

English 101: Journey Into Open



ENGLISH 101: JOURNEY INTO OPEN



Writing for College Classes

Christine Jones

Glendale



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THESE MATERIALS AND
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ENGLISH 101 JOURNEY INTO OPEN
COURSEBOOK

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Other Materials

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CHRISTINE JONES

Welcome to English 101 Open

This textbook is an English 101 text that includes rhetoric and approaches to research.

There are hundreds of wonderful, free writing resources available online, yet most college writing classes still use expensive textbooks. Students have been frustrated by textbook prices for longer than most instructors have noticed. Your instructor, like many others at the campus, has been actively working to lower that barrier to instruction and learning.

This course uses OER Materials.



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2.0

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Materials have been organized into “Chapters” which connect to the Modules of the course. They are NOT in the same order that the modules are. However, there are a few extra chapters in the book. This is because of the changing nature of the course. You may not completely read the textbook by the end of the semester. The materials include text, videos, and interactive activities that were developed under Creative Commons licensing.

You are expected to read the texts, watch the videos, and participate in interactive activities. You should complete the reading before coming to class, as I will be teaching with the expectation that you have completed the reading. It is best if you complete your Cornell Notes before the classes so you will be familiar with the information and be able to use them in class. Many of the in-class assignments are directly related to the information you will find in the book. Some of the in-book activities will be requested in class!

H5P Activities

The videos and activities that are in the book are sometimes graded. If you are reading the textbook for information, you can do that in any format you like, even printed. If you want the credit for completing the activities, you will need to access the textbook online.

This is only required for completing the graded activities. Here is an example of a graded activity that might show up in Canvas.



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<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=4#h5p-62>

Be sure to click “Submit” if there is a submit button. If there is a print button available, be sure to save a copy to your Google Drive. I recommend having a folder for the textbook activities in case of technical issues. These saved documents should be saved in PDF format. Mac, Iphone and Ipad access may make saving as a PDF difficult, but you can also save it to a Google Doc and then download as PDF.

Why, What, When, Where, How, Who?

by Sybil Priebe

WHY Do I Have to Take This Class? WHY Do I Have to Improve My Writing?

Students ask me why they have to take my class. They ask me this a lot. A LOT.

Now, I could be a typical teacher and roll my eyes, but I usually try to connect these questions with the REAL WORLD. College instructors are supposed to prepare students for that big scary REAL WORLD, right? So, often, I'll explain it like this:

“Do the people around you communicate well? Everyone always knows what the other one is saying, thinking, feeling at any given moment? Or, perhaps this is a better question: The people around you never fight or argue?”

Rarely can anyone say they haven’t seen people fight. Here’s a key to why English is important at all levels – communication is super tricky. We create slang on a daily basis, we text people with acronyms, and we still have people not understanding other people even when we don’t use slang or a text message! And don’t forget that if we can’t speak well, we probably aren’t writing well – what does that mean in our future jobs? For our future customers? What does that mean for us as people in relationships, friendships, etc.?

WHAT is Writing All About?

What is Composition? What is Rhetoric?

What is Literature? What is Linguistics?

These are terms you might only get quizzed on during Jeopardy, but if we start from the smallest level and work our way to the largest, it goes like this: Linguistics is the study of words, Composition is the study of arranging those words into sentences and paragraphs and essays, and then Literature is the study of fully composed pieces of work that may or may not be true (Nonfiction vs. Fiction). That weird word Rhetoric? Yeah, that’s the study of Argument.

WHEN Should We Write? WHERE Should

We Write?

All the time and everywhere.

HOW Can You Get Started with Writing?

With this amazing book!

WHO Am I Writing This For?

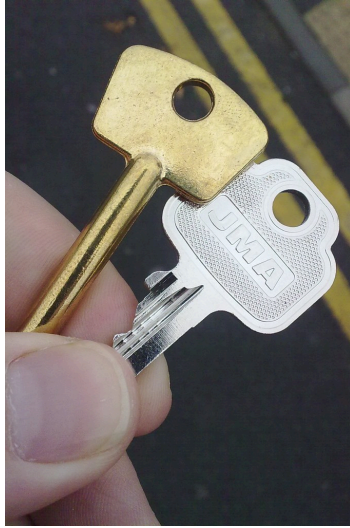
Okay, so typically, you might only be composing an assignment for your teacher's eyes only, but if you participate in Peer Review, or will be showing the final product to the public, your audience is more than one person.

Some Comparisons

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

The Keys to Success



Planning Strategies

Time Management

- Setting aside enough time
- Breaking Assignments into manageable chunks

Setting a purpose for reading

- How did my instructor frame the assignment?
- How deeply do I need to understand the reading?
- How does this assignment relate to other course readings or to concepts discussed in class?
- How might I use this text again in the future?

Comprehension Strategies

Reading for Information

- Reading that aligns with our skill level and interests
 - Magazines, newspapers, the latest book in our favorite series, a book about our favorite subject
 - Reading is not challenging and can be done passively

Reading for Understanding

- Reading that is outside of our skill level and interest
 - College textbooks and assignments
 - Reading is more challenging and requires more effort/deliberate action

Active Reading

- Reading for understanding cannot be done passively
- How much understanding you gain from a text depends on how much activity you put into it
- Active readers engage with a text: ask questions and demand answers
- Active readers can organize the reading and record answers to any questions
- 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.
- 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
- 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.

Annotate a Text

Develop a system and stick to it!

- I generally underline the Thesis and Topic Sentences
- I use vertical lines in the right margin of a paragraph for important supporting details—note the word, important; I do not highlight small details because annotations should be used for the main ideas and should point you toward what you need to read further.
- I circle unfamiliar words and write their

definition above the word or next to it.

- I write notes in the margin if I want to connect the information to something else I have read or an essay I am writing.
- I use an asterisk or exclamation point for startling facts/ statistics or surprising information.

Continuously Monitor Your Comprehension

Summarize the main points

- Thesis
- Topic Sentences

Ask questions and then answer them

Prepare questions for class discussion

Use the SQ3R Strategy

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

Key Takeaways

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

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

Optional Extra

As I was preparing this textbook, I came across a series of helpful videos that I know can help YOU, my students, with your college courses. However, I feel it should be up to you whether you watch them or not. So, I have put them here. This is the first in a playlist of helpful videos. Only one of the videos will be required and it is already in the chapter it links with. The others are optional, but a fun way to check your skills. Have fun!



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<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=4#oembed-1>

This textbook was compiled by Mrs. Christine Jones for her English 101 course using multiple OER and Creative

Commons licensed materials. A complete guide to the texts used can be found in the Appendix, with links to the Pressbooks and source materials pages. Specific citations and attributions can be found at the bottom of each chapter.

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PART I

THE WRITING PROCESS

Writing is a Process

Do you know what a Slinky® is?

It's a toy that can serve as a metaphor for the writing process.

A Slinky is one piece of material that's coiled in many loops. Writing is a large process that's made up of smaller ones—processes that connect and loop around each other.

A Slinky, after the first nudge, travels downstairs on its own, step by step. An experienced writer, after the first nudge of an idea or observation, moves through the writing process step by step, with the option to loop back up the stairs as well as down.

Okay, that's as far as the metaphor stretches (and yes,



"Slinky" by JeepersMedia is licensed under CC BY 2.0

that's a bad pun). But you get the idea through the visual example. Writing is a process.

Writing is a tangible result of thinking. And learning how to think—how to develop your own ideas and concepts—is the purpose of a college education. Even though the end result of writing is a product, writing itself is a process through which you ask questions; create, develop, hone, and organize ideas; argue a point; search for evidence to support your ideas...and so on. The point here is that writing really involves creative and critical thinking processes. Like any creative process, it often starts in a jumble as you develop, sort, and sift through ideas. But it doesn't need to stay in disarray. Your writing will gain direction as you start examining those ideas. It just doesn't happen all at once. Writing is a process that happens over time. And like any process, there are certain steps or stages.

These are some of the major stages in a strong writing process:

1. Thinking about your assignment
2. Developing ideas (often called prewriting)
3. Narrowing a topic
4. Gathering information
5. Ordering and drafting
6. Revising and editing



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Thinking About Your Assignment

When you receive your writing assignment from your professor, it's important to stop and think about your assignment. What are the requirements? What is the purpose of this assignment? What is your professor asking you to write? Who will be your audience?

Before you begin to write any part of an essay you have been assigned, it's important to first carefully consider your assignment. You must think about the requirements and how you plan to meet those requirements. All too often, students make the mistake of jumping into an assignment without stopping to think about it rhetorically.

What does it mean to think about an assignment rhetorically?

It means that you're being considerate of the purpose of the assignment, the audience for the assignment, the voice you might want to use when you write, and how you will approach the assignment effectively overall.

Each time you are presented with a writing assignment in the college, you're being presented with a particular situation for writing. Learning about rhetoric can help you learn to make good decisions about your writing. Rhetoric can be simply defined as figuring out what you need to do to be effective, no matter the writing situation.

Thinking rhetorically is an important part of any writing process because every writing assignment has different expectations. There is no such thing as right

when it comes to writing; instead, try to think about good writing as being writing that is effective in that particular situation.

The following video presentation will help you as you begin to think about your assignments rhetorically. It's so important to stop and think about what you are being asked to write about and why before you begin an assignment.



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<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=32#oembed-3>

Developing Ideas

Writers need to have something to write about. In college, you'll be expected to provide your own observations and ideas. Even in a research paper on an assigned topic, you'll be expected to offer your own thinking about what your sources say. The purpose of writing in college is to show your own analysis and thought processes on the concepts that you're learning about.

Writers develop ideas in many ways, including the following:

- Journaling
- Freewriting
- Brainstorming
- Mapping or diagramming
- Listing
- Asking defining questions

- Noting Pros & Cons

You will find each of these options explained in more detail in the **Prewriting** chapter. If you do not already have a strong prewriting process, you should try out several of the strategies to see what works best for you.

Narrowing a Topic

Once you have decided what you want to write about, you need to stop and consider if you have chosen a feasible topic that meets the assignment's purpose.

A cherry blossom tree with a magnifying glass focusing on one blossom

If you have chosen a very large topic for a research paper assignment, you need to create a feasible focus that's researchable. For example, you might write about something like the Vietnam War, specifically the economic impact of the war on the U.S. economy.

If you have chosen a topic for a non-research assignment, you still need to narrow the focus of the paper to something manageable that allows you to go in-depth in the writing. For instance, you might have a goal of writing about the nursing profession but with a specific focus on what the daily routine is like for a nurse at your local pediatric hospital.

The important thing is to think about your assignment requirements, including length requirements, and make sure you have found a topic that is specific enough to be engaging and interesting and will fit within the assignment requirements.

GATHERING INFORMATION

It's easier to gather information once you have a relatively narrow topic. A good analogy is when you conduct a search in an online database. You'll get thousands (if not more) entries if you use the keywords **Vietnam War** as opposed to fewer and more focused entries if you use terms related to the economic impact of the war on the U.S.

Or, if you're analyzing *The Great Gatsby*, you'll be able to gather more specific information from the novel if you focus on a character, a theme, etc. instead of all elements of the novel at once.

It may help to use the image of a hand fan in order to understand gathering information. Think of your narrow topic as the end of the fan, the point at which all of the slats are linked together. As you gather information about your narrow topic, the fan spreads out, but the information is still all connected to the narrow topic.

NOTE: Sometimes, gathering information occurs before you narrow a topic, especially if you don't have much knowledge of that subject.

You might use a general reference source, such as an encyclopedia, a textbook, a magazine, or a website to get a broad view of the issues related to a topic. This, in turn, helps you think of ways to narrow the topic in order to create a focused piece of writing.

However, it's important to remember that sources like

encyclopedias should be starting points only and should not be the kinds of sources you use in most college-level essays.

ORDERING & DRAFTING

Before you begin to draft, it can be helpful to create an outline to help you organize your thoughts. You can refer to the prewriting if you have organized thoughts already using a prewriting strategy, such as mapping. The important thing is to list out your main ideas, including your thesis, to help you visualize where you are going with your essay. An outline will also help you see before you begin drafting if your ideas will support your thesis.

The actual writing occurs after you have a focus and enough information to support that focus. Drafting involves making choices about how much information to offer and what information to put where. Your outline will be a guide, but you may find that you need to revise the order once you begin drafting.

Consider the following points as you draft:

- Is there enough information to provide evidence for your assertions? If not, circle back to gathering information.
- Is there a basic idea that needs to be offered first so that readers understand subsequent ideas?
- Are there related ideas that logically should be grouped together?
- Are there some ideas that are more important than others and, if so, what is the best place in the writing to emphasize those ideas?
- Are there logical linkages between ideas, so readers don't get lost moving from one idea to the

next?

Drafting consists of building the paragraphs of your writing and linking them together. And, remember, your draft you create at this point is not your final draft. There are additional steps of the writing process to consider before you are ready to submit your work.

REVISING & EDITING BASICS

Revising

Meme - 2 horses making comical expressions. You want to write a paper without revising it? Tell me about it's complete lack of grammatical errors.

Many students often try to lump revising and editing into one, but they are really two separate activities. **Revising** is about your content while **editing** is about sentence-level issues and typos. It's important to remember to allow yourself time to complete both parts of this process carefully.

Revision is about seeing your writing again. Revising is an important step in the writing process because it enables you to look at your writing more objectively, from a reader's view. Set your writing aside for a time. Then go back to it and work from big to small as you ask and answer revising questions.

Basic Big Revision Questions—Ask These First:

- Are there places that are not **clear**?
- Are there places that need **more information**?
- Are there places that need **less information**, because the information seems to diverge too much from your main point?
- Does some of the information need to be **re-ordered** in order to make sense to a reader who may not have much background on this topic?

As you see, these basic revision questions concern themselves with the amount, clarity, and order of information. That's what the revision process is all about—making sure that your concepts and supporting information are presented in the clearest, most logical way for most readers to understand.

Once you deal with the big things (amount and order of information), then you can move to the small things—the language, grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Editing

Once you have your content the way you want it and have completed your revisions, it's time to think about editing your paper. When you edit, you are looking for issues with sentence structure, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, etc. And, when you edit, it's important to realize that it's difficult to catch all of these errors in one editing pass. A thorough editing process is one that involves several

editing passes. Research on student writing indicates that most of the errors in college essays are related to careless editing. With that in mind, it's important to take steps to ensure you are engaging in a good editing process.

Questions to Consider When You Edit

- Is the **language** clear and easy to read and understand?
Are difficult terms defined?
- Is the **sentence structure** clear and easy to understand?
- Are the sentences **grammatically correct**?
- Have I **proofread** and checked for typos and misspellings?
- What **errors** might my spell checker and grammar checker have missed?

WRITING PROCESS ACTIVITY



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

<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=32#h5p-1>

SEE IT IN PRACTICE

In this first section, you'll see the student's assignment sheet and hear a discussion of the key things she must consider for her assignment.

Then, consider the different steps of The Writing Process—**Prewriting** **Strategies, Audience**

Awareness, Voice, Introductions & Conclusions, Parts of a Thesis Sentence, Paragraphing, Essay Writing, and Revising & Editing, and notice how the student approaches these steps given her specific assignment. As you watch each step, you'll want to think about how you might apply each step to your own assignment, as you'll be given a chance to engage in each step with your own writing assignment.



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

<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=32#h5p-2>

THINK ABOUT WRITING

Now that you have seen how the student in the video approached her assignment, it's your turn to examine your own writing assignment. As you do, it's a good idea to do a little writing in a writing journal in some notes. In your writing, you should to the following questions about your assignment:

- What is the **purpose** of my assignment, or what is my professor asking me to do with this assignment?
- Who is my **audience** for this assignment? Did my professor specify an audience? If not, who can I assume is my intended audience?
- What **ideas** do I have for a topic that might work for this assignment? Do I have freedom with my topic, or do I have to choose from a specific list?
- How can I apply a **strong writing process** to my

approach for this assignment? What is my plan here?

Before you begin to gather ideas during the prewriting process, it's important to make sure you understand what you are being asked to do by your professor's assignment. You should share your responses to these questions with your classmates to see if they have the same or similar responses. What questions might you have for your professor?

In the next chapter, we will discuss developing ideas.

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1

Prewriting



Prewriting Strategies

Did you ever work on a creative project—paint a picture, make a quilt, build a wooden picnic

table or deck? If you did, you know that you go through a development stage that’s kind of messy, a stage in which you try different configurations and put the pieces together in different ways before you say “aha” and a pattern emerges.

Many papers on a desk with writing on them all.

Writing is a creative project, and writers go through the same messy stage. For writers, the development stage involves playing with words and ideas—playing with writing. Prewriting is the start of the writing process, the messy, “play” stage in which writers jot down, develop, and try out different ideas, the stage in which it’s fine to

be free-ranging in thought and language. Prewriting is intended to be free-flowing, to be a time in which you let your ideas and words flow without caring about the organization, grammar, and the formalities of writing.

There are many ways to develop ideas for writing, including:

- Journaling
- Freewriting
- Brainstorming
- Mapping or diagramming
- Listing
- Outlining
- Asking defining questions
- Noting Pros & Cons

Journaling

Many people write in personal journals (or online blogs). Writers

A man writing in a journal.

not only record events in journals, but also reflect and record thoughts, observations, questions, and feelings.

Journals are safe spaces to record your experience of the world.

Use a journal to write about an experience you had, different reactions you have observed to the same situation, a current item in the news, an ethical problem at work, an incident with one of your children, a memorable childhood experience of your own, etc. Try to probe the **why** or **how** of the situation.

Journals can help you develop ideas for writing. When you review your journal entries, you may find that you keep coming back to a particular topic, or that you have

written a lot about one topic in a specific entry, or that you're really passionate about an issue. Those are the topics, then, about which you obviously have something to say. Those are the topics you might develop further in a piece of writing.

Here's one sample journal entry. You'll find ideas that the writer might develop further in a piece of writing:

Example

The hot issue here has been rising gas prices. People in our town are mostly commuters who work in the state capitol and have to drive about 30 miles each way to and from work. One local gas station has been working with the gas company to establish a gas cooperative, where folks who joined would pay a bit less per gallon. I don't know whether I like this idea – it's like joining one of those stores where you have to pay to shop there. You've got to buy a lot to recoup your membership fee. I wonder if this is a ploy of the gas company???? Others were talking about starting a petition to the local commuter bus service, to add more routes and times, as the current service isn't enough to address workers' schedules and needs. Still others are talking about initiating a light rail system, but this is an alternative that will take a lot of years and won't address the situation immediately. I remember the gas crunch a number of years ago and remember that we simply started to carpool. In the Washington, DC area, with its huge traffic problems and a large number of commuters, carpooling is so accepted that there are designated parking and pickup places along the highway, and it's apparently accepted for strangers to pull over, let those waiting know where they're headed, and offer rides. I'm not certain I'd go that far . . .

Freewriting

Freewriting is just what it says—writing freely, whatever comes into your mind, without

caring about spelling, punctuation, etc. It's a way to free up your thoughts, help you know where your interests lie and get your fingers moving on the keyboard (and this physical act can be a way to get your thoughts flowing).

Try a series of timed freewritings. Set a timer for five minutes. The object is to keep your fingers moving constantly and write down whatever thoughts come into your head during that time. If you can't think of anything to say, keep writing **I don't know** or **this is silly** until your thoughts move on. Stop when the timer rings. Shake out your hands, wait a while, and then do more timed freewritings. After you have a set of five or so freewritings, review them to see if you've come back to certain topics, or whether you recorded some ideas that might be the basis for a piece of writing.

Here's a sample freewriting that could yield a number of topics for writing:

I don't think this is useful or helpful in any way. This is stupid, stupid, stupid. I'm looking out of my window and it's the end of may and I can see that white cotton stuff flying around in the air, from the trees. One of my aunts was always allergic to that stuff when it started flying around in the spring. Don't know offhand what type of tree that comes from. That aunt is now 94 years old and is in a nursing home for a while after she had a bad episode. She seems to have one now every spring. It's like that old tree

cotton triggers something in her body. Allergies. Spring. Trying to get the flowers to grow but one of the neighbors who is also in his 90s keeps feeding the squirrels and they come and dig up everyone's flowerbed to store their peanuts. Plant the flowers and within thirty minutes there's a peanut there. Wonder if anyone has grown peanut bushes yet? Don't know . . . know . . .

Possible topics from this freewrite:

- Allergy causes
- Allergies on the rise in the U.S.
- Consequences of humanizing wild animals
- Growing your own food

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is like freewriting around a specific topic. It helps you bring your subconscious thoughts into consciousness, identifying as many ideas as possible that are related to a particular topic.

To brainstorm, let your thoughts about a specific topic flow, and list those thoughts.

Example

Squirrels

- How to get them out of the garden
- How to get rid of them ethically (without killing)
- Squirrel traps
- Repellents for squirrels

- Types of squirrels
- Brown vs. black vs. red squirrels
- Flying squirrels
- What they eat
- Different types of play
- Training squirrels
- Hunting squirrels
- Squirrels and cats
- How they nest
- Build nests in the same place each year

So, what happens once you've brainstormed a topic? Look over the list. Are there items that group together? Are there items that catch your interest as a thinker, researcher, and writer—items you want to know more about? Are there items that seem unrelated or not useful? Use your list as a starting place; it creates ideas for you, as a writer, to work with.

Mapping

Mapping or diagramming helps you immediately group and see relationships among ideas. Mapping and diagramming may help you create information on a topic, and/or organize information from a list or freewriting entries, as a map provides a visual for the types of information you've generated about a topic. For example:

mindmap example of squirrels

Free web tools for mapping and diagramming:

- [MindMeister](#)
- [Bubbl.us](#)
- [Coggle](#)
- [Lucid Chart](#)

Listing

Making a list can help you develop ideas for writing once you have a particular focus. If you want to take a stand on a subject, you might list the top ten reasons why you're taking that particular stand. Or, once you have a focused topic, you might list the different aspects of that topic.

Example

Ways to live a greener life:

- Use natural cleaning products without propellants
- Walk or bicycle to places nearby
- Use recycled products
- Take public transportation
- Recycle cans and bottles
- Use non-life-threatening traps instead of chemical squirrel repellents

As you review and work with your initial list, you'll find yourself revising it by adding or deleting items. Doing an initial list is a quick and useful way to develop ideas for writing.

Asking Defining Questions

Many question marks

If you have a broad topic you want to write about, but don't quite know how to narrow it, ask defining questions to help you develop your main idea for writing.

Example

I want to write about school taxes.

- Why do only property owners (and not renters) in New York State pay school taxes?
- What percent of overall school funding comes from school taxes?
- Do other states fund schools in the same way?
- Does the state lottery system, initially designed to fund schools, actually support schools?
- Is there a limit to paying school taxes when one gets older and no longer has children in school?

Once you have your questions, you can work with the list to group related questions, and then decide whether your writing can logically deal with a number of the questions together or only one. Use questioning to help develop a focus for your writing.

Noting Pros & Cons

A balance scale with a question mark on each side of the scale.

Once you know your topic for writing, develop ideas by pretending you're preparing for a debate. List all of the pros and cons you can think of related to your topic. When you have your lists of pros and cons, you can then decide whether to include one or both sides in your writing. For example:

Example

Smoking Outside of Buildings Pros:

- Conforms with state legislation for no smoking in the interiors of public places
- Inconveniences smokers, perhaps an inducement to quit?

Cons:

- Creates a wall of smoke that people need to walk through
- Businesses must purchase and maintain a place for smokers to discard matches and cigarettes
- Inconveniences smokers

Outlining

Outlines are a necessary part of writing. Period. Outlines are like a roadmap. They give you direction; they tell you where to go. Working without an outline is like trying to get from Oregon to New York and only knowing you need to go east. In technical writing, outlines can serve multiple purposes. One is to help the writer organize ideas and evidence, and the other to communicate your plan of development clearly to the person who has the authority to move your project forward. Therefore, the various parts of your outline should make sense to you and communicate your ideas clearly to your audience. As you begin to outline your report: Indicate the main idea or thesis at the top.



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

<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=24#h5p-44>

[HowToMakeAnOutline2019](#)

See It in Practice

Now that you have seen how some prewriting techniques can help you get your ideas going as you begin your writing process, it's time to see how our sample student applies some of these strategies to her essay assignment. In this screencast, you'll see the student share freewriting and mapping.





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

<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=24#h5p-3>

Ready to Write

If you have never tried out some of these prewriting strategies, it's a good idea to give them a try, especially if you have writer's block or feel your current prewriting strategies don't work well for you. Using your own assignment, spend some time trying out at least two of the prewriting activities described in this section of The Writing Process.

What are your results? What information can you use as you progress with your essay? Which prewriting strategy worked best for you?

You should put the notes you develop from your prewriting activities in a journal or someplace that will be handy for you. You can type or handwrite your prewriting, but even after you finish reviewing your notes initially, keep them around, as you may need to come back to them later if an idea you have from the beginning doesn't work out.

Be sure to share your results with someone, such as a classmate or your professor. Talking about your ideas, especially in this early stage, can really help you develop your ideas in your mind and can help you develop new ideas as well.

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2

Audience and Voice



Audience Awareness

Who are you writing for? You want to ask yourself that question every time you begin a writing project. And

Several avatars of people with question marks over each of them.

you want to keep your audience in mind as you go through the writing process because it will help you make decisions while you write. Such decisions should include what voice you use, what words you choose, and the kind of syntax you use. Thinking of who your audience is and what their expectations are will also help you decide what kind of introduction and conclusion to write.

Your instructor, of course, is your audience, but you

must be careful not to assume that he or she knows more than you on the subject of your paper. While your instructor may be well-informed on the topic, your purpose is to demonstrate your knowledge and fully explain what you're writing about, so the reader can see that you have a good grasp on the topic yourself. Think of your instructor as intelligent but not fully informed about your topic. Think of your instructor as representing people from a particular field (historians, chemists, psychologists).

Another approach is to think of your audience as the people who make up the class for which you are writing the assignment. This is a diverse group, so it can be tough to imagine the needs of so many people. However, if you try to think about your writing the way others from a diverse group might think about your writing, it can help make your writing stronger.

WRITING FOR YOUR AUDIENCE

Sometimes, it's difficult to decide how much to explain or how much detail to go into in a paper when considering your audience. Remember that you need to explain the major concepts in your paper and provide clear, accurate information. Your reader should be able to make the necessary connections from one thought or sentence to the next. When you don't, the reader can become confused or frustrated. Make sure you connect the dots and explain how the information you present is relevant and how it connects with other ideas you have put forth in your paper.

As you write your essay, try to imagine what information your audience will need on your topic. You

should also think about how your writing will sound to your audience, but that will be discussed more in the next section on Voice.

When it's time to revise, read your drafts as a reader would, looking for what is not well explained, clearly written, or linked to other ideas. It might be useful to read your paper to someone who has no background in the topic you're writing about to see if your listener can follow your argument. As always, your job as the writer is to communicate your thinking in a clear, thoughtful, and complete way.

ANALYZING YOUR AUDIENCE

Because keeping your audience in mind as you engage in the writing process is important, it may be helpful to have a list of questions in mind as you think about your audience. The interactive worksheet below can be saved and printed if you want to keep it near your computer as you write.



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

<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=26#h5p-4>

SEE IT IN PRACTICE

Now that you have read more about the importance of writing with your audience in mind, take a look at how this student considers her audience for the sample assignment she is working on.



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

<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=26#h5p-5>

Finding Your Voice

In writing, just as in life,
 you're selective when choosing words and the tone of voice you use in various situations. When writing a thank-you note to Great-Aunt Millie for the socks she sent you for your birthday, you probably use a polite, respectful voice. When you are having a fight with your partner or are gossiping with a friend, both your vocabulary and tone will be quite different. Likewise, you'll use a more formal voice in a research paper compared to a personal essay, an email, or a journal entry.

Deciding what kind of voice to use in writing depends entirely on who will be reading what you write and what your purpose is in writing. Are you writing about the first time you ever drove a car? Explaining your theory about why yoga is such a popular exercise regimen and spiritual practice? Putting forth your informed opinion of why hybrid cars are problematic for the environment despite their increased gas mileage?

What creates voice is simply the words you choose and the way you use them. What kind of voice you use in a paper depends on the assignment and the audience, as well as the effect you want to create. By making conscious

choices about the words you use to communicate to your reader, you establish a voice.

Different Voices

Note the two different voices here talking about the same subject. Which boss would you rather work for?

Example

Boss 1:

It has come to my attention
that computers are not being
turned off at the end of the

Same person different
expressions

workday. This is a possible security breach, as well as a waste of electricity, and failure to shut down electronic equipment will not be tolerated. Please ensure that your computers are off before you leave each night or there will be consequences for individuals who do not comply.

Boss 2:

Hello, everyone! I know that here at Plants, Inc., we're all committed to a green work environment. So I'm asking for your help with respect to computers. We've seen a number of computers inadvertently left on in the evenings. I want to ask for your cooperation in turning off your computer before you leave, which helps conserve electricity. Thanks for your help!

Notice the different tones in the two passages. The tone is part of the voice and reveals the attitude of the writer, which can range from friendly to angry to cold to intimate.

If you're writing a personal essay, about an experience

in your life, then the voice you use will reveal how you feel about the experience. You'll most likely write using the personal pronouns **I** or **we**. You'll let your personality emerge in the language you choose.

If you want to convey a humorous or outrageous event, then your words and your tone will reflect that. You might exaggerate, use informal, even silly-sounding words or use acerbic, or understated language. Your sentences might be short and convey energy. If, on the other hand, you are writing about a loss, your words will be more serious, your tone somber, and your sentences might be longer, more thoughtful, and reflective. As the writer, you get to decide how you want to describe your experience.

Notice the different voices and sentence structure in the excerpts from these two popular memoirs.

Example

Memoir 1:

We didn't call it the kitchen in our house. We called it the Burns Unit.

"It's a bit burned," my mother would say apologetically at every meal, presenting you with a piece of meat that looked like something—a much-loved pet perhaps—salvaged from a tragic house fire. "But I think I scraped off most of the burned part," she would add, overlooking that this included every bit of it that had once been flesh.

—from The Life and Times of the Thunderbolt Kid by Bill Bryson

Memoir 2:

Later I realized that I must have repeated the details of what

happened to everyone who came to the house in those first weeks, all those friends and relatives who brought food and made drinks and laid out plates on the dining room table for however many people were around at lunch or dinner time, all those who picked up the plates and froze the leftovers and ran the dishwasher and filled our (I could not yet think my) otherwise empty house even after I had gone into the bedroom (our bedroom, the one in which there still lay on a sofa a faded terrycloth XL robe bought in the 1970s at Richard Carroll in Beverly Hills) and shut the door.

-from A Year of Magical Thinking by Joan Didion

If your assignment is to write a more academic paper, then you will want to consider using the academic voice, which will be discussed next.

Academic Voice

Assuming that your audience is a teacher of some sort, your main purpose is to demonstrate your ability to articulate knowledge and experience. When writing a research paper and other academic writing (what is called academic discourse) you'll want to use what is called **the academic voice**, which is meant to sound objective, authoritative, and reasonable. While a research paper will be based on your opinion on a topic, it will be an opinion based on evidence (from your research) and one that has been argued in a rational manner in your paper.

You use the academic voice because your opinion is

based on thinking; in your paper, you're revealing your thought process to your reader. Because you'll be appealing to reason, you want to use the voice of one intellectual talking to another intellectual.

If the subject matter for your academic writing isn't personal, as in the case of a formal research paper, you would take on a more detached, objective tone. While you may indeed feel strongly about what you're writing about, you should maintain a professional tone, rather than a friendly or intimate one.

However, it's important to note that even the most formal academic voice does not need to include convoluted sentence structure or abstract, stilted language, as some believe. As with all writing, you should strive to write with clarity and an active voice that avoids jargon. All readers appreciate a vigorous, lively voice.

Instead of:

The utilization of teams as a way of optimizing our capacity to meet and prioritize our goals will impact the productivity of the company.

Write:

Teams will execute the goals and enhance the company's output.

Of course, the decision about whether you use a specialized vocabulary depends entirely on who your audience is and the purpose of the paper.

REMEMBER: Some academic writing will require a more

personal tone, such as when you are writing a formal narrative essay or perhaps an **ethnography** (study of a culture) essay. In general, the academic voice is a formal one, but there will be variations based on the situation.

Tips on Academic Voice

When using the academic voice you won't usually use first personal pronouns.

Instead of:

I think anyone who becomes a parent should have to take a parenting class.

Write:

Parenting classes should be mandatory for any biological or adoptive parents.

NOTE: There are exceptions for certain types of writing assignments.

Avoid using second-person pronouns.

Instead of:

When you read “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” you will realize that King was writing to people besides the ministers who criticized him.

Write:

Upon reading “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” readers will note that King was addressing a wider audience than the clergy who condemned his actions.

Avoid contractions in more formal writing.

Instead of:

It shouldn’t be difficult to record what we feel, but many of us just can’t get our feelings down on paper.

Write:

It should not be difficult to record feelings, but many people are unable to do so.

Avoid informal language.

Instead of:

It’s obvious that she’s a feminist because she makes a big deal about women who were into the suffrage movement.

Write:

Because of her focus on the suffragists, one can assume she is a feminist.

Abbreviations for common terms should not be used in academic writing

Instead of:

Smith was declared the official winner at the P.O. last Mon. on Jan. 6th.

Write:

Smith was declared the official winner at the post office last Monday, on January 6.

See It in Practice

In the following video, we'll check in on our student as she reflects on the tone of voice she'll use in her essay. You'll notice her struggles as she considers how she'll keep a formal tone for an essay that requires some examples of informal language.



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

<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=26#h5p-6>

Ready to Write

Now that you have had a chance to learn more about an academic voice and how to use a voice that will be appropriate for your assignment, it's time for you to consider the voice for your writing. Be sure to refer back to the Tips on Academic Voice. Then, spend a few minutes writing in some notes or in a writing journal about the

tone of voice you plan to use in your assignment and give reasons why this voice will work well in this particular situation.

If you have doubts, be sure to double-check with your professor. It can be difficult when you're first learning to write in a more formal voice. You don't want your writing to sound stuffy or convoluted, but you do want to be sure to avoid a voice that is too informal. Share your thoughts with your classmates as well, as they will be able to offer insight and support as they consider their voices for your assignment as well.

Remember that academic writing is not the same as creative writing and there are some important limitations to voice to consider. However, many writing assignments will allow for some flexibility.

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3

Drafting



Introductions & Conclusions

The introduction and conclusion of an essay serve an important purpose: They provide a kind of framing for the body of an essay. That framing helps your audience better understand your writing.

The introduction prepares your reader for the

ideas that are to come in the body of your essay. The conclusion provides important reminders about key points from the body of your essay and provides you with



an important opportunity to leave a lasting impression on your audience.

The following pages will help you develop a strong frame for your essay. You'll want to write effective introductions and conclusions. After all, they are the first and last impressions your audience will have of your essay.

Introductions

There is no doubt about it: the introduction is important for any kind of writing. Not only does a good introduction capture your reader's attention and make him or her want to read on, but it's also how you put the topic of your paper into context for the reader.

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

Introductions Purpose

The introduction has work to do, besides grabbing the reader's attention. Below are some things to consider about the purposes or the tasks for your introduction and some examples of how you might approach those tasks.

The introduction needs to alert the reader to what the central issue of the paper is.

Example

Few people realize how much the overuse of antibiotics for livestock is responsible for the growth of antimicrobial—resistant bacteria, which are now found in great abundance in our waterways.

The introduction is where you provide any important background information the reader should have before getting to the thesis.

Example

One hundred years ago there were only 8000 cars in the United States and only 144 miles of paved roads. In 2005, the Department of Transportation recorded 247,421,120 registered passenger vehicles in the United States, and over 5.7 million miles of paved highway. The automobile has changed our way of life dramatically in the last century.

The introduction tells why you have written the paper and what the reader should understand about your topic and your perspective.

Example

Although history books have not presented it accurately, in fact, the Underground Railroad was a bi-racial movement whereby black and white abolitionists coordinated secret escape routes for those who were enslaved.

The introduction tells the reader what to expect and what to look for in your essay.

Example

In 246 BCE, Ctesibius of Alexandria invented a musical instrument that would develop into what we know as the organ. Called a hydraulis, it functioned via wind pressure regulated by means of water pressure. The hydraulis became the instrument played at circuses, banquets, and games throughout Mediterranean countries.

The thesis statement (typically at the end of the introduction) should clearly state the claim, question, or point of view the writer is putting forth in the paper.

Example

While IQ tests have been used for decades to measure various aspects of intelligence, these tests are not a predictor for success, as many highly intelligent people have a low emotional intelligence, the important human mental ability to reason about emotions and

to use emotions to enhance thought.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:

<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=28#oembed-1>

Introductions Strategies

Although there is no one “right” way to write your introduction, there are some common introductory strategies that work well. The strategies below are ones you should consider, especially when you are feeling stuck and having a hard time getting started.

Consider opening with an anecdote, a pithy quotation, an image, question, or startling fact to provoke your reader’s interest. Just make sure that the opening helps put your topic in some useful context for the reader.

Anecdote:

One day, while riding in the car, my five-year old son asked me why my name was different from his daddy’s. I

welcomed the opportunity

to explain some of my feminist ideas, especially my strong belief that women did not need to take their husband’s name upon marriage. I carefully explained my reasons for keeping my own

A woman with aviator glasses riding in a car looking toward the back seat.

surname. My son listened intently and was silent for a moment after I finished.

Then he nodded and said, “I think it’s good you kept your own name Mom!”

“You do?” I asked, pleased that he understood my reasons.

“Yep, because you don’t look like a Bob.”

Question:

The study of anthropology and history reveals that cultures vary in their ideas of moral behavior. Are there any absolutes when it comes to right and wrong?

Overall, your focus in an introduction should be on orienting your reader. Keep in mind journalism’s five Ws: who, what, when, where, why, and add in how. If you answer these questions about your topic in the introduction, then your reader is going to be with you.

Of course, these are just some examples of how you might get your introduction *started*, but there should be more to your introduction. Once you have your readers’ attention, you want to provide context for your topic and begin to transition to your **thesis**, and don’t forget to include that thesis (usually at or near the end of your introduction).

Conclusions

A satisfying conclusion allows your reader to finish your paper with a clear understanding of the points you made and possibly even a new perspective on the topic.

Any single paper might have a number of conclusions, but as the writer, you must consider who the reader is and the conclusion you want them to reach. For example, is your reader relatively new to your topic? If so, you may want to **restate**



your main points for emphasis as a way of starting the conclusion. (Don't literally use the same sentence(s) as in your introduction but come up with a comparable way of restating your thesis.) You'll want to smoothly conclude by showing the judgment you have reached is, in fact, reasonable.

Just restating your thesis isn't enough. Ideally, you have just taken your reader through a strong, clear argument in which you have provided evidence for your perspective. You want to conclude by **pointing out the importance or worthiness of your topic** and argument. You could describe how the world would be different, or people's lives changed if they ascribed to your perspective, plan, or idea.

You might also **point out the limitations** of the present understanding of your topic, suggest or **recommend future action**, study, or research that needs to be done.

TIP: Be careful not to introduce any new ideas in your conclusion; your job is to wrap up in some satisfying way, so the reader walks away with a clear understanding of what you have had

to say.

If you have written a persuasive paper, hopefully, your readers will be convinced by what you have had to say!



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<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=28#oembed-2>

See It in Practice

In this videocast, we check in with our student writer after she has written a rough draft of her introduction to her essay. In the video, she discusses her strategies and explains why she feels she has a good start on her essay.



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Ready to Write

Although it's sometimes easier to write your introduction after having written the body of your essay, if you're able to draft an introduction as you begin, it can certainly help you get going with your drafting and give you some nice direction as you develop your body paragraphs. With that in mind, try drafting your introduction for your essay

using, perhaps, a strategy explored in this section. Don't forget to consult your assignment one more time to have the requirements fresh in your mind as you begin. Remember, this will be just a rough draft of your introduction, and there will be plenty of time for revision later.

Your conclusion will likely be drafted as you wrap up your essay. Just like your introduction, your conclusion should fit well with the rest of your essay. Be sure to review the lessons here before you begin drafting your conclusion.

Remember to spend some time getting feedback on your introduction and conclusion as well. Many times, professors may not have time to review entire essays before an assignment is due, but they will often be willing to take quick looks at introductions and conclusions. Of course, feedback from your classmates will also help a lot!

THESIS STATEMENTS

A strong thesis statement crystallizes your paper's argument and, most importantly, it's *arguable*.

This means two things. It goes beyond merely summarizing or describing to stake out an interpretation or position that's not obvious, and others could challenge for good reasons. It's also arguable in the literal sense that it can be *argued*, or supported through a thoughtful analysis of your sources. If your argument lacks evidence, readers will think your thesis statement is an opinion or belief as opposed to an argument.

It helps to understand why readers value the arguable thesis. What larger purpose does it serve? Your readers

will bring a set of expectations to your essay. The better you can anticipate the expectations of your readers, the better you'll be able to persuade them to entertain seeing things your way.

Academic readers (and readers more generally) read to learn something new. They want to see the writer challenge commonplaces—either everyday assumptions about your object of study or truisms in the scholarly literature. In other words, academic readers want to be surprised so that their thinking shifts or at least becomes more complex by the time they finish reading your essay. Good essays problematize what we think we know and offer an alternative explanation in its place. They leave their reader with a fresh perspective on a problem.

We all bring important past experiences and beliefs to our interpretations of texts, objects, and problems. You can harness these observational powers to engage critically with what you are studying. The key is to be alert to what strikes you as strange, problematic, paradoxical, or puzzling about your object of study. If you can articulate this and a claim in response, you're well on your way to formulating an arguable thesis in your introduction.

PARTS OF A THESIS SENTENCE

The thesis sentence is the key to most academic writing. This is important and worth repeating:

Keep calm and write your thesis sentence

The thesis sentence is the key to most

academic writing.

The purpose of academic writing is to offer your own insights, analyses, and ideas—to show not only that you understand the concepts you’re studying, but also that you have thought about those concepts in your own way, agreed or disagreed, or developed your own unique ideas as a result of your analysis. The thesis sentence is the one sentence that encapsulates the result of your thinking, as it offers your main insight or argument in condensed form.

A basic thesis sentence has two main parts:

1. **Topic:** What you’re writing about
2. **Angle:** What your main idea is about that topic

Example

Sample Thesis #1

Thesis: A regular exercise regime leads to multiple benefits, both physical and emotional. **Topic:** Regular exercise regime

Angle: Leads to multiple benefits

Example

Sample Thesis #2

Thesis: Adult college students have different experiences than typical, younger college students. **Topic:** Adult college students

Angle: Have different experiences

Example

Sample Thesis #3

Thesis: The economics of television have made the viewing experience challenging for many viewers because shows are not offered regularly, similar programming occurs at the same time, and commercials are rampant. **Topic:** Television viewing

Angle: Challenging because shows shifted, similar programming, and commercials

THESIS ANGLES

Most writers can easily create a topic: television viewing, the Patriot Act, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The more difficult part is creating an angle. But the angle is necessary as a means of creating interest and as a means of indicating the type and organization of the information to follow.

Click on each of the thesis angles in the box below that you want to learn more about.



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So what about this thesis sentence?

Adult college students have different experiences than

traditionally-aged college students.

As a reader, you understand intuitively that the information to come will deal with the different types of experiences that adult college students have. But you don't quite know if the information will deal only with adults, or if it will compare adults' experiences with those of typical college students. And you don't quite know what type of information will come first, second, third, etc.

Realize that a thesis sentence offers a range of possibilities for specificity and organization. As a writer, you may opt to pique reader interest by being very specific or not fully specific in your thesis sentence. The point here is that there's no one standard way to write a thesis sentence.

Sometimes a writer is more or less specific depending on the reading audience and the effect the writer wants to create. Sometimes a writer puts the angle first and the topic last in the sentence, or sometimes the angle is even implied. You need to gauge your reading audience and you need to understand your own style as a writer. The only basic requirements are that the thesis sentence needs a topic and an angle. The rest is up to you.

COMMON PROBLEMS

problem-solution

Although you have creative control over your thesis sentence, you still should try to avoid the following problems, not for stylistic reasons, but because they

indicate a problem in the thinking that underlies the thesis sentence.

Thesis Sentence too Broad

Hospice workers need support. The sentence above actually is a thesis sentence; it has a topic (hospice workers) and an angle (need support). But the angle is very broad. When the angle in a thesis sentence is too broad, the writer may not have carefully thought through the specific support for the rest of the writing. A thesis angle that's too broad makes it easy to fall into the trap of offering information that deviates from that angle.

Thesis Sentence too Narrow

Hospice workers have a 55% turnover rate compared to the general health care population's 25% turnover rate. The above sentence really isn't a thesis sentence at all, because there's no angle idea to support. A narrow statistic, or a narrow statement of fact, doesn't offer the writer's own ideas or analysis about a topic. A clearer example of a thesis statement with an angle of development would be the following:

*The high turnover rate in hospice workers (55 percent) compared to the general health care population (25 percent) indicates a need to develop support systems to reverse this trend.

Where to Place a Thesis?

In the U.S., it's customary for most academic writers to put the thesis sentence somewhere toward the start of the essay or research paper. The focus here is on offering the main results of your own thinking in your thesis angle and then providing evidence in the writing to support your thinking.

A legal comparison might help to understand thesis placement. If you have seen television shows or movies with courtroom scenes, the lawyer usually starts out by saying, "My client is innocent!" to set the scene, and then provides different types of evidence to support that argument. Academic writing in the U.S. is similar; your thesis sentence provides your main assertion to set the scene of the writing, and then the details and evidence in the rest of the writing support the assertion in the thesis sentence.

NOTE: Although the usual pattern is "thesis sentence toward the start," there may be reasons to place the thesis elsewhere in the writing. You may decide to place the thesis sentence at the end of the writing if your purpose is to gradually induce a reading audience to understand and accept your assertion. You may decide to place the thesis sentence in the middle of the writing if you think you need to provide relatively complicated background information to your readers before they can understand the assertion in your thesis.

As a writer, you have the option of placing the thesis anywhere in the writing. But, as a writer, you also have

the obligation to make the thesis sentence idea clear to your readers. Beginning writers usually stick with “thesis sentence toward the start,” as it makes the thesis prominent in the writing and also reminds them that they need to stick with providing evidence directly related to that thesis sentence’s angle.

THESIS CREATION

At what point do you
write a thesis sentence? Hourglass

Of course, this varies from writer to writer and from writing assignment to writing assignment. You’ll usually do some preliminary idea development first before a thesis idea emerges. And you’ll usually have a working thesis before you do the bulk of your research, or before you fully create the supporting details for your writing.

Think of the thesis as the mid-point of an hourglass.

You develop ideas for writing and prewriting, using various strategies until a main idea or assertion emerges. This main idea or assertion becomes your point to prove—your working thesis sentence.

Once you have a working thesis sentence with your main idea, you can then develop more support for that idea, but in a more focused way that deepens your thinking about the thesis angle.

Realize that a thesis is really a working thesis until you finalize the writing. As you do more focused research or develop more focused support, your thesis may change a bit. Just make sure that you retain the basic thesis characteristics of the topic and angle.



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THESIS CHECKLIST

When you draft a working thesis, it can be helpful to review the guidelines for a strong thesis. The following checklist is a helpful tool you can use to check your thesis once you have it drafted.



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SEE IT IN PRACTICE

In the videocast below, our student writer takes a closer look at her thesis from her rough draft introduction and makes some revisions based on the things she has learned about a good thesis in The Writing Process.



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THESIS STATEMENT ACTIVITY





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After completing this activity, you may download or print a completion report that summarizes your results.

ARGUMENTATIVE THESIS ACTIVITY



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<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=28#h5p-12>

After completing this activity, you may download or print a completion report that summarizes your results.

ANALYZE THIS

Before you try to develop a thesis of your own, it can be helpful to see how another author presents an argumentative thesis.

In this **Analyze This** video, watch as one student shares a short analysis of an online article ([Live and Learn](#)) with a specific focus on locating and evaluating the thesis. The student will share a summary of the article and then explore the author's thesis in the article.



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<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=28#h5p-13>

SEE IT IN PRACTICE

Now that you have learned about the importance of developing a strong argumentative thesis for your argumentative essay, it's time to visit our student who is engaging in her own argumentative writing process.

In this video, watch as she shares her drafts of thesis statements and her process of arriving at a good working thesis, which will guide her throughout the rest of her writing process.



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PARAGRAPHING

The paragraph is the building blocks building block of essay writing. The word itself, according to the [Oxford Dictionary Online](#) (2015), is defined as “a distinct section of a piece of writing, usually dealing with a single theme and indicated by a new line, indentation, or numbering.”

Paragraphs can be shown through breaks between lines

or through indentations of the first line of the paragraph. Paragraphs are important for ease of reading; they help to offer ideas in “chunks” that the eye and brain can more easily comprehend (as opposed to offering information in one large block of text, which is hard to read).

Paragraphs are necessary in academic writing to show changes in ideas or further development of ideas. In academic writing, paragraphs present mini ideas that often develop out of the thesis sentence’s main idea.

Example:

Thesis Sentence

- A regular exercise regimen creates multiple benefits, both physical and emotional.

Beginnings of Paragraphs

- One physical benefit of having a regular exercise regimen is longevity. Recent studies have shown that . . .
- Exercise reduces heart and cholesterol rates when done at least three times per week . . .
- Another physical benefit of regular exercise is that it results in stronger heart and lungs . . .
- People who exercise regularly have less trouble with sleep disorders . . .
- A benefit that spans the physical and emotional results of regular exercise is the release of endorphins, or substances produced by glands as a byproduct of exercise . . .
- In multiple studies, regular exercise has been shown to

reduce stress . . .

- Because regular exercise often helps to slow the effects of aging and maintain a good body weight, people who exercise regularly experience the emotional benefits of good self-image and self-confidence in their looks . . .

Although all of these paragraph beginnings are related to the main idea of the **benefits of exercise**, they all show a slight shift in content, as the writer moves from one benefit to another.

TOPIC SENTENCES

Signs

In academic writing, many paragraphs or groups of paragraphs start with topic sentences, which are like mini-thesis statements. Topic sentences are idea indicators, or “signs” that help guide a reader along from idea to idea.

Topic sentences have a topic and an angle, just like thesis sentences. But the angle of topic sentences usually is smaller in range than that of the thesis sentence. Very often the topic remains the same from thesis to the topic sentence, while the angle shifts as the writer brings in various types of ideas and research to support the angle in the thesis.

Look at this sample again; these are topic sentences created from the thesis sentence. The topic remains the same in all (regular exercise) and the overall angle remains the same (benefits). But the angle narrows and shifts

slightly from topic sentence to topic sentence as the writer brings in different supporting ideas and research.

Thesis Sentence

A regular exercise regime creates multiple benefits, both physical and emotional.

Topic Sentence

One physical benefit of having a regular exercise regime is longevity. Recent studies ha

Exercise reduces heart and cholesterol rates when done at least three times per week...

Another physical benefit of regular exercise is that it results in a stronger heart and lun

People who exercise regularly have less trouble with sleep disorders...

A benefit that spans the physical and emotional results of regular exercise is the release produced by glands as a byproduct of exercise...

In multiple studies, regular exercise has been shown to reduce stress...

Because regular exercise often helps to slow the effects of aging and maintain a good be regularly experience the emotional benefits of good self-image and self-confidence in t

Realize that all paragraphs do not need topic sentences. Sometimes, you may need multiple paragraphs to help explain one topic sentence, because you have a lot of supporting information.

REMEMBER: You need a topic sentence for each group of paragraphs in a piece of academic writing.

PARAGRAPHING & TRANSITIONING

	Idea	Summarizing
place		
On the patio	Another reason	Finally
In the kitchen	Also	In conclusion
At the cottage	In addition	To conclude
In the backyard	For example	To summarize
When we went to the store	To illustrate	In summary
Nearby	For instance	To sum up
Adjacent to	Likewise	In short
Wherever	However	As you can see
Opposite to	In contrast	For all of those reasons

When to Paragraph

How do you know when “enough is enough”—when you have enough information in one paragraph and have to start a new one? A very rough guide is that you need more than one or two paragraphs per page of type. Paragraphing conventions online require even shorter paragraphs, with multiple short paragraphs on one screen.

It's best to deal with paragraphs as part of the revision step in the writing process. Find places where the information shifts in focus and put paragraph breaks in those places. You can do your best to paragraph as you draft but know you'll address paragraphing more during the revision process.

Linking Paragraphs: Transitions

Transitions are words or phrases that indicate linkages in ideas. When writing, you need to lead your readers from one idea to the next, showing how those ideas are logically linked. Transition words and phrases help you keep your paragraphs and groups of paragraphs logically connected for a reader. Writers often check their transitions during the revising stage of the writing process.

Here are some examples of transition words to help as you transition both within paragraphs and from one paragraph to the next.

Transition Word / Phrase:	Shows:
and, also, again	More of the same type of information is coming.
but, or, however, in contrast	Different information is coming, information in contrast.
as a result, consequently, therefore	Information that is coming is a logical outgrowth.
for example, to illustrate	The information coming will present a specific example.
particularly important, note that	The information coming emphasizes the importance of the idea.
in conclusion	The writing is ending.

SEE IT IN PRACTICE

In this videocast, our student writer takes a look at one of her paragraphs she has drafted for her essay. She discusses the transitions and transitional words she uses in her paragraph to help connect her ideas within the paragraph and to make a transition to the next paragraph in her essay.



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ESSAY WRITING

A college essay goes by many names: paper, research paper, essay, theme. Most of these names refer to a piece of writing in which you offer your own idea about a topic. This concept is really important. The purpose of most college essay writing assignments is not for you to find and directly report the information you find. Instead, it's to think about the information you find, come up with your own idea or assertion about your topic, and then provide the support that shows why you think that way.

Another thing to remember about a college essay is that, in most cases, a writing process is emphasized. Following a thorough writing process, like the one described for you here, will lead you to a better product. Although you may have some timed writings in college, most of your college essays will involve a writing process. When you use a strong writing process, you're working to create your very best work!

The video below shows real students from a college writing class talking about writing for college and what they learned from taking a college writing class.



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TRADITIONAL ESSAY STRUCTURE

Although college essays can offer ideas in many ways, one standard structure for expository essays is to offer the main idea or assertion early in the essay, and then offer categories of support.

Thinking again about how a lawyer makes a case, one way to think about this standard structure is to compare it to a courtroom argument in a television drama. The lawyer asserts, “My client is not guilty.” Then the lawyer provides different reasons for lack of guilt: no physical evidence placing the client at the crime scene, the client had no motive for the crime and more.

In writing terms, the assertion is the **thesis sentence**, and the different reasons are the **topic sentences**.

Example:

Thesis Sentence (assertion):

The 21st-century workforce requires a unique set of skills.

Topic Sentence (reason) #1:

Workers need to learn how to deal with change.

Topic Sentence (reason) #2:

Because of dealing with such a rapidly changing work environment, 21st-century workers need to learn how to learn.

Topic Sentence (reason) #3:

Most of all, in order to negotiate rapid change and learning, workers in the 21st century need good communication skills.

As you can see, the supporting ideas in an essay develop

out of the main assertion or argument in the thesis sentence.

TRADITIONAL STRUCTURE ACTIVITY

An essay is based on a series of ideas and assertions in the thesis and topic sentences (which are like mini thesis sentences). But an essay is more than a series of ideas. An essay expands on its thesis and topic sentence ideas with examples, explanations, and information. An essay also leads the reader into the thesis sentence idea, supports that idea and convinces the reader of its validity, and then re-emphasizes the main idea. In other words, an essay has an introduction, body, and conclusion.

The first interaction below will review your knowledge; the second will test your knowledge.



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ROUGH DRAFTS

In this section, you have been learning about traditional structures for expository essays (essays that are thesis-based and offer a point-by-point body), but no matter what type of essay you're writing, the rough draft is going to be an important part of your writing process. It's important to remember that your rough draft is a long way from your final draft, and you will engage in revision and editing before you have a draft that is ready to submit.

Sometimes, keeping this in mind can help you as you draft. When you draft, you don't want to feel like "this has to be perfect." If you put that much pressure on yourself, it can be really difficult to get your ideas down.

The sample rough draft on the right shows you an example of just how much more work a rough draft can need, even a really solid first draft. Take a look at this example with notes a student wrote on her rough draft. Once you complete your own rough draft, you will want to engage in a revision and editing process that involves feedback, time, and diligence on your part. The steps that follow in this section of the Excelsior OWL will help!

Rough Draft Example

Rough_Draft_Image

SEE IT IN PRACTICE

Using the information from this section on developing a clear structure for a college essay, our student has now established a plan for her essay and has created a visual

to help illustrate what her final essay will look like. In the video, she discusses her introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion.



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ATTRIBUTIONS

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4

Revision



REVISING & EDITING PROCESS

Revision means what it looks like *RE-vision*, to see again. a woman working on the computer

So great, you're thinking. *That sounds easy.*

Well... it's not. (Surprise!) Revision requires us to look at our own work again with fresh eyes.

Revision and editing are both important parts of the writing process, yet many students skip revision and don't spend enough time editing. It's important to remember that these steps are separate and that each step takes time. The following pages will help you develop strong revision and editing strategies for your writing process.

Revision

The revision process is an essential aspect of writing and one that you should build in time for before submitting your written work. Just when you think the production of your document is done, the revision process begins. Runners often refer to “the wall,” where the limits of physical exertion are met and exhaustion is imminent. The writing process requires effort, from overcoming writer’s block to the intense concentration composing a document often involves. It is only natural to have a sense of relief when your document is drafted from beginning to end. This relief is false confidence, though. Your document is not complete, and in its current state, it could, in fact, do more harm than good. Errors, omissions, and unclear phrases may lurk within your document, waiting to reflect poorly on you when it reaches your audience. Now is not time to let your guard down, prematurely celebrate, or mentally move on to the next assignment. Think of the revision process as one that hardens and strengthens your document, even though it may require the sacrifice of some hard-earned writing.

Revision means to “re-see” the piece of writing.

It isn’t just proofreading your paper or correcting grammar, punctuation, or spelling errors. Revision is stepping back and looking at your paper as a whole and seeing if you are effectively saying what you intend to say. It is giving your paper a thorough look to see how you can make it stronger. Your goal should always be to write clearly, concisely, and in an engaging way.

One way to go about re-seeing your writing is to do it in

three stages. Many people skip the first stage, but looking at the big picture is crucial in making sure you have a well-developed essay that expresses your ideas.

REVISING STAGE 1: SEEING THE BIG PICTURE

When you first begin your revision process, you should focus on the big picture or issues at the essay level that might need to be addressed. The following questions will guide you:

The Grand Canyon -
Looking from high up

- Do you have a **clear thesis**? Do you know what idea or perspective you want your reader to understand upon reading your essay?
- Is your essay **well organized**?
- **Is each paragraph a building block** in your essay: does each explain or support your thesis?
- Does it need a different shape? Do **parts need to be moved**?
- Do you fully **explain and illustrate the main ideas** of your paper?
- Does your **introduction grab the reader's interest**?
- Does your **conclusion leave the reader understanding your point of view**?
- Are you saying in your essay what you want to say?
- What is the **strength of your paper**? What is its **weakness**?

REVISING STAGE 2: MID-VIEW

The second stage of the revision process requires that you look at your content closely and at the paragraph level. It's

A chalk board with the words who, how, what, why, where, and when on it

now time to examine each paragraph, on its own, to see where you might need to revise. The following questions will guide you through the mid-view revision stage:

- Does each paragraph contain **solid, specific information, vivid description, or examples** that illustrate the point you are making in the paragraph?
- Are there are other **facts, quotations, examples, or descriptions** to add that can more clearly illustrate or provide evidence for the points you are making?
- Are there sentences, words, descriptions, or **information that you can delete** because they don't add to the points you are making or may confuse the reader?
- Are the paragraphs in the **right order**?
- **Are your paragraphs overly long?** Does each paragraph explore **one main idea**?
- Do you use **clear transitions** so the reader can follow your thinking?
- Are any paragraphs or parts of paragraphs **redundant** and need to be deleted?

REVISING STAGE 3: EDITING UP CLOSE

Once you have completed your revision and feel confident in your content, it's time to begin the editing stage of your revision and editing process. The following questions will guide you through your editing:

- Are there any **grammar errors**, i.e. have you been consistent in your use of tense, do your pronouns agree?
- Have you accurately and effectively used **punctuation**?
- Do you rely on **strong verbs and nouns** and maintain a good balance with **adjectives and adverbs**, using them to enhance descriptions but ensuring clear sentences?
- Are your words as **accurate** as possible?
- Do you **define any technical or unusual terms** you use?
- Are there **extra words or clichés** in your sentences that you can delete?
- Do you **vary your sentence structure**?
- Have you **accurately presented facts**; have you copied quotations precisely?
- If you're writing an academic essay, have you tried to be **objective** in your evidence and tone?

- If writing a personal essay, is the **narrative voice lively and interesting**?
- Have you **spellchecked** your paper?
- If you used sources, have you **consistently documented all of the sources' ideas and information** using a standard documentation style?

SPECIFIC POINTS TO CONSIDER

When revising your document, it can be helpful to focus on specific points. When you consider each point in turn, you will be able to break down the revision process into manageable steps. When you have examined each point, you can be confident that you have avoided many possible areas for errors. Specific revision requires attention to the following:

- Format
- Facts
- Names
- Spelling
- Punctuation
- Grammar

Format

The format is an important part of the revision process. The format involves the design expectations of the author and audience. If a letter format normally designates a date at the top or the sender's address on the left side of the page before the salutation, the information should be in the correct location. Formatting that is messy or fails to

conform to the company style will reflect poorly on you before the reader even starts to read it. By presenting a document that is properly formatted according to the expectations of your organization and your readers, you will start off making a good impression.

Facts

Another key part of the revision process is checking your facts. Did you know that news organizations and magazines employ professional fact-checkers? These workers are responsible for examining every article before it gets published and consulting original sources to make sure the information in the article is accurate. This can involve making phone calls to the people who were interviewed for the article—for example, “Mr. Diaz, our report states that you are thirty-nine years old. Our article will be published on the fifteenth. Will that be your correct age on that date?” Fact-checking also involves looking facts up in encyclopedias, directories, atlases, and other standard reference works; and, increasingly, in online sources.

While you can’t be expected to have the skills of a professional fact-checker, you do need to reread your writing with a critical eye to the information in it. Inaccurate content can expose you and your organization to liability and will create far more work than a simple revision of a document. So, when you revise a document, ask yourself the following:

- Does my writing contain any statistics or references that need to be verified?
- Where can I get reliable information to verify it?

It is often useful to do independent verification—that is, look up the fact in a different source from the one where you first got it. For example, perhaps a colleague gave you a list of closing averages for the Dow Jones Industrial on certain dates. You still have the list, so you can make sure your document agrees with the numbers your colleague provided. But what if your colleague made a mistake? The Web sites of the *Wall Street Journal* and other major newspapers list closings for “the Dow,” so it is reasonably easy for you to look up the numbers and verify them independently.

Names

There is no more embarrassing error in business writing than to misspell someone’s name. To the writer, and some readers, spelling the name “Michelle” instead of “Michele” may seem like a minor matter, but to Michele herself, it will make a big difference. Attribution is one way we often involve a person’s name, and giving credit where credit is due is essential. There are many other reasons for including someone’s name, but regardless of your reasons for choosing to focus on them, you need to make sure the spelling is correct. Incorrect spelling of names is a quick way to undermine your credibility; it can also harm your organization’s reputation, and in some cases, it may even have legal ramifications.

Spelling

Correct spelling is another element essential for your credibility, and errors will be glaringly obvious to many readers. The negative impact on your reputation as a

writer, and its perception that you lack attention to detail or do not value your work, will be hard to overcome. In addition to the negative personal consequences, spelling errors can become factual errors and destroy the value of content. This may lead you to click the “spell check” button in your word processing program, but computer spell-checking is not enough. Spell checkers have improved in the years since they were first invented, but they are not infallible. They can and do make mistakes.

Typically, your incorrect word may in fact be a word, and therefore, according to the program, correct. For example, suppose you wrote, “The major will attend the meeting” when you meant to write “The mayor will attend the meeting.” The program would miss this error because “major” is a word, but your meaning would be twisted beyond recognition.

Punctuation

Punctuation marks are the traffic signals, signs, and indications that allow us to navigate the written word. They serve to warn us in advance when a transition is coming or the complete thought has come to an end. A period indicates the thought is complete, while a comma signals that additional elements or modifiers are coming. Correct signals will help your reader follow the thoughts through sentences and paragraphs, and enable you to communicate with maximum efficiency while reducing the probability of error (Strunk & White, 1979).

Grammar

Learning to use good, correct standard English grammar

is more of a practice than an event or even a process. Grammar involves the written construction of meaning from words and involves customs that evolve and adapt to usage over time. Because grammar is always evolving, none of us can sit back and rest assured that we “know” how to write with proper grammar. Instead, it is important to write and revise with close attention to grammar, keeping in mind that grammatical errors can undermine your credibility, reflect poorly on your employer, and cause misunderstandings.

KEY TAKEAWAY

By revising for format, facts, names, spelling, punctuation, and grammar, you can increase your chances of correcting many common errors in your writing.

TRANSITIONS AND ORGANIZATION

by Jenn Kepka

As we've discussed, the major purpose of writing is to communicate with an audience. Keeping that in mind means everything we do when writing a paper must be done for the benefit of whoever is reading. That's hard; it means that sometimes, things that look perfectly fine to us or sound OK out loud will need to be changed because other people bring different ideas and demands to our writing.

It also means that we need to go out of our way to be helpful to anyone who's sitting down to read our work. Every step of the writing process is built to help the reader, from the title — which tells him what he's getting into — to the conclusion, which reminds him what he's read. Along the way, we use other organizational signs to let the reader know what's going on.

Whenever we pause to signal the reader about what's about to happen, we use a transitional word or phrase. Transitions are simply brief, common signals that are put in place for the reader. They are often one of the final things that a writer will edit and add to a paper.

The most common place to find transitions is at the beginning or end of a paragraph. In an essay, transitions signal that one piece of a paper is coming to a close or that a new section is about to start. Common transition lines include:

- First, we have to consider...
- A second point in favor of this proposal is...
- The next day, I started...
- Finally, I want to make clear...

Transitions often help provide a logical order to a piece.

Logical order means that the writer has made decisions about how to organize the essay that they're writing. If, for instance, I decided to write a paper about the ways to be a good student, I could likely think of dozens, maybe even hundreds, of pieces of advice. However, to write an essay, I would need to narrow that down, and then I'd probably want to list my top 3 (or 5, or 10) reasons in an order that would make sense to my reader. That's what it means to put a paper in logical order. Every time you see a Top Ten list online, that writer has used logical order to organize her paper.

Transitions signal that logical order by reminding the reader where we are on the list. First, Second, Third, Fifth, Last, etc. all tell my reader what kind of progress she's making. These words are small but important.

We also use transitions to show changes in time or location. For instance, in a narrative essay, you might want to let the reader know that you're going to jump ahead from your first swimming lesson as a four-year-old to your gold-medal-winning competition at the 2025 Olympics. When you write, "Fifteen years later, I put on my Speedos and started to climb the pool ladder," that date at the beginning of your sentence is a clear transition. Without it, the reader will be lost (and wondering what a four-year-old is doing in a Speedo swimsuit).

When a piece is written in time order, we say it uses chronological order to organize itself. Transitions are vital to chronological order; without them, your hopeless reader won't know whether an hour or a day has passed.

Transitions also can signal to the reader that we're about to encounter a different kind of information. For example, if I'm in the middle of providing facts about why everyone should wear a seatbelt, and I decide that a story is

necessary to keep the reader's attention, I might say, "Let's consider an example." This tells my reader that I'm moving from the lecture to the story.

Signals like this are important because readers tackle different parts of our writing with different levels of attention. They also help a reader figure out where the main idea, a supporting idea, or a minor detail might be happening in a piece. If you've ever had to read and analyze a text, looking for the main idea, you know that words like "First," and "Finally" often signal that a major point is being made, while a tag like "For example" means that something smaller, an illustration or a detail, is about to be shared.

Use these signposts in your own writing to keep readers interested and focused.

Special Cases

Some kinds of writing require special transitions. For example, as we've already discussed, narrative writing will require the use of time transitions in nearly every case. You've got to name a time and give hints about the duration of an event when telling a story.

Example Writing also requires the use of transitions. Because Example (also called Exemplification or Illustration) writing uses logical organization, you'll find that ordinal numbers are key to providing clear transitions. (Ordinal Numbers are numbers that demonstrate an order or a position: First, Second, Third, Fourth, and etc.).

Comparison or Contrast writing requires a writer to provide transitions not just at the start of paragraphs but also within the text. In fact, in Comparisons, transitions

carry the meaning of the paper. They are more than just organization: they actually tell your reader what you mean. For example, if I'm comparing Tuesday and Wednesday, then I'll need to use comparison transition words when talking about them. I might write:

Tuesday is the second day of the week, and Wednesday is the third day.

Without a comparison word, that's a boring sentence that tells my reader almost nothing. So, instead, I could add a transition phrase:

Tuesday is the second day of the week, unlike Wednesday, which is the third day.

Yeah, still boring, but that's because my topic is bad. At least now my reader knows that I'm saying this is a big difference between Tuesday and Wednesday.

Transitions are critical to good comparison writing.

Transition Word Resources:

You can find great lists of comparison words in nearly every substantial grammar book and resource. I've listed a few below.

- Excelsior Owl: <https://owl.excelsior.edu/writing-process/paragraphing/paragraphing-and-transitioning/>
 - This is an excellent resource with an easy-to-understand chart. The words are divided

into different types/uses of transitional words and phrases.

- Purdue Online Writing Lab
(OWL): https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/mechanics/transitions_and_transitional_devices/transitional_devices.html <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/574/02/>
 - This is a brief listing of the most common college-level transition words. There is also a short explanation reading about using transitions available at:
https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/mechanics/transitions_and_transitional_devices/index.html

REVISING & EDITING TIPS

Revision Tips

One great way to help you with revision is to try something called the post-draft outline. Here's how it works: Outline your paper, jotting down your thesis statement and the topic sentences in each of your paragraphs. See if this skeleton of your paper reveals a clear, logical flow of ideas and organization. If not, you know you need to make some changes. Having this visual representation of what you have actually written in your

Exclamation Point in a yellow triangle

essay is a great help when you are trying to revise effectively.

Editing Tips

It's important to remember that a good editing process takes time. You can't edit well in one big editing pass. You should be prepared to spend the time it will take to edit in several passes and use strategies that will slow yourself down and edit thoroughly.

Read your paper aloud.

Reading aloud gives you the opportunity to both see and hear what you have written—and it slows your eyes down so you're more likely to catch errors and see what you have actually written, not what you think you wrote. It's also helpful to have someone else read your paper aloud so you can listen to how well it flows.

Read your paper backward

Start with the last sentence. Read it first. Then, read the second-to-the-last sentence. Continue this process for your whole essay. This strategy really slows you down and helps you see each sentence on its own, which is key to effective editing.

Review the Grammar

Review the Grammar for known struggles you have with grammar, punctuation, and other errors. Then, with that information fresh in your mind, edit your paper just

looking for those known issues. For example, if you know you have struggled with commas, review the information on commas in Paperrater.com, and, then, immediately edit your essay with special attention to commas. With the rules fresh in your mind, you're more likely to catch any errors.

A Tip for Both Revising and Editing

Finally, a good tip for both revision and editing is to use the resources available to you for feedback and help. If you're on a campus with a writing center, take advantage of it. If your online college offers an online writing tutorial service, submit your essay to that service for feedback. And, take advantage of in-class peer reviews. Your peers understand the writing assignment you're working on and can provide helpful reader feedback.

Seek help when you need it, and ask questions of your professor. A good revision and editing process involves using all of the resources available to you.

TIP

How do you get the best out of your revisions and editing? Here are some strategies that writers have developed to look at their first drafts from a fresh perspective. Try them throughout this course; then keep using the ones that bring results.

- Take a break. You are proud of what you wrote, but you might be too close to it to make changes. Set aside

your writing for a few hours or even a day until you can look at it objectively.

- Ask someone you trust for feedback and constructive criticism.
- Pretend you are one of your readers. Are you satisfied or dissatisfied? Why?
- Use the resources that your college provides. Find out where your school's writing lab is located and ask about the assistance they provide online and in person.

General Revision

General revision requires attention to content, organization, style, and readability. These four main categories should give you a template from which to begin to explore details in depth. A cursory review of these elements in and of itself is insufficient for even the briefest review. You may need to take some time away from your document to approach it again with a fresh perspective. Writers often juggle multiple projects that are at different stages of development. This allows the writer to leave one document and return to another without losing valuable production time. Overall, your goal is similar to what it was during your writing preparation and production: a clear mind.

Evaluate Content

Content is only one aspect of your document. Let's say

you were assigned a report on the sales trends for a specific product in a relatively new market. You could produce a one-page chart comparing last year's results to current figures and call it a day, but would it clearly and concisely deliver content that is useful and correct? Are you supposed to highlight trends? Are you supposed to spotlight factors that contributed to the increase or decrease? Are you supposed to include projections for next year? Our list of questions could continue, but for now, let's focus on content and its relationship to the directions. Have you included the content that corresponds to the given assignment, left any information out that may be necessary to fulfill the expectations, or have you gone beyond the assignment directions? Content will address the central questions of who, what, where, when, why, and how within the range and parameters of the assignment.

Evaluate Organization

The organization is another key aspect of any document. Standard formats that include an introduction, body, and conclusion may be part of your document, but did you decide on a direct or indirect approach? Can you tell? A direct approach will announce the main point or purpose at the beginning, while an indirect approach will present

an introduction before the main point. Your document may use any of a wide variety of organizing principles, such as chronological, spatial, compare/contrast. Is your organizing principle clear to the reader?



Beyond the overall organization, pay special attention to transitions. Readers often have difficulty following a document if the writer makes the common error of failing to make one point relevant to the next or to illustrate the relationships between the points. Finally, your conclusion should mirror your introduction and not introduce new material

Evaluate Style

Style is created through content and organization, but also involves word choice and grammatical structures. Is your document written in an informal or formal tone, or does it present a blend, a mix, or an awkward mismatch? Does it provide a coherent and unifying voice with a professional tone? If you are collaborating on the project with other writers or contributors, pay special attention to unifying the document across the different authors' styles of writing. Even if they were all to write in a professional, formal style, the document may lack a consistent voice. Read it out loud—can you tell who is writing what? If so,

that is a clear clue that you need to do more revising in terms of style.

Evaluate Readability

Readability refers to the reader's ability to read and comprehend the document. A variety of tools are available to make an estimate of a document's reading level, often correlated to a school grade level. If this chapter has a reading level of 11.8, it would be appropriate for most readers in the eleventh grade. But just because you are in grade thirteen, eighteen, or twenty-one doesn't mean that your audience, in their everyday use of language, reads at a postsecondary level. As a business writer, your goal is to make your writing clear and concise, not complex and challenging.

You can often use the "Tools" menu of your word processing program to determine the approximate reading level of your document. The program will evaluate the number of characters per word, add in the number of words per sentence, and come up with a rating. It may also note the percentage of passive sentences and other information that will allow you to evaluate readability. Like any computer-generated rating, it should serve you as one point of evaluation, but not the only point. Your concerted effort to choose words you perceive as appropriate for the audience will serve you better than any computer evaluation of your writing.



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THE WRITING PROCESS IN REVIEW

The writing process has several important stages, and you may find yourself having to engage in some of the stages more than once. You may also have to go back and repeat certain stages. This means the process is **recursive**. The writing process is not necessarily linear, as good writers often have to go back and repeat several stages of their process. For example, once you revise, you may realize you don't have enough information on a topic and need to go back to do a little brainstorming or freewriting to help you get more ideas. Think back to the Slinky® metaphor. The parts of the writing process connect and loop around each other.

Remember, a thorough writing process will make your writing better! You may continue to have struggles when you write. We all have areas in which we need to improve, but a good writing process will make your writing stronger than it would be otherwise. When you take advantage of

each stage of the writing process, you're helping yourself do your best work!

Listen as these college students talk about what they learned about writing and what they continue to struggle with as they continue with their journeys.



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5

Peer Review



PEER REVIEW

Jim Beatty

Peer review is a daunting prospect for many students. It can be nerve-wracking to let other people see a draft that is far from perfect. It can also be uncomfortable to critique drafts written by people you hardly know. Peer review is essential for effective public writing, however. Professors often publish in “peer-reviewed” journals, which means their drafts are sent to several experts around the world. The professor/author must then address these people’s concerns before the journal will publish the article. This process is done because, overall, the best ideas come out of

conversations with other people about your writing. You should always be supportive of your peers, but you should also not pull any punches regarding things you think could really hurt their grade or the efficacy of their paper.

HOW TO GIVE FEEDBACK

The least helpful thing you can do when peer-reviewing is correct grammar and typos. While these issues are important, they are commonly the least important thing English professors consider when grading. Poor grammar usually only greatly impacts your grade if it gets in the way of clarity (if the professor cannot decode what you are trying to say) or your authority (it would affect how much readers would trust you as a writer). And, with a careful editing process, a writer can catch these errors on their own. If they are convinced they have a good thesis statement and they don't, however, then you can help them by identifying that.

Your professor may give you specific things to evaluate during peer review. If so, those criteria are your clue to what your professor values in the paper. If your professor doesn't give you things to evaluate, make sure to have the assignment sheet in front of you when peer-reviewing. If your professor provides a rubric or grading criteria, focus on those issues when giving advice to your peers. Again, don't just look for things to "fix." Pose questions to your classmate; let them know where they need to give you more to clarify and convince you.

HOW TO RECEIVE FEEDBACK

Resist the powerful urge to get defensive over your writing. Try your best not to respond until your reviewer is finished giving and explaining their feedback. Keep in mind that your peers do not have all the information about your paper that you do. If they misunderstand something, take it as an opportunity to be clearer in your writing rather than simply blaming them for not getting it. Once you give a paper to another person, you cannot provide additional commentary or explanations. They can only evaluate what's on the page.

Perhaps the biggest challenge in peer review is deciding what advice to use and what to ignore. When in doubt, always ask your professor. They know how they will grade, so they can give you a more definitive answer than anyone else. This holds true for the advice you get from a writing tutor too.

MAKE PEER REVIEW A PART OF YOUR LIFE

Don't think of peer review as an isolated activity you do because it is required in class. Make friends in the class that can help you outside of it. Call on people outside the class whom you trust to give you feedback, including writing tutors. Integrate peer review into every step of your writing process, not just when you have a complete draft. Classmates, writing tutors, and your friends can be an invaluable resource as you brainstorm your ideas. Conversations with them can give you a safe, informal opportunity to work things out before you stare at a blank

screen wondering what to write. A writing tutor can help you talk out your ideas and maybe produce an outline by the end of your appointment. A friend can offer another perspective or additional information of which you are initially unaware. Again, you can get the most direct advice by visiting your professor during office hours to go over ideas and drafts. Take advantage of all the formal and informal resources surrounding you at GCC to help you succeed.

CONCLUSION

Far from being scary or annoying, peer review is one of the most powerful tools at your disposal in the life-long process of becoming a more effective public writer. No good writing exists in isolation. The best writing comes out of a communal effort.

Providing Good Feedback

by Jenn Kepka

chalkboard of happy customer restaurant feedback

Customer Comments chalkboard by Flickr user Lisa @Sierra Tierra CC-BY

Think about the most helpful feedback you've ever received from a teacher, a coach, a parent, or a friend. What did they tell you? How did they phrase it? Why did you believe what they were saying?

In general, we accept feedback best from people we trust because we believe they have our best interests at heart. In a college class where the faces around you change

frequently, it's hard to develop that level of trust. So in peer review, we have to create credibility — that's trustworthiness — through a process of Restating, Praising, and Criticizing.

RESTATING

The first step in providing good peer feedback is to prove to your peer that you've actually read and tried to understand her writing. If you've ever been through peer review before, you know that receiving feedback where the reader has completely missed your point is discouraging; it's also hard when someone else doesn't seem to have paid much attention to what you're saying.

To show a writer that we're on her side, we can restate her main idea (also known as her *thesis or topic sentence*). This will show that we've read the piece and tried our best to understand what the writer wanted to say — not what we wanted to hear, but what she was trying to say.

To provide a good restatement of the piece, follow these steps:

- I. Read the piece at least twice.
 - On your first read, don't pause to highlight or make notes or mark mistakes — just read to see what's going on.
 - On the second read, start to mark places where you have questions, places that you particularly like, or places where you're sure

some fix is needed.

2. After you've read the piece, get a separate piece of paper and, without looking, write down a sentence or two that sums up what you think is the author's main point.
 - Try to complete this sentence: I thought your major point was _____.
 - Sometimes, in an early draft, it can be hard to nail down a precise main point. In this case, try to put yourself in the writer's shoes, and think, "What do I think they *most* want to say in this whole thing?" Then fill in this sentence: The point I think you want to make here is _____, though you also spend time saying _____ and/or _____.

You may need to complete this process more than once just to feel secure that you understand what the piece is saying. That's great! That means you really are working with the paper, and your peer will appreciate your efforts.

If you provide peer feedback in person, this is also a valuable place to start. Think how much nicer it would be to have someone say, "What I thought you were writing about was ____" rather than just having him jump in with criticism.

GIVING POSITIVE FEEDBACK (PRAISE, OR WHAT'S WORKING)

We tend to focus on what's going wrong in a paper

because, as writers and students, we want to know what to fix as we go through the revision process. However, most good feedback will include a section on what's actually working in a paper, too. Positive feedback encourages a writer in a couple of ways:

- It shows him/her that the reviewer isn't just "out to get me."
- It can demonstrate some patterns or habits that are worth repeating. For example, if someone says, "I thought your transitions were well done," you can be prepared to add more and use them more confidently in the next paper.
- It builds credibility for the reviewer by providing feedback a reader is more likely to agree with before providing critical comments.

However, positive feedback is only useful if it's specific. Think how nice it is to see "Good job!" written on top of a paper — and then think about how useless that comment is if you really want to fix the paper. What do I do when I get a "good work!" comment? I probably just turn the paper in without any more revision.

Good, positive feedback should give the writer somewhere to go. It should encourage by making clear points about what's working, where, and why. So instead of saying, "I thought this was funny!," a good comment might say, "The way you turn the words around in the second paragraph so it's almost like a tongue-twister was funny, and the dialogue in the third paragraph made me laugh out loud." The writer can look at these and go, a-ha! I'm funny. I should add more like those two.

To provide useful, positive feedback:

1. Number the paragraphs (in a longer work) or sentences (in a one-paragraph or one-page work) in the piece you're reading so you can refer to them easily.
2. Provide two or three one-sentence comments that point out things the writer has done that were interesting, clever, funny, surprising, smart, or lovely.
 - Don't just look for funny jokes or big words (although complimenting the vocabulary of a section is a good piece of feedback!). Also consider how the writer uses detail, whether the story is believable (and why or how), if the title is informative, if the overall question being answered is creative, if the answer the student gives to the question of the assignment is unexpected, if the organization is clear, and if the introduction and/or conclusion are particularly strong.
3. Always keep your focus on the idea of *helpful* feedback. Letting someone know they've chosen a nice font isn't helpful, but letting her know that you like the places she's chosen to break up her paragraphs will be!

GIVING NEGATIVE FEEDBACK (CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM)

Some writers struggle with giving negative feedback at all;

others want to dive right in and provide only criticism. A balance of these two instincts is necessary in order to give useful feedback.

Think, again, about helpful feedback you've received in the past; now, think of a time when you received criticism that wasn't helpful. Generally, writers respond to bad, negative feedback in one of two ways: 1). "How DARE you insult my beloved work? I'm not listening to ANYTHING you have to say!" or 2). "You're sooooo right, it's terrible, it's all trash, I'm throwing the whole thing away and starting over, or maybe I'll just give up!"

The results are the same: no revision is completed. Since the entire point of getting peer feedback is to get good ideas to help you revise, bad feedback is bad for the process.

To give the best critical feedback, then, reviewers must remember that the writer should be able to act on whatever you say. That means no bland, vague statements. If someone writes, "I just didn't like it," on a paper, there's not much I (the writer) can do with that, other than cry or plot revenge. If, instead, someone writes, "I didn't like paragraph 2 because it felt like the voice changed completely from the rest of the story," then I can act on that. I can look at paragraph 2 and make changes.

Here are a few tips for providing good, critical feedback:

1. Be specific. State where problems are found by line number or paragraph number. Quote or re-write sentences that need to be edited and show the problems clearly.
2. Ask questions. There's a huge difference between

saying “I got lost in paragraph 2” and “What did you mean by __ in paragraph 2?” The second one gives the writer something to do — she can answer that question and fix the paragraph.

3. Limit yourself to a reasonable number of critical comments. Aim for an equal ratio of negative to positive feedback.
 - This isn’t just an ego-saver! If a paper is in such an early draft that you can only find 2 positive things to say, the author probably doesn’t need a pile of criticism yet.
4. Be aware of the goals the writer had for the piece. Make sure you aren’t trying to get him/her to say something you like instead of letting him/her say what s/he likes.
5. Don’t critique spelling, grammar, or punctuation unless you are an expert.
 - Colleges provide resources to help with mechanical errors, so don’t pretend to be an expert in commas if you aren’t one. It’s easier to get someone else more confused than it is to be really helpful.
 - Also, remember the writer may still need to rewrite and to do a final edit, so picking out every single spelling mistake might not be the best use of your time (unless the writer asks you to).

Finally, as a general rule of thumb, don’t write anything you wouldn’t say to the writer face-to-face. Always sign

your name to anything you write on, as well, so that the writer can follow up if she has questions.

UNDERSTANDING PEER REVIEW

Celia Brinkerhoff

Your assignment may require that you include information from “peer-reviewed” articles. These articles are published in scholarly or academic journals after they’ve gone through a lengthy editorial process which usually involves the author making many revisions before final acceptance is made. The reviewers themselves are experts in the same field, and judge the strength of the article on the originality of the research, the methods used, and the validity of findings. The highest standard of peer review is “double-blind,” meaning that both the identity of the authors as well as the reviewers are kept anonymous in order to ensure that bias and subjectivity do not influence the process.

But be careful: Not all of the content in an academic journal is subject to peer review. There may be other content such as letters, opinion pieces, and book reviews that have been edited but not necessarily gone through a formal peer-review process.

ACTIVITY: Watch, listen, and learn

The following video describes the process of peer review.

ACTIVITY: Summarize the peer review process



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But how can you, the researcher, recognize a peer-reviewed article?

Fortunately, the library's Summon search and most of our databases have a filter or limit which will help you find the right type of information. Various databases will use different terms: look for "academic" or "scholarly" or "peer-reviewed."

There are other clues you can look for.

Tip: Clues to help you decide if it's peer-reviewed

Examples

Author's credentials and affiliations	Look for the author's degrees, as well as the university or research institution they are affiliated with.
References	Any peer-reviewed article will have a lengthy list of sources used by the author.
Submission guidelines	Somewhere on the journal's homepage will be a link for submitting an article for review. You may have to dig around a little!
Journal publisher	Is the journal published by a scholarly society? a university press?

Activity: Summing up Module 2

Pick the correct statement.



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6

Outlining and Annotation



Outlining

A strong outline is like a road map for your research paper.

A map with push pins along a route

Outlining can help you maintain a clear focus in your research essay because an outline helps you see your whole paper in a condensed form, which can help you create a good plan for how you'll organize your research and develop your ideas.

Just as there are different types of essays, there are different outline structures appropriate to different fields and different types of essay assignments. You'll want to consult with your instructor about any specific organizational requirements, but the following will

provide you with some basic examples of outline structures for research papers in several different fields. Pre-draft and Post Draft outlines.

Pre-Draft Outlines

Traditional Outlining

In many of your courses, you'll be asked to write a traditional, thesis-based research essay. In this structure, you provide a thesis, usually at the end of your introduction, body paragraphs that support your thesis with research, and a conclusion to emphasize the key points of your research paper. You'll likely encounter this type of assignment in classes in the humanities, but you may also be asked to write a traditional research paper in business classes and some introductory courses in the sciences and social sciences.

In the sample on this page, you'll see a basic structure that can be modified to fit the length of your assignment. It's important to note, in shorter research essays, each point of your outline might correspond to a single paragraph, but in longer research papers, you might develop each supporting point over several paragraphs.

Example

Traditional Outline

- I. Introduction
 - I. background, context for topic
 - II. transition to thesis
 - III. thesis statement
- II. Supporting Point 1
 - I. supporting detail
 - I. example 1
 - II. example 2
 - II. supporting detail
 - I. example 1
 - II. example 2
 - III. supporting detail
 - I. example 1
 - II. example 2
- III. Supporting Point 2
- IV. Supporting Point 3
- V. Supporting Point 4
- VI. Conclusion
 - I. review central ideas presented in the body
and make connections to the thesis
 - II. transition to closing thoughts
 - III. closing thoughts

Traditional Outline Example

- 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 SLR's*
 - 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*

IMRAD Outlining

In many of your courses in the sciences and social sciences, such as sociology, psychology, and biology, you may be required to write a research paper using the IMRAD format. IMRAD stands for Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion. In this format, you

present your research and discuss your methods for gathering research. Each section of the IMRAD structure can take several paragraphs to develop.

This structure is also sometimes referred to as the APA format, but be sure not to confuse this with the APA format for documentation of your research.

Examples

IMRAD Outline

- I. Introduction
 - I. provide research question
 - II. explain the significance
 - III. review of background or known information on your topic
- II. Methods
 - I. describe your methods for gathering information
 - II. explain your sources of information, both primary and secondary
- III. Results
 - I. describe what you found out from your research.
 - II. develop each point thoroughly, as this is the main section of your research paper
- IV. Discussion

- I. explain the significance of your findings
- II. describe how they support your thesis
- III. discuss the limitations of your research

NOTE: APA does not recommend or require any particular outline for your papers. If you've seen sample papers following APA format, you may have seen the IMRAD format used, but this is not an official APA requirement. Your *assignment* should always dictate outline structure, not a formatting style.

So you might have an assignment that requires APA format for the documentation but a very different organizational pattern. In fact, you may use the traditional outline for some projects written in APA format.

See It in Practice

In this videocast, you'll see how our student writer has organized all of her research into a traditional outline.



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<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=243#h5p-64>

Checklist

Writing an Effective Outline

This checklist can help you write an effective 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 to my working thesis statement before I consider it the final version?

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 ideas.
- A sentence outline uses complete sentences to express ideas.
- The writer's thesis statement begins the outline and the outline ends with suggestions for the concluding paragraph.

Outline Time?

When it is time for you to write your outline, if you are unsure about the structural requirements for your assignment, be sure to ask your professor.

In your outline, you should aim for a level of detail at least similar to what you see in the models, though more detail may be necessary, depending upon the length of your paper. A clear outline gives you a good plan for your paper and will help you determine whether you have a strong research focus before you begin drafting the paper.

It's always a good idea to get feedback on your outline before heading into the drafting and integrating stage of your writing process. Share either a formal or informal

Post Draft Outline

A big huzzah—the rough drafts are done, which is a major hurdle. I know there’s still a lot to do, but I think the hardest part’s out of the way.

Now, it’s time to turn away from the raw content creation of writing a draft and towards the fine-tuning, that transforms into polishing and shaping an effective essay.

Like a pre-draft outline, a post-draft outline is a useful tool for assessing the organization of your paper. After you’re done with a rough draft, creating a post-draft outline can help you see how your paper flows from beginning to end.



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Annotations

Annotating a text means that you actively engage with it by taking notes as you read, usually by marking the text in some way (underlining, highlighting, using symbols such as asterisks) as well as by writing down brief summaries, thoughts, or questions in the margins of the page. If you are working with a textbook and prefer not to write in it, annotations can be made on sticky notes or on a separate sheet of paper. Regardless of what method you choose, annotating not only directs your focus, but it also helps you retain that information. Furthermore, annotating helps you to recall where important points are in the text if you must return to it for a writing assignment or class discussion.

Tip:

Annotations should not consist of JUST symbols, highlighting, or underlining. Successful and thorough annotations should combine those visual elements with notes in the margin and written summaries; otherwise, you may not remember why you highlighted that word or sentence in the first place.

How to Annotate:

- Underline, highlight, or mark sections of the text that seem important, interesting, or confusing.
- Be selective about which sections to mark; if you end up highlighting most of a page or even most of a paragraph, nothing will stand out, and you will have defeated the purpose of annotating.
- Use symbols to represent your thoughts.

- Asterisks or stars might go next to an important sentence or idea.
- Question marks might indicate a point or section that you find confusing or questionable in some way.
- Exclamation marks might go next to a point that you find surprising.
- Abbreviations can represent your thoughts in the same way symbols can
- For example, you may write “Def.” or “Bkgnd” in the margins to label a section that provides definition or background info for an idea or concept.
- Think of typical terms that you would use to summarize or describe sections or ideas in a text, and come up with abbreviations that make sense to you.
- Write down questions that you have as you read.
- Identify transitional phrases or words that connect ideas or sections of the text.
- Mark words that are unfamiliar to you or keep a running list of those words in your notebook.
- Mark key terms or main ideas in topic sentences.
- Identify key concepts pertaining to the course discipline (i.e.–look for literary devices, such as irony, climax, or metaphor, when reading a short story in an English class).
- Identify the thesis statement in the text (if it is explicitly stated).

Example of how to annotate a Journal Article:





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Links to sample annotated texts – [Journal article](https://tinyurl.com/ybfz7uke) (<https://tinyurl.com/ybfz7uke>) · [Book chapter excerpt](https://tinyurl.com/yd7pj379) (<https://tinyurl.com/yd7pj379>)

Basics of Annotating a Text



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For three different but equally helpful videos on how to read actively and annotate a text, click on one of the links below:

“[How to Annotate](https://youtu.be/muZcJXlfCWs)” (<https://youtu.be/muZcJXlfCWs>, transcript [here](#))

“[5 Active Reading Strategies](https://youtu.be/JLopqJeE4w)” (<https://youtu.be/JLopqJeE4w>, transcript [here](#))

“[10 Active Reading Strategies](https://youtu.be/5j8H3F8EMNI)” (<https://youtu.be/5j8H3F8EMNI>, transcript [here](#))

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7

Illustration and Exemplification



To **illustrate** means to show or demonstrate something clearly through the use of evidence. To **exemplify** means to demonstrate through the use of examples. This is a technique that can stand alone but is most often used within an essay to demonstrate the various points that an essay is offering as it supports its thesis. Effective **illustration** clearly demonstrates and supports a point through the use of evidence.

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. A variety of evidence is needed to demonstrate the validity of any 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. [This I Believe](https://thisibelieve.org/) (<https://thisibelieve.org/>) is a website that collects essays that illustrate core values and beliefs. Visit the program's website for some examples.

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, your essay's purpose, and your audience. When writing an illustration essay, keep in mind the following:

- Use evidence that is appropriate for your topic as well as appropriate for your audience.
- Assess how much evidence you need to adequately explain your point, which depends 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 your 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 6

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 audience.

1. Topic: Combat and mental health
2. Audience: family members of veterans, doctors
3. Topic: Video games and teen violence
4. Audience: parents, children
5. Topic: Architecture and earthquakes
6. Audience: engineers, local townspeople

The Structure of an Illustration Essay

The controlling idea, or thesis, often belongs at the beginning of the essay. Evidence is then presented in the essay's body paragraphs, to support the thesis. As you decide how to present your evidence, consider order of importance, then decide whether you want to with your strongest evidence first, or start with evidence of lesser importance and have the essay build to increasingly

stronger evidence. The table below shows the connection between order and purpose.

Figure 5.4 Order Versus Purpose

Order Vs Purpose

The time transition words listed in the table above 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. The table below provides a list of phrases for illustration.

Figure 5.5 Phrases of Illustration

Phrases of Illustration

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 7

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.

Exercise 8

Choose a motto or other inspirational statement that appeals to you. Using the aspects outlined above, write a paragraph that illustrates this statement. Remember to include specific examples and description to illustrate your interpretation of this statement.

Assignment 4

Choosing either a topic from Exercise 7 or Exercise 8 write a minimum five paragraph illustration essay.

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 highlight examples.

Student Sample: Illustration/Example Essay

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

External Links

“[April & Paris](https://tinyurl.com/y9rgud9b)” (https://tinyurl.com/y9rgud9b) by David Sedaris: In “April & Paris,” writer David Sedaris explores the unique impact of animals on the human psyche.

“[She’s Your Basic L.O.L. in N.A.D.](https://tinyurl.com/y7ocnnl5)” (https://tinyurl.com/y7ocnnl5) by Perri Klass: In “She’s Your Basic L.O.L. in N.A.D.,” pediatrician and writer Perri Klass discusses the medical-speak she encountered in her training as a doctor and its underlying meaning.

Jessica Bennett, a senior writer for *Newsweek*, offers an example of an illustration essay when she presents [The Flip Side of Internet Fame](https://tinyurl.com/y9yjmqt9) (https://tinyurl.com/y9yjmqt9). You can also see the essay [here](https://tinyurl.com/y7vd53db) (https://tinyurl.com/y7vd53db).

8

Classification



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. It is important, however, to be sure to use a single basis for the division of categories; otherwise, you may end up with items that fall into multiple categories. 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 20

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 five

separate regions: Long Island, New York City, Western New York, Central New York, and Northern New York.

The 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 21

Using your classifications from Exercise 20, 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. Continue in this section to read a sample classification essay.

Exercise 22

Consider things that are a part of your daily life. Create a list that classifies these items both as an overall categories and then within sub-topics.

Assignment 7

Building on Exercises 21 and 22, 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.

Example Essay

Types of Higher Education Programs

Today's students have many choices when it comes to pursuing a degree: four-year programs, two-year programs, large or small classroom settings, and even daytime or evening classes. With all

the different options to consider, potential students should learn about the different types of colleges, so they can find a school that best fits their personality, budget, and educational goals.

One type of higher education program for students to consider is a liberal arts college. These schools tend to be small in size and offer a range of undergraduate degrees in subjects like English, history, psychology, and education. Students may choose a liberal arts college if they want a more intimate classroom setting rather than large lecture-style classes. Students may also consider a liberal arts college if they want to gain knowledge from a variety of disciplines, rather than focus on a single area of study. Many liberal arts schools are privately owned, and some have religious affiliations. Liberal arts schools can come with a hefty price tag, and their high cost presents an obstacle for students on a tight budget; moreover, while some students might appreciate a liberal arts school's intimate atmosphere, others might encounter a lack of diversity in the student body. Still, students seeking a well-rounded education in the humanities will find liberal arts colleges to be one option.

Universities, another type of higher education program, offer both undergraduate and graduate degrees. Usually universities are larger than colleges and can accommodate tens of thousands of students in many different majors and areas of study. A large student body means that class sizes are often larger, and some classes may be taught by graduate students rather than professors. Students will feel at home at a university if they want a focused academic program and state-of-the-art research facilities. While some universities are private, many are public, which means they receive funding from the government, so tuition is more affordable, and some even offer discounted in-state tuition for state residents. Also, universities attract many international students, so those looking for a variety of campus cultural groups and clubs will appreciate a greater sense of diversity among the student body.

Universities can be overwhelming for some, but they are the right fit for students who seek research opportunities and academic studies, especially in the fields of mathematics and science.

Community college is a type of higher education program popular with students on a limited budget who want to take college courses but may not know what they want to major in. Most schools offer degrees after two years of study, usually an associate's degree that prepares students to enter the workforce; many students choose to study at a community college for two years and then transfer to a four-year college to complete their undergraduate degree. Like liberal arts schools, classes are small and allow instructors to pay more attention to their students. Community college allows students to live at home rather than in a dormitory, which also keeps costs down. While some young people might not like the idea of living at home for school, many adults choose to attend community college so they can advance their education while working and living with their families.

Online universities are another type of higher education program that are gaining popularity as technology improves. These schools offer many of the same degree programs as traditional liberal arts colleges and universities. Unlike traditional programs, which require students to attend classes and lectures, online universities offer greater academic flexibility and are a great option for students wishing to pursue a degree while still working full time. At online universities, students access course materials, such as video lectures and assessments, remotely using a personal computer and are able to speed up or slow down their progress to complete their degree at their own pace. Students may attend classes in the comfort of their own homes or local libraries, but students hoping for the social community of higher education might not enjoy this aspect of higher education.

With so many colleges and universities to choose from, it may be

difficult for a student to narrow down his or her selection, but once a student knows what he or she is looking for, the process may become much easier. It is very important for students to learn about the different types of higher education programs available before making their selections.

External Links

Amy Tan describes relationship with her heritage, her mother, and her languages in [Mother Tongue](https://tinyurl.com/hya7ob5) (<https://tinyurl.com/hya7ob5>). The essay is also available [here](https://tinyurl.com/y7gbrqhs) (<https://tinyurl.com/y7gbrqhs>).

PART II

RHETORIC AND WRITING

The Rhetorical Situation

Written by Dana Anderson

Most of us intuitively understand the rhetorical situations we face each day, but we rarely give them any thought.

Consider this. You [the author] need to ask your parents [the audience] for money [the purpose]. It is the third time this semester that you have asked, and it is right before the holidays [the context]. Should you communicate with a text message, a phone call, an email, or a Facebook message, and should it be funny, serious, or heartfelt [text]?

This is a rhetorical situation.

Whenever we decide to write, whether it is a tweet, an essay for history class, or a text message to your parents asking for money, we face a rhetorical situation or set of elements that help shape the choices we make as writers.

The rhetorical situation consists of:

- Author: The writer of the communication
- Audience: The receiver of the communication
- Purpose: The goal of the communication
- Context: The surrounding setting, time, culture,

and social discussions on the topic

- Text: The genre, organization, and style of communication
 - Genre is the form or shape
 - Writing strategies such as memoir, argument, or analysis help develop and organize the content
 - Style is created through elements such as tone, diction, and syntax

The rhetorical situation has evolved from the influential Greek philosopher Aristotle's ideas on how rhetoric, using language effectively, functions.

Often, we give little thought to or automatically process the rhetorical situation. However, effective writers carefully consider these elements and choose an approach to better communicate their ideas.

Returning to the scenario, you decide that the best way to convince your parents to send you money is through an honest email that explains why you are short on money. You choose this genre because you know that your parents will read it at home after work and prefer email to texts. You also thoughtfully write in a style that doesn't sound demanding, but provide clear reasons why you need the money. How could they say no to that?

That is the power of understanding and analyzing what shapes the rhetorical situation. It helps you create audience-centered communication in the genre and style best suited to achieve your purpose.

You will find more information on rhetoric in the next chapter.

9



WHAT IS RHETORIC?

Rhetoric is the study of effective speaking and writing. And the art of persuasion. And many other things.

The modes of persuasion you are about to learn about on the following pages go back thousands of years to [Aristotle](#), a Greek rhetorician. In his teachings, we learn about three basic modes of persuasion—or ways to persuade people. These modes appeal to human nature and continue to be used today in writing of all kinds, politics, and advertisements.

These modes are particularly important to argumentative writing because you'll be constantly looking for the right angle to take in order to be persuasive with your audience. These modes work together to create a well-rounded, well-developed argument that your audience will find credible.

By thinking about the basic ways in which human beings can be persuaded and practicing your skills, you can learn to build strong arguments and develop flexible

argumentative strategies. Developing flexibility as a writer is very important and a critical part of making good arguments. Every argument should be *different* because every audience is *different* and every situation is *different*. As you write, you'll want to make decisions about how you appeal to your particular audience using the modes of persuasion.

The video below provides you with an excellent example of how these modes work together, and the pages that follow will explain each mode in detail, focusing on strategies you can use as a student writer to develop each one. If you need the transcript, just click on the CC button at the bottom right of the video.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:

<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=5#oembed-1>

TED-Ed. (2013, January 14). *Conner Neill: What Aristotle and Joshua Bell can teach us about persuasion* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O2dEuMFR8kw>

Content/Form

Rhetoric requires understanding a fundamental division between *what* is communicated through language and *how* this is communicated.

Aristotle phrased this as the difference between *logos* (the logical content of a speech) and *lexis* (the style and delivery of a speech).

Five Essential Elements of Greek Rhetoric

Invention-planning a discourse by deciding which arguments should be used and how supporting evidence should be deployed.

Arrangement-deciding on the most effective way to organize the arguments and supporting evidence.

Style -choosing effective language that fit the speaker's character, the content of the speech and the occasion.

Memory-preparing for the speech through study and practice

Delivery-using the voice and body gestures in presenting the speech.

In written discourse, only the first three steps are involved.

PERSUASIVE APPEALS

Modes of Persuasion

Persuasion, according to Aristotle and the many authorities that would echo him, is brought about through three kinds of proof or persuasive appeal:

logos: The appeal to reason. Using a coherent, consistent in manner. Compelling and convincing. Using the effective rules of logic. Inductive and deductive reasoning. Evidence.

pathos: The appeal to emotion. Appeals that relate to human emotions, especially the feelings and fractions of the audience. Appeal to the heart.

ethos: The persuasive appeal of one's character. Personality, trustworthiness.

Although they can be analyzed separately, these three

appeals work together in combination toward persuasive ends.

LOGOS

Logos is about appealing to your audience's logical side. You have to think about what makes sense to your audience and use that as you build your argument. As writers,

we appeal to logos by presenting a line of reasoning in our arguments that is logical and clear. We use evidence, such as statistics and factual information, when we appeal to logos.

A sketch of the brain. One half is paint splattered and says Creative; the other half is black and white, has math problems written all over, and says Logic.

In order to develop strong appeals to logos, we have to avoid faulty logic. Faulty logic can be anything from assuming one event caused another to making blanket statements based on little evidence. Logical fallacies should always be avoided. We will explore **logical fallacies** in another section.

Appeals to logos are an important part of academic writing, but you will see them in commercials as well. Although they more commonly use pathos and ethos, advertisers will sometimes use logos to sell products. For example, commercials based on saving consumers money, such as car commercials that focus on miles-per-gallon, are appealing to the consumers' sense of logos.

As you work to build logos in your arguments, here are some strategies to keep in mind.

- Both experience and source material can provide

you with evidence to appeal to logos. While outside sources will provide you with excellent evidence in an argumentative essay, in some situations, you can share personal experiences and observations. Just make sure they are appropriate to the situation and you present them in a clear and logical manner.

- **Remember to think about your audience** as you appeal to logos. Just because something makes sense in your mind, doesn't mean it will make the same kind of sense to your audience. You need to try to see things from your audience's perspective. Having others read your writing, especially those who might disagree with your position, is helpful.
- **Be sure to maintain clear lines of reasoning throughout your argument.** One error in logic can negatively impact your entire position. When you present faulty logic, you lose credibility.
- When presenting an argument based on logos, **it is important to avoid emotional overtones and maintain an even tone of voice.** Remember, it's not just a matter of the type of evidence you are presenting; how you present this evidence is important as well.

PATHOS

Appealing to **pathos** is about appealing to your audience's emotions.

Drama masks

Because people can be easily moved by their emotions, pathos is a powerful mode of persuasion. When you think

about appealing to pathos, you should consider all of the potential emotions people experience. While we often see or hear arguments that appeal to sympathy or anger, appealing to pathos is not limited to these specific emotions. You can also use emotions such as humor, joy, or even frustration, to note a few, in order to convince your audience.

It's important, however, to be careful when appealing to pathos, as arguments with an overly-strong focus on emotion are not considered as credible in an academic setting. This means you could, and should, use pathos, but you have to do so carefully. An overly-emotional argument can cause you to lose your credibility as a writer.

You have probably seen many arguments based on an appeal to pathos. In fact, a large number of the commercials you see on television or the internet actually focus primarily on pathos. For example, many car commercials tap into our desire to feel special or important. They suggest that, if you drive a nice car, you will automatically be respected.

With the power of pathos in mind, here are some strategies you can use to carefully build pathos in your arguments.

- **Think about the emotions most related to your topic in order to use those emotions effectively.** For example, if you're calling for a change in animal abuse laws, you would want to appeal to your audience's sense of sympathy, possibly by providing examples of animal cruelty. If your argument is focused on environmental issues related to water conservation, you might provide examples of how water shortages affect metropolitan areas in order to appeal to your

audience's fear of a similar occurrence.

- In an effort to appeal to pathos, **use examples** to illustrate your position. Just be sure the examples you share are credible and can be verified.
- In academic arguments, be sure to **balance appeals to pathos with appeals to [logos](#)** (which will be explored on the next page) in order to maintain your ethos or credibility as a writer.
- When presenting evidence based on emotion, **maintain an even tone of voice**. If you sound too emotional, you might lose your audience's respect.

ETHOS

Appealing to **ethos** is all about using credibility, either your own as a writer or of your sources, in order to be persuasive. Essentially, ethos is about believability. Will your audience find you believable? What can you do to ensure that they do?

Ethos word cloud

You can establish ethos—or credibility—in two basic ways: you can use or build your own credibility on a topic, or you can use credible sources, which, in turn, builds your credibility as a writer.

Credibility is extremely important in building an argument, so, even if you don't have a lot of built-in credibility or experience with a topic, it's important for you to work on your credibility by integrating the credibility of others into your argument.

Aristotle argued that ethos was the most powerful of the modes of persuasion, and while you may disagree, you

can't discount its power. After all, think about the way advertisers use ethos to get us to purchase products. Taylor Swift sells us perfume, and Peyton Manning sells us pizza. But, it's really their fame and name they are selling.

With the power of ethos in mind, here are some strategies you can use to help build your ethos in your arguments.

- **If you have specific experience or education** related to your issues, **mention it** in some way.

NOTE: Not all professors will be in favor of this, as it will depend upon the level of formality of the assignment, but, in general, this is an effective strategy.

-
- **If you don't have specific experience or education** related to your issue, make sure you **find sources from authors who do**. When you integrate that source information, it's best if you can address the credibility of your sources. When you have credible sources, you want to let your audience know about them.
 - **Use a tone of voice** that is appropriate to your writing situation and will make you sound reasonable and credible as a writer. Controversial issues can often bring out some extreme emotions in us when we write, but we have to be careful to avoid sounding extreme in our writing, especially in academic arguments. You may not

convince everyone to agree with you, but you at least need your audience to listen to what you have to say.

- **Provide a good balance** when it comes to pathos and logos, which will be explored in the following pages.
- **Avoid flaws in logic—or logical fallacies**—which are explored in another chapter of the book.

MODES OF PERSUASION ACTIVITIES

Sticking with logic and facts isn't always going to be your best approach to getting your readers to agree with your opinions. Sometimes you'll need to appeal to people's emotions or make them feel like you are someone they can trust or is just like them.

The idea of the three persuasive appeals is another concept that comes to us from ancient Greek philosophers. In this case, it's Plato's student, Aristotle.

As you watch the video below, use this chart to keep track of crucial ideas: [The Three Persuasive Appeals](#)



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<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=5#h5p-54>

After completing this next activity, you may download or print a completion report that summarizes your results to submit to your instructor.



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<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=5#h5p-24>

SEE IT IN PRACTICE

Now that you have learned about the different modes of persuasion and their uses and seen some ethos, pathos, and logos analysis in action, it's time to see how our student is doing with her argumentative essay process. Let's look at how she plans to appeal to ethos, pathos, and logos in her essay.

Watch as our student explores her choices and what strategies she thinks will be most convincing.



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<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=5#h5p-25>

READY TO WRITE

It's time to think about how you will appeal to ethos, pathos, and logos

Ethos (credibility), Pathos (emotion), Logos (logic)

and, depending upon where you are in your process, maybe even draft a few rough paragraphs using your source material as support.

Wherever you are in your process, it's a good time to start thinking of the appeals and asking yourself questions about your own credibility, the credibility of your sources, how much emotion you want to convey, and what you can do to appeal to the logical thinking of your audience.

Write down your plans in a journal or in notes and share them with your professor and/or classmate for some additional feedback.

The key is to get started with your writing in each step and think, at least for right now, how you can appeal to ethos, pathos, and logos to make the most convincing argument possible?

ASSIGNMENT ANALYSIS

Analyzing Your Assignment and Thinking Rhetorically

Rhetoric can be defined as the ability to determine how to best communicate in a given situation. Although a thorough understanding of effective oral, written, and visual communication can take years of study, the foundation of effective communication begins with rhetoric. With this foundation, even if you are just starting out, you can become a more powerful, more flexible writer. Rhetoric is key to being able to write effectively in a variety of situations.

Every time you write or speak, you're faced with a different rhetorical situation. Each rhetorical situation

requires some thoughtful consideration on your part if you want to be as effective as possible.

Many times, when students are given a writing assignment, they have an urge to skim the assignment instructions and then just start writing as soon as the ideas pop into their minds. But writing rhetorically and with intention requires that you thoroughly investigate your writing assignment (or rhetorical situation) before you begin to write the actual paper.

Thinking about concepts like **purpose**, **audience**, and **voice** will help you make good decisions as you begin your research and writing process. These concepts will be explained in more detail below.

PURPOSE

Rhetorically speaking, the purpose is about making decisions as a writer about why you're writing and what you want your audience to take from your work.

There are three objectives you may have when writing a research paper.

- **To inform** – When you write a research paper to inform, you're not making an argument, but you do want to stress the importance of your topic. You might think about your purpose as educating your audience on a particular topic.
- **To persuade** – When you write a research paper to persuade, your purpose should be to take a stance on your topic. You'll want to develop a

thesis statement that makes a clear assertion about some aspect of your topic.

- **To analyze** – Although all research papers require some analysis, some research papers make analysis a primary purpose. So, your focus wouldn't be to inform or persuade, but to analyze your topic. You'll want to synthesize your research and, ideally, reach new, thoughtful conclusions based on your research.

TIPS! Here are a few tips when it comes to thinking about purpose.

You must be able to move beyond the idea that you're writing your research paper only because your professor is making you. While that may be true on some level, you must decide on a purpose based on what topic you're researching and what you want to say about that topic.

You must decide for yourself, within the requirements of your assignment, why you're engaging in the research process and writing a paper. Only when you do this will your writing be engaging for your audience.

Your assignment or project instructions affect purpose. If your professor gives you a formal writing assignment sheet for your research paper, it's especially important to read very carefully through your professor's expectations. If your professor doesn't provide a formal assignment sheet, be prepared to ask questions about the purpose of the assignment.

AUDIENCE

Before you begin to write your research paper, you should think about your audience. Your audience should have an impact on your writing. You should think about the audience because, if you want to be effective, you must consider the audience's needs and expectations. It's important to remember the audience affects both what and how you write.

Most research paper assignments will be written with an academic audience in mind. Writing for an academic audience (your professors and peers) is one of the most difficult writing tasks because college students and faculty make up a very diverse group. It can be difficult for student writers to see outside their own experiences and to think about how other people might react to their messages.

But this kind of rhetorical thinking is necessary for effective writing. Good writers try to see their writing through the eyes of their audience. This, of course, requires a lot of flexibility as a writer, but the rewards for such thinking are great when you have a diverse group of readers interested in and, perhaps, persuaded by your writing.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

Classmates and professors

For an academic audience of classmates and teachers, you have the task of considering a diverse group. You'll want

to think about how much background information your audience will need on your topic, as well as what terms will need to be defined. You'll want to be sure to use a formal tone, as research papers for an academic audience generally require a tone that is quite formal.

Colleagues or potential colleagues

For an audience within your field, you'll want to consider how much background information you'll need to provide and what terms you need to define. You may not need to provide as much background information as you would for a diverse academic or general audience, and you wouldn't want to define terms that would be considered common knowledge in your field. Your tone should be formal, as colleagues or potential colleagues in your field of study will expect a formal voice.

The general public

Although many research papers in college-level classes are intended for an academic audience, you may encounter assignments where instructors ask you to write for a general public type of audience. When you write for the general public, you may need to provide helpful background information, define important terms, and use a tone that is semi-formal.

Targetted Audience

Sometimes, an instructor will ask you to write for a specific public audience. When you write for a specific targetted audience, you are thinking about a specific group

of readers the essay is intended to reach. When it comes to determining the most appropriate audience for the essay, it is necessary to think back to the purpose. The easiest way to do that is to put into your mind the action you would like to see taken after your essay has been read. Then, you can consider who would be able to take that action.

Example

Susan is writing an essay to promote the banning of single-use plastic straws in restaurants. She has decided to focus on encouraging the use of metal straws. There are three possible audiences that Susan is thinking of writing towards as she writes her essay

- First: Restaurant Owners
- Second: Restaurant Customers
- Third: City Lawmakers

Each audience would give Susan a different approach and different arguments to target. If she chooses restaurant owners, she can focus on the cost savings of the use of reusable metal straws. If she chooses customers, she thinks she would focus more on the ways customers could do their part and about some of the convenience of personal metal straws. Finally, Susan believes that focusing on lawmakers would mean she would need to talk about cities that have already banned straws and the arguments for the laws that have already been passed.

Each audience has different pros and cons. Susan carefully considers the type of paper she wants to write and the research she

has done so far. In the end, Susan decides that customers are going to be the easiest for her to talk to in her essay.

Offending an Audience

You have learned now that your writing isn't just for you and that part of your role as a writer is to keep the audience in mind when you write. Some students struggle with this because it may feel like they just can't say what they want to say when they have to write with their audience in mind. You may feel the same and feel like you want to share your ideas the way you want to share your ideas, no matter what an audience thinks.

However, you have to remember that, unless you're keeping a personal journal, your writing is always for someone else as well. In fact, most of the time, you're going to need to be highly aware of your audience's needs when you are writing for college—and for work. Moreover, when you're writing argumentative essays on controversial topics, if you want to be persuasive, you have to think about what is going to work well to be persuasive for your given audience. Will your audience listen to you if you offend them? Probably not.

With that in mind, you'll want to make good rhetorical decisions when you write. This means you have to consider what language will work for your audience, what kind of evidence will be persuasive, and how you can present that evidence in the most convincing manner possible.

If you offend your audience, your audience members won't listen to what you have to say. While you may not

be able to always convince your audience to see your side of an issue, you should at least be able to get them to listen to you and consider your points.

In the video below, you'll see what happens when audience members are offended and what their reactions are, and why. Seeing what happens for yourself may help you remember that, when you're writing an argument, you are writing for someone else.



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<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=5#h5p-28>

VOICE

A seagull with an open mouth looking like he is making
noise

Once you have considered your audience and established your purpose, it's time to think about voice. Your voice in your writing is essentially how you sound to your audience. Voice is an important part of writing a research paper, but many students never stop to think about voice in their writing. It's important to remember voice is relative to **audience** and **purpose**. The voice you decide to use will have a great impact on your audience.

- **Formal** – When using a formal, academic or professional voice, you'll want to be sure to avoid slang and clichés, like “the apple doesn't fall far

from the tree.” You’ll want to avoid conversational tone and even contractions. So, instead of “can’t,” you would want to use “cannot.” You’ll want to think about your academic or professional audience and think about what kind of impression you want your voice to make on that audience.

- **Semi-formal** – A semi-formal tone is not quite as formal as a formal, academic, or professional tone. Although you would certainly want to avoid slang and clichés, you might use contractions, and you might consider a tone that is a little more conversational.

Students sometimes make errors in voice, which can have a negative impact on an essay. For example, when writing researched essays for the first time, many students lose their voices entirely to research, and the essay reads more like a list of what other people have said on a particular topic than a real essay. In a research essay, you want to balance your voice with the voices from your sources.

It’s also easy to use a voice that is too informal for college writing, especially when you are just becoming familiar with academia and college expectations.

Ultimately, thinking about your writing rhetorically will help you establish a strong, appropriate voice for your writing.

SEE IT IN PRACTICE

In the videocast below, you’ll see our student writer discuss the rhetorical analysis she has written for her research paper assignment.



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

<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=5#h5p-29>

READY TO WRITE

Now that you have had a chance to see how you can analyze your assignment rhetorically, it's time to try it out. Using your own research essay assignment as your guide, take some time to write about your purpose, audience, and voice. Keeping a writing journal is a great way to give yourself an opportunity to keep track of your notes that you can refer back to later.

Does your assignment specify anything in particular? In your journal or in some notes, make a short list and, in a few sentences, describe what you think your purpose for writing might be, who might be in your target audience, and what voice or tone you plan to take in order to make a good impression on your audience. Then, share your notes or journal with your professor and classmates for feedback.

This is a good opportunity to think about your requirements and ask questions of your professor to make sure you're understanding requirements related to your purpose, target audience, and what voice or tone would be appropriate.

ATTRIBUTIONS

- Content Adapted from Excelsior Online Writing Lab (OWL). (2020). Excelsior College. Retrieved

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10

MLA Style



Citation & Documentation

Welcome to Citation & Documentation!

Here you'll find extensive support for APA, MLA, and Chicago MLA documentation style. This section features instructional videos that show you how to set up your papers in MLA format, interactive checklists, and visual support for both in-text documenting and referencing at the end of your paper.

Essays at the college level will require some kind of documentation style. Documentation styles provide students, teachers, and researchers standards and specifications to follow for paper set up, in-text documentation, and references. They also will have

recommendations for writing style, word choice, and in some cases, organization.

The most common documentation styles are **APA** (from the American Psychological Association) and **MLA** (from the Modern Language Association), and some fields require **Chicago Style** (from the University of Chicago Press).

While it may feel tedious learning the different aspects of a documentation style, it's important to remember following style guidelines helps add credibility to your writing by providing you with a structured method for sharing your research with your audience.

Locating Reference Information

Having trouble locating reference information?

As you'll learn in this section of Citation & Documentation, part of writing within a particular documentation style, such as **MLA**, is building a Works Cited list with full publication information. But what happens when you're looking at your sources and just are not sure where to find all the necessary information like publication dates, volume numbers for journal articles, edition numbers, and the like?

The following images link to PDF files that include helpful information about locating publication information you'll need to build your References or Works Cited lists.

Print Book (Title/Author/Publisher)

Locating References Book

Print Book (Date of Publication)

Book - Date of Publication

Journal Article from a Database

Locating References Database

Online Journal Article

Locating References Journal Article

Website

Locating References Website

MLA Style | 8th Edition

MLA stands for the Modern Language Association. Most papers that use MLA formatting and citation style are those written in the humanities, especially in languages and literature. In 2016, the *MLA Handbook* was updated in an effort to simplify much of the documentation process in MLA format.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:

<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=40#oembed-1>

MLA Formatting: The Basics

MLA Handbook cover

Papers constructed according to MLA guidelines should adhere to the following elements:

- Double-space all of the text of your paper, and use a clear font, such as Times New Roman or Courier 12-point font.
- Use one-inch margins on all sides, and indent the first line of a paragraph one half-inch from the left margin.
- List your name, your instructor's name, the course, and the date in the upper left-hand corner of the first page. This is your **heading**. There is no cover page.
- Type a header in the upper right-hand corner with your last name, a space, and then a page number. Pages should be numbered consecutively with Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, 4, etc.), one-half inch from the top and flush with the right margin.
- Provide in-text citations for all quoted, paraphrased, and summarized information in your paper.
- Include a Works Cited page at the end of your paper that gives full bibliographic information for each item cited in your paper.
- If you use endnotes, include them on a separate page before your Works Cited page
- Your Works Cited page at the end of your project should line up with the in-text citations in the

body of your essay.

The following pages in this section will provide you with more information regarding MLA basic formatting, in-text citations, and the Works Cited entries. The information in this section follows the [*MLA Handbook*](#), 8th edition. MLA guidelines do change over time, so it's important to be aware of the most current information.

MLA Citations in the Body of Your Paper

MLA citations follow specific conventions that distinguish them from other styles. In-text citations are also sometimes known as “parenthetical citations” because they are enclosed in parentheses. The author’s last name and the page number(s) from which the quotation or paraphrase is taken must appear in parentheses at the end of the sentence.

At the end of the day Wilbur made “in excess of half a million dollars” (Marx 43).

If you use the name of the author to set up your quote or paraphrase, you mention the author’s name in the sentence and then put the page number only in the parentheses at the end of the sentence.

According to Marx, Wilbur made “in excess of half a million dollars” (43).

If you need to cite more than one source in your in-text citation, you should use a semicolon to separate the sources.

(Jones 101; Williams 23).

It's important to remember, in MLA style, each citation in your text must have a complete bibliographic entry in your Works Cited page, so, if readers want to go to the original source, they can!

The examples above are just a few of the most common examples of in-text citations in MLA style. The following provides more detailed information about in-text citing in MLA.

Single Author

When you quote or paraphrase a source, list the last name of the author, followed by the page number.

Example:

According to some experts, Marx used “class” in “two different ways” (Calvert 11).

Two Authors

Separate their last names with the word “and.” The authors' names should be listed in the order they appear in the published work.

Example:

Marx used “class” in “two different ways” (Calvert and Sennett 11).

Three or More Authors

If your source has three or more authors, you should include the first author’s name followed by et al.

Example:

Marx used “class” in “two different ways” (Calvert et al. 11).

Multiple Works by the Same Author

If more than one work by an author is cited, include shortened titles for the works to distinguish them from each other.

Example if the author’s name is mentioned:

Obama has argued that the invasion was a bad idea (“Too Soon” 42), though he has acknowledged elsewhere that it led to much good (“A Stronger Country” 13).

Example if the author’s name is not mentioned in the sentence:

Photography, because it is both science and art, seems to be “a bridge discipline” (Barthes, “Of Loss and Cameras” 45).

Multiple Sources

If multiple sources are cited within the same in-text citation, separate each citation with a semicolon. The sources do not need to be alphabetized.

Example:

The importance of family bonds and connections is immeasurable (Pickens 21; Bulmore 68).

No Page Numbers

If a work, such as a website, does not include page numbers, then omit this portion of the in-text citation.

Example:

Marx used “class” in “two different ways” (Calvert).

Some sources employ location indicators other than page numbers. For example, an ebook may include a numbering system different than page numbers. If your work is divided into stable sections, those sections may be cited.

Example:

Marx used “class” in “two different ways” (Calvert, par. 4).

Verse

Poem

For modern verse works, such as poems, include line numbers in your in-text citations.

Example:

And Poe wrote, "Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary," (line 1)

Scripture

When citing scripture, give the abbreviated name of the book and chapter and verse numbers.

Example:

And he wrote, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (*New Jerusalem Bible*, Ezek. 18.4-20).

Anonymous or Unknown Author

Use an abbreviated version of the work's title if the author is unknown. If your title is a noun phrase, it should not be abbreviated.

Example:

An anonymous source claimed that the Iraq invasion was a bad

idea from the beginning (“Bush Cannot Win” 104).

Citing Indirect Sources

The MLA Handbook recommends taking material from the original source whenever possible. If you need to use indirect quotations, use “qtd. in” to indicate the source consulted. MLA also recommends using your text to clarify the relationship between the original and the secondhand source.

Example:

Jones claimed that runners who “drank regularly usually stopped running after a few months” (qtd. in Salazar 212).

MLA Works Cited

Formatting Sources at the End of Your Paper

With the 2016 update, MLA changed and simplified the way your Works Cited entries should be formatted.

Diagram image of an MLA citations using one container.

Instead of offering a specific way to format each and every source time, the new MLA offers a streamlined approach using something called “containers.”

These containers, pictured here, provide you with the required elements, order, and punctuation for each of your Works Cited entries.

As you work to format your Works Cited entries, you will notice that some sources require only one container, depicted at the right. These are sources that you access directly from their original publication, such as books, an online magazine article, and general websites. You should follow the order of items listed in the container, following the simplified punctuation rules you see in the container as well. You will place a period after the author and the title of the source. Then, you should place commas after each item until the end of the entry.

Diagram image of an MLA citations using two container.

Two containers are required for sources that you access through places like library databases. An example

of MLA's "two container" structure is depicted at the left. Here, you will notice there is a place for the first container, with the original publication information. Below the first container, the second container provides publication information for where you retrieved that information. For example, a journal article you access through your library's databases will have its original publication information (container 1) and access information from the online database (container 2).

On the following sections, you can access interpretations of MLA format for Works Cited entries for a wide variety of sources. These interpretations follow the MLA "container" system.

Print Books

Examples

Single Author

If you are accessing a print book, then you will need just one container for publication information.

Minot, Stephen. *Three Genres*. Pearson, 2003.

Multiple Author Books

If you are accessing a print book, then you will need just one container for publication information.

Two Authors

Sennett, Richard, and Jonathan Cobb. *The Hidden Injuries of Class*. Vintage Books, 1973.

More Than Two Authors

For more than two authors: list only the first author followed by the phrase “et al.” (Latin abbreviation for “and others”; no period after “et”) in place of the other authors’ names.

Smith, John, et al. *Writing and Erasing: New Theories for Pencils*. Utah State UP, 2001.

Two or More Books by the Same Author

If you are accessing a print book, then you will need just one

container for publication information. When you list multiple works by the same author on your Works Cited page, all entries after the first one use three hyphens and a period in place of the author's name. List alphabetically by title.

Young, Dean. *Elegy on a Toy Piano*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005.

---. *Embryo: New Poems*. McSweeney's, 2007.

Corporate Authored Books

If you are accessing a print book, then you will need just one container for publication information.

French Cheese Association. *Cheese for Life*. Fromage Press, 1996.

Book With No Author

If you are accessing a print book, then you will need just one container for publication information. When you have a book with no author, you should begin with the title of the book.

Encyclopedia of Cats. Feline Press, 1991.

A Translated Book

If you are accessing a print book, then you will need just one container for publication information.

Marquez, Gabriel Garcia. *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.
Translated by Gregory Rabassa, Harper & Row, 1970.

Republished Book

If you are accessing a print book, then you will need just one container for publication information. If your source has been republished, the *MLA Handbook* recommends providing the reader with the original publication date.

Thomas, Paul. *Boy Trouble*. 1982. State Press, 1999.

A Subsequent Edition of a Book Prepared by the Author

If you are accessing a print book, then you will need just one container for publication information.

Minot, Stephen. *Three Genres*. 8th ed., Pearson, 2007.

A Subsequent Edition of a Book Prepared by an Editor Who Is Not the Author

If you are accessing a print book, then you will need just one container for publication information.

Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*. 7th ed., edited by J. Paul Hunter, W. W. Norton, 1995.

Anthology or Collection

If you are accessing a print book, then you will need just one container for publication information.

Lyons, Paul, editor. *The Greatest Gambling Stories Ever Told*. Lyons Press, 2002.

An Essay in an Anthology, Reference, or Collection

If you are accessing a print book, then you will need just one container for publication information. To cite a work in an anthology or collection, provide the author and title of the specific work first. Then, provide information for the anthology or collection.

Young, Willie. "Knowing the Unknowable." *Poker and Philosophy*, edited by Eric Bronson, Carus Publishing Company, 2006, pp.

41-57.

Poem or Short Story Examples from an Anthology or Collection

If you are accessing a print book, then you will need just one container for publication information. To cite a work in an anthology or collection, provide the author and title of the specific work first. Then, provide information for the anthology or collection.

Coleman, Wanda. "Job Hunter." *For a Living: The Poetry of Work*, edited by Nicholas Coles and Peter Oresick, U of Illinois Press, 1995, p. 105.

Article in a Reference Book

If you are accessing a print book, then you will need just one container for publication information. If an article in a reference work has no author, you should begin with the title of the article.

"Discourse." *The Dictionary of Literary Theory*. 2nd ed., Penguin, 1991.

A Multivolume Work

If you are accessing a print book, then you will need just one container for publication information.

Citing Only One Volume

"On the Heavens." *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, edited by J. Barnes, vol. 1, Princeton UP, 1971.

Citing More Than One Volume of a Multivolume Work

Physics. *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, edited by J. Barnes, 3 vols., Princeton UP, 1971.

An Introduction, a Preface, a Forward, or an Afterword

If you are accessing a print book, then you will need just one container for publication information.

Carter, Billy. Introduction. *Southern Beers*, by Carter, Jersey City Press, 1977, pp. 2-14.

If the author of the part cited is different from the author of the book, then write the full name of the complete work's author after the word "by."

Carter, Billy. Introduction. *Southern Beers*, by Thomas Budweiser, Jersey City Press, 1977, pp. 4-18.

Ebooks

Because ebooks may have been originally published in print, you may need two containers to present publication information. The first container includes the print information, and the second container includes the access information.

Gikandi, Simon. *Ngugi wa Thiong'o*. Cambridge UP, 2000. *ACLS Humanities E-book*, hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.07588.0001.0001.

Print Magazine Articles

If you are accessing a print magazine article, then you will need just one container for publication information.

Gallivan, Joseph. "Against the Odds." *Oregon Humanities*, Summer 2008, pp. 16-24.

Online Magazine Articles

If you are accessing a magazine article directly from the web, you will most likely need just one container to present publication information.

Bilger, Burkhard. "The Height Gap." *The New Yorker*, 5 Apr. 2004, www.newyorker.com/magazine/2004/04/05/the-height-gap.

Print Journal Articles

If you are accessing a print journal article, then you will need just one container for publication information.

NOTE: If the journal does not use volume numbers, cite the issue numbers only.

Pasquaretta, Paul. "On the Indianness' of Bingo: Gambling and the Native American Community." *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 20, no.4,

1994, pp. 151-187.

Online Journal Articles

If you are accessing a journal article directly from the journal's website, you will most likely need just one container to present publication information.

NOTE: MLA now requires full URLs for online material. However, if your article includes a DOI (digital object identifier), that information should be provided instead of the URL.

Collins, Ross. "Writing and Desire: Synthesizing Rhetorical Theories of Genre and Lacanian Theories of the Unconscious." *Composition Forum*, vol. 33, Spring 2016, compositionforum.com/issue/33/writing-desire.php.

Article from a Database

If you are accessing a journal article from a database, you will need two containers to present the original publication information as well as the access information from the database.

NOTE: MLA now requires full URLs for online material. You should look for a stable link to the article within the database.

However, if your article includes a DOI (digital object identifier), that information should be provided instead of the URL.

Goldman, Anne. "Questions of Transport: Reading Primo Levi Reading Dante." *The Georgia Review*, vol. 64, no. 1, 2010, pp. 69-88. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/41403188.

Print Newspaper

If you are accessing a print newspaper article, then you will need just one container for publication information. Reviews and letters to the editor should be presented in a similar manner.

Williams, Joy. "Rogue Territory." *The New York Times Book Review*, 9 Nov. 2014, pp. 1+.

Online Newspaper

If you are accessing a newspaper article directly from the web, you will most likely need just one container to present publication information. Reviews and letters to the editor should be presented in a similar manner.

St. Fleur, Nicholas. "City Bees Stick to a Flower Diet Rather Than Slurp Up Soda." *The New York Times*, 19 May 2016, www.nytimes.com/2016/05/21/science/urban-bees-diet-flowers-soda.html.

Web Page

Websites that contain articles, postings, and almost anything else have been simplified in the 8th edition of the *MLA Handbook*. Just one container is needed for most websites.

Hollmichel, Stephanie. "The Reading Brain: Differences between Digital and Print." *So Many Books*, 25 Apr. 2013, somanymorebooksblog.com/2013/04/25/the-reading-brain-differences-between-digital-and-print/

Images & Other Multimedia

Image — Photograph or Artwork

In the 8th edition of the *MLA Handbook*, images from the web will most likely need just one container. Images from other types of sources should follow guidelines for those particular sources.

Wootten, Bayard. *Woman Resting*. 1937. Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, *North Carolina Collection Photographic Archives*, 12 Feb. 2013, <http://library.unc.edu/wilson/>.

Online Video

In the 8th edition of the *MLA Handbook*, videos accessed via web will most likely need just one container.

Digoxin Nursing Pharmacology NCLEX (Cardiac Glycosides). *YouTube*, uploaded by RegisteredNurseRN, 9 Mar. 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S73GT32EE48>.

Television or Radio Program

In the 8th edition of the *MLA Handbook*, television or radio programs may need two containers. In addition to the original airing information, you may need a second container to show how you accessed the program.

"In the Graveyard." *New Amsterdam*, season 2, episode 13, NBC, 11 Feb. 2020. *Hulu*, <https://www.hulu.com/watch/26be7472-2727-4d02-b77a-22bdeb79278e>. Accessed 2 Oct. 2020.

NOTE: The title is normally italicized; however, when the item is part of a whole (an episode within a series for example), the title is contained within quotation marks.

Film or DVD

In the 8th edition of the *MLA Handbook*, films may need two containers but a DVD would need just one.

One Container (Example from DVD)

Luhrmann, Baz, director. *Romeo + Juliet*. 1996. Performance by Leonardo DiCaprio, Claire Danes, and John Leguizamo, 20th Century Fox, 2004.

Two Containers

Cook, Barry, and Bancroft, Tony, directors. *Mulan*. 1998. Performance by Eddie Murphy, Donny Osmond, and Lea Salonga, Disney. *Netflix*, www.netflix.com/watch/14607635.

Album or Song

In the 8th edition of the *MLA Handbook*, albums or songs accessed from the web should be cited as websites or online videos. However, if you access an album or a song from a CD or vinyl the following information applies.

Album

Lady Gaga. *The Fame Monster*. Streamline/Konlive/Cherrytree/Interscope, 2009.

Song

Lady Gaga. "Dancer in the Dark." *The Fame Monster*, Streamline/Konlive/Cherrytree/Interscope, 2009.

Theses & Dissertations

If you have a hard copy of the thesis or dissertation, you will need just one container. However, since you are likely

accessing the work via a database, you will most likely need two containers.

One Container — Example of Hard Copy

Samuelson, Michael Lynn. *Contending with Foucault*. 2003. Florida State U, dissertation.

Two Containers — Example of Database

Samuelson, Michael Lynn. *Contending with Foucault*. 2003. Florida State U, dissertation, *ProQuest*, search.proquest.com/docview/502312254.

Blog Entry / Comment

In the 8th edition of the *MLA Handbook*, access information for blog posts and comments is presented in the same manner that website information is presented.

Hollmichel, Stephanie. "The Reading Brain: Differences between Digital and Print." *So Many Books*, 25 Apr. 2013, somanymanybooksblog.com/2013/04/25/the-reading-brain-differences-between-digital-and-print/.

Online Course & Discussion Boards

Formatting entries for online course pages and discussion posts should follow similar formatting you will find for

other online sources in the 8th edition of MLA. Provide as much information as you can, based on an online resource example. Since the information is accessed directly online, you will likely need just one container system.

Course Page

Sands, Crystal. "English 101: English Composition." Excelsior College, 2016, mycourses.excelsior.edu.

Discussion Post

Brunell, David. "Re: Armstrong Article." *Reflections on Assignment 1*, Excelsior College, 2013, mycourses.excelsior.edu.

Email

When documenting an email message, you will need just one container. Use the subject line as the title and standardize its capitalization.

Jones, Star. "Re: Your Mother." Received by Daniel Jones, 11 May 2013.

Government Publications

If a person is not listed as the author of a government document, the government organization should be listed

as the corporate author. The number of containers needed to document government publications will depend upon how you accessed the publication. For example, if you accessed the publication directly from the web, just one container is needed. If you accessed the publication via a database, two containers are needed.

United States Department of Health and Human Services. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Specifications for Medical Examinations of Underground Coal Miners." *The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health*, 9 Jan. 2012, www.cdc.gov/niosh/docket/archive/docket225.html.

Interviews

Radio or Television

When documenting a radio or television interview, you will need just one container. In general, treat the person being interviewed as the author. Then provide the title of the interview.

Barrett, Paul. Interview conducted by Terry Gross. *Fresh Air*, NPR, 1 Feb. 2013.

Online

When documenting an online interview, you will need just one container. In general, treat the person being

interviewed as the author. Then include the title of the interview.

Sometimes the same interview can be found in more than one place. When formatting your citation, list the source you used to watch. If your interview comes from an online network or show, follow the format below.

Armstrong, Lance. *Lance Armstrong Confirms Emma O'Reilly's Claims*. OWN, uploaded by The Oprah Show, 17 Jan. 2013, <http://www.oprah.com/search.html?q=lance%20armstrong%20interview>.

If your interview comes from YouTube, treat YouTube as the container and follow the format below.

Armstrong, Lance. *Lance Armstrong's "Inexcusable" Attack | Oprah's Next Chapter* | Oprah Winfrey Network. YouTube, uploaded by OWN, 18 Jan. 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yOhixALeVY>.

Published Interview

When documenting a published interview, you will need just one container. In general, treat the person being interviewed as the author. Then provide the title of the interview.

Print Published Interview Example

Te'o, Manti. "The Full Manti." Interview conducted by Pete Thamel. *Sports Illustrated*, 1 Oct. 2012, pp. 46-50.

Online Published Interview Example

Te'o, Manti. "The Full Manti." Interview conducted by Pete Thamel. *Sports Illustrated*, 1 Oct. 2012, <https://vault.si.com/vault/2012/10/01/the-full-manti>.

NOTE: If no title is provided, then write "Interview" (with no quotes).

Smith, John. Interview. Conducted by Bridget Peterson, 30 Nov. 2019.

Personal Interview

When documenting a personal interview, you will need just one container. In general, treat the person being interviewed as the author. Then provide the title of the interview. If no title is provided, then write "Interview" (with no quotes).

Davis, Benjamin. Interview. Conducted by William Anderson, 3 May 2004.

Lecture or Speech

When documenting a lecture or speech you attended in person, you will need just one container.

Foucault, Michel. "The Culture of the Self." University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley. 12 May 1983. Lecture.

Online Lecture or Speech

When documenting an online lecture or speech, you will need just one container.

Sometimes the same interview can be found in more than one place. See the citation examples below as a reference. When formatting your citation, list the source you used to watch the lecture or speech.

Brown, Brené. "The Power of Vulnerability." *TED: Ideas Worth Spreading*, June 2010, https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_the_power_of_vulnerability.

Brown, Brené. "The Power of Vulnerability | Brené Brown." *YouTube*, uploaded by TED, 3 Jan. 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iCvmsMzIF7o>.

MLA Style Demo

MLA formatting can seem a little confusing at first, and it can be helpful to view a sample MLA paper when you are new to this documentation style. The following short

videocasts are designed to give you an overview of the basic requirements for page setup, in-text citations, and works cited in MLA format.

This first video will demonstrate the requirements for the MLA heading, headers, and page set up.



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

<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=40#h5p-20>

This second video will show you what in-text citations should look like and explain why you must use them.



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

<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=40#h5p-21>

In this third and final video on MLA format, you'll see a sample Works Cited page with some tips on creating a works cited list of your own.



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

<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=40#h5p-22>

MLA Formatting Guide

Once you review the different aspects of MLA formatting, you may find that it takes you a while

to remember everything you need to do. Referring back to helpful resources here can help, but a guide with the key components of MLA can provide important reminders and support.

When you have your paper in order, it's a good idea to review this handy guide below.



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<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=40#h5p-23>

MLA SIGNAL PHRASES

Keep things interesting for your readers by switching up the language and placement of your signal phrases.



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<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=40#h5p-37>

MODEL PHRASES

In the words of professors Greer and Dewey, “...”

As sociology scholar Janice Kinsey has noted, “...”

Creative Commons, an organization that helps internet users understand and create copyright for materials, reports that “...”

“...,” writes Deidre Tyrell, “...”

“...,” attorney Sanderson claims.

Kyles and Sanderson offer up a compelling point: “...”

VERBS

Acknowledges	Contends	Observes
Admits	Declares	Points out
Adds	Denies	Reasons
Agrees	Disputes	Refutes
Argues	Emphasizes	Rejects
Asserts	Endorses	Reports
Believes	Grants	Responds
Claims	Illustrates	Suggests
Comments	Implies	Thinks
Compares	Insists	Writes
Confirms	Notes	

Avoiding Plagiarism When Documenting

In addition to adding credibility to your writing when you cite your sources correctly, you also help yourself avoid plagiarism. Plagiarism occurs when writers do not give proper credit to sources for words, ideas, and images.

Plagiarism can be both purposeful and accidental, but plagiarism is a serious offense either way. With that in mind, the following tutorial can help you understand the importance of citing your source material and how you can avoid plagiarism.

Acknowledgment of Sources is a Rhetorical Act

To an inexperienced writer, citing and documenting sources may seem like busywork. Yet, when you cite your external sources in the text of your paper and when you document them at the end of your piece in a list of works cited or a bibliography, you are performing a rhetorical act. Complete and accurate citing and documenting of all external sources help writers achieve three very important goals:

1. It enhances your credibility as a writer. By carefully and accurately citing your external sources in the text and by documenting them at the end of your paper you show your readers that you are serious about your subject, your research, and the argument which you are making in your paper. You demonstrate that you have studied your subject in sufficient depth, and by reading credible and authoritative sources.
2. It helps you to avoid plagiarism. Plagiarism is trying to pass someone else's ideas or writing as your own. It is a serious offense that can damage the reputation of a writer forever and lead to very serious consequences if committed in an academic or professional setting. Later on in the chapter, we will discuss plagiarism and ways to avoid it in detail.
3. The presence of complete citations of sources in your paper will help you demonstrate to your readers that you are an active participant in the community of readers, writers, researchers, and

learners. It shows that you are aware of the conversations that are going on among writers and researchers in your field and that you are willing to enter those conversations by researching and writing about the subjects that interest you. By providing enough information about the sources which you used in your own research and writing, you give other interested readers the opportunity to find out more about your subject and, thus, to enter in a conversation with you.

The Logic and Structure of a Source Citation

Every time writers cite and document their sources, they do it in two places in the paper—in the text itself and at the end of the paper, in a list of works cited or bibliography. A citation is incomplete and, by and large, useless to the readers, if either of the parts is missing. Consider the following example, in which I cite an academic journal article using the Modern Language Association citation system. Please note that I give this example at this point in the chapter only to demonstrate the two parts of a citation. Later on, we will discuss how to cite and document different kinds of sources using different documentation systems, in full detail.

In-text citations

In-text citations are also known as parenthetical citations

or parenthetical references because, at the end of the citation, parentheses are used. In her essay “If Winston Weather Would Just Write to Me on E-mail,” published in the journal *College Composition and Communication*, writer and teacher Wendy Bishop shares her thoughts on the nature of writing: “[I see...writing as a mixture of mess and self-discipline, of self-history [and] cultural history.” (101).

The Citation in the List of Works Cited

Bishop, Wendy. “If Winston Weather Would Just Write to Me on E-mail.” *College Composition and Communication*. 46.1 (1995): 97-103.

The reason why each citation, regardless of the type of source and the documentation system being used, has two parts is simple. Writers acknowledge and document external sources for several reasons. One of these reasons is to give their readers enough information and enable them, if necessary, to find the same source which the paper mentions. Therefore, if we look at the kinds of information provided in the citation (page numbers, titles, authors, publishers, and publication dates), it becomes clear that this information is sufficient to locate the source in the library, bookstore, or online.

When to Cite and Document Sources

The brief answer to this question is “always.” Every time you use someone else’s ideas, arguments, opinions, or data, you need to carefully acknowledge their author and

source. Keep in mind that you are not just borrowing others' words when you use sources in your writing. You are borrowing ideas. Therefore, even if you are not directly citing the source, but paraphrase or summarize it, you still need to cite it both in the text and at the end of the paper in a list of works cited or in a list of references.

The only exception is when you are dealing with what is known as "common knowledge." Common knowledge consists of facts that are so widely known that they do not require a source reference. For instance, if you say in your writing that the Earth rotates around the Sun or that Ronald Reagan was a US President, you do not need to cite the sources of this common knowledge formally.

Avoiding Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a problem that exists not only on college, university, and high school campuses. In recent years, several high profile cases, some involving famous writers and journalists have surfaced, in which these writers were accused of either presenting someone else work as their own or fabricating works based on fictitious or unreliable research. With the advent of the Internet, it has become relatively easy to download complete papers. Various people and organizations, sometimes masquerading as "writing consultants" promise students that they would write a paper on any subject and of any level of complexity for a hefty fee. Clearly, the use of such services by student writers is dishonest and dishonorable. If your college or university is like mine, it probably has adopted strict policies for dealing with plagiarizing writers. Punishments for intentional plagiarism are severe and may include not

only a failing grade for the class but even an expulsion from the university.

In addition to intentional plagiarism, there is also the unintentional kind. Experience shows that beginning writers' work sometimes include passages which could be called plagiarized because such writers often do not know how to cite and document external sources properly or do not understand that importance of following proper citation practices.

Observing the following practices will help you avoid plagiarism:

As you research, keep careful notes of your sources. As you take notes for your research project, keep track of what materials in those notes come from external sources and what material is yours. Keep track of all your sources, including interviews and surveys, photographs and drawings, personal e-mails and conversations. Be sure to record the following information:

- Author
- Title
- Date of publication
- Publisher

Remember that when you use external sources, you are borrowing not the words of another writer, but his or her ideas, theories, and opinions. Therefore, even if you summarize or paraphrase a source, be sure to give it full credit. Writers used to have to record this information on separate note cards. However, with the proliferation of online and other electronic tools which allow us to keep track of our research, the task of recording and reflecting on source-related information has become easier.

Anti-Plagiarism Activity 1

Read the following four paragraphs. They are from a research source, an article in *The New Yorker* magazine. The other three are from student papers which attempt to use the article as an external source. As you read consider the following questions:

- Would you call the student's passage or its parts plagiarized from the original? Why or why not?
- If any parts of the student's passages are plagiarized what needs to be changed in order to avoid plagiarism? Keep in mind that you may need to rewrite the whole Paragraph and not just make changes in separate sentences.
- Which of the student passages will require more significant rewriting than others and why?

Source Paragraph (from the article "Personality Plus," by Malcolm Gladwell. *New Yorker*, Sept 20, 2004). One of the most popular personality tests in the world is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), a psychological assessment system based on Carl Jung's notion that people make sense of the world through a series of psychological frames. Some people are extroverts, some are introverts. Some process information through logical thought. Some are directed by their feelings. Some make sense of the world through intuitive leaps. Others collect data through their senses.

Student Paragraph 1

The Myers-Briggs Test is a very popular way to assess

someone's personality type. Philosopher Carl Jung believed that people make sense of the world in different ways. Some are extroverts and some are introverts. According to this idea, people process information either by logical reasoning or through intuition or feelings.

Student Paragraph 2

According to writer Malcolm Gladwell, One of the most popular personality tests in the world is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), a psychological-assessment system based on Carl Jung's notion that people make sense of the world through a series of psychological frames. Gladwell states that the test is based on the idea by Carl Jung that people make sense of the world through a series of psychological frames. According to Jung, some people are extroverts and some are introverts. Some process information through logical input, and some through feelings. Some make sense of the world through intuitive leaps. Others collect data through their senses.

Student Paragraph 3

One of the most popular personality tests in the world is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), a psychological assessment system based on Carl Jung's notion that people make sense of the world through a series of psychological frames (Gladwell 43). The test is based on Jung's theory that people understand the world differently. This is why we have extroverts and introverts and people who act either based on reasoning or feelings (Gladwell).

Anti-Plagiarism Activity 2



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this

version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=40#h5p-7>

Major Citation Systems

In this part of the chapter, I will explain the major citation and documentation systems which you are likely to encounter in your writing for college classes and beyond. The information in this section is not meant to be memorized. Instead, I encourage you to use this material as a reference source, when you are writing a paper and need to cite and document sources correctly, using one of the systems described below, refer to this chapter.

Please note that the following sections include only the basic information about each of the citation styles. There are plenty of excellent sources explaining and illustrating the differences between citation systems. I recommend the site of the [Online Writing Center at Purdue University](#).

Conclusion

Avoiding plagiarism and acknowledging your external sources completely and accurately are vital parts of the writing process. Your credibility as a writer and the reception that your work will receive from readers may depend on how well you acknowledge your sources. By following the guidelines presented in this chapter and by seeking out more knowledge about the rules of citing and documenting from the publications listed in this chapter, you will become a more competent, more professional,

and more credible writer. This chapter covers only the basics of source citing and documenting.

Attribution

- The Modern Language Association of America. (2016). *MLA Handbook* (8th ed.). The Modern Language Association of America.
- Content Adapted from Excelsior Online Writing Lab (OWL). (2020). Excelsior College. Retrieved from <https://owl.excelsior.edu/> licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-4.0 International License](#).
- Content Adapted from [About Writing: A Guide](#) by Robin Jeffrey is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#), except where otherwise noted.

11

Using Description



Description is the tool writers use to make things come alive for their readers, to make sure that their audience is fully immersed in the words on the page. Every time you tell a story to someone, or tell someone about something, you use description even if you don't know it. Description can be as basic as, "I have a blue car" or "That is such a cute baby" or as detailed as "*The flowers soak up the golden sun's rays and begin to show their vibrant colors.*" Descriptive words are used to provide more information and provide added insight. In fact, a description is the one tool that most allows writers (and speakers) to show instead of just tell, which enables us to exemplify our points to our readers.

There are two basic types of description, **objective** and **subjective**. An objective description is demonstrated in the first two examples

above; it gives a factual account of the subject. A subjective description offers a more personal view of the details by choosing specific words and phrases such as *vibrant* to describe colors in the above example. Vibrant doesn't just offer detail about the colors, it also offers an opinion or a value judgment within the description. Most descriptions offer a mix of the two to convey the details while also offering the audience an idea of the emotional context of the subject being described.

Sensory Details

The Five Senses

Figure 5.3 The Five Senses

All expressive description, however, uses **sensory details** as its basis. These are

details that appeal to the *five senses*—*sight, smell, sound, taste, and touch*. Of course, different subjects lead themselves to an emphasis on different sensory details and not all subjects require a use of all five senses. We all recognize the importance of sight as a descriptive tool, but we don't always realize how important other sensory details can also be. Consider, though, how often you will smell a certain smell and instantly think of something or someone specific. You might smell freshly baked bread and think of your grandma's kitchen, or popcorn and think of a movie theater. Hearing a certain phrase might make you think of an old friend or acquaintance. You might associate a certain type of material with a blanket you had as a child. When you take a bite of pepperoni pizza you might be reminded of the slumber parties of your youth. Sensory details really can play an important part in making a description come alive.

Practice Step 1

Choose an everyday object. Write a description of that object that appeals to all five senses in a way that does not state the object.

Practice Step 2

On a separate sheet of paper, describe the following five items in a short paragraph. Use at least three of the five senses for each description.

1. Night
2. Beach
3. City
4. Dinner
5. Stranger

Using Concrete Description

Try to use specific, concrete descriptions. For example, a writer may write *beautiful* to describe a tree. However, *beautiful* is too vague. Instead, a concrete adjective or modifier would be stronger and gives a greater impact. The reader needs details for a picture to form in their heads, abstract concepts like *beautiful* lack a real-world analog.

Here's a reworked description of the tree: "the sun's rays glistened off the rain-slick leaves, even as the afternoon sky dipped towards evening." The *beautiful* qualities of the

tree are “shown” through concrete details instead of merely told through abstraction. This gives the reader the illusion of immediate experience, as opposed to the dictionary variety.

Similes and Metaphors

Another way to add descriptive language is to use **similes** and **metaphors**, creating a picture in readers’ heads by comparing two objects to each other. Similes and metaphors help to make connections between two ideas, concepts, or objects that clarify or give new meaning.

A **simile** is a comparison using the words like or as. It usually compares two dissimilar objects. For example, the bread was as dry as a bone. The comparison links a piece of bread that has become hard and white to a bone that is also hard and white. Bones often dry out, and so does bread. These similar characteristics are what make the simile effective.

A **metaphor** states that one thing is something else. It is a comparison, but it does NOT use like or as to make the comparison. For example, my grandmother is an open book. The comparison implies that my grandmother is full of information that she willingly shares with others.

To make a simile or metaphor, identify an object like a sunset, tree, or river, or a concept like love, peace, or anger. Then think of another object that has some similar traits. Decide whether the words “like” or “as” will help make the connection more understandable. A good simile or metaphor will make the reader look at both objects in a new perspective.

By adding similes and metaphors to a description paper, the writer can appeal to the readers’ imagination and make the writing more interesting to read. Similes and metaphors add spark to descriptions. However, many

cliches come in the form of similes and metaphors, so strive to create comparisons that are specific to your particular subject.

The Structure of a Description Essay

Description essays typically describe a person, a place, or an object using sensory details. The structure of a descriptive essay is more flexible than in some of the other rhetorical modes. The introduction of a description essay should set the tone and the point of the essay. The thesis should convey the writer's overall impression of the person, place, or object described in the body paragraphs.

The organization of the essay may best follow **spatial order**, an arrangement of ideas according to physical characteristics or appearance. Depending on what the writer describes, the organization could move from top to bottom, left to right, near to far, warm to cold, frightening to inviting, and so on.

For example, if the subject were a client's kitchen in the midst of renovation, you might start at one side of the room and move slowly across to the other end, describing appliances, cabinetry, and so on. Or, you might choose to start with older remnants of the kitchen and progress to the new installations. Maybe start with the floor and move up toward the ceiling.

Exercise 2

On a separate sheet of paper, choose an organizing strategy and then execute it in a short paragraph for three of the following six items:

- I. Bus stop

2. Your office
3. Your car
4. A coffee shop
5. Lobby of a movie theater
6. Mystery Option. Choose an object to describe but do not indicate it. Describe it so that you preserve the mystery.

Writing a Description

In order to write descriptively, you must take a topic and decide how to make that topic vivid for your audience. If the topic of the piece is merely to describe a particular place, you must decide what elements of that place, when described in text, will become most vivid for your audience. The first step in any descriptive writing is to choose a topic and begin to work out a [thesis statement](#). You may choose to describe a particular place.

Thesis

Sample Thesis Statement

Although Minnesota may seem drab and cold to outsiders, natives of the state find it a wonderful place to live.

We can see in this thesis statement that the writer will attempt to show the aspects of Minnesota that make it a great place to live. After detailing a thesis statement, you should come up with a list of sensory words that provide vivid detail and support the thesis. You may start by

thinking about the five senses. How does your particular place look, smell, feel, taste, and sound like? How can you best describe these senses so the reader feels what you feel? By organizing the elements of descriptive language into easier to handle sections, like the five senses, you are able to more specifically engage in what elements of the description are most useful.

Order of Presentation

The writer in this case could choose to present the positive aspects of Minnesota in terms of the seasons and weather changes. The details could be presented linearly, starting with spring and going through the winter, highlighting the aspects of each season that most closely support the thesis, that Minnesota is a great place to live.

Prior to starting the essay, give some thought to the audience of your piece. Who is going to read the essay, and what effect would you like it to have upon the readers? An awareness of audience is important in choosing the level of formality you take with your writing. Knowing your audience will also help you distinguish which details to include throughout your essay. Assume that your audience knows very little or nothing about your subject matter, and include details that may seem obvious to you.

Audience

Example Audience: In this particular essay, the writer wants to show an outsider to the state why Minnesota natives are so happy to live there. The essay should help break down stereotypes for those outsiders about Minnesota's cold weather and apparent drabness. Because the essay is designed for those who do not live in Minnesota, and maybe have never been there, it is important to include details about the state that may seem obvious to a native.

With the preparatory work complete, it is time now to begin writing your essay. Use your thesis statement to begin to construct an introductory paragraph. The introduction should set up the basis for your essay, and the thesis statement should state its purpose.

Introduction

Example Introduction

Many who have not traveled to the state of Minnesota only hear of its cold weather and boring reputation. They are sure missing out on the great opportunities that Minnesota affords. Each season offers different senses that native Minnesotans and tourists know and love. Although Minnesota may seem drab and cold to outsiders, natives of the state find it a wonderful place to live.

With the introduction complete, it is time to start constructing the body paragraphs of your essay. Each body paragraph should have a central theme in itself, and that theme should be represented in a topic sentence. Consequently, each sentence of the paragraph should relate to and support the topic sentence. The body paragraphs are where the majority of the details should be given. When writing the first draft of your descriptive essay, include as many details as is reasonably possible. You can always eliminate the ones that do not serve the essay as well when you are revising your draft. In the case of the Minnesota nature essay, we have decided to set up the body paragraphs in terms of season, starting with spring.

Body

Example Body Paragraph

Spring in Minnesota brings new life to the state after the long winter season. The rain washes the landscape clean, leaving its fresh aroma for all to enjoy. The flowers soak up the golden sun's rays and begin to show their vibrant colors. The first birds can be seen and heard throughout the woods and fields, telling their stories in beautiful songs. The lakes begin to show their glossy finish as the ice melts away slowly under the heat of the season.

With the body paragraphs complete, it is time to bring the essay to a close with the conclusion. The conclusion should draw a conclusion based on what has been presented throughout the body of the essay. It needs to return to the thesis, but not in an overt way. The conclusion should give the reader a final sense of what the essay was meant to portray. Remember that there should not be any new material introduced in the conclusion, and the way it is worded should give the reader a sense of finality.

Conclusion**Example Conclusion**

The variety of activities and distinct seasons found in Minnesota reveal diverse beauty of this state. As one considers the benefits of each season, it becomes clearer why so many native Minnesotans are content with their home state. Minnesota is truly a wonderful place to live.

With the essay complete, it is time to reread and revise

your essay (also see revision sections of this textbook). Read your first draft and pinpoint all of the descriptor words you used. If possible, go back and add more after the ones you already used in the essay. If you can, read your essay aloud to a friend and have him/her tell you what images are vivid and what images need more development. Rework any images that are cloudy with more descriptions. Also, check to see if your descriptions have made use of all of the five senses: sound, smell, texture, sight, and taste. Repeat these steps as many times as necessary until you are happy with your product.

Key Takeaways

- Description essays should describe something vividly to the reader using strong sensory details.
- Sensory details appeal to the five human senses: sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch.
- A description essay should start with the writer's main impression of a person, a place, or an object.

External Links

Checklist of [Things to Consider](https://tinyurl.com/y7zegez5) (https://tinyurl.com/y7zegez5) when writing a description.

Susan Berne visits New York and describes her impressions in [Where Nothing Says Everything](https://tinyurl.com/yboc9mq5) (https://tinyurl.com/yboc9mq5), also called *Ground Zero*. Another link to the story is [here](https://tinyurl.com/y99fchlw) (https://tinyurl.com/y99fchlw).

Heather Rogers provides a detailed description (book excerpt) of a landfill that challenges the reader to consider his or her own consumption and waste in [*The Hidden Life of Garbage*](https://tinyurl.com/y7sb348m) (<https://tinyurl.com/y7sb348m>).

Sample Descriptive Essay

America's Pastime

As the sun hits my face and I breathe in the fresh air, I temporarily forget that I am at a sporting event. But, when I open my eyes and look around, I am reminded of all things American. From the national anthem to the international players on the field, all the sights and sounds of a baseball game come together like a slice of Americana pie.

First, the entrance turnstiles click and clank, and then a hallway of noise bombards me. All the fans' voices coalesce in a chorus of sound, rising to a humming clamor. The occasional, "Programs, get your programs, here!" jumps out through the hum to get my attention. I navigate my way through the crowded walkways of the stadium, moving to the right of some people, and to the left of others, I eventually find the section number where my seat is located. As I approach my seat I hear the announcer's voice echo around the ballpark, "Attention fans. In honor of our country, please remove your caps for the singing of the national anthem." His deep voice echoes around each angle of the park, and every word is heard again and again. The crowd sings and hums "The Star-Spangled Banner," and I feel a surprising amount of national pride through the voices. I take my seat as the umpire shouts, "Play ball!" and the game begins.

In the fifth inning of the game, I decide to find a concessions stand. Few tastes are as American as hot dogs and soda pop, and

they cannot be missed at a ball game. The smell of hot dogs carries through the park, down every aisle, and inside every concourse. They are always as unhealthy as possible, dripping in grease, while the buns are soft and always too small for the dog. The best way to wash down the Ball Park Frank is with a large soda pop, so I order both. Doing my best to balance the cold pop in one hand and the wrapped-up dog in the other, I find the nearest condiments stand to load up my hot dog. A dollop of bright green relish and chopped onions, along with two squirts of the ketchup and mustard complete the dog. As I continue the balancing act between the loaded hot dog and pop back to my seat, a cheering fan bumps into my pop hand. The pop splashes out of the cup and all over my shirt, leaving me drenched. I make direct eye contact with the man who bumped into me. He looks me in the eye, looks at my shirt, and tells me how sorry he is. I just shake my head and keep walking. "It's all just part of the experience," I tell myself.

Before I am able to get back to my seat, I hear the crack of a bat, followed by an uproar from the crowd. Everyone is standing, clapping, and cheering. I missed a home run. I find my aisle and ask everyone to excuse me as I slip past them to my seat. "Excuse me. Excuse me. Thank you. Thank you. Sorry," is all I can say as I inch past each fan. Halfway to my seat I can hear discarded peanut shells crunch beneath my feet, and each step is marked with a pronounced crunch.

When I finally get to my seat I realize it is the start of the seventh inning stretch. I quickly eat my hot dog and wash it down with what is left of my soda pop. The organ starts playing and everyone begins to sing "Take Me Out to the Ball Game." While singing the song, putting my arms around friends and family with me, I watch all the players taking the field. It is wonderful to see the overwhelming number of players on one team from around the world: Japan, the Dominican Republic, the United States, Canada, and Venezuela. I

cannot help but feel a bit of national pride at this realization. Seeing the international representation on the field reminds me of the ways that Americans, though from many different backgrounds and places, still come together under common ideals. For these reasons and for the whole experience in general, going to a Major League Baseball game is the perfect way to glimpse a slice of Americana.

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12

Essay Features: Read Me!



Things You Should Already Know

Here are a few key highlights that you have already read about, or should have. To make sure you have a solid foundation, you should review this chapter before every essay. You do not need to complete the activities in this chapter, they are meant as a refresher.

It's important to remember that there are certain features that all of these styles or methods have in common:

- A clear **thesis statement** usually provided at the beginning of the essay
- Clear and logical **transitions**
- Focused **body paragraphs** with evidence and

- support
- Appropriate **format and style** if you use source material
 - A **conclusion** that expands upon your thesis and summarizes evidence
 - Clear writing that follows standard conventions for things like **grammar, punctuation, and spelling**.
-

Stating Your Thesis

Most traditional research essays will require some kind of explicitly stated thesis. This means you should state your thesis clearly and directly for your readers. A **thesis** is a statement of purpose, one to two sentences long, about your research, that is often presented at the beginning of your essay to prepare your audience for the content of your whole research paper. Your thesis is often presented at the end of your introductory paragraph or paragraphs.

Your thesis statement should state your topic and, in a persuasive research essay, state your assertion about that topic. You should avoid simply “announcing” your thesis and should work to make it engaging. A good thesis will answer the “so what?” question your audience might have about your research paper. A good thesis statement will tell your readers what your research paper will be about and, specifically, why it is important.

You should avoid thesis statements that simply announce your purpose. For example, in a research paper on health care reform, you should avoid a thesis statement like this:

AVOID!

In this essay, I will write about health care in the United States.

Instead, a good thesis statement on health care reform in the United States would be more specific and make a point that will help establish a clear purpose and focus for your essay. It might look something like this:

Example

Although health care reform is a controversial topic in the United States, the need for strong reform is important, as too many Americans are living without access to health care.

Of course, not all research papers are persuasive. Some essays are analytical. In developing a thesis for an analytical essay, you won't make an argument, but you'll still want to provide a specific statement about the purpose of your essay. A good analytical thesis statement might look something like this:

Example

Analysis of high school dropout rates reveals that an emphasis on standardized testing plays a role in higher dropout rates among

American high school boys, resulting in what some educational researchers call “the boy crisis.”

Implying Your Thesis

Not all research papers will require an explicitly stated thesis. Some research papers in some fields will simply require a strong focus. You can maintain a strong focus in your essay without an explicitly stated thesis by thinking about an implied thesis for your research paper. With an implied thesis, your point is never stated directly, but your paper does have a clear focus or point. Even if you’re not stating your thesis directly, you should keep your implied thesis in mind as you write. All papers require a specific focus, and a good research paper will maintain that focus throughout.

If you’re unsure about whether you should use an explicit thesis or simply maintain a clear focus without an explicit thesis, be sure to ask your instructor. In English 101, you should use an explicit thesis statement to make it clear you know how to use one.

Placement of Thesis Statements

A thesis statement is usually the last sentence of the first paragraph of a paper. It is also customary to restate the main idea of your paper in the conclusion so that the paper leaves a clear impression on the reader.

Topic Sentences

So, thesis statements tell us the goals of the entire writing assignment and topic sentences tell us the goal of a particular paragraph. Essentially, the CEO is the thesis statement and the topic sentences are the managers. Let's use a quick cheeseburger method to see how topic sentences work:



Original Photo: "Cheeseburger on a Plate" by TheCulinaryGeek is licensed under CC BY 2.0

Linking Paragraphs: Transitions

	Idea	Summarizing
patio	Another reason	Finally
itchen	Also	In conclusion
ottage	In addition	To conclude
ackyard	For example	To summarize
ve went to the store	To illustrate	In summary
	For instance	To sum up
at to	Likewise	In short
ver	However	As you can see
ce to	In contrast	For all of those reasons

Transitions are words or phrases that indicate linkages in ideas. When writing, you need to lead your readers from one idea to the next, showing how those ideas are logically linked. Transition words and phrases help you keep your paragraphs and groups of paragraphs logically connected for a reader. Writers often check their transitions during the revising stage of the writing process.

Here are some example transition words to help as you transition both within paragraphs and from one paragraph to the next.

Transition Word / Phrase:	Shows:
and, also, again	More of the same type of information
but, or, however, in contrast	Different information is being presented
as a result, consequently, therefore	Information that is coming as a result of the information presented
for example, to illustrate	The information coming is an example of the information presented
particularly important, note that	The information coming is particularly important
in conclusion	The writing is ending.

Paragraphing: MEAL Plan

When it's time to draft your essay and bring your content together for your audience, you will be working to build strong paragraphs. Your paragraphs in a research paper will focus on presenting the information you found in your source material and commenting on or analyzing that information. *It's not enough to simply present the information in your body paragraphs and move on. You want to give that information a purpose and connect it to your main idea or thesis statement.*

Duke University coined a term called the “MEAL Plan” that provides an effective structure for paragraphs in an academic research paper. Select the pluses to learn what each letter stands for.



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version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=99#h5p-30>

Here are the same terms with examples:



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<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=99#h5p-61>

MLA Formatting: The Basics

Papers constructed according to MLA guidelines should adhere to the following elements:

- Double-space all of the text of your paper, and use a clear font, such as Times New Roman or Courier 12-point font.
- Use one-inch margins on all sides, and indent the first line of a paragraph one half-inch from the left margin.
- List your name, your instructor's name, the course, and the date in the upper left-hand corner of the first page. This is your **heading**. There is no cover page.
- Type a header in the upper right-hand corner with your last name, a space, and then a page number. Pages should be numbered consecutively with Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, 4, etc.), one-half inch from the top and flush with the right margin.
- Provide in-text citations for all quoted,

paraphrased, and summarized information in your paper.

- Include a Works Cited page at the end of your paper that gives full bibliographic information for each item cited in your paper.
- If you use endnotes, include them on a separate page before your Works Cited page
- Your Works Cited page at the end of your project should line up with the in-text citations in the body of your essay.

If you need more information, check the chapter on [MLA Style](#).

Conclusions

A satisfying conclusion allows your reader to finish your paper with a clear understanding of the points you made and possibly even a new perspective on the topic.

Any single paper might have a number of conclusions, but as the writer, you must consider who the reader is and the conclusion you want them to reach. For example, is your reader relatively new to your topic? If so, you may want to **restate your main points for emphasis** as a way of starting the conclusion. (Don't literally use the same sentence(s) as in your introduction but come up with a comparable way of restating your thesis.) You'll want to smoothly conclude by showing the judgment you have reached is, in fact, reasonable.

Just restating your thesis isn't enough. Ideally, you have just taken your reader through a strong, clear argument in which you have provided evidence for your perspective. You want to conclude by **pointing out the importance or**

worthiness of your topic and argument. You could describe how the world would be different, or people's lives changed if they ascribed to your perspective, plan, or idea.

You might also point out the limitations of the present understanding of your topic, suggest or recommend future action, study, or research that needs to be done.

TIP: Be careful not to introduce any new ideas in your conclusion; your job is to wrap up in some satisfying way, so the reader walks away with a clear understanding of what you have had to say.

If you have written a persuasive paper, hopefully, your readers will be convinced by what you have had to say!

20 Most Common Grammar Errors

The link below will take you outside of our book.

Have you ever had a teacher mark comma splice on your paper?

Grammar

Have you ever turned in your essay only to realize later that spell check “fixed” your word so that it reads **defiantly** when you meant to write **definitely**? Well, if these things have happened to you, you are not alone. These are among the most common errors beginning writers make.

Thanks to some excellent research from Andrea Lunsford and her colleagues, every few years, we get a list of the “[20 Most Common Errors](#)” beginning writers in the

United States make. Every few years, Lunsford and her team of researchers examine thousands of student essays and survey hundreds of writing teachers in order to give us this list.

The good news is that most of the errors on this list are mistakes that we make when we are tired, in a hurry, and just not being good editors. So, they are easy fixes.

Once you finish reading through the 20 most common errors, you can come back here to complete the activity.

Try It Out



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

<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=99#h5p-63>

After completing this activity, you may download or print a completion report that summarizes your results.

Punctuation

Meme - Punctuation Matters! Some people find inspiration in cooking their families and their dogs. vs. Some people find inspiration in cooking, their families, and their dogs.

Maybe you have heard the story about how punctuation saves lives. Clearly, there is a difference between

Let's eat, Grandma!

and

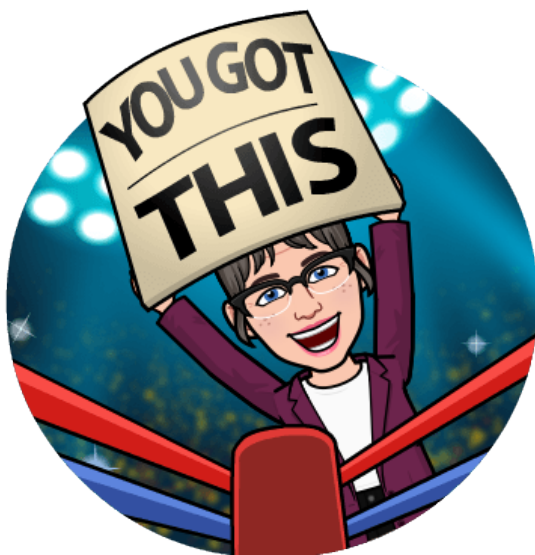
Let's eat Grandma!

In addition to saving lives, using punctuation properly will help your writing be clean and clear and help you build your credibility as a writer.

The following [link](#) will provide you with an overview of the basic rules regarding punctuation and will give you a chance to practice using the information you have learned.

Putting It All Together

It is time to write your essay. Keep this list of things to remember handy and put that paper together. You got this!



ATTRIBUTIONS

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13

Reflection and Portfolios



Reflection

The final assignment in your English course will include a reflective essay in which you describe your growth as a writer over the course of the semester. This activity of reflecting on your growth and performance is what is called a metacognitive activity: one in which you think and write about your learning.

Writing a formal reflective essay may be a new thing for you, so this chapter will provide an overview of why we write reflections on our learning and how to approach a reflection assignment.

Sometimes the process of figuring out who you are as writers requires reflection, a “looking back” to determine what you were thinking and how your thinking changed over time, relative to key experiences. Mature learners set goals and achieve them by charting a course of action and making adjustments along the way when they



encounter obstacles. They also build on strengths and seek reinforcement when weaknesses surface. What makes them *mature*? They're not afraid to make mistakes (own them even), and they know that struggle can be a rewarding part of the process. By equal measure, mature learners celebrate their strengths and use them strategically. By adopting a reflective position, they can pinpoint areas that work well and areas that require further help—and all of this without losing sight of their goals.

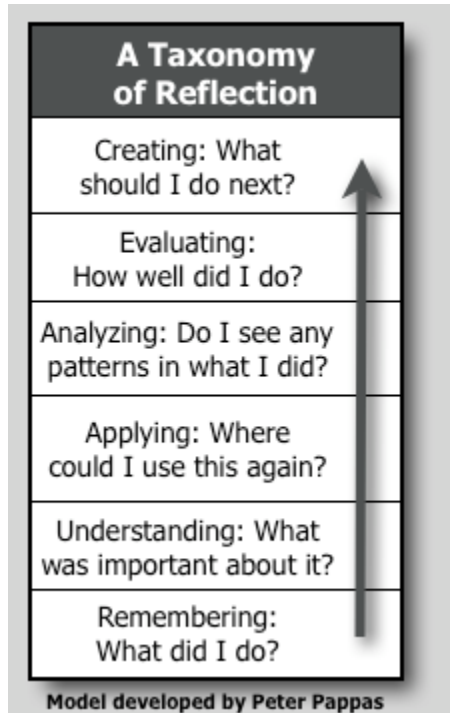
Student reflection about their thinking is such a crucial part of the learning process. You have come to this course with your own writing goals. Now is a good time to think back on your writing practices with reflective writing, also called metacognitive writing. Reflective writing helps you think through and develop your intentions as a writer. Leveraging reflective writing also creates learning habits

that extend to any discipline of learning. It's a set of procedures that helps you step back from the work you have done and ask a series of questions: Is this really what I wanted to do? Is this really what I wanted to say? Is this the best way to communicate my intentions? Reflective writing helps you authenticate your intentions and start identifying places where you either hit the target or miss the mark. You may find, also, that when you communicate your struggles, you can ask others for help! Reflective writing helps you trace and articulate the patterns you have developed, and it fosters independence from relying too heavily on an instructor to tell you what you are doing. Throughout this course, you have been working toward an authentic voice in your writing. Your reflection on writing should be equally authentic or honest when you look at your purposes for writing and the strategies you have been leveraging all the while.

Reflective Learning

Reflective thinking is a powerful learning tool. As we have seen throughout this course, proficient readers are reflective readers, constantly stepping back from the learning process to think about their reading. They understand that just as they need to activate prior knowledge at the beginning of a learning task and monitor their progress as they learn, they also need to make time during learning as well as at the end of learning to think about their learning process, to recognize what they have accomplished, how they have accomplished it, and set goals for future learning. This process of “thinking about thinking” is called metacognition. When we think about our thinking—articulating what we now know and how we came to know it—we close the loop in the learning process.

How do we engage in a reflection? Educator Peter Pappas modified Bloom’s Taxonomy of Learning to focus on reflection:



This “taxonomy of reflection” provides a structure for metacognition. Educator Silvia Rosenthal Tolisano has modified Pappas’s taxonomy into a pyramid and expanded upon his reflection questions:



By making reflection a key component of our work, students realize that learning is not always about facts and details. Rather, learning is about discovery.

How is reflective writing in the academic setting different from journaling or writing in a diary?

If you write in a diary or a journal, recording your thoughts and feelings about what has happened in your life, you are certainly engaging in the act of reflection. Many of us have some experience with this type of writing. In our diaries, journals, or other informal spaces for speaking – or writing – our mind, write to ourselves, for ourselves, in a space that will largely remain private.

Your reflection essay for college courses will contain some of those same features:

- The subject of the reflective essay is you and your experiences
- You can generally use the first person in a reflective essay

But writing academic reflections, like the one that is due for the English 100/101 portfolio assignment, is a bit different from journaling or keeping a diary:

	Personal diary/journal	Reflection essay for a course
Audience	Only you will read it! (at least, that is often the intention)	Professor, peers, or others will read your essay. A reflective essay is written with the intention of submitting it to someone else
Purpose	To record your emotions, thoughts, analysis; to get a sense of release or freedom to express yourself	To convey your thoughts, emotions, analysis about yourself to your audience, while also answering a specific assignment question or set of questions
Structure	Freeform. No one will be reading or grading your diary or journal, so you get to choose organization and structure; you get to choose whether or not the entries are edited	An essay. The reflection should adhere to the style and content your audience would recognize and expect. These would include traditional paragraph structure, a thesis is the writer's central point (clear, concise, and limited) that provides the foundation for the rest of the essay. Most often located at the end of the introduction, the thesis establishes the core idea that the rest of the essay will develop. It should never be expressed as a question. A thesis can be explanatory or argumentative; if a thesis is argument-based, it is sometimes referred to as a claim. data-uri="https://pressbooks.ulib.csuohio.edu/csu-fyw-rhetoric/glossary/thesis/">thesis that conveys your essay's main points, a well-developed body, strong proofreading, and whatever else the assignment requires

Development	<p>Since you are only writing for yourself, you can choose how much or how little to elaborate on your ideas</p>	<p>All of the points you make in the essay should be developed and supported using examples or evidence which come from your experiences, your actions, or your work</p>
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What can be gained from metacognitive activities that ask you to reflect on your learning and your performance as a writer?

One of the major goals in any First-Year Writing class is to encourage students' growth as writers. No one is expected to be a perfect writer at the end of the semester. Your instructor's hope, however, is that after 16 weeks of reading, writing, and revising several major essays, you are more confident, capable, and aware of yourself as a writer than you were at the beginning of the semester. Reflecting on the process that you go through as you write – even if your writing is not perfect – can help you to identify the behaviors, strategies, and resources that have helped you to be successful or that could support your future success. In short, reflecting on how you write (or how you have written during a particular semester) can be quite powerful in helping you to identify areas where you have grown and areas where you still have room for more growth.

How can I write a reflective essay?

As with any essay, a reflective essay should come with

its own assignment sheet. On that assignment sheet, you should be able to identify what the purpose of the reflective essay is and what the scope of the reflection needs to be. Some key elements of the reflective essay that the assignment sheet should answer are:

- What, exactly, the scope of the reflection is. Are you reflecting on one lesson, one assignment, or the whole semester?
- Do you have detailed guidelines, resources, or reference documents for your reflections that must be met?
- Is there a particular structure for the reflection?
- Should the reflection include any outside resources?

If you are struggling to find the answers to these questions, ask your professor!

Another wonderful resource for writing a reflective essay comes from [Writing Commons](#), in the article [“Writing an Academic Reflection Essay”](#). This article offers great information about the following:

- What it means to be “academic” or “critical” and at the same time personal and reflective
- How you can achieve focus in a reflective essay
- What “evidence” is in a reflective essay

Prior Learning

Fast and well-traveled roads may make for a quicker trip, but they also miss the nuance and beauty of the scenic route. For some, the long way around is just worth it. The

adventures, mishaps, connections, and coincidences that happen along the way are a teacher like no other.

If this sounds familiar to you when you think about your journey in education, then this textbook is for you. Let's take another look at those years of experiential learning along the scenic route: your work, travel, volunteering, community involvement, entrepreneurship, and whatever else you've explored while not in the traditional classroom setting.

Let's reconsider that experience as Prior Learning, and dig in to see what you've learned on the way.

The portfolio is composed of an assortment of documents and artifacts demonstrating previous college-level learning.

- **The Educational Narrative** is a document that does the following:
 - Examines your personal motivations and educational goals in the context of learning and how you will achieve them.
 - Examines and discusses past instances that led to learning.
 - This portion should address each course objective found on the course syllabus, and demonstrate that you have mastered the objectives. Showcase how your learning applies to the objectives for a specific course.
- **Supporting Documentation**
 - You will need to supply documentation

- to support the narrative.
- Documentation is as individual as the learner, and it may include items such as sample work products, training certificates, workplace evaluations, letters of recommendation, and/or photographs.

The Educational Narrative is asking for a very specific thing from you so that your reviewers can understand the learning you've done and relate it to the course you're challenging.

What is that thing it's asking for?

A *story*. Several stories, actually.

The word Narrative means "story," of course, so this component is asking you to tell the story of your learning. To tell that story, you'll need to have several examples that clearly demonstrate your expertise with the course's subject matter. And these examples need to be *specific*. Here's why:

In creative writing, teachers often say that the universe is in the specific. The more detailed the description, the better the reader can visualize the characters and scene. Take, for example, this line:

We got dressed up and went to the concert.

Who are they? What'd they wear? How old were they? What kind of concert was it? Who was playing? None of that is apparent, so every reader sees something different.

But what if that line was written like:

We teased our hair to the ceilings, doused it in White Rain, snapped on spandex and pleather. We tore out of the suburbs, left a mile-long streak of rubber on our way to go see Twisted Sister at CBGB's.

Now can you see it? From the first description, it could've also easily been a black-tie evening at the Philharmonic, or a 7th Grade Band Concert, or... It's the specifics that make the example come alive.

That's your task in the Educational Narrative.

Though, of course, you'll be writing about your class experiences and not an 80s hair band (unless you are drawing connections from when you were a member of an 80s hair band...).

•

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14

Using Multiple Sources



Within the pages of your research essay, it is important to properly reference and cite your sources to avoid plagiarism and to give credit for original ideas.

There are three main ways to put a source to use in your essay: you can quote it, you can summarize it, and you can paraphrase it.

Quoting



Direct quotations are words and phrases that are taken directly from another source, and then used word-for-word in your paper. If you incorporate a direct quotation from another author's text, you must put

that quotation or phrase in quotation marks to indicate that it is not your language.

When writing direct quotations, you can use the source author's name in the same sentence as the quotation to introduce the quoted text and to indicate the source in which you found the text. You should then include the page number or other relevant information in parentheses at the end of the phrase (the exact format will depend on the formatting style of your essay).

Summarizing

Summarizing involves condensing the main idea of a source into a much shorter overview. A summary outlines a source's most important points and general position. When summarizing a source, it is still necessary to use a citation to give credit to the original author. You must reference the author or source in the appropriate citation method at the end of the summary.

Paraphrasing

When paraphrasing, you may put any part of a source (such as a phrase, sentence, paragraph, or chapter) into your own words. You may find that the original source uses language that is more clear, concise, or specific than your own language, in which case you should use a direct quotation, putting quotation marks around those unique words or phrases you don't change.

It is common to use a mixture of paraphrased text and quoted words or phrases, as long as the direct quotations are inside of quotation marks.

Providing Context for Your Sources

Whether you use a direct quotation, a summary, or a paraphrase, it is important to

distinguish the original source from your ideas, and to explain how the cited source fits into your argument. While the use of quotation marks or parenthetical

citations tells your reader that these are not your own words or ideas, you should follow the quote with a description, in your own terms, of what the quote says and why it is relevant to the purpose of your paper. You should not let quoted or paraphrased text stand alone in your paper, but rather, should integrate the sources into your argument by providing context and explanations about how each source supports your argument.¹

Sources are a great help for understanding a topic more deeply. But what about when sources don't quite agree with one another, or challenge what you have experienced yourself?

This is where your skill of **synthesis** comes into play, as a writer. Synthesizing includes comparison and contrast,



Sources that are not properly integrated into your paper are like “bricks without mortar: you have the essential substance, but there’s nothing to hold it together, rendering the whole thing formless” (Smith).

1. ²
2. [1]

but also allows you to combine multiple perspectives on a topic to reach a deeper understanding.

This video explains the process of synthesis in action.

[https://youtube.com/
watch?v=7dEGoJdb6Oo%3Ffeature%3Doembed%26rel%3
Do%26rel%3Do](https://youtube.com/watch?v=7dEGoJdb6Oo%3Ffeature%3Doembed%26rel%3Do%26rel%3Do)

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1. [Smith, Matt. “Putting It All Together: Thesis Synthesis.” Web log post. Walden University Writing Center, 12 Apr. 2013. Web. 04 Apr. 2016.](#)
 2. This chapter is sourced from [English Composition II](#) by Lumen Learning, licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#)

PART III

RESEARCH

15

Reading in College



College-level reading is different from the kind of reading done in high school. The types of texts and assignments differ, but also the expectations for critical thinking, analysis, and synthesis of ideas. The more you are able to read effectively at the college level, the greater your chances of having success in college, economic advancement, and a more fulfilling life.

Active vs. Passive Reading

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

Successful readers develop active reading habits that improve their reading comprehension, speed, and

enjoyment. Active reading involves deeper engagement with the text before, during, and after reading. The Reading Lab promotes active reading by modeling strategies and techniques to support it.

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



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

<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=155#h5p-42>

Common Reading Systems

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

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

- **SQ3R:** SQ3R is a reading comprehension method developed in the 1940s to help college students read textbooks. The name stands for *survey*, *question*, *read*, *recite*, and *review*, which are the steps in the process advocated by this reading system. The steps cover what to do before, during, and after reading. Follow the links below for more information about this system.

- [WPI resource page on SQ₃R](#)
- [YouTube video on SQ₃R](#)
- [Oregon State University handout on SQ₃R](#)
- **KWL:** KWL was designed to help students conduct research. The acronym stands for *know*, *want*, and *learn*. The system involves creating a graphic organizer—in this case, a chart. The chart has three columns: what I know, what I want to know, and what I learned. Students answer the first two columns before doing research and the third column after the research is over. Follow the links below for more information about this system.
 - [Explanation of the KWL system](#)
 - [YouTube video on KWL](#)
 - [Videos of educators using KWL](#)
 - [Blank KWL chart handout](#)
- **Cornell Notes:** Cornell Notes is a comprehensive note-taking system developed in the 1950s by a professor at Cornell University to help college students improve their study skills. The system involves creating a table with two columns. In the right column, which is the larger column, the student writes notes from a lecture or text. In the left column, the student goes back and writes key words, main ideas, or questions about the notes. Afterward, the student reviews the notes and writes a short summary of the main ideas beneath the two columns. Follow the links below for more information about this system.
 - [Cornell University explanation of the Cornell Notes system](#)

- [YouTube video on the Cornell Notes system](#)
- [Cornell University handout on the Cornell Notes system](#)
- [The Learning Toolbox explanation of the Cornell Notes system](#)

Reading Scholarly Articles

Reading and understanding scholarly articles can be challenging. There are many different types of articles that may be found in scholarly journals and other academic publications.

While You Read

Reading a scholarly article isn't like reading a novel, website, or newspaper article. Likely, you won't read and absorb it from beginning to end, all at once. Instead, think of scholarly reading as inquiry, i.e., asking a series of questions as you do your research or read for class. Your reading should be guided by your class topic or your own research question or research.

For example, as you read, you might ask yourself:

- Is the article relevant to a class theme or to my own work?
 - What questions does it help to answer, or what topics does it address?
- Does the article offer any unique perspectives or new information?
 - Are these relevant or useful to me?
- Can I use the contents of the article in any other ways?

- Does the article offer a helpful framework for understanding my topic or question (theoretical framework)?
- Do the authors use interesting or innovative methods to conduct their research that might be relevant to me?
- Does the article contain references I might consult for further information?

In Practice

Scanning and skimming are essential when reading scholarly articles, especially at the beginning stages of your research or when you have a lot of material in front of you.

Many scholarly articles are organized to help you scan and skim efficiently. The next time you need to read an article, practice scanning the following sections (where available) and skim their contents:

- **The abstract:** This summary provides a birds' eye view of the article contents.
- **The introduction:** What is the topic(s) of the research article? What is its main idea or question?
- **The list of keywords or descriptors**
- **Methods:** How did the author(s) go about answering their question/collecting their data?
- **Section headings:** Stop and skim those sections you may find relevant.
- **Figures:** Offer lots of information in quick visual format.
- **The conclusion:** What are the findings and/or conclusions of this article?

Reading Strategies

Mark Up Your Text

Read with purpose.

- Scanning and skimming with a pen in hand can help to focus your reading.
- Use color for quick reference. Try highlighters or some sticky notes. Use different colors to represent different topics.
- Write in the margins, putting down thoughts and questions about the content as you read.
- Use digital markup features available in eBook platforms or third-party solutions, like Adobe Reader or Hypothes.is.

Categorize Information

Create your own informal system of organization. It doesn't have to be complicated — start basic, and be sure it works for you.

Keywords

- Jot down a few of your own keywords for each article. These keywords may correspond with important topics being addressed in class or in your research paper.
- Write keywords on print copies or use the built-in note-taking features in reference management tools like Noodletools and EndNote.
- Your keywords and system of organization may

grow more complex the deeper you get into your reading.

New Words

Highlight words, terms, phrases, acronyms, etc. that are unfamiliar to you. You can highlight on the text or make a list in a notetaking program.

- Decide if the term is essential to your understanding of the article or if you can look it up later and keep scanning.

Reading for Citations

You may scan an article and discover that it isn't what you thought it was about. Before you close the tab or delete that PDF, consider scanning the article one more time, specifically to look for citations that might be more on-target for your topic.

You don't need to look at every citation in the bibliography — you can look to the literature review to identify the core references that relate to your topic. Literature reviews are typically organized by subtopics within a research question or thesis. Find the paragraph or two that are closely aligned with your topic, make note of the author names, and then locate those citations in the bibliography or footnote.

Common Components of Original Research Articles

Note: Not all articles contain all components.

Title	Offers clues to article's main topic.
Author(s)	Describes who is responsible for this work. May be one person, a group, or an institution. Make note of authors and institutions you see repeatedly during your search process.
Abstract	Summarizes article contents and findings; may include methodology.
Keywords	Describe the content in quick words or phrases. Help you place the work in context with other literature. Good for quick reference!
Introduction	Summarizes the article's main idea, thesis, or research question. Should answer the question, "Why this?" Includes background knowledge on the topic and provides information about research motivations, impact, or purpose.
Literature Review	Places the research in context with prior work. Analyzes important contributions that the author(s) believe are relevant and that the article builds upon to create new knowledge. Sometimes includes a theoretical framework. A good place to look to find additional sources for your research!
Methods (or Methodology)	An explanation of how and why the authors approached the examination of their question and the collection of data. May include information about the limitations of their chosen methodology.
Discussion	An examination of meaning and implications of the research for existing and future exploration.
Figures	Graphical representation of findings and other relevant information. Includes charts, graphs, maps, images, tables, etc. Look at figures during your initial scan to determine relevancy and quality.
Conclusion	A synthesis of the findings and importance of the research.

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16

Identifying Sources



RESEARCH STRATEGIES

As you search for sources on your topic, it's important to make a plan for that research process. You should develop a research strategy that fits within your assignment expectations and considers your source requirements. Your research strategy should be based on the research requirements your professor provides. Some formal research essays should include peer-reviewed journal articles only; however, there are some research papers that may allow you to use a wider variety of sources, including sources from the World Wide Web.

If your professor has not established research requirements for your assignment, it's a good idea to ask. Although general **internet searching** is great for

generating ideas, you may not be able to use internet sources for all research projects.

strategy

DATABASE SEARCHING

Databases can help you to identify and secure information across a range of subjects. Such

A close up of a hand on a keyboard

information might include a chapter in a book, an article in a journal, a report, or a government document. Databases are a researcher's best friend, but it can take a little time to get used to searching for sources in your library's databases. Be prepared to spend some time getting comfortable with the databases you're working in, and be prepared to ask questions of your professor and librarians if you feel stuck.

Becoming adept at searching online databases will give you the confidence and skills you need to gather the best sources for your project.

Your online college library can help you learn how to select search terms and understand which database would be the most appropriate for your project. College libraries will require login information from students in order to access database resources.

INTERNET SEARCHING

Web research can be an important part of your research

process. However, be careful that you use only the highest quality sources that are returned on your general web search. Your paper is only as good as the sources you use within it, so if you use sources that are not written by experts in their field, you may be including misinformed or incorrect information in your paper.

As a general rule, one site to avoid is Wikipedia, which is not considered a quality source for academic writing. While this site is fine for looking up information in a casual way and gaining a better understanding of a subject, it is not recommended for academic writing since information can sometimes be incorrect since the content is user-generated, rather than peer-reviewed and written by experts; peer-reviewed and works written by experts can be found in academic journals, news articles, magazines, or published books. It is also considered more of a “general knowledge” source, and academic writing favors sources with more specific information.

Still, when you are researching on the web, search engines are effective tools for locating web pages relevant to your research, and they can save you time and frustration. However, for searches to yield the best results, you need a strategy and some basic knowledge of how search engines work. Without a clear search strategy, using a search engine is like wandering aimlessly in a field of corn looking for the perfect ear.

STRATEGIES



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version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=50#h5p-32>

SEE IT IN PRACTICE

In the videocast below, you'll see our student writer discuss her research strategy and share some of the results of her work researching her question.



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

<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=50#h5p-33>

EVALUATING SOURCES

As you gather sources for your research, you'll need to know how to assess the validity and reliability of the materials you find.

Evaluate your sources

Keep in mind that the sources you find have all been put out there by groups, organizations, corporations, or individuals who have some motivation for getting this information to you. To be a good researcher, you need to learn how to assess the materials you find and determine their reliability—before deciding if you want to use them and, if so, how you want to use them.

Whether you are examining the material in books, journals, magazines, newspapers, or websites, you want to consider several issues before deciding if and how to use the material you have found.

- Suitability
- Authorship and Authority
- Documentation
- Timeliness

SOURCE SUITABILITY

Does the source fit your needs and purpose? reference materials

Before you start amassing large amounts of research materials, think about the types of materials you will need to meet the specific requirements of your project.

Overview Materials

Encyclopedias, general interest magazines (*Time*, *Newsweek* online), or online general news sites (CNN, MSNBC) are good places to begin your research to get an overview of your topic and the big questions associated with your particular project. But once you get to the paper itself, you may not want to use these for your main sources.

Focused Lay Materials

For a college-level research paper, you need to look for books, journal articles, and websites that are put out by organizations that do in-depth work for the general public on issues related to your topic. For example, an article on the melting of the polar icecaps in *Time* magazine offers you an overview of the issue. But such articles are generally written by non-scientists for a non-scientific

audience that wants a general—not an in-depth—understanding of the issue. Although you'll want to start with overview materials to give yourself a broad-stroke understanding of your topic, you'll soon need to move to journals and websites in the field. For example, instead of looking at online stories on the icecaps from CNN, you should look at the materials at the website for the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC) or reports found at the website for the National Snow and Ice Data Center (NSIDC). You also should look at some of the recent reports on the polar icecaps in *Scientific American* or *The Ecologist*.

Specialists' Materials

If you already have a strong background in your topic area, you could venture into specialists' books, journals, and websites. For example, only someone with a strong background in the field would be able to read and understand the papers published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* or the *Journal of the Atmospheric Sciences*. Sources such as these are suitable for more advanced research paper assignments in upper-level courses, but you may encounter source requirements like these in freshman writing courses.

AUTHORSHIP & AUTHORITY

When you consider the quality of your sources, you should also consider the authorship and authority of your sources. Who wrote the material? Is that person or organization credible? The following information will provide you with more details on authorship and

authority to help you make good decisions about your sources.

Publisher-Provided Biographical Information

Often, books and scholarly journals will have a short biography of the author, outlining her or his credentials: education, publications, and experience in the field.

Look the biography over. Does the material there seem to suggest this writer has in-depth knowledge on the topic? What educational credentials does the writer have? If the writer is a trained economist but is writing on scientific matters, you need to keep that in mind as you look at her or his arguments. If the writer is associated with a specific conservative or liberal think tank, be aware that the arguments presented will probably reflect the ideology of that organization.

An ideological agenda does not mean that you have to avoid material. You simply need to read it with an awareness that the writer is writing from a specific point of view.

Minimal qualifications or qualifications that seem unrelated to the topic are a warning sign to you that you might want to reconsider using the material.

Outside Biographical Information

If no biography is attached to the work, an advanced search on Google or another search engine can be very helpful. You might also check hard copy or online sources such as Contemporary Authors, Book Review Index, or Biography index.

Many authors also have their own websites, listing

information about their educational background, current and past research, and experience.

If you can find no or little information about a writer, be careful about using her or his material. You may want to consider replacing it altogether with a different source where the credentials of the writer are more readily available.

No Author Listed

While you want to be careful of sources without authors, that doesn't mean you can't use them. Often, websites won't list an author. In that case, you need to evaluate the sponsoring organization. Look for the following information:

- Does the home page offer information about the organization?
- Is there a mission statement?
- Does the site offer any indication that the material on the webpage has been reviewed or checked by experts, often called a "peer-review process"?
- Does the site provide a link with an address, phone, and email?

Yes — If you find only some of the points from the bulleted list, try filling in the blanks with an internet search on the organization. Often, an encyclopedia — online or hard copy — provides background information on an organization. Try to find out a little bit about who funds it, who its audience is, and what its objectives are.

Again, discovering that an organization has specific ideological ties does not mean that you need to discard the

material you have found there. You simply need to use it carefully and balance it with material from other sources.

No — If the answer to all of the bulleted questions is “no,” be careful!

A site that provides no information about its sponsors is a site that you should avoid using for your paper.

If no one is willing to put her or his name on the site and accept responsibility for the information, do you think you should trust that information for your research? Definitely not.

EVALUATING SOURCES: DOCUMENTATION

Where does the book/article/website get its information? covered books or periodicals

Look for a bibliography and/or footnotes. In a piece of writing that is making a case using data, historical or scientific references, or appeals to outside sources of any kind, those sources should be thoroughly documented. The writer should give you enough information to go and find those sources yourself and double-check that the materials are used accurately and fairly by the author.

Popular news magazines, such as *Time* or *Newsweek* online, will generally not have formal bibliographies or footnotes with their articles. The writers of these articles will usually identify their sources within their texts, referring to studies, officials, or other texts. These types of articles, though not considered academic, may be acceptable for some undergraduate college-level research papers. Check with your instructor to make sure

that these types of materials are allowed as sources in your paper.

Examine the sources used by the author. Is the author depending heavily on just one or two sources for his or her entire argument? That's a red flag for you. Is the author relying heavily on anonymous sources? There's another red flag. Are the sources outdated? Another red flag.

If references to outside materials are missing or scant, you should treat this piece of writing with skepticism. Consider finding an alternative source with better documentation.

TIMELY SOURCES

an alarm clock

Is the material up-to-date?

The best research draws on the most current work in the field. That said, depending on the discipline, some work has a longer shelf life than others. For example, important articles in literature, art, and music often tend to be considered current for years, or even decades, after publication. Articles in the physical sciences, however, are usually considered outdated within a year or two (or even sooner) after publication.

In choosing your materials, you need to think about the argument you're making and the field (discipline) within which you're making it.

For example, if you're arguing that climate change is indeed anthropogenic (human-caused), do you want to use articles published more than four or five years ago? No. Because science has evolved very rapidly on that question,

you need to depend most heavily on research published within the last year or two.

However, suppose you're arguing that blues music evolved from the field songs of American slaves. In this case, you should not only look at recent writing on the topic (within the last five years), but also look at historical assessments of the relationship between blues and slavery from previous decades.

Timeliness and Websites

Scrutinize websites, in particular, for dates of posting or for the last time the site was updated. Some sites have been left up for months or years without the site's owner returning to update or monitor the site. If sites appear to have no regular oversight, you should look for alternative materials for your paper.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:

<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=50#oembed-1>

Friebolin, C. (2012, July 24). *Can't lie on the internet* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/bufTnaoWArc>

You may have seen the commercial above making a point about how you have to be careful of what you find on the internet. This is true in life and in your efforts to find quality sources for academic papers.

The internet is particularly challenging because anyone can really post anything they want on the internet. At the same time, there are some really quality sources out there, such as online journals.

The important thing is to use skepticism, use the guidelines you have read about in this section of Research, and be sure to ask your professor if general web sources are even allowed. Sometimes, in an effort to have students steer clear of inaccurate information, professors will forbid general web sources for a paper, but this is not always the case. If you are allowed to go to the web to locate sources, just remember to check for **suitability**, **credibility**, and **timeliness** using the guidelines presented here.

Using an [Evaluation Checklist](#) will also give you some good guidelines to remember, no matter where you found your source.

SEE IT IN PRACTICE

Now that you have an understanding of some effective ways to evaluate sources, it's time to check in with our student writer. In this videocast, you'll see our student writer evaluate one of her sources for relevance or suitability, credibility, and timeliness.



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

<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=50#h5p-34>

USING EVIDENCE

When writing an argumentative essay, Find those quality sources! you'll definitely want to locate quality sources to support your claims, and you

have a lot of options for sources. You can look for support for your argument in journal articles, magazine articles, documentaries, and more. You may even be allowed to use **personal experience** and observations, but this isn't always the case. No matter what, you'll want logical, clear, and reasonable evidence that helps you support your claims and convince your audience.

It's important to review the **logical fallacies** before you develop evidence for your claims. If you're using personal experience, you have to be careful that you don't make claims that are too broad-based on limited experiences.

The following pages provide you with information on the types of sources you may be able to include, how to decide if your sources are credible, and how to make good decisions about using your sources.

EXPERIENCE

Chances are, if you have chosen an issue to write about for your argumentative essay, you have chosen a topic that means something to you. With this in mind, you may have had a personal experience related to the issue that you would like to share with your audience.

This isn't always going to be allowed in an argumentative essay, as some professors will want you to focus more on outside sources. However, many times, you'll be allowed to present personal experience. Just be sure to check with your professor.

If you do have personal experiences to share, you have to make sure you use those experiences carefully. After all, you want your evidence to build your **ethos**, not take away

from it. If you have witnessed examples that are relevant, you can share those as long as you make sure you don't make claims that are too big based on those experiences.

X Here's an example of ineffective use of personal experience as evidence:

A student is writing an argumentative paper on welfare reform, arguing that there are too many abuses of the system. The student gives an example of a cousin who abuses the system and makes a claim that this is evidence that abuse of the system is widespread.

Here's an example of how the student might use personal experience as evidence more effectively:

A student is writing an argumentative paper on welfare reform and has statistical evidence to support claims that the system is not working well. Instead of using the personal experience of a cousin who abuses the system as key evidence, the student shares data and then presents the personal experience as an example that some people may witness.

PRIMARY SOURCES

When you use source material outside of your own experience, you're using either

Many old books, photos, and documents

primary or secondary sources. **Primary sources** are sources

that were created or written during the time period in which they reference and can include things like diaries, letters, films, interviews, and even results from research studies. **Secondary sources** are sources that analyze primary sources in some way and include things like magazine and journal articles that analyze study results, literature, interviews, etc.

Sometimes, you'll be conducting original research as you work to develop your argument, and your professor may encourage you to do things like conduct interviews or locate original documents. Personal interviews can be excellent sources that can help you build your **ethos**, **pathos**, and **logos** in your essay.

When conducting an interview for your research, it's important to be prepared in order to make the most of your time with the person you are interviewing.

TIPS!

The following tips will help you get the most out of your interview:

- Prepare questions you want to ask in advance.
- Be prepared with some follow-up questions, just in case the questions you have prepared don't get the interviewee talking as you had hoped.
- Have a recording device handy. It's a good idea to record your interview if your interviewee is okay with it.
- If you can't record the interview, come prepared to take good notes.
- Record the date of your interview, as you will need this

for documentation.

- Obtain contact information for your interviewee in case you have follow-up questions later.
- Be polite and appreciative to your interviewee, as you will want the experience to be a positive one all the way around.

SECONDARY SOURCES

When you're searching for secondary source material to support your claims, you want to keep some basic ideas in mind:

- Your source material should be **relevant** to your content.
- Your source material should be **credible**, as you want your sources to help you build your ethos.
- Your source material should be **current** enough to feel relevant to your audience.

Before you make your final decisions about the sources you'll use in your argumentative essay, it's important to review the following pages and take advantage of the helpful [source credibility checklist](#).

SOURCE INTEGRATION

Just as with any type of essay, when you write an argumentative essay, you want to integrate your sources effectively. This means you want to think about the different ways you integrate your sources (paraphrasing,

summarizing, quoting) and how you can make sure your audience knows your source information is credible and relevant. this [helpful checklist on source integration](#) can help you remember some of the key best practices when it comes to getting the most out of your source material in your argumentative essay.

These key lessons on source integration in **Research** are relevant.

- Summarizing
- Paraphrasing
- Quoting
- Signal Phrases

Your authority as a scholar will be enhanced when you demonstrate your ability to use and integrate outside sources in a fair and attentive manner. By doing so, you help to demonstrate that you have carefully read and considered the material on your topic. Your reader sees not only your ideas alone but also your points contextualized by the conversations of others. In this way, you establish yourself as one of the members of the community of scholars engaged with the same idea.

PARAGRAPHING: MEAL PLAN

When it's time to draft your essay and bring your content together for your audience, you will be working to build strong paragraphs. Your paragraphs in a research paper will focus on presenting the information you found in your source material and commenting on or analyzing that information. *It's not enough to simply present the information in your body paragraphs and move on. You want to give that*

information a purpose and connect it to your main idea or thesis statement.

Your body paragraphs in a research paper will include summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting your source material, but you may be wondering if there is an effective way to organize this information.

Duke University coined a term called the “MEAL Plan” that provides an effective structure for paragraphs in an academic research paper. Select the pluses to learn what each letter stands for.



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SUMMARIZING

One way to integrate your source information is through the summary. Summaries are generally used to restate the main ideas of a text in your own words. They are usually substantially shorter than the original text because they don’t include supporting material. Instead, they include overarching ideas of an article, a page, or a paragraph.

Some summaries, such as the ones that accompany annotated bibliographies, are very short, just a sentence or two. Others are much longer, though summaries are always much shorter than the text being summarized in the first place.

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

paraphrase from a source.

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

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

For example, in the first chapter of his 1854 book, *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*, Henry David Thoreau wrote the following:

Most men, even in this comparatively free country, through mere ignorance and mistake, are so occupied with the factitious cares and superfluously coarse labors of life that its finer fruits cannot be plucked by them. Their fingers, from excessive toil, are too clumsy and tremble too much for that. Actually, the laboring man has not leisure for a true integrity day by day; he cannot afford to sustain the manliest relations to men; his labor would be depreciated in the market. He has no time to be anything but a machine. How can he remember well his ignorance—which his growth requires—who has so often to use his knowledge? We should feed and clothe him gratuitously sometimes, and recruit him with our cordials, before we judge of him. The finest qualities of our nature, like the bloom on fruits, can be preserved only by the most delicate handling. Yet we do not treat ourselves nor one another thus tenderly.

What is the main idea in the passage above? The following is one way the passage might be summarized.

In his 1854 text, *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*, Henry David Thoreau suggests that the human fixation on work and labor desensitizes man to the world around him, to the needs of his own intellectual growth, and to the complexity and frailty of his fellow humans.

NOTE: The summary accomplishes two goals:

- I. It contextualizes the information (who said it, when,

and where).

2. It lists the main ideas of the passage without using quotations or citing specific supporting points of the passage.

You should use summaries of your source materials when you need to capture main ideas to support a point you are making.

Test Your Understanding of Summarizing:

This [article](#) contains the following quotation:

“In a study of Australians with psychiatric service dogs, the participants reported their dogs “making” them leave the house or get out of bed, “reminding” them about medication, “sensing” their emotions and nudging them to bring them back to the present or blocking contact with a person they feared. For almost half the participants, their dog led them to need less mental health care, because they were hospitalized less often, made fewer suicide attempts, or needed less medication (Ehrenfeld).”



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How to Quote and Paraphrase: An Overview

Writers quote and paraphrase from research in order to support their points and to persuade their readers. A quote or a paraphrase from a piece of evidence in support of a point answers the reader's question, "says who?"

This is especially true in academic writing since scholarly readers are most persuaded by effective research and evidence. For example, readers of an article about a new cancer medication published in a medical journal will be most interested in the scholar's research and statistics that demonstrate the effectiveness of the treatment.

Conversely, they will not be as persuaded by emotional stories from individual patients about how a new cancer medication improved the quality of their lives. While this appeal to emotion can be effective and is common in popular sources, these individual anecdotes do not carry the same sort of "scholarly" or scientific value as well-reasoned research and evidence.

Of course, your instructor is not expecting you to be an expert on the topic of your research paper. While you might conduct some primary research, it's a good bet that you'll be relying on secondary sources such as books, articles, and Web sites to inform and persuade your readers. You'll present this research to your readers in the form of quotes and paraphrases.

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

"paraphrase" is a restatement of the information or point of the original source in your own words.

While quotes and paraphrases are different and should be

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

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

PARAPHRASING

When you want to use specific materials from an argument to support a point you are making in your paper but want to avoid too many quotes, you should paraphrase.

What is a paraphrase?

Paraphrases are generally as long, and sometimes longer than the original text. In a paraphrase, you use your own words to explain the specific points another writer has made. If the original text refers to an idea or term discussed earlier in the text, your paraphrase may also need to explain or define that idea. You may also need to interpret specific terms made by the writer in the original text.

Be careful not to add information or commentary that

isn't part of the original passage in the midst of your paraphrase. You don't want to add to or take away from the meaning of the passage you are paraphrasing. Save your comments and analysis until after you have finished your paraphrased and cited it appropriately.

What does paraphrasing look like?

Paraphrases should begin by making it clear that the information to come is from your source. If you are using APA format, a year citation should follow your mention of the author.

For example, using the Thoreau passage as an example, you might begin a paraphrase like this:

Even though Thoreau (1854) praised the virtues of intellectual life, he did not consider....

Paraphrases may sometimes include brief quotations, but most of the paraphrase should be in your own words.

What might a paraphrase of this passage from Thoreau look like?

Passage

"Most men, even in this comparatively free country, through mere ignorance and mistake, are so occupied with the factitious cares and superfluously coarse labors of life that its finer fruits cannot be plucked by them. Their fingers, from excessive toil, are too clumsy and tremble too much for that. Actually, the laboring

man has not leisure for a true integrity day by day; he cannot afford to sustain the manliest relations to men; his labor would be depreciated in the market.”

Paraphrase

In his text, *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*, Henry David Thoreau (1854) points to the incongruity of free men becoming enslaved and limited by constant labor and worry. Using the metaphor of fruit to represent the pleasures of a thoughtful life, Thoreau suggests that men have become so traumatized by constant labor that their hands—as representative of their minds—have become unable to pick the fruits available to a less burdened life even when that fruit becomes available to them (p. 110).

Note that the passage above is almost exactly the same length as the original. It’s also important to note that the paraphrased passage has a different structure and significant changes in wording. The main ideas are the same, but the student has paraphrased effectively by putting the information into their own words.

What are the benefits of paraphrasing?

The paraphrase accomplishes three goals:

1. Like the summary, it contextualizes the information (who said it, when, and where).

2. It restates all the supporting points used by Thoreau to develop the idea that man is hurt by focusing too much on labor.
3. The writer uses their own words for most of the paraphrase, allowing the writer to maintain a strong voice while sharing important information from the source.

Paraphrasing is likely the most common way you will integrate your source information. Quoting should be minimal in most research papers. Paraphrasing allows you to integrate sources without losing your voice as a writer to those sources. Paraphrasing can be tricky, however. You really have to make changes to the wording. Changing a few words here and there doesn't count as a paraphrase, and, if you don't quote those words, can get you into trouble with **plagiarism**.

PARAPHRASING STRUCTURE

As noted, when you paraphrase, you have to do more than change the words from the original passage. You have to also change the sentence structure. Sometimes, students will struggle with paraphrasing because they have an urge to simply use the same basic sentence or sentences and replace the original words with synonyms. This is not a method that works for effective paraphrasing.

Let's see what that looks like. Here's an original quote from an article about a new video game based on Thoreau's famous work, *Walden*.

Original Quote

“The digital Walden Pond will showcase a first-person point-of-view where you can wander through the lush New England foliage, stop to examine a bush and pick some fruit, cast a fishing rod, return to a spartan cabin modeled after Thoreau’s and just roam around the woods, grappling with life’s unknowable questions.”

Incorrect Paraphrasing

According to Hayden (2012), the Walden Pond game will offer a first-person view in which the play can meander within the New England trees and wilderness, pause to study foliage or grab some food, go fishing, return home to a small cabin based on Thoreau’s cabin, and just venture around in the woods, pondering important questions of life (para. 3).

Explanation

Here, you can see that the “paraphrase” follows the exact same structure as the original passage. Even though the wording has been changed, this would be considered a form of plagiarism by some because the sentence structure has been copied, taking this beyond just sharing the ideas of the passage. Let’s take a look at a better paraphrase of the passage.

Correct Paraphrasing

According to Hayden (2012), the upcoming video game *Walden Pond* is a first-person game that simulates the life and experiences of Thoreau when he lived at Walden Pond. Based upon Thoreau's famous work, *Walden*, the game allows players to experience life in the New England woods, providing opportunities for players to fish, gather food, live in a cabin, and contemplate life, all within a digital world (para. 3).

Explanation

In this paraphrase, the student has captured the main idea of the passage but changed the sentence structure and the wording. The student has added some context, which is often helpful in a paraphrase, by providing some background for the game.

You will now have the chance to practice your ability to recognize an effective paraphrase in the Paraphrasing Activity.



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Test Your Understanding of Paraphrasing:

This [article](#) contains the following quotation:

“Student development of 21st-century skills is greatly needed to promote workforce preparedness and long-term success of the U.S. economy. To add to the discussion on which skills are of the greatest importance for students

to develop before entering the workforce, this study investigated skill demand based on direct communication from employers to potential employees via job advertisements. The four most in-demand 21st-century skills found across roughly 142,000 job advertisements were oral and written communication, collaboration, and problem-solving (Rios et al. 80).”



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Here is another article to view.

Article: Animal Testing: Is Animal Testing Morally Justified?, *Issues & Controversies*, 2020

Example: From the article ” Human beings have long used animals as test subjects for a variety of purposes. Every year, tens of millions of animals are used in laboratory settings to gauge the toxicity of newly developed chemicals. If deemed safe, these chemicals find their way into a wide range of consumer goods including cosmetics, household cleaners, pesticides, shampoos, and sunscreens (“Animal Testing”).



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USING QUOTATIONS

Quotations are another way to integrate source information into your paragraphs, but you should use them sparingly.

An empty box with quotation marks

How do you know when you should use quotations in your essay? Essentially, quotations should function to support, comment on, or give an example of a point you are making in your own words. And, of course, you should keep in mind that quotes should be kept to a minimum. A good “rule” to remember is that you only want to use a quote when it’s absolutely necessary, when your source puts something in a way that just needs to be put that way or when you need a quote from an expert to support a point you have already made.

You should also remember that you don’t want to use quotations to make your point for you. Readers should be able to skip the quotations in your paper and still understand all your main points. This means, after each quote, you have to provide an analysis for that quote. This works well if you follow the MEAL Plan. The idea is to help your audience gather the meaning from the quote you want them to gather. It’s your job as a writer to make the quote meaningful for your audience.

Integrating quotations smoothly and effectively is one sign of a truly polished writer. Well-chosen and well-integrated quotations add strength to an argument. But many new writers do not know how to do the choosing and integrating effectively. The following guidelines will help make your quotations operate not as stumbling

blocks to a reader, but as smooth and easy stepping-stones through the pathways of your paper.

When to Use Quotes

Use quotations in the following situations:

- When the wording is so specific to the meaning that you cannot change the wording without changing the meaning.
- When the wording is poetic or unique, and you want to maintain that unique quality of wording as part of the point you are making. This guideline may also apply when the wording is highly technically-specific.
- When you are doing a critical/literary analysis of a text.
- When you want to maintain the specific authority of the words of a well-known or highly-reputable author in order to add to the credibility of your own argument.
- In most other cases, you should use your own words, a summary, or a paraphrase of your source, to make your point.

USING PHRASES & WORDS

Although you generally want to avoid using too many short quotes when you write, there are times when you need to quote a word or a phrase as a part of your own sentence. Short phrases and single words should work smoothly with the structure of your own sentence. Look,

for example, at the way the brief passages from Thoreau's *Walden* flow into the surrounding sentence:

The demands of a market economy, in fact, would penalize a man who chose to give precedence to relationships and "true integrity" over labor: an over-emphasis on work leaves a man dehumanized and with "no time to be anything but a machine" (Thoreau 21).

USING SENTENCES

Usually, when you find it necessary to quote, you'll be using a full sentence or two from a text as a quotation. In addition to making sure the quote is necessary and meaningful, be sure to make the quote works with your own writing. Your quote must work well in terms of the flow of your writing and in terms of the content. You don't want to simply drop in a quote without connecting it to the surrounding text. Look, for example, at the following:

Thoreau argues that a market economy penalizes a man who chooses to give precedence to parts of his life other than work. "Actually, the laboring man has no leisure for a true integrity day by day; he cannot afford to sustain the manliest relations to men; his labor would be depreciated in the market" (21).

The quotation, "Actually, the laboring man..." isn't connected to the previous sentence, and there's no

analysis following the quote to help readers understand its meaning and purpose.

Here are some good content guidelines to follow when using sentences as quotations:

- **Be sure to give your quote some set up and context.** You will learn more about doing this in the next lesson on signal phrases.
- **Don't forget to provide a proper citation for your quote.** Find out if you need to follow MLA, APA, or another documentation style's guidelines.
- **After your quote, you'll need anywhere from a sentence to several sentences to provide commentary or analysis on the quote.** How much you write here will depend upon the situation and the quote, but you always need something following a quote, as you want to control how your reader understands the quote.

And, in addition to those content guidelines, here are some good guidelines when thinking about your sentence structure as you set up your quote:

- When the introductory text is a complete sentence, connect it to the quotation with a colon.
- When the introductory text is an introductory phrase (rather than a complete sentence), connect it to the quotation with a comma.
- When the introductory text works directly with the flow of the sentence that follows, use no punctuation at all.

LONG QUOTATIONS

Long quotations should be kept to a minimum in your essay. Mrs. Jones recommends no more than one long quote per five (5) pages of essay. So, in a ten (10) page paper, you shouldn't have more than 2 long quotes. Additionally, you should only use those parts of the long quotation that you really need. If a passage has a middle section that doesn't relate to the point you are making, drop it out and replace it with an ellipsis (...) to indicate that you have left out part of the original text.

Set up long quotations in blocks; these are generally called block quotations. Block quotations are most often used if the passage takes up more than four typed lines in your paper. Indentation and spacing guidelines vary depending on the formatting style you are using (APA, MLA, Chicago, or other). English 101 for Mrs. Jones requires MLA style.

Leave the quotation marks off of a block quotation. The indentation itself is the visual indicator to the reader that the text is a quote. Block quotations usually are introduced with a full sentence that summarizes the main point of the quotation. This introductory sentence should be followed by a colon, as in the example below.

Henry David Thoreau argued in *Walden* that men who are over-occupied with labor run the risk of becoming dehumanized. They must be granted the time to learn about, and address, their own shortcomings in order to fully mature as humans:

He has not time to be anything but a machine. How can he remember well his ignorance—which his growth requires—who has so often to use his knowledge? We

should feed and clothe him gratuitously sometimes, and recruit him with our cordials, before we judge of him. The finest qualities of our nature, like the bloom on fruits, can be preserved only by the most delicate handling. (23)

It's important to remember that longer quotes should be set up and followed by commentary and analysis, just like shorter quotes. For long quotes, you should follow the same guidelines related to content that you follow for shorter quotes. It's important to always think rhetorically about your writing, even when you're quoting. So, if you use a long quote in your essay, be sure to provide some analysis after that quote to let your audience know why the quote is there and why it's important. Otherwise, long quotes can look and feel like "filler" to your audience.

MLA LONG QUOTE GUIDELINES

Block Quotations (4 Lines or More)

When quoting works longer than 4 lines, use a block quote format:

- Indent 1/2 inch from the left margin
- Do not use quotation marks
- Include in-text citation at end of quote
- Introduce block quote with a complete sentence followed by a colon

Block Quote Example:

There are several important questions about bullying that all educational leadership should consider:

Is bullying minimized as a “normal rite of childhood,” or is it recognized as the harmful peer abuse that it is? Do leaders understand that uninterrupted, severe bullying can confer lifelong negative consequences on targets of bullies, bullies, and witnesses? Are school leaders committed to promoting all children’s positive psychological health, or do they over-rely on punishing misbehavior? Can they discern between typical developmental processes that need guidance versus bullying that needs assertive intervention? Are educators empathic to their students, and do they value children’s feelings? (Divecha)

When to Quote, When to Paraphrase

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

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

In general, **it is best to use a quote when:**

- **The exact words of your source are important for the point you are trying to make.** This is especially true if you are quoting technical language, terms, or very specific word choices. When original writing has striking or memorable author statements, expert opinions.
- **You want to highlight your agreement with the author's words.** If you agree with the point the author of the evidence makes and you like their exact words, use them as a quote. When you cannot easily express the same idea in your own words. When using your own words would lessen the impact of the original language.
- **You want to highlight your disagreement with the author's words.** In other words, you may sometimes want to use a direct quote to indicate exactly what it is you disagree about. When you plan to argue against a writer's ideas and want to accurately state them.

In general, it is best to paraphrase when:

- **There is no good reason to use a quote to refer to your evidence.** If the author's exact words are not especially important to the point you are trying to make, you are usually better off paraphrasing the evidence.
- **You are trying to explain a particular piece of evidence in order to explain or interpret it in more detail.** This might be particularly true in writing projects like critiques.
- **You need to balance a direct quote in your**

writing. You need to be careful about directly quoting your research too much because it can sometimes make for awkward and difficult to read prose. So, one of the reasons to use a paraphrase instead of a quote is to create balance within your writing.

Tips for Quoting and Paraphrasing

- **Introduce** your quotes and paraphrases to your reader, especially on the first reference.
- **Explain** the significance of the quote or paraphrase it to your reader.
- **Cite** your quote or paraphrase properly according to the rules of style you are following in your essay.
- **Quote when** the exact words are important when you want to highlight your agreement or your disagreement.
- **Paraphrase when** the exact words aren't important, when you want to explain the point of your evidence, or when you need to balance the direct quotes in your writing.

SIGNAL PHRASES ACTIVITY



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After completing this activity, you may download or print a completion report that summarizes your results.

SEE IT IN PRACTICE

In this videocast, you'll see our student writer examine her rough draft and discuss how she integrated her source material into her paper.



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ANNOTATING SOURCES

As a part of your argumentative research process, your professor may require an argumentative annotated bibliography. An **annotated bibliography** is a list of potential sources for your paper or project with summaries and evaluations. A traditional annotated bibliography can be found on the Annotated Bibliographies page, but your professor may ask you to take an argumentative angle with your annotated bibliography and focus more attention on evaluating the persuasive elements of the source.

A basic argumentative annotated bibliography will include the following for each entry:

- Reference information following a particular formatting style (APA, MLA, or another)
- A summary of the source's content
- A thorough evaluation of the argument that includes a focus on rhetorical concepts and terms
- A few sentences on how you will use this source in your paper or project

A sample argumentative annotated bibliography can be found [here](#). In the sample, the different parts of each entry have been noted for you.

USING EVIDENCE ACTIVITY



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After completing this activity, you may download or print a completion report that summarizes your results.

Using Sources Blending Source Material with Your Own Work

When working with sources, many students worry they are simply regurgitating ideas that others formulated. That is why it is important for you to develop your own assertions, organize your findings so that your own ideas are still the thrust of the paper, and take care not to rely too much on any one source, or your paper's content might be controlled too heavily by that source.

In practical terms, some ways to develop and back up your assertions include:

Blend sources with your assertions. Organize your sources before and as you write so that they blend, even within paragraphs. Your paper—both globally and at the paragraph level—should reveal relationships among your sources, and should also reveal the relationships between your own ideas and those of your sources.

Write an original introduction and conclusion. As much as is practical, make the paper's introduction and conclusion your own ideas or your own synthesis of the ideas inherent in your research. Use sources minimally in your introduction and conclusion.

Open and close paragraphs with originality. In general, use the openings and closing of your paragraphs to reveal your work—"enclose" your sources among your assertions. At a minimum, create your own topic sentences and wrap-up sentences for paragraphs.

Use transparent rhetorical strategies. When appropriate, outwardly practice such rhetorical strategies as analysis, synthesis, comparison, contrast, summary, description, definition, hierarchical structure, evaluation, hypothesis, generalization, classification, and even narration. Prove to your reader that you are thinking as you write.

Also, you must clarify where your own ideas end and

the cited information begins. Part of your job is to help your reader draw the line between these two things, often by the way you create a context for the cited information. A phrase such as “A 1979 study revealed that . . .” is an obvious announcement of citation to come. Another recommended technique is the insertion of the author’s name into the text to announce the beginning of your cited information. You may worry that you are not allowed to give the actual names of sources you have studied in the paper’s text, but just the opposite is true. In fact, the more respectable a source you cite, the more impressed your reader is likely to be with your material while reading. If you note that the source is the NASA Science website or an article by Stephen Jay Gould or a recent edition of *The Wall Street Journal* right in your text, you offer your readers immediate context without their having to guess or flip to the references page to look up the source.

What follows is an excerpt from a political science paper that clearly and admirably draws the line between writer and cited information:

The above political upheaval illuminates the reasons behind the growing Iranian hatred of foreign interference; as a result of this hatred, three enduring geopolitical patterns have evolved in Iran, as noted by John Limbert. First . . .

Note how the writer begins by redefining her previous paragraph’s topic (political upheaval), then connects this to Iran’s hatred of foreign interference, then suggests a causal relationship and ties her ideas into John Limbert’s analysis—thereby announcing that a synthesis of Limbert’s work is coming. This writer’s work also becomes

more credible and meaningful because, right in the text, she announces the name of a person who is a recognized authority in the field. Even in this short excerpt, it is obvious that this writer is using proper citation and backing up her own assertions with confidence and style.

ANALYZE THIS

When you use sources to support your claims in your argument, you certainly have a lot of options to consider. Now that you have learned about those options and how you can use those sources to help build a strong argument, it's time to see source integration in action.

In the following video, a student analyzes another argumentative essay for its use of sources and evidence. Seeing how others use sources to support their arguments can help you when it's time to develop your own argumentative essay.

[I'm too \(Insert negative criticism of yourself here\). The media says so.](#) is the full essay used in the analysis.



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<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=50#h5p-40>

SEE IT IN PRACTICE

Now that you have learned about the different ways you can use evidence in your argument, it's a good time to see how our student applies this information to her process.

In this video, our student explores some of the sources she has found, discusses her struggles with contradictions

in her research, and explains her plans for using sources in her essay.



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Identifying a Journal Article

Scholarly articles are a little different from other articles and sometimes harder to read. You need to know when you are looking at a journal article.

Click on the plus symbols below to review characteristics of scholarly articles:



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WRAP UP

It's your turn now to wrap up your research a library process and start thinking about how you'll use sources and which sources you'll use. Remember, you want to ensure you have quality sources, but those sources can come from your library's databases, the web, and even interviews if your professor allows for them.

It's time to start putting your argument together, and

your sources are going to be a key part of that. Before you draft, make some notes about your sources and share them with your professor and classmates for feedback. Do these sources seem credible? Will these sources fit your purpose? How will these sources help your appeals to **ethos**, **pathos**, and **logos**?

You have a lot to think about as you make decisions about your sources, but good planning about your sources will make drafting your essay so much easier.

ATTRIBUTIONS

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Evaluating Sources



The process of finding and evaluating sources is inextricably intertwined. As researchers search for sources to advance their research, they must also evaluate the credibility of those sources, whether they are found in a library database or on the Internet.

These techniques are used in both English Composition courses. They are most often used in English 102 because that course centers around research. However, there are also opportunities for research in English 101 with the argument essay, so we are looking at the CRAAP test and the process of evaluating resources in English 101.

This video will help you learn how to choose sources that are credible enough for an academic audience using the CRAAP test.



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<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=225#h5p-55>

[Click here to see the Prezi used in the video.](#)

What Might be a More Credible, Reliable Source?

Why is it wise to avoid unreliable sources?

Information from unreliable sources is not always true, up-to-date, or accurate. Using unreliable sources in an academic paper can weaken the credibility of the writer, dilute the writer's argument, and detract from the overall strength of the paper.

What kind of sources should be avoided?

While the Internet provides a plethora of information on almost any topic imaginable, not all of its content can be trusted. Students should be cautiously selective while doing research and avoid sources that may contain unreliable information:

- Popular and collective websites (ask.com, about.com, WebMD.com, etc.): Websites such as these provide articles and information that has been collected from other sources that may not

be reliable. While the sponsors of these sites usually employ writers who research the topics, citations for the sources of the data are not always provided.

- **Wikipedia:** Wikipedia is an online open-source encyclopedia, which means that it can be edited by anyone. While the information on the site is audited by a Wikipedia editor, the information found there may or may not be correct or current.
- **Source material based solely on opinion:** While material that conveys opinions and beliefs may have some validity, reliable sources that back up the opinion or belief with facts and trustworthy information should also be sought. If the opinion piece does not include data from reliable sources, a writer may choose not to include it as a source.

Note: Some sources, such as Wikipedia, provide a works cited list or reference list. Some of the cited works could be reliable, but checking the original source and interpreting the information yourself provides the opportunity to confirm its validity.

Where are credible, reliable sources found?

- **Academic databases:** These databases, such as Academic Search Premier and JSTOR, include searchable collections of scholarly works, academic journals, online encyclopedias, and helpful bibliographies and can usually be accessed through a college library website.
- **Academic peer-reviewed journals:** Journal articles that have been peer-reviewed are generally

considered reliable because they have been examined by experts in the field for accuracy and quality.

- Google scholar: This Internet search engine helps the user to locate scholarly literature in the form of articles and books, professional societies' websites, online academic websites, and more.
- Library reference or research desk: Library staff can provide useful services, such as assistance with the use of library research tools, guidance with identifying credible and non-credible sources, and selection of reliable sources.

All three of the articles below are about the same topic (online dating,) but each is written at a very different "level." When you choose sources for an academic paper, you must ensure they are at the right level for your audience. Most college courses expect "medium" or "high" level sources. Some courses will expect you to use only "high" level sources.

Scan each article and read the first few paragraphs to determine what "level" is indicated.

Is the information at a low level? (brief, simple, easy to understand, often superficial)

Medium? (somewhere in the middle)

or a high level? (longer, more complex language/sentence structure, more evidence focused)

[Click here to see article #1](#)

[Click here to see article #2](#)

[Click here to see article #3](#)

Watch this video to see how you did and learn more about how to evaluate a source's level:



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

<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=225#h5p-56>

Is your source enough of an authority on the topic?

We decided the LA Times article about online dating was a Medium level source and the Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication was a High-level source.

Revisit these same articles and decide which source has a higher level of authority.

[LA Times](#)

[Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication](#)

To determine this, you should search for information on both the authors and the periodicals themselves.

Typically the periodical provides information about the author via a hotlink or a byline near the author's name.

Most periodicals have links to an "about us" page, or you can find their "about us" page by using Google.

Write down things you find that suggest you can trust this periodical or author. Then decide which has a higher level of credibility to write about this topic.

Watch this video to see how you did and learn more about how to evaluate Authority.



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PART IV

RHETORICAL MODES

Welcome to Rhetorical Modes

The term rhetorical modes refers to the different styles and techniques we use when we write. This chapter will discuss different modes, explaining the specific aspects and techniques involved in these methods of communication. As you read about these, remember that the rhetorical mode a writer chooses depends on his/her purpose for writing. Some assignments ask students to use a specific rhetorical mode, such as writing a descriptive passage or contrasting two concepts, but most essays incorporate several different rhetorical modes to express an idea. Overall, the rhetorical modes are a set of tools that allow you different methods to effectively communicate information to your audience.

In the Rhetorical Modes area of the English 101 Open textbook, you'll learn about different rhetorical styles or, essentially, different strategies for developing your essays and other writing assignments. These basic strategies are

not all-encompassing but will provide you with a foundation and flexibility to help you as you engage in writing assignments in your introductory writing classes and beyond.

In the following pages, you'll find support for major styles of development, including **memoir, evaluation, cause and effect, and compare and contrast**. For each style, you'll find visual instruction and a sample paper, showing you how each style works in your writing classes. This learning area is one you will want to visit for support for most major types of assignments you'll encounter in college. Sometimes these modes are as a full essay style, sometimes modes are mixed.

It's also important to remember that there are certain features that all of these styles or methods have in common:

- A clear **thesis statement** usually provided at the beginning of the essay
- Clear and logical **transitions**
- Focused **body paragraphs** with evidence and support
- Appropriate **format and style** if you use source material
- A **conclusion** that expands upon your thesis and summarizes evidence
- Clear writing that follows standard conventions for things like **grammar, punctuation, and spelling**.

As you explore the Rhetorical Modes, think about the key features of each type of essay as well as the features that all effective essays have in common.

Figure RM1: Choosing Paragraph Patterns

Choosing Paragraph Patterns

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Narrative and Memoir Essays



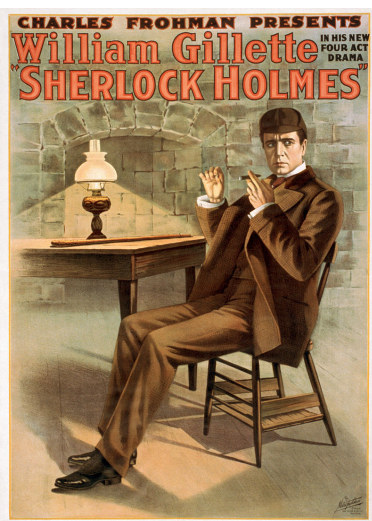
NARRATIVE WRITING

Human beings tell stories every day. We understand most of nature through stories. Though facts can be memorized, stories — the details, the description, the experience — make us believe.

Therefore, as we begin to study writing, we need to begin with the properties of the story. How do good storytellers make us believe? How can good writing draw a reader into a story? How can we harness the power of the story to make a point, even in a dry, academic context?

The purpose of narrative writing is to tell stories. This is a form we are familiar with, as any time we tell a story about an event or incident in our day, we are engaging in a form of narration. In terms of writing, narration is the act of describing a sequence of events. Sometimes this is the primary mode of an essay—writing a narrative essay about a particular event or experience, and sometimes this is a component used within an essay, much like other evidence is offered, to support a thesis. This chapter will discuss the basic components of narration, which can be applied either as a stand-alone essay or as a component within an essay.

Ultimately, narrative writing tries to relay a series of



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events in an emotionally engaging way. You want your audience to be moved by your story, which could mean through laughter, sympathy, fear, anger, and so on. The more clearly you tell your story, the more emotionally engaged your audience is likely to be.

Sherlock Holmes, a creation of the writer Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, has become one of the most famous detectives of all time — though he never lived. Have you heard of him? Why do you think this story perseveres? How can stories permeate our culture so thoroughly?

WHERE DO WE FIND NARRATIVE?

We talk about narrative writing in many ways. Books will introduce it as Narration, Narrative, and Storytelling. Narrative creeps into most of the other kinds of writing we learn about, too. Persuasive essays use short stories — often called **anecdotes** — to engage a reader's attention and sympathy. Consider the difference between these two openings to the same essay:

Statistics show that consistent seatbelt wearing is vital if passengers are to survive a mo-
cause some discomfort. However, everyone should wear a seatbelt because they've been

Timmy's mother was in a hurry as they left the mall. He'd climbed into the backseat of
to make it to his sister's concert on time. The van rushed into traffic, and Timmy's mot-
and the car barreled into their van, connecting with the door beside Timmy with a sick

Which opening makes you want to read more? The second one engages its readers with a story — and we're hard-wired, as humans, to want to hear the end of a story.

Television plays on this characteristic all the time.

Think of your favorite show and the maddening, brief preview that starts before the credits roll. It's always a quick snippet that makes you stay tuned because the writers and producers know their audience will sit through several minutes of mindless commercials just to find out how the story will continue.

In our own writing, we can use stories in just the same way. We can draw our readers into our own experiences, even if they've never been through anything even similar to what we have, by telling our own stories.

HOW DO WE WRITE A NARRATIVE?

A narrative essay is a piece that tells one consistent, cohesive story. In academic writing, a narrative essay will also always convey a lesson, a moral, or a point that the writer wishes the reader to take.

When we say “moral,” some people think of after-school specials and having “good behavior” tips crammed down their throat. However, the most powerful lessons conveyed through writing are often done with great subtlety. True, the punishing pace of writing expected in a college course may not leave enough time to develop a nuanced story — no one is going to churn out *War and Peace* or even *The Hobbit* in ten weeks — but not every story has to have the moral stated clearly, in bold font, at the very beginning.

Think about it this way: When you were a kid, if your grandmother had sat you down and said, “Listen. We’re now going to have a thirty-minute conversation about how it’s really bad if you start smoking,” would you have listened? Probably not. If, however, your grandmother took you to visit your uncle Larry, who had terminal lung

cancer, and then casually mentioned as you left that Larry had been smoking since he was your age — would you get the lesson? Would you remember it? Do you remember better the 200 lectures you had as a teenager about not being a bully, or do you remember the one time that you witnessed its effects firsthand?

In a narrative, we want to pull that same kind of trick on our readers: get our point across, but do it in a way that engages the imagination and attention. Use the power of the story.

The narrative relies on the same components that all good writing does: it needs detail, clear organization, and a central purpose (AKA our friends Development, Organization, and Unity).

NARRATIVE DEVELOPMENT: BRING THE DETAILS

Consider this passage from the very first Sherlock Holmes mystery, “A Study in Scarlet,” which describes a major character:

His face was lean and haggard, and the brown parchment-like skin was drawn tightly over the projecting bones; his long, brown hair and beard were all flecked and dashed with white; his eyes were sunken in his head, and burned with an unnatural luster; while the hand which grasped his rifle was hardly more fleshy than that of a skeleton. As he stood, he leaned upon his weapon for support, and yet his tall figure and the massive framework of his bones suggested a wiry and vigorous constitution. His gaunt face, however, and his clothes, which hung so baggily over his shriveled limbs, proclaimed what it was that gave him that senile and decrepit appearance. The man was dying—dying from hunger and from thirst.

The author includes detail upon detail to describe this gentleman. He could have simply said, “He was dying from

hunger and from thirst,” which would tell us everything we need to know. Instead, he describes how these feelings have had an effect upon the man — he is *gaunt*, he’s starting to look like a skeleton, and he can barely stand without the support of his rifle.

Think of the best book you’ve ever read (or the best television show you’ve ever watched, or the movie you love), and you may be able to relate to this. Good description is the difference between hearing a game on the radio and watching it live in the stadium (or on a ginormous 3-D television). The very breath of life in a narrative will always be your ability to describe a scene.

This relies on the use of specific language. As you read through the revision section, you were encouraged to avoid phrases that your audience might find misleading. Consider this as you write a story.

With every sentence, ask, “What does my audience know? What do they think?” If you say a car is “beautiful,” will your audience think of a 2018 Hybrid Honda Accord or of a 1966 Chevelle (pictured at right)? If there’s some doubt, change your words to reflect your meaning.

You may have heard the advice that asks you to “show, not tell” in writing. This is what we mean: be so descriptive in telling a story that the reader feels s/he is there beside you, seeing the swimming pool or the school’s



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Vegavairbob

front doors or the new car or the new child with his/her own eyes.

NARRATIVE ORGANIZATION

Narrative traditionally follows time order, or **chronological order**, throughout. This seems obvious when you think about it — we tell stories in time order, starting (usually) at the beginning and working through to the end.

In an essay, pieces of the story can be organized into timespans by paragraph. For instance, if I'm describing a particularly harrowing day at work, I might have a paragraph just for the morning, and then a paragraph about my terrible lunch break, and then a paragraph about my afternoon.

Narrative essays usually can't cover more ground than a day or two. Instead of writing about your entire vacation experience, study abroad month, two years of work at the plant, or 18 years living at home, focus on one particular experience that took place over a day or two. That's enough for a reader to digest in a few pages, and it will also give you a chance to really lay in details without feeling rushed.

Sometimes, we start stories out of order. Many popular movies and television shows do this regularly by showing a clip of something that happens later before starting the whole show. If you've ever seen an episode of NCIS, you'll be familiar with this technique: they start each section of the show with a photo of the ending scene, then start an hour or two before that scene in the live-action. Shows often jump to "One Week Earlier" between commercial breaks.

Think of the emotional impact that has upon you as a viewer. Again, it's a trick the writers pull with their story to drive you through the boring/silly/pointless/insulting commercials so that you'll stay with them. We want to know how the characters get to that end.

You can manipulate your audience in this way, too, but be careful; giving away too much of the ending may sometimes make a reader simply put down what they're reading. It's safer (though not always better) to just start at the beginning and write things down as they happened. Particularly in a first draft, sticking to the natural story order will be a good way to make sure nothing gets missed. **Chronological order**, the order in which events unfold from first to last, is the most common organizational structure for narratives. Stories typically have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Certain transitional words and phrases aid in keeping the reader oriented in the sequencing of a story. Some of these phrases are listed below.

Figure 5.2 Transition Words and Phrases for Expressing Time

 TRANSITIONAL
EXPRESSION

- first, second, third, ...
next, then, finally

LOGICAL RELATIONSHIP

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sequence/Order | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • after, afterward, at last, before, currently, during, earlier, immediately, later, meanwhile, now, recently, simultaneously, subsequently, then |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for example, for instance, namely, specifically, to illustrate |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conclusion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • finally, in a word, in brief, briefly, in conclusion, in the end, in the final analysis, on the whole, thus, to conclude, to summarize, in sum, to sum up, in summary |
-

The following are the other basic components of a narrative:

- **Plot.** The events as they unfold in sequence.
- **Characters.** The people who inhabit the story and move it forward. Typically, each narrative has there are minor characters and main characters. The minor characters generally play supporting roles to the main character, or the protagonist.
- **Conflict.** The primary problem or obstacle that unfolds in the plot, which the protagonist must solve or

overcome by the end of the narrative. The way in which the protagonist resolves the conflict of the plot results in the theme of the narrative.

- **Theme.** The ultimate message the narrative is trying to express; it can be either explicit or implicit.

Writing at Work

When interviewing candidates for jobs, employers often ask about conflicts or problems a potential employee had to overcome. They are asking for a compelling personal narrative. To prepare for this question in a job interview, write out a scenario using the narrative moved structure. This will allow you to troubleshoot rough spots as well as better understand your own personal history. Both processes will make your story better and your self-presentation better, too.

Narrative Anecdotes

An anecdote is a short, personal **narrative** about something specific. It is often used as a component in an essay, acting as evidence to support your thesis, as an example to demonstrate your point, and/or as a way to establish your credibility. It always has a point in telling it.

Elements of an Anecdote

1. Who, Where, When

Have you ever wondered why children's stories begin something like this?

Once upon a time, in a galaxy far, far away, the teachers were revolting ...

It is the start of a simple narrative. It also contains all

the elements of a beginning to any narrative: when, where, and who. An anecdote, because it is short, will begin similarly:

One day, while I was sitting at a stop sign waiting for the light to change...

This little particle of an anecdote tells when, who, and where before the first sentence even ends.

Note: An anecdote sets up a particular incident; it does not tell about a long period of time.

2. What Happened (Sequence of Events)

Any narrative also includes a sequence of events. You should be able to read an anecdote and tell what happens first, what happens next, and so on. In the following anecdote, the bolded words suggest each event in the sequence.

Example Anecdote:

My first day of college I parked in the “South Forty,” which is what everyone called the huge parking lot on the edge of the campus. It was seven forty-five in the morning, hazy and cool. I walked across the parking lot, crossed a busy street, walked over a creek, through a “faculty” parking lot, crossed another street, and came to the first row of campus buildings. I walked between buildings, past the library and the student mall. I passed many quiet, nervous-looking students along the way. Many of them smiled at me. One trio of young girls was even chuckling softly among themselves when they all smiled and said “Hi” to me at once. By the time I got to my classroom, far on the other side of campus from the parking lot, I was smiling and boldly saying “Hi” to everyone, too, particularly the girls. Every single one of them smiled or responded with a “Hi” or made a friendly comment or even chuckled happily. It was my first day of college.

When I found the building I was looking for, a friend from high school appeared. She was in my first class! I smiled at her and said, “Hi!” She looked at me. She smiled. Then she laughed. She said, “Why are you wearing a sock on your shirt?” I looked down. A sock had come out of the dryer clinging to my shirt.

3. Implied Point

Most of us want to make sure that we “get the point across” to whatever story we are telling, assuming it has a point. To do this, we tend to explain what we are telling. It is sometimes very difficult to stop. However, stopping in a timely way allows the reader to draw his or her own conclusions.

Show, don't tell

In the anecdote above, I am very tempted to tell the reader what I felt at the moment I realized that everyone was laughing AT me rather than just being friendly. For the ending, where the point is in this case, it is best to let the reader infer (draw conclusions, fill in the blanks) what happens implicitly rather than to state explicitly what the point is, or what the narrator felt, or anything else.

Tip

The more indirect you are about your object or place the better. In the anecdote above, it might be obvious that my object is a sock or my place is a parking lot. The point is, it is not an anecdote “about” a sock; it is referred to indirectly.

How do we show rather than tell? First, describe what you see (I don't really see anything with "I was SO embarrassed...") or what you smell, hear, or taste, but NOT what you feel. An easy way to check whether you are showing or telling is to go through your anecdote and underline the verbs. If the verbs are "be"-verbs (is, was, were, etc.) or verbs that describe actions we cannot see ("I thought..." "I believed..." "I imagined..." "it made me upset..." and so on) then you are probably telling. In the sentence above I used "walked," "lecturing," "ripped," and "said."

Most Common Question:

"What makes stories or anecdotes interesting and something I can relate to?"

Actually, it is a simple principle, even though it may not be obvious. We "relate" or "connect" most easily to situations we recognize and so fill in the blanks. If you "tell" me, for example, "I was SO embarrassed ..." then you have not let me fill in MY embarrassment. On the other hand, if you "show" me a scene, it allows me to fit my own experience into it:

"I walked past the corner of the aluminum whiteboard tray while lecturing to a class. It ripped my pants. After a moment I said, 'Class dismissed.'"

The writer of those statements, hopes the reader will fill in some similarly embarrassing moment without the writer clearly stating that this is what is supposed to be done. The connection, the act of "filling in," is what people tend to refer to as "relating to."

Interestingly, it does not even matter whether or not readers fill in what the writer intend for them to fill in; it is the act of filling in our own experiences that makes us

“relate” to an incident. From a writer’s perspective, that means we should show rather than tell.

Second, resist the temptation to “explain.” Let the reader fill in the blanks! It is so much more personal when the reader participates by filling in.

Assignment 1

Write an anecdote that contains who, where, when, and what happens (a sequence of events). Think about an anecdote that **involves, alludes to, or otherwise includes your object or place**; it does not have to be “about” your place. It also does not have to be “true” in the strict sense of the word; we will not be able to verify any believable details if they add to the effect of the anecdote. Type it out. Keep it simple and to the point.

Clichés

What are ‘clichés’ and why can’t we use them?

Clichés are figurative phrases and expressions that you have probably heard a million times. For our purposes, there are two kinds of clichés: the ones that jump out at you and the ones that we use without thinking.

If you are paying attention, you will notice that the two sentences above contain at least 3 clichés. You might also notice that clichés are best suited to spoken language, because they are readily available and sometimes when we speak, we don’t have time to replace a common expression with a unique one. However, we **DO** have time to replace clichés while we are writing.

The problem with clichés in writing is that they are too

general when we should be much more specific. They also tend to tell rather than show. In the first sentence above, we have most likely heard the phrase, “have probably heard a million times.” In speech, that expression works. In writing, it should be **literal** rather than **figurative**. The first sentence is better this way:

Clichés are figurative phrases and expressions that we have heard so many times that we all share some understanding of what they mean.

Not exactly what you thought when you read it at the beginning of this answer, is it? That is why being *literal and specific* in writing is better than *figurative and vague* as a rule.

Here is a re-write of the second sentence at the start of this answer:

For our purposes, there are two kinds of clichés: the ones that are obvious expressions (like “You can lead a horse to water ...”) and the ones that are not part of expressions but seem to “go” easily into a group of words (like “we use without thinking”).

The second type is more difficult to identify and eradicate. Usually it is a group of words we have heard before that doesn’t add anything to a statement. For example, instead of “We watched the donuts roll down the street every night,” you might be tempted to add to it this way: “We watched the donuts roll down the street each and every night.” Avoid clichés in your writing.

To see more see more commonly used clichés and for guidance on how to rewrite them, see this [handout](https://writingcenter.unc.edu/cliches/) (https://writingcenter.unc.edu/cliches/) from The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Writing Center.

Some Other Rhetorical Tips

- To create strong details, keep the human senses in mind. You want your reader to be immersed in the world that you create, so focus on details related to sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch as you describe people, places, and events in your narrative.
- Create tension by making the reader nervous about what is going to happen through sentence structure, tone, and voice.
- Add dialogue to show the immediacy and drama of the personal interactions (re-creating conversations as necessary to make your narrative work).
- Name specific objects to re-create the scene by selecting details that leave the readers with a dominant impression of how things were.
- Show people in action by describing precise movements and dialogue to convey the action of the scene.

External Links:

“[Sixty-nine Cents](https://tinyurl.com/ybjasq9c)” (<https://tinyurl.com/ybjasq9c>) by Gary Shteyngart: In “Sixty-nine Cents,” author Gary

Shteyngart describes a coming-of-age experience as a first-generation Russian-Jewish immigrant in modern America.

Sherman Alexie grew up on the Spokane Reservation in Washington State. He chronicles his challenges in school, starting in first grade, in [Indian Education](https://tinyurl.com/hlshngr) (https://tinyurl.com/hlshngr).

Sandra Cisneros offers an example of a narrative essay in “[Only Daughter](https://tinyurl.com/yc4srod7)” (https://tinyurl.com/yc4srod7) that captures her sense of her Chicana-Mexican heritage as the only daughter in a family of seven children. The essay is also available [here](https://tinyurl.com/y7hzhz6) (https://tinyurl.com/y7hzhz6).

Annie Dilliard offers an example of a narrative essay in an excerpt, often entitled “[The Chase](https://tinyurl.com/ycsen7r4)” (https://tinyurl.com/ycsen7r4) from her autobiography *An American Childhood*, outlining a specific memorable event from her childhood. This essay is also available [here](https://tinyurl.com/y7udsl88) (https://tinyurl.com/y7udsl88).

NARRATIVE UNITY

The final consideration in putting together a narrative essay should be unifying it around a single theme or lesson. As you draft, you may already have this lesson in mind: *everyone should wear a seatbelt*. However, remember that your reader needs to make up her own mind. Don’t insult a reader by beating them up with your lesson, and don’t leave them guessing about the meaning of your piece by leaving it out completely.

Many writers include a paragraph of reflection after telling a personal story in an essay that lets a reader know, directly, the significance that the story has on the writer’s life. This can be a good way to get a lesson across. Showing what you’ve learned or found important in an event will

provide the reader with a clue about the overall meaning of the story.

You should use “I” in a personal, narrative essay. There are types of academic writing where “I” is inappropriate, but this is not one of those times. In fact, the best narratives will often be the most personal, the stories that avoid hiding behind “you” or “they” and instead boldly tell the writer’s own story.

NARRATIVE OUTLINES

The typical narrative essay follows an outline that should seem like common sense:

1. Paragraph 1: Introduction
2. Paragraph 2: Event #1
3. Paragraph 3: Event #2
4. Paragraph 4: Event #3
5. Paragraph 5: Conclusion

This outline is flexible. Perhaps the first event in your story will take significant space to describe; it may need 2 paragraphs of its own. Maybe there are smaller events that happen within the larger events. Maybe for your piece, it makes sense to jump right into the story instead of spending an introduction paragraph to give some setup. What matters most is that a reader can easily follow the piece from beginning to end and that she will leave with a good understanding of what you wanted the reader to learn.

Student Sample Essay

My College Education

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 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.

Memoirs

Most People Don't Understand Memoirs

In 2006, James Frey wrote a memoir about parts of his life when he was under the influence of drugs called *A Million Little Pieces*, and after Oprah had him on her show to discuss the book – it was featured in her popular book club, of course – she was told that he “lied” about certain parts. Well, he didn’t lie. Memoirs contain what we remember. What we remember isn’t always “fact.” What I always say is that if you have all of your family members report what happened at a family gathering – like a birthday party or Christmas – whose report would be correct? No ones! That’s what a memoir is. It’s still nonfiction because it’s what the person remembers, but it’s not false on purpose. If I remember that my sister responded to me in a snotty way one day and my other sister didn’t think so, no one is correct. It’s just my memory versus hers.

Now, typically, memoirs encompass just a chunk of someone’s life, like when James Frey wrote about his drug years, but sometimes, some famous person in their 70s (or older) will write his/her memoir. No matter what, it’s simply what they remember, and I suppose if someone’s on drugs or has an awful memory, the stories could appear to be false. But they aren’t. That’s why they say, “life is stranger than fiction.”

Memoirs are part of the nonfiction category of

literature; they contain a lot of description and detail, and they are typically very, very personal in content.



"Shirley dictates her memoirs to Brendan..." by heymrleej taken March 5, 2015.

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The Bits and Pieces of Memoir

The memoir is a specific type of narrative. It is autobiographical in nature, but it is not meant to be as

comprehensive as a biography (which tells the entire life story of a person). Instead, a memoir is usually only a specific “slice” of one’s life. The time span within a memoir is thus frequently limited to a single memorable event or moment, though it can also be used to tell about a longer series of events that make up a particular period of one’s life (as in Cameron Crowe’s film memoir *Almost Famous*). It is narrative in structure, usually describing people and events that ultimately focuses on the emotional significance of the story to the one telling it. Generally, this emotional significance is the result of a resolution from the conflict within the story. Though a memoir is the retelling of a true account, it is not usually regarded as being completely true. After all, no one can faithfully recall every detail or bit of dialogue from an event that took place many years ago. Consequently, some creative license is granted by the reader to the memoirist recounting, say, a significant moment or events from his childhood some thirty years, or more, earlier. (However, the memoirist who assumes too much creative license without disclosing that fact is vulnerable to censure and public ridicule if his deception is found out, as what happened with James Frey and his memoir, *A Million Little Pieces*.)

Furthermore, names of people and places are often changed in a memoir to protect those who were either directly or indirectly involved in the lives and/or event(s) being described.

Why read memoirs?

To learn about other people’s lives and their thoughts

about events that have occurred. Memoirs are a personalized look at history.

How to write memoirs?

Reflect n your life. write what you remember about events that matter to you from your unique point-of-view.

Dialogue

Dialogue is another way to bring life to your writing. Dialogue is conversation or people speaking in your story. An engaging dialogue goes beyond what is simply being said to include descriptions of non-verbal communication (facial expressions, body movement, changes in tone, and speed of speech) and characterization. The way people speak and interact while talking reveals much about them and the situation.

Writing a natural-sounding dialogue is not easy. Effective dialogue must serve more than one purpose – it should:

- Drive the plot forward,
- Reveal information about the characters, and
- Build tension or introduce conflict.

Dialogue is a great way to show, rather than tell.

Sample Dialogue

“So, what was it really like?” I asked.

“I’ve told you. It was amazing.”

I shifted to my side so I could look at her. “You have to give me more than that,” I insisted, “and not the mom and dad version.”

Liv mirrored my move to her side and propped up her head with her arm. Her blue eyes searched my greens, looking for the right words. “I shouldn’t—”

We broke our gaze as we heard our mom call for us. Once again, I didn’t get the truth.

Basic Dialogue Rules

1. Use a comma between the dialogue and the tag line.
 1. “I want to go to the beach,” she said.
2. End punctuation goes inside the quotation marks.
 1. He asked, “Where’s the champagne?”
3. When a tag line interrupts a sentence, it should be set off by commas.
 1. “That is,” Wesley said, “that neither you nor me is her boy.”
4. Every time you switch to a different speaker, start a new paragraph.
 1. Even if the speaker says only one word, with no accompanying attribution or action, it is a separate paragraph.
5. Start a new paragraph when you wish to draw the

reader's attention to a different character, even if that character doesn't actually speak.

6. For internal dialogue, italics are appropriate.

Example Memoir

Chocolate Can Kill You

Just when you think your life could not get any better, the Great One Above throws you for a loop that causes you to think upon your life, yourself, and your “little” obsession with chocolate. I am somewhat ashamed of this story, but it taught me so much. I still remember Alisa’s face when I came crying into the Valley City gym, I can hear Dad’s echoing “Are you OKAY?” consistently in my mind as if it had been a childhood scolding, and I see the image of the snow coming at me at 70mph every time I drive on a highway now.

In 1997, the morning after Valentine’s Day, I took off to see my sister in Valley City. She was there because of a wrestling meet. She is one of their prized assistants and without her, they would never get to see how goofy they look in tights. It was a crisp morning, and I cannot remember if I filled the bronco’s tank, but I did purchase a Twix bar before heading out on I-94. I vaguely remember thinking, Gee a seat belt would be good, even though the roads were as clean as they could have been in a North Dakota February. On that ten-degree morning, I met up with no one on the highway.

I was just bee-bopping along the left side of the road, listening to the radio and singing aloud as if I was Mariah Carey. It was at this time that I chomped into my first Twix bar.

In an attempt at a different radio station or something or

another, I dropped the last bar between my legs onto the floor of the black beastly bronco.

This is where I become a stupid human. I tried to recapture the chocolate bar thinking, or maybe not even thinking, It will only take me a second. Whoever has said that seconds count in any accident WAS RIGHT! All of a sudden, I look up to see that I am driving 70 mph into the median's snowdrifts. I cranked the wheel, thinking I could just drive back onto the highway. I mumble a few swear words and realize I am going 70 MPH IN A VERY DEEP SNOWDRIFT! I take my foot off the accelerator and while the front end slows, the back end has accumulated too much energy or velocity (a good physics question) and begins to lift upwards. I close my eyes, cross my arms across my chest, and crouch back into my seat and start to feel the bronco as well as myself turn and twist and hover for what seemed an eternity in slow motion. I did not open my eyes once.

And then all of a sudden, the small jolted car lands- PLOP – ON ITS WHEELS! My chair has completely reclined, and I sit up seeing smoke coming from my engine. I forget how to work my car and instinctively get out as if to show God I am alive. I stand on top of the drift becoming taller than my boxy 4x4. There are small dents in the front where you would open the hood but that is the biggest damage I can see.

“Are you OKAY?” An old couple are parked and honking at me from the other side of the highway going towards Fargo. They tell me to come with them and turn off the engine. I grab my parka and make my way through the snow to sit down in the back seat of the long car and take in that old people smell. This is when I quietly cry.

“You did a flip! It's amazing you walked away from it,” says the old man and I think to myself sarcastically to calm down, Yeah I

tried to do that. I ask them to take me to Valley City trying not to sound three and a half. Another major thought echoes What will Dad say?

They turned around at the next available bridge which was a mile away and the lady told me the exit so I could give it to the people that will tow my little bruised bronco. They talked to themselves as I tried to think of what exactly happened, how glad I was to be alive, and how I felt about it. Once inside the gymnasium, I found Alisa's eyes and she instantly frowned and looked scared.

"Did you and Jason fight?" No, I try to say but I am crying in front of a large crowd who all seem more interested in me now than the matches. I sit down beside her and say:

"I did a flip... the bronco... flipped ... it did a 360."

"The bronco did a WHAT! ARE YOU OKAY!" She panics. I go to call Dad as she tells her friends, and they also feel sympathetic and are quite amazed. I don't know how I managed to remember my calling card number, but I reached Mom and Dad just waking up. Once again Dad frightens me with his voice and vows to be there as soon as possible and tells me to call the highway patrol.

I was the only accident that whole day on the highway, I think, so I looked pretty silly.

Mom and Dad showed up an hour later. Mom was half-awake, and Dad looked like he'd been chugging coffee left and right. They had seen the bronco being towed incorrectly towards Fargo, so Dad feared the transmission was screwed up again much less the rest of the car. We took off for Fargo and stopped at the spot seeing the tracks lead into the snow, then 25 feet of no tracks, and suddenly a large indentation where the bronco had sat down.

Once at the Mobile on I-29, Dad jumped into the bronco to try to start it. It revved right up. I shook my head and thought of the motto, Built Ford Tough. Only the alignment and steering was off

from me trying to turn it back onto the road, and the steam I had seen was the radiator fluid splashing onto the hot engine.

We had to meet with a highway patrolman, so the bronco could get a sticker and photos could be taken. I also, fortunately for the taxpayers, had to pay a Care of Vehicle bill of thirty dollars which means that the government basically can fine someone for trashing his/her own vehicle. This pissed me off incredibly after a day like I had just had. My mom had to remind me though that at least it wasn't a medical bill.

The highway patrolman reminds me how valuable it was that I had had a seat belt on because I would have for sure gone through the windshield with that type of event and all the tossing that I had endured. That does not make replaying this event in my memory any better. As if God was saying: "No, not yet."

It's a common joke to not let me eat while I am driving.

That day made me incredibly grateful for my life, and for the people who came to my aid, especially my parents for spending their whole Saturday with me. Whether we were trying to contact the highway patrolman, paying the tower and the ticket, or comforting me- they never complained. Who knew chocolate could lead to such a life-threatening, yet philosophical day?

Time to Write

Purpose: This assignment will demonstrate the understanding of how to write a memoir

Task: This assignment frames a single event for the memoir essay.

Write a Memoir Essay. This essay should clearly

identify a significant event or series of closely tied events that convey the significance of that event or has somehow shaped your personal perspective. Remember that you are writing for an audience that doesn't share your knowledge of the event(s), people, setting, etc. It is up to you to make your memoir come to life.

Key Features of a Memoir:

- Invoke the 5 senses
- Use narrative suspense
- use metaphor
- include significant details
- provide descriptive language
- use effective dialogue
- include transitions

Key Grading Considerations

- Purpose & Audience Awareness
 1. The rhetorical purpose is clear, focused, and appropriate to the audience and assignment.
 2. The purpose is focused on the memoir.
 3. Shows engagement with issues of story, language, rhetoric, or thinking deeply about a personal event.
 4. The theme relates to a personal experience but also illustrates more universal principles.

- Organization
 1. Transitions
 2. Learning Point Thesis Statement
 3. Topic Sentences
 4. Some Narrative Elements that flow with the paper
 5. Clear introduction, event story, and conclusion
 - Descriptive Language
 1. Dialogue is used
 2. Descriptions and quotes to help visualize the event
 - Language Use, Mechanics & Organization
 1. Correct, appropriate, and varied integration of textual examples, including in-text citations
 2. Limited errors in spelling, grammar, word order, word usage, sentence structure, and punctuation
 3. Good use of academic English
 4. Demonstrates cohesion and flow
 5. Uses the rules of dialogue
 - Fully in MLA Format
 1. Paper Format
 1. Header
 2. Heading
 3. Date format
-

Attributions

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Evaluation Essays



Evaluative arguments center around the question of quality. Is something good? Bad? Honest? Dishonest? Evaluative judgments are also about values—what the writer thinks is important. Sometimes the writer’s values are not the same as his/her readers’ values, so he/she has to bridge the gap by showing respect for the audience’s opinions and clarifying the points that they do and don’t agree upon.

An important first step in writing an evaluation is to consider the appropriate standards/criteria for evaluating the subject. If a writer is evaluating a car, for example, the writer might consider standard criteria like fuel economy, price, crash ratings. But the writer also might consider style, warranty, color, special options, like sound systems. Even though all people might not base their

choice of a car on these secondary criteria, they are still considered acceptable or standard criteria.

To be taken seriously, a writer must have valid reasons for his evaluation. These reasons are based on criteria. Imagine choosing your attire for a job interview at a very prestigious law firm. You look at the jeans and t-shirts in your closet and immediately decide to go shopping. Why? Because the clothes in your closet don't meet the criteria for the interview.

The Purpose of Evaluative Writing

Writers evaluate arguments in order to present an informed and well-reasoned judgment about a subject. While the evaluation will be based on their opinion, it should not seem opinionated. Instead, it should aim to be reasonable and unbiased. This is achieved through developing a solid judgment, selecting appropriate criteria to evaluate the subject, and providing clear evidence to support the criteria.

Evaluation is a type of writing that has many real-world applications. Anything can be evaluated. For example, evaluations of movies, restaurants, books, and technology ourselves are all real-world evaluations.

Five Characteristics of an Evaluative Essay

by Dr. Karen Palmer

1. Presenting the subject.

Presenting the subject is an often misunderstood aspect of an evaluative essay. Either writers give too little information or too much. Presenting the subject occurs in two different places in the essay.

First, the writer should give a brief introduction of the subject in the introduction of the evaluation. This introduction occurs in the second part of the introduction—the intro to the topic. At this point, the writer should simply name the subject and give a very brief description. For example, a restaurant review should include at a minimum the name and location of the restaurant. An evaluation of a vehicle might include the make, model, and year of the vehicle and any important features.

Second, the writer should give a more detailed description of the subject following the introduction in the background section of the paper. Here the writer could give a more detailed overview of the restaurant (the type of decor, type of food, owners, history), describe the vehicle in detail, etc. Striking a balance between giving the reader the necessary information to understand the evaluation and telling readers everything is important. The amount of detail necessary depends on the topic. If you are reviewing a brand new technology or a machine, specific to your line of work, for example, you will need to give readers more information than if you are simply reviewing a restaurant or a doctor's office.

The language used in your description can be evaluative. For example, a writer can use descriptive adjectives and adverbs to convey a certain impression of the subject, even before the claim is made.

2. Asserting an overall judgment.

The main point/thesis should be located at the end of the paper's introduction. It should be definitive—certain, clear, and decisive. Asking a question does not pose a definitive claim. Giving several different perspectives also does not give a definitive claim. It is ok to balance your claim, though, acknowledging weaknesses (or strengths) even as you evaluate a subject positively: "While the Suburban is a gas guzzler, it is the perfect car for a large family...."

Providing a map of your reasons/criteria within the thesis is a great technique for creating organization and focus for your essay. For example, "While the Suburban is a gas guzzler, it is the perfect car for a large family because it can seat up to 9, it has a high safety rating, and it has the best in class towing capacity." Not only does this example give a clear, balanced claim, but it also lays out the writer's reasons upfront, creating a map in the reader's mind that will help him follow the reasoning in the essay.

3. Giving Reasons and Support

After presenting the subject and providing readers with a clear claim, the writer must explain and justify his/her evaluation using reasons that are recognized by readers as appropriate. This occurs in the argument section of the paper and should be the most extensive part of the paper. Reasons should reflect values or standards typical for the subject. If a writer uses criteria that is not typical for the subject, he/she must be prepared to defend that decision in the essay. For example, "Buying local may not always be at the forefront of a buyer's mind when shopping for

eggs, but..." Each reason should be clearly stated as a topic sentence that both states the reason and refers back to the main claim. Going back to the suburban example, a body paragraph/section might begin with the following topic sentence: "One of the obvious reasons a suburban is great for large families is its capacity for holding that large family and all of their necessary traveling items."

Following the topic sentence, a writer must include relevant examples, quotes, facts, statistics, or personal anecdotes to support the reason. Depending on what the subject is, the support might be different. To support a claim about a book/film, for example, a writer might include a description of a pivotal scene or quotes from the book/film. In contrast, to support a claim about gas mileage, a writer would probably simply give the information from the vehicle specifications. Support can come from a writer's own knowledge and experience, or from published sources.

4. Counterarguing:

Counterarguing means responding to readers' objections and questions. In order to effectively counterargue, a writer must have a clear conception of his/her audience. What does the audience already know or believe about the subject? Effective counterarguing builds credibility in the eyes of the audience because it creates a sense that the writer is listening to the reader's questions and concerns.

Counterarguments can occur at the end of the essay, after the writer has made his/her point, or throughout the essay as the writer anticipates questions or objections. Writers can respond to readers' objections in two ways.

First, a writer can acknowledge an objection and immediately provide a counter-argument, explaining why the objection is not valid. Second, a writer can concede the point, and allow that, the subject does have a flaw. In either case, it is important to be respectful of opposing positions, while still remaining firm to the original claim.

5. Establishing credibility and authority:

A writer's credibility and authority lead to readers' confidence in your judgment and their willingness to recognize and acknowledge that credibility and authority. An author can gain credibility by showing that he/she knows a lot about the subject. In addition, the writer shows that his/her judgment is based on valid values and standards.

The writer's authority is in large part based upon the background of the author—education, etc. Is the author qualified to make a judgment? For some subjects, like a film review, simply watching the film might be enough. In other instances, like evaluating the quality of newly constructed cabinets or the engine of a new car, more experience might be necessary.

The Structure of an Evaluation Essay

Evaluation essays are structured as follows.

Subject

First, the essay will present the **subject**. What is being evaluated? Why? The essay begins with the writer giving any details needed about the subject.

Judgement

Next, the essay needs to provide a **judgment** about a subject. This is the thesis of the essay, and it states whether the subject is good or bad based on how it meets the stated criteria.

Criteria

The body of the essay will contain the **criteria** used to evaluate the subject. In an evaluation essay, the criteria must be appropriate for evaluating the subject under consideration. Appropriate criteria will help to keep the essay from seeming biased or unreasonable. If authors evaluated the quality of a movie based on the snacks sold at the snack bar, that would make them seem unreasonable, and their evaluation may be disregarded because of it.

Evidence

The **evidence** of an evaluation essay consists of the supporting details authors provide based on their judgment of the criteria.

For example, if the subject of an evaluation is a restaurant, a judgment could be “Kay’s Bistro provides an unrivaled experience in fine dining.” Some authors evaluate fine dining restaurants by identifying appropriate criteria in order to rate the establishment’s food quality, service, and atmosphere. The examples are evidence.

Another example of evaluation is literary analysis; judgments may be made about a character in the story based on the character’s actions, characteristics, and past

history within the story. The scenes in the story are evidence for why readers have a certain opinion of the character.

Job applications and interviews are more examples of evaluations. Based on certain criteria, management and hiring committees determine which applicants will be considered for an interview and which applicant will be hired.

Example Outline

Thesis: McAdoo's is a fantastic family restaurant, offering young and old alike a great atmosphere, wonderful customer service, and a fantastic menu.

1. Introduction
2. Info about McAdoo's (McAdoo's is a new restaurant in one of the oldest German settlements in Texas.
 1. Location—New Braunfels, TX
 2. History—old post office, restored
 3. Type of food
3. One of the best things about McAdoo's is the atmosphere. From the moment you step out of your car until you take your seat, McAdoo's exudes charm.
 1. Walking up to the restaurant—cool

exterior

2. Lobby—original post office doors, etc
3. Tables—great decor—memorabilia from NB history
4. Once you’ve been seated, you’ll notice the superb service offered at this establishment.
 1. prompt, courteous service
 2. refills, bread
 3. taking care of complaints—all you can eat lobster out—so price reduced
5. Of course, the food is scrumptious.
 1. bread
 2. seafood
 3. land lovers
6. Conclusion...If you’re ever in NB, I highly suggest stopping in at McAdoo’s and absorbing some of the great old world charm with some delicious food.

Possible “Get Started” Idea

1. Evaluate a restaurant. What do you expect in a good restaurant? What criteria determine whether a restaurant

is good?

2. List three criteria that you will use to evaluate a restaurant. Then dine there. Afterward, explain whether or not the restaurant meets each criterion, and include evidence (qualities from the restaurant) that backs your evaluation.
3. Give the restaurant a star rating. (5 Stars: Excellent, 4 Stars: Very Good, 3 Stars: Good, 2 Stars: Fair, 1 Star: Poor). Explain why the restaurant earned this star rating.

Time to Write

In this essay, you will evaluate potential obstacles to learning. Think about the health and wellness of a college student during an international pandemic. What do you need to be successful? Do you have access to resources? Are the GCC resources adequate to support the community and its students during the pandemic?

You will evaluate at least three campus resources. Your recommendation should clearly state which of the resources should be maintained, which should be improved, and which might be eliminated, if any.

Purpose: This assignment will demonstrate the understanding of how to do a thorough evaluation of an approved topic. Students will review the complex elements of the topic they have chosen. Evaluative essays call for the writer to assess a subject in light of specific

and explicit criteria and to make a judgment based on the assessment.

Task: This assignment evaluates a campus resource.

Write an Evaluation Essay. For this essay, you will choose a clear topic, give a reason for the evaluation, use description and categorization, create evaluation criteria, use concrete evidence and demonstrate the “why” of your position.

Possible Topics

Some topics to consider are listed here:

- Center for Learning
- Writing Center
- Math Solutions
- High Tech 1
- High Tech 2
- GCC Counseling and Career Services
- Library
- Fitness Center

Key Features of an Evaluation:

- Describe the particular phenomenon or work in a way that the rhetorical audience will understand and value.
- Present the criteria on which the phenomenon or work is to be evaluated clearly, persuasively, authoritatively, and often in an order indicating importance. Criteria can be categorized into three

groups: necessary (crucial but not enough to meet your overall assessment), sufficient (meeting all of your minimum standards, including the necessary ones), and accidental (unnecessary but an added bonus to the necessary and sufficient criteria).

- Include concrete evidence and relevant examples from your personal experience and research illustrate the ways (usually in the form of assertions) the phenomenon does or does not meet each evaluative criterion. These fair and balanced assertions support the thesis statement.
- At least three (3) sources on the Works Cited; these could be from your personal experience, college web pages, public health information, or sources related to quality college resources.
- Articulate a clear argument (usually in the form of a thesis statement) about whether or not the object or phenomenon meets the criteria on which it is being evaluated.
- Demonstrate an ethical approach to the process.

Key Grading Considerations

- Content
 1. A clear reason for the evaluation
 2. Use of description
 3. Categorizing
 4. Clear evaluation criteria
 5. Concrete evidence & Examples
 6. A clear argument presented (Thesis)

7. The establishment of ethos (balanced argument)
 8. Secure closure to the argument (conclusion)
 9. Three (3) sources minimum
- Key Features are included
 - Organization
 1. One inch margins
 2. Typed and double-spaced
 3. The heading is double-spaced on the left side of the page (includes name, my name, class, date)
 4. Upper right-hand corner has last name and page number (EX: Dewey 1)
 5. The font is Times New Roman, size 12
 6. The title is original and is centered one line under the heading
 7. Works Cited page lists outside sources in MLA format
 - Descriptive Language
 - Language Use, Mechanics & Organization
 1. Correct, appropriate, and varied integration of textual examples, including in-text citations
 2. Limited errors in spelling, grammar, word order, word usage, sentence structure, and punctuation
 3. Good use of academic English
 4. Demonstrates cohesion and flow
 - Fully in MLA Format
 1. One inch margins

2. Typed and double-spaced
3. The heading is double-spaced on the left side of the page (includes name, my name, class, date)
4. Upper right-hand corner has last name and page number (EX: Dewey 1)
5. The font is Times New Roman, size 12
6. The title is original and is centered one line under the heading
7. Works Cited page has hanging indents and is in alphabetical order by author's last name

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Dedication.

20

Argument Essay



When we talk about arguments, we need to move beyond the idea that an argument is a fight or disagreement. Instead, think of argumentation as a process of taking a stand, presenting reasons and evidence, and using logic to convince an audience.

“Don’t Raise Your Voice, Improve Your
Argument.”

— Desmond Tutu

Why Argue?

We don’t always argue to win. Yes, you read that correctly. Argumentation isn’t always about being “right.” We argue

to express opinions and explore new ideas. When writing an argument, your goal is to convince an audience that your opinions and ideas are worth consideration and discussion.

What is an Academic Argument?

Billboards, television advertisements, documentaries, political campaign messages, and even bumper stickers are often arguments – these are messages trying to convince an audience to do something. But an academic argument is different. An academic argument requires a clear structure and use of outside evidence.

Key features of an academic argument:

- **Clear Structure:** Includes a claim, reasons/evidence, counterargument, and conclusion.
- **Claim:** Your arguable point (most often presented as your thesis statement).
- **Reasons & Evidence:** Strong reasons and materials that support your claim.
- **Consideration of other Positions:** Acknowledge and refute possible counterarguments.
- **Persuasive Appeals:** Use of appeals to emotion, character, and logic.

Organizing an Argument

If you are asked to write an argument in college, there is a basic argument structure, much like the essay structure covered in the Essay chapter. Use this outline to help create an organized argument:

1. Introduction: Begin with an attention-getting introduction. Establish the need to explore this topic.
 1. Thesis Statement: What's your claim?
2. Brief background on issue (optional).
3. Reasons & Evidence:
 1. First reason for your position (with supporting evidence)
 2. Second reason for your position (with supporting evidence)
 3. Additional reasons (optional)
4. Counterargument: What's the other side of the issue? Explain why your view is better than others.
5. Conclusion: Summarize the argument. Make clear what you want the audience to think or do.

How to Be Persuasive?

Building an argument isn't easy, and building a convincing argument is even more difficult. You may have a clear claim, solid reasons and evidence, and even refute the main counterargument, but your audience may not be convinced. Maybe they don't care about the topic. Maybe they don't find you credible. Or, maybe they find your evidence weak.

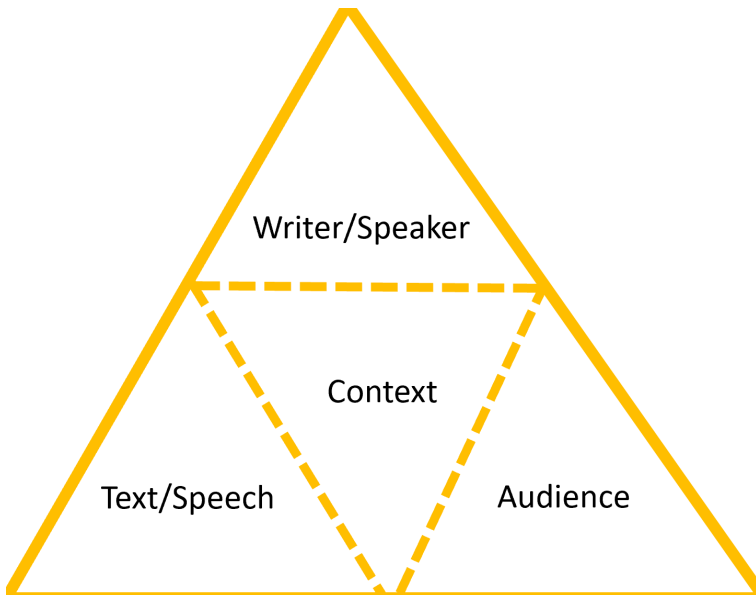
What can you do to convince them? How can you
persuade your audience?

Greek philosopher Aristotle (Remember him from the Rhetorical Situation chapter?) asked similar questions and he concluded that arguments needed to be persuasive. In

The Art of Rhetoric, he identified three means of persuasion:

- Logos: Use of evidence and reason to support the claim.
- Pathos: Appeals to the audience's emotions and values.
- Ethos: An author leverages trustworthiness and character.

To build a convincing and perhaps influential argument, you need to not only have a structurally sound argument (claim, reasons, evidence, counterargument, conclusion), but you also need to leverage appeals to persuade your audience.



Arguments are complex and difficult to master. But understanding how to build and critically read arguments is essential in understanding and shaping our lives.

Strengthening Your Argument

Phrasing

It is important to clearly state and support your position. However, it is just as important to present all of the information that you've gathered in an objective manner. Using language that is demeaning or non-objective will undermine the strength of your argument. This destroys your credibility and will reduce your audience on the spot. For example, a student writing an argument about why a particular football team has a good chance of "going all the way" is making a strategic error by stating that "anyone who doesn't think that the Minnesota Vikings deserve to win the Super Bowl is a total idiot." Not only has the writer risked alienating any number of her readers, she has also made her argument seem shallow and poorly researched. In addition, she has committed a third mistake: making a sweeping generalization that cannot be supported.

Objective Language

You should avoid using "I" and "My" (subjective) statements in your argument. You should only use "I" or "My" if you are an expert in your field (on a given topic). Instead choose more objective language to get your point across.

Consider the following:

I believe that the United States Government is failing to meet the needs of today's average college student through the under-funding of need-based grants, increasingly restrictive financial aid eligibility requirements, and a lack of flexible student loan options. "Great," your reader thinks, "Everyone's entitled to their opinion."

Now let's look at this sentence again, but without the "I" at the beginning. Does the same sentence become a strong statement of fact without your "I" tacked to the front?

The United States Government is failing to meet the needs of today's average college student through the underfunding of need-based grants, increasingly restrictive financial aid eligibility requirements, and a lack of flexible student loan options.

"Wow," your reader thinks, "that really sounds like a problem."

A small change like the removal of your "I"s and "my"s can make all the difference in how a reader perceives your argument – as such, it's always good to proofread your rough draft and look for places where you could use objective rather than subjective language.

A Note About Audience

Many topics that are written about in college are very controversial. When approaching a topic it is critical that you think about all of the implications that your argument

makes. If, for example, you are writing a paper on abortion, you need to think about your audience. There will certainly be people in each of your classes that have some sort of relationship to this topic that may be different than yours. While you shouldn't let others' feelings sway your argument, you should approach each topic with a neutral mind and stay away from personal attacks. Keep your mind open to the implications of the opposition and formulate a logical stance considering the binaries equally. People may be offended by something you say, but if you have taken the time to think about the ideas that go into your paper, you should have no problem defending it.

Questions to Consider

- How would your relatives react to the argument? Would they understand the terminology you are using? Does that matter?
- How would your friends react to the argument? Would they understand the terminology you are using? Does that matter?
- How would you explain your argument or research to a teenager vs someone who is in their 70s? Is there a difference?
- If you are aware that your classmates are more liberal or more conservative in their political standing, does that determine how you will argue your topic? Or does that even matter?
- If you are aware that your instructor is more liberal or conservative than you are, does that determine how you will argue your topic? Or does that even matter?
- If you were to people-watch at a mall or other space where many people gather, who in the

crowd would be your ideal audience and why?
Who is not your ideal audience member? Why?

Counterargument

Speaking of the audience, there are three main strategies for addressing counterargument:

- **Acknowledgment:** This acknowledges the importance of a particular alternative perspective but argues that it is irrelevant to the writer's thesis/topic. When using this strategy, the writer agrees that the alternative perspective is important, but shows how it is outside of their focus.
- **Accommodation:** This acknowledges the validity of a potential objection to the writer's thesis and how on the surface the objection and thesis might seem contradictory. When using this strategy, the writer goes on to argue that, however, the ideal expressed in the objection is actually consistent with the writer's own goals if one digs deeper into the issue.
- **Refutation:** This acknowledges that a contrary perspective is reasonable and

understandable. It does not attack differing points of view. When using this strategy, the writer responds with strong, research-based evidence showing how that other perspective is incorrect or unfounded.

Examples

Let's see how these three strategies could work in practice by considering the thesis statement "Utah public schools need to invest more money in arts education."

- **Acknowledgment:** One possible objection to the thesis could be: "Athletics is also an important part of students' educational experience." The writer could acknowledge that athletics are indeed important, but no more important than the arts. A responsible school budget should be able to include both.
- **Accommodation:** Another possible objection to this thesis could be: "Students need a strong foundation in STEM subjects in order to get into college and get a good career." The writer could acknowledge that STEM education is indeed crucial to students' education. They could go on to argue, however, that arts education helps students be stronger in STEM classes through teaching creative problem-solving. So, if someone values STEM education, they need to value the arts as well.
- **Refutation:** The most common objection to education budget proposals is that there is simply not enough money. Given limited resources, schools have to prioritize where the money is spent. In terms of research required, refutation takes the most work of these three methods. To argue that schools do have enough resources to support arts education, the writer would need to look at the current budget allocations. They

could Google “Salt Lake City school district budget” to find a current budget report. In this report, they would find that the total budget for administrative roles in the 2014–15 school year totaled \$10,443,596 (Roberts and Kearsley). Then they could argue that through administrative reforms, a small portion of this money could be freed up to make a big difference in funding arts education.

COUNTERING OPPOSING ARGUMENTS

Almost anything you can argue or claim in a paper can be refuted. Opposing points of view and arguments exist in every debate, and it's important to anticipate possible objections to your arguments. In order to do that, ask yourself the following questions:

- Could someone draw a different conclusion from the facts or examples you present?
- Could a reader question any of your assumptions or claims?
- Could a reader offer a different explanation of an issue?
- Is there any evidence out there that could weaken your position?

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, the next set of questions can help you respond to these potential objections:

- Is it possible to concede the point of the opposition, but then challenge that point's importance/usefulness?
- Can you offer an explanation of why a reader should question a piece of evidence or consider a different point of view?
- Can you explain how your position responds to any contradicting evidence?
- Can you put forward a different interpretation of the evidence?

You can use signal phrases in your paper to alert readers that you're about to present an objection. 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...

Student Example: Mini-Argument

Mini Example

Sally Student

ENG 101

Mrs. Christine Jones

29 September 2019

Can Graffiti Ever Be Considered Art?

Graffiti is not simply acts of vandalism, but a true artistic form because of personal expression, aesthetic qualities, and movements of style.

Graffiti, like traditional artistic forms such as sculpture, is art because it allows artists to express ideas through an outside medium.

Graffiti must be considered an art form based on judgement of aesthetic qualities. Art professor George C. Stowers argues that “larger pieces require planning and imagination and contain artistic elements like color and composition” (“Graffiti”).

Like all artistic forms, Graffiti has evolved, experiencing significant movements or periods.

Often, graffiti is seen as only criminal vandalism, but this is not always the case.

The artistic merits of graffiti—expression, aesthetics, and movements—cannot be denied; Graffiti is art.

Works Cited

“Graffiti: Art through Vandalism.” Graffiti: Art through Vandalism. N.p., n.d. Web. 29 Sept. 2015.

Time to Write

Purpose: This assignment will demonstrate the understanding of how to write an argument

Task: This assignment establishes a position on a significant problem (or issue) and directs the argument to a specific audience.

Compose a position argument on a significant problem (or issue) and direct your argument to a specific audience. Whether you are taking a stand on a personal experience, a newsworthy situation, or a lifestyle, educational, or religious belief, provide a vivid description of the issue so that your audience can appreciate the significance of the problem and understand your position (or claim). Your description should reveal the importance of the issue to you as well as its effect on your audience. Your clear position on the issue should appear in your thesis statement. Support your thesis with reasons that are themselves supported by specific details, examples, and anecdotes. As you draft your position argument, be sure to acknowledge and address any concerns or beliefs that oppose your own.

A position argument is not just your opinion. It is a carefully constructed point of view based on reasons and evidence. Bring your supporting reasons to life with research through detailed, credible evidence and examples, whether personal anecdotes, statistics, or other details.

Because you want your audience to consider seriously your position, conduct research to see what evidence your opposition uses. Acknowledging the values and beliefs of your audience helps you establish common ground. In doing so, you make clear that you respect and understand

your audience—and hope they will try to understand you as you work to persuade them to change their attitudes or actions.

You will utilize elements of logos and ethos. As you are considering the elements of your rhetorical situation, you will also want to consider whether your audience is supportive, wavering, or hostile. For this essay, we will be pre-writing, identifying a thesis, using library databases to find evidence, outlining, writing a rough draft, peer-reviewing, and completing a final draft of 750-1000 words in length.

Key Features of an argument:

- Clearly describe the problem or issue
- Target the audience
- Include background on why the issue matters
- Acknowledge counterarguments
- Illustrate the ability to use a third-person point of view effectively in an argument.
- Present a thesis statement at the end of the introductory paragraph.
- Support the thesis using RESEARCH MATERIAL and specific details.
- Illustrate the ability to argue a position or a solution argument.
- Support the thesis using research material and specific details.
- Plus MLA formatted Works Cited page
- Must utilize 3-4 sources
- Must include in-text citations that identify the source for the evidence
- In-text citations must match the references in the works cited page

Key Grading Considerations

- Introduction
 1. Hook
 2. Bridge
 3. Thesis
 4. Essay Map
- Conclusion
 1. Restates thesis
 2. Summarizes main ideas
- Organization
 1. Transitions
 2. Thesis Statement
 3. Topic Sentences
 4. Clear introduction, argument, counterargument, and conclusion
 5. An appropriate sequence of paragraphs
- Discussion & Evidence
 1. Relevant, current sources
 2. Parenthetical (in-text) citations
 3. Clear use of author, purpose, audience, tone, voice, ethos
 4. No logical fallacies
- Language Use, Mechanics & Organization
 1. Correct, appropriate, and varied integration of textual examples, including in-text citations
 2. Limited errors in spelling, grammar,

word order, word usage, sentence structure, and punctuation

3. Good use of academic English
 4. Demonstrates cohesion and flow
 5. Uses the rules of dialogue
- Fully in MLA Format
 1. Paper Format
 1. Header
 2. Heading
 3. Date format
 2. Works Cited Page
 1. Five (5) sources or more
 2. alphabetical order
 3. hanging indent

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21

Literary Analysis



Literature

When is the last time you read a book for fun? If you were to classify that book, would you call it fiction or literature? This is an interesting separation, with many possible reasons for it. One is that “fiction” and “literature” are regarded as quite different things. “Fiction,” for example, is what people read for enjoyment. “Literature” is what they read for school. Or “fiction” is what living people write and is about the present. “Literature” was written by people (often white males) who have since died and is about times and places that have nothing to do with us. Or

“fiction” offers everyday pleasures, but “literature” is to be honored and respected, even though it is boring. Of course, when we put anything on a pedestal, we remove it from everyday life, so the corollary is that literature is to be honored and respected, but it is not to be read, certainly not by any normal person with normal interests.

Sadly, it is the guardians of literature, that is, of the classics, who have done so much to take the life out of literature, to put it on a pedestal and thereby to make it an irrelevant aspect of life. People study literature because they love literature. But what happens too often, especially in colleges, is that teachers forget what it was that first interested them in the study of literature. They forget the joy that they first felt (and perhaps still feel) as they read a new novel or a poem or as they reread a work and saw something new in it. Instead, they erect formidable walls around these literary works, giving the impression that the only access to a work is through deep learning and years of study. Such study is clearly important for scholars, but this kind of scholarship is not the only way, or even necessarily the best way, for most people to approach literature. Instead, it makes the literature seem inaccessible. It makes the literature seem like the province of scholars. “Oh, you have to be smart to read that,” as though Shakespeare or Dickens or Woolf wrote only for English teachers, not for general readers.

What is Literature?

In short, literature evokes imaginative worlds through the

conscious arrangement of words that tell a story. These stories are told through different genres, or types of literature, like novels, short stories, poetry, drama, and the essay. Each genre is associated with certain conventions. In this text, we will study poetry, short fiction, drama, and even personal narratives.

Some Misconceptions about Literature

Of course, there are a number of misconceptions about literature that have to be gotten out of the way before anyone can enjoy it. One misconception is that literature is full of **hidden meanings**. There are certainly occasional works that contain hidden meanings. Most literary works, however, are not at all like that. Perhaps an analogy will illustrate this point. When I take my car to my mechanic because something is not working properly, he opens the hood and we both stand there looking at the engine. But after we have looked for a few minutes, he is likely to have seen what the problem is, while I could look for hours and never see it. We are looking at the same thing. The problem is not hidden, nor is it in some secret code. It is right there in the open, accessible to anyone who knows how to “read” it, which my mechanic does and I do not. He has been taught how to “read” automobile engines and he has practiced “reading” them. He is a good “close reader,” which is why I continue to take my car to him. The same thing is true for readers of literature. Generally, authors want to communicate with their readers, so they are not likely to hide or disguise what they are saying, but reading literature also requires some training and some practice. Good writers use language very carefully, and readers must learn how to be sensitive to that language,

just as the mechanic must learn to be sensitive to the appearances and sounds of the engine. Everything that the writer wants to say, and much that the writer may not be aware of, is there in the words. We simply have to learn how to read them.

Another popular misconception is that a literary work has a **single “meaning”** (and that only English teachers know how to find that meaning). There is an easy way to dispel this misconception. Just go to a college library and find the section that holds books on Shakespeare. Choose one play, *Hamlet*, for example, and see how many books there are about it, all by scholars who are educated, perceptive readers. Can it be the case that one of these books is correct and all the others are mistaken? And if the correct one has already been written, why would anyone need to write another book about the play? The answer is that there is no single correct way to read a good piece of literature.

Again, let me use an analogy to illustrate this point. Suppose that everyone at a meeting was asked to describe a person who was standing in the middle of the room. Imagine how many different descriptions there would be, depending on where the viewer sat in relation to the person. Furthermore, an optometrist in the crowd might focus on the person's glasses; a hairstylist might focus on the person's haircut; someone who sells clothing might focus on the style of dress; a podiatrist might focus on the person's feet. Would any of these descriptions be incorrect? Not necessarily, but they would be determined by the viewers' perspectives. They might also be determined by such factors as the viewers' ages, genders, or ability to move around the person being viewed, or by their previous acquaintance with the subject. So whose

descriptions would be correct? Conceivably all of them, and if we put all of these correct descriptions together, we would be closer to having a full description of the person. This is most emphatically not to say, however, that all descriptions are correct simply because each person is entitled to his or her opinion. If the podiatrist is of the opinion that the person is five feet, nine inches tall, the podiatrist could be mistaken. And even if the podiatrist actually measures the person, the measurement could be mistaken. Everyone who describes this person, therefore, must offer not only an opinion but also a basis for that opinion. "My feeling is that this person is a teacher" is not enough. "My feeling is that this person is a teacher because the person's clothing is covered with chalk dust and because the person is carrying a stack of papers that look like they need grading" is far better, though even that statement might be mistaken. So it is with literature. As we read, as we try to understand and interpret, we must deal with the text that is in front of us; but we must also recognize both that language is slippery and that each of us individually deals with it from a different set of perspectives. Not all of these perspectives are necessarily legitimate, and we are always liable to be misreading or misinterpreting what we see. Furthermore, it is possible that contradictory readings of a single work will both be legitimate, because literary works can be as complex and multi-faceted as human beings. It is vital, therefore, that in reading literature we abandon both the idea that any individual's reading of a work is the "correct" one and the idea that there is one simple way to read any work. Our interpretations may, and probably should change according to the way we approach the work. If we read *War and Peace* as teenagers, then in middle age, and then

in old age, we might be said to have read three different books. Thus, multiple interpretations, even contradictory interpretations, can work together to give us a better understanding of a work.

Why Reading Literature is Important

Reading literature can teach us new ways to read, think, imagine, feel, and make sense of our own experiences. Literature forces readers to confront the complexities of the world, to confront what it means to be a human being in this difficult and uncertain world, to confront other people who may be unlike them, and ultimately to confront themselves. Writers are close observers of the world who are capable of communicating their visions, and the more perspectives we have to draw on, the better able we should be to make sense of our lives. In these terms, it makes no difference whether we are reading a Homeric poem, a twelfth-century Japanese novel like *The Tale of Genji*, or a novel by Dickens. The more different perspectives we get, the better. And it must be emphasized that we read such works not only to be well-rounded (whatever that means) or to be “educated” or for antiquarian interest. We read them because they have something to do with us, with our lives. Whatever culture produced them, whatever the gender or race or religion of their authors, they relate to us as human beings; and all of us can use as many insights into being human as we can get. Reading is itself a kind of experience, and while we may not have the time or the opportunity or it may be physically impossible for us to experience certain things in the world, we can experience them through sensitive reading. So literature allows us to broaden our

experiences. Reading also forces us to focus our thoughts. The world around us is so full of stimuli that we are easily distracted. Unless we are involved in a crisis that demands our full attention, we flit from subject to subject. But when we read a book, even a book that has a large number of characters and covers many years, the story and the writing help us to focus, to think about what they show us in a concentrated manner. When I hold a book, I often feel that I have in my hand another world that I can enter and that will help me to understand the everyday world that I inhabit. Though it may sound funny, some of my best friends live in books, and no matter how frequently I visit them, each time I learn more about them and about myself. Literature invites us to meet interesting characters and to visit interesting places, to use our imagination and to think about things that might otherwise escape our notice, to see the world from perspectives that we would otherwise not have. Watch this video for a lively overview of how and why we read literature. (If you are interested in reading the books suggested by Crash Course, feel free. We won't have time to in English 101 but Mr. John Green is an interesting and fun teacher for a little extra.)

How to Read Literature

1. Read with a pen in hand! Jot down questions, highlight things you find significant, mark confusing passages, look up unfamiliar words/references, and record first impressions. 2. Think critically to form a response.

- The more you know about a story, the more pleasure your reading will provide as you uncover the hidden elements that create the theme of the piece.

- Address your own biases and compare your own experiences with those expressed in the piece.
- Test your positions and thoughts about the piece with what others think by doing research.

While you will have your own individual connection to a piece based on your life experiences, interpreting literature is not a willy nilly process. Each piece has an author who had a purpose in writing the piece—you want to uncover that purpose. As the speaker in the video you watched about how to read literature notes, you, as a reader, also have a role to play. Sometimes you may see something in the text that speaks to you—whether or not the author intended that piece to be there, it still matters to you. However, when writing about literature, it's important that our observations can be supported by the text itself. Make sure you aren't reading into the text something that isn't there. Value the author for who he/she is and appreciate his/her experiences while attempting to create a connection with yourself and your experiences.

Analyzing

To analyze means to break something down into its parts and examine them. Analyzing is a vital skill for successful readers. Analyzing a text involves breaking down its ideas and structure to understand it better, think critically about it, and draw conclusions. In order to most efficiently analyze a fictional text, you can make use of a story map.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:

<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=58#oembed-1>



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

<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=58#h5p-43>

Literary Elements

When you read a literary piece of work, one of the best ways to begin an analysis is to review the literary elements that are contained within that story. Several of these elements were mentioned in the previous section on writing a story map. Let's look a little deeper.

A common approach to analyzing short fiction is to focus on five basic elements: **plot**, **character**, **setting**, **conflict**, and **theme**. The **plot** of a work of fiction is the series of events and character actions that relate to the central conflict. A **character** is a person, or perhaps an animal, who participates in the action of the story. The **setting** of a piece of fiction is the time and place in which the events happen, including the landscape, scenery, buildings, seasons, or weather. The **conflict** is a struggle between two people or things in a short story. The main character is usually on one side of the central conflict. The **theme** is the central idea or issue conveyed by the story. These five basic elements combine to form what might be called the overall **narrative** of story. In the next section, we will discuss the narrative arc of fiction in more detail. Below are the formal elements of fiction and questions that will help you to read texts actively.

Questions for Active Reading:

PLOT

- How does the text present the passing of time?
- Does it present time in a chronological way?
- Or does it present the event in a non-chronological way?
- What verb tenses are used? (i.e. past, present, future)

CHARACTER

- How are the characters described?
- Do the characters talk in unique or peculiar ways?
- Are the names of the characters important or meaningful?
- What kind of conflicts emerge between the characters?

SETTING

- When and where does the story seem to take place?
- Is there anything important or meaningful in regards to the time of day or time of year the story seems to take place?
- Is there any significance to the atmospheric, environmental, or weather events that take place?

CONFLICT

- What problem or issue serves as the story's focus?

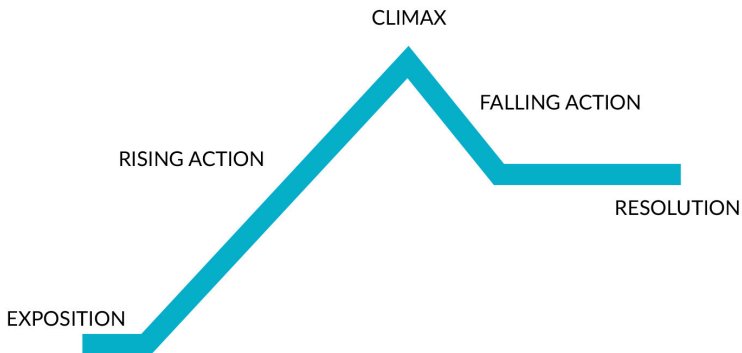
- Is the conflict an explicit one between the story's characters?
- Or is there a larger question or concern that is implied through the story's narration?

THEME

- What is the relationship between the title of the story and the text?
- What main issue or idea does the story address?⁽¹⁾

Narrative Arc

The narrative arc — or dramatic structure — of a story may be divided into several phases of development. One traditional method of the analysis of fiction involves identifying five major stages of the development of the plot. The five major stages are known as the **exposition** (or introduction), **the rising action** (sometimes referred to as complicating action), **the climax** (or turning point), **the falling action**, and **the denouement** (or resolution).



The **exposition** of a story introduces characters' backstory and key information about the setting. With this foundation laid, the dramatic tension then builds, thus creating the **rising action** of the story through a series of related events that complicate and exacerbate the major conflicts of the story. The turning point of the story occurs at the **climax** that typically changes the main character's fate or reveals how the conflict will move toward resolution, either favorably or perhaps tragically. The **falling action** works to unravel the tension at the core of the major conflict or conflicts in the story and between the characters, although it may include one last twist that impacts the resolution of events. **Denouement** is derived from the Old French word *desnouer* ("to untie"); the term suggests that the knot of conflict generating the tension in the story at last is loosened. Of course, not every aspect of the conflict may be resolved or may be resolved to the satisfaction of the reader. Indeed, in some stories, the author may intend that the reader should be left to weigh the validity or even the morality of further outcomes. While these five stages of dramatic structure are very helpful in analyzing fiction, they can be applied too strictly making a story seem like one linear series of events in straight chronological order. Some of the most engaging and well-crafted works of fiction break or interrupt the linear structure of events, perhaps through the manipulation of time (as in the use of **flashback** or **flash forward**) or through the inclusion of an extended **interior monologue** (a digression into the interior thoughts, memories, and/or feelings of a particular character). Therefore, readers should be careful not to simplify the plot of a story into an ordered, numerical list of events. The terms **protagonist** (main

character, or hero/heroine) and **antagonist** (anti-hero/ine) can be helpful in highlighting the roles of the major characters in a story. The story also may unfold through a particular **point-of-view**, or even through alternating points-of-view. The two most utilized narrative perspectives to consider are **first-person point-of-view** where the protagonist narrates the story from the voice of “I,” and **third-person point-of-view**, or **omniscient point-of-view**, where the narrative refers to each character as “he,” “she,” or “it” thus offering a more distanced perspective on events. Readers may be persuaded, or not, of a narrative’s **credibility** through point-of-view(s) and/or the presentation of the **persona** of the narrator (if there is one). A persona is the role that one assumes or displays in public; in literature, it is the presented face or speaking voice of a character. Credibility is the quality of being believed, convincing, or trustworthy. When the credibility of a text is called into question, perhaps as a result of conflicting accounts of events, or detected bias in a point-of-view, the text is said to have an **unreliable narrator**. Sometimes authors choose to intentionally create an unreliable narrator either to raise suspense, obscure their own position on a subject, or as a means of critiquing a particular cultural or social perspective. Additionally, to analyze a short story more closely, as in poetry, students may also pay attention to the use of **figurative language**. Figurative language, such as the use of **imagery** and **symbol** can be especially significant in fiction. What brings value to one’s analysis is the critical thought that prioritizes which of these many formal elements is most significant to communicating the meaning of the story and connects how these formal

elements work together to form the unique whole of a given fictional work.

Common Types of Figurative Language:

Apostrophe — A direct address to a person or object not literally listening; ex: “Oh, Great Mother Nature how you test our spirit...”
Allusion — Reference to a well-known object, character, or event, sometimes from another literary work.
Hyperbole — Exaggeration used for emphasis.
Imagery — Words and phrases that appeal to the senses, particularly sight.
Metaphor — A direct comparison of two seemingly dissimilar items (does not use the words *like* or *as*).
Onomatopoeia — A word that imitates the sound of the object the word represents.
Personification — The attribution of human characteristics to nonhuman places or things.
Simile — A comparison of two seemingly dissimilar items using *like* or *as*.
 While it is important to ground our analysis of literature in a **close reading** based on a detailed understanding of formal elements and structure, we should not become so carried away that we neglect the roles history and cultural circumstances can play in shaping a piece. Likewise, as Edward Hirsch suggests, it is also important to recognize the contribution that you make as a reader to the construction of a text’s meaning. Consider the poem “[*Dulce et Decorum est*](#)” by Wilfred Owen. The content of the text is moving enough, yet the added emotional weight of understanding the poem’s **context** — the mass casualties in Europe during World War I — lends a potent specificity to the imagery in Owen’s poem. The poem’s effect is made all the more palpable by the knowledge that he was killed in action

one week before the Armistice that ended the fighting in Western Europe. With this historical context in mind, it might be possible then to consider what your own experience or views on war might be. The context of a text can play a major role in what gives it a lasting literary value. However, when a powerful historical context meets masterful formal execution, it can be tempting to assume everything in the piece is a direct line to the author's heart and mind. But when analyzing a poem or story, the **speaker**, the narrator, the "I" voice, should not be conflated with the author of the poem. In the written analysis, we refer to "the author" when speaking of his or her craftsmanship and authorial choices, as in "the author repeats the symbol of the bird at the beginning and the end of the poem." We use "the speaker" when discussing the point-of-view of the narrator of the story, or the "I" speaking in the poem, as in "the speaker longs to be free" or "the speaker bemoans the impending loss of her child." In our analysis we can suggest that "the poet" is closely aligned with "the speaker," but we should not assume they are one and the same.

Preparing for Research — Knowing Your Thesis

If we truly are engaged in writing and research as a process, then finding the **thesis** or purpose statement that will ground and drive your analysis essay will not be instant. Drafting different versions of what will be your thesis is advisable. Consider the preparation that would occur for other things you would place before an audience, like a business proposal or an invitation to a party; some refinement would be required.

For example, if your goal was to write an analysis of

Mark Twain's novel *Huckleberry Finn*, it is likely that several ideas for a thesis statement would come to mind.

The friendship between Huck and Jim reveals Twain's commentary on the moral dilemma of slavery.

This is a fair enough focus. It is analytical; it does more than summarize. It places a proposition before the reader and upon consideration of that proposition would lead to a richer understanding of the novel. However, slight alterations in this thesis statement may offer improvements or interesting variations. For instance, an emphasis on the form could add to the analysis of the content of the novel.

The friendship of Huck and Jim reveals Twain's commentary on the moral dilemma of slavery as revealed through the use of dialogue and interior monologue.

A further refinement might manage to incorporate form, content, AND context. Notice that a fully developed thesis may well require more than one long, run-on sentence.

Mark Twain encourages the reading audience of his day to question the moral dilemma of slavery through his portrayal of the friendship between Huck and Jim. By revealing differing social perspectives and moral positions through the dialogue between the characters and the interior monologues of Huck, Twain allows his readers to have multiple opinions while nudging their sympathies toward a critique of slavery.

The advantage of establishing your thesis before embarking upon outside research is that you are more likely to be focused on the kinds of sources that will be most useful and less likely to be overwhelmed or sidetracked by tangential information. You may want to look up general information, such as confirming historical dates or clarifying the use of certain vocabulary, but entering the process of looking for quality sources without a clear sense of the thesis you intend to place at the center of your analysis may muddle your thinking. Certainly, as you continue your research and draft and revise your essay, your thesis, and/or your supporting ideas may shift somewhat. That is a natural part of the writing process, but that kind of adjustment in thinking deepens or refines your analysis.

Time to Write

Purpose: This assignment will demonstrate the understanding of how to respond to a piece of literature you have read by evaluating it and making a claim or observation about the way it relates to a larger issue or idea.

Task: This assignment frames a single short story in which the student analyzes the significance of the elements in the text.

Write a Literary Analysis. Concentrating on the literary elements of the text, write a short essay in which you analyze the significance of specific literary elements with evidence from the text itself and from outside sources.

Key Features of a Literary Analysis:

- Introduce an interpretation of the literary work
- Present specific questions or ideas that need a response
- Present a clear argument in your thesis
- Use quotes from the literary text
- Explain how the quotes support your thesis
- If it is a long text, you may need to focus on a particular section such as a chapter

Key Grading Considerations

- Content
 1. A clear focus on literary elements
 2. Supporting points are credible, clear, and explained
 3. 3 solid, supporting points minimum
 4. 3 sources, used in an appropriate manner
 5. All information is clear, appropriate, and correct.
- Key Features of Analysis are included
- Organization
 1. Transitions
 2. Argumentative Thesis Statement
 3. Topic Sentences
 4. Clear introduction, body, and conclusion
- Comprehension of the literary text
- Language Use, Mechanics & Organization
 1. Correct, appropriate, and varied

- integration of textual examples,
including in-text citations
2. Limited errors in spelling, grammar,
word order, word usage, sentence
structure, and punctuation
 3. Good use of academic English
 4. Demonstrates cohesion and flow
- Fully in MLA Format
 1. Paper Format
 2. In-text Citations
 3. Citation Format
-

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22

Writing a Letter



Business Letters

Letters are brief messages sent to recipients that are usually outside the organization. They are often printed on letterhead and usually take up one or two pages.

While email may be used more frequently today, the business letter remains a common form of written communication. It can serve to introduce you to a potential employer, announce a product or service, or even communicate emotions. We'll examine the basic outline of a letter and then focus on specific types.

Your organization may have its own letter format, but this chapter outlines common elements across business letters. There are many types of letters, and we'll look at two primary purposes—good news and bad news—in this chapter. We'll first discuss the elements of a block-style letter.

Letters may serve to introduce your skills and qualifications to prospective employers, deliver important or specific information, or serve as documentation of an event or decision. They may deliver information with a positive, negative, or neutral tone. Regardless of the type of letter you need to write, it can contain up to 16 elements in five areas. While you may not use all the elements in every case, they are listed in the following table.



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

<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=202#h5p-48>

A letter has five main areas:

1. The heading, which establishes the sender, including address and date
2. The introduction, which establishes the purpose
3. The body, which articulates the message
4. The conclusion, which restates the main point and may include a call-to-action
5. The signature line, which sometimes includes the contact information

TIP

When formatting a full-block business letter, keep in mind the following guidelines:

- Apply single spacing throughout
- Use 1" – 1 1/2" margins
- Left-justify all contents

A sample letter is shown below with guiding notations in bold. Rather than placing the return address at the top of your page, you could instead use company letterhead showing the logo and company address.

Example Letter (Guide)

Return Address (if not in letterhead logo):

123 Cockburn Road
Anytown, MB A1M 2P3

Date: September 14, 2015

Recipient Note (optional): CONFIDENTIAL

Inside Address:

Ms. Zoe Maeve
123 Arbuthnot Drive
Anytown, AB T1A 2B3

Salutation: Dear Ms. Maeve:

Subject Line (optional): The myth of the paperless office

Introduction: This letter is to inform you that the myth of the paperless office, where you will not be required to produce hard copy letters on company letterhead, is just that: a myth.

Body: While email has largely replaced letter writing for many applications, several reasons for producing a hard copy letter remain. The first is that many employers still produce letters as a normal part of business communication. Next, we must consider

that paper sales in business have increased across the last decade, showing no signs of the decrease we would associate with the transition to the paperless office. Finally, business letters may serve many functions, and your proficiency in their production will contribute to our personal and professional success.

Conclusion: Letter writing is a skill that will continue to be required in the business environment of today and tomorrow.

Close: Sincerely,

Murray Moman

Signature: Murray Moman

Reference Initials (optional): ARJ

Enclosure Notation (optional, if needed)

Copy Notation (optional): cc: Beth Lloyd

Mailing Notation (optional)

Remember that letters represent you and your company in your absence. In order to communicate effectively and project a positive image, you'll need to:

- be clear, concise, specific, and respectful
- ensure each word contributes to your purpose
- ensure each paragraph focuses on one idea only
- form a complete message
- keep your writing free of errors

Good News or Neutral Information in a Business Letter

Writing a letter that contains good or neutral news is fairly

straightforward. Your intention is to get the news across quickly and clearly while making sure the reader has a positive image of you and your company. You can do this by following these steps:

1. State the news simply and directly.
2. Give the reasons/details.
3. Close with a **goodwill statement**.*

Bad News in a Business Letter

Saying no is more challenging than saying yes! This is true for all kinds of communication, but in a professional context, this can be challenging because you may not know the recipient of your message personally or be able to predict how they will react. When writing a letter that contains bad news, for example, when you need to tell a customer that they will not be receiving a refund, your challenge is to send a negative message while maintaining a positive relationship between your company and the receiver. Bad news can make the receiver feel a number of emotions, from disappointment to irritation, anger, and confusion. You can minimize these negative effects by structuring your letter in a specific way.

When you write a letter that contains bad news, your goals are to

- make the news easy to understand,
- let the receiver know that there will be no change in status (and avoid further communication),
- leave the receiver with a positive impression of your company.

Direct and Indirect Approaches to Writing Business Letters

There are two different ways to deliver bad news in a letter: the direct approach and the indirect approach. You'll decide which approach to use based on the type of news you are delivering.

When using the direct approach, you'll follow these steps:

1. State the bad news simply and directly.
2. Give the reasons.
3. Give an alternative, if possible.
4. Close with a goodwill statement.*

* What is a goodwill statement? It is an assertive but professional statement that demonstrates care about the ongoing positive relationship.

The following letter uses the direct approach.

Example Letter (Direct Approach):

Dear Mr. Moore:

The reference you are looking for doesn't seem to have originated with our company. While looking through our record of corporate speeches on the effect of free trade on agriculture, we haven't come across anything similar to the remarks you mentioned. When I asked Mr. Lockhart, he had no recollection of anyone in the company having made that type of analogy.

We have conducted a quick Internet search and have found a number of sites that may well give you the information you are

seeking. The Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada website at www.agr.gc.ca is probably a good starting point for your search.

We hope you find this information helpful.

When using the indirect approach, you'll follow these steps:

1. Begin with a buffer statement.*
2. Discuss the circumstances leading to the bad news.
3. State the bad news as positively as possible.
4. Give a helpful suggestion or alternative.
5. Close with a goodwill statement.

* What is a buffer statement? It is a gentle but professional statement that sets the tone of your letter.

Choosing an Approach

You would typically use the direct approach in all business letters, except when

- you are delivering bad news and it is unexpected;
- you don't know the reader very well, and a negative emotional reaction is likely to occur.

In these situations, the indirect approach is a better choice.

In situations like these, the reasons you would give in the direct approach (in Step 2) could be viewed as excuses, so it is best not to present them. Instead, you should place the bad news in the middle portion of the letter, providing an explanation before it, and closing with positive or

neutral language, as in the indirect approach. It is important to avoid a canned, insincere, inappropriate, or self-serving closing in any letter, but particularly so when you are using the indirect approach.

There are three key things to do in a letter that follows the indirect approach:

1. Provide proof that persuades the reader to accept the bad news.
2. Give the bad news.
3. Give options for future success.

The following letter uses the indirect approach.

Example Letter (Indirect Approach):

Dear James:

Clerks in our office must be ready to serve customers by 9:00 a.m.

According to company policy, arriving at work on time is a mandatory element of your employment here.

This month you have been late to work four times. Only two late arrivals are permitted before management must intervene. Since you have exceeded those limits, it is necessary for me to give you a written warning and put you on probation.

If you are on time each day within the next 90 days, I will remove this from your employment record. You will then be able to work towards a promotion and salary increase. I would be pleased to discuss this with you at your convenience.

TIP

When using the indirect approach, you should follow these guidelines:

- **Don't** mislead the reader with an opening that is too positive.
- Do keep reasons as short as possible.
- Do make sure the reader is clear about the bad news.
- Do avoid negative words and phrasing.
- **Don't** end with a statement that is artificial.

When you are writing a letter that contains good news or neutral information, you should use the direct approach.

Check Your Understanding

Instructions: Please review the business letter below and then answer the multiple-choice questions that follow.



Aspen Country Lodge

November 14, 2015

Dorothy Allen

12345 Stream Ave.

St. Augustine, FL 34567

Dear ____ (#1):

As the holiday season approaches, we are reminded of the blessings that are bestowed on us throughout the year. At Aspen

Country Lodge, the pleasures we share year after year with our Legacy clients are among our most cherished blessings.

And so, as our staff looks forward to spending time with friends and family, we are also thinking of special friends like you and hoping you are enjoying good health and good cheer. We take pride in being your home away from home and reserve a special place in our hearts for the memories we've shared with you.

Thank you for making Aspen Country Lodge part of your annual traditions. Have a blessed Christmas and a peaceful, joyous, and prosperous New Year.

_____(#2),

Theodore P. Hyde, Owner/Manager

Aspen Country Lodge • 402 Aspen Way • Cold Bluff, CA 98765 •
(303) 346-7889



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<https://open.maricopa.edu/english101open/?p=202#h5p-49>

23

Compare and Contrast



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.

Figure 5.7 Apples, Green and Red

Apples, Green and Red	Similarly, to focus on comparison, choose two subjects that seem at first to be unrelated.
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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 13

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 14

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. Remember, the point of comparing and contrasting is to provide useful knowledge to the reader. Take the following thesis as an example that focuses on contrast.

Thesis statement: Organic vegetables may cost more than those that are conventionally grown, but 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

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

See the chart below, which diagrams the ways to organize the organic versus conventional vegetables thesis.

Figure 5.8 Organization Diagram

Organize by Subject

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 the chart below for examples.

Figure 5.9 Phrases of Comparison and Contrast

Phrases of Comparison and Contrast

Exercise 15

Create an outline for each of the items you chose in Exercises 13 and 14. 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 reinforces your thesis while drawing a conclusion based on what you have presented. This conclusion is the “and so” statement for your essay, giving you the place to offer a judgement based on the examination you have just offered.

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 16

Choose two people who are significant in your life and have a similar relationship with you (two friends, two siblings, etc). Make a list of similarities and differences between these people. Consult your list, then draw a conclusion based on the presence of these similarities and differences. Outline the similarities and differences, then write a statement that offers an overall conclusion.

Assignment 5

Choose one of the outlines you created in Exercise 15 or 16, 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.
 - Organize by the subjects themselves, one then the other.
 - 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.

External Links

“[Disability](https://tinyurl.com/y99te6e2)” (https://tinyurl.com/y99te6e2) by Nancy Mairs: In “Disability,” writer Nancy Mairs discusses the experience of being a disabled person in a world focused on the able-bodied. It seems to be titled “Hers” but it is the correct essay.

“[Friending, Ancient or Otherwise](https://tinyurl.com/y85u8ae8)” (https://tinyurl.com/y85u8ae8) by Alex Wright: In

“Friending, Ancient or Otherwise,” writer Alex Wright explores the evolution and purpose of friendship in the age of social media.

“[Sex, Lies and Conversation: Why Is It So Hard for Men and Women to Talk to Each Other?](https://tinyurl.com/y95dpehx)” (<https://tinyurl.com/y95dpehx>) by Deborah Tannen. In this essay, Tannen compares and contrasts conversation styles. You can view the essay [here](https://tinyurl.com/y9vnjqv8) (<https://tinyurl.com/y9vnjqv8>) also.

Example Comparison and Contrast Essay

“A South African Storm”

By Allison Howard – Peace Corps Volunteer: South Africa (2003-2005)

It’s a Saturday afternoon in January in South Africa. When I begin the 45-minute walk to the shops for groceries, I can hear thunder cracking in the distance up the mountain in Mageobaskloof. But at 4 p.m. the sky is still light and bright and I am sure—famous last words—I will be fine without an umbrella.

Just the basics: eggs, bread, Diet Coke in a bag slung into the crook of my elbow. Halfway from town, two black South African women—domestic workers in the homes of white Afrikaner families—stop me with wide smiles. They know me; I’m the only white person in town who walks everywhere, as they do. They chatter quickly in northern Sotho: “Missus, you must go fast. Pula e tla na! The rain, it comes!” They like me, and it feels very important to me that they do. “Yebo, yebo, mma,” I say—Yes, it’s true—and I hurry along in flip-flops, quickening my pace, feeling good about our brief but neighborly conversation. These are Venda women.

My black South African friends tell me it’s easy to tell a Venda from a Shangaan from a Xhosa from a Pedi. “These ones from Venda, they have wide across the nose and high in the cheekbones,” they say. But I don’t see it; I’m years away from being

able to distinguish the nuances of ethnicity. Today, I know these women are Vendas simply because of their clothing: bright stripes of green and yellow and black fabric tied at one shoulder and hanging quite like a sack around their bodies. They've already extended a kindness to me by speaking in northern Sotho. It's not their language but they know I don't speak a word of Afrikaans (though they don't understand why; Afrikaans is the language of white people). They know I struggle with Sotho and they're trying to help me learn. So they speak Sotho to me and they're delighted and amused by my fumbling responses. And I am, quite simply, delighted by their delight.

The Venda ladies are right: the rain, it comes. Lightly at first, and by habit I begin trotting to hurry my way home. Just a little rain at first and there are plenty of us out in it. I can see others up ahead on the street and others still just leaving the shops to get back before the real rain begins.

The people who are walking along this swath of tar road are black. Black people don't live in this neighborhood—or in my town at all, for the most part. They work and board here as domestic workers, nannies, gardeners. Their families live in black townships and rural villages—some just outside of my town; others far away, in places like Venda.

Today, we're walking together in the rain, and I'm quickening my pace because—after all, it's raining. That's what you do in the rain. And even though it's coming down noticeably harder, it's 80 degrees and I'm not cold, I'm just wet. My hair is stuck to my forehead and my T-shirt is soaked ... and I'm the only one running for cover. And I think: So what? It's just water and in the middle of the January summer, it's warm, refreshing water. Why run? Why do we run from the rain?

In my life back in the United States, I might run because I was carrying a leather handbag, or because I wore an outfit that

shouldn't get wet. I would run because rain dishevels and messes things up. Mostly though, we run because we just do; it's a habit. I've done it a hundred times: running to my car or the subway station with a newspaper sheltering my head. I have never not quickened my pace in the rain until today.

It took all of my 27 years and a move to Africa, where I don't have a leather handbag to shelter or a pretty outfit to protect. I'm wearing an old cotton skirt and a T-shirt, and I'm drenched, and I love it. I learn things here in the most ordinary circumstances. And I feel like a smarter, better woman today because I got groceries in the rain.

But on the long walk home, positively soaked and smiling like a fool, I notice a car pulling over and a man yelling in Afrikaans to get in, get in. I look in the direction I've come from and several meters behind me is a woman with a baby tied to her back and an elderly man carrying bags, leading a young boy by the hand. On the road ahead, a woman about my age carries a parcel wrapped in plastic, balanced precariously on her head. There are maybe 20 people walking with me in my reverie of rain and they are black. And the man in the car is white and he's gesturing frantically for me to get in. Why me? Why not the others? Because I'm white and it's about race. Everything is about race here.

This man in the car is trying to do something kind and neighborly. He wants to help me and his gesture is right, but his instincts are so wrong. How do you resent someone who is, for no benefit of his own, trying to help? But I do. I resent him and I resent the world he lives in that taught him such selective kindness. This whole event unravels in a few seconds' time. He's leaned over and opened the car door, urging me in ... and I get in. And we speed past my fellow walkers and he drops me at my doorstep before I have time to think of anything besides giving him directions.

It feels like a mistake because I'm ashamed to think what the Venda women would have felt if he'd ignored them and they had

watched me climb into that car. In some ways, the whole episode seems absurd. I'm not going to atone for 400 years of South African history by walking with black people in the rain. If I'd refused his ride, he wouldn't have thought anything besides the fact that I was certifiably crazy. That's the thing about being here: I'm not going to change anything. But I believe it matters in some infinitesimal way that people like the Venda women, and the dozens of people who may walk alongside me on any given day, know that I'm there. In black South African culture, it is polite to greet every person you pass. That's what they do, so I do it, too. On the occasional morning, someone might greet me as "sesi," sister. I have to believe that matters; I know it matters to me.

I was disappointed in myself for getting into the car because I acted according to the same habit that makes us think rain an inconvenience. Just as we run from the rain, I hopped into that car because I'm supposed to. Conventionally, it makes sense. But convention compels us to do so many things that don't make any sense at all. Convention misinforms our instincts. And in a larger sense, it is convention that propels Afrikaner culture anachronistically into the future. Ten years after the supposed end of apartheid, I'm living in a world of institutionalized racism. Convention becomes institution—and it's oppressive and it's unjust. I know that if I'm going to make it here for two more years, I need to walk in the rain. It's a small, wasted gesture, but it's an uncorrupted instinct that makes me feel human.

So much about living here feels like that fraction of a second when the Afrikaner man was appealing to my conventional sensibilities and the people on the street were appealing to my human instincts. It may feel unnatural to reject those sensibilities just as, at first, it feels unnatural to walk in the rain. But if I lose a hold on my instincts here, I'll fail myself and I'll fail to achieve those tiny things that matter so much. It's simple and it's small; and it's

everything. Gandhi said, “Be the change you wish to see in the world.” Indeed. Let it rain.

Example Comparison and Contrast Essay#2

Comparing and Contrasting London and Washington, DC

Both Washington, DC, and London are capital cities of English-speaking countries, and yet they offer vastly different experiences to their residents and visitors. Comparing and contrasting the two cities based on their history, their culture, and their residents show how different and similar the two are.

Both cities are rich in world and national history, though they developed on very different time lines. London, for example, has a history that dates back over two thousand years. It was part of the Roman Empire and known by the similar name, Londinium. It was not only one of the northernmost points of the Roman Empire but also the epicenter of the British Empire where it held significant global influence from the early sixteenth century on through the early twentieth century. Washington, DC, on the other hand, has only formally existed since the late eighteenth century. Though Native Americans inhabited the land several thousand years earlier, and settlers inhabited the land as early as the sixteenth century, the city did not become the capital of the United States until the 1790s. From that point onward to today, however, Washington, DC, has increasingly maintained significant global influence. Even though both cities have different histories, they have both held, and continue to hold, significant social influence in the economic and cultural global spheres.

Both Washington, DC, and London offer a wide array of museums that harbor many of the world’s most prized treasures.

While Washington, DC, has the National Gallery of Art and several other Smithsonian galleries, London's art scene and galleries have a definite edge in this category. From the Tate Modern to the British National Gallery, London's art ranks among the world's best. This difference and advantage has much to do with London and Britain's historical depth compared to that of the United States. London has a much richer past than Washington, DC, and consequently has a lot more material to pull from when arranging its collections. Both cities have thriving theater districts, but again, London wins this comparison, too, both in quantity and quality of theater choices. With regard to other cultural places like restaurants, pubs, and bars, both cities are very comparable. Both have a wide selection of expensive, elegant restaurants as well as a similar amount of global and national chains. While London may be better known for its pubs and taste in beer, DC offers a different bar-going experience. With clubs and pubs that tend to stay open later than their British counterparts, the DC night life tend to be less reserved overall.

Both cities also share and differ in cultural diversity and cost of living. Both cities share a very expensive cost of living—both in terms of housing and shopping. A downtown one-bedroom apartment in DC can easily cost \$1,800 per month, and a similar “flat” in London may double that amount. These high costs create socioeconomic disparity among the residents. Although both cities' residents are predominantly wealthy, both have a significantly large population of poor and homeless. Perhaps the most significant difference between the resident demographics is the racial makeup. Washington, DC, is a “minority majority” city, which means the majority of its citizens are races other than white. In 2009, according to the US Census, 55 percent of DC residents were classified as “Black or African American” and 35 percent of its residents were classified as “white.” London, by contrast, has very few minorities—in 2006, 70 percent of its population was “white,” while

only 10 percent was “black.” The racial demographic differences between the cities is drastic.

Even though Washington, DC, and London are major capital cities of English-speaking countries in the Western world, they have many differences along with their similarities. They have vastly different histories, art cultures, and racial demographics, but they remain similar in their cost of living and socioeconomic disparity.

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Cause and
Effect

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 received 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, a 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. Identify whether each statement is identifying a cause or an effect. Then, 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 because of the poor economy, it was really because of 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 write about the

effects.

2. Start with the effect and then write 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 writing 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 the table below for examples of such terms.

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 because of 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 Exercise 1. 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 by drawing a conclusion based on the information presented. You may find it helpful to think of the conclusion as an answer to the question: “so what” or as a continuation of the statement “and so. . .”. In some cases, may be appropriate to issue a call to action in your essay’s conclusion.

Exercise 4

Choose a local issue or topic that concerns you. Examine both the causes and effects of this issue or topic, and write a paragraph that outlines these using the components of a cause and effect essay.

Assignment 1

Choose one of the ideas you outlined in 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:
 - Start with the cause and then write about the effect.
 - Start with the effect and then write about the cause.
- Strong evidence is particularly important in the cause-and-effect essay because of the complexity of determining connections between phenomena.
- Phrases of causation are helpful in signaling links between various elements in the essay.

Cause and Effect Essay Example

Effects of Video Game Addiction

By Scott McLean

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.

External Links

“[Women in Science](https://tinyurl.com/y8pggr7g)” (<https://tinyurl.com/y8pggr7g>) by K.C. Cole. The link to the essay is correct. It seems to be titled “Hers” but it is the correct essay.

“[Cultural Baggage](https://tinyurl.com/yc7qeuyy)” (<https://tinyurl.com/yc7qeuyy>) by Barbara Ehrenreich.

Robin Tolmach Lakoff discusses the power of language to dehumanize in “[From Ancient Greece to Iraq: The Power of Words in Wartime](https://tinyurl.com/y76bt3ah)” (<https://tinyurl.com/y76bt3ah>).

Alan Weisman examines the human impact on the planet and its effects in “[Earth without People](https://tinyurl.com/mswazr)” (<https://tinyurl.com/mswazr>).

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Process Analysis



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.

What is the difference between process instruction and process explanation?

Process instruction is direct instruction (such as how to change a tire), so direct address (2nd person) can be used. It is okay to communicate to the audience because you imagine their purpose in reading the instruction is to learn

and follow said instruction. **Process explanations** are more like what we get in textbooks (the Krebs Cycle explained in a biology textbook, e.g.). They are more formal and involve third person with the process itself at the heart. No more direct address or command language allowed, and paragraph structure is the norm.

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 3

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. Also, identify whether each of these are process instruction or process explanation:

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 [Illustration and Exemplification](#) section are also helpful in organizing process analysis essays. Words such as first, second, third, next, and finally can be helpful cues to orient the 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 and ensure no steps have been omitted. Can your reader follow the steps to recreate the process?

Exercise 4

Choose two of the lists you created in Exercise 3 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 fewer 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. Remember to also include, either in the introduction or the first body paragraph, a list of necessary equipment/tools and any relevant recommendations for where the process should take place.

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.

Exercise 5

Choose one of the expanded lists from Exercise 4. 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.

Assignment 3

Choose something that you know how to do well or that you understand thoroughly. Make sure it is complex enough to warrant instructions (i.e. skip instructions for basic tasks – brushing teeth, driving a car, etc.). If you are writing **process instructions**, be sure to include a section at the beginning explaining what materials or tools are required, what clothing is recommended and what environment is necessary. If you are writing **process explanation**, be sure to introduce what you plan to explain, and any information about it the reader needs to understand your explanations. Conclude with some idea of what the reader should expect after the steps are done.

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.

External Links

Stanley Fish, a professor of humanities and law at Florida International University, tells us why [Getting Coffee Is Hard to Do](https://tinyurl.com/y89lmsfc) (<https://tinyurl.com/y89lmsfc>). Another link to this story is [here](https://tinyurl.com/yareanjc) (<https://tinyurl.com/yareanjc>).

Arthur Miller takes a humorous look at a gruesome process in [Get It Right: Privatize Executions](https://tinyurl.com/ycdknq8d) (<https://tinyurl.com/ycdknq8d>). Another link to the story is [here](https://tinyurl.com/y6wdcwtn) (<https://tinyurl.com/y6wdcwtn>).

Sample Process 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 $\frac{3}{4}$ 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 with your hands the root ball that formed in the nursery container. 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 two-three 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 on 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.

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Definition



The purpose of a definition essay may seem self-explanatory, 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. Ultimately, a definition essay will share your special understanding about your chosen topic.

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. When defining is the major impetus of an essay, the writer cast him/herself as the expert, aiming at an audience who knows less, maybe much less, about the topic.

Tip

When writing definition essays, avoid terms that are too simple, that lack complexity. Think in terms of concepts, such as *hero*, *happiness*, or *loyalty*, rather than physical objects. Definitions of concepts and abstractions, rather than concrete 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 17

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 from 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.

You define according to principles of definition, but you are the author of the definition. As you consider how to develop your essay, it might be helpful to consider the parts of a formal definition:

Parts of a definition:

- Formal re-definition
- History
- Context
- Sounds
- Similar things
- Function
- Meaning

Example: Here is an example of a formal definition for "candle:"

The candle is a kind of reminder that not only lets me think of my friend when I see it, but also lights my room when I think of her. Every time I clean my room, or get dressed, or pass by, or go to bed, or wake up in the morning, I see the candle and think of my friend. At times, I just light it for a few minutes, and I am reminded of her presence. I am bombarded with meeting reminders, "to do" lists,

alarms, sticky notes, deadlines, requests, and on and on. My candle is the only reminder I have that slows me down and lets me think of her. The silent burning of the candle reminds me of her quiet demeanor, the long silences that followed our fights, and the suddenness with which her life was snuffed out. Like an old photograph, or stories told by friends, or places we met, or the smell of barberry and cinnamon, my candle reminds me of the time we were together. The candle only burns when I light it once a year – on the day I lost her. To me, the candle signifies a life lived quietly, resolutely, but with a burning passion for living in the moment.

You may define any object or place this way. When you have a definition constructed, you may add it to the other elements in your personal writing. When you finish ALL the elements, you may then arrange elements for greatest effect.

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 18

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.

- Bravery
- Adulthood
- Consumer culture
- Violence
- Art

Writing a Definition Essay

Choose a topic that will be complex enough to be discussed at length. Be sure that the term is abstract, and that it is or refers to something that can mean different things to different people. Also, be sure that you choose a word that you have some familiarity with. Since you need to elaborate on the word you choose to define, you will need to have your own base of knowledge or experience with the concept you choose. If you try to define something that is beyond the scope of your paper or your own experience, the task will become overwhelming and get mired down in details or abstractions.

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 can come at the end of the introduction, can be implied throughout the development of the essay, or can be clearly asserted in the conclusion. However, you must have a clear idea of your thesis—your overall definition for the term or

concept— that is reinforced throughout the development of the essay.

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. A definition can be developed in a number of ways. A definition of a business management concept such as Total Quality Management (TQM), for instance, could begin with a **history** (a kind of process paper) of its inception in Japanese management systems, its migration across the Pacific, its implementation and transformation in American systems, and its predicted demise. It could also (or instead) include examples of the kind of labor conflict that TQM is supposed to eliminate or alleviate. Or it could describe TQM as a **process**, the steps involved in its implementation, or involve an **analysis** of its principles and its place in management theory. **Contrasts** to other management theories might be appropriate, demonstrating what TQM is not as well as what it is. We could even think of it as a **cause and effect** situation in which we describe how TQM responds to certain needs in the workplace. Negation also works well, as you can define your topic by what it is not or does not have. A definition essay is not limited to any one method of development and it may, in fact, employ more than one method at once. Implicit in all of these techniques, and therefore essential in your essay, is an analysis of this topic you have chosen. By developing and explaining your own opinion of what the topic you have chosen means, you are in a way analyzing the topic.

Your concluding paragraph should pull together all the different elements of your definition to ultimately reinforce your thesis. It draws a conclusion based on the

overall breakdown of the information offered throughout the body of the essay.

Tip

Don't rely on that old cliché of the dictionary or encyclopedia definition. Even if your intent is to show how inadequate or wrong-headed the dictionary might be, this device has been used far too often to be effective. The point of your essay is to provide your reader with a new way of looking at things — *your* way, not Noah Webster's.

Exercise 19

Choose a label that you would give yourself (such as good friend, daughter, brother, student, etc). For this label, consider both the denotation of the word and your connotation of it. Then, write paragraph that defines this word using at least one other rhetorical techniques such as illustration, description, cause and effect, comparison and contrast, and narration.

Assignment 6

Create a full definition essay from one of the items you already defined in Exercise 18 or 19. 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

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.

Some Additional Tips About Definition

Avoid using the phrases “is where” and “is when” in your definition: “Total Quality Management is when management and labor agree to. . .” “A computer virus is where . . .”

Avoid circular definitions (repeating the defined term within the predicate, the definition itself): “A computer virus is a virus that destroys or disrupts software . . .”

Avoid using a too narrow definition, one that would unduly limit the scope of your paper: “Reggae music is sung on the Caribbean island of Jamaica. . .”

Avoid defining the word by quoting the dictionary or

encyclopedia because that detracts from your own thoughts and opinions.

External Links

“[I Learned to Understand Shame](https://tinyurl.com/ybsp3ytz)” (<https://tinyurl.com/ybsp3ytz>) by Joe Quinn. In this essay, Quinn defines and analyzes shame by combining personal experience in post 9/11 America with research.

“[Pride](https://tinyurl.com/ydamxkqo)” (<https://tinyurl.com/ydamxkqo>) by Ian Frazier. In this essay, published by *Outside Online*, *New Yorker* writer Ian Frazier uses a mix of rhetorical devices to define the concept of pride.

Student Sample Essay

Defining Good Students Means More Than Just Grades

Many people define good students as those who receive the best grades. While it is true that good students often earn high grades, I contend that grades are just one aspect of how we define a good student. In fact, even poor students can earn high grades sometimes, so grades are not the best indicator of a student's quality. Rather, a good student pursues scholarship, actively participates in class, and maintains a positive, professional relationship with instructors and peers.

Good students have a passion for learning that drives them to fully understand class material rather than just worry about what grades they receive in the course. Good students are actively engaged in scholarship, which means they enjoy reading and learning about their subject matter not just because readings and assignments are required. Of course, good students will complete

their homework and all assignments, and they may even continue to perform research and learn more on the subject after the course ends. In some cases, good students will pursue a subject that interests them but might not be one of their strongest academic areas, so they will not earn the highest grades. Pushing oneself to learn and try new things can be difficult, but good students will challenge themselves rather than remain at their educational comfort level for the sake of a high grade. The pursuit of scholarship and education rather than concern over grades is the hallmark of a good student.

Class participation and behavior are another aspect of the definition of a good student. Simply attending class is not enough; good students arrive punctually because they understand that tardiness disrupts the class and disrespects the professors. They might occasionally arrive a few minutes early to ask the professor questions about class materials or mentally prepare for the day's work. Good students consistently pay attention during class discussions and take notes in lectures rather than engage in off-task behaviors, such as checking their cell phones or daydreaming. Excellent class participation requires a balance between speaking and listening, so good students will share their views when appropriate but also respect their classmates' views when they differ from their own. It is easy to mistake quantity of class discussion comments with quality, but good students know the difference and do not try to dominate the conversation. Sometimes class participation is counted toward a student's grade, but even without such clear rewards, good students understand how to perform and excel among their peers in the classroom.

Finally, good students maintain a positive and professional relationship with their professors. They respect their instructor's authority in the classroom as well as the instructor's privacy outside of the classroom. Prying into a professor's personal life is

inappropriate, but attending office hours to discuss course material is an appropriate, effective way for students to demonstrate their dedication and interest in learning. Good students go to their professor's office during posted office hours or make an appointment if necessary. While instructors can be very busy, they are usually happy to offer guidance to students during office hours; after all, availability outside the classroom is a part of their job. Attending office hours can also help good students become memorable and stand out from the rest, particularly in lectures with hundreds enrolled. Maintaining positive, professional relationships with professors is especially important for those students who hope to attend graduate school and will need letters of recommendation in the future.

Although good grades often accompany good students, grades are not the only way to indicate what it means to be a good student. The definition of a good student means demonstrating such traits as engaging with course material, participating in class, and creating a professional relationship with professors. While professors have different criteria for earning an A in their courses, most will agree on these characteristics for defining good students.

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Rhetorical Analysis



What is a Rhetorical Analysis?

A Rhetorical analysis begins with the examination of the *content* and the *style* of the author. A rhetorical analysis is an examination of the topic, purpose, audience, and context of a piece of text. A text can be written, spoken, or conveyed in some other manner.

Sometimes, the best way to learn how to write a good argument is to start by analyzing other arguments. When you do this, you get to see what works, what doesn't, what strategies another author uses, what structures seem to work well and why, and more.

In the paragraphs that follow, you will learn about analyzing arguments for both content and rhetorical strategies. The content analysis may come a little easier for

you, but the rhetorical analysis is extremely important. To become a good writer, we must develop the language of writing and learn how to use that language to talk about the “moves” other writers make.

When we understand the decisions other writers make and why, it helps us make more informed decisions as writers. We can move from being the “accidental” writer, where we might do well but are not sure why, to being a “purposeful” writer, where we have an awareness of the impact our writing has on our audience at all levels.

The ultimate goal of a rhetorical analysis is twofold:

1. to analyze how well the rhetorical elements work together to create a fitting response, and
2. to evaluate the overall effectiveness of that response.

To examine that goal, there are a couple of approaches that can be made in writing an analysis. The first is to ask some basic questions.

1. How has the place affected the writing?
2. How have the rhetorical elements (rhetorical appeals) affected the writing?
3. Do the means of delivery, genre, or medium impact the audience?

As you begin, search your answers for an idea that can serve as your claim or thesis. For example, you might focus on the declared goal—if there is one—of the creator of the text and whether it has been achieved.

You might evaluate how successfully that creator has

identified the rhetorical audience, shaped a fitting response, or employed the best available means.

Or you might focus on the use of the rhetorical appeals and the overall success of their use.

Whether or not you agree with the text is beside the point. Your job is to analyze **how** and **how well** the text's creator has accomplished the purpose of that text.

1. **HOW** is the analysis of the parts
 2. **HOW WELL** is the overall evaluation
-

Thinking Rhetorically

As a part of thinking rhetorically about an argument, your professor may ask you to write a formal or informal rhetorical analysis essay. Rhetorical analysis is about “digging in” and exploring the strategies and writing style of a particular piece. Rhetorical analysis can be tricky because, chances are, you haven't done a lot of rhetorical analysis in the past.

To add to this trickiness, you can write a rhetorical analysis of any piece of information, not just an essay. You may be asked to write a rhetorical analysis of an ad, an image, or a commercial.

The key is to start now! Rhetorical analysis is going to help you think about strategies other authors have made and how or why these strategies work or don't work. In turn, your goal is to be more aware of these things in your own writing.

When you analyze a work rhetorically, you are going to explore the following concepts in a piece:

- Audience
- Purpose

- Style or Voice
- Ethos
- Pathos
- Logos

You will be thinking about the decisions an author has made along these lines and thinking about whether these decisions are effective or ineffective.

Types of Argument

Just as there many types of essays you will write in college and many types of writing in general, argumentative essays come in many forms as well. There are three basic structures or types of an argument you are likely to encounter in college: the Toulmin argument, the Rogerian argument, and the Classical or Aristotelian argument. Although the Toulmin method was originally developed to analyze arguments, some professors will ask you to model its components. Each of these serves a different purpose, and deciding which type to use depends upon the rhetorical situation: In other words, you have to think about what is going to work best for your audience given your topic and the situation in which you are writing.

Toulmin Argument

The Toulmin method, developed by philosopher [Stephen Toulmin](#), is essentially a structure

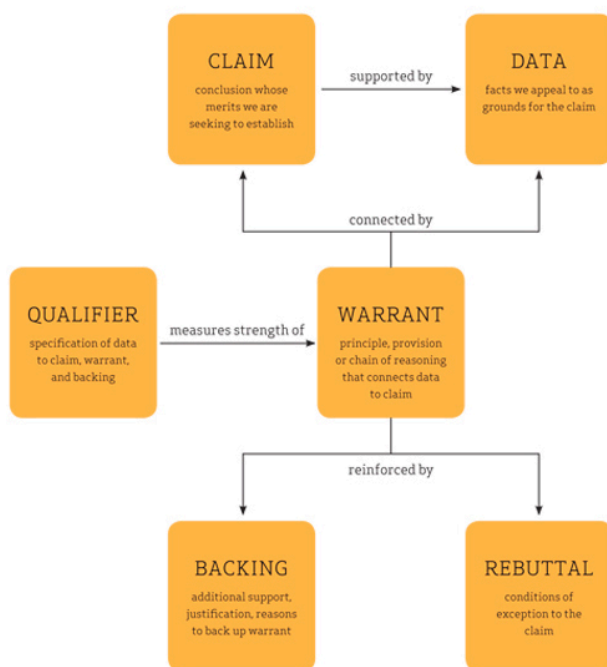
for *analyzing* arguments. But the elements for analysis are so clear and structured that many professors now have students write argumentative essays with the elements of the Toulmin method in mind.

This type of argument works well when there are no clear truths or absolute solutions to a problem. Toulmin arguments take into account the complex nature of most situations.

There are six elements for analyzing, and, in this case, presenting arguments that are important to the Toulmin method.



These elements of a Toulmin analysis can help you as both a reader and a writer. When you're analyzing arguments as a reader, you can look for these elements to help you understand the argument and evaluate its validity. When you're writing an argument, you can include these same elements to ensure your audience will see the validity in your claims.



Toulmin, S. (1969). *The Uses of Argument*, Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press. Retrieved from http://changingminds.org/disciplines/argument/making_argument/toulmin.htm [accessed April 2011]

Claims

The **claim** is a statement of opinion that the author is asking her or his audience to accept as true.

Example

There should be more laws to regulate texting while driving in order to cut down on dangerous car accidents.

Grounds

The **grounds** are the facts, data, or reasoning upon which the claim is based. Essentially, the grounds are the facts making the case for the claim.

Example

The National Safety Council estimates that 1.6 million car accidents per year are caused by cell phone use and texting.

Warrant

The **warrant** is what links the grounds to the claim. This is what makes the audience understand how the grounds are connected to supporting the claim. Sometimes, the warrant is implicit (not directly stated), but the warrant can be stated directly as well. As a writer, you are making assumptions about what your audience already believes, so you have to think about how clear your warrant is and if you need to state it directly for your audience. You must also think about whether or not a warrant is actually an unproven claim.

Example

Being distracted by texting on a cell phone while driving a car is dangerous and causes accidents.

Backing

The **backing** gives additional support for the claim by addressing different questions related to your claim.

Example

With greater fines and more education about the consequences, people might think twice about texting and driving.

Qualifier

The **qualifier** is essentially the limits to the claim or an understanding that the claim is not true in all situations. Qualifiers add strength to claims because they help the audience understand the author does not expect her or his opinion to be true all of the time or for her or his ideas to work all of the time. If writers use qualifiers that are too broad, such as “always” or “never,” their claims can be really difficult to support. Qualifiers like “some” or “many” help limit the claim, which can add strength to the claim.

Example

There should be more laws to regulate texting while driving in order to cut down on some of the dangerous car accidents that happen each year.

Rebuttal

The **rebuttal** is when the author addresses the opposing views. The author can use a rebuttal to pre-empt counter-arguments, making the original argument stronger.

Example

Although police officers are busy already, making anti-texting laws a priority saves time, money, and lives. Local departments could add extra staff to address this important priority.

Toulmin Argument



Excelsior Online
Writing Lab

What is the Toulmin method?

The Toulmin method, developed by philosopher Stephen Toulmin, is essentially a structure for analyzing argument but can also be used to construct arguments.

This type of argument works well when there are no clear truths or absolute solutions to a problem. Toulmin arguments take into account the complex nature of most situations.

There are six elements for analyzing, and in this case, presenting arguments that are important to the Toulmin method.



Claim

The claim is a statement of opinion that the author is asking her or his audience to accept as true.

Grounds

The grounds are the facts or data or reasoning upon which the claim is based. Essentially, the grounds are the facts making the case for the claim.

Warrant



The warrant is what links the grounds to the claim. This is what makes the audience understand how the grounds are connected to supporting the claim.

Backing



The backing gives additional support for the claim by addressing different questions related to your claim.

Qualifier

The qualifier is essentially the limits to the claim or an understanding that the claim is not true in all situations.

Rebuttal

The rebuttal is when the author addresses the opposing views.

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.



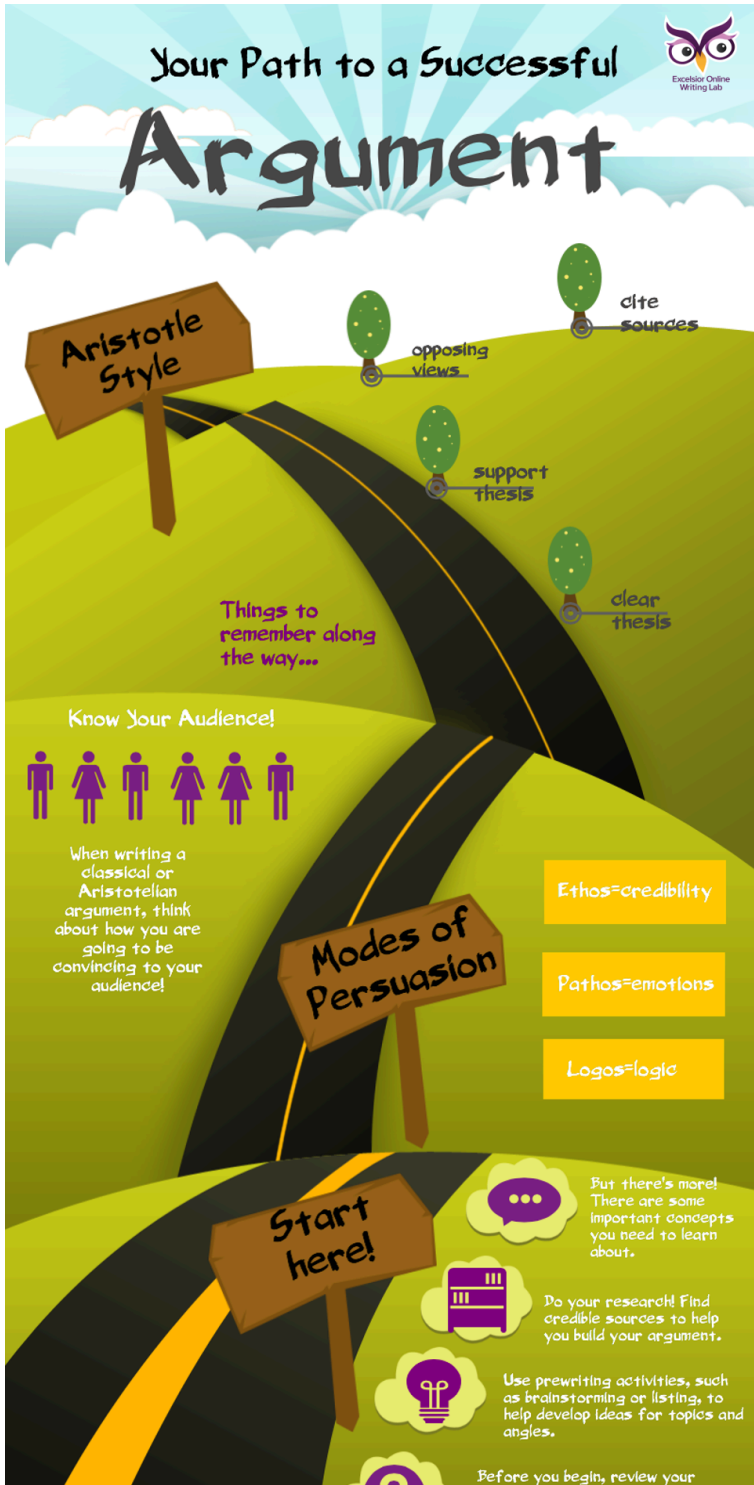
Although **ethos**, **pathos**, and **logos** play a role in any argument, this style of argument utilizes them in the most persuasive ways possible.

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.



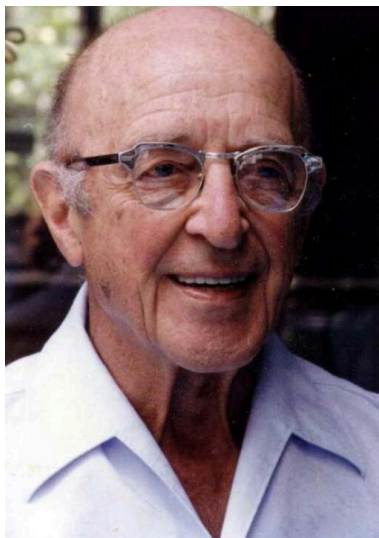
Rogerian Argument

When most of us think of arguments, we think about winners of arguments and losers of arguments.

Arguments, even sometimes

academic arguments,
can be strong and
forceful.

An
Aristotelian or
classical argument is a
strong, “this is my
assertion and here’s
why I am right” kind of
argument. But that
kind of argument isn’t
going to work in all
situations. When your
audience is a really
difficult one in the
sense that you know
your audience isn’t



going to completely agree with your side of the issue, it can
be a good idea to try to find a middle ground. The
Rogerian argument finds that middle ground.

Based on the work of psychologist [Carl Rogers](#) (pictured on the right), a Rogerian argument focuses on finding a middle ground between the author and the audience. This type of argument can be extremely persuasive and can help you, as a writer, understand your own biases and how you might work to find common ground with others.

Here is a summary of the basic strategy for a Rogerian

argument, and the infographic on the following page should be helpful as well.

1. In your essay, first, **introduce the problem**.
2. **Acknowledge the other side** before you present your side of the issue. This may take several paragraphs.
3. Next, you should carefully **present your side** of the issue in a way that does not dismiss the other side. This may also take several paragraphs.
4. You should then work to **bring the two sides together**. Help your audience see the benefits of the middle ground. Make your proposal for the middle ground here, and be sure to use an even, respectful tone. This should be a key focus of your essay and may take several paragraphs.
5. Finally, in your conclusion, **remind your audience of the balanced perspective** you have presented and make it clear how both sides benefit when they meet in the middle.

For a visual representation of this type of argument, check out the Rogerian infographic below.



10 Steps to Writing

a Rogerian Argument

1

FIND COMMON GROUND



Because a Rogerian argument will help you find common ground with your audience, you should consider this style of argument when you have a difficult or controversial topic and want to use a connection with your audience as a part of your persuasive style. But what is common ground? Finding a common ground involves meeting your opposition in the middle.



KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

2

Is your audience going to be reluctant to change on this issue? If so, a Rogerian argument can be persuasive. It is also going to be a wonderful exercise in helping you see things from your audience's perspective, as your goal is to understand the other side of an issue and then meet your audience in the middle. Some brainstorming can help you as you think about how you are going to approach your audience and find the common ground you need.

3

INTRODUCE THE PROBLEM



When you begin your argumentative essay, you should introduce the problem or issue in a way that makes it clear to an opposing audience that you understand their position.

ACKNOWLEDGE OTHER SIDE

4

Unlike some other argument structures, in a Rogerian argument, you should address the opposition in the very beginning of your essay. After your introduction, you should explain the contexts in which your opposition's viewpoints make sense and are valid.



STATE YOUR POSITION

5

It's now time to present your side. Your goal is to evenly and

Types of Argument

<div> STYLES OF ARGUMENT <p>There are three main styles of argument. The most common is arguably Aristotelian, or Classical. Here's an overview of the "big three" used most often in academics today.</p> </div>		
ARISTOTELIAN	TOULMIN	ROGERIAN
<p>This type was originally used by Greek farmers in order to present arguments in court.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce your issue, usually in a thesis statement. • Present Your Case by explaining why the issue is relevant in a few paragraphs. • Confirm your thesis by providing some paragraphs in a Claim, Evidence, Warrant format. • Include a Counterclaim and Rebuttal to address and refute the opposition in a paragraph or two. • Conclude your argument. 	<p>This type of argument works well when there are no clear truths or solutions to a problem.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin with a Claim, or a thesis statement. • Provide some Grounds, or evidence for your claim in a few paragraphs • Include a Backing or warrant for your grounds • Include a Counterclaim and Rebuttal to demonstrate that you've done your research on the issue. • Provide a Conclusion 	<p>This type works to establish common ground between author and readers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the problem • Acknowledge the other side before you present your side of the issue. • Present your side in a way that does not dismiss others • Establish a middle ground in a few paragraphs. This should be the key focus of your essay. • Conclude and remind your audience that everyone benefits from middle ground.

Analyze This

You have learned about some of the most common organizational structures for academic arguments and learned about the benefits of each one—as well as when it might be best to use each one.

Before you begin working with your own academic argument structure, it might be helpful to review another academic argument for its organizational structure.

In the following video, watch as one student analyzes a traditional academic argumentative essay ([Cheap Thrills](#):

[The Price of Fast Fashion](#)), one that most closely follows the Aristotelian structure.

Thinking About Content

Content analysis of an argument is really just what it seems—looking closely at the content in an argument. When you're analyzing an argument for content, you're looking at things like claims, evidence to support those claims, and if that evidence makes sense.

The **Toulmin** method described in this learning area is a great tool for analyzing the content of an argument. In fact, it was developed as a tool for analyzing the content of an argument. Using the different concepts we learn in the Toulmin model, we are able to examine an argument by thinking about what claim is being made, what evidence is being used to support that claim, the warrants behind that evidence, and more.

When you analyze an argument, there is a good chance your professor will have you review and use the Toulmin information provided in the Excelsior OWL.

However, the lessons you have learned about **logical fallacies** will also help you analyze the content of an argument. You'll want to look closely at the logic being presented in the claims and evidence. Does the logic hold up, or do you see logical fallacies? Obviously, if you see fallacies, you should really question the argument.

Basic Questions for a Rhetorical Analysis

What is the rhetorical situation?

- What occasion gives rise to the need or opportunity for persuasion?
- What is the historical occasion that would give rise to the composition of this text?

Who is the author/speaker?

- How does he or she establish ethos (personal credibility)?
- Does he/she come across as knowledgeable? fair?
- Does the speaker's reputation convey a certain authority?

What is his/her intention in speaking?

- To attack or defend?
- To exhort or dissuade from certain action?
- To praise or blame?
- To teach, to delight, or to persuade?

Who makes up the audience?

- Who is the intended audience?
- What values does the audience hold that the author or speaker appeals to?
- Who have been or might be secondary audiences?
- If this is a work of fiction, what is the nature of the audience within the fiction?

What is the content of the message?

- Can you summarize the main idea?
- What are the principal lines of reasoning or kinds of arguments used?
- What topics of invention are employed?
- How does the author or speaker appeal to reason?

to emotion?

What is the form in which it is conveyed?

- What is the structure of the communication; how is it arranged?
- What oral or literary genre is it following?
- What figures of speech (schemes and tropes) are used?
- What kind of style and tone is used and for what purpose?

How do form and content correspond?

- Does the form complement the content?
- What effect could the form have, and does this aid or hinder the author's intention?

Does the message/speech/text succeed in fulfilling the author's or speaker's intentions?

- For whom?
- Does the author/speaker effectively fit his/her message to the circumstances, times, and audience?
- Can you identify the responses of historical or contemporary audiences?

What does the nature of the communication reveal about the culture that produced it?

- What kinds of values or customs would the people have that would produce this?
- How do the allusions, historical references, or kinds of words used place this in a certain time and location?

Sample Rhetorical Analysis

Seeing rhetorical analysis in action is one of the best ways to understand it. Read the [sample rhetorical analysis of an article](#). If you like, you can read the original article the student analyzes: [Why I won't buy an iPad \(and think you shouldn't, either\)](#).

Time to Write

Purpose: This assignment will demonstrate the understanding of Rhetorical Analysis and Preliminary Research. This assignment will connect to the course competencies of writing for specific rhetorical contexts, using appropriate conventions in writing, an

Task:

This assignment frames the topic, purpose, audience, and context for the approved research topic from Research Prospectus 1.

At this time you will utilize two or three sources as in-text citations and on the References.

Choose a single source (selection) for rhetorical analysis that meets the following criteria.

- Is the text responding to an opportunity to make a change? (Does it look at solving a problem?)
- What is the rhetorical opportunity for change?
- How is it identified?
- How is it connected to your research proposal topic?

After you have selected a text, read it carefully, keeping in mind that the ultimate goal of a rhetorical analysis is

twofold: (1) to analyze how well the rhetorical elements work together to create a fitting response, and (2) to assess the overall effectiveness of that response. Then, write answers to the following questions, citing material from the text itself to support each answer:

Are the available means anchored to the writer's place?

1. Who created the text? What credentials or expertise does that person or group have? Why is the creator of the text engaged with this opportunity? Is this an opportunity that can be modified through language? What opinions or biases did the person or group bring to the text?
2. What is the place (physical, social, academic, economic, and so on) from which the creator of the text forms and sends the response? What are the resources of that place? What are its constraints (or limitations)?
3. Who is the audience for the message? What relationship is the creator of the text trying to establish with the audience? What opinions or biases might the audience hold? How might the audience feel about this rhetorical opportunity? And, most important, can this audience modify or help bring about a modification of the rhetorical opportunity? How?

Do the available means include the rhetorical elements of the message itself?

1. Identify the rhetorical elements of the message itself. In other words, where and how does the person or group employ the rhetorical appeals of ethos, pathos, and logos? How are credentials, goodwill, or good sense evoked to establish

ethos? How is evidence (examples, statistics, data, and so forth) used to establish logos? And how is an emotional connection created to establish pathos? Keep in mind that the rhetorical appeals can sometimes overlap.

2. What kind of language does the creator of the text use? Is it plain or specialized, slang or formal? How does the choice of language reveal how the person or group views the intended audience?

Do the available means deliver a message in a genre and medium that reaches the audience?

1. Is the intended audience for the text a rhetorical audience? Draw on evidence from the text to support your answer.
2. If the audience is a rhetorical one, what can it do to resolve the problem?
3. Does the response address and fit the rhetorical opportunity? How exactly? If not, how might the response be reshaped so that it does fit?
4. Is the response delivered in an appropriate medium that reaches its intended audience? Why is that medium appropriate? Or how could it be adjusted to be appropriate?
5. Can you think of other responses to similar rhetorical situations? What genre is commonly used? Does the creator of this text use that genre? If not, what is the effect of going against an audience's expectations?

Now that you have carefully read the text and answered all of the questions, you are ready to write your rhetorical

analysis. How does your analysis of the use of the available means reveal

1. How well the rhetorical elements work together to create a fitting response to an opportunity for change?
2. How effective the response is?

As you begin, search your answers for an idea that can serve as your claim or thesis. For example, you might focus on the declared goal—if there is one—of the creator of the text and whether it has been achieved. You might assess how successfully that creator has identified the rhetorical audience, shaped a fitting response, or employed the best available means. Or you might focus on the use of the rhetorical appeals and the overall success of their use.

Whether or not you agree with the text is beside the point.

Your job is to analyze an essay, examining how, and how well, the text's creator has accomplished the purpose of that text.

Key Grading Considerations

- Standard Structure
 1. The intro provides context for the rest of the paper
 2. The thesis is explicit, specific, and clear
 3. The thesis is analytical in nature
 4. The conclusion recasts the thesis and provides cohesion to the whole paper

- Rhetorical Triangle & Appeals
 1. Source text is thoroughly and effectively contextualized with well-supported analysis
 1. structure
 2. rhetorical triangle (audience, author, purpose)
 3. and rhetorical appeals (logos, ethos, pathos)
 2. focus is on an analysis (not a summary or the author's own ideas of the issue)
- Cohesion & Flow
 1. Smooth flow of ideas ordered in a logical sequence that effectively guides the reader
 2. Each paragraph has a well-supported clearly-stated main point
 3. The topic sentences focus on analysis
 4. There is an effective use of transitions.
- Uses the Rhetorical Triangle to Target the Audience
- Language Use & Mechanics
- Fully in APA Format

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Other Materials

- Content “APA Long Quote Guidelines” taken from the American Psychological Association. (2019). Quotations. <http://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/citations/quotations>