comply with U.S. copyright law.

- Is the reading available to all students through your college library? I often partner with our librarians to find appropriate and available readings for my rhetoric and composition students. Some colleges even offer class sets of books with readings for students to use.
- Does your college library have a subscription to a major news

source like *The New York Times* that students can use without cost? At the College of Western Idaho where I teach, all students have access to *The New York Times* through a free student account. This major media outlet publishes a wide variety of sources and perspectives, so I often choose topical readings and include the links in my LMS course shell and on my course schedule. I like this method because I can update my course each semester to make sure our readings are current to events the students are experiencing.
- Is the reading licensed with a Creative Commons license that allows you and students to use the resource?
- Does your use of the reading fall under the Fair Use Doctrine for educational purposes? Factors to consider here include the purpose and character of the use, the nature of the copyrighted work, the amount of work you are using, and the potential effect on the market for the work.

Here are three resources for educators using Open Education Resources:

- Creative Commons contains a wide variety of CC licensed open readings and resources. Remember to give credit for all Creative Commons sources you use (Title, Author, License, and Source).
- Fair Use Calculator helps you to apply the four factors to your chosen reading to determine whether it falls under fair use. As an added bonus, you can print out a certificate that you can include in your courses, explaining your reasoning behind designating a reading as falling within fair use.
- U.S. National Archives offers public domain primary texts and tools that are free for use in your classroom.

*except Mickey Mouse. It's a long story.

PART XXII

TEACHING AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: READINGS AND RESOURCES

This section contains readings and resources for teaching about and with generative artificial intelligence tools.

172. Surviving the Textpocalypse

LIZA LONG

Why Human Writing Matters More than Ever in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

Imagine a world where every story, every song, every piece of writing is algorithmically generated. It would be a world devoid of the human touch, the spark of imagination, and the richness of diversity. While AI and large language models can generate text that is technically proficient, they lack the capacity to truly understand the intricacies of human emotions. They lack the life experiences that shape our perspectives and fuel our creativity. They lack the ability to empathize, to relate, and to genuinely connect on a profound level.

I didn't write that first paragraph. AI did (Open AI, 2023).

Welcome to our brave new world. Spoiler alert: as with prior technological advances we have seen in our lifetimes, profits, not ethics or even a basic concern for humanity, are dominating discussions and development of generative artificial intelligence.

What does the rise of artificial intelligence mean for jobs? For creativity? For humanity? How will we survive as we face what may turn out to be one of the greatest technological changes since the Industrial Revolution?

Before we get into the ones and zeroes, I want to share a new kind of acknowledgement with you inspired by the work of Laurie Phipps and Donna Lanclos

(2023). I acknowledge that ChatGPT does not respect the individual rights of authors and artists and ignores concerns over copyright and intellectual property in its training; additionally, I acknowledge that the system was trained in part through the exploitation of precarious workers in the global south. In this work I specifically used ChatGPT to write the opening lines of this essay and to research examples of prompts that I will share later. I also used Adobe Firefly to generate two images based on my own text prompts.

I'm assuming that you've heard about ChatGPT and other large language models. The students in my college English classrooms certainly have. To understand the potential impacts, both positive and negative, I'd like to share the United Nation's Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's statement on artificial intelligence:

> The world is set to change at a pace not seen since the deployment of the printing press six centuries ago. AI technology brings major benefits in many areas, but without the ethical guardrails, it risks reproducing real world biases and discrimination, fueling divisions and threatening fundamental human rights and freedoms. AI business models are highly concentrated in just a few countries and a handful of firms — usually developed in male-dominated teams, without the cultural diversity that characterizes our world. Contrast this with the fact that half of the world's population still can't count on a stable internet connection. (UNESCO, n.d.)

A Brief History of Writing

To understand how we got here, we need a quick tour of writing as a technology.

Language—the ability to communicate both concrete and abstract thought to other humans—is not new. Most anthropologists think that it's been a defining characteristic of humanity at least since we became *homo sapiens* (Pagel, 2017).

But writing is a relatively new technology, appearing on the cultural scene less than 5500 years ago in Mesopotamia (Brown, 2021). For thousands of years, writing remained the provenance of the elites—the scholarly upper class. The invention of the printing press in Germany around 1440 C.E. was a game changer, creating the possibility for mass publication, and with this, mass literacy (Briggs & Burke, 2002). One of my first jobs in college was cataloging the marginalia from some of the first printed books—pocket-sized editions of Roman and Greek texts printed by Aldus Manutius in the late 1400s (Naiditch et al., 2001).

By the 1900s, educators around the world were embracing the goal of universal literacy. Public schools promoted literacy as an unqualified good, a rising tide that would lift all boats. Free libraries brought texts to everyone who wanted to read them (Kober & Rentner, 2020).

And in the 1990s, the advent of the World Wide Web meant that suddenly any person could communicate by text with any other person literally anywhere, in real time. In 1995, only 3% of Americans had ever signed on to the web (Pew Research Center, 1995). By 2000, that number had climbed to 52%. By 2015, 96% of adults ages 18-29 were using the Internet (Perrin & Duggan, 2015).

Not that all the words posted to the World Wide Web were worth reading. But it turns out they were good for something else: a treasure trove of readily available text to train large language models (LLMs) (Schaul et al., 2023).

A few interesting things happened to our brains along our path from oral language to ubiquitous text-based Internet. Writing removes the need for robust memory, allowing us to externalize knowledge (DeSilva et al., 2021). We no longer need to memorize all 26 books of Homer's Iliad—or even a single line. And we no longer need to remember anything, really, when the advanced computers we all carry in our pockets can look up any knowledge, no matter how esoteric, in an instant.

The British author E.M. Forster is often credited with this famous quote: “How do I know what I think until I see what I say?” If we outsource our writing to large language models, will we still be able to think for ourselves? Will we still want to?

The Internet: Then and Now

Maybe you remember life before the Internet. We wrote letters and sent them by mail. My siblings and I fought over who would get to use the telephone after school. We needed a thick book called a Thomas Guide to navigate the streets of Los Angeles.

Things changed fast with the early Internet. I still remember the thrill of my first Mosaic web search in 1994. Not knowing what else to ask, I queried the surfing conditions in Australia—and was delighted by the instant response!

In the early days of the internet, anything seemed possible. My friends and I wrote long earnest email missives to each other. I booked a hotel online and looked up train schedules in Barcelona. We explored new identities in anonymous chat rooms. We could order any book we wanted from this magical new website: Amazon.com.

Then the towers fell, and America went to war, and everything fell to pieces.

A few years later a new technology appeared, one that promised to connect us with people around the world. I shared tunes on MySpace and posted photos—so many photos!—of my adorable children to Facebook, never once considering their privacy, or my own. I started an anonymous mommy blog, *The Anarchist Soccer Mom.* Andy Warhol’s predicted 15 minutes of world fame for everyone, everywhere, became a reality (Jones, 2017).

We all know how that ended. Facebook destroyed democracy.

Today our young people show devastatingly high levels of anxiety and depression (Abrams, 2023). We are polarized and siloed in our social media echo chambers.

Large Language Models and Generative AI

Now, with little warning, large language models have been unleashed on the world, with all the optimism that accompanied the last three technological revolutions. And of course, none of the ethical considerations.

I typed my first prompt into ChatGPT in late November 2022. Wanting to assess its potential impact on my school's philosophy program, I asked it to summarize Kant's deontology, apply it to the ethics of eating meat, and contrast that with utilitarianism. It got utilitarianism right, but it was wrong on Kant. Three weeks later, I tried the same prompts again. This time, it got Kant right too.

Aside: I am not able to share this chat history because ChatGPT only provides my conversation history beginning January 2023, and when I first used it, I did not think about the critical importance of citing this new tool as a source. For this reason, if you're a student who has used ChatGPT in a similarly cavalier fashion, I completely empathize—but it's important that we both now know that we can and should cite any AI assistant we use, including Open AI, Quillbot, and Google's Writing Assistant.

Since January 2023, I've used ChatGPT daily. As an instructor, I teach students prompts to generate ideas, focus research questions, clarify difficult concepts like deconstruction, outline papers, and check for grammar. I've asked it to design yoga routines, plan meals, create lesson plans, write drafts of emails and recommendation letters, and even compose a collaborative rhyming poem. It's a simultaneously strange and delightful experience, chatting with this bot. When it lies (which is often, and with great confidence), it always apologizes. How many humans can do that?

I don't think this tool is intelligent. If you're familiar with predictive text on your smartphone, ChatGPT is basically that on steroids. Emily Bender, a computational linguist at the University of Washington, has called large language models "stochastic parrots" (Weil, 2023). They function by analyzing probabilities and predicting what you want them to say in response to your prompt. Of course, there are worse things to ask for in a conversation partner.

Ethical Concerns with Generative Artificial Intelligence

And yet, every time I use ChatGPT or any other generative AI program, I am mindful of the problems intrinsic to a training set based on the Internet—gender and racial bias, for starters. This tool acts as a mirror to 30 years of Internet toxicity. No one has meaningfully addressed how this technology will impact knowledge workers, who previously thought their jobs were safe; for example, LLMs are really good at writing code (Meyer, 2023). *Time Magazine* reported that tech companies exploited Kenyan workers to make ChatGPT's responses less toxic (Perrigo, 2023).

Then there's climate change. The energy required to run these large language models is predicted to reach 8-21% of the world's total energy supply by 2030, in a climate that is already warming far too fast (Magubane, 2023). This massive energy consumption will disproportionately impact the global south and those who do not have the financial means to protect themselves from climate harms.

And of course, let's not forget the general existential threat to humanity. How forward thinking of the tech bros who unleashed this on us to sign a letter calling for regulation and warning about the potential "risk of extinction" (Roose, 2023).

But AI is just one of many existential threats facing humanity. Matthew Kirschenbaum (2023), a professor of English and digital studies at the University of Maryland, predicts a far more mundane, and I think, more likely future: the textpocalypse. He writes,

> What if, in the end, we are done in not by intercontinental ballistic missiles or climate change, not by microscopic pathogens or a mountain-size meteor, but by …a tsunami of text? Think of it as an ongoing planetary spam event, but unlike spam, there may prove to be no reliable way of flagging and filtering the next generation of machine-made text. "Don't believe everything you read" may become "Don't believe anything you read" when it's online." (para. 1; para. 5)

Is this what our life will become—computers doing all the writing and the reading? Even as I admit to experimenting with training ChatGPT to provide formative feedback on student essays, I think about the 1985 Val Kilmer movie *Real Genius*, as a tape recorder lectures to tape recorders. Is this what education is destined to become?

Not everyone is as gloomy as Kirschenbaum about the future of AI though.

Adrienne LaFrance (2023) sees another possibility for this new technology. She writes,

> Just as the Industrial Revolution sparked transcendentalism in the U.S. and romanticism in Europe—both movements that challenged conformity and prioritized truth, nature, and individualism—today we need a cultural and philosophical revolution of our own…. Artificial intelligence will, unquestionably, help us make miraculous, lifesaving discoveries. The danger lies in outsourcing our humanity to this technology without discipline…. We need a human renaissance in the age of intelligent machines (para. 15).

What might that human renaissance look like? What does it mean to be human in the age of AI? Who is the author of my story?

AI researcher Kartik Chandra (2023) has an answer. She writes,

> [T]he question to ask about writing is not *Will AI make it worthless?* but rather *What could possibly be more important?* In a world flooded with the monotonous slurry AI excels at producing, power lies with those who can—and do—speak for themselves. Never have the skills of independent, critical thought and expression been more vital than in the AI era (para. 8).

In the end, I'm left—and I'm leaving you—with more questions than answers. But I agree with Kartik—and with ChatGPT's assessment at the beginning of this essay: Artificial intelligence cannot and should not replace us. And I believe that if writing, thinking, and creating continue to be humanity's essential work, poets must lead the way. In the words of twentieth century poet Archibald MacLeish, our task as writers in the age of artificial intelligence is clear:

> Poets, deserted by the world before,
> Turn round into the actual air:
> Invent the age! Invent the metaphor! ("Hypocrite Auteur," lines 65-67).

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173. General Resources for AI

LIZA LONG

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming higher education, from the way students learn to the way faculty teach. AI resources are being used to personalize learning, provide feedback, and automate tasks.

Some of the ways AI is being used in higher education include:

- **Personalizing learning:** AI can be used to create personalized learning experiences for students based on their individual needs and interests. This can be done by using AI to analyze student data and identify areas where they need additional support.
- **Providing feedback:** AI can be used to provide feedback to students on their work. This can be done by using AI to analyze student work and identify areas where they need improvement.
- **Automating tasks:** AI can be used to automate tasks that are currently done by faculty, such as grading papers and providing feedback. This can free up faculty time so they can focus on more creative and strategic tasks.

AI is still a relatively new technology, and there are some challenges associated with its use in higher education. One challenge is that AI systems can be biased, which can lead to unfair outcomes for students. Another challenge is that AI systems can be difficult to understand, which can make it difficult for faculty and students to trust them.

Despite these challenges, AI has the potential to transform higher education in a number of positive ways. By personalizing learning, providing feedback, and automating tasks, AI can help students learn more effectively and efficiently.

The content above was auto-generated by Google Docs Writing Assistant on June 22, 2023. For a demonstration of how Writing Assistant works, please watch this brief video from Liza Long, Assistant Professor of English at the College of Western Idaho.

MLA-CCCC JOINT TASK FORCE ON WRITING AND AI

This working paper discusses the risks and benefits of generative AI for teachers and students in writing, literature, and language programs and makes principle-driven recommendations for how educators, administrators, and policy makers can work together to develop ethical, mission-driven policies and support broad development of critical AI literacy.

We invite you to comment on the working paper to help inform the task force's ongoing activities. We intend for this to be the first of subsequent working papers that will be developed as the task force receives feedback and identifies priorities in the coming year.

Resource Guide from Lance Eaton (College Unbound)

This 40+ page resource guide includes numerous articles and ideas about using generative AI in the college classroom. Topics include the following:

- Effective Uses of AI for Teaching & Learning
- Resources created/sourced by Lance Eaton
- General Resources About Generative AI
- Online AI & Education Communities
- AI Resources

- Guidance on Prompt Creation
- Classroom Activities

Generative AI Acknowledgment

Lawrie Phipps and Donna Lanclos have observed that the ethical concerns surrounding generative AI require acknowledgement. They offer this sample language:

> This presentation/paper/work was prepared using ChatGPT, an "AI Chatbot." We acknowledge that ChatGPT does not respect the individual rights of authors and artists, and ignores concerns over copyright and intellectual property in the training of the system; additionally, we acknowledge that the system was trained in part through the exploitation of precarious workers in the global south. In this work I specifically used ChatGPT to …

CRAFT (Curricular Resources about AI for Teaching)

We're building resources to teach AI literacies for high school and college instructors and assembling them into a full curriculum that will be deployed in a course with the National Educational Equity Lab, offered in Fall 2023.

UNESCO ChatGPT and Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education: Quick Start Guide

This resource provides an overview of AI and its potential uses (and abuses) in higher education. The resource is a companion to UNESCO's free self-paced training on AI.

ChatGPT in Higher Education: Artificial Intelligence and its Pedagogical Value by Rob Rose*

ChatGPT in Higher Education explores the positive integration of AI in academia and the ways that it might enhance pedagogy, research, and professional development.

*Author statement: "The chapter topics and most of the specific functions and their descriptions within each chapter were generated by ChatGPT. The prompts that were fed into ChatGPT were generated by me."

Classroom Policies for AI Generative Tools

This collaborative resource compiled by College Unbound Digital Director Lance Eaton includes a wide variety of classroom syllabus policies from instructors at numerous higher education institutions.

AI, machine learning, and generative technologies

This brief overview of ChatGPT from BC Campus demonstrates some of its capabilities in the classroom including essay writing, lesson plan creation, poetry, and drafting of a course syllabus, classroom policies, and learning outcomes.

Academic Honesty and Integrity (CSU): An Introduction to ChatGPT

This webpage from Colorado State University provides a broad overview of academic integrity issues as well as case studies from instructors and information on why AI checkers may be unreliable.

APA "How to Cite ChatGPT"

This page provides APA style guidelines for referencing ChatGPT and other generative AI tools.

MLA "How to Cite ChatGPT"

This page provides MLA style guidelines for referencing ChatGPT and other generative AI tools.

Artificial Intelligence in Teaching & Learning

This Pressbooks guide from Cleveland State University's Center for Teaching and Learning provides best practices from a faculty AI workgroup that met in Spring 2023.

OpenAI Teaching with AI

From OpenAI: We're releasing a guide for teachers using ChatGPT in their classroom—including suggested prompts, an explanation of how ChatGPT works and its limitations, the efficacy of AI detectors, and bias.

174. Generative AI Apps

LIZA LONG

The information below was updated on July 3, 2023. I will update this information monthly.

Open AI ChatGPT 3.5 (free version)

From Open AI: We've trained a model called ChatGPT which interacts in a conversational way. The dialogue format makes it possible for ChatGPT to answer followup questions, admit its mistakes, challenge incorrect premises, and reject inappropriate requests. ChatGPT 4 is available by subscription only ($20 per month).

Claude AI (beta)

The Claude chatbot from Anthropic is designed with safety in mind. According to Anthropic's website, "Constitutional training is a process for training a model to adhere to a "constitution" of desired behavior. The core Anthropic model has been finetuned with constitutional training with the goal of becoming helpful, honest, and harmless. You can learn more about constitutional training here." The current beta model is free to users.

ClioVis

This app was developed through the University of Texas to provide students with a way to create mind maps, timelines, and presentations for projects. It can easily be adapted for use in writing assignments. Have students create a timeline of their work and explain the connections between each stage of the writing process. The tool has a bare-bones free version and also has a more robust subscription model.

Khanmigo Education AI (beta)

Khanmigo for teachers offers a lot of exciting features such as standards-aligned lesson planning tied to Khan Academy's world-class content library; an on-demand summary of recent student work to quickly assess progress and identify areas where additional support is needed; and Khanmigo-crafted learning objectives, rubrics, and even exit tickets.

Not currently available to students; requires monthly donation ($9 per month or $99 per year). For updates, subscribe to the free Khan Labs newsletter.

Adobe Firefly (beta)

The vision for Adobe Firefly is to help people expand upon their natural creativity. As an embedded model inside Adobe products, Firefly will offer generative AI tools made specifically for creative needs, use cases, and workflows. Through efforts like the Content Authenticity Initiative and Coalition for Content Provenance and Authenticity, we're standing up for accountability, responsibility, and transparency in generative AI. We're working toward a universal

“Do Not Train” Content Credentials tag that will remain associated with a piece of content wherever it’s used, published, or stored.

Google Docs “Help Me Write” Assistant (beta)

On Google Docs, you can use the “Help me write (Labs)” prompt to suggest text using artificial intelligence. You can use the prompt to:

- Write new text. For example, you can ask Google Docs to draft a letter or a social media caption.
- Rewrite existing text. For example, you can rephrase text, or you can make it more formal, more concise, or more detailed.

This feature is currently available on desktop.

Otter AI Transcription

Otter provides faculty and students with real-time captions and notes for in-person and virtual lectures, classes or meetings. A basic account is free; more advanced features are available for a monthly subscription fee ($8.33 per month).

Grammarly

Here’s Grammarly’s description of student services: “Discover what you’re capable of with Grammarly’s AI writing assistance for any task from start to finish, including brainstorming, revision, and citations.” Many if not all high school students have been advised to use Grammarly to assist in checking their papers for grammar, spelling, and syntax errors. All English Language Learners at the College of Western Idaho use this tool. Grammarly is now providing more “robust” assistance in generating writing for assignments. The base app is free, with premium subscriptions.

Paperly

“Paperly is specially designed for researchers, offering you the most effective way to read, review and think.” The tool is designed to help researchers manage articles they read. Features include citation generation, note taking, and mind-mapping. Users drag pdf formatted text into Paperly to use the app’s tools. The free version limits document imports to 10. A license costs $33.15 (not a subscription-one time license fee).

175. Professional Development/Learning Opportunities for AI

LIZA LONG

The resources below are free courses or other professional development opportunities for educators.

UNESCO ChatGPT, Artificial Intelligence, and Higher Education Training

Level: Novice

This is a free, self-paced introduction to ChatGPT and AI created by Emma Sabzalieva and Arianna Valentini. Topics include the following:

- How ChatGPT works
- Introduction to Artificial Intelligence
- Applications in higher education, including teaching activities, research design, data analysis, writing for publication, and peer review
- Improving processes in higher education
- Challenges and ethical implications
- UNESCO recommendations
- Adapting to AI at your institution (beginning with a full-scale AI audit)

Khan Academy: AI for Education

Level: Novice

There are so many exciting developments in the field of artificial intelligence (AI), and the future remains unwritten. This course is somewhat unwritten, too! This course is a work-in-progress!

We only have a few articles in a single unit so far, but as our understanding evolves, so will the course. For now, please think of this set of articles as an appetizing starter course!

Coursera, Vanderbilt University Prompt Engineering for ChatGPT

Level: Intermediate

Vanderbilt's Prompt Engineering for ChatGPT course teaches the most effective patterns and approaches to writing inputs for the large language model. Students start by crafting basic prompts and build toward writing sophisticated prompts to solve problems across all domains. Learners solidify their prompt engineering skills through interactive, hands-on assignments.

By the end of the course, participants will possess strong prompt engineering skills and be capable of using large language models for a wide range of tasks in their personal, professional and academic endeavors, such as writing, summarization, gameplay, planning, simulation, programming and more. (https://news.vanderbilt.edu/2023/05/24/vanderbilt-launches-free-online-chatgpt-course-shaping-the-future-of-ai-education/)

CS 281: Ethics of Artificial Intelligence

Level: Intermediate (this link provides a syllabus and readings for the course)

Machine learning has become an indispensable tool for creating intelligent applications, accelerating scientific discoveries, and making better data-driven decisions. Yet, the automation and scaling of such tasks can have troubling negative societal impacts. Through practical case studies, you will identify issues of fairness, justice and truth in AI applications. You will then apply recent techniques to detect and mitigate such algorithmic biases, along with methods to provide more transparency and explainability to state-of-the-art ML models. Finally, you will derive fundamental formal results on the limits of such techniques, along with tradeoffs that must be made for their practical application. (Stanford professors Carlos Guestrin and Agata Foryciarz)

CVC292-2: Special Topics in Civic Engagement:Digital Interventions: AI & Education

Level: Intermediate

Lance Eaton developed this course for CU for Spring 2023. Course description: This course is about the present and future; it's about tools, how they change, and how they change what we can do. It's also about what gets lost, confusing, or troubling as new tools come into being that disrupt, override, or diminish cultural, social, and personal practices, expectations, relations, and meaning. Technologies are not neutral and the changes they bring can often have downstream effects and consequences. Our goal for this course is to be both dreamer and skeptic, prophet and futurist, honest broker and fierce advocate; to hold these tensions to help us arrive at an understanding of how artificial intelligence, particularly tools like ChatGPT (writing) and DALLE-2 (visual imagery), can impact education and how we should be anticipate, prepare, and train for their increasing use in society and education. Our goal is to document the concerns and possibilities and use that knowledge to craft a proposed policy that institutions (particularly, CU) can use to address the technology and its proper use in education.

176. Readings and Videos for Classroom Use

LIZA LONG

These articles and videos may be suitable for classroom discussions or assignments centered on generative artificial intelligence. As this annotated bibliography grows, I will separate this into sections by topic. For now, it's organized alphabetically by author's last name. Note: Some of these articles may be behind paywalls.

Readings

Atwood, M. (2023, August 26). Murdered by my replica? *The Atlantic Monthly*. https://www.theatlantic.com/books/archive/2023/08/ai-chatbot-training-books-margaret-atwood/675151/

In this essay, Canadian author Margaret Atwood reacts to learning that 33 of her books were illegally pirated to train AI chatbots. She imagines what that might mean for the future of fiction.

Biever, C. (2023, July 25). ChatGPT broke the Turing test — the race is on for new ways to assess AI. *Nature*. https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-023-02361-7?utm_source=pocket-newtab

This article explores the potential–and limits–of large language models. Though they can sound convincingly human, they still struggle with simple visual logic tests.

Blackman, R. & Ammanath, B. (2022, March 21). Ethics and AI: 3 Conversations Companies Need to Have. *Harvard Business Review*. https://hbr.org/2022/03/ethics-and-ai-3-conversations-companies-need-to-be-having

While concerns about AI and ethical violations have become common in companies, turning these anxieties into actionable conversations can be tough. With the complexities of machine learning, ethics, and of their points of intersection, there are no quick fixes, and conversations around these issues can feel nebulous and abstract.

Bostrom, N. (2003). Ethical issues in advanced artificial intelligence. *Science fiction and philosophy: From time travel to superintelligence*, 277, 284.https://philpapers.org/archive/BOSEII.pdf

This seminal paper from an Oxford philosophy professor outlines some ethical concerns around the development of artificial intelligence, including the famous "paperclip maximizer" problem where AI might destroy humanity in pursuit of a mundane goal.

Brooks, R. (2017, October 6). The seven deadly sins of AI predictions. *MIT Technology Review*. https://www.technologyreview.com/2017/10/06/241837/the-seven-deadly-sins-of-ai-predictions/

"Mistaken predictions lead to fears of things that are not going to happen, whether it's the wide-scale destruction of jobs, the Singularity, or the advent of AI that has values different from ours and might try to destroy us. We need to push back on these mistakes."

Chandra, K. (2023, June 8). What's a word worth in the AI era? *Inside Higher Ed.* https://www.insidehighered.com/opinion/views/2023/06/08/what-word-worth-ai-era-opinion

Kartik Chandra offers a message to the Class of 2023: your words matter, now more than ever.

Chen, S.Y, Tenjarla, R., Oremus, W., & Harris, T. (2023, August 31). How to talk to an AI chatbot: An ordinary human's guide to getting extraordinary results from a chatbot. *Washington Post.* https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/interactive/2023/how-to-talk-ai-chatbot-chatgpt/

This guide shares strategies for asking a chatbot to help with explaining, writing and brainstorming, with specific interactive examples.

Dede, C. (2023, August 6). What is academic integrity in the age of artificial intelligence? [Blog]. *Silver Lining for Learning*. https://silverliningforlearning.org/what-is-academic-integrity-in-the-era-of-generative-artificial-intelligence/

This article from Chris Dede, Harvard education professor and co-principal investigator of the NSF-funded National Artificial Intelligence Institute in Adult Learning and Online Education, explores the concept of academic integrity while also providing foundational knowledge about LLMs and how they work. Dede argues for intelligence augmentation, not intelligence replacement, when we work with AI.

Future of Life Institute (2023, March 22). *Pause giant AI experiments: An open letter.* Future of Life.org. https://futureoflife.org/open-letter/pause-giant-ai-experiments/

This open letter highlights the risks and unknowns of generative AI development and calls for an immediate six month pause.

Gent, E. (2023, May 10). What is the AI alignment problem and how can it be solved? New Scientist. https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg25834382-000-what-is-the-ai-alignment-problem-and-how-can-it-be-solved/

Artificial intelligence systems will do what you ask but not necessarily what you meant. The challenge is to make sure they act in line with human's complex, nuanced values.

Kirschenbaum, M. (2023, March 8). Prepare for the textpocalypse. *The Atlantic Monthly.* https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2023/03/ai-chatgpt-writing-language-models/673318/

Our relationship to writing is about to change forever; it may not end well.

Knight, S. Chatting with AI. https://casls.uoregon.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2023/05/Chatting-with-AI-Vol.-1-Iss.-2.pdf

This 10 minute classroom activity from familiarizes students with ChatGPT and prompt writing.

La France, A. (2023, June 5). The coming humanist renaissance. *The Atlantic Monthly*. https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2023/07/generative-ai-human-culture-philosophy/674165/

We need a cultural and philosophical movement to meet the rise of artificial superintelligence.

Metz, C. (2019, March 1). Is ethical A.I. even possible? *New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/01/business/ethics-artificial-intelligence.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share&referringSource=articleShare

"Building ethical artificial intelligence is an enormously complex task. It gets even harder when stakeholders realize that ethics are in the eye of the beholder."

Nkonde, M. (2023, February 22). ChatGPT: New technology, Same old misogynoir. *Ms. Magazine*. https://msmagazine.com/2023/02/22/chatgpt-technology-black-women-history-fact-check/

The contributions to human history made by women, children and people who speak nonstandard English will be underrepresented by chatbots like ChatGPT.

Perrigo, B. (2023, January 28). Exclusive: OpenAI Used Kenyan Workers on Less Than $2 Per Hour to Make ChatGPT Less Toxic. *Time.com*. https://time.com/6247678/openai-chatgpt-kenya-workers/

This article discusses the ethical implications of using low-paid workers to train ChatGPT (CW: sexual abuse).

Sterling, B. (2023, June 28). AI is the Scariest Beast Ever Created, Says Sci-Fi Writer Bruce Sterling. Newsweek. https://www.newsweek.com/2023/07/21/ai-scariest-beast-ever-created-says-sci-fi-writer-bruce-sterling-1809439.html

This essay discusses three "monster" AI models: Roko's Basilisk, the Shoggoth, and the Paperclip AI, using the metaphor of Mardi Gras and Lent to consider what our lives may look like once the AI gold rush cools.

Trucano, M. (2023, July 10). AI and the next digital divide in education. *Brookings Institute.* https://www.brookings.edu/articles/ai-and-the-next-digital-divide-in-education/

Trucano explores the potential for AI to make the existing digital divide–the idea that some children, families, teachers, and schools have access to information and communications technologies to support learning while others do not–even worse for students.

Williamson, B. (2023, June 30). Degenerative AI in education. Code Acts in Education [Blog]. https://codeactsineducation.wordpress.com/2023/06/30/degenerative-ai-in-education/

"What if, instead of being generative of educational transformations, AI in education proves to be degenerative—deteriorating rather than improving classroom practices, educational relations and wider systems of schooling?"

Wolchover, N. (2020, January 20). Artificial intelligence will do what we ask. That's a problem. *Quanta Magazine.* https://www.quantamagazine.org/artificial-intelligence-will-do-what-we-ask-thats-a-problem-20200130/

By teaching machines to understand our true desires, one scientist hopes to avoid the potentially disastrous consequences of having them do what we command.

Yudkowsky, E. (2023, March 29). Pausing AI developments isn't enough. We need to shut it all down. *Time.com.* https://time.com/6266923/ai-eliezer-yudkowsky-open-letter-not-enough/?mibextid=Zxz2cZ&fbclid=IwAR39K9_VsmVLYfzCWqlPaRFBqGoXGviRgqp77h1FWGhXqAIR7R2lTm5RjNo_aem_AQs-MSEiCT4fQkccotVSZBlqI_8aLpcBJXsAV9wQi33e_ZFBPrdvwhWaJNdWI50hVWc

Yudkowsky, a decision theorist from the U.S. who leads research at the Machine Intelligence Research Institute, paints an urgent and imminent worst-case scenario where generative AI destroys humanity.

Videos

Bostrom, N. (2015). What happens when our computers get smarter than we are? [Video]. TED thttps://www.ted.com/talks/nick_bostrom_what_happens_when_our_computers_get_smarter_than_we_are

Artificial intelligence is getting smarter by leaps and bounds — within this century, research suggests, a computer AI could be as "smart" as a human being. And then, says Nick Bostrom, it will overtake us: "Machine intelligence is the last invention that humanity will ever need to make." A philosopher and technologist, Bostrom asks us to think hard about the world we're building right now, driven by thinking machines.

Khan, S. (2023). How AI could save (not destroy) education. https://www.ted.com/talks/sal_khan_how_ai_could_save_not_destroy_education/c

Sal Khan, the founder and CEO of Khan Academy, thinks artificial intelligence could spark the greatest positive transformation education has ever seen. He shares the opportunities he sees for students and educators to collaborate with AI tools — including the potential of a personal AI tutor for every student and an AI teaching assistant for every teacher — and demos some exciting new features for their educational chatbot, Khanmigo.

177. Peer Reviewed/ Professional Readings and Research on AI

LIZA LONG

This annotated bibliography includes peer reviewed research, pre-print research, and professional blogs for educators. The annotations are still a work in progress, so thank you for your patience! Where abstracts or author summaries are available, I have included these.

Anderson, J. & Rainie, L. (2023). As AI Spreads, Experts Predict the Best and Worst Changes in Digital Life by 2035. Pew Research Center https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2023/06/PI_2023.06.21_Best-Worst-Digital-Life_2035_FINAL.pdf?mibextid=Zxz2cZ

> This report covers results from the 16th "Future of the Internet" canvassing that Pew Research Center and Elon University's Imagining the Internet Center have conducted together to gather expert views about important digital issues. This is a nonscientific canvassing based on a nonrandom sample; this broad array of opinions about where the potential influence of current trends may lead society between 2023 and 2035 represents only the points of view of the individuals who responded to the queries. Pew Research Center and Elon's Imagining the Internet Center sampled from a database of experts to canvass from a wide range of fields, inviting entrepreneurs, professionals and policy people based in government bodies, nonprofits and foundations, technology businesses and think tanks, as well as interested academics and technology innovators. The predictions reported here came in response to a set of

questions in an online canvassing conducted between Dec. 27, 2022, and Feb. 21, 2023. In all, 305 technology innovators and developers, business and policy leaders, researchers and activists responded in some way to the question covered in this report.

D'Agostino, S. (2023, June 5). How AI tools both help and hinder equity, Inside Higher Ed. https://www.insidehighered.com/news/tech-innovation/artificial-intelligence/2023/06/05/how-ai-tools-both-help-and-hinder-equity

The technology promises to assist students with disadvantages in developing skills needed for success. But AI also threatens to widen the education gap like no tech before it.

Dede, C., Etemadi, A., & Forshaw, T. (2021). Intelligence Augmentation: Upskilling Humans to Complement AI. *Project Zero.* https://pz.harvard.edu/resources/intelligence-augmentation-upskilling-humans-to-complement-ai

While many forecasts chart an evolution of artificial intelligence (AI) in taking human jobs, more likely is a future where AI changes the division of labor in most jobs, driving a need for workforce development to shift towards uniquely human skills. Specifically, AI is becoming increasingly proficient at calculation, computation, and prediction ("reckoning") skills. As such, we will see increased demand for human judgment skills such as decision-making under conditions of uncertainty, deliberation, ethics, and practical knowing. Developing human judgment skills follows well from the broadened conception of learners presented in the earlier briefs in this series. This brief focuses on the important topic of how workforce development can help humans prepare to collaborate with artificial intelligence to do work that neither are capable of in isolation.

Eaton, S. E., Dawson, P., McDermott, B., Brennan, R., Wiens, J., Moya, B., Dahal, B., Hamilton, M., Kumar, R., Mindzak, M., Miller, A., & Milne, N. (2023). Understanding the Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Higher Education. Calgary, Canada. https://hdl.handle.net/1880/116624

Eaton, S. (2023).Academic Integrity and Artificial Intelligence: Research Project Update. Learning, Teaching, and Leadership [Blog]. https://drsaraheaton.wordpress.com/2023/06/22/academic-integrity-and-artificial-intelligence-research-project-update/

This blog post contains numerous links to peer reviewed research, presentations, and other resources for college educators on the use of AI in the classroom.

Eloundou, T., Manning, S., Mishkin, P., & Rock, D. (2023). Gpts are gpts: An early look at the labor market impact potential of large language models. arXiv preprint arXiv:2303.10130. https://arxiv.org/abs/2303.10130

From section 4.3: "Our findings indicate that the importance of science and critical thinking skills are strongly negatively associated with exposure, suggesting that occupations requiring these skills are less likely to be impacted by current language models. Conversely, programming and writing skills show a strong positive association with exposure, implying that occupations involving these skills are more susceptible to being influenced by language models."

Gadiraju, V., Kane, S., Dev, S., Taylor, A., Wang, D., Denton, E., & Brewer, R. (2023, June). " I wouldn't say offensive but…": Disability-Centered Perspectives on Large Language Models. In *Proceedings of the 2023 ACM Conference on Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency* (pp. 205-216). https://research.google/pubs/pub52358/

Large language models (LLMs) trained on real-world data can inadvertently reflect harmful societal biases, particularly toward historically marginalized communities. While previous work has primarily focused on harms related to age and race, emerging research has shown that biases toward disabled communities exist. This study extends prior work exploring the existence of harms by identifying categories of LLM-perpetuated harms toward the disability community. We conducted 19 focus groups, during which 56 participants with disabilities probed a dialog model about disability and discussed and annotated its responses. Participants rarely characterized model outputs as blatantly offensive or toxic. Instead, participants used nuanced language to detail how the dialog model mirrored subtle yet harmful stereotypes they encountered in their lives and dominant media, e.g., inspiration porn and able-bodied saviors. Participants often implicated training data as a cause for these stereotypes and recommended training the model on diverse identities from disability-positive resources. Our discussion further explores representative data strategies to mitigate harm related to different communities through annotation co-design with ML researchers and developers.

LaQuintano, T., Schnitzler, C., & Vee, A. (2023). *TextGenEd: An introduction to teaching with text generation technologies.* WAC Clearinghouse. https://wac.colostate.edu/repository/collections/textgened/?fbclid=IwAR2wCfhGsL_t6SPR0jif-HX84k7_ezCeHuu1WE8n1W6EbgndwIy0hhDxU1A_aem_AcmrzVKiCynZcFViNCClV-a6wwe2lG-6kvcTDljAc7sZ5lCO93Oc-iMa8WQE_S1TXw&mibextid=Zxz2cZ

At the cusp of this moment defined by generative AI, *TextGenEd* collects early experiments in pedagogy with generative text technology, including but not limited to AI. The resources in this collection will help writing teachers to integrate computational writing technologies into their assignments. Many of the assignments ask teachers and students to critically probe the affordances and limits of computational writing tools. Some assignments ask students to generate Markov chains (statistically sequenced language blocks) or design simple neural networks and others ask students to use AI platforms in order to critique or gain fluency with them. A few assignments require teachers to have significant familiarity with text generation technologies in order to lead students, but most are set up to allow teachers and students to explore together. Regardless of their approach, all of these assignments now speak to the contemporary writing landscape that is currently being shaped by generative AI. Put another way, the assignments in this collection offer initial answers to urgent calls for AI literacy.

Lorentzen, A. and Bonner, E. (2023, February 12). Customizable ChatGPT AI Chatbots for Conversation Practice. *The FLT Mag*. https://fltmag.com/customizable-chatgpt-ai-chatbots-for-conversation-practice/

Since OpenAI's AI can also be accessed and interacted with using a little bit of computer code called an API, we decided to go the extra step and develop a simple application using Unity, some 3D characters and some C# coding that would give the AI a customizable voice, accent and appearance. This way our students could not only create their own personalized AI conversation partners, but also choose how they look and sound. Finally, using Google Speech-to-Text for the students and Text-to-Speech for the AI, our students spoke with their AI directly and heard and saw the AI respond in kind.

Mollick, E. R. (2023, February 17). My class required AI. Here's what I've learned so far. One Useful Thing. https://www.oneusefulthing.org/p/my-class-required-ai-heres-what-ive?subscribe_prompt=free

I fully embraced AI for my classes this semester, requiring students to use AI tools in a number of ways. This policy attracted a lot of interest, and I thought it worthwhile to reflect on how it is going so far. The short answer is: great! But I have learned some early lessons that I think are worth passing on.

Mollick, E. R., & Mollick, L. (2023). Using AI to implement effective teaching strategies in classrooms: Five strategies, including prompts. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4391243

This paper provides guidance for using AI to quickly and easily implement evidence-based teaching strategies that instructors can integrate into their teaching. We discuss five teaching strategies that have proven value but are hard to implement in practice due to time and effort constraints. We show how AI can help instructors create material that supports these strategies and improve student learning. The strategies include providing multiple examples and explanations; uncovering and addressing student misconceptions; frequent low-stakes testing; assessing student learning; and distributed practice. The paper provides guidelines for how AI can support each strategy, and discusses both the promises and perils of this approach, arguing that AI may act as a "force multiplier" for instructors if implemented cautiously and thoughtfully in service of evidence-based teaching practices.

Mollick, E. R., & Mollick, L. (2022). New modes of learning enabled by AI chatbots: Three methods and assignments. Available at SSRN. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4300783

Chatbots are able to produce high-quality, sophisticated text in natural language. The authors of this paper believe that AI can be used to overcome three barriers to learning in the classroom: improving transfer, breaking the illusion of explanatory depth, and training students to critically evaluate explanations. The paper provides background information and techniques on how AI can be used to overcome these barriers and includes prompts and assignments that teachers can incorporate into their teaching. The goal is to help teachers use the capabilities and drawbacks of AI to improve learning

Sayers, D. (2023, May 25). A simple hack to ChatGPT-proof assignments using Google Drive. *Times Higher Education.*

https://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/simple-hack-chatgptproof-assignments-using-google-drive

Sayers explains how he uses Google Docs version history to track potential misuse of generative AI in student assignments (note from Liza: this may prove more difficult now that generative AI writing assistant is embedded in Google Docs, but it still may be a good idea to try).

Zamfirescu-Pereira, J. D., Wong, R. Y., Hartmann, B., & Yang, Q. (2023, April). Why Johnny can't prompt: how non-AI experts try (and fail) to design LLM prompts. In *Proceedings of the 2023 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (pp. 1-21). https://dl.acm.org/doi/pdf/10.1145/3544548.3581388

Pre-trained large language models ("LLMs") like GPT-3 can engage in fluent, multi-turn instruction-taking out-of-the-box, making them attractive materials for designing natural language interactions. Using natural language to steer LLM outputs ("prompting") has emerged as an important design technique potentially accessible to non-AI-experts. Crafting effective prompts can be challenging, however, and prompt-based interactions are brittle. Here, we explore whether non-AI-experts can successfully engage in "end-user prompt engineering" using a design probe—a prototype LLM-based chatbot design tool supporting development and systematic evaluation of prompting strategies. Ultimately, our probe participants explored prompt designs opportunistically, not systematically, and struggled in ways echoing end-user programming systems and interactive machine learning systems. Expectations stemming from human-to-human instructional experiences, and a tendency to overgeneralize, were barriers to effective prompt design. These findings have implications for non-AI-expert-facing LLM-based tool design and for improving LLM-and-prompt literacy among programmers and the public, and present opportunities for further research.

178. Writing with AI Prompts (Josh Brewer)

Overview

This resource includes traditional writing prompts as well as prompts and assignments that utilize AI-generated text. It covers the fields of Creative Writing, Composition, and Business and Technical Writing. These prompts were developed by Josh Brewer.

Introduction

This resource provides a repository of writing prompts that writing instructors can use in their classes. Please feel free to use anything you find here or remix it. If you would like to add to this resource, you can copy the entire thing, and create your own. Otherwise, you can email your prompt suggestions to brewerwriter@gmail.com. For now, this resource will cover Creative Writing, Composition, and Business/Tech Writing.

Creative Writing Prompts

I put creative writing first, because it seems to be the most amenable to AI text generation.

Take your dialogue and ask the chatbot to rewrite it in, say, the style of Tarantino or Mamet.

============

Summarize the plot of a famous work of literature. Then ask AI to write this in a completely different genre (or at least to give you the outline for rewriting the entire novel in a new genre). For example, have it rewrite Frankenstein as a romantic comedy.

============

Ask AI to write a poem in a very challenging form with several other restrictions. For example, you could ask it to write a crown of sonnets in anapestic tetrameter. Now, it won't be able to do that, but see if it doesn't give you some ideas for a poem anyway.

Memoir in 100 Words View

Composition Prompts

AI-resistant prompts:

Look at the art in the hallway and throughout the building. Pick one to write about:

Describe painting by paying attention to details.

What specifics make it unique?

What theme do you see in the details? Where? (Be specific, in other words.)

How to the parts make a whole or what doesn't fit?

Describe an artistic technique or its effect on you as you look. Discuss colors.

What does this person say? What's the tone of voice, personality, or context?

Where is this? What happens or does not happen here?

What was the painter thinking?

- **AI component**: Ask a chatbot how to improve your answers to the questions above in terms of specificity, clarity, and vocabulary.

=========

Clothes Prompts for Description

Think about a single article of clothing that you own. Pick something you've had for years or your go-to outfit for certain situations (working, relaxing with friends, sleepovers, game day, formal wear). Describe it in great detail, far beyond the words below. You can talk about the size and fit, sure, but how does it feel in your hands, on your shoulder, head, or waistline? Where is it worn or stained? Describe that. What colors can you see? Don't just tell me about the red stiletto; tell me about the shape of the sole on the bottom of the spike. It isn't round, is it? Enumerate things. Work around the clock (12/3/6/9), describing all sides and angles, and don't forget the **<u>inside</u>** of the garment, shoe, or hat.

Shoes: your most comfortable house slippers rainy day shoes Summer/beachwear
Work boots Your favorite running shoes Pumps, stilettoes

Tops: shawl Polo Shirt that you wear when you… / when you want to …
Flannel windbreaker hoodie camisole tank blouse T-shirt

Bottoms: mini skirt khakis sweatpants pajamas favorite jeans

Yoga/bicycle shorts/shorts I wear when you... / when you want to...   underwear   socks   classy shorts

Hats: baseball   cap   bowler   hardhat   cowboy/girl hat   beach/sun hat

FREEWRITE: fill at least two paragraphs with as much detail as you can about your chosen article of clothing.

AI Component: Have a conversation with a chatbot about how to organize your writing about your article of clothing. Also, you might do a little research to find the right vocabulary (so that you don't have to say "that thing that looks like clear tape around the end of my shoelaces").

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Tell a story:

Put <u>yourself</u> (or a character you've invented) in that piece of clothing. Tell a story in which a bit of the description you used above comes into play. You can use real dialogue (or fake) or no dialogue. If you can't remember the actual words, make some up. Build on memories or create them.

Otherwise, you can write in the first person about another character's clothing. Or you can write about someone *else*'s garment that *you* now own—something that means a lot to you. ***Don't <u>just</u> focus on your feelings or emotions***! Note <u>changes</u> over time, if any, or different <u>occasions</u> when you've worn this item.

The point is to use your senses to describe it:

* How does it smell?

* How does it feel?

* How does it look?

* Does it make a sound?

Business and Technical Writing Prompts

Write a company profile for a regional or national company. You can also pick a nonprofit.

- Try prompting ChatGPT to write the first draft. However, this chatbot does not use the most up-to-date information. Therefore, you'll need to do research.
- Start with the company website, but don't forget its social media presence as well. Follow or join platforms where this company is active.
- Tell the story of the company's history. They will likely leave out the rough spots. Check local newspapers, online reviews, former employee blogs, or social media posts from customers. These can help you make this an objective history. If you use ChatGPT for this section, be sure to double check the facts. Sometimes it just makes up falsehoods, so edit the history carefully.
- What products or services is this company known for? Has it won any awards? Can you find opinions from customers, vendors, employees, or neighbors of this organization or its products? Can you find their company rating with the Better Business Bureau or similar websites?
- What business sectors do they operate in? (Retail, financial services, charity, website design?) What is the market outlook for such companies? How do they compare to similar companies? Would an investor be wise to invest in them? ChatGPT can help you orient yourself to some of these ideas, but the market changes daily, so do your own research.
- What are the values, goals, and mission statements of this company? Again, you may need to move beyond their website

and infer things that they don't necessarily say about themselves. Use your critical thinking skills to do so.

- Is this company growing, shrinking, or merging with another organization? Search through job advertisements on sites such as Indeed, LinkedIn, and ZipRecruiter. See if you can guess the new directions for this company based on job ads they have posted recently.
- What is their current address? How do they ask to be contacted? Who are the leaders in this company, and what's the contact information for them?

Writing for Yourself or Your Company on LinkedIn

You need to learn how to write your LinkedIN profile. You also should know about how to market yourself or your products on LinkedIn.

PROMPT:

You are a career building expert. I am a young student. How should I write my LinkedIn profile summary? Use facts only. Give examples of language that I should use and also what to avoid.

Answer: Sure, I'd be happy to help you with that. Here are some tips for writing a strong LinkedIn profile summary as a young student:

1. Keep it concise: Your LinkedIn summary should be a brief overview of your professional experience and goals. Aim for a summary of 3-5 sentences or bullet points.
2. Highlight your unique selling points: Focus on your strengths and achievements that make you stand out. For example, you might mention any academic honors or awards, relevant coursework, or extracurricular activities.
3. Use action-oriented language: Start your sentences with action verbs that showcase your skills and accomplishments. For example, instead of saying "I am interested in marketing," say "I have experience creating and executing successful marketing campaigns."

4. Avoid clichés and vague language: Phrases like “team player” and “hard worker” are overused and don’t provide specific details about your skills or accomplishments. Also, avoid using buzzwords and jargon that may not be easily understood by everyone.
5. Customize for your audience: Consider the industry or job function you’re interested in and tailor your summary to highlight relevant skills or experience.

Here’s an example of a strong LinkedIn summary for a young student:

“Motivated student with a strong academic record and passion for marketing. Completed coursework in digital marketing and advertising, and gained hands-on experience through internships at XYZ company and ABC nonprofit. Excited to apply my skills and knowledge to a marketing role in the technology industry.”

Remember to proofread your summary and ensure that it is free of spelling or grammatical errors. A well-crafted LinkedIn summary can make a big difference in attracting attention from potential employers or professional connections.

PROMPT: I want you to be an expert in <topic>. You have all the information about anything to do with <topic>. I will ask about different subjects within <topic>. You will provide me with clear, concise, accurate information. Ensure that you only respond back with answers that you know are true or factual. Please limit your responses to the specific information requested. Avoid providing unnecessary details.

Topic = LinkedIN Marketing

Sure, I’ll do my best to assist you with your questions about LinkedIn marketing. Please go ahead and ask me any specific questions you have on this topic.

Question: Do I have to own a business to engage in LinkedIn marketing? If not, how do I get started?

Answer: No, you don’t need to own a business to engage in LinkedIn marketing. LinkedIn provides opportunities for individuals to market themselves as professionals and to build their personal brand. Here are some steps to get started with LinkedIn marketing as an individual:

1. Create a LinkedIn profile: The first step is to create a LinkedIn profile that highlights your professional skills, experience, and accomplishments. Ensure that your profile is complete and professional-looking.
2. Build your network: Connect with other professionals in your industry, clients, and colleagues on LinkedIn to expand your network. Share your profile link with your contacts to invite them to connect with you.
3. Share valuable content: Share relevant articles, insights, and updates related to your industry or area of expertise. This will help you establish yourself as a thought leader and attract more followers.
4. Participate in LinkedIn groups: Join LinkedIn groups related to your industry and participate in discussions to engage with other professionals and expand your reach.
5. Consider LinkedIn advertising: If you have a budget for advertising, LinkedIn offers a variety of advertising options to target specific audiences based on their job title, company, and other demographics.

By following these steps, you can effectively leverage LinkedIn marketing to build your personal brand and expand your professional network.

Q: How much does it cost for an individual to market themselves on LinkedIn? Are there multiple price points? What different services do they offer for targeting specific audiences?

A: Marketing yourself on LinkedIn as an individual is free, but if you want to take advantage of additional features and advertising options, there may be costs involved.

LinkedIn offers a range of advertising options that allow you to target specific audiences based on their job title, industry, location, and other demographics. These advertising options include sponsored content, sponsored InMail, display ads, and dynamic ads.

The cost of advertising on LinkedIn varies depending on the advertising option you choose and the size of your target audience. LinkedIn advertising operates on a bidding system, where advertisers bid for ad placement and pay-per-click (PPC) or per-impression (CPM). You can set your own budget and bid for ad placement, and LinkedIn will provide an estimated range for the minimum bid required to reach your target audience.

In terms of pricing, LinkedIn offers multiple price points for advertising depending on your budget and advertising goals. For example, sponsored content ads can start at $10 per day, while sponsored InMail campaigns can cost upwards of $3000 depending on the size of the target audience and the number of messages sent.

LinkedIn also offers targeting options such as job title, job function, company size, industry, location, and more. These targeting options allow you to reach the most relevant audience for your business or professional goals.

Overall, the cost of LinkedIn marketing can vary widely depending on your goals, targeting options, and budget. LinkedIn provides a range of options to suit different marketing needs and budgets.

179. Share a Resource!

We'd love to add to this collection. If you have an AI-related resource you would like to share for possible inclusion in this book, please complete [this form.]

Include the name of the resource, a link, and the type of resource as well as a brief description of how it will be useful to teachers and/or students. We appreciate your help!

Image Credit: Prompt: "An image of teachers and robots smiling in a classroom in the style of a cartoon." Adobe Firefly, June 30, 2023.

PART XXIII

FEEDBACK FOR "WRITE WHAT MATTERS"

Thanks for participating in our "Write What Matters" Open Education Resource pilot! If you have suggestions, please respond to the questions here. Try to be as specific as possible. We really appreciate your help in including new material or assignments, locating errors/typos, and hearing about how you're using the textbook.