



English

1101 and 1102

College and Analytic Writing

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Published by **CNM**>

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This textbook is a derivative of seven creative commons texts—*Successful Writing*, *Writer's Handbook*, *A Guide to Perspective Analysis*, *Writing, Rhetoric and Composition*, *English for Business Success*, and *Visual Rhetoric*. Jennifer Schaller and Tammy Wolf reduced the original text content; additionally, they created original introductions and added original chapters, licensed as [CC BY-SA 4.0](#).

Part 1: Introduction to College Writing

Chapter 1: Introduction to College Writing at CNM

Chapter 2: Reading Strategies

Chapter 3: Common Writing Assignments

Chapter 1: Introduction to College Writing at CNM

Part 1: Chapter 1

This textbook asks you to take yourself seriously as a college writer. You are entering the realm of academic writing; you are entering academia. Welcome. We are happy you are here.

This textbook is a college reader for English 1101 and 1102, College Writing and Analytic Writing, respectively. If you are enrolled in one of these courses, you may be nearing the end of your studies at Central New Mexico Community College, you may be just starting your studies at CNM, or you may have already taken this class but didn't finish. The reality is every English 1101 and 1102 course at CNM contains a diverse range of students. If you are enrolled in English 1101 or 1102 at CNM, you are likely a resident of New Mexico. You might have gone to an elementary or secondary school here. You might feel a part of the unique culture here in NM.

CNM offers resources that can help you not only with your studies but also with managing your responsibilities as well.

In this textbook, we'll cover the conventions of writing, and we'll also cover some of the resources available to you as a CNM student. And since this book is free and available on the internet, you can keep it...forever!

Did You Know

Being a CNM student means that you are enrolled at the largest postsecondary institution in the state.

This textbook is an Open Educational Resource text, which means it was created using free and available sources on the Internet, namely seven different open access books. Our compiled textbook will shift between free, outside writing resources and the plural first pronoun voice, or the we voice,

signaling the English teachers who compiled and developed sections of the text.

Throughout this text, the writers—all CNM English faculty, some of whom are still paying back the student loans that paid for textbooks and degrees!—are the we who compiled this textbook. We did so because we believe that a college education should be engaging, enlightening, informative, life-affirming, worldview-upturning *and* affordable. We believe it shouldn't cost money to learn how to write, and that is why we are making this book available to you. This project also would not have happened without the support of the OER initiative and CHSS administration.

This textbook will cover ways to communicate effectively as you develop insight into your own style, writing process, grammatical choices, and rhetorical situations. With these skills, you should be able to improve your writing talent regardless of the discipline you enter after completing this course. Knowing your [rhetorical situation](#), or the circumstances under which you communicate, and knowing which [tone](#), style, and genre will most effectively persuade your [audience](#), will help you regardless of whether you are enrolling in history, biology, theater, or music next semester—because when you get to college, you write in every discipline. To help undertake our [introduction](#) this chapter includes a section from the open access textbook *Successful Writing*.

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

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

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

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

HIGH SCHOOL

VERSUS

COLLEGE

Reading assignments are moderately long. Teachers may set aside some class

Some reading assignments may be very long. You will be

time for reading and reviewing the material in depth.

Teachers often provide study guides and other aids to help you prepare for exams

Your grade is determined by your performance on a wide variety of assessments, including minor and major assignments. Not all assessments are writing based.

Writing assignments include personal writing and creative writing in addition to expository writing.

The structure and format of writing assignments is generally stable over a four-year period.

expected to come to class with a basic understanding of the material.

Reviewing for exams is primarily your responsibility.

Your grade may depend on just a few major assessments. Most assessments are writing based.

Outside of creative writing courses, most writing assignments are expository.

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.

Adapted from “Chapter One ” of [Successful Writing](#), 2012, used according to creative commons 3.0 [cc-by-nc-sa](#)

Overarching Principles of Academic Writing

According to *Boundless Writing*, academic writing comes in many forms and can cover a wide range of subject matter; however, successful writing will demonstrate certain conventions, no matter what is being written about.

“Academic writing” is a broad term that covers a wide variety of genres across disciplines. While its features will vary, academic (or scholarly) writing generally tries to maintain a professional tone while arguing for (or against) a specific position or idea.

There are many different approaches to academic research since each discipline has its own conventions that dictate what kinds of texts and evidence are permissible. Scholarly writing typically takes an objective tone, even though it argues in favor of a specific position or stance. Academic writing can reach a

broader audience through more informal venues, such as journalism and public speaking.

The Thesis Statement: Making and Supporting a Claim

Strong academic writing takes a stance on the topic it is covering—it tries to convince the reader of a certain [perspective](#) or claim. This claim is known as the “[thesis statement](#).” The majority of an academic paper will be spent using facts and details to “prove” to the reader that the claim is true. How this is done depends on the discipline; in the sciences, a research paper will present an original experiment and data to support the claim; in a literature class, an essay will cite quotations from a text that weave into the larger [argument](#). Regardless of discipline, the overarching goal of most academic writing is to persuade the reader to agree with the claim.

Concision

[Concision](#) is the art of using the fewest words possible to convey an idea. Some students mistakenly think that longer words and more complicated sentence structures make their writing “better” or make it sound more sophisticated. In reality, however, the longer and more complicated a sentence gets, the harder it is for a reader to interpret that sentence, and the harder it is to keep them engaged with your argument. For example, if you find yourself using a phrase like “due to the fact that,” you can simplify your wording and make your sentence more powerful by saying “because” instead. Similarly, say “now” or “currently” rather than “at this point in time.” Unnecessarily complicated wording distracts your reader from your argument; simpler sentence structures let your ideas shine through.

Objectivity

Most academic writing uses objective language. That is, rather than presenting the argument as the writer’s opinion (“I believe that ...”, “I think this means ...”), it tries to convince the reader that the argument is necessarily true based on the supporting facts: “this evidence reveals that ...”

Breaking the Rules

There are countless examples of respected scholarly pieces that bend these principles—for instance, the “reader response” school of literary criticism abandons the objective stance altogether. However, you have to know the rules before you can break them successfully.

Think of a chef putting chili powder in hot chocolate, a delicious but unexpected bending of a rule: typically, desserts are not spicy. In order to successfully break that rule, the chef first had to understand all the flavors at work in both ingredients, and make the choice knowing that it would improve the recipe. It’s only a good idea to break these rules and principles if there is a specific, good reason to do so. Therefore, if you plan to dispense with one of these conventions, it is a good idea to make sure your instructor approves of your stylistic choice.

Building Academic Writing Skills

Academic work is an excellent way to develop strong research and writing skills. Try to use your undergraduate assignments to build your reading comprehension, critical and creative thinking, research and analytical skills. Having a specific, “real” audience will help you engage more directly with the reader and adapt to the conventions of writing in any given genre.

Seeking Help Meeting College Expectations

Depending on your education before coming to CNM, you will have varied writing experiences as compared with other students in class. Some students might have earned a GED, some might be returning to school after a decades-long break, and still other students might either be graduating high school, or be freshly graduated. If the latter is the case, you might enter college with a wealth of experience writing five-paragraph essays, book [reports](#), and lab reports. Even the best students, however, need to make big adjustments to learn the conventions of academic writing. College-level writing obeys different rules, and learning them will help you hone your writing skills. Think of it as ascending another step up the writing ladder.

Many students feel intimidated asking for help with academic writing; after all, it’s

something you've been doing your entire life in school. However, there's no need to feel like it's a sign of your lack of ability; on the contrary, many of the strongest student writers regularly seek help and support with their writing (that's why they're so strong). College instructors are familiar with the ups and downs of writing, and most universities have support systems in place to help students learn how to write for an academic audience. The following sections discuss common on-campus writing services, what to expect from them, and how they can help you.

Writing Mentors

Learning to write for an academic audience is challenging, but colleges like CNM offer various resources to guide students through the process. Most instructors will be happy to meet with you during office hours to discuss guidelines for writing about their particular discipline. If you have any doubts about research methods, paper structure, writing style, etc., address these uncertainties with the instructor before you hand in your paper, rather than waiting to see the critiques they write in the margins afterward. If you have questions, ask them. For example, if you're not sure about which point of view is appropriate for a specific paper, raise your hand in class and ask your teacher. Your peers may have a similar question, but they may be too afraid to ask. Lastly, you are not bothering your instructor by showing up for office hours; they'll be glad to see you.

Tutoring Center

Here at CNM, students have access to ACE Tutoring Services, which is available on six campuses: Advanced Technology Center, Main, Montoya, Rio Rancho, South Valley, and Westside. At these writing centers, trained tutors help students meet college-level expectations. The tutoring centers offer one-on-one meetings or group sessions for other disciplines. ACE also offers workshops on citing and learning how to develop a writing process.

[ACE Tutoring Services](#)



Student-Led Workshops

Some courses encourage students to share their research and writing with each other, and even offer workshops where students can present their own writing and offer constructive comments to their classmates. Independent paper-writing workshops provide a space for peers with varying interests, work styles, and areas of expertise to brainstorm.

If you want to improve your writing, organizing a workshop session with your classmates is a great strategy. You can also ask your writing center to help you organize a workshop for a specific class or subject. In high school, students submit their work in multiple stages, from the thesis statement to the outline to a draft of the paper; finally, after receiving feedback on each preliminary piece, they submit a completed project. This format teaches students how to divide writing assignments into smaller tasks and schedule these tasks over an extended period of time, instead of scrambling through the entire process right before the deadline. Some college courses build this kind of writing schedule into major assignments. Even if your course does not, you can master the skill of breaking large assignments down into smaller projects instead of leaving an unmanageable amount of work until the last minute.

Academic writing can, at times, feel overwhelming. You can waste a great deal of time staring at a blank screen or a troublesome paragraph, when it would be more productive to move on to drafting other parts of your paper. When you return to

the problem section a few hours later (or, even better, the next day), the solution may be obvious.

Writing in drafts makes academic work more manageable. Drafting gets your ideas onto paper, which gives you more to work with than the perfectionist's daunting blank screen. You can always return later to fix the problems that bother you.

Scheduling the Stages of Your Writing Process

Time management, not talent, has been the secret to a lot of great writing through the ages. Not even a “great” writer can produce a masterpiece the night before it's due. Breaking a large writing task into smaller pieces will not only save your sanity, but will also result in a more thoughtful, polished final draft.

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Emailing Your Instructor

Subject:

English 1101.192: Office hours on Tuesday

Dear/Hello Professor [Last name],

I have a few questions about the next essay assignment for College Writing 1101 section 192. Would it be convenient to discuss them during your office hours on Tuesday? I plan to stop and visit you during your office hours. Thank you for your help with these assignments.

Many thanks,

[First name] [Last name]

Expository Writing 101; T, Th, 10:00

Tips for Emailing Your Instructor

- Be polite: Address your professor formally, using the title “Professor” with their last name. Depending on how formal your professor seems, use the salutation “Dear,” or a more informal “Hello” or “Hi.” Don’t drop the salutation altogether, though.
- Be concise. Instructors are busy people, and although they are typically more than happy to help you, do them the favor of getting to your point quickly. Sign off with your first and last name, the course number, and the class time. This will make it easy for your professor to identify you, and although they are typically more than happy to help you, do them the favor of getting to your point quickly.
- Do not ever ask, “When will you return our papers?” If you MUST ask, make it specific and realistic (e.g., “Will we get our papers back by the end of next week?”).

Adapted from “Chapter One ” of [Successful Writing](#), 2012, used according to creative commons 3.0 [cc-by-nc-sa](#)

Chapter 2: Reading Strategies

Part 1: Chapter 2

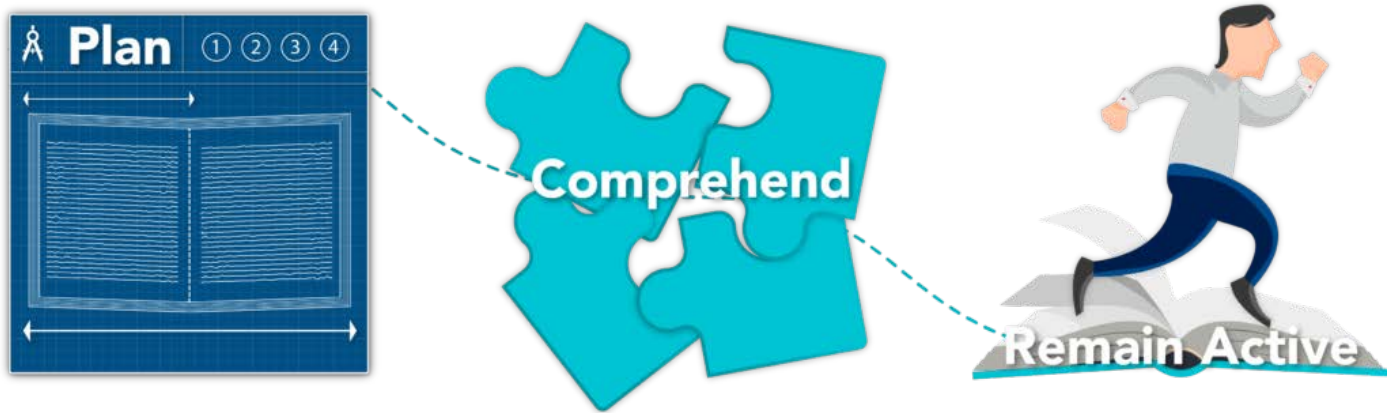
Now that we have gone over adjustments students should consider as they prepare for college writing, we will discuss another important strategy: college reading. Two important steps of reading at the college level include considering your writing situation and developing strong reading strategies. The textbook *Successful Writing* discusses how reading and writing work together.

Reading and Considering the Writing Situation

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

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

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



Managing Your Reading Time

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

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

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

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

determine how much reading time to set aside.

Setting a Purpose

The other key component of planning is setting a purpose. Knowing what you want to achieve from a reading assignment not only helps you determine how to approach that task, but it also helps you stay focused during those occasional moments when you are up late, tired, or relaxing in front of the television sounds far more appealing than curling up with a stack of journal articles.

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

- **How did my instructor frame the assignment?** Often your instructors will tell you what they expect you to get out of the reading:
 - Read Chapter 2 and come to class prepared to discuss current teaching practices in elementary math.
 - Read these two articles and compare Smith's and Jones's perspectives on the 2010 healthcare reform bill.
 - Read Chapter 5 and think about how you could apply these guidelines to running your own business.
- **How deeply do I need to understand the reading?** If you are majoring in computer science and you are assigned to read Chapter 1, "Introduction to Computer Science," it is safe to assume the chapter presents fundamental concepts that you will be expected to master. However, for some reading assignments, you may be expected to form a general understanding but not necessarily master the [content](#). Again, pay attention to how your instructor presents the assignment.
- **How does this assignment relate to other course readings or to concepts discussed in class?** Your instructor may make some of these connections explicitly, but if not, try to draw connections on your own.

(Needless to say, it helps to take detailed notes both when in class and when you read.)

- **How might I use this text again in the future?** If you are assigned to read about a topic that has always interested you, your reading assignment might help you develop ideas for a future research paper. Some reading assignments provide valuable tips or summaries worth bookmarking for future reference.

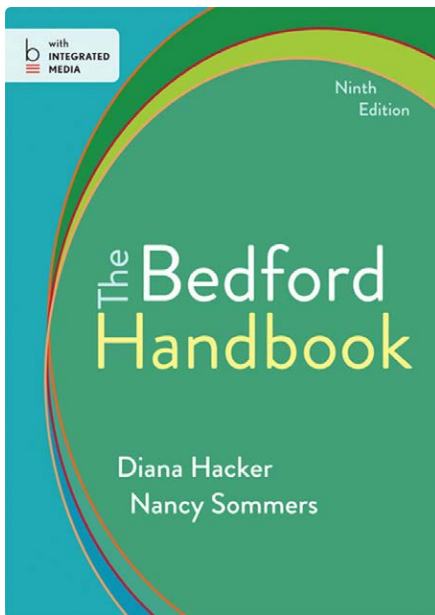
Improving Your Comprehension

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

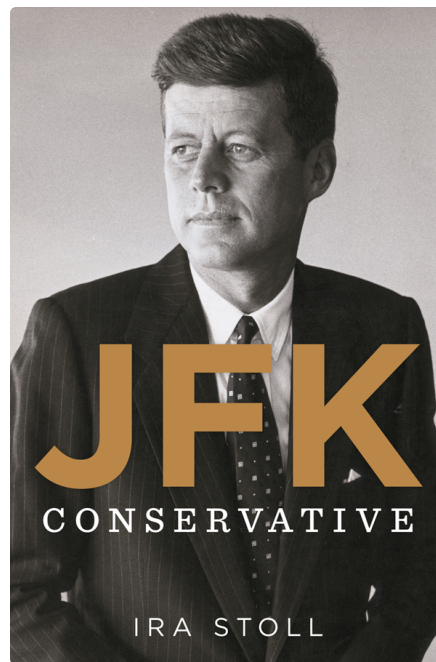
For any [expository writing](#)—that is, nonfiction, informational writing—your first comprehension goal is to identify the main points and relate any details to those main points. Because college-level texts can be challenging, you will also need to monitor your reading comprehension. That is, you will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

Identifying the Main Points

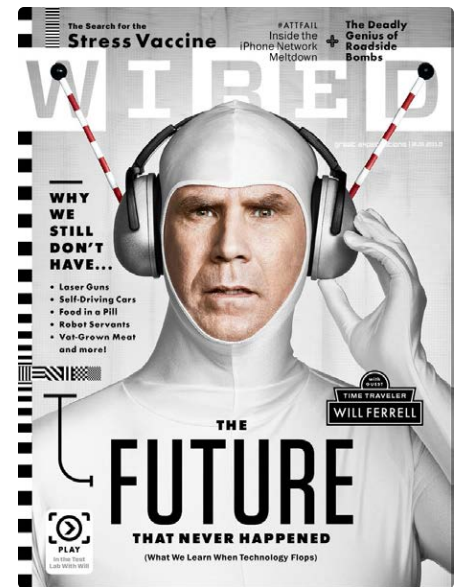
In college, you will read a wide variety of materials, including the following:



Textbooks



Nonfiction trade books



Popular magazine, newspaper, or web articles

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

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

Some texts make that task relatively easy. Textbooks, for instance, include the aforementioned features as well as headings and subheadings intended to make it

easier for students to identify core concepts. Graphic features, such as sidebars, diagrams, and charts, help students understand complex information and distinguish between essential and inessential points. When you are assigned to read from a textbook, be sure to use available comprehension aids to help you identify the main points.

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

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

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

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

Monitoring Your Comprehension

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

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

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

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

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

Adapted from “Chapter One ” of *Successful Writing*, 2012, used according to

Chapter 3: Common Writing Assignments

Part 1: Chapter 3

College writing assignments serve a different purpose than the typical writing assignments you completed in high school. The textbook *Successful Writing* explains that in high school, teachers generally focus on teaching you to write in a variety of modes and formats, including personal writing, expository writing, research papers, creative writing, and writing short answers and essays for exams. Over time, these assignments help you build a foundation of writing skills. In college, many instructors will expect you to already have that foundation.

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

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

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

Common Types of College Writing Assignments

Personal Response Paper

Expresses and explains your response to a reading assignment, a provocative quote, or a specific issue; may be very brief (sometimes a page or less) or more in-depth



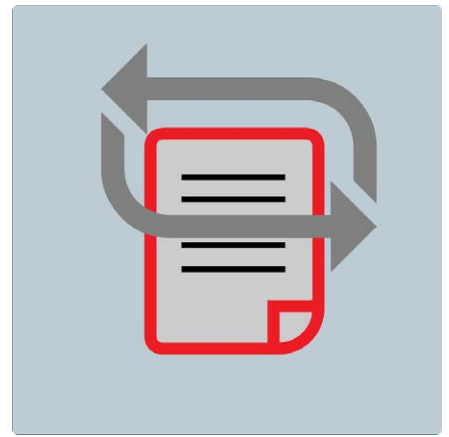
Summary

Restates the main points of a longer passage objectively and in your own words



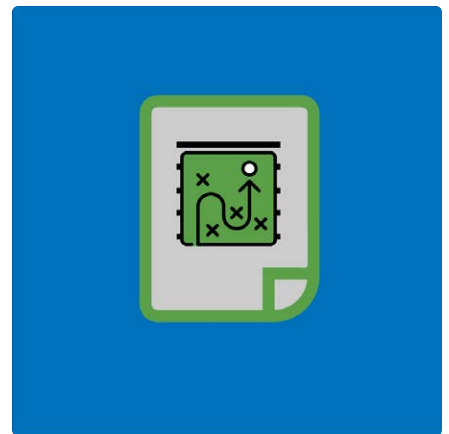
Position Paper

States and defends your position on an issue (often a controversial issue)



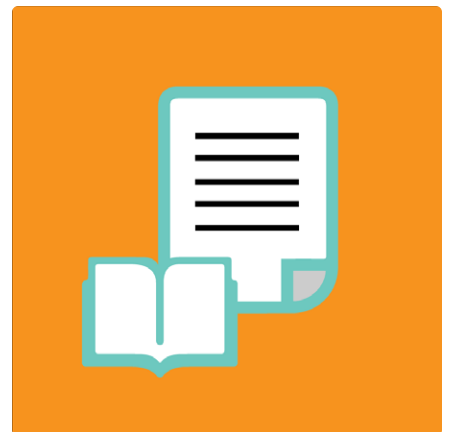
Problem-Solution Paper

Presents a problem, explains its causes, and proposes and explains a solution



Literary Analysis

States a thesis about a particular literary work (or works) and develops the thesis with evidence from the work and sometimes from additional sources



Research Review or Survey

Sums up available research findings on a particular topic



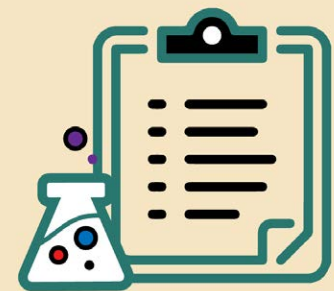
Case Study or Case Analysis

Investigates a particular person, group, or event in depth for the purpose of drawing a larger conclusion from the analysis



Laboratory Report

Presents a laboratory experiment, including the hypothesis, methods of data collection, results, and conclusions



Research Journal

Records a student's ideas and findings during the course of a long-term research project



Research Paper

Presents a thesis and supports it with original research and/or other researchers' findings on the topic; can take several different formats depending on the subject area

In Part One of this textbook, we covered college writing at CNM, and reading strategies that will help you succeed in different disciplines. As reading and writing go hand-in-hand, we will now turn to the steps you can take toward effective writing, also known as developing a writing process.



Adapted from “Chapter One ” of *Successful Writing*, 2012, used according to creative commons 3.0 [by-nc-sa](#)

Part 2: Writing Processes

Chapter 4: Writing for Different Rhetorical Situations

Chapter 5: Considering Audience

Chapter 6: Drafting Strategies

Chapter 7: Outlining

Chapter 8: Thesis Development

Chapter 9: Paragraph Development

Chapter 9.1: Paragraph Development contd.

Chapter 10: Revising and Peer Review

Chapter 10.1: Revising and Peer Review contd.

Chapter 4: Writing for Different Rhetorical Situations

Part 2: Chapter 4

An important part of developing academic writing skills includes developing your own writing process. Your writing process includes all the steps you take from the time you receive a writing prompt to the time that you turn in a final draft for a grade.

One teacher who helped compile this textbook, she shall remain nameless, described her own writing process as an undergrad: reading over the assignment prompt, stuffing the prompt into her backpack, losing the prompt, asking her teacher for another prompt, complaining that her teacher was mean when she asked for a new prompt, waiting until the night before the due date, writing until far past her bedtime, getting only three hours of sleep, and turning in the assignment.

That is not an effective writing process.

Her current writing process is different, and reflects years of experience. Now she reads over the expectations of her writing situation, considers her audience, develops her tone to match her audience's expectations, writes in multiple sittings, asks a friend or colleague to read what she has written, and then makes her writing public.

That process works for her; however, that process might not work for you. We are all different. Our brains respond differently to the task of writing. Some people like to outline, some people like to create idea maps, and some people like to write all their ideas down and organize later.

Each one of these processes is perfectly acceptable—**your job as a college writer is to determine which process works best for you.** What circumstances provide you with the best opportunities to write? Once you figure out what works best for you, try to repeat that pattern each time you find yourself in a situation where you must write. Then you can proudly say that you have a writing process.

The first step to developing a writing process is considering why you need to write and what you need to write. With that in mind, here is a section on analyzing assignments from the textbook *Rhetoric and Composition: A Guide to College Writing*.

Analyzing Assignments

You will likely encounter many different kinds of writing assignments in college, and it would be nearly impossible to list all of them. However, regardless of genre, one can use some basic strategies to approach these assignments constructively.

Read the assignment sheet early and thoroughly

An assignment sheet may be lengthy, but resist the temptation to skim it. Observe and interpret every detail of the text. Moreover, it is essential to focus on the [keywords](#) of the subject matter being discussed. It would be unfortunate to hand in an incomplete or misguided assignment because you did not properly read and understand the guidelines. Since you can easily overlook details on the first reading, read the assignment sheet a second time. As you are reading, highlight areas where you have questions, and also mark words you feel are particularly important. Ask yourself why your professor has given this assignment. How does it relate to what you are studying in class? Pay attention to key words, such as *compare*, *contrast*, *analyze*, etc. Who is your audience? Should the paper be written in a formal or informal tone? Is there documentation required? If a specific number of sources are required, how many must be books vs. online sources? What type of citation is called for: APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.? Is there a page or word count minimum/maximum? Are you required to submit a draft before the final copy? Will there be peer review?

Ask questions

After thoroughly reading the assignment sheet, you might not have questions right away. However, after reading it again, either before or after you try to start the assignment, you might find that you have questions. Don't play a guessing game when it comes to tackling assignment criteria—ask the right person for help: the instructor. Discuss any and all questions with the person who assigned the work, either in person or via email. Visit him or her during office hours or stay after class. Do not wait until the last minute, as doing so puts your grade at risk. Don't be shy about asking your professors questions. Not only will you better your understanding and the outcome of your paper, but professors tend to enjoy and benefit from student inquiry, as questions help them rethink their assignments and improve the clarity of their expectations. You are probably not the only student with a question, so be the one who is assertive and responsible enough to find answers. In the worst case scenario, when you have completed all of these steps and a professor still fails to provide you with the clarity you are looking for, discuss your questions with fellow classmates.

Tutoring Centers

Tutors are helpful consultants for reviewing writing assignments both before and after you begin. If you feel somewhat confident about what you need to include in your writing assignment, bring your completed outline and/or the first draft of your paper together with your assignment sheet. Tutors can also review your final draft before its submission to your professor. Details about CNM's ACE Tutoring Centers are located in chapter two.

Create a timeline

Set due dates for the stage of your writing process, for example when you would like to pick a topic and complete your rough draft. Procrastination rarely results in a good paper. Some school libraries offer helpful computer programs that can create an effective assignment timeline for you. This is a helpful option for new, inexperienced writers who have not yet learned the art of analyzing assignments, and who are not familiar with the amount of time that is required for the college writing process. Remember, late papers may or may not be accepted by your

instructor, and even if they are your grade will likely be reduced. Don't sell yourself short with late submissions.

Bonus Video

Adapted from "Chapter 22" of *Rhetoric and Composition*, 2013, used under creative commons 3.0 [cc-by-sa](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/Nna19lAZO50?modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0>

Rhetorical Situation of an Assignment

While it's helpful to spend time analyzing an assignment, you also want to make sure to consider the rhetorical situation of any assignment you write.

Has a teacher ever told you that the writing you turned in wasn't quite what he/she was looking for? Chances are, if this has happened to you, the problem originated in your purpose. You probably did not perform the tasks that the teacher asked for in the assignment. You can find the tasks in an assignment prompt when you pick out the strong, active verbs written in second person point of view.

Your teacher might ask you to contextualize, analyze, synthesize, or explicate in an assignment, and if you, in turn, merely summarize an assigned reading, you will miss out not only on points, but also educational objectives. [Summary](#) is often important in high school, where the purpose of writing assignments might be for the teacher to know you comprehend the material. For that reason, they may ask

you to explain what happened in a story.

In college, your instructors are under the impression that you understand the material, and they would like you to deal critically with the material. For that reason, figuring out the academic purpose of an assignment is important.

Analyzing Assignments

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modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0](https://www.youtube.com/embed/X9RaMO6exdY?modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0)

Analyzing Assignments: How to figure out what your teacher wants

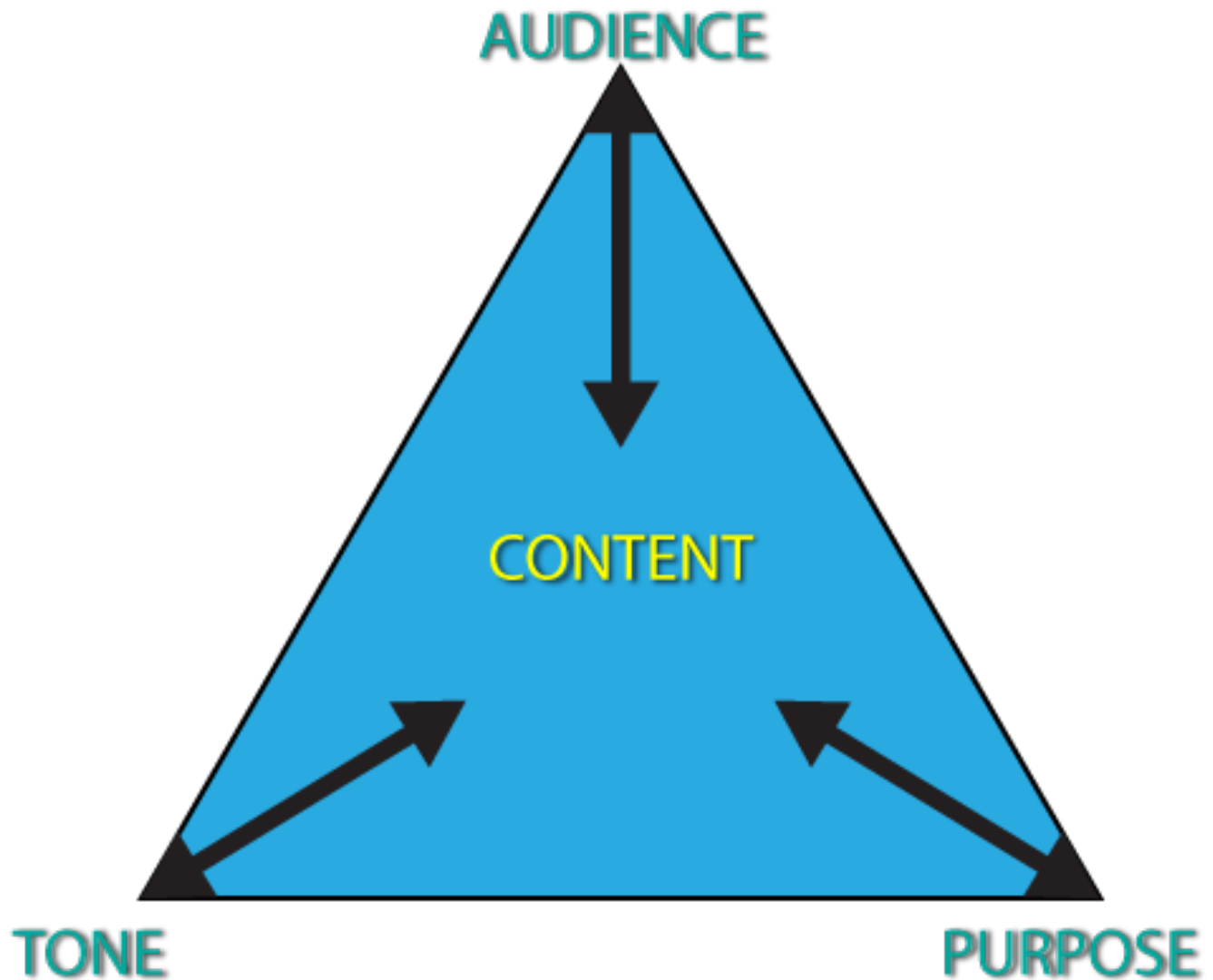
Your teachers will likely introduce different purposes for your writing, and different conventions they want you to follow depending on the disciplines in which they teach. For that reason, when you receive any writing assignment prompt, you will need to analyze that assignment's rhetorical situation. From *Successful Writing*, here is a section that discusses how to determine your rhetorical situation.

During the writing process, it is helpful to position yourself as a reader. Ask yourself whether you can focus easily on each point you make. One technique that effective writers use is to begin a fresh paragraph for each new idea they introduce.

Paragraphs separate ideas into logical, manageable chunks. One paragraph focuses on only one main idea and presents coherent sentences to support that one point. Because all the sentences in one paragraph support the same point, a paragraph may stand on its own. To create longer assignments and to discuss more than one point, writers group together paragraphs.

Three elements shape the content of each paragraph:

1. **Purpose.** The reason the writer composes the paragraph.
2. **Tone.** The attitude the writer conveys about the paragraph's subject.
3. **Audience.** The individual or group whom the writer intends to address



The assignment's purpose, audience, and tone dictate what the paragraph covers and how it will support one main point. This section covers how purpose, audience, and tone affect reading and writing paragraphs

Bonus Video

[//www.youtube.com/embed/hfH-j2WDftY?modestbranding=1&rel=0&showin](https://www.youtube.com/embed/hfH-j2WDftY?modestbranding=1&rel=0&showin)

Writing: Task, Purpose, and Audience

– Aristotle’s Rhetorical Triangle

Identifying Common Academic Purposes

The purpose of a piece of writing answers the question “Why?” For example, why write a play? To entertain a packed theater. Why write instructions to the babysitter? To inform him or her of your schedule and rules. Why write a letter to your congressman? To persuade him to address your community’s needs.

In academic settings, the reasons for writing often fulfill four main purposes: to summarize, to analyze, to synthesize, and to evaluate. You will encounter these four purposes not only as you read for your classes but also as you read for work or pleasure. Because reading and writing work together, your writing skills will improve as you read.

Eventually, your instructors will ask you to complete assignments specifically designed to meet one of the four purposes. As you will see, the purpose for writing will guide you through each part of the paper, helping you make decisions about content and style. For now, identifying these purposes by reading paragraphs will prepare you to write individual paragraphs and to build longer assignments.

Here are some sample paragraphs that each fulfill one of these main purposes.

Summary Paragraphs

A summary shrinks a large amount of information into only the essentials. You probably summarize events, books, and movies daily. Think about the last blockbuster movie you saw or the last novel you read. Chances are, at some point

in a casual conversation with a friend, coworker, or classmate, you compressed all the action in a two-hour film or in a two-hundred-page book into a brief description of the major plot movements. While in conversation, you probably described the major highlights, or the main points in just a few sentences, using your own vocabulary and manner of speaking.

Similarly, a summary paragraph condenses a long piece of writing into a smaller paragraph by extracting only the vital information. A summary uses only the writer's own words. Like the summary's purpose in daily conversation, the purpose of an academic summary paragraph is to maintain all the essential information from a longer document. Although shorter than the original piece of writing, a summary should still communicate all the key points and key support. In other words, summary paragraphs should be succinct and to the point.

Here is an example of a college level reading that a student will need to summarize:

According to the Monitoring the Future Study, almost two-thirds of 10th-grade students reported having tried alcohol at least once in their lifetime, and two-fifths reported having been drunk at least once (Johnston et al. 2006x). Among 12th-grade students, these rates had risen to over three-quarters who reported having tried alcohol at least once. In terms of current alcohol use, 33.2 percent of the Nation's 10th graders and 47.0 percent of 12th graders reported having used alcohol at least once in the past 30 days; 17.6 percent and 30.2 percent, respectively, reported having had five or more drinks in a row in the past 2 weeks (sometimes called binge drinking); and 1.3 percent and 3.1 percent, respectively, reported daily alcohol use (Johnston et al. 2006a).

Alcohol consumption continues to escalate after high school. In fact, eighteen- to twenty-four-year-olds have the highest levels of alcohol consumption and alcohol dependence of any age group. In the first 2 years after high school, lifetime prevalence of alcohol use (based on 2005 follow-up surveys from the Monitoring the Future Study) was 81.8, 30-day use prevalence was 59 percent, and binge-drinking prevalence was 36.3 percent (Johnston et al. 2006b). Of note, college students on average drink more than their non-college peers, even though they drank less during high school than those who

did not go on to college (Johnston et al. 2006a,b; Schulenberg and Maggs 2002). For example, in 2005, the rate of binge drinking for college students (1 to 4 years beyond high school) was 40.1 percent, whereas the rate for their non-college age mates was 35.1 percent.

Alcohol use and problem drinking in late adolescence vary by sociodemographic characteristics. For example, the prevalence of alcohol use is higher for boys than for girls, higher for White and Hispanic adolescents than for African-American adolescents, and higher for those living in the north and north central United States than for those living in the South and West. Some of these relationships change with early adulthood, however. For example, although alcohol use in high school tends to be higher in areas with lower population density (i.e., rural areas) than in more densely populated areas, this relationship reverses during early adulthood (Johnston et al., 2006 a,b). Lower economic status (i.e., lower education level of parents) is associated with more alcohol use during the early high school years: by the end of high school, and during the transition to adulthood, this relationship changes, and youth from higher socioeconomic backgrounds consume greater amounts of alcohol.

A summary of the report should present all the main points and supporting details in brief. Read the following summary of the report written by a student:

Brown et al. inform us that by tenth grade, nearly two-thirds of students have tried alcohol at least once, and by twelfth grade this figure increases to over three-quarters of students. After high school, alcohol consumption increases further, and college-aged students have the highest levels of alcohol consumption and dependence of any age group. Alcohol use varies according to factors such as gender, race, geo-graphic location, and socioeconomic status.

Some of these trends may reverse in early adulthood. For example, adolescents of lower socioeconomic status are more likely to consume alcohol during high school years, whereas youth from higher socioeconomic status are more likely to consume alcohol in the years after high school.

Notice how the summary retains the key points made by the writers of the original report but omits most of the statistical data. Summaries need not contain all the specific facts and figures in the original document; they provide only an overview of the essential information.



Analysis Paragraphs

An analysis separates complex materials in their different parts and studies how the parts relate to one another. The analysis of simple table salt, for example, would require a deconstruction of its parts—the elements sodium (Na) and chloride (Cl). Then, scientists would study how the two elements interact to create the compound NaCl, or sodium chloride, which is also called simple table salt.

Analysis is not limited to the sciences, of course. An analysis paragraph in academic writing fulfills the same purpose. Instead of deconstructing compounds, academic analysis paragraphs typically deconstruct documents. An analysis takes apart a primary source (an essay, a book, an article, etc.) point by point. It communicates the main points of the document by examining individual points and identifying how the points relate to one another.

Take a look at a student's analysis of the journal report.

At the beginning of their report, Brown et al. use specific data regarding the use of alcohol by high school students and college-aged students, which is supported by several studies. Later in the report, they consider how various socioeconomic factors influence problem drinking in adolescence. The latter part of the report is far less specific and does not provide statistics or examples.

The lack of specific information in the second part of the report raises several important questions. Why are teenagers in rural high schools more likely to

drink than teenagers in urban areas? Where do they obtain alcohol? How do parental attitudes influence this trend? A follow-up study could compare several high schools in rural and urban areas to consider these issues and potentially find ways to reduce teenage alcohol consumption.

Notice how the analysis does not simply repeat information from the original report, but considers how the points within the report relate to one another. By doing this, the student uncovers a discrepancy between the points that are backed up by statistics and those that require additional information. Analyzing a document involves a close examination of each of the individual parts and how they work together.



Synthesis Paragraphs

A [synthesis](#) combines two or more items to create an entirely new item. Consider the electronic musical instrument aptly named the synthesizer. It looks like a simple keyboard but displays a dashboard of switches, buttons, and levers. With the flip of a few switches, a musician may combine the distinct sounds of a piano, a flute, or a guitar—or any other combination of instruments—to create a new sound. The purpose of the synthesizer is to blend together the notes from individual instruments to form new, unique notes.

The purpose of an academic synthesis is to blend individual documents into a new document. An academic synthesis paragraph considers the main points from one or more pieces of writing and links the main points together to create a new point, one not replicated in either document.

Take a look at a student’s synthesis of several sources about underage drinking.

In their 2009 report, Brown et al. consider the rates of alcohol consumption among high school and college-aged students and various sociodemographic

factors that affect these rates. However, this report is limited to assessing the rates of underage drinking, rather than considering methods of decreasing these rates. Several other studies, as well as original research among college students, provide insight into how these rates may be reduced.

One study, by Spoth, Greenberg, and Turrisi (2009) considers the impact of various types of interventions as a method for reducing alcohol consumption among minors. They conclude that although family-focused interventions for adolescents aged ten to fifteen have shown promise, there is a serious lack of interventions available for college-aged students who do not attend college. These students are among the highest risk level for alcohol abuse, a fact supported by Brown et al.

I did my own research and interviewed eight college students, four men and four women. I asked them when they first tried alcohol and what factors encouraged them to drink. All four men had tried alcohol by the age of thirteen. Three of the women had also tried alcohol by thirteen and the fourth had tried alcohol by fifteen. All eight students said that peer pressure, boredom, and the thrill of trying something illegal were motivating factors. These results support the research of Brown et al. However, they also raise an interesting point. If boredom is a motivating factor for underage drinking, maybe additional after school programs or other community measure could be introduced to dissuade teenagers from underage drinking. Based on my sources, further research is needed to show true preventative measures for teenage alcohol consumption.

Notice how the synthesis paragraphs consider each source and use information from each to create a new thesis. A good synthesis does not repeat information; the writer uses a variety of sources to create a new idea.



Evaluation Paragraphs

An [evaluation](#) judges the value of something and determines its worth.

Evaluations in everyday experiences are often not only dictated by set standards

but also influenced by opinion and prior knowledge. For example, at work, a supervisor may complete an employee evaluation by judging his subordinate's performance based on the company's goals. If the company focuses on improving communication, the supervisor will rate the employee's customer service according to a standard scale. However, the evaluation still depends on the supervisor's opinion and prior experience with the employee. The purpose of the evaluation is to determine how well the employee performs at his or her job.

n academic evaluation communicates your opinion, and its justifications, about a document or a topic of discussion. Evaluations are influenced by your reading of the document, your prior knowledge, and your prior experience with the topic or issue. Because an evaluation incorporates your point of view and reasons for your point of view, it typically requires more critical thinking and a combination of summary, analysis, and synthesis skills. Thus evaluation paragraphs often follow summary, analysis, and synthesis paragraphs. Read a student's evaluation paragraph.

Throughout their report, Brown et al. provide valuable statistics that highlight the frequency of alcohol use among high school and college students. They use several reputable sources to support their points. However, the report focuses solely on the frequency of alcohol use and how it varies according to certain sociodemographic factors. Other sources, such as Spoth, Greenberg, and Turrisi's study (2009) and the survey I conducted among college students, examine the reasons for alcohol use among young people and offer suggestions as to how to reduce the rates. Nonetheless, I think that Brown et al. offer a useful set of statistics from which to base further research into alcohol use among high school and college students.

Notice how the paragraph incorporates the student's personal judgment within the evaluation. Evaluating a document requires prior knowledge that is often based on additional research. And if you include that outside research in your paragraph, be sure to cite it. Check out part six of this book, either MLA or APA style to help you incorporate research ethically and effectively

Adapted from “Chapter Six” of *Successful Writing*, 2012, used according to creative commons 3.0 [cc-by-nc-sa](#)

You may be asked to use these different modes of writing—evaluation, synthesis, analysis, and summary—for any given assignment. The trick for you to remember is to search for the purpose of an assignment. Your teacher will give you keywords—verbs—that will let you know what the purpose of an assignment is. In an assignment prompt that involves writing, look for the active verbs or tasks that your teacher would like you to perform.

- If an assignment asks you to summarize, you will know that your teacher wants to make sure you comprehend the material, and the teacher would like you to re-state a text’s main ideas in your own words
- If you see a verb like evaluate, rate, or assess, you will know that your instructor expects you to write evaluative paragraphs
- There aren’t many synonyms for synthesis in an assignment prompt. If your teacher asks you to synthesize in writing, you can expect that they would like you to use multiple sources and discuss them together, how they relate to one another, and how they relate to your ideas and [claims](#) in an essay.
- If your teacher asks you to examine, interpret, consider, or investigate in a piece of writing, chances are they would like to see you writing analytical paragraphs.

But don’t take our word for it. Each instructor is different. For that reason, if you have questions about the purpose of an assignment, raise your hand in class and ask. Chances are, someone else is thinking the same question. They might even thank you for asking the instructor to clarify his/her request because getting the purpose incorrect in a writing assignment means that you will not only miss out on a lot of points, but you will also miss out on the educational objective for that assignment.

Adapted from “Chapter 5” of *A Guide to Perspective Analysis*, 2012, used according to creative commons [CC-BY-NC-SA 3.0](#).

Chapter 5: Considering Audience

Part 2: Chapter 5

Although the audience for writing assignments—your readers—may not appear in person, they play a vital role in the development of your writing. Even in everyday writing activities, you identify your readers' characteristics, interests, and expectations before making decisions about what you write. In fact, thinking about audience has become so common that you may not even detect the audience-driven decisions. We will spend this chapter focusing on the role the audience plays in your writing by reviewing information presented in the textbook *Successful Writing*.

For example, you update your status on a social networking site with the awareness of who will digitally follow the post. If you want to brag about a good grade, you may write the post to please family members. If you want to describe a funny moment, you may write with your friends' senses of humor in mind. Even at work, you send e-mails with an awareness of an unintended receiver who could intercept the message.

Choosing Appropriate, Interesting Content

Content refers to all the written substance within a document. After selecting an audience and a purpose, you must choose what information will make it to the page. Content may consist of examples, statistics, facts, anecdotes, testimonies, and observations, but no matter the type, the information must be appropriate and interesting for the audience and purpose. An essay written for third graders that summarizes the legislative process, for example, would have to contain succinct and simple content.

Content is also shaped by [tone](#). When the tone matches the content, the audience

will be more engaged, and you will build a stronger relationship with your readers. Consider the third grade audience mentioned earlier; you would choose simple content that the audience will easily understand, and you would express that content using an enthusiastic tone. The same considerations apply to all audiences and purposes.

Adapted from “[Chapter Six](#)” of *Successful Writing*, 2012, used according to creative commons 3.0 [CC-BY-NC-SA](#)

Developing Voice

As a writer, it is important to know your audience and to consider which content will be appropriate for that audience. Once you have determined these basic steps in your writing process, you can begin to consider how to shape and develop your voice to be academic and appropriate to the discipline in which you are writing. The textbook *Boundless Writing* introduces great information on developing voice.

You’ve probably heard that one quality found in good writing is voice. Voice refers to elements of the author’s tone, phrasing, and [style](#) that are recognizably unique to her or him. Having a distinctive, persuasive voice is crucial to engaging your audience — without it, your paper risks falling flat, no matter how much research you’ve compiled or how well you’ve followed other directions. Yes, academic writing has rules

about format, style, and [objectivity](#) that you must follow, but this does not mean you can write boring, impersonal prose. You can — and should — develop an authorial voice no matter what subject you choose to write about.

Saying each writer has a unique voice does not mean that each writer has a

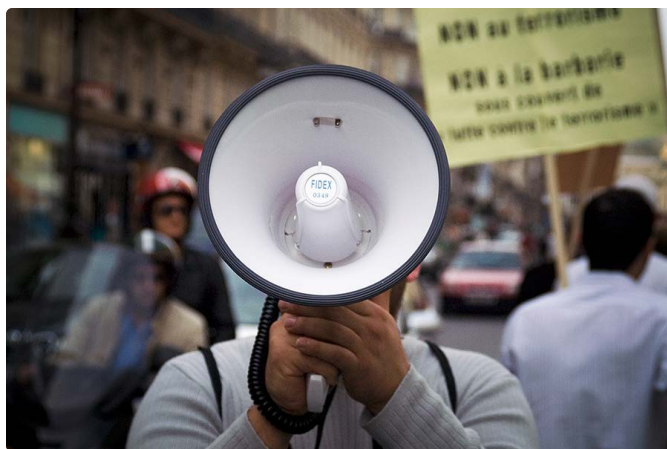


Photo by [looking4poetry](#), CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

radically different style from anyone else. In academic writing, voice comes down to small habits and personal preferences. Think about it this way: if all the students in your class were told to explain a complex concept, none of them would do it in the same way. Each one would use different language and [syntax](#) to describe the concept, and as each student makes individual choices in language and syntax over a period of time, their readers will eventually associate those choices with particular writers — their unique writing accumulates to create an authorial voice.

Selecting an Appropriate Tone

Tone identifies a speaker's [attitude](#) toward a subject or another person. You may pick up a person's tone of voice fairly easily in conversation. A friend who tells you about her weekend may speak excitedly about a fun skiing trip. An instructor who means business may speak in a low, slow voice to emphasize her serious mood. Or, a coworker who needs to let off some steam after a long meeting may crack a sarcastic joke.

Just as speakers transmit emotion through voice, writers can transmit a range of attitudes through writing, from excited and humorous to somber and critical. These emotions create connections among the audience, the author, and the subject, ultimately building a relationship between the audience and the text. To stimulate these connections, writers portray their attitudes and feelings with useful devices, such as sentence structure, word choice, punctuation, and formal or informal language. Keep in mind that the writer's attitude should always appropriately match the audience and the purpose.

Writing with Appropriate Style

Every writer has a distinct **style**. You should maintain distinctive elements of your voice and style in the academic context. Even when you're outside your comfortable, everyday environment, you can still find ways to express your unique style. Your writing style, especially your word choice ([diction](#)), should reflect the audience you are writing to. Always imagine who your hypothetical audience is (what type of publication would the content of your essay fit into?) and that will help you determine the specifics of your writing style. Academic essays usually require a formal style of writing. That means you should avoid unnecessary

informality like first and second person usage, use of slang, and the temptation to write like you are texting, tweeting, emailing, blogging or engaging in any other genre that is typically characterized by a less formal style.

Examples of different voice and style:

Example 1

Political discussions can often be a cause of tension and controversy, which is why many people prefer to avoid the subject altogether when they're in social or professional situations. However, engaging in discussions of politics is an essential form of participation in a democracy. This is why civics and political science must be taught in elementary and high schools beginning in the first grade.

Example 2

Ugh, politics. Whether you love them or hate them, they're a necessary part of living in a democracy. As Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will." So how do we help people achieve a better understanding of politics and encourage them to talk about differing views? By starting to teach them long before they reach voting age.

Which example has a more formal voice or academic style? Which one would you want to read further? Keep in mind that voice is not something you can automatically create. There are times when you may be tempted to use unusual syntax or fancy vocabulary in the hopes of making your writing stand

Exercise

https://www.youtube.com/embed/CfUy_v-kwrA

out, but that would not be your genuine style. There are no quick ways to give yourself a recognizable voice; it is something that can only be developed over time. The best way to develop voice is to keep writing and to think about what kind of writing you like. Pay attention to how you speak — what words you use, what sorts of phrases and sentence structures you favor, even what kind of punctuation appears in your work frequently. These are the choices that will eventually become markers of your *authority*.

Watch the opening statements from a debate between Bill O'Reilly and Jon Stewart. Compare and contrast their voices, tones, and styles.

Adapted from “[Chapter One](#)” in Boundless Writing, 2015, used under creative commons 4.0 [cc-by-sa](#)

Finding the Most Vivid Terms

Once you've decided on the most appropriate voice and style for your document, you will want to continue enhancing your writing to engage your reader. The writing process requires many steps, and in order to ensure you have created a style that meets the needs of both the assignment and your reader, spend some time enhancing your word choices, developing your descriptions, and clarifying your sentence constructions. Here are a few tips to help you enhance your writing style as you continue working to complete your draft.

After you've finished writing a draft of your essay, go back and underline all the vague and general terms to see if you can replace them with more precise diction, words that are clear and specific. Especially look out for the “s” word, and no, I do not mean the one that comes to almost everyone's lips when they look in the rear view mirror and see flashing police lights. I mean “society.” By itself it can mean anything—the entire world, the specific part of the country you live in, the people who make the rules, the counter culture that resists the people who make the rules, to name just a few. If you can specify which “society” you are referring to,

you will not only clarify your analysis but also discover new insights concerning the significance of your perspective to a specific group. And also try to avoid all the variations of society that do not provide additional clarity, such as: “in today’s society” or “in today’s modern complex industrial society.”

Consider also looking out for these vague terms and phrases: “The Government.” Try to specify if this term refers to state, local, or federal representatives, the people who vote them in, or to those who are paid through tax dollars, such as public school teachers, policeman, and armed

service personnel. Another vague phrase is, “Since the beginning of time.” Try to specify when something actually begins. Personal computers, for instance, have not been around since the beginning of time, as one of my students wrote, but only since the late 1970’s. Avoid broad generalizations like, “All people want to have...” No matter how you finish that sentence, you probably won’t discover something that all people want to have. Again, specify which group of people and why they want to have it. You should also be on the lookout for words like, “stuff,” “things,” or “items,” if you can replace them with more concrete terms like, “scattered papers,” “empty oil cans,” or “half finished plates of food.”



Give the same care and attention to your choice of verbs. You should especially avoid overusing the passive voice, in which the subject of the sentence does not perform the action as in “Tina was asked to go to the prom by Jake.” Usually the active voice sounds more vivid and more compelling, “Jake asked Tina to go to the prom.” And this sentence would be even better if you could replace the verb “asked” with one that gives a more specific account of the action: “Jake begged Tina to go to the Prom.” But don’t feel the need to eliminate the passive voice entirely. Sometimes you may not know who performed the action implied in the sentence, “my car was scratched” or you don’t want to admit responsibility for your own actions, “mistakes were made.” Just make certain that when you use a form of the verb “to be,” you do so for a reason and not in place of a verb that suggests a

more vivid account. Ultimately, you want to avoid repetitively using any one verb in your writing. Vary your verb choices to create descriptive and engaging writing.

Avoiding Wordiness

In advising you to find more precise and compelling words, I do not mean that you should search your thesaurus to find the longest and most complicated terms. Nothing makes students sound like they are trying too hard to impress their teachers than when they use words that appear unnecessarily complicated, dated, or pretentious to make the analysis seem more sophisticated. Though students often think that they impress their teachers by using the most complex term, it usually leaves the opposite impression that you are spending too much time with the thesaurus and not enough with the actual substance of the essay.

Bonus Video

[//www.youtube.com/embed/Dz8E8UOBFJQ?modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0](https://www.youtube.com/embed/Dz8E8UOBFJQ?modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0)

The power of simple words – Terin Izil

Along these lines, avoid the other common trick of adding unnecessary words just to lengthen the essay out to the required number of pages. Instead always look for ways to state your point of view more succinctly. You can do this by using a term that implies several others. For instance, you do not need to write, “Sue is like those people who always put off doing what they are supposed to do until much later than they should have done it in the first place,” when you can simply say, “Sue procrastinates.”

Writing Compelling Sentences

Once your essay has a precise, natural diction, you can jazz it up even further by creating sentence variety. A series of sentences of the same length and type tends to become hypnotic (in fact, hypnotists use rhythmical tones and repetitious phrases to put people into trances). Your essay should “flow” in the sense that the ideas connect to each other, but not in the sense that the style seems like listening

to the waves of a lake lapping against the shore at steady intervals. A style that commands attention seems more like a river that changes at every bend. To achieve this effect, try to juxtapose sentences of various lengths and types. If you have a long sentence that is full of subordination and coordination, moving through the complexities of a section of your analysis, then try to follow it up with a short one. Like this.



An excellent way to achieve more variety, provide more coherence, and reduce wordiness is to combine some of your sentences. Take the following series: *I wanted some ice cream. There are ice cream shops downtown. I have to drive to get to downtown. I don't have time to drive downtown. I've been putting on weight lately. I decided to eat a carrot. Carrots are healthier than ice cream.* Even if these sentences were full of more intriguing observations, we would have to struggle not to fall into a hypnotic trance while reading them. Consider how much more engaging it is to read: *I wanted some ice cream. But when I realized I had to drive all the way downtown to buy some, I decided to settle for a carrot instead, a much healthier choice for me anyway. I've put on weight lately.* The combination of short and long sentences keeps your reader's attention by jolting them out of a monotonous flow; the elimination of excess words keeps us from having to sort through the clutter; and the coordination and subordination provides a sense of coherence to the previously scattered thoughts.

Adapted from “[Chapter 5](#)” of *A Guide to Perspective Analysis*, 2012, used according to creative commons 3.0 [cc-by-nc-sa](#).

Chapter 6: Drafting Strategies

Part 2: Chapter 6

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

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

These are the five steps in the writing process:

1. [Prewriting](#)
2. Outlining the structure of ideas
3. Writing a rough draft
4. Revising
5. Editing

Effective writing can be simply described as good ideas that are expressed well and arranged in the proper order. This chapter will give you the chance to work on all these important aspects of writing. Using the strategies in this chapter can help

you overcome the fear of the blank page and confidently begin the writing process.

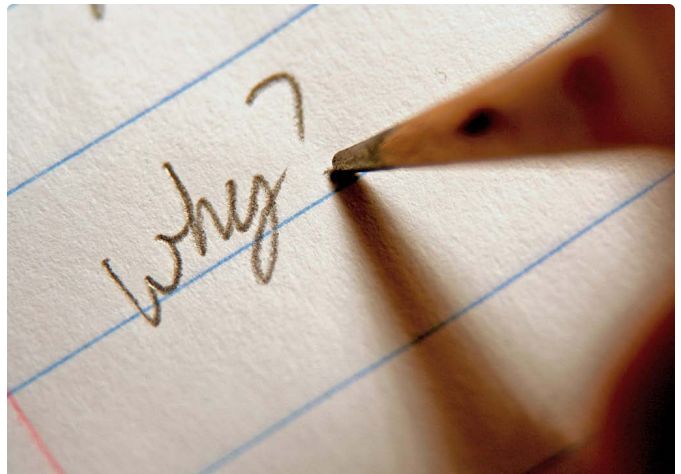
Prewriting

Prewriting is the stage of the writing process where you transfer your abstract thoughts into more concrete ideas in ink on paper (or in type on a computer screen). Although prewriting techniques can be helpful in all stages of the writing process, the following four strategies are best used when initially deciding on a topic:

1. Using experience and observations
2. Reading
3. Freewriting
4. Asking questions

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

The first important step is to tell yourself **why** you are writing (to inform, to explain, or some other purpose) and **for whom** you are writing. Write your purpose and your audience on a sheet of paper, and keep the paper close by as you read and complete exercises in this chapter.



My purpose:

My audience:

The following checklist can help you decide if your narrowed topic is a good topic for your assignment.

Am I interested in this topic?

Would my audience be interested?

Do I have prior knowledge or experience with this topic? If so, would I be comfortable exploring this topic and sharing my experiences?

Do I want to learn more about this topic?

Is this topic specific?

Does it fit the length of the assignment?

Can I achieve the assignment's purpose with this topic?

With your narrowed focus in mind, answer the bulleted questions in the checklist for developing a good topic. If you can answer “yes” to all the questions, then you have a good topic. If you answer “no” to any of the questions, think about another topic or adjust the one you have and try the prewriting strategies again.

Using Experience and Observations

When selecting a topic, you may also want to consider something that interests you or something based on your own life and personal experiences. Even everyday observations can lead to interesting topics. After writers think about their experiences and observations, they often take notes on paper to better develop their thoughts. These notes help writers discover what they have to say about their topic.

Reading

Reading plays a vital role in all the stages of the writing process, but it first figures in the development of ideas and topics. Different kinds of documents can help you choose a topic and also develop that topic. For example, a magazine advertising the latest research on the threat of global warming may catch your eye in the supermarket. This cover may interest you, and you may consider global warming as a topic. Or maybe a novel's courtroom drama sparks your curiosity of a particular lawsuit or legal controversy.

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

Prewriting strategies depend on your critical reading skills and your level of effort. You can use prewriting exercises (and outlines and drafts later in the writing process) to further develop your topic and ideas.

Freewriting

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

Writing often comes easier when you have a personal connection with the topic you have chosen. Remember, to generate ideas in your freewriting, you may also think about readings that you have enjoyed or that have challenged your thinking. Doing this may lead your thoughts in interesting directions.

Quickly recording your thoughts on paper will help you discover your position on a

topic. When writing quickly, try not to doubt or question your ideas. Allow yourself to write freely and unselfconsciously. Once you start writing with few limitations, you may find you have a clearer position than you first realized. Your flow of thoughts can lead you to discover even more ideas about the topic. Freewriting may even lead you to discover another topic that excites you even more.

Asking Questions

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

In everyday situations, you pose these kinds of questions to obtain more information. Who will be my partner for the project? When is the next meeting? Why is my car making that odd noise? Even the title of this chapter begins with the question “How do I begin?”

You seek the answers to these questions to gain knowledge, to better understand your daily experiences, and to plan for the future. Asking these types of questions will also help you with the writing process. As you choose your topic, answering these questions can help you revisit the ideas you already have and generate new ways to think about your topic. You may also discover aspects of the topic that are unfamiliar to you and that you would like to learn more about. All these idea-gathering techniques will help you plan for future work on your assignment.

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Creative Prewriting Techniques

The textbook *English for Business Success* explains that the prewriting techniques of freewriting and asking questions can help you think more about your topic; however, you have more strategies available to you, some less linear and more creative, to help you begin your writing journey. These include brainstorming, idea mapping, and searching the Internet.

Brainstorming



Brainstorming is similar to list making. You can make a list on your own or in a group with your classmates. Start with a blank sheet of paper (or a blank computer document) and write your general topic across the top. Underneath your topic, make a list of more specific ideas. Think of your general topic as a broad category and then list items that fit in that category. Often you will find that one item can lead to the next, creating a flow of ideas that can help you narrow your focus to a more specific paper topic.

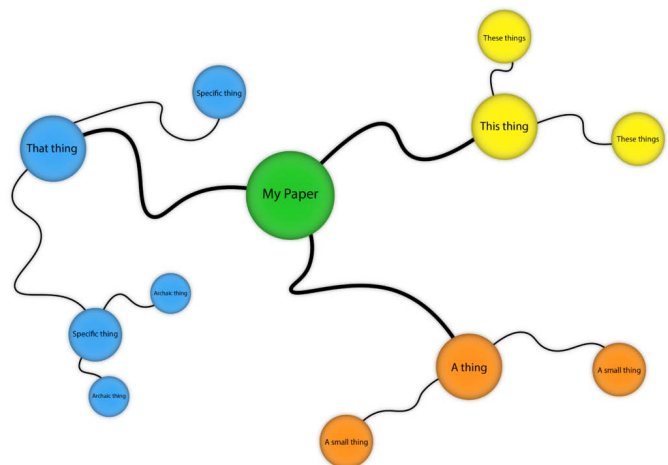
Idea Mapping

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

Idea Map

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



Searching the Internet

Using search engines on the internet is a good way to see what kinds of websites are available regarding your topic. Writers use search engines not only to understand more about the topic's specific issues but also to get better acquainted with their audience.

When you search the internet, type some keywords from your broad topic or words from your narrowed focus into your browser's search engine (many good general and specialized search engines are available for you to try). Then look over the results for relevant and interesting articles.

Not all the results that online search engines return will be useful or reliable. CNM's Library offers additional information on evaluating online sources. Give

careful consideration to the reliability of an online source before selecting a topic based on it. Remember that factual information can be verified in other sources, both online and in print. If you have doubts about any information you find, either do not use it or identify it as potentially unreliable. For more information, you can either visit the following CNM Libraries link:

[CNM Libraries](#)

or read ahead to [Chapter 32](#).

Narrowing the Focus

Narrowing the focus means breaking up the topic into subtopics, or more specific points. Generating several subtopics will help you eventually select the ones that fit the assignment and appeal to you and your audience. For a more extended discussion of how to narrow down a paper's focus, check out the [Research Process Chapter](#).

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Chapter 7: Outlining

Part 2: Chapter 7

Once you begin narrowing down your topic, depending on the type of paper, you may be ready to start drafting. The best point to begin writing your draft also depends on the genre of essay you are writing. If you are writing a research paper, then you will need to follow more steps, which are covered in detail in [part six](#).

However, if you are preparing for a response paper and your teacher has provided you with all of the texts you need to begin writing, you may be ready to start outlining. The textbook *English for Business Success* explains that your prewriting activities and readings can help you gather information for your assignment. The more you sort through the pieces of information you found, the more you will begin to see the connections between them. Patterns and gaps may begin to stand out. But only when you start to organize your ideas will you be able to translate your raw insights into a form that will communicate meaning to your audience.

Organizing Ideas

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

Order refers to your choice of what to present first, second, third, and so on in your writing. The order you pick closely relates to your purpose for writing that particular assignment. For example, when telling a story, it may be important to first describe the backstory. Or you may need to first describe a 3-D movie

projector or a television studio to help readers visualize the setting and scene. You may want to group your support effectively to convince readers that your point of view on an issue is well reasoned and worthy of belief.

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

Methods of Organizing Writing

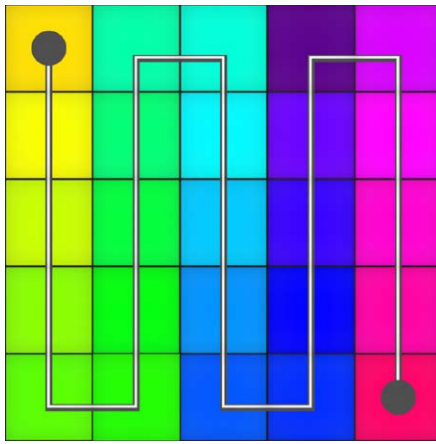
An outline is a written plan that serves as a skeleton for the paragraphs you write. Later, when you draft paragraphs in the next stage of the writing process, you will add support to create “flesh” and “muscle” for your assignment. The outline will utilize the ideas you developed during the prewriting process.

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

Three common ways to structure a paper are [chronological order](#), spatial order, and order of importance. Choose the order that will most effectively fit your purpose and support your main point.

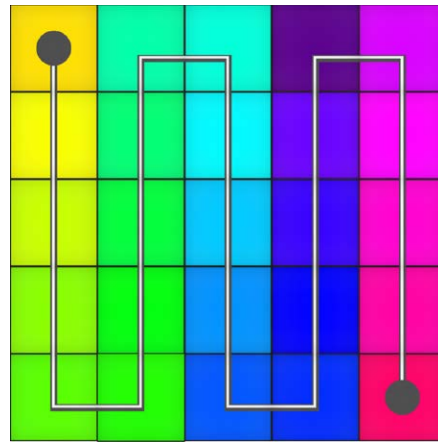
The following table “Order versus Purpose,” shows the connection between order and purpose.

Table 7.1 Order versus Purpose



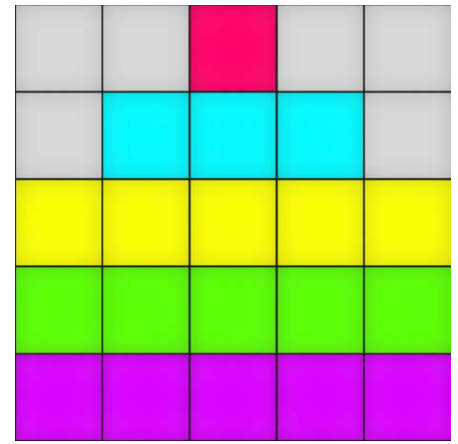
Chronological

- To tell a story or relate an experience
- To explain the history of an event or a topic
- To introduce the steps in a process



Spatial

- To help readers visualize something as you want them to see it
- To create a main impression using the senses (sight, touch, taste, smell, and sound)



Importance

- To persuade or convince
- To rank items by their importance, benefit, or significance

Once you decide on the structure of your paper, you'll want to begin drafting your thesis statement. Try to remember that you do not need a perfect thesis statement to begin writing. Wanting a perfect thesis often leads to procrastination, which is pointless because you don't need to write perfectly the first time—especially if you have a process and you leave enough time to revise. So become invested in the process of writing. Write your ideas on paper and work with them.

Tip

No one has to see your freewriting and brainstorming, but these ideas, the sloppy stuff written on a looseleaf sheet of paper, will guide you toward writing a strong paper.

Your first thesis statement will be a preliminary or a working thesis statement. As you continue to develop the arrangement of a paper, you can limit your working thesis statement if it is too broad or expand it if it proves too narrow for what you want to say.

Writing a Thesis Statement

You will need a thesis, a main focus that addresses your purpose, when you begin to outline your assignment; this is different from the previously mentioned topic. Your thesis statement is the controlling idea (sometimes referred to as the big idea) of an entire essay. The controlling idea is the main idea that you want to present and develop.

A thesis statement is often one sentence long, and it states your point of view or interpretation. The thesis statement should not introduce the broad topic for your writing writing but rather what you have to say about that topic and what is important to share with your readers.

The following table compares topics and thesis statements.

Table 7.2 Topics and Thesis Statements

Topic	Draft Thesis Statement
Music Piracy	The recording industry fears that so-called music piracy will diminish profits and destroy markets, but it cannot be more wrong.
The number of consumer choices available in media gear	Everyone wants the newest and the best digital technology, but the choices are extensive, and the specifications are often confusing.
E-books and online newspapers increasing their share of the market	E-books and online newspapers will bring an end to print media as we know it.

Types of Outlines

A formal outline is a detailed guide that shows how all your supporting ideas relate to each other. This outline helps you distinguish between ideas that are of equal importance and ones that are of lesser importance. You can build your paper based on the framework you created in the outline.

There are two types of formal outlines: the topic outline and the sentence outline. Format both types of formal outlines similarly.

- Place your introduction and thesis statement at the beginning, under roman numeral I.
 - Use roman numerals (II, III, IV, V, etc.) to identify main points that develop the thesis statement.
 - Use capital letters (A, B, C, D, etc.) to divide your main points into parts.
 - Use arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, etc.) if you need to subdivide any As, Bs, or Cs into smaller parts.
 - End with the final roman numeral expressing your idea for your conclusion.
- Here is what the skeleton of a traditional formal outline looks like. The indentation helps clarify how the ideas are related.

Outlining a Paper

[//www.youtube.com/embed/qzwdngfTHyw?
modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0](http://www.youtube.com/embed/qzwdngfTHyw?modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0)

Outlining a Paper Quick Guide to Topic Outlines

I. Introduction

A. Thesis Statement

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

A. Supporting detail → becomes a support sentence of body paragraph 1

1. Subpoint

2. Subpoint

B. Supporting detail

1. Subpoint

2. Subpoint

C. Supporting detail

1. Subpoint

2. Subpoint

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

A. Supporting detail → becomes a support sentence of body paragraph 2

1. Subpoint

2. Subpoint

B. Supporting detail

- 1. Subpoint**
- 2. Subpoint**

C. Supporting detail

- 1. Subpoint**
- 2. Subpoint**

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

A. Supporting detail → becomes a support sentence of body paragraph 3

- 1. Subpoint**
- 2. Subpoint**

B. Supporting detail

- 1. Subpoint**
- 2. Subpoint**

C. Supporting detail

- 1. Subpoint**
- 2. Subpoint**

V. Conclusion

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

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Chapter 8: Thesis Development

Part 2: Chapter 8

After developing an outline, a good next step is refining your [thesis](#) statement. The textbook *Successful Writing* explains that writers need a thesis statement to provide a specific focus for their essay and to organize what they will discuss in the body of their writing. A thesis statement is an argumentative central claim in a paper; the entire paper is focused on demonstrating that claim as a valid perspective. Your thesis statement should be in your introduction because you must make sure that the audience is aware of your paper's intent so that there is clarity from the outset. Consider placing the thesis toward the bottom of your introduction. This allows you a few sentences to introduce the concept and prepare the reader for your purpose.

Just like a topic sentence summarizes a single paragraph, the thesis statement summarizes an entire essay. You should form your thesis before you begin to organize an essay, but you may find that it needs revision as the essay develops.

Elements of a Strong Thesis Statement

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

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

A strong thesis statement contains the following qualities.

Specificity

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

Precision

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

Ability to be argued

A thesis statement must present a relevant and specific argument. A factual statement often is not considered arguable. Be sure your thesis statement contains

a point of view that can be supported with evidence.

Ability to be demonstrated

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

Assertiveness

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

Confidence

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

Tip

Even in a personal essay that allows the use of first person, a thesis should avoid phrases such as “in my opinion” or “I believe.” These statements reduce your credibility and weaken your argument. Your opinion is more convincing when you use a firm attitude.

Examples of Appropriate Thesis Statements

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

- Specificity
 - Precision
 - Ability to be argued
 - Ability to be demonstrated
 - Assertiveness
 - Confidence
-
1. The societal and personal struggles of Troy Maxon in the play “Fences” symbolize the challenge of black males who lived through segregation and integration in the United States.
 2. Shakespeare’s use of dramatic irony in *Romeo and Juliet* spoils the outcome for the audience and weakens the plot.
 3. J. D. Salinger’s character in *Catcher in the Rye*, Holden Caulfield, is a confused rebel who voices his disgust with phonies, yet in an effort to protect himself, he acts like a phony on many occasions.
 4. Compared to an absolute divorce, no-fault divorce is less expensive, promotes fairer settlements, and reflects a more realistic view of the causes for marital breakdown.
 5. Exposing children from an early age to the dangers of drug abuse is a sure method of preventing future drug addicts.
 6. In a crumbling job market, a high school diploma is not significant enough

education to land a stable, lucrative job.



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A thesis is weak when the statement is too broad.

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

Ways to Revise Your Thesis

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

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

The best way to revise your thesis statement is to ask questions about it and then examine the answers to those questions. By challenging your own ideas and forming definite reasons for those ideas, you grow closer to a more precise point of view, which you can then incorporate into your thesis statement.



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

1. Pinpoint and replace all non-specific words, such as people, everything, society,

or life, with more precise words in order to reduce any vagueness.

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

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

A *joke* means many things to many people. Readers bring all sorts of backgrounds and perspectives to the reading process and would need clarification for a word so vague. This expression may also be too informal for the selected audience.

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

The linking verb in this working thesis statement is the word *are*. Linking verbs often make thesis statements weak because they do not express action. Rather, they connect words and phrases to the second half of the sentence. Readers might wonder, “Why are they not paid enough?” But this statement does not compel them to ask many more questions. The writer should ask himself or herself questions in order to replace

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the linking verb with an action verb, thus forming a stronger thesis statement, one that takes a more definitive stance on the issue:

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

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

While it is true that some young women in today’s society are more sexualized than in the past, that is not true for all girls. The writer of this thesis should ask the following questions:

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

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Chapter 9: Paragraph Development

Part 2: Chapter 9

Once you have the structure of your paper figured out, and the main idea you will support, you can start with the introduction and conclusion.

Not all people like to begin writing their introduction. Some writers like to begin the body paragraphs and then return to the introduction and conclusion once they know what it is they would like to focus on. There is no one right process. Find the process that works for you.

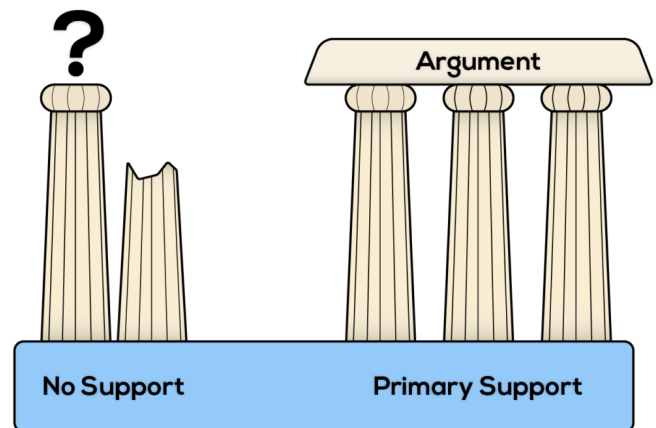
Introductions

[//www.youtube.com/embed/nylu1_m9Vn4?modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0](https://www.youtube.com/embed/nylu1_m9Vn4?modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0)

Introductions Using a funnel model

The following information from *Successful Writing*, explains how to support your thesis statement within your body paragraphs.

Without primary support, your argument is not likely to be convincing. Primary support can be described as the major points you choose to expand on as you prove your thesis. Your primary support is the most important information you select to argue for your point of view. Each point you choose will be incorporated into the topic sentence for each body paragraph you write. Your primary supporting points are further supported by supporting details within the paragraphs.



Identify the Characteristics of Strong Primary Support

In order to fulfill the requirements of strong primary support, the information you choose must meet the following standards:

- **Be specific.** The main points you make about your thesis and the examples you use to expand on those points need to be specific, for example using quotes or detailed paraphrases. Use specific examples to provide the evidence and to build upon your general ideas. These types of examples give your reader something narrow to focus on, and if used properly, they leave little doubt about your [claim](#). General examples, while they convey the necessary information, are not nearly as compelling or useful in writing because they are too obvious and typical.
- **Be relevant to the thesis.** Primary support is considered strong when it relates directly to the thesis. Primary support should show, explain, or prove

your main argument without delving into irrelevant details. When faced with lots of information that could be used to prove your thesis, you may think you need to include it all in your body paragraphs. But effective writers resist the temptation to lose focus. This idea is so important, here it is again: *effective writers resist the temptation to lose focus*. Choose your examples wisely by making sure they directly connect to your thesis.

- **Be detailed.** Remember that your thesis, while specific, should not be overly detailed. The body paragraphs are where you develop the discussion that a thorough essay requires. Using detailed support shows readers that you have considered all the facts and chosen only the most precise details to enhance your point of view.

Integrating Evidence

When you support your thesis, you are revealing evidence. Evidence includes anything that can help support your stance. The following are the kinds of evidence you will encounter as you conduct your [research](#):

- **Facts.** Facts are the best kind of evidence to use because they often cannot be disputed. They can support your stance by providing background information or a solid foundation for your point of view. However, some facts may still need explanation. For example, the sentence “The most populated state in the United States is California” is a pure fact, but it may require some explanation to make it relevant to your specific argument
- **Judgments.** Judgments are conclusions drawn from the given facts. Judgments are more credible than opinions because they are founded upon careful reasoning and examination of a topic.
- **Testimony.** Testimony consists of direct quotations from either an eyewitness or an expert witness. An eyewitness is someone who has direct experience with a subject; he adds authenticity to an argument based on facts. An expert witness is a person who has extensive experience with a topic. This person studies the facts and provides commentary based on either facts or judgments, or both. An expert witness adds authority and credibility to an argument.

- **Personal observation.** Personal observation is similar to testimony, but personal observation consists of your testimony. It reflects what you know to be true because you have experiences and have formed either opinions or judgments about those experiences. For instance, if you are one of five children and your thesis states that being part of a large family is beneficial to a child's social development, you could use your own experience to support your thesis.

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Once you have your evidence organized, and the evidence relates to the points you have outlined for yourself, you have the scaffolding that you need to begin constructing strong body paragraphs. Now it's time to begin constructing the building blocks that will help you create strong and developed body paragraphs.

Keep in mind that your evidence should compliment your ideas rather than overshadow them.

Next we have a chapter from *Writing* published by *Boundless*, on the topic of writing effective paragraphs:

Topic Sentences

When you created your [outline](#), you wrote your thesis statement and then all the claims you need to support it. Then you organized your research, finding the evidence to support each claim. You'll be grateful to have done that sorting now that you're ready to write your paragraphs. Each of these claims will become a topic sentence, and that sentence, along with the evidence supporting it, will

become a paragraph in the body of the paper.

Paragraph Structure

While you're writing, think of each paragraph as a self-contained portion of your argument. Each paragraph will begin by making a claim (your topic sentence) that connects back to your thesis. The body of the paragraph will present the evidence, reasoning, and conclusions that pertain to that claim. Usually, paragraphs will end by connecting their claim to the larger argument or by setting up the claim that the next paragraph will contain.

- **Topic sentence:** summarizes the main idea of the paragraph; presents a claim that supports your thesis.
- **Supporting sentences:** examples, details, and explanations that support the topic sentence (and claim).
- **Concluding sentence:** gives the paragraph closure by relating the claim back to the topic sentence and thesis statement.

Paragraphs should be used to develop one idea at a time. If you have several ideas and claims to address, you may be tempted to combine related claims into the same paragraph. Don't do it! Combining different points in the same paragraph will divide your reader's attention and dilute your argument. If you have too many claims, choose the strongest ones to expand into paragraphs, or research the [counterarguments](#) to see which of your claims speak most powerfully to those.

By dedicating each paragraph to only one part of your argument, you will give the reader time to fully evaluate and understand each claim before going on to the next one. Think of paragraphs as a way of guiding your reader's attention—by giving them a single topic, you force them to focus on it. When you direct your readers' focus, they will have a much easier time following your argument.

Creating Topic Sentences

Every paragraph of your argument should begin with a topic sentence that tells the reader what the paragraph will address—that is, the paragraph’s claim. By providing the reader with expectations at the start of the paragraph, you help him or her understand where you are going and how the paragraph fits in with the overall structure of your argument. [Topic sentences](#) should always connect back to and support your thesis statement.

Mistakes to Avoid in Your Topic Sentence

Referring to the Paper or Paragraph Itself

You do not have to make announcements like, “This paragraph is about ...” There is no need to remind your reader that he or she is reading a paper. The focus should be on the argument. This kind of announcement is like riding with training wheels in the Tour de France. You don’t need this crutch, and seeing it in a paper can be somewhat startling to the reader, who’s expecting a professional presentation.

Offering Evidence or an Example

Stick with your claim in your topic sentence, and let the rest of the paragraph address the evidence and offer examples. Keep it clear by stating the topic and the main idea. Instead of stating the following: “On one occasion, another EMT and I were held at gunpoint.” Consider a more precise example: “Twenty-first century emergency-services personnel face an ever-increasing number of security challenges compared to those working fifty to a hundred years ago.”

Not Being Specific Enough

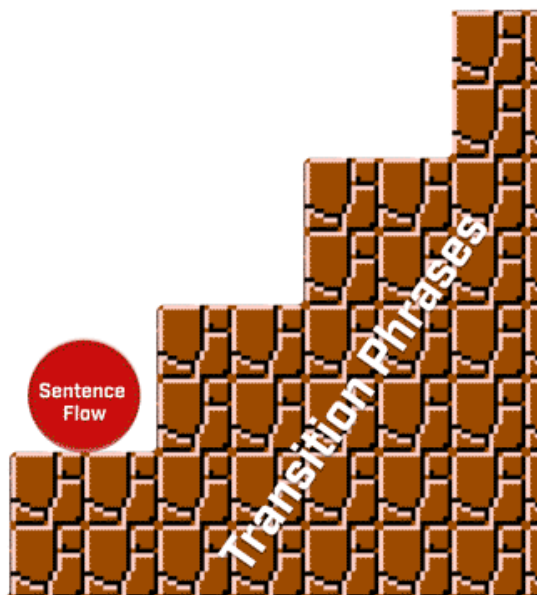
The topic may relate to your thesis statement, but you’ll need to be more specific here. Consider a sentence like this: “Cooking is difficult.” The claim is confusing because it is not clear for whom cooking is difficult and why. A better example would be, “While there are food pantries in place in some low-income areas, many recipients of these goods have neither the time nor the resources to make nutritionally sound meals from what they receive.” (Stylistically speaking, if you wanted to include “Cooking is difficult,” you could make it the first sentence,

followed by the topic sentence. The topic sentence should be precise.)

In [expository writing](#), each paragraph should articulate a single main idea that relates directly to the thesis statement. This construction creates a feeling of unity, making the paper feel cohesive and purposeful. Connections between each idea—both between sentences and between paragraphs—should enhance that sense of cohesion.

Why Use Transitions?

Following the parts of a poorly constructed argument can feel like climbing a rickety ladder. Transition words and phrases add the girders and railings, smoothing the journey of reading your paper, so it feels more like climbing a wide, comfortable staircase.



Using transitions will make your writing easier to understand by providing connections between paragraphs or between sentences within a paragraph. A transition can be a word, phrase, or sentence—in longer works, they can even be a whole paragraph. The goal of a transition is to clarify for your readers exactly how your ideas are connected.

Transitions refer to both the preceding and ensuing sentence, paragraph, or section of a written work. They remind your readers of what they just read, and

tell them what will come next. By doing so, transitions help your writing feel like a unified whole.

Transitions Between Paragraphs

In Topic Sentences

Using transitions in your topic sentences can explain to the reader how one paragraph relates to the previous one. Consider this set of topic sentences from a paper about metrical variation in the poem “Caliban Upon Setebos”:

“Browning begins the poem by establishing a correspondence between metrical variation and subversive language.”

“Once Caliban begins his exploration of the nature of Setebos, though, the pattern established earlier in the poem begins to break down.”

“Browning further subverts the metrical conventions established in the opening stanza by ... switching to iambic pentameter when acknowledging that unmotivated events can and do occur.”

The transitions help the reader understand how the argument is progressing throughout the paper, beginning with the poem’s basic meter, then explaining different ways in which the pattern shifts. The word “though” in the second topic sentence lets the reader know that the pattern explained in the first paragraph is going to change in the second paragraph. The use of “further” in the third topic sentence alerts the reader that the pattern is shifting again in the third paragraph. These simple words are the handrail for the steps the reader is climbing.

In Concluding Sentences

A paragraph’s concluding sentence also offers an excellent opportunity to begin the transition to the next paragraph—to wrap up one idea and hint at the next.

You can use a question to signal a shift:

“It’s clear, then, that the band’s biggest selling original compositions were written early in their career, but what do we know about their later works?”

Alternatively, you could conclude by comparing the idea in the current paragraph with the idea in the next:

“While the Democratic Republic of Congo is rich in natural resources, it has led a troubled political existence.”

An “if–then” structure is a common transition technique in concluding sentences:

“If we are decided that climate change is now unavoidable, then steps must be taken to avert complete disaster.”

Here, you’re relying on the point you’ve just proven in this paragraph to serve as a springboard for the next paragraph’s main idea.

Transitions Within Paragraphs

Transitions within a paragraph help readers to anticipate what is coming before they read it. Within paragraphs, transitions tend to be single words or short phrases. Words like while, however, nevertheless, but, and similarly, as well as phrases like on the other hand and for example, can serve as transitions between sentences and ideas.

Signal Phrases

Another transitional option within a paragraph is the use of signal phrases, which alert the reader that he or she is about to read referenced material, such as a [quotation](#), a summation of a study, or statistics verifying a claim. Ideally, your signal phrases will connect the idea of the paragraph to the information from the outside source.

- “In support of this idea, Jennifer Aaker of the Global Business School at Stanford University writes that ...”
- “In fact, the United Nations Environmental Program found that ...”
- “However, ‘Recycling programs,’ the Northern California Recycling Association retorts ...”
- “As graph 3.2 illustrates, we can by no means be certain of the outcome.”

Such phrases prepare the reader to receive information from an authoritative source and subconsciously signal the reader to process what follows as evidence in support of the point being made. Table 9.1, “Common Signal-Phrase Verbs” displays common action words you can use to introduce quotes and evidence.

Table 9.1 Common Signal-Phrase Verbs

acknowledges	confirms	implies	rejects
adds	contends	insists	reports
admits	declares	notes	responds
argues	denies	observes	suggests
asserts	disputes	points out	things
believes	emphasizes	reasons	writes
claims	grants	refutes	

Transition Paragraphs

In longer pieces of writing, you might need an entire paragraph to connect the ideas presented in two separate sections. The purpose of a transitional paragraph is to summarize the information in the previous paragraph, and to tell your reader how it is related to the information in the next paragraph. Transition paragraphs are good places to review where you have been and how it relates to the next step of your argument.

Appropriate Use of Transition Words and Phrases

Before using a particular transitional word or phrase, be sure you completely understand its meaning and usage. For example, if you use a word or phrase that indicates addition (“moreover,” “in addition,” “further”), you must actually be introducing a new idea or piece of evidence. A common mistake with transitions is using such a word without actually adding an idea to the discussion. That confuses readers and puts them back on rickety footing, wondering if they missed something.

Whenever possible, stick with transition words that actually have meaning and purpose. Overusing transition words, or using them as filler, is distracting to the reader. “It is further concluded that,” for example, sounds unnatural and a little grandiose because of the [passive voice](#). “Also,” or “Furthermore” would be clearer choices, less likely to make the reader’s eyes roll.

With that said, here are some examples of transitional devices that might be useful once you’ve verified their appropriateness:

Table 9.2 Transitional Devices

Result	Transitional devices	Sample Sentence
To indicate addition	and, again, and then, besides, equally important, finally, further,	<i>“Strength of idea is indeed a factor in entrepreneurial success,</i>

	furthermore, nor, too, next, lastly, what's more, moreover, in addition, still, first (second, etc.)	<i>but equally important is economic viability."</i>
To indicate comparison	whereas, but, yet, on the other hand, however, nevertheless, on the contrary, by comparison, where, compared to, up against, balanced against, although, conversely, in contrast, although this may be true, likewise, while, whilst, although, even though, on the one hand, on the other hand, in contrast, in comparison with, but, yet, alternatively, the former, the latter, respectively, all the same	<i>"In contrast to what we now consider his pedantic prose, his poetry seemed set free to express what lies in every human heart."</i>
To indicate a logical connection	because, for, since, for the same reason, obviously, evidently, furthermore, moreover, besides, indeed, in fact, in addition, in any case, that is	<i>"The Buddha sat under the bodhi tree for the same reason Jesus meditated in the desert: to vanquish temptation once and for all."</i>
To show exception	yet, still, however, nevertheless, in spite of, despite, of course, once in a while, sometimes	<i>"Advocates of corporate tax incentives cite increased jobs in rural areas as an offset; still, is that sufficient</i>

		<i>justification for removing their financial responsibilities?</i>
To show time	immediately, thereafter, soon, after a while, finally, then, later, previously, formerly, first (second, etc.), next, and then	<i>“First, the family suffered a devastating house fire that left them without any possessions, and soon thereafter learned that their passage to the New World had been revoked due to a clerical error.”</i>
To summarize or indicate repetition	in brief, as I have said, as I have noted, as has been noted, as we have seen, to summarize	<i>“We have seen, then, that not only are rising temperatures and increased weather anomalies correlated with an increase in food and water shortages, but animal-migration patterns, too, appear to be affected.”</i>
To indicate emphasis	definitely, extremely, obviously, in fact, indeed, in any case, absolutely, positively, naturally, surprisingly, notwithstanding, only, still, it cannot be denied	<i>“Obviously, such a highly skilled architect would not usually be inclined to give his services away, and yet this man volunteered his services over and over again to projects that paid him only through appreciation.”</i>
To indicate sequence	first, second, third, and so	<i>“So, finally, the author</i>

	<p>forth, next, then, following this, at this time, now, at this point, after, afterward, subsequently, finally, consequently, previously, before this, simultaneously, concurrently</p>	<p><i>offers one last hint about the story’s true subject: the wistful description of the mountains in the distance.”</i></p>
<p>To indicate an example</p>	<p>for example, for instance, in this case, in another case, on this occasion, in this situation, take the case of, to demonstrate, to illustrate, consider.</p>	<p><i>“Take, for example, the famous huckster P. T. Barnum, whose reputation as ‘The Prince of Humbugs’ belied his love and support of the finer things of life, like opera.”</i></p>
<p>To qualify a statement</p>	<p>under no circumstances, mainly, generally, predominantly, usually, the majority, most of, almost all, a number of, some, a few, a little, fairly, very, quite, rather, almost</p>	<p><i>“Generally, we can assume that this statement has merit, but in this specific case, it behooves us to dig deeper.”</i></p>

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Chapter 9.1: Paragraph Development contd.

Part 2: Chapter 9

We have looked at the basic parts of your essay, and now we have a sample formula to help you expand your ideas about your evidence. Between the Introduction (and thesis) and the Conclusion (and reflection on the thesis) comes the **body** of the essay. For your essay's body to be solid and focused, it needs to have clear, well-developed paragraphs. Even paragraphs need to have a beginning, middle, and end. To help you think about paragraph organization, think about **TEAR**:

**TOPIC
SENTENCE**

EVIDENCE

ANALYSIS

REFLECTION

T = Topic Sentence

This is like a little thesis for your paragraph. It tells the reader what that paragraph is all about. If your reader were only to read the topic sentences in your essay, he/or she should have a general idea of what you're talking about. Of course, he/she can't get a complete picture unless you provide...

E = Evidence

This is the "how do you know?" part of your paragraph. Evidence comes from the real world. You may present your evidence in the form of statistics, direct quotes, summaries, or paraphrases from a source, or your own observations. Evidence is available to us all. What your reader needs is for you to make sense of that evidence so that s/he understands what all this has to do with your thesis or claim. That is why you provide...

A = Analysis

This is the 'so what?' part of your paragraph. You say what is important and why. This isn't just personal taste or opinion. You have to provide good reasons to support your conclusions. And just to make sure you're still on track, you...

R = Reflection

This sentence concludes the paragraph, relates to the topic sentence and the thesis. Ideally, it should also prepare us for the next paragraph.

Note

Transitions are like the mortar between the bricks. Transitions hold our ideas together and move us gracefully from point to point. Some common transition words or phrases may include although, therefore, because, in fact, for example, on the other hand, while, in addition, in contrast, then again, furthermore, but back to our main point...

To help you think about **TEAR**, imagine your snarky little brother looking over your shoulder as you compose asking you:

T = “What’s all this about?”

E = “How do you know?”

A = “Why should I care?”

R = “What does this have to do with anything?”

You may be thinking, I’ve heard this before, but it wasn’t called TEAR. It was called....

PIE



Photo by [Armando Rafael Moutela](#), CC BY-SA 4.0

What does PIE stand for?

P = Point. This is the point of the paragraph, or the topic sentence.

I = Illustration. This is where you illustrate your point with evidence

E = Explication. This is where you explain how that evidence supports your point. This is your analysis.

Why give you two ways to think of this? Because you may find that to fully develop your paragraph, you'll need to add a little more evidence and analysis. And it looks a little funny to write **TEAEAR**. So, you can think of **PIE-IE-IE** will always love you.



Photo by [Ryan Dickey](#), CC BY 2.0

Take a look at the picture above. Notice anything? No two slices are the same. So it should be in your essay. Each paragraph should do its own job, have its own focus. Sure, your essay may feature a variety of related paragraphs grouped in sections; however, to avoid repeating information or losing focus in your essay, remember that each slice of **PIE** should serve a unique purpose.

—the above writing was adapted from a handout created by the talented and brilliant CNM English instructor, Patricia O'Connor.

Varying Sentence Structure

Argumentation isn't just about what you say, it's also about how you say it. Even the most solid argument won't get far with a reader if the text isn't engaging. But how do we make it so?

Perhaps the biggest secret to creating captivating writing is variation. Without it,

your reader might fall asleep from boredom.

If you've ever been in a vibrant debate with someone you respected about beliefs you hold dear, you've got a sense of just the kind of life we want to capture when we're writing. Learning, debating ideas, digging for the truth: these things are all fun! No need for "anyone" to be drooling on his desk.

If variation is key, what can we vary? We've discussed the importance of structure. Readers need to depend on the paper's structure to be able to follow the argument. So, introduction, conclusion, body paragraphs with topic sentences and transitions—yes to all of these. Within the structure, though, you can vary the following:

- sentence length
- sentence structure
- sentence type
- tone
- vocabulary
- transition words and categories
- types of evidence

You'll want to have reasons for the choices you make. Adding random [rhetical questions](#) will sound strange, but if you ask the right question at the right time, it will make the reader think. The same will be true of all variation. There must be a good reason to choose a particular sentence structure or a new type of evidence.

There are no codified rules on how to vary sentence structure, nor are there lists of all the different types of phrasing you can use. The English language allows for so much flexibility that such a list would be never-ending. However, you should consider certain aspects of writing when looking for different sentence formats.

Clauses: The easiest way to vary sentence length and structure is with clauses. Multi-clause sentences can connect related ideas, provide additional detail, and vary the pattern of your language.

Length: Longer sentences are better suited for expressing complex thoughts. Shorter sentences, in contrast, are useful when you want to emphasize a concise point. Clauses can vary in length, too.

Interrogatives: When used sparingly, questions can catch your reader's attention. They also implicate your reader as a participant in your argument by asking them to think about how they would answer the question.

Tone: If you want a sentence to stand out, you can change the tone of your writing. Using different tones can catch the reader's attention and liven up your work. That means you can be playful with your reader at times, sound demanding at times, and cultivate empathy when that feels appropriate. Be careful that the tone you choose is appropriate for the subject matter.

[Syntax](#) variation cultivates interest. Start playing with structure. Try changing a sentence's language to make it sound different than the ones around it.

Syntactical Variation

Here is an example of what a paragraph with a repetitive syntax can sound like:

“Looking Backward was popular in the late nineteenth century. Middle-class Americans liked its vision of society. The vision appealed to their consumption habits. Also, they liked the possibility of not being bothered by the poor.”

Choppy? Uninteresting? Here's the rewritten version, with attention paid to sentence variation:

“The popularity of Looking Backward among middle-class Americans in the late nineteenth century can be traced to its vision of society. The novel

presents a society that easily dispels the nuisance of poverty and working-class strife while maintaining the pleasure of middle-class consumptive habits.”

What’s different here? The rewrite simply combines the first two and the last two sentences and adds a bit of variation in vocabulary, but the difference is powerful. Of course, if all the sentences were compound like these, the paper would begin to sound either pretentious or exhausting. If this were your paper, you might want to make the next sentence a short one and get to your thesis statement relatively soon.

Varying Vocabulary

One way to avoid appearing overly repetitive is to consult a [thesaurus](#) and use [synonyms](#). However, when using synonyms, you should make sure that the word you choose means exactly what you think it means. (“Penultimate,” for example, does not mean “the highest,” and there’s a difference between “elicit” and “illicit.”) Check the connotations of synonyms by looking up their definitions.

Varying Transitions, Signal Words, Pointing Words, and Pronouns

Writers familiar with their own habits will sometimes do a “word search” on a word or phrase they typically overuse (“however,” “that said,” “moreover,”) and replace some of those words with another transition. Or they might rework a sentence to avoid using any transition words in that spot, if they feel they’re overdoing it. Nouns, too, are often overused when pronouns would sound more natural. Don’t worry about this too much in the writing phase; you just want to get your thoughts on the page. But as you revise, keep an eye out for repetitiveness and vary your sentence constructions to keep your paper interesting.

Introducing variation benefits not only your reader, but also you, the writer. Conceiving of different ways to communicate essential elements of your argument will allow you to revisit what makes these elements essential, and to consider the central argument you are making. Each variation is a chance to introduce nuance into your writing while driving your point home. However, variation should never be your main goal—don't sacrifice [audience](#) comprehension to achieve stylistic virtuosity. You'll just sound silly. The argument is the point.

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Chapter 10: Revising and Peer Review

Part 2: Chapter 10

At this point you have completed several of the prewriting and drafting steps. You have an introduction, a thesis, body paragraphs, and a conclusion. You're beginning to vary your syntax, and you're feeling confident with your work. That's wonderful, but the writing process is not over yet. What you have at this point is a rough draft, which is not a polished final draft.

The textbook *Rhetoric and Composition* explains that successful writers rely on revising as an integral part of the writing process, and it is important for authors to spend the majority of their time revising their texts. Revising and editing are two separate processes that are often used interchangeably by novice writers. Revising requires a significant alteration in a piece of writing, such as enriching the content, or giving the piece clarity; editing, however, is not as involved and includes fixing typos and grammatical errors. Although editing can be a part of this process, revising generally involves changes that concern bigger issues, such as content and organization. While revising, a writer might notice that one idea needs to be developed more thoroughly and another idea omitted. The writer might decide that rearranging paragraphs will provide clarity and support for their argument, strengthening the paper as a whole. Writers should also change grammar and punctuation while revising, but if that is all they are doing, then they are simply editing.

Differences Between Revising, Editing, and Proofreading

Writers should note that revising, editing, and proofreading are considerably different processes. Despite the differences, however, they often overlap. They are being separated here for ease of explanation.

Revising

- Revising is done throughout the writing process, with special emphasis on the first few drafts.
- Focus = big issues
 - Audience
 - Organization
 - Content
 - Evidence
 - Conclusion

Editing

- Editing is done throughout the writing process, with special emphasis on the middle and final drafts
- Focus = technical issues
 - Usage
 - Word choice
 - Transitions
 - Mechanics

Proofreading

- Proofreading is reserved for the final draft
- Focus = mechanics and presentation
 - Spelling
 - Punctuation
 - Format
 - Typographical errors
 - Textual inconsistencies

A Change for the Better

Writing well is an intellectually challenging, and draining, activity. Jotting down ideas on paper is a good start, but revising those ideas so that they are persuasive, cogent, and form a solid argument is the real work of writing. As you review what you have written, you will undoubtedly see holes in your logic, sentences that confuse rather than clarify, and sentences and paragraphs out of place. Below are some helpful hints to consider as you [analyze](#) and transform your paper.

../assets/modules/inkling.slideline/widgets/slideline/index_11e3ab449f024fb7bf2449c325089e47.html?configFile=../%2F../%2F../%2F../%2Fwidget_data%2Fconfig%2F11e3ab449f024fb7bf2449c325089e47.json

After doing all this by yourself, seek help from others. First, find an individual who knows about the assignment, your intended audience, and the purpose of the essay. This person is likely one of your peers who has participated in class. Then, share the paper with someone who fits the description of the audience for whom the document is intended. Ask your readers if everything is clear and easily understood, if phrases are worded correctly, if the document is logically sound, etc. If you have other specific concerns — Is the second example effective? Does my conclusion resolve the paper nicely? — ask your readers to direct their attention to those issues.

Once you write your paper, return to the beginning to see how the conclusion relates to the introduction and thesis. Have you maintained the same tone and main idea throughout? Does the ending [reiterate](#) your main idea without just summarizing what you've already said? Pay attention to your word usage; try to leave little room for [misinterpretation](#) when the audience reads your piece.

Another helpful technique in the final revision process is to have someone read

your paper aloud to you. This practice will force you to go over the material more slowly and allow you another chance to absorb the content of the paper. When you read your own paper aloud, you are more apt to read the paper as you intended it to be read, as opposed to reading what is actually on the page.

You will also want to spend a few minutes reviewing your assignment prompt and the rubric to ensure that you have addressed all of the concepts introduced by your instructor.

Rubrics as Revision Tools

[//www.youtube.com/embed/TXpqJ-XGqow?
modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0](https://www.youtube.com/embed/TXpqJ-XGqow?modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0)

Rubrics as Revision Tools : One way to evaluate your own writing

After going through the steps above and making changes as necessary, you should feel your paper is nearly complete. The content should be in place, and your text should make your case clearly and forcefully. If you feel this is the case, you are ready to closely edit and proofread your text.

Analyzing Each Part of Your Paper

Introductions

When you look over the draft of your paper, the first part you should focus on is your introduction. Whether it is one paragraph or an entire chapter, the purpose of the introduction is to grab your reader's attention while simultaneously giving a preview of the information that will be included in the following paragraphs. Make sure you draw your readers in from the beginning and follow with interesting and supportive information. If readers are not intrigued from the very beginning of the piece, they will quickly become distracted and avoid reading any further.



Where is your introduction taking us?

What is the difference between a good and a bad introduction? A bad introduction is misleading, rambling, incoherent, boring, or so hopelessly vague that you know less about the topic than you did before you read it. On the other hand, a good introduction gets to the point, gives the reader a reason to keep on reading, and sets the stage for an exciting performance. An introduction is like a first impression; it

is crucial to your image and, once presented, you never have a second opportunity. Your essay's introduction is your reader's first impression of your ability as a writer. Even if you are brilliant and have great ideas, a muddy or boring introduction will turn away many of your readers.

Try not to miss the main point of your paper and/or give your reader the runaround in the intro. If you have tedious openers such as “in today's society” or openers that merely relay what the assignment is, change it so that

Bonus Video

https://www.youtube.com/embed/j0_u-lourd0?

it instead states your argument up front and presents a clear thesis right away, then you can subtly describe your paper's overall structure. Try summarizing every paragraph into one sentence each, then put them all together to see if your introduction covers each point. Your introduction should state the issue at hand, establish your position regarding it, describe your paper's organization, and identify the scope of your coverage. However, be careful not to write a wordy or overly dense introduction; your introduction should merely frame the rest of the paper.

[modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0](#)

The power of a great introduction –

Carolyn Mohr

Revising the Thesis Statement

A thesis is not only an idea, but it is also a theory that provides direction and guidance about the writer's ideas. It is a theory because it is an abstract type of generalized thinking that binds the whole piece of writing together and also provides a goal and a standard for the paper. Next, make sure you have a clear thesis. Simply put, a thesis is your main point, the line of argument that you are pursuing in your essay. The thesis should answer two simple questions: What issue are you writing about, and what is your position on that topic? A thesis statement is often a single sentence (or sometimes two, and they can be combined using a semicolon or comma and conjunction) that provides the answers to these questions clearly and concisely. Ask yourself, "What is my paper about, exactly?" to help you develop a precise and directed thesis, not only for your reader, but for you as well.

How can you be sure that your thesis is clear? Will your reader be able to identify it and see that the rest of your paper is supporting your argument? One sign of a weak thesis is if the statement does not make a concise claim, or if the claim is already proven true from its factual contents.

Most American readers expect to see the

Tip

Avoid the “implied thesis” unless you are certain of your audience. Almost every professor will expect to see a clearly discernible thesis sentence in the intro. Remember: The harder it is for you to write your thesis statement, the more likely it is that your entire essay is incoherent and unfocused. If you are having real problems crafting a good thesis statement, you may need to start over, narrow your topic, or dig even more deeply into what you are trying to say and write.

point of your argument (the thesis statement) within the first few paragraphs. This does not mean that you have to place it there every time. Some writers place it at the end, slowly building up to it throughout their work, to explain a point after the fact. Others don’t bother with one at all, but feel that their thesis is “implied.” Review your prompt and follow your instructor’s guidelines.

The commonality in the following sample thesis statements is the presence of an arguable point of view that helps the writer develop their paper. Read on and judge for yourself.

Although many readers believe *Romeo and Juliet* to be a tale about the ill fate of two star-crossed lovers, it can also be read as an allegory concerning a playwright and his audience.

The “War on Drugs” has not only failed to reduce the frequency of drug-related crimes in America, but actually enhanced the popular image of dope peddlers by romanticizing them as desperate rebels fighting for a cause.

The bulk of modern copyright law was conceived in the age of commercial

printing, long before the internet made it so easy for the public to compose and distribute its own texts. Therefore, these laws should be reviewed and revised to better accommodate modern readers and writers.

Plato's dialectical method has much to offer those of us engaged in online writing, which is far more conversational in nature than print.

You will know your thesis statement is finished when it contains the basic information for your argument without any major in-depth descriptions. Save the in-depth descriptions for your body paragraphs.

Clarifying Your Position

Make sure the reader knows your position on the issue. Your stance should be debatable and clearly expressed in your thesis, so check your entire introduction for vague, conflicting, or confusing sentences. Revise these sentences and replace them with statements that reflect your position on the topic. Unless you're writing a summary, your introduction should make it clear how you feel about the issue at stake.

Avoid vague sentences or "thesis statements" that fail to introduce your stance. Here are a few examples:

Abortion is a very controversial issue in America.

Capital punishment is both good and bad.

This paper will present the pros and cons of modern copyright law.

All these examples introduce an issue rather than state a position. Again, your reader should already know that the issue you're writing about is controversial; otherwise, there would be little reason to write about it. Unless you've been instructed to merely write a report or summary of an issue, assume that your professor wants you to take a position and defend it with the best evidence you can locate. This is a great opportunity to use the library databases to locate convincing research. However, you should not forget to fairly analyze all positions and debate opposing viewpoints. Even if you only cater to other opinions in order to disprove them, you will have strengthened your argument as a result.

Scope

Besides explaining what your paper is about and your argument, an introduction may also state what you will and won't cover. For instance, let's say your paper is about an issue affecting mothers infected with HIV. Your introduction should reflect this focus, rather than present your paper as a general overview of HIV. If your scope isn't clear, then readers will constantly wonder when you'll address the larger topic—or even assume you simply forgot to do it.

Let's say you wanted to write a paper that argued that Ford makes better cars than Chevrolet. However, your introduction didn't mention Chevrolet at all, but instead had the line: "Ford makes better cars than any other car manufacturer." Your reader would quickly begin to wonder why you're not talking about Toyota or Nissan! Try to anticipate what your reader will expect to see covered, and, if necessary, state it explicitly:

Although the topic of this paper is capital punishment, it will focus on one aspect of that larger issue: the execution of convicts who are mentally ill.

Although two hundred doctors were interviewed in this study, the paper will focus on three of them in detail here.

Revising Body Paragraphs

As you build support for your thesis in the body paragraphs, always ask yourself if you are spending your readers' time wisely. Are you writing unnecessarily complex and confusing sentences, or using fifty words when five would do? If a sentence is already plain and direct, there's no need to fluff it up. Flowery words and phrases obscure your ideas: conciseness is key. For example, why write, "Cats have a tendency toward sleeping most of the day" when you could simply write, "Cats usually sleep most of the day"? How about changing "The 12th day of the month of April" to "April 12th"? As you revise, look for overly-complicated sentences and substitute simpler ones for clarity.

But wait—don't you need to inflate your text so you can meet the minimum word count? Wouldn't it be better to use "due to the fact that" for "because" and "in addition to" for "and," since these phrases use far more words? Answer: NO. Any experienced reader will instantly see through such a scheme and will likely become irritated by the resulting "fluffy" prose. If you are having trouble meeting the minimum word count, a far better solution is to add more examples, details, quotations, or perspectives. Go back to the planning and drafting stage and ask yourself if you've written everything useful about a topic.

Other students worry that their sentences don't sound smart enough. Compare these two sentences:

Do not ask what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.

Do not submit a query concerning what assets and benefits your country can bestow upon you and yours, but rather inquire as to what tasks or activities you yourself can perform and carry out that will be useful for the citizens of your own country.

Although the second sentence is longer and harder to grasp, that doesn't make it more intelligent. In fact, it's far more impressive to write a complex thought in simple prose than vice versa. Beware, however, that you do not lose meaning when you make a sentence simpler; cut out only the most unnecessary "fluffy" adjectives, but don't sacrifice being descriptive.

How about your organization? From sentence-to-sentence, paragraph-to-paragraph, the ideas should flow into each other smoothly and without interruptions or delays. If someone tells you that your paper sounds "choppy" or "jumps around," you probably have a problem with organization and transitions. The addition of quotations from a text that relates to your topic can be an excellent way to refocus your writing and avoid unrelated ideas.

Keep in mind that few writers can write a well-organized paper in one draft. Instead, their first drafts are disorganized and even chaotic. The writing process takes patience. You can spend time sorting through your original ideas, consolidating related ideas into coherent paragraphs, and helping readers to follow your train of thought without derailing. Compare:

Proofreading is an important step in the writing process. One technique is to read your paper aloud, which will help you catch errors you might overlook when reading silently. Another strategy is to use spell check on your computer to correct any typos.

Proofreading is an important step in the writing process. Read your paper aloud to catch errors, and use spell check on your computer to correct any

typos.

The first example has better transitions between ideas and is easier to read. Note that the example with better transitions is also longer. Good transitions can improve your style and help you reach the minimum word count!

Conclusions

After all the work you have exerted while developing your paper, you want to end with a strong, fully developed conclusion. The conclusion and the introduction may be similar but may take several forms. Conclusions may be a simple restatement of your thesis to reestablish your paper's purpose, or it may sum up your main points, reflect on the information presented, ask a thought-provoking question, or present a "call to action," telling your readers what you want them to do with the information you have presented. Often, this choice will be determined by the genre, audience, or purpose of your paper. Nevertheless, your conclusion should accurately reflect the paper's subject and provide the reader with closure.

Finally, avoid ending a paper with new ideas or a thesis you have not already supported or explained in the paper. Remember, a conclusion is meant to reiterate the paper's main argument and then return the thesis to the larger issue the paper is addressing and should not present any new arguments or topics in the process.

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Chapter 10.1: Revising and Peer Review contd.

Part 2: Chapter 10

In addition to revising, you will also want to go back to your paper, one more time, to edit and proofread. The *Writers' Handbook* suggests that after you have made some revisions to your draft based on feedback and your recalibration of your purpose for writing, you may now feel your essay is nearly complete. However, you should plan to read through the entire final draft at least one additional time. During this stage of editing and proofreading your entire essay, you should be looking for general consistency and clarity. Also, pay particular attention to parts of the paper you have moved around or changed in other ways to make sure that your new versions still work smoothly.

Although you might think editing and proofreading isn't necessary since you were fairly careful when you were writing, the truth is that even the brightest people and best writers make mistakes when they write. One of the main reasons that you are likely to make mistakes is that your mind and fingers are not always moving along at the same speed nor are they necessarily in sync. So what ends up on the page isn't always exactly what you intended. A second reason is that, as you make changes and adjustments, you might not totally match up the original parts and revised parts. Finally, a third key reason for proofreading is because you likely have errors you typically make and proofreading gives you a chance to correct those errors.

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Editing and proofreading can work well with a partner. You can offer to be another pair of eyes for peers in exchange for their doing the same for you. Whether you are editing and proofreading your work or the work of a peer, the process is basically the same. Although the rest of this section assumes you are editing and proofreading your work, you can simply shift the personal issues, such as “Am I...” to a viewpoint that will work with a peer, such as “Is she...”

Adapted from “Chapter Eight” of *Writers’ Handbook*, 2012, used according to creative commons 3.0 [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#)

Completing a Peer Review

After working so closely with a piece of writing, writers often need to step back and ask for advice from a more objective reader. The textbook *English for Business Success* explains that what writers need most is feedback from readers who can respond to both the words on the page and critique whether the writing responds to the assignment; this process is called peer review. The in-class (and sometimes online) peer review process provides writers with the opportunity to share their drafts with someone who can give an honest response about its strengths and weaknesses. Since your peers have participated in the same lectures, discussions, and group work, they can offer the most constructive and focused feedback based on the assignment and the instructor’s expectations.

Peer review can feel scary because you may feel uncomfortable sharing your writing at first, but remember that each writer is working toward the same goal: a final draft that fits the audience and the purpose. You and your peers have all the tools to offer advice since you have been working together, in the classroom, to understand the essay’s topic and genre. Maintaining a positive attitude when providing feedback will put you and your partner at ease. The sample peer review below provides a useful framework for the peer review process.

Questions for Peer Review

Title of essay:

Date:

Writer's name:

Peer reviewer's name:

1. This essay is about...
2. Your main points are...
3. What I most liked is...
4. These three points are your strongest...
 - A. Point:
 - B. Why:
 - C. Point:
 - D. Why:
 - E. Point:
 - F. Why:
5. These places are not clear to me...
 - A. Where:
 - B. Needs improvement because:
 - C. Where:
 - D. Needs improvement because:
6. The one additional change you could make that would improve this essay significantly is...

Using Feedback Objectively

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

Ultimately the changes you make to your essay are up to you since it is not necessary to incorporate every recommendation you receive. However, if you start to observe a pattern in the responses you receive from peer reviewers, you might want to take that feedback into consideration in future assignments. For example,

if you read consistent comments about a need for more research, then you may want to consider including more research in future assignments.

Using Feedback from Multiple Sources

You might receive feedback from more than one reader as you share different stages of your revised draft. In this situation, you may receive feedback from readers who do not understand the assignment or who lack your involvement with and enthusiasm for it. These differing opinions most commonly occur when students ask people outside the classroom to review their writing. While the advice from different readers can be great, you should always value the feedback you receive from your classmates because they have participated in the class discussions, are familiar with your instructor's expectations, and have often completed the same reading assignments as you.

When you receive differing feedback you should evaluate the responses you receive according to two important criteria:

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

Then, using these standards, accept or reject revision feedback as you work to finalize your paper.

How to Offer Your Peer Advice

Students often worry about the peer review process, especially if they have never been asked to peer review before. The best way to address this fear is to accept that you will be unable to locate every error or weakness. Once you understand that the process is not perfect, it is easier to feel comfortable with your role as the reviewer. Here are a few tips that will help you during the peer review process:

1. Begin by reading the assignment instructions. Your instructor will likely have clear goals for the peer review process, and following the instructions will help you provide significant and meaningful revision ideas for your peer.

2. Read your peer's essay from the beginning to the end without adding any comments. This first read allows you to grasp your peer's intentions and focus.
3. Complete a second reading of your peer's draft and start looking for strengths and weaknesses. Make comments on the margins of your peer's essay. Later, you can further expand on these comments when you complete the peer review form.
4. When you feel stuck, stop and ask yourself "If this was my paper, how would I revise?"
5. Set aside time to review the organization of your peer's essay. Read their thesis statement and make sure their body paragraphs have topic sentences that connect to their thesis statement. If there isn't a clear connection, consider helping your peer revise their topic sentence so the connection between the thesis and body paragraph is easy to understand.
6. Be honest. Your peers want to earn the best grade they can and your advice during peer review will help them achieve this goal. Think of every piece of advice as constructive criticism. Your advice will help them to create a stronger, more focused writing sample.

The peer review process has the potential to help you create a much stronger and more focused essay. Try to be open to the process and give honest and thoughtful critiques.

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Part 3: 1101 Genres

Chapter 11: Summary

Chapter 12: Personal Narratives

Chapter 13: Reflection Writing

Chapter 14: Comparison and Contrast

Chapter 15: Reports

Chapter 16: Evaluations

Chapter 17: Proposals

Chapter 18: Academic Research Papers

Chapter 11: Summary

Part 3: Chapter 11

A summary is an accurate retelling in your own words of the main points or events from something you read, saw, or experienced.

For example, your friend asks you about the latest movie you saw and what it was about. You mention an interesting article to your instructor and they ask for a description. You probably responded with a shortened version of the plot of the movie or main points of the article. That is summary.

Summary is a useful tool for writers and can do the following:

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- Provide background information for your audience
- Entertain your audience, or...
- Persuade your audience by supporting a point you make.

When you write a summary, you will need to think about your audience and purpose. If you are writing a summary in order to provide background information, you will need to include the key ideas your audience needs to know in order to understand what follows the summary. If you are writing a summary for an annotated bibliography, you are writing to other researchers and also to your future self. You will need to include all the important information so that you can

remember what that article was about when you pull all of your sources together for a larger writing project. Summarizing is also a comprehension aid, which forces you to read in-depth to understand a reading.

Summary: Features

A summary usually has most, if not all, of the following features:

Accurately and objectively presents the author's main points or findings

One feature that distinguishes summary from other genres is that it only includes the main points or events of the text you are summarizing. If you are summarizing an argument, you might ask: What is the author's thesis or main idea? What are their supporting claims or points? If you are summarizing a story or fictional work, you might include the main events or ideas. In order to keep your summary concise, leave out minor or unimportant details.

In addition, you should try to present the author's ideas accurately and objectively, even if you disagree with the author. Because you are the go-between for the author and your audience, you should consider what your responsibility is to both. Set aside personal commentary or analysis so that readers don't confuse your ideas with the author's ideas.

Uses your own words and phrases

- Talking about a word as a word: Use italics. For example, "Rodriguez repeatedly uses the word *zeitgeist* to describe what drove his creative process."
- Using a direct quote or characteristic word: Place in quotation marks. For example: Rodriguez writes that he was driven by "the haunted zeitgeist" of his generation. (Notice how this is still my summary, but I've put quotes around a phrase I found especially important or powerful. Be careful not to over-quote, as that defeats the purpose of a summary.)

Summarizes main ideas or events in the same order as they were presented in the original article, story, or text

In general, a summary presents main ideas or events in the same order that they appeared in the original author's work. This helps give your audience an accurate understanding of the author's work and avoids confusing them. For example, if you were summarizing an argument, the author has probably stated their thesis, then their supporting points, and their conclusion. A summary of that argument, then, would concisely state their thesis, supporting points, and conclusion in the same order. As always, you will have to use your judgment as there can be exceptions. For example, if a thesis is implied it would be up to you to decide where to include it in your summary. But, for starters, going in the same order as the author is a good rule of thumb

Other Features

A summary also often has the following features:

- Includes an opening line that states the title, author, and genre of the text (aka a "TAG"). For example, if I were summarizing *Jurassic Park*, my first sentence might read: "In the action film *Jurassic Park*, produced by Stephen Spielberg, dinosaurs are brought back to life with disastrous consequences."
 - Title: *Jurassic Park*
 - Genre: Action Film
 - Author (in this case producer): Steven Spielberg
- Uses signal phrases (and possibly citations) to remind the reader you are summarizing someone else's work or reporting someone else's findings. For example, "The author states..." or "In the article..."
- Uses transitions (Next, then, as a result) to help the reader understand the order of ideas or events and how they are connected.
- Uses present tense (The author states...The author writes...) unless it is illogical to do so.
 - Example: The author states that in his childhood he had a red wagon named

Rosebud.

- Think of it this way—the text you are summarizing still exists, so the author is still essentially speaking in the present. However, events or occurrences from the past should be reported as happening in the past.
- Uses neutral, non-biased language while avoiding conversational language.

Summary: An Example

In this section, you will find an example of a one-paragraph summary. The full article that is being summarized can be found at the end of this chapter.

Example Summary of “Universal Health Care Coverage for the United States”

In the article, “Universal Health Care Coverage for the United States,” the writer argues that U.S. citizens should see health care as a universal right instead of something based on income or wealth. The author points out that, although there are concerns that universal health care (UHC) will increase tax-payer costs, there has been little investigation into what the actual cost would be compared to the current cost of insurance premiums. In addition, the author feels that the current system does not align with current U.S. values such as love and compassion because hospitals sometimes have to turn away the uninsured. The article challenges the argument that UHC systems in other European countries have proven that a UHC is too problematic, due to high costs and long waits to see a doctor. The article instead points out that the current U.S. health system has similar complaints. Finally, the author observes that even wealthy and insured families are not protected from healthcare costs. If a required treatment is not covered by a family’s policy, they must pay out-of-pocket which can be a severe financial burden. The author believes that this is another reason readers should contact their representative and request a UHC system. In conclusion, the author states that Americans should consider health care a right, similar to public education and access to police services.

This summary mostly uses neutral language and retains only the main ideas from the article. The writer leaves out their personal response and attempts to accurately convey the original author's main point and everything the audience needs to understand the argument. In addition, they include a "TAG" in their opening sentence, and use signal words and transitions to lead readers through their summary. Because there is no author for the article, the signal phrases use "the writer" or "the author." Typically, however, a summary would refer to the writer by their last name.

Summaries can be any length—the length will vary depending on your audience, purpose, and, possibly, the length of the work you are summarizing. Here you can see the same summary as above, compressed into one sentence and used in a paragraph.

Summary Used in a Paragraph

Universal health care has been a controversial topic in the US in recent years and there are many sides to the issue. **In the article "Universal Health Care Coverage for the United States," one writer argues that U.S. citizens should see healthcare as a universal right.** Meanwhile, other commentators feel that such an approach is impractical (Baum). These attitudes, and countless other examples, provide a glimpse of the many perspectives on the topic.

The highlighted sentence summarizes the article. Here, you can see how the summary is used to support the author's point—to illustrate that "Universal health care has been a controversial topic in the US in recent years and there are many sides to the issue."

What follows is the article summarized above. We've included it here for context.

Writing a Summary: Some Tips

Like most writing tasks, everyone has their own way of summarizing information. In fact, if you search for “how to write a summary,” you will likely find many, many tutorials. The key idea to keep in mind is your audience and purpose. What do they need to know? How can I organize my work to make the most sense for them? What tone would be the most appropriate? However, if you are looking for some guidance, here is one way to begin:

1. First, read the text. Try to use **active** reading strategies as you go. This will make it easier to identify the text’s main points.
2. Make a list of the text’s main points in your own words and phrases. This will require you to read the text again.
3. Use your list to write a summary of the text in your own words. Write in complete sentences and present the main points in the same order they appeared in the text. Remember to include an opening sentence where you state the title, author, and genre of the text you are summarizing and any other relevant features.
4. Revise, edit, and proofread your summary.

Did you include all the main events or ideas?

Did you omit unnecessary details or personal commentary? Are main ideas and events presented accurately (i.e. they have not been misunderstood or distorted)?

Do you include signal phrases (for example, “the article explains...” The author states...) to remind the reader that you are summarizing or paraphrasing an idea from the reading or article?

Did you use your own words? (not copied from text)

Extras: Did you use a TAG in your opening sentence? Did you use transition words to connect your sentence and paragraphs? Did you use present tense or

appropriate verb tenses throughout? Did you use complete sentences with standard punctuation, syntax, and grammar usage?

Chapter 12: Personal Narratives

Part 3 Chapter 12

The [personal narrative](#), a form of creative writing, is a story about personal experiences. Two examples of personal narratives are literacy narratives and memoirs. These genres share more similarities than differences, so for this reason, we will cover the genres in one chapter; however, your teachers may assign either the literacy narrative or memoir, so please closely read your essay prompts. This chapter covers similarities in these two genres, and in later subsections, the chapter covers how the genres are different.

Creative writing can take place in a variety of forms: poems, short stories, memoirs, novels, and even song lyrics. Memoirs and literacy narratives can also be classified as creative nonfiction. Narratives whether in the form of a poem, a story, or an essay, often attempt to achieve, or create, an effect in the minds of the readers. In this class, you will only write nonfiction, but if you would like to learn more about creative writing, check out the creative writing courses the CNM English department offers: English 2220 (nonfiction) English 2221 (fiction), English 2222 (poetry). Additionally, the student literary journal at CNM, *Leonardo*, publishes creative nonfiction, fiction, and poetry. If you write a memoir for class that you are proud of, consider submitting your memoir essay to *Leonardo*, which accepts submissions in the fall and spring semesters. To learn more, email leonardo@cnm.edu.

The intended effect of creative writing differs depending on the writer's goals. The intention or purpose may be to expound on the grieving process (catharsis), or to encourage an emotional response from the reader, for example, making a person laugh or cry. The potential results are unlimited. Creative writing can also be used as an outlet for people to get [their](#) thoughts and feelings out and onto paper. Many people enjoy creative writing but prefer not to share it. For this class, be prepared to share your narratives with your teacher and potentially classmates if your

teacher uses peer review.

Ultimately, narrative writing tries to relay a series of 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.

Adapted from “Chapter 10” of [Successful Writing](#), 2012, used according to creative commons [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#)



A reader may not have experienced similar life circumstances as yours, but that doesn't mean the reader won't be able to identify emotionally with what you and your characters go through. Human strife is human strife. For this reason, the subject of the memoir cannot be you. Your story, whether a literacy narrative or a memoir, needs to be about something larger than yourself. Your task, as the writer, is to explain how an event or experience is vexing, enlightening, or engrossing, something an outside reader could potentially relate to. Here's an example, I used to spend summers at my grandmother's house in New Jersey—snore. Who cares, right?

But what if I explain that during my stay at my grandmother's house in New Jersey when I was nineteen, I learn that my father has re-married without telling me and he now has a child on the way. I understandably feel betrayed and left out. Throughout the story, I reflect on the idea of honesty and trust in father-daughter relationships, while explaining the events that unfolded as my father called me on the phone and said I was his little Pica-paca-pu. Now that's a story. The more specific the details in a memoir or literacy narrative, the more human, appealing,

and universal your story becomes.

Nonfiction and Memory

Because literacy narratives and memoirs often deal with events that happened early on in your life, you may be wondering, “But what if I don’t remember all the details?” That’s okay! Chances are that you won’t remember every word you spoke or what the weather was like, but it is important that you tell the emotional truth. In other words, you convey the heart of what happened and what it meant, rather than intentionally changing aspects of the story to make it more interesting or to make yourself (or your Grandma or your third grade teacher) look better. For example, let’s say your mother’s favorite color is red and you know when you were first learning to read that she had a red dress she wore often. It’s perfectly okay to say that your mother was wearing that red dress when she sat you down to teach you the alphabet; however, it’s not okay to say that she turned into a giant dinosaur that day. Filling in small pieces with likely details from the past is fine, but outright fabricating is not.

Structuring a Personal Narrative

When writing a personal narrative for class, first consider the prompt your teacher assigned you. Then freewrite about topics that are of general interest to you. For more information about freewriting, see chapter six, which discusses the pre-writing process.

Once you have a general idea of what you will be writing about, you should sketch out the major events of the story that will compose your plot. Typically, these events will be revealed chronologically and a climax at a central conflict that must be resolved by the end of the story. Major narrative events are most often conveyed in chronological order, the order in which events unfold from first to last. Stories typically have a beginning, a middle, and an end, and these events are typically organized by time.

Not all personal narratives are written in chronological order. Some are told backwards, or some are arranged thematically. On occasion, a narrative can be structured by starting in the present and then “flashing back” to a prior, related

event. Typically, this is a strategy used to create interest and tension—the reader has to read the rest of the narrative to find out what happened. When using flashback, the writer usually concludes by returning to the present and reflecting on the flashback or its resolution. Regardless of your structure, whether you tell your story chronologically or non-chronologically, you will definitely need transitional words and phrases to guide the reader through time.

Table 12.1

Transition Words and Phrases for Expressing Time	
after/afterward	as soon as
currently	during
next	now
finally	later
until	when/whenever
at last	before
eventually	meanwhile
since	soon
still	then
while	first, second, third

As always, it is important to start with a strong introduction to hook your reader into wanting to read more. Try opening the essay with an event that is interesting to introduce the story and get it going. Tell the story with scene and engaging details. Finally, your conclusion should help resolve the central conflict of the story and impress upon your reader the ultimate theme of the piece. The ultimate theme of the piece is the larger wisdom or the universal experience that other people can relate to and enjoy.

Adapted from “Chapter 10” of [Successful Writing](#), 2012, used according to

Crafting a Personal Narrative

Craft features are the tools a writer uses to tell stories. Some examples of craft features include theme, characterization, setting, mood, imagery, persona, plot—these help you to shape and craft your story.

Craft features, stylistic elements, or literary devices—these are all synonyms for the same basic idea—these are your writer’s toolbox, and using craft features effectively in a piece of writing tells the reader that you know your focus, and you are using craft as support for your larger idea—some people call it theme, some people call it a universal experience.

Here are a few craft features, or writer’s tools, defined for you from *Successful Writing*:

- **Plot** – The events as they unfold in sequence
- **Characters** -The people who inhabit the story and move it forward. Typically, there are minor characters and main characters. The minor characters generally play supporting roles to the main character, or the protagonist. Characters are fleshed out not only through how the author describes them, but also through their actions, dialogue, and thoughts.
- **Conflict** -The primary problem or obstacle that unfolds in the plot that 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. The theme of a story is also what makes it significant. If the story has lasting meaning to you, it will be meaningful to your readers.

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Stills from the animated short [Sintel](#)

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Successful Writing introduced a few craft features to help you write a personal narrative, but there are more features available for you to use in a personal narrative. The chapter continues with more talk of plot, and then other features.

Plot Triangle

[//www.youtube.com/embed/J0AR7VMzhYE?
modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0](https://www.youtube.com/embed/J0AR7VMzhYE?modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0)

- **Basic Orienting Facts**-Lets the reader know who, when, where, and what is happening.
- **Organization**-This is so important that it has a whole sub-section on the next page.
- **Structure**-This is also so important it has a whole sub-section on the next page.
- **Scene**-The reader likes vivid descriptions of the setting and what you said in order to feel immersed in a story. Scene is the opposite of summary. Use scene sparingly when you want to slow down and focus on an important part of the story.
- **Summary**-This term is slightly different when used in creative writing. In academic writing, when you summarize, you tell the reader the main idea of a text. In creative writing, summary is different—it's a way to manage time. When you tell the reader what used to happen in your family, for example, you could explain, "My mother used to cook Sunday dinner for the family. She often made a roast." You are summarizing what used to happen in the past. If you were to write about a specific Sunday, and you fleshed out what happened in scene with dialogue, included details about the sound of vegetables being chopped, described the smells in the kitchen, and told the reader what your mother was wearing, and reflected on the conversation you had, that would be a scene. Summary condenses information in both academic and creative writing, but in creative writing, summary is linked to time management.
- **Persona**— Be aware that the character of you in the memoir is a construct. It's not literally you, because you are not words on the page, right? You are flesh and bone and you have a rich inner life. Use that rich inner life to develop your persona. Persona comes from the Latin word for mask. It's the version of you that you would like to illustrate for the reader in your memoir. This is a complicated concept. One way to think of your persona is you in relationship to the situation or people in the story. The persona can also be shaped by time: who and what you were like when you were twelve, for example. It can be shaped by relationship to your topic: who and what you are like in relationship to your mother or third grade teacher or your sergeant in boot camp.

- **Accountability to the reader**-Readers won't automatically question your credibility as a narrator on the page, but if you seem very infallible or somehow superhuman while everyone else in the story is tragically flawed, then the reader will wonder about the truthfulness of your own self-depiction. You are accountable to telling the story to your reader as truthfully as you can, while using craft elements to engage the reader. It's a daunting task. Also, readers like protagonists who are flawed, so be truthful about your mistakes.
- **Setting**-Where and when the story takes place.
- **Mood**-The emotional weight or atmosphere of a story, created through details, description, and other craft features, for example, sometimes setting can help create a mood.
- **Imagery**-An image in a story, or in a poem, is a description that appeals to one of the five senses. An image should also convey additional meaning, either emotional and/or intellectual. It's not an image to say green gelatin. Green gelatin is meaningless until the reader injects the gelatin with meaning. You can, however, create an image if you were to write, "The Frog Eye Salad recipe that my beloved grandmother used to make for Sunday picnics." The latter description is specific and contains emotional content.
- **Reflection**-The sense and interpretation that you make of the events that transpired in your memoir and how you feel and/or think about them. You can also reflect on the story and relate the events to the universal meaning or theme you would like to include in the story.

You can use all of these tools or craft features to help you tell a story that is vibrant and focused. All of these craft features work together in a story to help the writer convey the ultimate theme or universal experience in a nonfiction work. That universal experience, what reading and writing means for you, personally, getting down to that level of personal experience actually makes your writing more appealing and universal to the reader. The more specific your descriptions and stories become, the more easily the reader can relate and enjoy your stories.

Literacy + Narrative = Literacy Narrative



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A commonly accepted definition of literacy is the ability to read and write; however, there are different types of literacy. A person can be computer literate, which would suggest either having knowledge of computers, or being well-versed in their function and capabilities.

For our purposes and time constraints, we will define literacy as the ability to read and write. When you combine that concept with the rhetorical mode of narration, a literacy narrative is born. In a literacy narrative, a writer may discuss learning to read and write, or the writer could recall a time in which he/she became more proficient or skilled in reading and writing, or a writer could even write about a person who taught him/her to read or be inspired by stories.

Because a literacy narrative is a story, a story needs to have some sort of trouble, or something vexing for you as the protagonist. For that reason, literacy narratives can contain specific themes to help focus the story. For example, literacy can be linked to the idea of being empowered, for example, Malcolm X describes the freeing aspects of literacy in his essay, "Literacy Behind Bars." If literacy has

affected your identity or self-discovery, you could write about “...the time my journal saved my life or sanity...who knew I was a slam poet?” You could also tackle how literacy for you is linked to struggle or triumph, for example, the story could begin, “Here I am in college. I’m sure my second grade teacher, Mrs. Lukenda, who once told me I was dumber than a box of rocks, would be surprised.”

The more specific you are in a literacy narrative, the more focused the details become. When you write about the time you learned to read and write, you wouldn’t want to focus on every detail of your life at the time, because it wouldn’t be useful to let the reader know that you learned to read at about the same time you visited Santa, or lost your first tooth, unless those details help you to tell your story.

Additionally, it is important to understand that there are many different types of literacy narratives. For example, you could explore a theme of empowerment through literacy; one example would be Malcolm X’s essay “Literacy Behind Bars” where he explores the freeing aspects of literacy. Or a literacy narrative could cover becoming literate in a new culture. Literacy can also pertain to learning a new language. If you are unsure whether your story of literacy follows your teacher’s guidelines, set some time aside before or after class to meet with your teacher. Or visit your teacher during their office hours and pitch your ideas.

Literacy Narrative Essay Example

A literacy narrative recounts a formative experience or experiences with reading and/or writing. As long as the event you write about was a meaningful part of the learning process and enough time has elapsed for substantive reflection, then you can pick a more recent experience, like this sample literacy narrative illustrates.

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 fail my first assignment. 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 assigned 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 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.

Adapted from "Chapter Fifteen" of [Successful Writing](#), 2012, used according to creative commons [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#)

Brainstorming Literacy Narrative Ideas

You may receive an assignment prompt that asks you to write from your memory, recapturing the experience of reading a special book or text from your childhood or adolescence. Think of this as a chance to recapture something significant from your past, to explore its importance, and to reconstruct it in writing for others to appreciate.

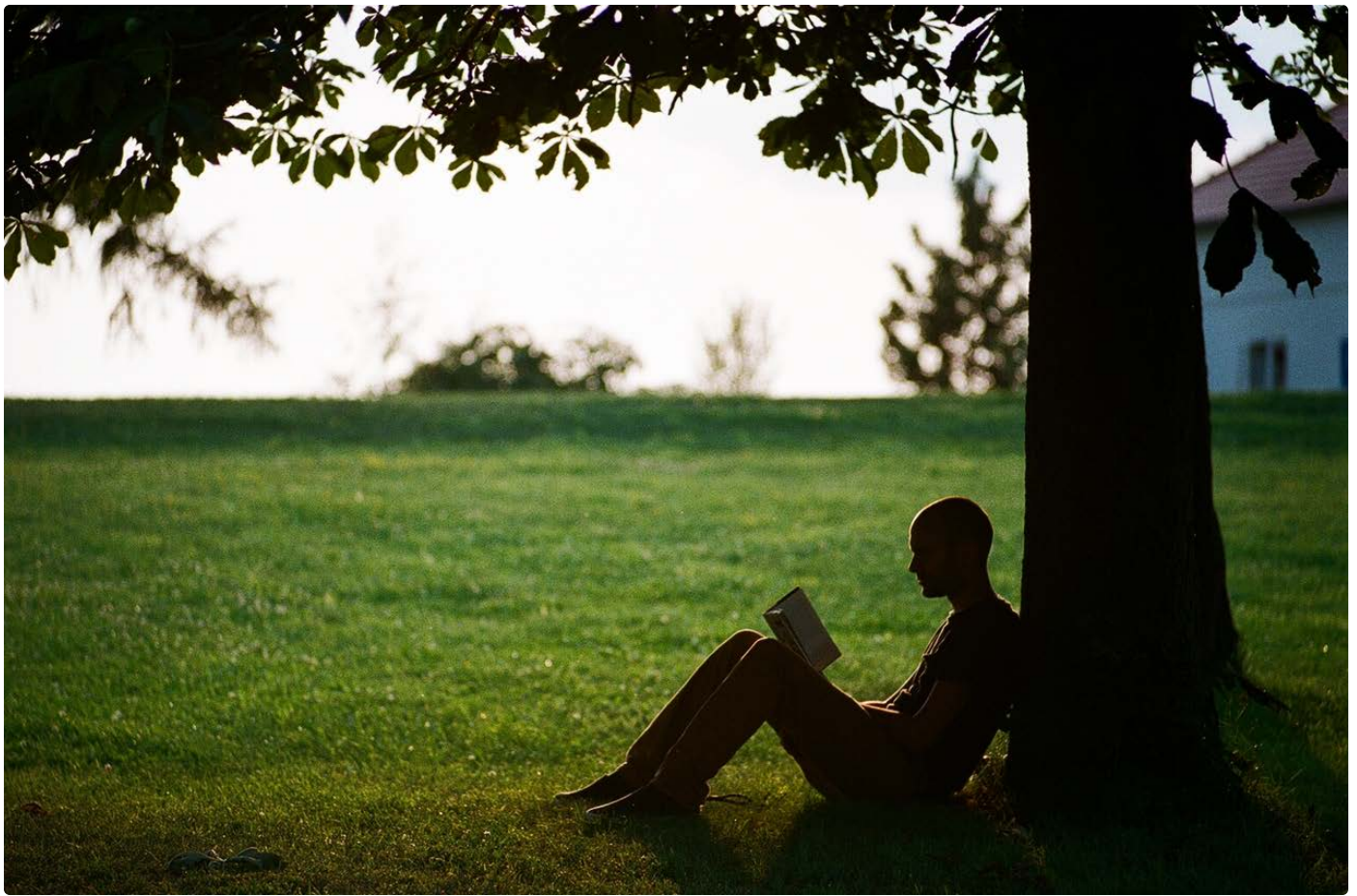


Photo by [Marketa](#), CC BY-SA 2.0

Certain books we've read live in our memories. When we first read these books or when they were read to us, they spoke to us in some important way. They may still speak to us. Find a book that played an important role in your life when you were a child or an adolescent. Why was it important? What was it like to read this book? Did you read it on your own or did someone read it to you? If someone read it to you, who was it, and what was the experience like? Is there a connection between this book and learning to read on your own? Re-read the book. (If it is long, like *Little Women*, for example, it is all right to skim it, although you may find yourself re-reading certain parts.)

In your essay, use the book as a springboard for your writing by focusing on an insight (a discovery) you have made about the book. Be sure to cite passages and tell the effect they had on you. As you shape your drafts, give attention to organization, the way you build your story. Decide what the reader needs to know in the beginning, and think about the order the events happened and how much to

tell the reader at each point. Give attention also to the pictures you create: try to reconstruct key moments by showing what happened rather than merely telling that it happened. Dialogue and scene descriptions often help to make those moments come alive. Finally, give careful thought to the story's theme or controlling idea.

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Memoir

A literacy narrative is a genre of creative writing that focuses specifically on a person's personal experience with literacy. Another genre of creative writing you may be asked to write in English 1101 is a memoir. The textbook *Rhetoric and Composition* describes memoirs as a form of creative writing, a first-person autobiographical text that records a writer's reaction to important events in his or her life. This is different from an autobiography. Influential people, such as former U. S. Presidents Bill Clinton and Ronald Reagan, often write lengthy autobiographies depicting the many critical events of their lives and careers. But every writer has experienced a few critical events that will be of interest to people who do not know them. These individual events are great topics for memoir.

According to Greg Martin, professor at UNM, when a person creates a memoir, the writer is examining a specific time in his/her life, and a very specific relationship—a relationship to a person or idea. The memoir must be larger than the writer in that an outside reader could relate to themes or universal meaning in the text.

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How to Write a Memoir

You don't have to be nearing the end of your life to write a memoir. A book-length memoir can cover your lifetime, but it had better be focused on some aspect of your persona, which is how you characterize yourself in memoir. So even two hundred pages of memoir needs focus.

Focus is central to any genre of writing—academic essays, business letters, memoirs, and so on. For this course, when you write a memoir, focus is even more important. Since you only have two to three pages to tell a story from your life, your persona (that is, you characterized on the page) should focus on a universal meaning you would like to relay to the reader and a relationship between you and something larger than yourself—a relationship to a person, an activity, a struggle. Pick a short time period, or maybe even a moment, for this course’s assignment, and focus on relaying to the audience what made that event in your life special, important, life-changing

If you are assigned a memoir in class, you will want to ask yourself a few questions:

1. What is the story I want to tell?
2. Why do I want to tell it?
3. How could an outside reader relate to what I write?

The third point above is important because you always want to think about the reader when you write. If you are writing a personal narrative, you aren’t just writing about yourself. You’re writing about the human experience, and what it means to live inside your body and your mind at this particular moment in time.

Here’s an example of how a reader can relate to a narrative. Think about a children’s story, take Cinderella for example. She’s a nice, young lady; she’s so nice that even small animals are drawn to her. They know she won’t hurt them, but her family is mean, and they don’t see that she is special and beautiful.

Have you ever experienced or known someone who was not understood by a parental figure? Have you ever snuck out at night to go to a party, especially if there was a super-hot host or hostess who invited you? Have you experienced being double-crossed? Have you ever been forced to do chores you didn’t want to do? Cinderella experienced all these struggles and the story compels the reader to connect with the audience.

On many levels, this children's story is relatable to an outside audience. Yes, it is fiction, and the fantastical elements might make it seem like an ordinary person couldn't identify with the story; however, the specific details allow the reader to be immersed in the story and identify with the protagonist.

In this vein, you will write memoir. The way to create a more human and relatable story is to write specific details, and reflect on the story and what it means to you now. Professor Greg Martin at UNM has said that one of the most important parts of writing memoir is reflection. Reflection is you looking back on the events that you are describing and making sense of them.

Reflection in memoir is similar to interpreting and analyzing evidence in an academic essay. When you read the Analytical Writing chapters in this textbook, you will notice that interpreting evidence and making sense of statistics or facts is important. The same goes for writing memoir. You have to write about why the situation you have narrated is important or universal—how does it relate to the reader? What did you learn? What can we learn? However, you don't want to sound so dogmatic when you begin the reflection area of an essay because the reader will have his/her own interpretation of the events you describe. And that's the hard part about memoir—once you create a piece of art and present it to an audience, the audience will have a different interpretation from what you have created. And that's fine. It's part of the process of creating art—writing is art. Creative writing should be lyrical, and lecturing never sounds pretty. You can reflect by using other craft features like imagery and metaphor to help you create the meaning, theme, or universal wisdom in your story. But it's up to the reader to decide on meaning.

Sample Memoir

Here is a short sample memoir written by one of your English teachers. It was first published in *Brain, Child*, a mother's magazine.

Forgetting the Class Snack by Jennifer Schaller

I was reading over final papers from my semester of teaching and busy all day with conferences for my English classes; meanwhile, at my daughter's Kindergarten class, fourteen children sat nervously waiting, bellies grumbling, as they stared daggers at my daughter, while chanting "We want Cheez-its! We want Cheez-its!" Eh, maybe it didn't happen quite like that.

Regardless, each month at my daughter's school, in alphabetical order, parents are required to bring a snack, and I am usually ready days in advance. Sometimes I add a cute and Pinterest-y flourish—name tags for each kid, or on St. Patrick's Day, each carrot cupcake had green clovers I cut out and attached to toothpicks. It wasn't the healthiest snack, but at least there were carrots and raisins in the mix.

Then one time I forgot.

I hadn't checked my phone messages all morning, and in the afternoon, I had plenty: two from my daughter's teacher and three from my husband who was confused—Jennifer always remembers snack, right? Upon reading the texts, I felt a familiar burning sensation run up my body—call it shame, humiliation, sadness. I'm pretty sure forgetting snack shouldn't bring up a laundry list of self-defeating malevolence.

When I was a teenager, my mom forgot a lot, mostly me, a few times after school, and at least once, when I was a toddler, she forgot me, restrained in my car seat while she locked her keys in a running car to fetch something inside our house. I had nightmares for years afterward that I was in the backseat of a car rolling erratically downhill with no one at the wheel. For this reason, I vowed to never forget anything as a parent.

Then one time I forgot.

Who cares, right? Every parent forgets some things. But I care, mostly about my reaction—that burning sensation of shame. It worries me that I would feel like such a failure over something so minor. Sometimes I wish I had a doppelganger, a woman plump around her middle, soft in her thirties, who tries her best; she would be me but outside of me, there to let me feel for myself what I don't feel: compassion. I would say out loud to her the things I

think to myself, “How could you forget? How could you disappoint your daughter?” As my insults spiraled through the air, I’d hear my harsh tone. I’d understand why I need to quiet those voices.

I’m not completely sure of the difference between self-pity and self-sympathy. It’s a hard line to envision drawing for myself. I was always taught to suck things up: pity and pouting would get me nowhere. So I suck up the various blows life deals me, and that philosophy has certainly served me well, with a few exceptions, like when I forgot snack.

It’s sad that I could give more sympathy to doppelganger me than real me, the me who behaves more like a human than a super-mother. Real me doesn’t get my sympathy. I would like to feel for myself, even though it feels false and strange. I’ll try it:

Oh that Jennifer, she forgot her daughter’s snack. It’s understandable. Her semester does end in two weeks. One could see how she might forget. She’ll try harder next time. She will say everyone makes mistakes, even Mommy. She’ll realize the burning shame she feels is not something she wants to pass down. In place of sucking it up, she’ll keep striving for self-compassion, or self-sympathy, or even just the opposite of self-loathing.

First published here:

Forgetting the Class Snack

In this sample memoir, there is a protagonist with a problem—she’s a perfectionist. She wants to do everything right, but she can’t. When she is unable to achieve her own expectations, she feels self-loathing. These are some heavy issues, and they were all sparked by forgetting snack for her daughter’s kindergarten class. The story becomes focused, and the trouble begins when she realizes that she forgot snack—forgetting snack is also the inciting incident, the trouble in the story that opens up the gateway to reflection and discovery. The reflection in this memoir is

not about Cheez-its; the reflection has to do with the protagonist reflecting on why she feels so terribly about forgetting the class snack.

When you begin writing your memoir for class, try to focus the story on some aspect of yourself, and then risk wisdom, as Professor Greg Martin used to say—say something about what happened, make sense of the events. Lastly, trust that when you tell your story and include conflict (something has to happen to somebody), create a protagonist with which the reader can identify, reflect on the events, and describe using plenty of detail, the reader will want to come along for the ride.

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Chapter 13: Reflection Writing

Part 3: Chapter 13

The textbook *Rhetoric and Composition* discusses how in many composition courses, your teachers may stress to you the importance of the writing process over the final writing product. An important component of the writing process is reflection or the act of stepping back and considering your writing choices. In English 1101 or 1102, you might be asked to reflect on your writing process, and the by-product of this, or what your teachers hope you glean is a type of learning called reflective learning. The goal with reflective writing is to help students become more self-aware of their strengths and weaknesses as a writer. Self-awareness helps students tune in to what lessons/concepts they need to study the most. But reflective writing is not only limited to reflecting on your writing process.

Adapted from “Chapter Seven” of [Rhetoric and Composition](#), 2013, used under creative commons [CC BY-SA 3.0 US](#)

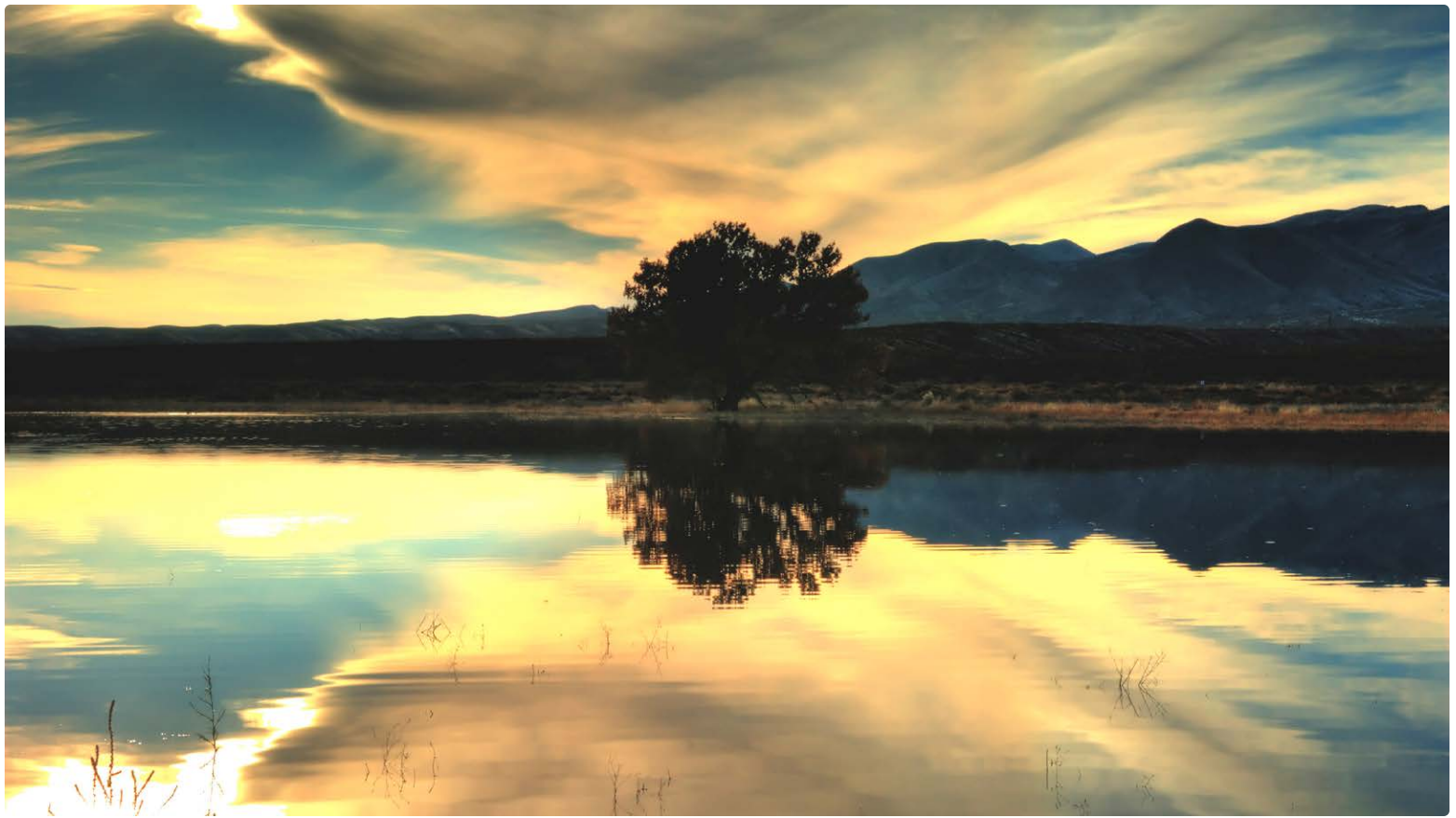


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You can write a reflection to help you develop an idea, think about an experience, consider the impact of your actions or choices, illustrate your understanding of a concept, or reflect on a moment. This genre of writing provides you with the opportunity to learn from an experience and ponder the elements of your actions, the outcomes, and other influences.

There are many different types of reflection assignments. Some instructors will ask you to think about an experience while considering your purpose, audience, and goals for a piece of writing. Other reflection assignments might ask you to think about your writing stages including the inventing, outlining, drafting, and revision process. These types of assignments often ask you to display your knowledge of a concept or self-assess your writing strategies while addressing the impact of those strategies. For example, did the use of outlining help you create an essay that was more organized? Did the peer review process help you look at your writing through the reader's perspective? Evaluating your writing process is important because you can work to enhance your writing techniques for future assignments and

strengthen your final submissions. Reflection is also a great way to solidify your understanding of the information you gathered and learned during the multi-step writing process.

Reflection writing, specifically reflecting on your own writing process, is a common assignment in English courses because it encourages you to think through and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of your writing process. Once you receive a reflective writing prompt, you might ask yourself some of the following questions: Did a specific pre-writing tool benefit your final assignment? Were any of your writing strategies unsuccessful? What did you learn about your writing through the assignment process? Reflective writing helps solidify what you learned while completing an assignment.

How to Write a Reflection

The best way to begin a reflection is with an open mind so you can develop a thoughtful response. You will likely receive an assignment prompt from your instructor. Begin by reading the prompt and determine your goals for the assignment. Then, with an open mind, start free-writing your initial responses to the questions posed in the prompt. These initial reactions can act as a rough outline for your assignment. A reflection doesn't have to follow a pre-determined structure, but it should have a clear focus. Once you've determined the focus for your writing, essentially a draft thesis statement, you can continue thinking about the development of your assignment.

Tips

Allow your prewriting to be exploratory. Reflective writing encourages you to explore an experience and explain or ponder the individual choices you have made.

Stand back and view the experience from an objective point of view.

While reflective writing asks you to write about your own experience, you should be as thorough as you would for any other writing task. Remember to keep your reader in mind. Try to remove your emotions from the experience. Rather than blame yourself for a specific choice, consider the reasoning for that decision and explore what you've learned.

Avoid focusing on writing about every moment of the event or process. Reflective writing should focus on specific snapshots of your experience, so avoid spending too much time narrating. Instead, reflect on how a specific choice impacted the experience. Ultimately, your essay's goal is not to create a narrative but to speculate about the significance of your experience.

Structure

While reflective writing can seem complex, students often enjoy the freedom to use first person since you are writing about your own experience. You are also free to use past tense since you are describing events that occurred in the past. These two elements will help you create an inquisitive tone while looking back at your experience.

Like most academic writing, you will want to structure your essay by including a detailed thesis statement, body paragraphs with topic sentences that connect to your thesis, smooth transitions between paragraphs, and an engaging and thoughtful conclusion. Reflective writing is a creative genre, and you have the flexibility to add dialog, hindsight, and speculation to your writing. Think about your audience while you're writing and work to include vivid imagery that helps your reader envision your experience. Together, these strategies will help you introduce, reflect, and explain your experience while solidifying what you've learned and engaging your reader.

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Chapter 14: Comparison and Contrast

Part 3 : Chapter 14

The textbook *Successful Writing* introduces the key elements of writing a comparison and contrast essay. In writing, comparison discusses elements that are similar, while contrast discusses elements that are different. A compare-and-contrast essay, then, analyzes two subjects by comparing them, contrasting them, or both. These skills are helpful in many writing situations, especially when you spend time completing textual analysis.

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 to illuminate subtle differences or unexpected similarities while contemplating the meaning of the similarities or differences. 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 and the potential for each.



For example, Red Delicious apples are sweet, while Granny Smiths are tart and acidic; therefore, one type is better suited for baking and the other for eating as a snack. Drawing distinctions between elements in a similar category will increase the audience's understanding of that category, which is the purpose of the compare-and-contrast essay.

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

The Structure of a Comparison and Contrast Essay

Similar to other academic essays, the compare-and-contrast essay starts with a

thesis that clearly introduces the two subjects that are to be compared, contrasted, or both and the reason for doing so. The thesis could lean more toward comparing, contrasting, or both. Remember, the point of comparing and contrasting is to provide useful knowledge to the reader. Take the following thesis as an example that leans more toward contrasting.

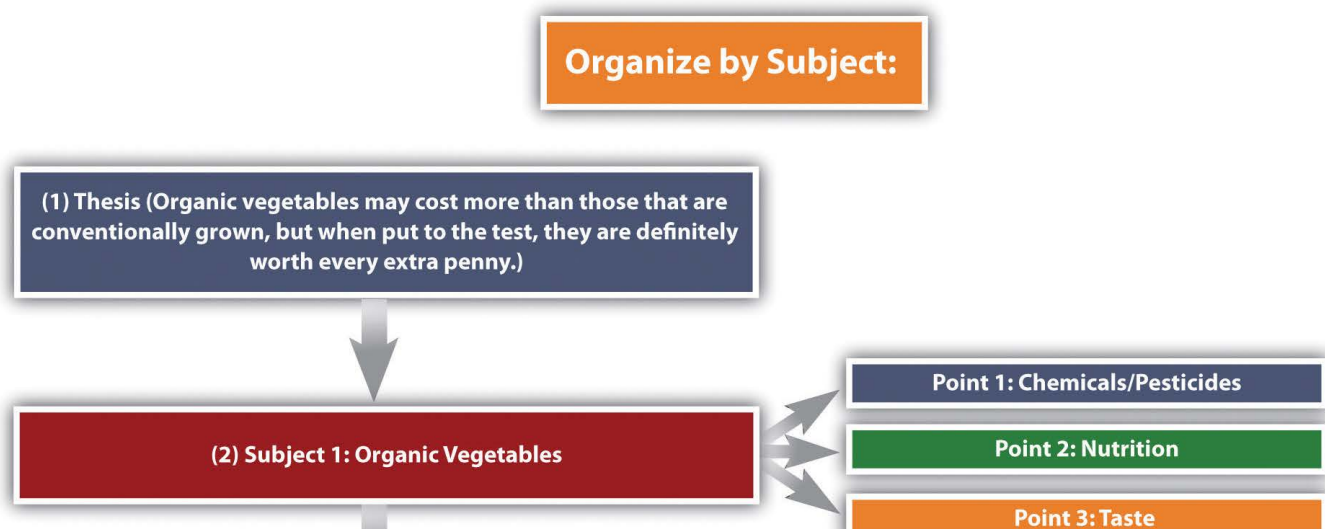
Thesis statement: Organic vegetables may cost more than those that are conventionally grown, but, when put to the test, they are definitely worth every extra penny.

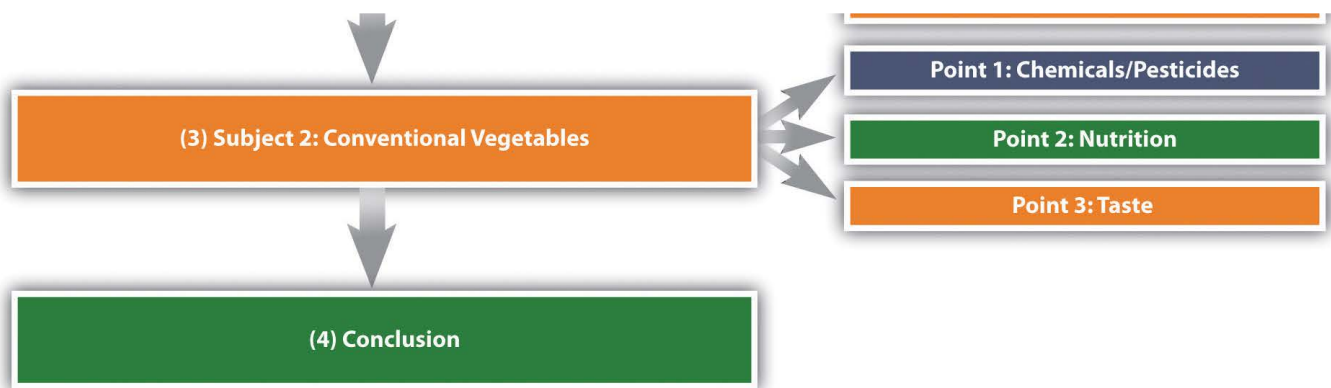
Here the thesis sets up the two subjects to be compared and contrasted (organic versus conventional vegetables), and it makes a claim about the results that might prove useful to the reader.

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

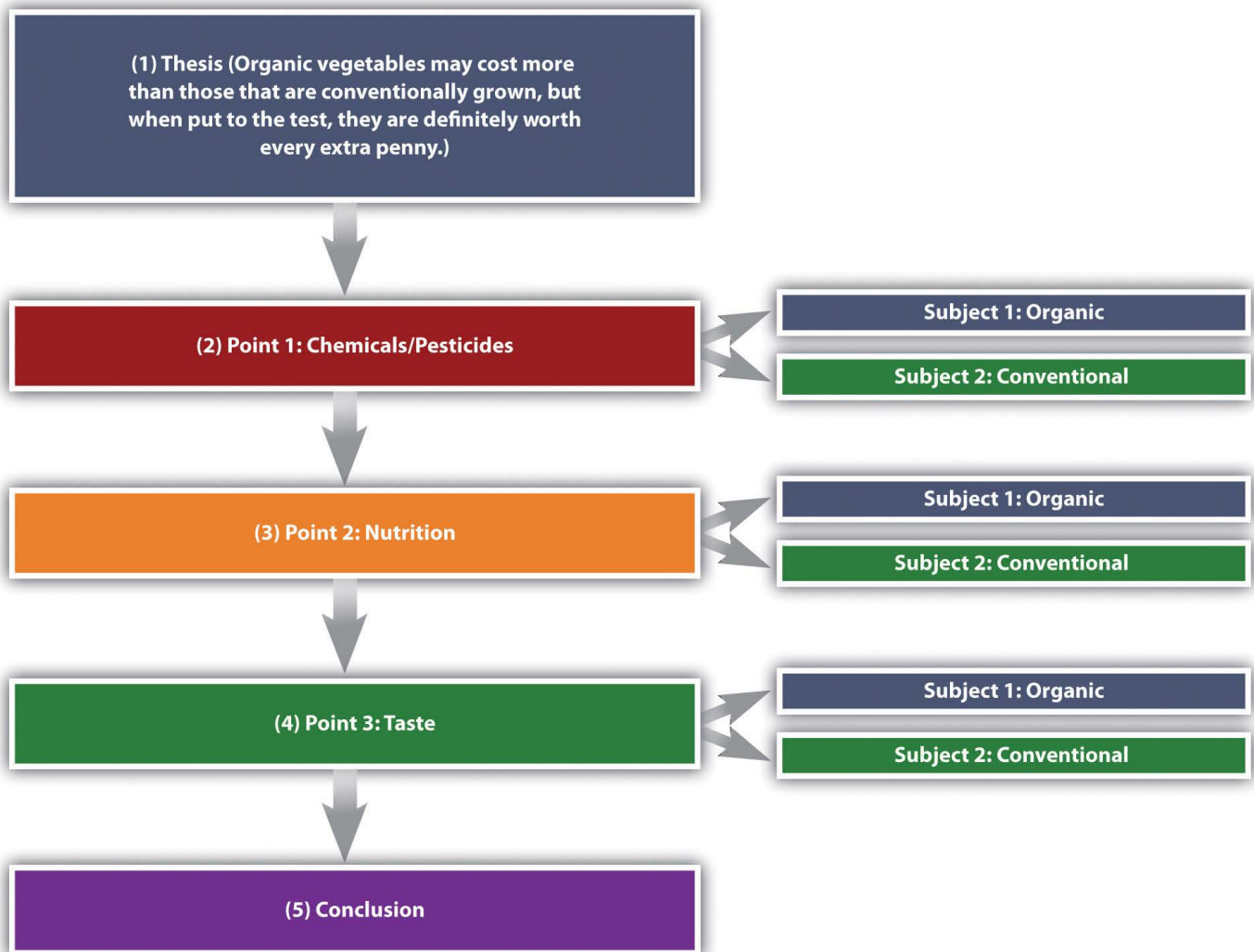
1. According to the subjects themselves, discussing one then the other
2. According to individual points, discussing each subject in relation to each point.

See [Figure 14.1 “Comparison and Contrast Diagram”](#), which diagrams the ways to organize our organic versus conventional vegetables thesis.





Organize by Point:



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

Given that comparison and contrast essays analyze the relationship between two subjects, it is helpful to have some phrases on hand that will cue the reader to such analysis.

Table 14.1 Phrases of Comparison and Contrast

Comparison	Contrast
One Similarity	One Difference
Another Similarity	Another Difference
Both	Conversely
Like	In Contrast
Likewise	Unlike
Similarly	While
In a Similar Fashion	Whereas

Writing a Comparison and Contrast Essay

Students are often provided with a general concept for a compare and contrast essay, so spend time reviewing your essay prompt to ensure you clearly understand the goals for your assignment. Then you will need to decide 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. This is your opportunity to hook your reader and introduce the significance of your essay. 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 you are analyzing the relationship between the subjects.

After you finish analyzing the subjects, write a conclusion that summarizes the main points of the essay and reinforces your thesis.

Adapted from “Chapter 10” of [Successful Writing](#), 2012, used according to creative commons [CC-BY-SA 3.0](#)

[Sample C and C Essay](#)

Chapter 15: Reports

Part 3: Chapter 15

Reports record and convey information to the reader in a clear, concise, and visually appealing manner. The textbook *Communication for Business Success* explains that reports play a role in both academic and business settings. Both businesses and organizations commonly use reports—from credit reports to police reports—to provide document-specific information for specific audiences, goals, or functions. In both settings, the type of report is often identified by its primary purpose or function, as in an accident report, a laboratory report, a sales report, or even a book report.

Different types of reports share similar traits. For example, unlike other genres, a report will often include visual elements to engage your reader and help them quickly visualize data. Reports are often analytical, meaning they analyze and interpret information. Sometimes they simply report the facts with no analysis at all, but still need to communicate the information in a clear and concise format. Other reports summarize past events, present current data, and forecast future trends. While a report may have conclusions, propositions, or even a call to action, the demonstration of the analysis is the primary function. A sales report, for example, is not designed to make an individual sale. It is, however, supposed to report sales to date, and may forecast future sales based on previous trends. This chapter is designed to introduce you to the basics of report writing.

In an academic setting, reports are often used to encourage students to review or research information. For example, in CNM's English 1101 course, students often complete a career report. This report requires students to evaluate their current progress in their selected program, report on the coursework they have yet to complete, consider the requirements involved in transferring to a four year program, and research the current market for their ideal job. While this is only one type of report, it follows pre-described formatting for the report genre. Below you

will read about many different types of reports you may create both in an academic and professional setting.

Types of Reports

Reports come in all sizes, but they are typically longer than a page and shorter than a book. The type of report depends on its function or purpose. The purpose or function of the report is often indicated in the thesis or purpose statement.

The types of evidence you use in a report will vary depending on your purpose and audience. For example, you will need to consider the types of visual content or visual aids, representing words, numbers, and how they relate to the central purpose in a report. Lengths of reports will vary, depending on your purpose, so it's important to consider your rhetorical situation: "Focusing on the content of your longer business documents is not only natural but necessary because doing so helps ensure complete, correct information." Bovee, C., & Thill, J. (2010). *Business Communication Essentials: A skills-based approach to vital business English* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

While reports vary by purpose or function, they also vary by style and tradition. If you are writing a report for work, there may be employer-specific expectations that need to be addressed to meet audience expectations. If you are writing a report for a class, you will have similar concerns, so consult your teacher and the assignment prompt to determine what sections and sub-sections you will need to include. This chapter discusses reports generally, and you will need to consider the needs of your specific audience and rhetorical situation to figure out if you need to include an abstract, a summary, or a recommendation section.

Informational or Analytical Report?

There are two main categories for reports, regardless of their specific function or type. An **informational report** informs or instructs and presents details of events, activities, individuals, or conditions without analysis. An example of this type of "just the facts" report is a police accident report. The report will note the time, date, place, contributing factors like weather, identification information for the drivers involved in an automobile accident, and it does not establish fault or

include judgmental statements. You should not read, “Driver was falling down drunk” in a police accident report. Instead, you can expect to read, “Driver failed sobriety tests and breathalyzer test and was transported to the station for a blood sample.” The police officer is not a trained medical doctor and is not licensed to make definitive diagnoses, but can collect and present relevant information that may contribute to that diagnosis.

As mentioned earlier, you may be asked to write a career report in English 1101 or a similar report in English 1119. Your ultimate goal will be to inform the audience, using data and research, about your findings. An informative report might also include analysis.

The second type of report is called an **analytical report**. An analytical report presents information with a comprehensive analysis to solve problems, demonstrate relationships, or make recommendations. An example of this report may be a field report by a Center for Disease Control (CDC) physician from the site of an outbreak of the H1N1 virus, noting symptoms, disease progression, steps taken to arrest the spread of the disease, and to make recommendations on the treatment and quarantine of subjects.

Report Types	
Type	Function
1. Laboratory Report	Communicate the procedures and results of laboratory activities
2. Research Report	Study problems scientifically by developing hypotheses, collecting data, analyzing data, and indicating findings or conclusions
3. Field Study Report	Describe one-time events, such as trips, conferences, seminars, as well as reports from branch offices, industrial and manufacturing plants
4. Progress Report	Monitor and control production, sales,

	shipping, service, or related business process
5. Technical Report	Communicate a process and product from a technical perspective
6. Financial Report	Communicate a status and trends from a finance perspective
7. Case Study	Represent, analyze, and present lessons learned from a specific case or example
8. Needs Assessment Report	Assess the need for a service or product
9. Comparative Advantage Report	Discuss competing products or services with an analysis of relative advantages and disadvantages
10. Feasibility Study	Analyze problems and predict whether current solutions or alternatives will be practical, advisable, or produce the desired outcome(s)
11. Instruction Manuals	Communicate step-by-step instructions on the use of a product or service
12. Compliance Report	Document and indicate the extent to which a product or service is within established compliance parameters or standards
13. Cost-Benefit Analysis Report	Communicate costs and benefits of products or services.
14. Decision Report	Make recommendations to management and introduce tools to solve problems and make decisions
15. Benchmark Report	Establish criteria and evaluate alternatives by measuring against the accepted benchmark criteria

16. Examination Report	Report or record data obtained from an examination of an item or conditions, including accidents and natural disasters
17. Physical Description report	Describe the physical characteristics of a machine, device, or object
18. Literature Review	Present summaries of the information available on a given subject

Features of a Report

Reports vary by size, format, and function, so you will need to be flexible and adjust to the needs of the audience while respecting customs and guidelines.

Reports are typically organized around six key elements:

1. Whom the report is about and/or prepared for
2. What was done, what problems were addressed, and the results, including conclusions and/or recommendations
3. Where the subject studied occurred
4. When the subject studied occurred
5. Why the report was written, including under what authority, for what reason, or by whose request
6. How the subject operated, functioned, or was used

Pay attention to these essential elements when you consider your stakeholders, or those who have an interest in the report. That may include the person(s) the report is about, whom it is for, and the larger audience of the business, organization, or industry. While there is no universal format for a report, there is a common order to the information. Each element supports the main purpose or function in its own way, playing an important role in the representation and transmission of

information. In a way, this is similar to writing any other genre for this course—all the information and evidence you include in a report needs to be appropriate for the audience and it needs to speak to your main purpose or thesis. If you cannot connect the evidence or a visual back to being useful for your audience or purpose, consider cutting out that information.

10

ELEMENTS OF A REPORT

1

COVER

Title and image

Cover of a book, sometimes a image, or logo features to introduce the topic to the reader

2

TITLE FLY

Optional Page

Feasibility Study of Oil Recovery from the X Tarpit Sands Location

3

TITLE PAGE

Label, report, features title, author, and sometimes

whom the report was prepared

4

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A list of the main parts of the report and their respective page numbers

5

ABSTRACT

Informational Abstract: Highlight topic, methods, data, and results

Descriptive Abstract: All of the above except statements of conclusion or recommendations

6

INTRODUCTION

Introduces the topic of the report

7

BODY

Key Elements:

Background, Methodology, Results, Analysis and recommendations

8

CONCLUSION

Concise presentation of the findings

9

REFERENCES

Bibliography or Works Cited

APPENDIX

Here is a checklist you can use to ensure that a report fulfills its goals:

Report considers the audience's needs

Format follows function of report

Format reflects institutional norms and expectations

Information is accurate, complete, and documented

Information is easy to read

Terms are clearly defined

Figures, tables, and art support written content

Figures, tables, and art are clear and correctly labeled

Figures, tables, and art are easily understood without test support

Words are easy to read (font, arrangement, organization)

Results are clear and concise

Recommendations are reasonable and well-supported

Report represents your best effort

Report speaks for itself without your clarification or explanation

Adapted from “Chapter 13” of *English for Business Success* 2012, used according to creative commons [CC-BY-NC-SA 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/).

Chapter 16: Evaluations

Part 3: Chapter 16

People evaluate all the time. An important and basic function of any evaluation is to recommend or not recommend a product or service to other people. Students frequently utilize evaluation strategies in an academic setting. For example, you have probably used evaluation strategies when you decided whether to use a research article in an academic essay. If you have ever tried out a new restaurant because of its positive online or newspaper reviews, then you are testing out other people's evaluations. If a friend recommends a movie because they say the film is really, really good, and you later watch the film and find yourself disappointed, the trouble might be that you and your friend have different criteria for what makes a good movie.

The textbook *Rhetoric and Composition* states that evaluative writing judges using a set of criteria. For instance, your health might be evaluated by an insurance company before issuing a policy. The purpose of this evaluation would be to determine your overall health and to check for existing medical conditions. The better your evaluation, the less the insurance company might charge you for coverage.

Criteria

The key to effective evaluative writing is starting off with a clear and precise argument. Your main argument is what you will use to perform the evaluation. You may want to argue that a Chevy Tahoe is better than a Ford Expedition based on its horsepower, gas mileage, capacity, warranty, etc. These concepts are the criteria you will use to evaluate each vehicle. Other evaluators might argue the difference between their towing capability. Whatever the main argument may be for your evaluative essay, make sure that your argument is clear.

- Make sure you have a well-presented subject. Without one, you will lose your readers.
- Create a thesis statement that introduces your stance. Thesis statements help you stay focused and help your reader to understand what is being evaluated or judged.
- Give only information that is imperative to the decision-making process. If it looks like unnecessary information, it probably is.
- Do not be biased when creating an evaluative essay. Give both good and bad examples of the topic.
- You are the expert in an evaluative essay. Support your opinions with facts, not whims.

How to Evaluate

A big question you might have is: how do I evaluate my subject? That depends on your position on the topic. If you are evaluating a piece of writing, then you will need to read the work thoroughly. While you read the work, keep in mind the criteria you are using to evaluate. The evaluative aspects may be grammar, sentence structure, spelling, content, usage of sources, or other stylistic elements. Another issue to consider when evaluating a piece of writing is whether the writing appeals to its target audience. Is there an emotional appeal? Does the author engage the audience, or is the piece lacking something? If you can, make notes directly on the work itself so that you remember what you want to write about in your essay.

You need to try, use, or test whatever thing you are evaluating. That means you should not evaluate a 2005 Chevrolet Corvette unless you have the \$45,000 (or more) to buy one, or the money to rent one. You also need the know-how of driving a car of that power and a base of knowledge of other cars that you have tested to make a fair comparison.

On the note of comparisons, only compare items that are reasonably alike. People

don't care to know how an apple compares to a backpack; that is for a different type of essay. Compare different types of apples to each other and different types of backpacks against each other. That is what people are looking for when reading comparisons in an evaluation essay. Whatever you are evaluating, make sure to do so thoroughly. Take plenty of notes during the testing phase so that your thoughts stay fresh in your mind. You do not want to forget about a part of the subject that you did not test.

Features of an Evaluation

Introduction

In the introduction of your evaluative essay, you should clearly state the following:

1. the subject you are evaluating (like a 2009 Toyota Prius)
2. the purpose of your evaluation
3. the criteria you are using to evaluate your subject (mileage, price, performance, etc.).

For example, you should not just write that you are judging the taste of an apple. You should explain that you are judging the sweetness, bitterness, and crispness of the apple.

Body

Unlike some types of essays, the introduction is not the most important part of an evaluative essay. Most readers already want to read about the subject that you are writing on, so you don't need to draw them in with a fancy intro. Your audience just wants the information.

Be sure to be descriptive and thorough when evaluating your subject. The more you leave out of the essay, the more unanswered questions your readers are left with. Your goal should be to cover all aspects of the subject and to tell the audience how good or bad it is. Consider, for example, not only what quality the subject possesses, but also what is missing. Good evaluations measure the quality or value

of a subject by considering what it has and what it lacks.

Conclusion

The conclusion for an evaluative essay is straightforward. Simply go over the main points from the body of your essay. After that, make an overall evaluation of the subject. Tell the audience if they should buy it, eat it, use it, wear it, etc. and why. After that is done, your essay is complete. Good job!

Reviews: One Type of Evaluation

In many college courses, the review assignment gives writers the chance to express their personal opinion about anything the writers would like. The main purpose of the review, however, is to develop the ability of supporting arguments and demonstrating an understanding of a subject at hand.

A review is an essay expressing an informed opinion about a subject while explaining why a writer came to an opinion. Instead of simply stating whether a writer likes something or not, a review expresses opinions based on common expectations shared with readers. Opinions in a review are important; however, a review must consider what a potential audience might find successful or unsuccessful.

In print media, reviews commonly cover films, books, or events. In a review, the writer determines whether a film, book, or event was enjoyable; with films and books, a writer determines whether a reader should or should not watch or purchase the film or book. Many people often read a review after purchasing the film or book to see if others agree. Online, reviews abound, from the websites where you shop, like Amazon, to the apps that help you navigate a trip, like Yelp. Even while buying a car, consumers now have access to review sites like *Kelley Blue Book*.

Writing a review

At least two methods for writing a review are available. In the **first** method, there is the following:

- **Introduction** (Identifying the subject reviewed or evaluated)
- **Description or summary** of the subject
- Strengths and weaknesses of the **first** feature of the subject.
- Strengths and weaknesses of the **second** feature of the subject.
- Strengths and weaknesses of the **third** feature of the subject.
- **Conclusion** (Offering an overall judgment of the subject).

In the **second** method available for writing a review, there is the following:

- **Introduction**
- **Description or summary** of the subject
- **Strengths** of the subject
- **Weaknesses** of the subject
- **Weighing the strengths and weaknesses** of the subject
- **Conclusion.**

What Should I Say About My Subject in the Review?

Before writing a review on your subject, many writers use a first-hand experience. For instance, if the subject of the review is a film, it is best to see the film. For a book, it is best to read it. For a product or service, it is best to use it.

However, before actually experiencing the subject, almost all writers suggest engaging in some preliminary inquiry background research. Both can help form a critical perspective for analyzing the subject. Initial inquiries will also help to determine what both writers and readers of reviews should expect of the reviewed subject. On the other hand, background research can help develop a richer understanding of the subject's history and context.

Preliminary Inquiry

As mentioned above, the practice of preliminary inquiry can help achieve common expectations between writers and readers of reviews. This allows for an interactive understanding of what makes the reviewed subject successful or unsuccessful. Both writers and readers of reviews should keep in mind that common expectations are not always stated clearly.

When engaging in a preliminary inquiry of the subject, it helps to brainstorm, a writing strategy covered in **chapter six**. This can help sort out common expectations. For instance, if a reviewer wants to write about a recent psychological thriller seen in a movie theater, brainstorming can help break down the characteristics of that genre of film. When brainstorming, it is best to make a list of points that stand out the most. When writers use this strategy in the reviews they write, it helps readers understand what to expect if something about the film—for instance, a trailer—piques the interest of the prospective reader.

Background Research

Background research can help both writers and readers of reviews better understand the experience of the person reviewing the subject. There are four possible strategies used to gather background research.

Answering the Five-W and How Questions: This can involve using online or print sources to find out as much as possible about the subject under review. The “Five-W and How Questions” are:

- *Who* were its creators or original developers?
- *What* exactly is the subject under review?
- *When* and *where* was it created
- *Why* was it created? (What is its purpose?)
- *How* was it made?

Locating Other Reviews of the Same Subject: This can involve the use of online search engines (e.g., Google, Bing, Yahoo!) as well as library indexes and

databases. Some questions to consider when locating other reviews involve what others have said about the subject under review. What others have said may bring some important insights. Of course, when using another person's review, it is especially important in academic writing to cite the source properly; otherwise, you are plagiarizing.

Interviewing or Surveying Others: On many college and university campuses, experts abound, particularly regarding the potential subject under review. In cases like this, experts can help provide some common expectations. If there are no official experts around, many writers review other people who have had a personal experience with the same subject. Here, writers often ask what others thought of the subject, how they reacted to it, and what they liked or disliked about it.

Field Observations:

These involve watching the subject closely and paying attention to the reactions of others. For instance, if the potential subject under review is a film, and if the experience of watching the film under review takes place in a cinema, then it is best to observe the reactions of audience members.

Experiencing the Subject under Review: To experience a potential subject under review involves, on the one hand, reviewing it as a regular person; on the other hand, it involves stepping back and experiencing the subject from a critic's point of view. When members of an audience, including the reviewer, react to a moment in the film, the reviewer must analyze *why* there was that specific reaction. Taking notes while experiencing the subject can provide an additional help. When taking notes, reviewers should keep in mind the common expectations found when engaging in preliminary inquiry and background research.

Included in the experience of the subject under review is what Johnson-Sheehan and Paine define as the **Believing and Doubting Game** involving three common ideas:

- **Believing** (Writing a positive review)
- **Doubting** (Writing a negative review)

Synthesis (Writing a review with “common ground”)

What is the Style of a Review?

The style of the review depends on the readers and where they will see it. The best reviews are often those that are accurate while keeping the expectations of their audience in check. For instance, if the review appears in a mainstream publication or on a website, the style should appear lively as much as it matches the reviewer’s reaction to the subject. Some important elements of style in writing a review include the use of *detail*, *tone*, and *pace*.

- Detail:** More often than not, reviews use sensory detail to include sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell. It is not required for writers of reviews to use all of the senses. However, it is important to keep sensory details in mind while writing a review.

- Tone:** This should be a reflection of the subject under the review. The voice should match the tone.

- Pace:** The length of sentences in a review can determine how readers of that same review should react. Shorter sentences can create a more hectic, fast-paced feeling while longer sentences can create a more languid, slower-paced feel.

Adapted from “Chapter Three” of *Rhetoric and Composition*, 2013, used under creative commons 3.0 [CC-BY-SA](#)

Chapter 17: Proposals

Part 3: Chapter 17

A proposal is essentially a solution to a problem. During the process of writing a proposal, the textbook *Rhetoric and Composition* explains that it is important to keep your attitude open to change. Like most writing, a proposal evolves and changes because it is a process. If you are too rigid in your thinking processes and goals, you will likely get stuck. Openness to change and a willingness to communicate are key, especially when you are working with an individual or organization you're directing your proposal.

Preliminary Research

Defining the Problem

Proposals often stem from an individual's heartfelt wish to address this problem. Although personal conviction and passion can give meaning and drive towards the completion of the proposal, these are not enough. In order to come up with a viable solution, you need to build a solid foundation of research on the problem. You can use online, print, and empirical sources to research the problem (e.g., interviews, field observation, etc.). Gathering this research helps you identify possible solutions and eliminate solutions that will not work. You can also include your research in your proposal to show that you have a working knowledge of the issue, strengthening your credibility.

Writing with the Reader in Mind

As you write your proposal, it is helpful to imagine your real audience. Doing this acts as an anchor because it reminds you that your goal is to explain your ideas to a real person. Once you have your audience in mind, you can begin analyzing what they want by asking a series of questions. The following table demonstrates the importance of moving from vague, general questions to specific questions.

Table 17.1 “From Vague to Specific Questions”

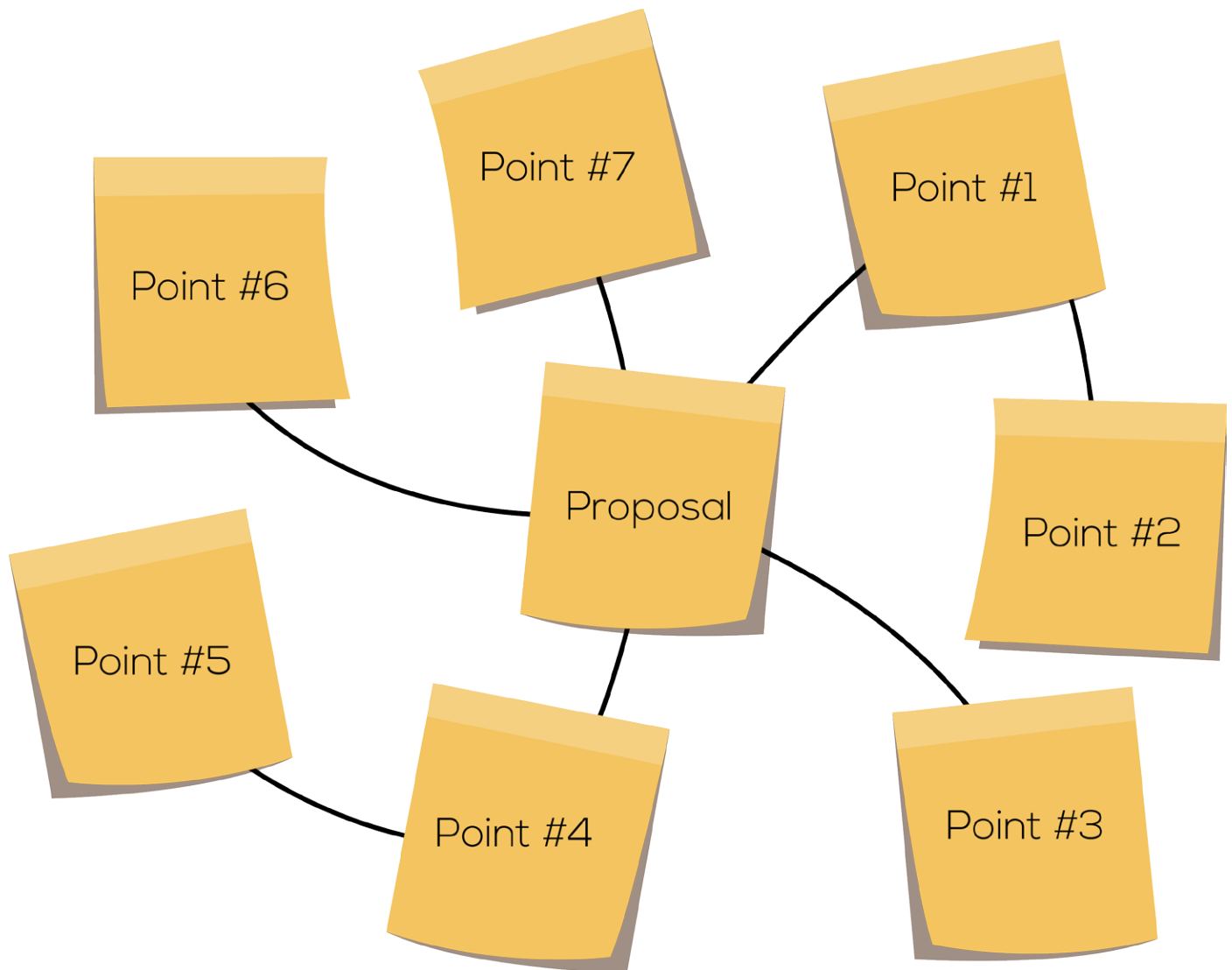
From	To
Is my idea any good, anyway?	Who will want to buy this idea?
What do I want to say?	What does the buyer want to her?
Can I actually write this?	How can I target my idea to this specific buyer?
What’s the best way for me to say it?	How will that buyer understand it best?
How can I convince anyone to buy this idea?	What logic of persuasion or entertainment will attract that buyer?
What do I want to say first?	What will this buyer want to know first?
How do I want to organize this proposal?	What will the buyer want to know next?
What do I mean to say here?	What does this buyer need to hear at this point to be convinced?

By shifting to questions about a real audience, the proposal writer simultaneously reduces their anxiety about their proposal through depersonalization while producing specific answers that will guide the writing process. Although the above chart targets a specific buyer, this kind of analysis can extend to proposals that are not asking for money (although in a sense, anyone who reads your proposal is a “buyer” of your ideas).

Outlining a Solution

In the process of building and organizing ideas, it’s helpful to use a variety of techniques to help you visualize and play with the structure. Mindmaps, sticky notes, and list making are all ways of generating and organizing ideas (you can search Google for free mindmapping software). A mindmap is a visual tool that uses symbols organized spatially to focus on relationships between ideas, usually

using arrows.



Sticky notes can be made into a mindmap and are convenient because they allow you to easily move ideas around. In addition to using the tools to organize your ideas, you can also do more research to grow your solution. You may find similar projects and determine which aspects make them successful or unsuccessful. Once you have a basic outline of your solution, make a chart of its cost and benefits.

Writing the Proposal

Introduction

A strong introduction is concise and direct. If you choose to give background

information, keep it to a minimum. An introduction should contain the following points in some order or another: topic, purpose, background information, importance of the topic to the readers, and the main point.

Description of the Problem

Follow your introduction with a description of the problem. This should begin by emphasizing why this problem is important and relevant to the reader, followed by its causes and consequences. This section should end with a sense of exigency (creating an urgent need that demands action). Tell the reader what will happen if the problem is not addressed.

Body

The introduction to the main body of your proposal should also be concise (notice a theme here?). State what your proposal is and why it is the best. A short and direct explanation and justification of your proposal establishes credibility early, and prepares the reader to follow the details of your proposal. After this brief overview, you can then provide a detailed, step-by-step explanation of how your plan will be carried out. Your concluding statement should discuss the deliverables of your proposal, that is, the concrete benefits carrying out your proposal.

Costs and Benefits

Prior to your conclusion, you can further support your argument by including a costs and benefits section.

Conclusion

Once again, the conclusion should be short and concise. In it you should restate the thesis, re-stress the importance of the topic, and “look to the future,” which helps the reader visualize how the proposal will result in a brighter future.

Presenting the Proposal

Before you present your proposal, complete a thorough revision and proofread. Your document should be polished, error-free, and represent your

Bonus Video

best work. Your style should be persuasive and authoritative. Connecting with your audience is important, because you are trying to persuade them to accept your proposal. Rhetorical devices ([ethos](#), [pathos](#), and [logos](#)) will enhance your argument. Metaphors and similes can be particularly influential.

At the end of this process, you should be the author of an engaging and thoughtful proposal.

Adapted from “Chapter Three” of *Rhetoric and Composition*, 2013, used under creative commons [CC BY-SA 3.0](#)

[//www.youtube.com/embed/3klMM9BkW5o?modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0](https://www.youtube.com/embed/3klMM9BkW5o?modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0)

How to use rhetoric to get what you want – Camille A. Langston

Chapter 18: Academic Research Papers

Part 3: Chapter 18

Academic papers have a variety of elements that make them stand out from other papers. The textbook *Rhetoric and Composition* explains that they carry three distinct characteristics. First, research will help you develop your ideas. The research contains various findings, such as facts, statistics, interviews, and quotes. Researching and gathering data must include understanding that information once it is compiled. The second characteristic is the amount of preparation it takes in gathering, compiling, analyzing, and sorting through everything in order to create a draft of your data. Finally, the third characteristic involves knowing the rules that must be followed when writing a specific term paper in the humanities discipline. These rules will generally be conveyed by your instructor, and the process of writing a research paper are covered more extensively in part six of this textbook.

Writing the research paper involves a bit of detective work. While there is much reading to be done on the chosen topic, reading is not the only pathway to gain information. As a writer in the humanities, you can also conduct interviews, surveys, polls, and observation clinics. You should research and discover as much information as you can about the given topic so you can form a coherent and valid opinion.

Students are often surprised that their initial perceptions on a topic change after completing research, so try to remain open minded as you work through the research tasks.

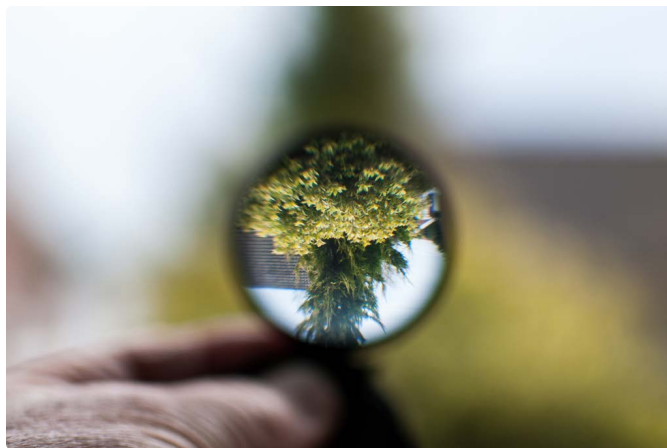


Photo by [Bobby McKay](#), CC BY-ND 2.0

Elements of a Humanities Research Paper

Many styles of documentation are used when writing the humanities paper. Choosing the style depends on the subject being addressed in the paper and the style your instructor requests.

When it comes down to actually writing your paper, be sure to include the following elements: an introduction, a thesis statement, the body of the paper (which should include quotations, and, of course, the citations), and the conclusion.

Introduction

Like most papers and essays, an introduction is absolutely necessary when writing in the humanities. There can be some confusion as to which should come first; the introduction or the thesis statement. This decision could probably be clarified by asking your instructor. Many writers include the thesis statement in their introduction. Generally speaking, however, the introduction usually comes before the thesis statement, and the thesis usually comes at the end of the first paragraph.

The introduction should grab your reader's attention and interest them enough that they way to continue reading your paper. Ask a question, write something powerful, or introduce a controversial topic. Be specific, not vague. Create something interesting, not mundane. Relay something the reader may not know, not something that is public knowledge. The idea is to capture and keep the reader's attention.

A good introduction may go something like this:

“Imagine yourself walking out of class feeling refreshed and relaxed because your day is almost done. You race down the stairs and out the doors just to take in the amazing scent of fresh outside air when suddenly you smell something completely wretched. You notice something that resembles a small grey cloud coming out of a fellow student's mouth. Then your throat begins to feel clogged and just when you can't take it any longer, your lungs give in and

you feel as if you can no longer breathe. You think to yourself, ‘What’s happening to me? Am I dying?’ No, not exactly. Your lungs and the rest of your body have just been affected by what is commonly known as passive smoking, which is becoming one of the leading causes of death in the United States.”

Thesis Statement

After creating an enticing introduction, it is time to work on your paper’s thesis statement. The thesis statement should come at the beginning of the paper, and it will introduce the reader to the topic you intend to address, and gives them a hint of what to expect in the pages that follow. Thesis statements should avoid words and phrases such as, “In my opinion...” or “I think that...”

Start your thesis by taking a stand immediately; be firm in your statement, but not pushy.

You’ll either be given your topic for your paper or you will choose one yourself. In either case, after the topic is chosen, write a thesis statement that clearly outlines the argument you intend to address in the paper. The thesis statement will be the center of your paper; it should address one main issue. Throughout the paper, whatever you write will be focused on the thesis statement. As your paper develops, you may find you will want to, or need to, revise your thesis statement to better outline your paper so avoid becoming too attached to your original thesis. As your paper evolves, so should your thesis. In other words, when writing your thesis statement, keep your paper in mind, and when writing your paper, keep your thesis statement in mind. Your paper will defend your thesis, so write your paper accordingly.

For example, if the topic is “Analyzing Mark Twain’s ‘Huckleberry Finn,’” your thesis statement might address the social implications or meanings behind the

characters chosen for the story. Keeping the thesis statement in mind, you would then write your paper about the characters in the story. Let's say you are writing a philosophy paper. Your thesis statement might include two opposing arguments, with the hint that you intend to argue or prove one side of the argument. Many thesis statements are written in such a way as to try to prove an argument or point of view, but challenge yourself; consider making your thesis statement a statement of how you plan to disprove an argument. Maybe you want to attempt to show your readers why a specific point of view does not work.



Your thesis statement should address one main issue, take a stance on the topic, and include body paragraphs that develop the argument. If your thesis statement is too simple, obvious, or vague, then you need to work on strengthening it. You should try to write it in a way that will catch your reader's attention, while also making it interesting and thought-provoking. Ideally, it should be specific in nature, and address the theme of the entire paper. The thesis statement may be written to try to convince the reader of a specific issue or point of view, and it may also address an issue to which there is no simple solution or easy answers; remember, make it thought-provoking. Some of the best thesis statements invite the reader to disagree.

Don't be alarmed if you find yourself midway through your paper and want to change your thesis statement. This will happen. Sometimes a writer will start out thinking they know exactly the point they want to make in their paper, only to find halfway through that they've taken a slightly different direction.

Don't be afraid to modify your thesis statement.

But a word of caution; if you modify your thesis statement, be sure to double check your body paragraphs to ensure that they are supporting the thesis. If you have

changed your thesis statement, it would be wise, even advisable, to have a third party read your paper to be sure that the paper supports the thesis and the revised thesis describes the paper.

As you begin drafting the body of your paper, work to include evidence, analysis, and reasoning to support your thesis. Often the topic of the paper is divided into subtopics. Typically, each subtopic is discussed in a separate paragraph, but there is nothing wrong with continuing a subtopic throughout multiple paragraphs. It is good practice to begin each paragraph with a topic sentence that introduces the subject of the new paragraph and helps transition between paragraphs. A topic sentence will help keep you focused while writing the paragraph, and it will keep your reader focused while reading it.

The purpose of a conclusion is to wrap up the discussion of your paper and close with a strong stance. Especially if the paper is a long one, it is a good idea to re-cap the main ideas you present. If your paper is argumentative, you'd likely want to re-enforce the standpoint introduced in your thesis statement; however, rather than repeating your thesis, offer closing statements that make use of all the information you've presented to support your thesis. Try to "echo" your thesis so that your reader understands that you have fulfilled the "promise" a thesis statement implies, but give your reader a sense of closure rather than simply restating everything you said above just ending it.

Here are some strategies for closing your discussion:

After summing up your main points/thesis you might

- Comment on the significance of the topic in general: why should your reader care?
- Look to the future: Is there more work to be done on the topic? Are there predictions you can make about your topic?
- Ask something of your reader: Is there something your reader can do? Should do?

Argumentative Research Papers

One of the main criteria that differentiates a college level research paper from research papers written before college is they are almost always argumentative; that is, they will be taking a stance. The research is then used to back up the argument of the writer, or to put their argument into context. Students new to college will often attempt to simply inform, but if a paper is only repackaging old information, why not just go back to the original source? Also, papers that just provide information risk unintentional plagiarism. If none of the information provided contains your own insights, then failing to cite everything means that it is plagiarized. Yet, most students are reluctant to cite the entirety of their paper.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious occurrence in an academic setting and results from including non-trivial information (ideas, facts, etc) from another source without acknowledging its source. Plagiarism is one of the most serious offenses that can be committed in academia and it involves varying degrees. Plagiarism, at its most blatant definition, includes handing in an entire paper that is not one's own; it can also include failing to document one's sources. When writing a research paper, avoid unintentional plagiarism. Plagiarism can be grounds for failing a paper or the course as a whole. To learn more about CNM's policy on academic dishonesty, visit the following link:

[Resources To Use](#)

Academic Resources

The best way to avoid plagiarism is to locate and clearly introduce your sources, and the humanities category offers many detailed sources from which to gather information. The internet is fast becoming an important source of information for

humanities writing. There are many history sites, journalism and news sites, sites focusing on the history of film, sites dedicated to women's issues, and so on. More traditional physical resources include dictionaries, encyclopedias, biographies, indexes, abstracts, and periodicals, and our old friend, the library. All of these sources are valuable and fairly easy to cite.

As you can see, there are many resources from which to choose when writing your paper. Start at the most basic level and progress from there. For example, if you are writing about a specific work of a famous author, the obvious place to begin is with a careful reading of the work in question. Once you are done, try to articulate what you know to be true, what you think is probably true, and what is open to question: that is, what you might need to find out. You may find it helpful to actually go through the physical process of writing out two or three key questions that you would like to focus on.

At that point, you may want begin your further research with a search through an encyclopedia, or do an online search for available resources, including interviews. After you have found the information you need there, you might then search through a catalog in a library for specific books, such as *World Cat* on the [CNM Libraries](#) website. You may find that while searching for one specific book you will stumble upon many other useful books on the same subject.

You can then begin to look through book reviews for information on your subject. Book reviews can be especially informative in that they will often will identify important themes, raise new questions, and broaden your sense of what is at stake in the text. Next, you may want to try searching for articles in periodicals, and even abstracts of articles, which will provide a summary of the content of the potential article. Read through chapter [thirty-two](#) of this textbook, entitled Evaluating Sources, to learn more about what criteria you should use to judge whether your outside sources are relevant and credible.

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Part 4: Analysis and Critical Thinking

Chapter 19: What is Analysis?

Chapter 20: Considering Your Subjectivity

Chapter 21: Developing an Analysis from a Critical Reading of Examples

Chapter 21.1: Developing an Analysis from a Critical Reading of Examples contd.

Chapter 22: Using Interpretation to Develop Thesis

Chapter 23: Explanations and Significance: Developing Your Analysis

Chapter 23.1: Explanations and Significance: Developing Your Analysis contd.

Chapter 24: Analyzing Visual Rhetoric

Chapter 25: The Analytical Essay: Expressing Your Points of View

Chapter 25.1: The Analytical Essay: Expressing Your Point of View contd.

Chapter 19: What is Analysis?

Part 4: Chapter 19

The genre of [analysis](#) encompasses several different aspects of examination. Completing an analysis begins the moment you carefully read or review a form of text. In developing an analysis, you may be asked to locate different components of the text and consider the impact or effect of the text. As a student, you may be asked to complete a literary analysis or a textual analysis. Both of these types of analysis will require you to investigate and evaluate ideas thoroughly. A literary analysis might ask you to review a text and argue your interpretation of the text. A textual analysis requires the same close attention to detail but will focus more specifically on the meaning of a text.

Analysis is an interesting and complex genre that can, at times, feel overwhelming, but it's important to recognize that you have developed many of the tools you need to analyze throughout your life, both as a student and a participant in your community. The textbook *A Guide to Perspective Analysis* introduces new tools to help you further develop the analysis skills you already have.



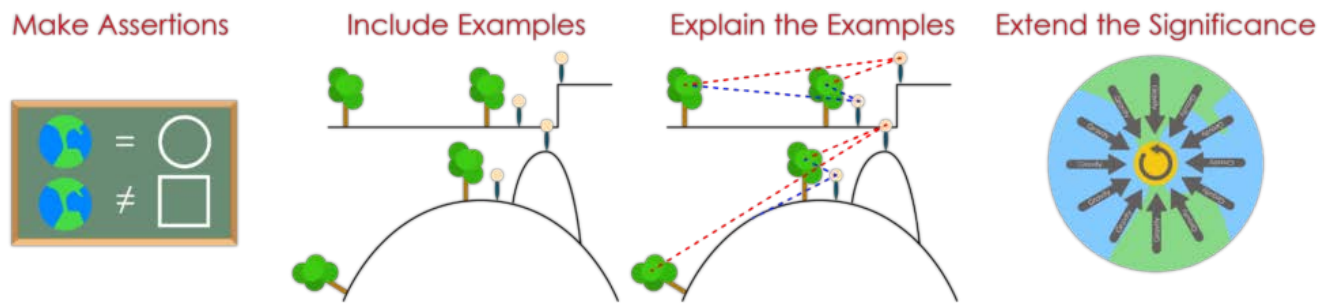
Writing an analysis can seem difficult. Below you will read about Jeff, a college student who has been assigned an analysis essay. Jeff is encountering obstacles similar to what many students may experience.



Jeff is not happy. His clock shows 2 a.m., but his computer screen shows nothing. For the last four hours he has tried to start an essay on William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, but he just doesn't know where to begin. "It's Professor Johnson's fault I'm in this mess," he thinks to himself. "My other teachers always told me exactly what and how to write, but Professor Johnson asked us to focus on what each of us finds important about the play. She even told us that no one knows Shakespeare's real intentions, and that a million ways to analyze the play are possible." Frustrated, Jeff thinks, "If this is true, how do I know when I've found the right interpretation?" And Professor Johnson made it even more difficult for Jeff by instructing her students not to summarize the plot or give unsupported opinions, but to come up with their own interpretations, show why they are important, and justify them through close readings of particular scenes. "No one has ever shown me how to do this," Jeff grumbles to himself as he gulps down his third cup of coffee.

In actuality, Jeff already possesses the ability to write an analytical essay. He would have realized this if he had considered the discussions and activities he engaged in during the previous week. In planning a date and in thinking of the best way to convince his parents to send him more money, Jeff had to carefully evaluate a variety of situations to develop a point of view that he then had to justify why it

mattered. In each of these instances, he made plenty of **assertions**, statements that present points of view; used **examples**, specific passages, scenes, events, or items that inspire these points of view; gave **explanations**, statements that reveal how the examples support and/or complicate the assertions; and provided **significance**, statements that reveal the importance of the analysis to our personal and/or cultural concerns. These four components are part of the analytical writing process.



Analysis is a way of understanding a subject by using each of these elements, expressing an opinion (making assertions), supporting that opinion (including examples), justifying that opinion (explaining the examples), and showing why the opinion matters (extending the significance). A complete analysis relies on these elements, but the reasons for engaging in it may vary widely. For instance, sometimes the goal is to persuade the reader to accept an interpretation or to adapt a course of action, and other times the goal is to explore several possible interpretations or courses of action without settling on any one in particular. But whether the goal is to persuade, explore, or enlighten, analysis should always begin with a careful examination of a given subject.

Tip

Students do not need to convince teachers that their points of view are correct but rather reveal that they have thought about their subject thoroughly and arrived at reasonable and significant considerations.

The structure and form of an analysis can vary as widely as the many reasons for producing one. Though an analysis should include attention to each of the four main components, it should not be written in a formulaic manner, like those tiresome five-paragraph essays you might recall from high school: “I spent my summer vacation in three ways: working, partying and relaxing. Each of these activities helped me in three aspects of my life: mentally, physically and psychologically.” At best, formulaic essays serve as training wheels that need to come off when you are ready for more sophisticated kinds of writing. Rigorous analysis doesn’t rely on formulas or clichés, and its elements may occur in different orders and with various emphases, depending on your purpose and audience. In fact, individual elements may sometimes blend together because a section may serve more than one function. With practice, you won’t even need to individually recall the four components when producing an analysis, because you will have mastered when and how to express each component.

Though it would be impossible to outline all the possible manifestations and combinations of these elements of analysis, Part Four of this book will help you to create, balance, and express each of them with precision, clarity, and voice. The first task is to make certain all these elements are present “to some degree” throughout your paper, because when any one is missing or dominates too much, the essay starts to drift from analysis to a different mode of writing. Consider, for instance, how Jeff might have gone off track when trying to respond to the following speech from *The Tempest*, when the character Prospero becomes morose as the play he is putting on within the play becomes interrupted:



Our revels now are ended. These, our actors,

As I foretold you, were all spirits and

Are melted into air; into thin air.

And, like the baseless fabric of this vision

The cloud capped towers, the great globe itself,

Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,

And like this insubstantial pageant faded,

Leave not a rack behind.

We are such stuff

As dreams are made on, and our little life

Is rounded with a sleep

(Act IV, Scene 1: 148-57).

After reading this piece Jeff had several immediate thoughts about the character, story, and meaning, and you will read those below. As you begin working to develop your analysis, it is important to recognize that there are several ways to tackle your initial response to a text. Below you will read about several ways you can begin your initial analysis process.

Response 1: Review (assertion emphasis)

This is a famous speech about how our lives are like dreams. No wonder Shakespeare is such a great playwright. He continuously and brilliantly demonstrates that he knows what life is about; this is why this is such a great speech, and I would recommend this play for everybody.

Assertions are necessary to communicate your points of view, but when you make only declarative statements of taste, your essays will seem less like analyses and more like reviews. A review can be useful, especially when considering whether a movie might be worth spending money on, but in an analysis you should not just state your opinions but also explain how you arrived at them and explore why they matter.

Response 2: Summary (example emphasis)

First Prospero feels angry because his play was interrupted, causing his magical actors to disappear. Next, he shows how everything will dissolve in time: the sets of his theater, the actors, and even “the great globe itself.” He concludes by comparing our lives to dreams, pointing out how both are surrounded by sleep.

Like a review, a summary can sometimes be useful, especially when you want to include the plot of a piece or basic arguments of a policy as part of the foundation or introduction to your argument. However, a summary stops short of being an analysis because it simply covers the main aspects of the object for analysis and does not provide any new perspective as to why it is significant. Though you need to provide examples, you should select and discuss only those details that shed the most light on your points of view. Always remember that people want to read your essay to learn your perspective on what you are analyzing; otherwise, they could just examine the piece for themselves.

Response 3: Description (explanation emphasis)

In Prospero’s speech, Shakespeare points out how life, plays, and dreams are always being interrupted. He makes a lot of comparisons between these

different areas of existence, yet makes them all seem somewhat similar. I never thought about how they are all so similar, but Shakespeare helps me consider ways they all kind of fit together.

Though you should explain how you derived your assertions from your examples and not just let the piece speak for itself, you should not do so in a general manner. You do not want to give the impression that you are trying to remember the details of a piece that you are too attached to pull out and reconsider, but that you are engaging in a close reading or a careful consideration of all the aspects of an issue. Your analysis should seem like it was a challenge for you to write, and not something that you pieced together from vague recollections.

Response 4: Tangent (significance emphasis)

This speech reminds me that life is short. My father keeps telling me that life is over before you even realize it, and he should know because he's getting old (he's in his late 40s!). I think it also shows that it's important to be careful about what you dream of because these dreams may affect the way you choose to live your life. I dream about being a famous surfer and that's what makes me try hard to be one.

If an essay had no significance, the reader might constantly think, "So what?" You might provide a close reading of the piece, but unless you have a reason for drawing the reader's attention to it, your essay will not leave the reader with anything new or important to consider. Be careful, however, not to leave the piece completely behind when discussing why it matters, or your essay will seem less like an analysis and more like an excuse to deliver a soapbox speech or to write about something that is easier for you to discuss.

Response 5: Analysis (attention to each aspect)

In *The Tempest*, William Shakespeare connects plays, lives, and dreams by showing that while each contains an illusion of permanence, they're all only temporary. The "baseless fabric of this vision" of "cloud capped towers" may immediately refer to the painted sets contained within the "great globe itself," the name of Shakespeare's theater. Yet when we measure time in years rather than hours, we can see that most of the real "cloud capped towers" of the seventeenth century have already faded and at some point in the future even the globe we live on will disappear and "leave not a rack behind." Likewise, it is not just the actors who are "such stuff as dreams are made on," but all of us. We are unconscious of the world before we are born and after we die, so our waking lives mirror our sleeping lives. Thinking of it this way leaves me with mixed feelings. On the one hand, I find it a bit disturbing to be reminded that neither we nor our world are permanent and all that we do will dissipate in time. On the other hand, it inspires me to enjoy my life further and not to worry too much about my inability to accomplish every one of my goals because nothing I do will last forever anyway.

This last paragraph gives adequate attention to each of the elements of analysis. The main assertion that our dreams, our lives, and our creative works only provide an illusion of permanence sets the analytical stage in a compelling fashion. The examples are well chosen and intelligently explained. For instance, the analysis excerpt shows that whether we see the "cloud capped towers" as actually existing or as paintings on the sets of the stage, they both have succumbed to time. Finally, it reveals the significance of the author's perspective without coming to a trite conclusion or skipping off on a tangent. In general, the analysis reflects the thoughts of a writer who is engaged enough with the text to take the time to carefully consider the quote and reflect on its implications. Though the paragraph could use a more thorough development (especially of the significance) and a more deliberate style, it certainly reveals a more compelling analysis than the previous four paragraphs.

So is it a waste of time to write paragraphs that mostly consist of summaries, opinions, descriptions, or tangents? Absolutely not. Thinking and writing are not

separate processes but occur simultaneously, and we often need to produce responses that focus on one of these simpler rhetorical modes before we can understand the underlying complexity that allows us to develop a more thorough analysis. Jeff will experience essentially the same thinking and writing process when he switches from his Shakespeare essay to the ones he's composing for his courses in history, political science, and psychology. Understanding an event, an issue, or an aspect of human nature requires careful attention to the details of what happened and to the arguments and theories that make up a particular perspective. But before Jeff can develop his own point of view on any of these subjects, he first needs to consider what might influence the way he sees them, a process that will require him to look at his culture and his experiences while consulting the points of view of others. The following chapter will introduce how to set the stage for analysis by bringing together all of these factors.

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Chapter 20: Considering Your Subjectivity

Part 4: Chapter 20

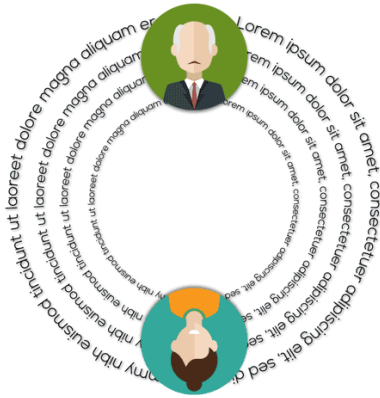
The analytical writing process is often challenging for students because there is not a single, correct answer. Analysis does not always lead to a definitive answer; instead, your goal is to consider your own ideas and develop your impressions of a topic. The textbook *A Guide to Perspective Analysis* suggests spending time thinking about your point of view on a topic, whether you're writing about a text or image, is a critical step because your perception is influenced by connections you have already developed to the topic, your values, and your experiences. Here is a sample that will help you focus on the analytical writing process.

Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress.

Kenneth Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1974), 110.

This often quoted parable reveals how history functions as an on-going

conversation, a conversation that we're invited to participate in during the time we have on earth.



Likewise, when we write an analysis of a subject, we should see ourselves as participating in a discussion, one that will continue long after we've handed in our essays. Just as it's unlikely that what we have to say will be the last word, we should not allow others to have the final say either. Of course, there isn't just one conversation that goes on in our lives; instead, we are involved every day in several discussions, and they all influence each other. Because we do not begin any analysis as a blank slate, we first need to understand

why we see a subject in a certain way, by considering how past discussions and experiences inform our reactions.

None of us are raised in a vacuum: our friends, our teachers, and our families influence our beliefs, tastes, and judgments. Though sometimes we may disagree with their perspectives (especially those of our parents), we can never completely escape from them. Likewise, our broader culture exerts a heavy influence. For instance, although you might enjoy shows like *South Park* or *Family Guy* that satirize the American family, you might not have liked them if you were alive (and able to see them) in the 1950s when Americans were more celebratory and less critical of themselves. In addition, personal experiences strongly inform our reactions. At some time, we have all heard a sappy song about a heartbroken person and wanted to scream at the singer to get over it, only to hear the same song again after being freshly dumped and feeling as though it now penetrates our soul.

This subjectivity holds true not only for works of art and fiction but also for writing that reveals the author's intentions more directly, such as editorials, documentaries, and essays. For one, we may disagree as to whether the author's stated purpose is the only reason behind the piece.

If, for instance, I were to write an editorial arguing that the government should spend more money on education to make it more accessible to the poor and bring about greater cultural literacy, I know what my friends and family would say: “Yeah, right; you just want a raise.” And even if everyone were to agree that the author has sincerely stated the purpose of the piece, the effect of that purpose will vary from person to person due to the different experiences, morals, and beliefs that shape each individual’s unique perspective. For instance, a Michael

Moore documentary that is critical of American business practices may leave one person (who just received a promotion) seething at him for trying to tear down established institutions, while another viewer (who just got downsized) may applaud Moore for bravely calling our attention to an injustice that needs to be rectified.

We can all agree that it is impossible to wipe our minds of all potential bias. Objectivity is an ideal that is largely unattainable, for we all see the world through our own subjective lenses. This example of an individual reader response is why we need to first acknowledge, understand, and evaluate our subjectivity, especially as it relates to the subject of our analysis.

To consider why you react to something as you do, consider recording your thoughts in a reading/observation journal when reading a text, viewing a show, listening to a song, or recalling an experience. Taking the time to pause periodically and record your thoughts will help you identify and understand your own perceptions and biases.

Bonus Video

[//www.youtube.com/embed/_uYpwehCoYc?modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0](https://www.youtube.com/embed/_uYpwehCoYc?modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0)

By [The School of Life](#)



Photo by [Joel Montes de Oca](#), CC BY-SA 2.0

Your responses will vary in length and type, but should essentially consist of two parts: first summarize what you encounter (if it's a written or visual text, mark the page number or DVD chapter so you can find it again), and then write your reaction to it. The advantage to keeping a reading/observation journal is that it allows you to reflect on your subject as you examine it. Though you might think pausing to write in a journal will take away from experiencing or enjoying your subject, it may actually help you to encounter it more fully.

When a piece inspires a particular thought, your mind may wander through its implications even as you continue reading or viewing, causing you to overlook important details. The journal allows you to pause and record your considerations and then return to your focus with greater attention. Below are a few examples of reading observation journal entries for an analysis of a book, a business report, and a travel essay.

Response to Virginia Woolf's Essay "A Room of One's Own"

p. 5 Woolf claims that she had to “kill the Angel of the House” before she felt the freedom to engage in her own writing. She clearly associates this phrase with the expectations laid out for women in this period.

This seems a bit dated to me. Most of the couples I know split the household chores. I also know that if my girlfriend asked me to do the dishes while she wrote poetry, I would support her.

p. 7 Woolf also points out that to write anything worthwhile we need to have a “room of one’s own,” free from distractions or expectations.

I would love to have a room of my own, but unfortunately as a student living in Southern California, I can’t afford one. And there are plenty of distractions: My roommate’s TV, the passing traffic, the cat that keeps jumping up on my lap. She’s so aware of the problems with gender, she isn’t thinking about social...

Business Report on Buddies, a Family Restaurant Chain

Quarterly Profits were up by 10% on the Lincoln and Elm location, but down over 5% at the Broadway and Fourth location.

Of course several factors could allow for this. The management team at L&E is more competent, but they are also located in a family neighborhood. Customers want something more upscale.

A suggestion was made at board meeting on 12/7 to increase advertising for B&F location and possibly bring in new management.

I doubt either plan will have much success, other family restaurants tried the same strategy but failed in that area. Best scenario is to shut down and move

to a more family friendly neighborhood, and then consider...

Travel Journal for a Week in Paris

June 23, 8 p.m. Sitting across the coffee shop from me are two Americans asking for soy milk. The waiter clearly looks confused, so they repeat their request more loudly. The waiter simply walks away, leaving the Americans to comment, “It’s true what they say about the French being rude.”

Why don’t more Americans understand not everybody should speak English and that raising your voice does not help? I made an effort to order in French and the waiter was very nice to me. Another example of how we create and believe our stereotypes.

June 24, 3 p.m. Amazing view from top of Eiffel Tower, the city stretches on as far as you can see in every direction.

On further reflection, however, I preferred the quieter places in the city. I loved the hidden restaurants, the small art galleries, the...



As you can see from these examples, what you write at this point will probably not appear in your finished draft, at least not verbatim. In this chapter and the next two, try to write in a more exploratory fashion, using your pen or keyboard to discover and develop your perspectives before you present them more formally. Your initial responses should take the form of freewriting, writing that comes out as a stream of thoughts unencumbered by grammar, spelling, or a fear of where it is heading. In addition to freewriting, we will look at several other exercises and heuristics, which are discovery procedures, that will help you begin the process—but always remember that if you do not take the time to explore your ideas, then

your final draft will most likely seem obvious and under-developed, no matter how much you polish the structure or style.

Adapted from “Chapter 2” of [A Guide to Perspective Analysis](#), 2012, used according to creative commons [CC BY-SA 3.0 US](#)

Chapter 21: Developing an Analysis from a Critical Reading of Examples

Part 4: Chapter 21

Earlier you read about already having analytical skills simply by having opinions and being a participant in your community. These skills are evident in our daily interactions. Everywhere you turn, you can hear people engaging in analysis. Sitting in a coffee shop, you may overhear fellow caffeine addicts discussing diet fads, politics, and the latest blockbusters. Watching television, you listen to sports commentators discuss which team has the best chance to win the Super Bowl, comedians rip on the latest cultural trends, and talk show hosts lecture their guests on the moral repugnance of their actions. This chapter from *A Guide to Perspective Analysis* will help you to consider the components that make up your subject in a balanced way.



The best way to begin your analysis is with an attentive, open mind; a task that is more difficult than most of us care to admit. Our analytical muscles often grow flabby through lack of use as we rush from one task to the next, seldom pausing long enough to consider anything around us. From an early age, overwhelmed by school, scheduled activities, and chores, we discovered that it is much easier to accept someone else's explanations than to think for ourselves. Besides, original thinking is rarely encouraged, especially in school where deviating from the teacher's perspective seldom results in good grades. It should, therefore, come as no surprise that the ability to slow down long enough to fully consider a subject is, for most of us, difficult, and not something that comes naturally.

It is, however, definitely worthwhile to do so. Remember how [Jeff](#), the frustrated student introduced earlier, wasted hours staring at his computer screen because he

did not think deeply about *The Tempest* when he first read it? Paying close attention when you first encounter a subject will save you time down the road.

Learning to prioritize the details on which to focus is just as important as learning how to pay close attention to a subject. Each detail does not warrant the same amount of consideration. Consider, for example, meeting someone at a party who relates every single detail of what happened to him throughout the day (I woke up at 6:58 a.m., brushed each of my teeth, had breakfast consisting of two thirds cereal and one third milk....). Who would not try to find an excuse to move to the other side of the room? Likewise, sometimes teachers will tell students to make sure that they use plenty of concrete details in their essays. Yes, concrete details are good to include and examine, but only if they matter and somehow connect to your analysis. You risk boring your reader if you simply include details for their own sake without exploring what makes them important. When you read this section, keep in mind that you do not have to pay equal attention to all the kinds of details presented. Instead, focus on those that are most essential to your subject and purpose.

Analyzing a Premise: Events, Plots, and Actions

Usually the first detail we relate when someone asks us “what’s new?” is an important event or recent action we’ve taken in our life: “I ran a marathon on Sunday, found out I was accepted into law school, and proposed to my girlfriend.” Events and actions also tend to be the first ideas we consider about our subjects. Sometimes actions are overt—we see a movie about a superhero who saves a city; sometimes they’re implied—we see a painting of a distraught face and assume that something bad must have recently happened. Events and actions tend to consume the majority of our attention, whether they happen on a small scale to us individually or on a large scale to an entire city, country, or culture.

The subject that focuses the most closely on this type of detail is, of course, history. Certain events are so central to a particular era that they are studied again and again, often with different perspectives and conclusions. Take, for example, the big event of 1492. Up until I started college, I was told that this was the year Columbus

discovered America. Later I discovered that many historians disagree with this assessment of what happened. First of all, you can't discover a place that has already been found, yet the fact that people were living in America already was always brushed aside in my high school history texts. Given that many Native Americans had more sophisticated forms of government and agriculture than their European counterparts makes this oversight seem particularly troubling. And even if we were to revise the assessment to state "Columbus was the first European to discover America," that too would be wrong. New discoveries of Viking settlements in southern Canada and the northern United States suggest that they beat Columbus by several decades. Understanding the event in light of these facts may cause us to revise the assessment of the event to "Columbus introduced the Americas to the people of Europe," or, less charitably, "Columbus opened up the Americas to modern European imperialism."

This more fully informed perspective complicates the history of Columbus and posits a perception of him as a nefarious figure, at least from the Native American's point of view. He could not have anticipated the centuries of conquest that would follow his arrival.

Often in history, people are caught up in forces they don't completely understand.

The same holds true when you examine the actions of fictional characters. For instance, sometimes characters create the condition for their own downfall, which inspires us to learn from their mistakes. Other times, characters may act nobly yet come to bad ends anyway. Such plots may encourage us to try to change the system that rewards bad behavior and punishes good, or they might leave us feeling frustrated with the seemingly random nature of our existence.

Understanding the implications of recent events and actions can be much more difficult than evaluating those that occur in the distant past or in fiction. At what

point, for example, do the seemingly inappropriate actions of one country justify another to declare war on it? At what point do the actions of an individual justify another to call the police? Like everything else, most of this is a matter of interpretation, but success in professional settings often requires the ability to justify your point of view through a close reading of what actually occurred. Take for instance the proverbial story of a woman stealing a loaf of bread to feed her starving children. You could look at this action as extremely noble, as the mother puts herself in danger to keep her children healthy. The baker, however, may not share this sentiment, particularly if he too is struggling to survive.

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Analyzing Diction: Loaded Terms and Stock Phrases

Though actions may speak louder than words, words are what usually inspire the actions to occur in the first place. In addition, we often base what we know of the world on what people tell us rather than on our direct experiences. Thus, unless we are able to discern how language may be manipulated, we stand a good chance of being manipulated ourselves. For instance, consider how politicians often ignore their opponent's actions and simply repeat loaded terms, words infused with negative associations like "bleeding heart liberal" or "heartless conservative," to characterize an opponent as being against the public good.

A particularly blatant example of this type of manipulation is present in text regarding the Red Scare in America, which followed World War II. The Red Scare was a period when the fear of the spread of communism abroad inspired a great deal of domestic suspicion and conformity. In a series of pamphlets released by the

House Committee on Un-American Activities (often referred to as HUAC), the members attempted to feed this fear by introducing a skewed view of the nature of communism to the American public. The pamphlets were set up in a question/answer format, similar to the FAQ sections of websites today. Several of the answers attempted to show communism as a warped view from its inception by going after the man whom we often credit with inventing it:

“What was Marx’s idea of a Communist World?”

HUAC’s answer: “That the world as we know it must be destroyed—religion, family, laws, rights, everything. Anybody opposing was to be destroyed too”

(U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Un-American Activities, *100 Things You Should Know About Communism in the USA*. 80th Congress, 2d Session, 1).

The repetition of “destroyed” clearly inspires a feeling of dread, and presents an overly simplistic, and nearly cartoonish duality: melodramatic socialist villains twirling their mustaches while planning the destruction of their own families versus the warm-hearted capitalistic politicians in Washington who are only out to serve the public’s best interests.

When loaded terms combine into [stock phrases](#), [aphorisms](#) or sayings that people often repeat without fully considering their implications, you should be especially careful to look beyond the obvious meaning that’s usually attached to them. Take the phrase, often attributed to legendary football coach Vince Lombardi: “Winning isn’t everything; it’s the only thing.” First of all, does this mean that we can never engage in sports for fun, exercise, or friendship? On the contrary, in sports and in all of life, we often learn best from our mistakes and our failings. If we only play it safe and try to win all the time, then we lose the opportunity to experiment and discover anything new. As Thomas Edison pointed out, he had to allow himself to fail over a thousand times when trying to invent the lightbulb in order to discover the right way to do it. Clearly, winning isn’t the only thing, and it should not even

be the most important thing, at least for most of us.

Be especially attentive when analyzing creative works to make note of any stock phrases or loaded terms the characters repeat, as it often reveals insights about how they see themselves and the world. In J.D. Salinger's novel *Catcher in the Rye*, Holden Caulfield, the troubled teenage protagonist, has just been expelled from his high school and goes to see his old history teacher, Mr. Spencer in his home. After a polite exchange, Mr. Spencer asks Holden to repeat what Dr. Thurmer, the principal, said to him just before giving him the boot:

“What did Dr. Thurmer say to you, boy? I understand you had quite a little chat?...”

“Oh...well, about Life being a game and all. And how you should play it according to the rules. He was pretty nice about it. I mean he didn't hit the ceiling or anything. He just kept talking about life being a game and all. You know.”

“Life is a game, boy. Life is a game that one plays according to the rules.”

“Yes, sir. I know it is. I know it.”

(J.D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*. Boston, MA: LB Books, 1951, 8.)

Though Holden agrees with Mr. Spencer out of politeness, he goes on to narrate:

“Game, my ass. Some game. If you get on the side where all the hot-shots are, then it's a game, all right—I'll admit that. But if you get on the other side, where there aren't any hot-shots, then what's a game about it? Nothing. No game.”

What is even more disturbing about the phrase is that it leaves absolutely no room for creativity because nothing new can be brought into a world that has already been completed, making us all seem like those blue or pink pegs in the Milton/Bradley game *Life*, generic people with generic goals.

One reason that we often fall victim to erroneous conclusions is that every day we are bombarded with a form of media that pushes us to accept the most absurd phrases—advertising. Take for instance the slogan “things go better with Coke.” What “things”? If I drank a Coke while running a marathon, I might feel sick. And some things that actually do go better with Coke, I could do without, such as tooth decay and weight gain. To be fair, the slogans of Coke’s chief competitor do not stand up to scrutiny either: “Pepsi, The Choice of a new generation.” Which generation? And how did they determine that it’s their choice? Often advertisers use ambiguous language like this in their slogans to deceive without lying outright. For instance, saying that a detergent *helps* to eliminate stains does not tell us that it actually *will*.

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Chapter 22: Using Interpretation to Develop Thesis

Part 4: Chapter 22

An assertion differs from an interpretation by providing perspective on an underlying pattern, a perspective that implies what it means to you and why you think it's significant. Without such a perspective, an interpretation merely becomes a statement with no potential for development. Just as one might utter a statement that kills the mood of a particular situation ("What a romantic dinner you cooked for me! Too bad I'm allergic to lobster and chocolate..."), one can make statements that block any possibility for further analysis. What follows are some of the most common examples, introduced in *A Guide to Perspective Analysis*, that limit further analysis::

Statements of Fact

Factual statements might help support an analysis but should not be the main force that drives it. You might notice that Vincent Van Gogh used twenty-five thousand brush strokes to create *Starry Night*, that global warming has increased more rapidly in the polar regions, or that Alfred Hitchcock used erratic background music throughout his film *Psycho*. But what else can you say about any of these statements? They are simply true or false. To transform these factual statements into assertions that can be explored further, you need to add your own perspectives to them. For instance, you could argue that the erratic music in *Psycho* underscores the insanity of the plot and results in a cinematic equivalent to Edgar Allen Poe's frantic short sentences,

Bonus Video

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/0WtDmbr9xyY?start=57>

Psycho – 1960

Alone

by Edgar Allan Poe, 1875

From childhood's hour I have not been
As others were — I have not seen
As others saw — I could not bring
My passions from a common spring —
From the same source I have not taken
My sorrow — I could not awaken
My heart to joy at the same tone —
And all I lov'd — I lov'd alone —
Then — in my childhood — in the dawn
Of a most stormy life — was drawn
From ev'ry depth of good and ill
The mystery which binds me still —
From the torrent, or the fountain —
From the red cliff of the mountain —
From the sun that 'round me roll'd

In its autumn tint of gold —
From the lightning in the sky
As it pass'd me flying by —
From the thunder, and the storm —
And the cloud that took the form
(When the rest of Heaven was blue)
Of a demon in my view —

or that global warming in the polar regions will result in higher sea levels that will cause enormous damage if we don't do anything to keep it in check.

Statements of Classification

Analysis requires more than simply asserting that your focus or topic fits into a pre-established category like “modernism,” “impressionism,” “neo-conservativism,” or “first wave feminism.” Of course it can be useful to understand the nature of these broader categories, but you still need to explore why it is important to see your subject in this light. For instance, rather than simply point out that *Family Guy* can be seen as a satire of the American family, you should also consider what this perspective reveals about the show's development and reception. It might also be worthwhile to consider how a work transcends the standard notions of its period or genre. You might point out that while most of the time the *Family Guy* characters are depicted as broad and ridiculous, they can sometimes act in ways that are familiar and endearing, which helps the audience connect to them. Similarly, when looking at a policy or argument, you should not simply categorize it as belonging to a particular social attitude or political party, but consider it on its own merits. Though political pundits often use terms associated with their opposition as curse words and summarily dismiss anything they advocate, you want to appear much more reasonable in an academic analysis.

Statements of Taste

An analysis is not merely a review that states how you feel about a piece or dismisses an argument or policy as being “distasteful.” A good assertion will not

only reveal how you feel about the focus of your analysis, but it should also inspire you to explore why it makes you feel that way. In her article, “*Babe, Braveheart and the Contemporary Body*,” Susan Bordo, Professor of Media Studies, explains that the reason she liked the film *Babe* better is that it shows the need for self-acceptance and connection to others in a society that overly values conformity and competition (Susan Bordo. *Twilight Zones: The Hidden Life of Cultural Images from Plato to O.J.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999). This assertion allows her to explore different aspects of contemporary American culture that may have inspired each of these films. Had she simply stated her opinion without stating why her subject, the films, made her feel this way, her article would not have been as compelling or convincing.

Babe, Braveheart and the Contemporary Body

Statements of Intention

When looking at creative works, we often want to assert that our point of view is the one the author intended, yet when we equate our perspective with the author's, we (rather arrogantly) assume that we have solved the mystery of the piece, leaving us with nothing more to say about it. And even if we can quote the author as saying “I intended this,” we should not stop exploring our own interpretations of what the piece means to us. John Lennon tells us that his song “Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds” was written in response to a drawing given to him by his son, Julian. Others suspect that his real intention was to describe a drug trip brought about by LSD, the initial letters in the words of the title of the song (John Lennon and Paul McCartney. “Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds,” *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. Apple Records, 1967). Most people have never seen his son's drawing, and even more have never tried psychedelic drugs, so neither interpretation works for them. Many people love the song because it guides them through a kind of *Alice in Wonderland* fantasy of “looking glass ties” and “tangerine trees.”

To be able to show why a given interpretation matters to us, we should not phrase our assertions as being about what we think the author intended but

what it causes us to consider.

Likewise you should be careful to avoid simply stating that you know the “real intentions” behind a work of non-fiction, a social policy, or a particular action or decision. For example, consider if a business decides to move its operations overseas to save money. This may inspire some to say that the company’s real intention is to destroy the American economy or to exploit workers overseas, but it would sound far more persuasive and reasonable to actually show how these concerns could come about, even if they were never the stated intentions.

Worthwhile Assertions

In short, **worthwhile assertions** should reveal a perspective on your subject that provides possibilities for further exploration. Statements based on facts, classifications, opinions, and author intentions provide only inklings of perspectives and should be revised to inspire more prolific and meaningful analysis. Once you come up with some initial interpretations of your subject, reconsider it in light of what it means to you, perhaps by asking some or all of the following questions:

- What immediate memories does the subject spark?
- How does it cause you to react emotionally and intellectually?
- What personal decisions/relationships does it cause you to ponder?
- What social, political, or intellectual concerns does it make you consider?
- How does it confirm or contradict your morals and beliefs?

Questions like these will help you to reflect on the subject further, enabling you to transform the aforementioned problematic statements into meaningful assertions. This is a great time to write down your responses; you may appreciate looking back at your initial ideas later in the drafting process. Now, consider how the following

interpretation,

“The CEO is moving his company’s operations overseas because he hates America and wants to exploit the workers of the third world”

can be revised:

“Though the CEO’s stated intention for moving the company’s operations overseas is to save money, the end result could be disastrous for both the local economy and the new country’s employees who will have to work under unsafe conditions.”

Similarly, the statement

“John Lennon’s real intention in writing ‘Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds’ is to promote the use of LSD”

can be revised:

“Whatever John Lennon’s real intention, I see ‘Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds’ as being about the power of the imagination to transcend the deadening routine of daily life.”

For this reason, you do not always need to state your thesis as a definitive argument that shows how you feel in no uncertain terms. Instead, it is often desirable to show your ambivalence about your position as long as you are clear

about why you feel this way. For example, you might feel uncertain as to whether your school should build a new football stadium. Although you might think the money could be spent on more pressing educational needs, you might also want to have a more safe and comfortable place to watch the games. You can discuss the advantages and disadvantages of such a proposal, making it clear that you haven't yet decided which side to support. Some of the most intriguing essays are exploratory, highlighting the mysteries of a subject, rather than persuasive, trying to convince us of a particular point of view.

Developing a Thesis from an Assertion

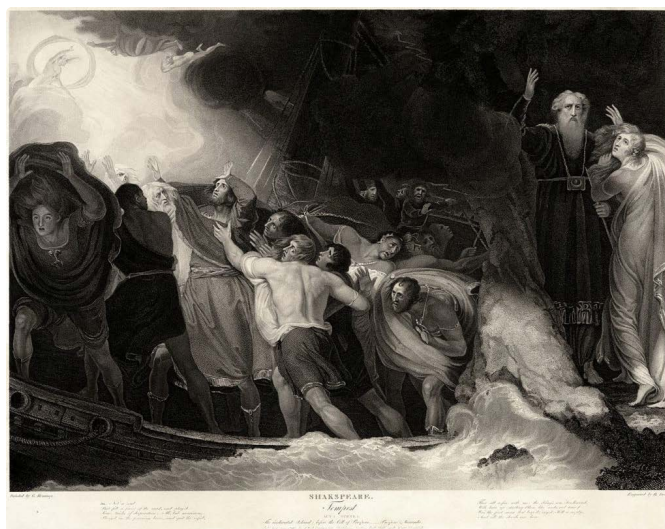
While a thesis does not need to be limited in terms of argument, it should be limited in terms of scope. Perhaps the most common mistake students make is to choose a thesis that encompasses too many aspects of the subject. Remember that it is almost always better to write “a lot about a little” than “a little about a lot.” When you discuss too many aspects of your subject, it becomes difficult to provide any new perspectives. Challenge yourself to write about an aspect of your subject that may appear too small to inspire even a page response. Then think about the nature of your perspective a bit further, putting it to the following tests before you put too much more time into it.

The Evidence Test

Before engaging in further analysis, look again at your subject and ask yourself, “Is there enough evidence here to support my point of view?” If you were to write about the film *Office Space* as showing just how much employees love to go to work in the Tech Industry, you might have a difficult time finding enough scenes to match your perspective. You should also research the details surrounding your subject to see if your assertion needs to be modified, for instance, by considering the historical circumstances that were in place at the time the event happened or the piece was created. One student, when writing about the speech from *The Tempest*, (quoted in Chapter 19), wrote that when Prospero's actors disappear into “thin air,” they must have been projected on film with the camera suddenly switching off.

Of course, Shakespeare could not have

had that in mind given that he wrote three hundred years before we had the technology to carry this out. Still, one could argue that the scene might best be performed this way now. If a statement cannot be justified or at least modified to match the evidence, then you may have even more problems with the next category.



Engraving by Benjamin Smith, [CC 1.0](#)

The Explanation Test

Oftentimes when there isn't enough evidence to support a thesis, writers will be accused of stretching their explanations. For example, a speaker suggested that technicians assigned terms associated with women to parts of the computer in order to give themselves an illusion of control can be considered a stretched explanation. Some of the assertions can be supported—for instance, that “mother” in motherboard shows how men may want to recall/dominate the nurturing figure of their childhoods. However, when the speaker pointed out that the “apple” in Apple Computers recalls the forbidden fruit that Eve handed to Adam, I started to squirm. The speaker even tried to argue that the name Macintosh was chosen because it's a “tart” apple, and “tart” is a derogatory term that men use to refer to women of ill repute. Nonetheless, most instructors would rather see an analysis that focuses too heavily on evidence than an analysis with an explanation that isn't even necessary because the thesis is so obvious: “Othello reveals the destructive consequences of jealousy,” or “Beavis and Butthead's stupidity often gets them into trouble.” Ideally, the assertion should require some explanation of the relevant details within or directly implied by the thesis. Remember that the goal is not to come up with an answer to the question “what's THE meaning of the piece?” but rather to explore dimensions of the subject that do not have definitive answers, allowing you to consider your own subjectivities.

The Significance Test

You should also try to avoid wasting time on a thesis that does not have any significance by applying what many teachers call the “so what?” test.



Why is it incredible?

Photo by [Spensatron 5000](#), CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

If your assertions do not lead to a deeper consideration of any of the questions raised earlier, then it probably will be boring for both the writer to write and the audience to read.

Oftentimes, to make an assertion more interesting, we simply need to add more to it.

Asking the question “so what” will help your thesis become clearer, nuanced, and unique. In addition, it will allow

your research questions (discussed in-depth in chapter 30) to become more precise and fruitful as you compare and contrast your points of view with those of others. Remember that the goal of a careful examination should not be to arrive at the same conclusions and have the same thoughts as everyone else. If we all came to the same conclusions when looking at a subject, then there would be no reason to write a new essay on it. Your instructor likely wants you to explain what you think about a topic instead of only presenting opinions that have already been stated by someone else.

Developing a perspective that is both unique and worthwhile takes time, and although carefully examining a piece may help you to form an initial understanding and lay the cornerstone for your analysis, you still need to build the rest of the essay. In the next chapter, we’ll look at ways to do this, first by helping you to explain more thoroughly how you arrived at your perspective and second by helping you to explore the significance of your perspective in a manner that moves beyond the most obvious lessons.

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Chapter 23: Explanations and Significance: Developing Your Analysis

Part 4: Chapter 23

As one of the more mystical poets of the Romantic period, [William Blake](#) may have been thinking about the transformative power of the imagination when he wrote these lines, but his words apply equally well to how analysis can open up new perspectives that give greater understanding and appreciation for our subjects.

Bonus Video

[//www.youtube.com/embed/SzPy_eLQO8DE?modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0](https://www.youtube.com/embed/SzPy_eLQO8DE?modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0)

**Video by Soratica, William Blake:
Biography of a Great Thinker**

To see a world in a grain of sand

And Heaven in a wild flower

Hold infinity in the palm of your hand

And eternity in an hour

(William Blake. “Auguries of Innocence.” *The Mentor Book of Major British Poets*. Ed. Oscar Williams. New York: The New American Library, 1963. 40. Print.)

In this chapter, you will learn how to both explain and show the significance of your initial assertions by looking again at the key aspects of the examples that first inspired them. In doing so, your point of view will evolve as your assertions become increasingly clear and complex. Always keep in mind that the more deeply you think about one area of analysis, the more fully you can understand the other areas. To illustrate, let's take a fresh look at one of the most well known movies of all time, *The Wizard of Oz*.



Provided by [Insomnia Cured Here](#), The Wizard of Oz (1939) CC BY-SA 2.0

For those of you who have not seen the 1939 film based on the novel by L. Frank Baum, here is a brief synopsis.

***The Wizard of Oz* – Synopsis**

Dorothy, a young girl from Kansas, is bored with the life that she leads on her uncle and aunt's farm and spends much of her time dreaming of running away to a magical place "over the rainbow." Besides her fantasies, she finds most of her happiness from taking care of her dog, Toto, but soon a mean, yet influential woman takes the dog away from her and threatens to drown him in a river. Though Toto escapes and returns to Dorothy, Dorothy decides to run away to protect her pet and seek more exciting adventures. She doesn't get far, however, before she feels guilty for causing her Auntie Em so much worry and returns home, only to get caught in a tornado that takes her, her dog, and her house to the magical land of Oz (The Wizard of Oz. Dir. Victor Fleming. Perf. Judy Garland, Ray Bolger, Jack Haley, Bert Lahr, and Margaret Hamilton. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1939).

At this point, the movie changes from black and white to color as Dorothy leaves her home to explore these strange new surroundings. Immediately we see that the house has landed on the Wicked Witch of the East, much to the gratitude of the Munchkins, strange little people whom the witch oppresses. Unfortunately for Dorothy, the witch's sister (the Wicked Witch of the West) is not at all pleased by this and threatens revenge. Before the Wicked Witch of the West can carry this out, however, Glenda, the Good Witch from the North, protects Dorothy by placing the deceased witch's magical ruby slippers on her feet. Glenda tells Dorothy to follow the Yellow Brick Road to the Emerald City where the Wizard of Oz lives, the only man wise and powerful enough to protect her and help her to return home.

On the way there, Dorothy encounters a scarecrow, a tin man, and a cowardly lion who accompany her on her journey in the hopes that they too will get something from the wizard: a brain, a heart, and courage.

When they finally reach the wizard, he appears as a disembodied head emerging out of fire and speaking with a booming voice of authority. He refuses to help them until they return with the broom of the Wicked Witch of the West, which eventually they do, but on their return they discover that the fiery wizard is merely a projection of a "smoke and mirror" machine. The real wizard, whom Toto finds operating the machine behind a curtain, is an ordinary man with no more power to grant wishes than the rest of them. Nonetheless, he points out to the Scarecrow, the Tin Man, and the Lion that

they already performed deeds that showed intelligence, compassion, and courage—proving to them that they already possessed the qualities that they thought they lacked. He is not, however, so successful in helping Dorothy, and it seems as though she will never be able to return to Kansas.

Just when all seems lost, Glenda returns and tells Dorothy that she can return home simply by clicking the heels of her slippers together and repeating the phrase: “There’s no place like home.” The resulting magic returns Dorothy to Kansas where she wakes up in her own bed. When she tells her family about her adventure, they believe that it was only a dream brought about by a concussion caused during the storm. Dream or not, Dorothy tells her family that she’s happy to be back and that if she ever feels the urge to look for happiness and fulfillment again, she doesn’t need to look any further than her own backyard.

Applying the Pentad

There are many different ways to analyze this film, but let’s just focus on two common perspectives. Certain feminist analyses have taken issue with how the film might be seen as a warning to women to avoid the dangers of having too much power or straying too far from their “proper” role in the home. Yet others argue the exact opposite and instead see the film as a reminder to trust our own thoughts and feelings over those of questionable authorities.



If you tried to explain each of these perspectives by simply summarizing the general plot, your explanation would seem too broad or too obvious. To fully justify your interpretation, you need to look again at the film with a more critical eye, concentrating on those features that validate your main assertions. To determine which details are the most significant and how they relate to each other, I recommend that you use a heuristic (derived from a concept by the social philosopher [Kenneth Burke](#)) called the Pentad. The Pentad helps you to break apart any scene, whether real or fictional, into five interrelated components that determine its overall shape and direction:

Act: What generally happens.

Agent: Those involved in what happens.

Agency: The means through which it happens.

Scene: When and where it happens.

Purpose: Why it happens.



Of the five areas, the purpose is the most difficult to define, and it can be understood as the motivation for the actions within the subject itself or it could be stated in terms of what it means to you as spelled out in your working thesis. When defined the second way, the Pentad can help you to explain your thesis more thoroughly by helping you to select the most relevant details and consider how they relate to each other. But, of course, this can happen only after you have taken the time to consider the subject long enough to come up with a working thesis in the first place. To illustrate, consider how the Pentad helps us to look again at *The Wizard of Oz* in light of the two perspectives mentioned.

If the **purpose** is to show how the film may discourage women from leaving the home to pursue careers or take on prominent positions in society, then the way you delineate the other aspects of the Pentad may look like this.

Act: Dorothy's attempts to leave her home are shown as short lived and irresponsible. She finds satisfaction only at the end of the film when she decides to wander no further than her own backyard, thus preparing her for her inevitable future as a stay-at-home wife and mother.

Agent: Powerful women in both Kansas and Oz are shown as "wicked" and abusive. In contrast, Auntie Em and Glenda are considered "good" because of their feminine and homespun qualities. Glenda knows magic but uses it only in small ways and primarily acts as a nurturing figure.

Agency: Objects of power that fall into women's hands (the broom, the ruby slippers) are either misunderstood or misused. Dorothy learns to disregard these objects, giving away the broom and using the slippers only to return to a place where they no longer contain power.

Scene: Though Oz is certainly more “colorful” than Kansas, it’s also shown as more dangerous and unsatisfying, which is why Dorothy chooses to leave it almost as soon as she arrives. At the time the film appeared, women were mostly expected to stay at home and any desire to have a career was often seen as strange or unnatural.

After considering all of these elements, you can then explain your perspective more thoroughly:

For many generations *The Wizard of Oz* has not only served as entertainment but also as subtle propaganda for rigid gender roles. When the film was released in 1939, few women felt that they could pursue careers outside of the home. Those who wanted to do something else with their lives were often viewed as abnormal or irresponsible. The film clearly reinforces this attitude. Throughout, the women who seek more powerful positions are shown as “wicked” and crazy whereas those who are simply content to look after the home or look pretty are shown as good and stable. Though Dorothy is at first unsatisfied with her role as future homemaker, she eventually decides to embrace it, trading in magical objects like the ruby slippers and witch’s broom for her peaceful yet static rural existence.

This is clearly a valid perspective, one that justifies the main assertion with clear and appropriate examples. While it brings to light something that should be seriously considered, it is not the only permissible way to see the film.



Let’s consider the other perspective that the purpose of the film might be to encourage a questioning of the traditional family structure along with other beliefs passed down by reason of tradition or authority. As the purpose behind our analysis changes, so do the other corresponding elements of the Pentad:

Act: The characters eventually come to accept their own traits and abilities

without any need for external validation. Because the authority figures prove to be unreliable, phony, or just plain wicked, the characters eventually learn to rely on themselves.

Agent: Dorothy's three companions eventually learn that they don't need a wizard to grant them the qualities that they already possess. Dorothy too learns to stand up to a witch, to call a wizard a phony, and to eventually tap the power within her that she needs to get back home.

Agency: The wizard uses his "smoke and mirror" device to enhance his authority. Though he tries to create a persona that is "all powerful" and frightening, he is only a little man with no more power or ability to grant wishes than the rest of them.

Scene: Oz is a place for personal enlightenment. And while the film may reflect the cultural attitudes of its time, it may also have inspired future generations to question authority and challenge existing norms.

As before, evaluating these different elements leads to a stronger explanation:

While the characters in the film *The Wizard of Oz* do not wear buttons stamped with the phrase "Question Authority," the film, as a whole, strongly suggests that the audience does so. Though the characters Dorothy encounters look to the wizard to grant them a brain, a heart, and courage, they already show plenty of intelligence, feeling, and bravery. It's only after Toto inadvertently exposes the real wizard's "smoke and mirror" contraption that they see the phony behind the curtain and realize that they don't need his validation to prove their self-worth. Likewise Dorothy learns to stand up to questionable authorities, and though she chooses to remain in the home, she has helped inspire countless others to say "no" to the rigid roles that restrict them.

Even though these perspectives are extremely different, each paragraph reveals a

reasonable position arising from a close and thoughtful viewing of the film. And perhaps the most useful aspect of the Pentad is that it not only helps you to reexamine the details of your subject in light of your purpose but also to see how the other elements relate to each other. For instance, it helps us to see how exposing the agency of the wizard's machine inspires the agents to stand up for themselves. As you apply the Pentad, you might also be surprised by how many details you picked up on subconsciously when you arrived at your initial working thesis, justifying your perspective to yourself as well as to others.

Using Research to Support Analysis

Doing extra research and providing more background information will help you understand the context and open up even more areas for analysis of *The Wizard of Oz*. For instance, some scholars have argued that the story is based on the political situation at the turn of the Twentieth Century, the time of the novel's release, and chronicles the rise of the Populist Party, as represented by Dorothy, that attempted to take on the more established Democrat and Republican Parties, as represented by the two wicked witches. You might also want to read interviews with L. Frank Baum, the author, or Victor Fleming, the director, to find out what inspired them to create the book and the movie.

In addition to suggesting new avenues for interpretation, providing background information and research can help you to explain certain aspects of your subjects that might seem unclear because the terms, sounds or images are abstract, dated or specialized. For instance, to explain the quote from *The Tempest* in [Chapter 19](#) you might first need to provide modern versions of some of the more archaic terms or reveal how a "baseless fabric" might refer to the painted sets on a stage.

Likewise, if you are considering a historical event or a political speech, you should provide information about the surrounding circumstances and the key people involved in the outcome. For instance, to explain why President Bush decided to invade Iraq, you would need to know something about the potential threat Saddam Hussein posed, American economic interests in the Middle East, President Bush's character and personal motivations, and the general mood of the American public after 9/11.

Considering the Audience

Just how much background you need to provide mostly depends on what you know about the people who will be reading your essay, so considering your audience is essential. For instance, you will not need to review the basic principles of Sigmund Freud's theory of id/ego/superego when writing for your psychology professor. But you might want to explain this when writing to your peers. On the other hand, when writing for your professors, you might need to explain references to popular culture that would be unnecessary if you were writing only to your friends. Despite what you may have been taught in the past, you should never assume that your audience doesn't know anything because you do not want to bore them by explaining obvious references any more than you want to confuse them by withholding important background.

For this reason, you should also take the context of your writing into account before developing your explanations. If, for instance, you were writing an essay for a class about a book that was previously assigned, you would not have to begin with a general synopsis, but could jump straight to the section that corresponds most closely with your assertions. If, however, you were writing to a broader audience, you should first provide them with a general background or a summary of the piece before examining the sections that specifically stood out for you.

Likewise, the tone and style of your essay will vary depending on context, audience, and purpose. When writing to a friend on Facebook, you might use vocabulary, abbreviations, and icons that you would never use when writing a more formal essay for your instructor. Even among teachers, your tone and style will vary depending on how formal they expect your writing to appear. Teachers, like everyone else, have their own subjective impressions as to what constitutes effective writing. But try not to let this bother you too much because in learning how to communicate effectively to the various audiences you find in school, you will gain a greater rhetorical flexibility to communicate outside of it.

Adapted from "Chapter 4" of *A Guide to Perspective Analysis*, 2012, used

Chapter 23.1: Explanations and Significance: Developing Your Analysis contd.

Part 4: Chapter 23

Explaining a Subject Through Comparison and Contrast

Once you provide enough background information for your specific audience, you can further explain your subject through comparison and contrast with others that relate to it. For instance, to lend validity to the feminist perspective on *The Wizard of Oz*, you might compare the film to others of the same period that also show powerful women in a negative light.

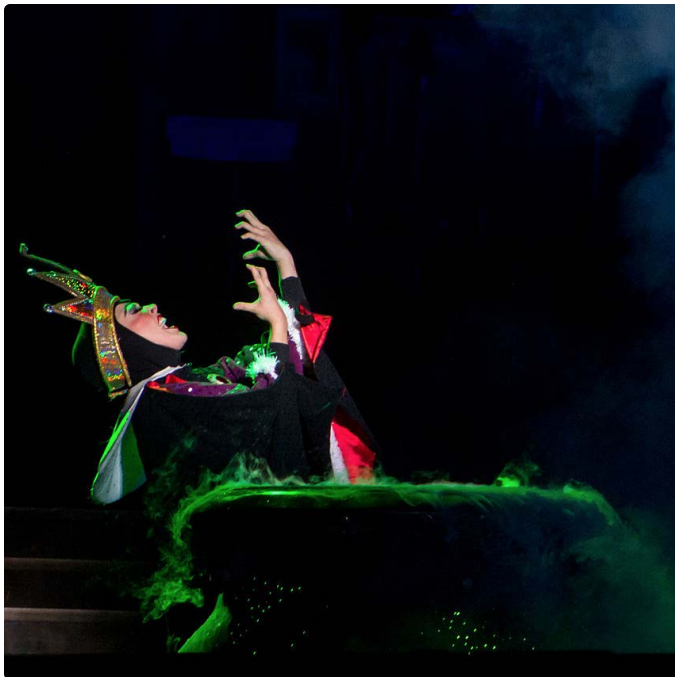


Photo by [HarshLight](#), CC BY 2.0

Consider, for instance, how the evil queen in Walt Disney's 1937 film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* uses her magic to achieve her desires, while Snow White, the ideal of femininity, simply waits for a man to come along and rescue her (Walt Disney Productions, 1937).

You could also underscore how a subject is influenced by cultural attitudes through contrast. For example, if you wanted to explain why a show like *South Park* or *Family Guy* has particular appeal to young people today, you might contrast these shows with coming of age television series from other periods. For instance, you could contrast an episode of *South Park* with an episode of *Leave it to Beaver*, an iconic series from the 1950s. Though the main characters, Beaver and Wally Cleaver, often get into trouble, it is never anything like the kind that Eric Cartman gets into, and, unlike Cartman, who is spoiled by his single mother, the Cleaver kids are always able to talk out their difficulties with their father who helps them to learn from their mistakes at the end of each episode. Again, the conclusions you draw from this contrast could vary. You might assert that this relationship reveals the necessity of a strong father figure to keep children in check, you might suggest that the tightly controlled patriarchal family structure of the 1950s inspired rebellion and ridicule in the decades that followed, or you might come to conclusion somewhere in between these two extremes.

Along these lines, you might also consider explaining your subject by contrasting it with how it could have been different by calling your reader's attention to the details that were deliberately omitted. For instance, you might analyze an advertisement by revealing what it doesn't show about the product.

Advertisements for fast food restaurants usually show families sitting together, relaxed, and having a good time, but they never show how people usually eat at these places, quickly and alone. And these ads certainly do not reveal the negative effects that eating too much fast food can have on the body, such as heart disease or obesity. Similarly, you can learn about how people feel about something or someone not only by the terms they use but also by the ones they refuse to use. For instance, if the first time you say "I love you" to your significant other only garners the response "thank you," you might begin to suspect that your feelings run more

deeply than those of your partner.

Explaining a Subject Through Personal Values and Experiences

As discussed in [Chapter 19](#), the process through which we discover meaning takes place in the interaction between the subject and the viewer/reader/listener. So to fully explain how and why you came up with your assertions, you should also consider how your experiences, your values, even your mood at the moment of encounter can shed light on how you see your subject. As the above examples indicate, you might begin by considering how your surrounding culture influences your response. For instance, Thomas de Zengotita argues that Americans have become so used to media constructions of reality that they become bored with the real world that is unmitigated by it. To illustrate, he points out that if you were to see wolves in the wild, you might at first be fascinated, but then will quickly lose interest because the sight cannot measure up to the ones that you are used to seeing in movies and on television:

And you will quickly lose interest if that ‘wolf’ doesn’t do anything. The kids will start squirming in, like, five minutes; you’ll probably need to pretend you’re not getting bored for a while longer. But if that little smudge of canine out there in the distance continues to just loll around in the tall grass, and you don’t have a powerful tripod-supported telelens gizmo to play with, you will get bored. You will begin to appreciate how much technology and editing goes into making those nature shows.

de Zengotita, Thomas. “The Numbing of the American Mind.” *Harpers*. April 2002, 37

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modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo
=0](https://www.youtube.com/embed/OOMJt1spJ1A?modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0)

Twilight Wolf Scenes

Wolves In The Wild, [John Muir](#)

But we need to be careful here. One reason many teachers do not allow students to use the word “I” is that they often overuse it. If every sentence began with the phrase “I see it this way because” the essay would soon become monotonous and repetitive. Most of the time, you do not need to use first person point of view (or similar phrases like “in my opinion”) because it is implied that as the writer you are expressing your point of view. This writing rule is often utilized for early college writing, and is in place to help students learn about the rule before they can effectively break the rule. There are times when using “I” will make your writing clearer, more accurate, and more meaningful than constructions that begin with generic subjects like “the reader,” “the viewer” or “one.” These terms can make it tempting to not justify our perspectives, because they can give the impression that all people see a subject in the same way; this simply isn’t true, as evidenced by the fact that we can use these terms to make contradictory assertions:

“the reader sees the poem as about the renewal and energy the life force brings to both people and nature”; “the reader views the poem as about the destructive consequences of time.”

Think of how much more accurate, meaningful, and clear it is for me to write:

“when I was younger I understood the poem to be about the mystery and power that creates life in people and nature, but now (having just turned fifty) I see it as revealing the inevitable decay of both.”

Those teachers who tell their students to never use “I” expect them to seem like objective and indifferent scholars. Yet according to Joan Didion, one of the most prolific and respected essayists of our time, the nature of writing is never like this:

In many ways writing is the act of saying I, of imposing oneself upon other people, of saying **listen to me, see it my way, change your mind**. It’s an aggressive, even a hostile act. You can disguise its aggressiveness all you want with veils of subordinate clauses and qualifiers and tentative subjunctives, with ellipses and evasions with the whole manner of intimating rather than claiming, of alluding rather than stating but there’s no getting around the fact that setting words on paper is the tactic of a secret bully, an invasion, an imposition of the writer’s sensibility on the reader’s most private space.

Didion, Joan. “Why I Write.” New York Times Magazine 5 Dec. 1976

Michel de Montaigne, the man credited with inventing the essay form, would clearly agree with Didion’s assessment because he frequently used the personal pronoun to acknowledge the subjective nature of his perspectives. Consider this excerpt from *Of Idleness*:

“Lately when I returned to my home, . . . it seemed to me that I could do my mind no greater favor than to let it entertain itself in full idleness and stay and settle in itself, which I hoped it might do more easily now, having become weightier and riper with time. “

Montaigne, Michael de. *Of Idleness Montaigne’s Essays and Selected Writing*. Trans. Donald M Frame.

Imagine if Montaigne had been expected to write these lines without the use of the personal pronoun: “when one returns to one’s home, it seems to a person....” So don’t be afraid of including that vertical line when it adds accuracy, clarity, or depth to your explanations.

Whether you choose to explain your subject through background information, cultural influence, personal experience, comparison and contrast with other subjects, or some combination of these, you should never ignore this area of analysis. Your interpretation of a subject may seem apparent to you, but your reader may see it differently and not understand how you derived your perspectives. By providing explanations, you show that you took the time to pay careful attention.

Though not everyone will agree with your point of view, most will at least respect it if they see that you derived your assertions from a close consideration of the subject and did not just rely on a gut reaction based on a brief glance. Ultimately you will want to discuss your essay’s point of view with your instructor. Different genres and essay goals will dictate the need for a specific point of view.

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Chapter 24: Analyzing Visual Rhetoric

Part 5: Chapter 24

According to the Wikibook *Visual Rhetoric*, rhetoric is the art of persuasion using language. Rhetorical appeals were utilized by the classical philosophers in their speeches to persuade people to their point of view. In the realm of [visual rhetoric](#), the viewer may analyze how images communicate and persuade.

“Rhetoric may be defined as the faculty of observing [discovering] in any given case the available [appropriate] means of persuasion”

– Aristotle, qtd. in Bizzell 160

The art of rhetoric uses style and many different formulas to make the most pertinent argument to convince their audience. The classical sophist, Gorgias, said rhetoric had the power to create images in a person’s mind. Quintilian also believed that rhetoric presented images into people’s minds (Blakesley 2). Visual rhetoric is actually representations and images designed to convince people instead of, or in addition to, using words.

Bonus Video

[//www.youtube.com/embed/csIW4W_DYX4?modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0](https://www.youtube.com/embed/csIW4W_DYX4?modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0)

PHILOSOPHY – Aristotle, [The School of Life](#)

“The duty and office of Rhetoric is to apply Reason to Imagination for the better moving of the will”

– Bacon, qtd. in Bizzell 629

Academics have only recently begun to analyze images rhetorically, even though imagery has been around since cave people were drawing on cave walls. Images today are used in advertisements, school books, movies, magazines, and paintings.

We live in a visual world. The definition of visual rhetoric depends upon the scholar, but it can be any range of the items listed above. In *Defining Visual Images*, the authors, Charles Hill and Marguerite Helmers, explain that visual rhetoric is “understanding how images... work upon readers” (2). So visual rhetoric is the study of what impression visuals give a viewer. There are many categories to look at when determining this impression or impact.

One aspect of visual rhetoric is intertextuality. This is how one image relates to another image. Are there similarities? Is it a certain type of image, advertisement, family photo? This is important because the more images that are similar, the more symbols our society comes to know, and the study of semiotics is born, which can be defined as the study of signs, symbols, the interpretations of each. The reason that images can mean something or create emotion in viewers is because of semiotics.

Objects can take on a symbolic meaning; images can represent concepts known to our culture when [they](#) have a common meaning throughout our society. One example is the American flag. The American flag in an image, at least in America, stands for patriotism.



USMC War Memorial by Christopher Hollis, Wdwic Pictures

Psychology must also be looked at when studying images. Trying to figure out what impact certain colors, shapes, symbols have on people is important in figuring out their reactions. This psychology could change from culture to culture. Cultural studies are then also important. Two people from different backgrounds could see images in completely opposite views.



Visual rhetoric found its beginnings in art criticism. Analysts would look at aspects in the design and symbolism in a piece of fine art, to try and explain what the artist was trying to say. Again, as discussed out in [chapter 21](#), one image ripe for analysis is *Starry Night* by Vincent Van Gogh.



The Starry Night by Vincent van Gogh, CC 1.0

To some people, it is simply a beautiful painting to look at, while others see a foreshadowing to his death. He includes a cypress tree, which is a cemetery tree. He also has the stars, in Van Gogh's time, heaven was being in the stars. Now that painting would be looked at by a rhetorician and be analyzed in the same way- by looking at all aspects of it.

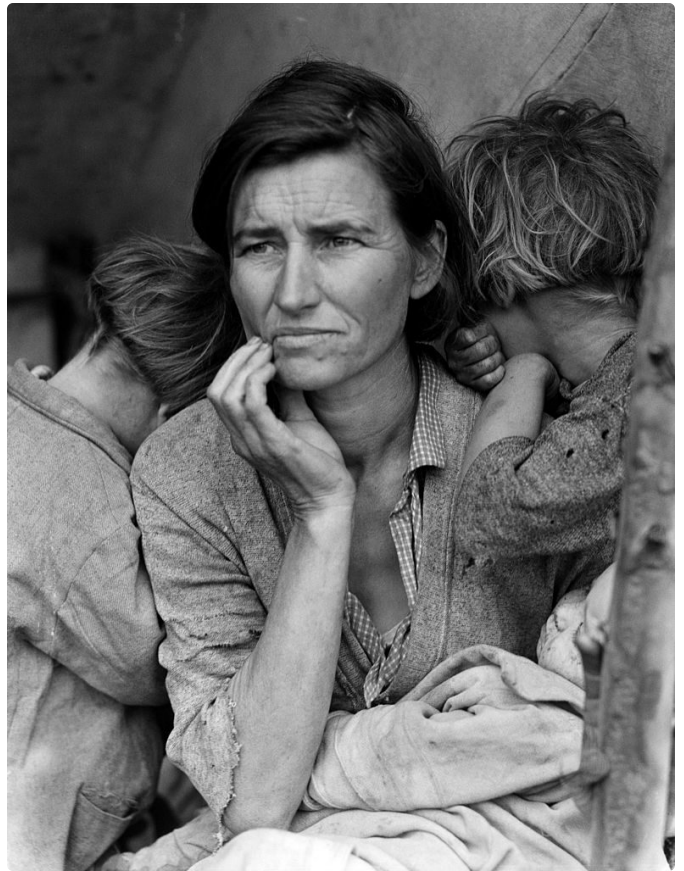
Visual rhetoric is highly connected to design. When the maker of an image is creating it, they look at the lines. What

direction are the lines going? Are they thick or thin? Are they diagonal? In *The Grammar of Visual Design*, Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen argue that visual representations have their own language. They introduce examples including the use of vectors, modality, and framing and salience. **Rhetorical vectors** are diagonal lines throughout an image that create action. These vectors determine whether or not an image is narrative or conceptual, or whether an image tells a story or becomes art. Another concept in their book is modality, which is how believable or realistic an image is. Lastly, another concept in their book is framing and salience. Kress and Leeuwen say that the rhetoric of an image is affected by the framing around it, or the way the image is cropped. This makes the image either more or less believable.

All of these concepts need to be analyzed in order to determine the rhetoric of an image. And even through looking at each aspect scholars may disagree about the meaning, each person has previous knowledge and experiences that lead them to have their own opinion about different symbols. But through semiotics and using Kress and

Leeuwen's concepts, hopefully the study of visual rhetoric can become more stabilized and easier to grasp.

Adapted from "Definitions of Visual Rhetoric" of *Visual Rhetoric*, 2010, used according to creative commons [CC BY-SA 3.0 US](#).



Migrant Mother by Dorothea Lange, Farm Security Administration

Chapter 25: The Analytical Essay: Expressing Your Points of View

Part 4: Chapter 25

After discussing general strategies for analysis and applying these strategies to specific examples in class, students often ask questions like the following:

“This has all been well and good, but when are we going to actually learn how to write?”

A student’s confusion most likely emerges from how (s)he was taught in the past. In most school assignments, writing does not require thinking so much as the stuffing of obvious considerations or memorized material into formulated structures, like a five-paragraph essay or a short answer exam. However, in less restrictive writing situations the specific way we articulate our analysis emerges from what we think of it, and thus our best writing comes through our most careful considerations. While there is no easy formula for organizing an analytical essay, successful analytical writers use general strategies we can examine, though the specific way you enact these strategies will depend on the ideas that you have already discovered.

Focusing Your Analysis

After examining your subject thoroughly and reading what others have written about it, you might have so much to write that you will not be able to cover your perspective adequately without turning your essay into a book. In such a case you have two options: briefly cover all the aspects of your subject or focus on a few key

elements. If you take the first option, then your essay may seem too general or too disjointed. A good maxim to keep in mind is that it is better to say a lot about a little rather than a little about a lot; when writers try to cover too many ideas, they often end up reiterating the obvious as opposed to coming up with new insights. The second option leads to more intriguing perspectives because it focuses your gaze on the most relevant parts of your subject, allowing you to discern shades of meaning that others might have missed.

To achieve a stronger focus, you should first look again at your main perspective or working thesis to see if you can limit its scope. Consider whether you can concentrate on an important aspect of your subject. For instance, if you were writing an essay for an Anthropology class on Ancient Egyptian rituals, look over your drafts to see which particular features keep coming up. You might limit your essay to how they buried their dead, or, better, how they buried their Pharaohs, or, even better, how the legend of the God Osiris influenced the burial of the Pharaohs.

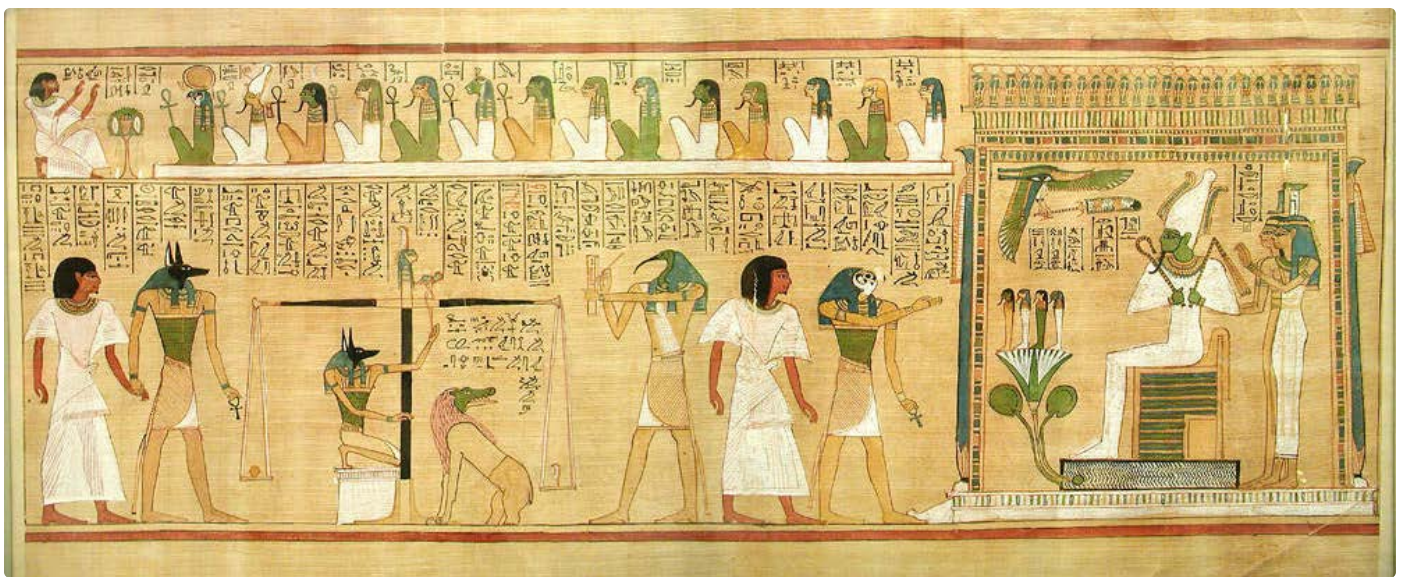


Photo by Jon Bodsworth, [CC 1.0](#)

Next, see if you can delineate your perspective on the subject more clearly, clarifying your argument or the issue you wish to explore. This practice will help you move from a working thesis, such as

“Rituals played an important function in Ancient Egyptian society,”

to a strong thesis:

“Because it provided hope for an afterlife, the legend of Osiris offered both the inspiration and methodology for the burial of the Pharaohs.”

Once you have focused the scope of your thesis, revise your essay to reflect it. This practice will require you to engage in what is usually the most painful part of the writing process—cutting. If something does not fit in with your perspective, it has to go, no matter how brilliantly considered or eloquently stated. But do not throw away the parts you cut. You never know when you might find a use for them again. Just because a particular section does not fit well with the focus of one essay does not mean that you won't be able to use it in another essay down the road. Create a second document where you can paste all the text you cut from your draft document. This allows you to go back and review the text as you continue to work on your writing.

Expanding

After cutting your essay down to the essential ideas, look it over again to make sure that you have explored each idea adequately. At this point it might help to ask yourself the following questions:

- Do your assertions clearly reveal your perspectives on the subject?
- Do you provide the specific examples that inspired these assertions?
- Do you explain how you derived your assertions from a careful reading of these examples?
- Do you explore the significance of these assertions as they relate to personal

and broader concerns?

If any long sections seem lacking in any of these areas, you might explore them further by taking time out from your more formal writing to play with one of the heuristics recommended in various sections throughout this book ([freewriting](#), [brainstorming](#), [clustering](#), [metaphor extension](#), [issue dialogue](#), and the [Pentad](#)). You can then incorporate the best ideas you discover into your essay to make each section seem more thoughtful and more thorough.

Now that we've looked at each of these areas of analysis more carefully, let's go back to the main example from [Chapter 19](#), the passage from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. At the end, there is an example of a paragraph that includes each aspect of analysis, but while these aspects are all present, none of them are developed fully enough for even a brief essay on the passage. Beginning with the examples, the paragraph makes brief reference to the "baseless fabric of the vision of cloud capped towers" and to the "great globe itself," pointing out how these phrases refer to items associated with Shakespeare's theater as well as the world outside of it. But we could also discuss other terms and phrases that appear in the quote. For instance, we could discuss the implications of the word *revels* in the first line. These days we probably wouldn't say *revels* but instead *celebrations*, or, less formally, *partying*, but the word clearly refers back to the play within the play that comes to an abrupt end. In this context, the implication is that above all, the purpose of plays should be for enjoyment, a sentiment reflected in the epilogue when Prospero speaks directly to the audience:

"gentle breath of yours my sails/Must fill, or else my project fails, Which was to please."

As we further consider the implications, we might be reminded of past teachers who made reading Shakespeare feel less like a celebration and more like a task, as

something to be respected but not enjoyed. We could then explain how the word *revels* serves as a reminder to enjoy his plays, and not because they are “good for us” like a nasty tasting vitamin pill, but because if we’re willing to take the effort to understand the language, the plays become deeply entertaining. Looking back over the passage and seeing how plays are equated to our lives outside the theater leads to an even more significant insight. We should try to see life as a celebration, as something to be enjoyed before we too disappear into “thin air.” In discussing the significance of this, we wouldn’t simply wrap it up in a cliché like “I intend to live only for today,” but explore more responsible ways we can balance fulfilling our obligations with enjoying the moments that make up our lives.

Now we can go back and expand the main assertion.

Instead of simply writing, *In The Tempest*, Shakespeare connects plays, lives, and dreams by showing that while each contains an illusion of permanence, they’re all only temporary,

we might also add,

But this does not mean that we should waste the time we have on earth or in the theater lamenting that it will all soon be over. Instead we should celebrate, in a responsible manner, our remaining moments.

And because all of these insights came about from examining the implications of only one word, **revels**, the essay will continue to expand as we consider more details of the passage and consult related research. Eventually, however, we will need to stop expanding our analysis and consider how to present it more deliberately.

Chapter 25.1: The Analytical Essay: Expressing Your Point of View contd.

Part 4: Chapter 25

Introducing the Essay

When revising your essay, you do not have to write it in the exact order that it will be read, as any section you work on in a given moment may appear anywhere in your final draft. In fact, many times it's best to write the first paragraph last because we may not know how to introduce the essay until we've discovered and articulated the main perspectives. Eventually you will need to consider not only what your analysis consists of, but also the effect you want it to have. An essay that commands attention seems like a discussion between intelligent and aware people, in which ideas are not thrown out randomly but in a deliberate manner with each thought leading logically to the next.

For this reason, the opening paragraph or introduction should be the place where you invite your readers into this discussion, making them want to read what will follow without delineating the main content in a rigid manner rather than announcing what you plan to accomplish in the following paragraphs. Again, imagine being at a party, but this time instead of meeting someone who bores you by reciting irrelevant details of the past, and they tell you exactly what will follow in the near future:



Most likely you and everyone else this person approaches will find an excuse to move to the other side of the room as quickly as possible. Similarly, when writers begin their essays with a step-by-step announcement of what will follow, the reader doesn't feel the sense of anticipation that they would when the perspective unfolds more organically. Successful analytical essay writers do not begin by blatantly spelling out the main points that they will cover, but rather create leads, openings that hook the reader into wanting to read further.

One way to capture the reader's attention is to share a story or anecdote that directly relates to the main perspective. For instance, in [Chapter 19](#), you were introduced to a student named Jeff who was having difficulty writing an analytical paper on *The Tempest* in order to reveal a situation that was widely familiar and allowed the introduction of the various components of analysis.

You can also capture your reader's attention with a quote:

"Oh what fools these mortals be" has become one of my favorite Shakespeare quotes since I began working in a restaurant. I am always amazed by the litany of ridiculous questions and requests I have to entertain during each of my shifts.

Or perhaps you can startle the reader with an unexpected twist:

The best day of my life occurred last summer. First, I was fired from my job, next my girlfriend dumped me, and finally I was kicked out of my parents' house. All this motivated me to find a better job, a better girlfriend, and a better place to live. History is full of days like this, ones that seem tragic yet turn out to have positive consequences in the long run.

Finally, you might begin with an analogy:

Trying to write a perfect essay all at once is like attempting to ride a bike while juggling and singing opera. You are likely to crash unless you take on each task separately: invention, drafting, revising, and editing.

These are just a few suggestions for grabbing the reader's attention and many other possibilities exist (though try to avoid beginning with a dictionary definition unless you want to provide your own twist on it). Whichever way you decide to open your paper, make certain that you go on to relate your lead-in to the main perspective or thesis you have on your subject. For instance, you wouldn't want to start an essay by telling a joke that has nothing to do with the subject of your analysis just to get an easy laugh. However, it would be fine if you were to write:

There's an old Sufi joke that points out that "the moon is more valuable than the sun because at night we need the light more." Of course the joke's humor arises from the fact that without the sun, it would be night all the time, and yet it does seem to be human nature to take advantage of that which is constant in our lives, the people and things that add warmth and light on a daily basis. In applying this to the television show, Mad Men, it's easy to see how Donald Draper, the main character, undervalues his wife Betty in order to chase after other women. Though these other women are as inconstant as the moon, disappearing and reappearing in new forms, they give him light during the dark times in his life when he needs it the most. His affairs, however, do not provide lasting satisfaction, but only a fleeting illusion of happiness, much like the advertisements he creates for a living.

Notice how this paragraph leads the reader from the hook to the main focus of the essay without spelling out or announcing what will follow in a rigid manner. The Sufi joke is not simply thrown out for a chuckle, but to set up the thesis that the main character of the show prefers illusions to reality in both his personal life and his work. As a result, this paragraph is likely to engage our attention and make us want to read further.

Organization of the Body Paragraphs

Once you've led your readers into your essay, you can keep their attention by making certain that your ideas continue to connect with each other by writing transitions between your paragraphs and the main sections within them. At the beginning of a paragraph, a transition functions as a better kind of assertion than a topic sentence because it not only reveals what the paragraph will be about but also shows how it connects to the one that came before it. Take this paragraph you are currently reading as an example. Had I begun by simply writing a topic sentence like "A second strategy for effective writing is to develop effective transitions," I would not only have ignored my own advice, but also would have missed an important point about how transitions, like opening paragraphs, function to lead readers through various aspects of our perspectives.

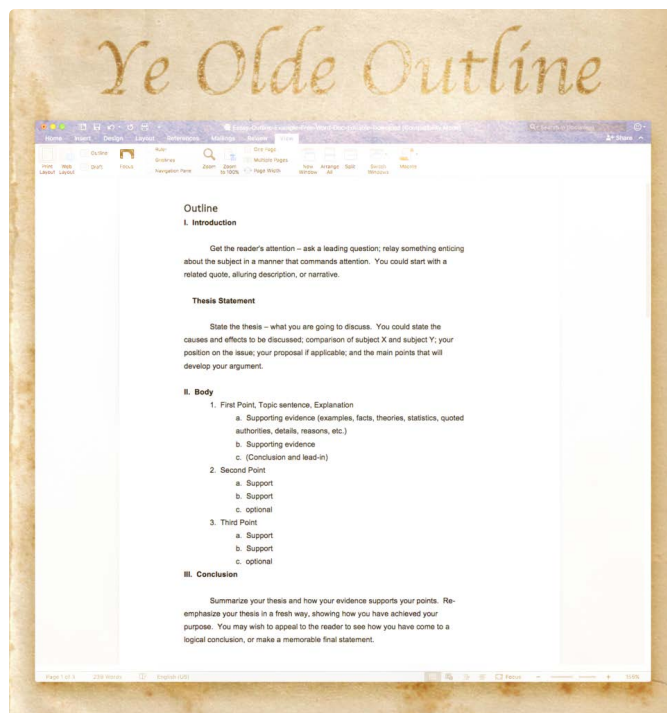
Before you can write effective transitions, you need to make certain that your paper is organized deliberately. To ensure this, you might try the oldest writing trick in the composition teacher's handbook, the outline, discussed in more depth in [Chapter 7](#). But wait until after you have already come up with most of your analysis.

To begin a paper with an outline requires that you know the content before you have a chance to consider it.

Writing is a process of discovery—so how can you possibly put an order to ideas that you have not yet articulated? After you have written several paragraphs, you should read them again and write down the main points you conveyed in each of them on a separate piece of paper. Then consider how these points connect with each other and determine the best order for articulating them, creating a reverse outline from the content that you've already developed. Using this outline as a guide, you can then reorganize the paper and write transitions between the paragraphs to make certain that they connect and flow for the reader.

An excellent method for producing effective transitions is to underline the keywords in one paragraph and the keywords in the one that follows and then to write a sentence that contains all of these words. Try to show the relationship by adding linking words that reveal a causal connection (however, therefore, alternatively) as opposed to ones that simply announce a new idea (another, in addition to, also). For example, if I were to write about how I feel about having to pay taxes, the main idea of one paragraph could be:

Like everyone else, I hate to see so much of my paycheck disappear in taxes.



And the main idea of the paragraph that follows could be:

Without taxes we wouldn't have any public services.

My transition could be:

Despite the fact that I hate to pay taxes, I understand why they are necessary because without them, we wouldn't be able to have a police force, fire department, public schools and a host of other essential services.

If you cannot find a way to link one paragraph to the next, then you should go back to your reverse outline to consider a better place to put it. And if you cannot find any other place where it fits, then you may need to cut the paragraph from your paper (but remember to save it for potential use in a future essay).

This same advice works well for writing transitions not only between paragraphs but also within them. If you do not provide transitional clues as to how the sentences link together, the reader is just as likely to get lost:

I love my two pets. My cat, Clyde is very independent. My dog, Mac, barks if I leave him alone for too long. I can leave Clyde alone for four days. I'm only taking Clyde with me to college. I have to come home twice a day to feed Mac. Mac does a lot of tricks. Clyde loves to purr on my lap.

The reason that reading this can make us tired and confused is that we can only

remember a few unrelated items in a given moment. By adding transitional phrases and words, we store the items in our memory as concepts, thus making it easier to relate the previous sentences to the ones that follow. Consider how much easier it is to read an analysis with transitions between sentences:

I have two pets that I love for different reasons. For instance, I love when my cat, Clyde, sits on my lap and purrs, and I also love when my dog Mac performs many of the tricks I've taught him. But when I leave for college, I plan to take only Clyde with me. Unfortunately, I can only leave Mac at home for a few hours before he starts to bark; however, Clyde is very independent and can be left in my dorm for days without needing my attention.

The previous paragraph is more like a brainstorm session, while the second is more developed. This revision not only is much easier to read and recall but also gives a sense of coherence to what previously seemed like scattered, random thoughts.

Ending the Essay

Once you've led your readers all the way through to the conclusion, try not to sink their enthusiasm by beginning it with the words "in conclusion." Not only is this phrase overused and cliché, but it also sends the wrong message. The phrase implies that you have wrapped up all the loose ends on the subject and neither you nor your readers should have any need to think about it further. Rather than close off the discussion, the last paragraph should encourage it to continue by stressing how your analysis opens up new avenues for thinking about your subject (as long as these thoughts emerge from your essay and are not completely unrelated to what you wrote about before). This is the place where you should answer the "so what" question and stress the significance of your analysis, underscoring the most important insights you discovered and the implications for further thought and action.

However you choose to stress the importance of your analysis in your final paragraph, you can do so without simply repeating what you wrote before. If you have effectively led your readers through your paper, they will remember your main points and will most likely find a final summary to be repetitive and annoying. A much stronger choice is to end with a statement or observation that captures the importance of what you have written without having to repeat each of your main points. For example, in his book, *City of Quartz*, Mike Davis ends his discussion of how Southern Californians do not care to preserve their past by calling attention to a junkyard full of zoo and amusement park icons:

Scattered amid the broken bumper cars and ferris wheel seats are nostalgic bits and pieces of Southern California's famous extinct amusement parks (in the pre-Disney days when admission was free or \$1); the Pike, Belmont Shores, Pacific Ocean Park, and so on. Suddenly rearing up from the back of a flatbed trailer are the fabled stone elephants and pouncing lions that once stood at the gates of Selig Zoo in Eastlake (Lincoln) Park, where they had enthralled generations of Eastlake kids. I tried to imagine how a native of Manhattan would feel, suddenly discovering the New York Public Library's stone lions discarded in a New Jersey wrecking yard. I suppose the Selig lions might be Southern California's summary, unsentimental judgment on the value of its lost childhood. The past generations are like so much debris to be swept away by the developers' bulldozers.

Davis, Mike. ***City of Quartz***. New York: Vintage Books, 1990. 435

Imagine, if instead of this paragraph, he had written:

In conclusion I have shown many instances in which Southern Californians try to erase their past. First I showed how they do so by constructing new buildings, concentrating especially on the Fontana region. Second I showed...

Can't you just feel the air leaving your sails?

In light of this advice, you have probably already discerned that certain parts of your essay will emphasize various aspects of analysis. The beginning of the paper will announce your main assertion or thesis and the transitions in subsequent paragraphs will present corollary assertions. The bulk of your paper will most likely center on your examples and explanations, and the end will focus more on the significance. However, try to make certain that all of these elements are present to some degree throughout your essay. A long section without any significance may cause your readers to feel bored, a section without assertions may cause them to feel confused, and a section without examples or explanations may cause them to feel skeptical.

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Part 5: Argumentative Writing

Chapter 26: Recognizing the Rhetorical Situation

Chapter 27: Rhetoric and Argumentation

Chapter 28: Arguments and Persuasive Writing

Chapter 29: Sample Argument and Persuasion Essays

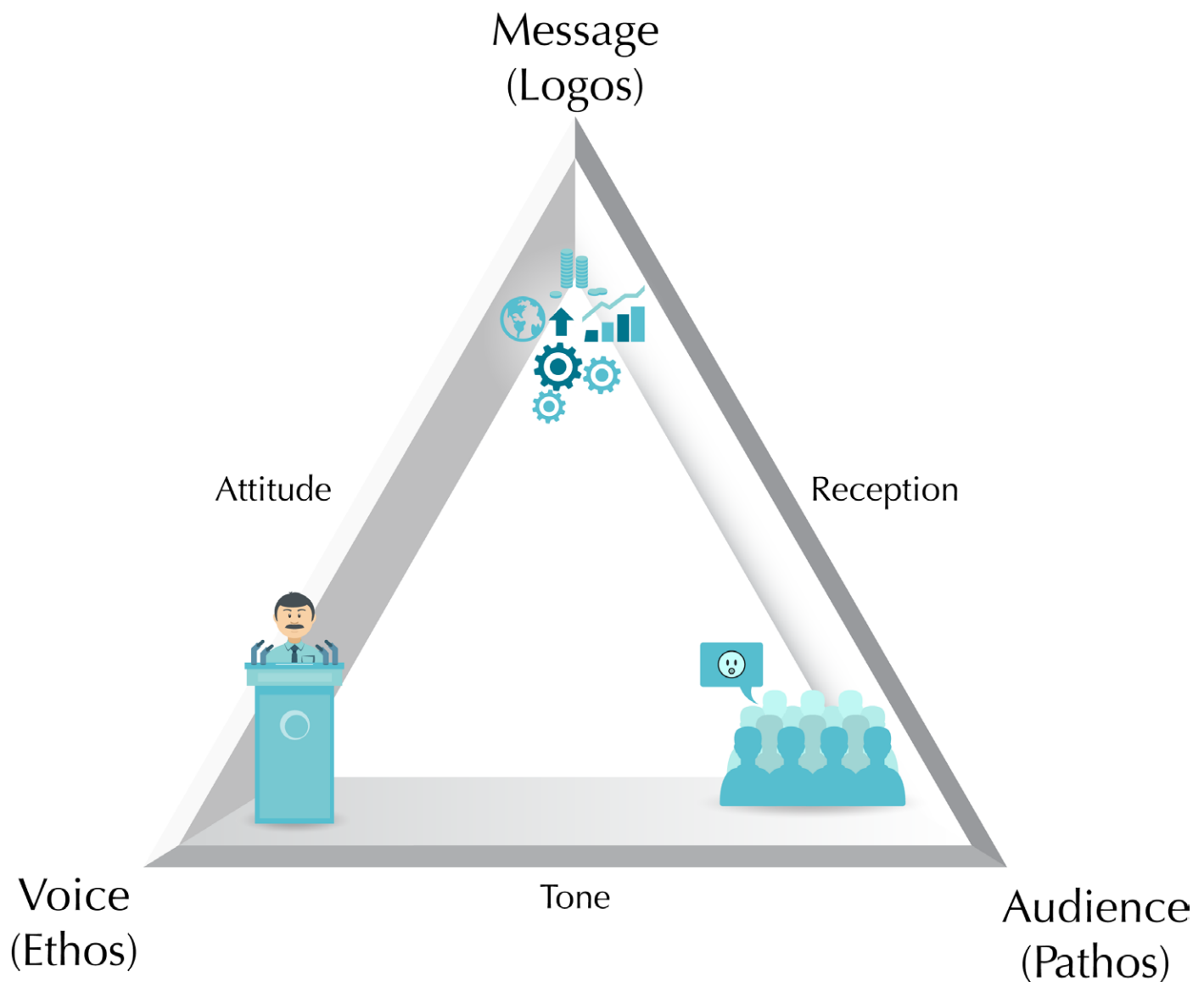
Chapter 26: Recognizing the Rhetorical Situation

Part 5: Chapter 26

The term argument, like rhetoric and critique, is another term that can carry negative connotations (e.g., “We argued all day,” “He picked an argument,” or “You don’t have to be so argumentative”), but like these other terms, it’s simply a neutral term. In academic writing, an argument is using rhetorical appeals to influence an audience and achieve a certain set of purposes and outcomes.

The Rhetorical Triangle

The principles Aristotle laid out in his *Rhetoric* nearly 2,500 years ago still form the foundation of much of our contemporary practice of argument. Teachers often use a triangle to illustrate the rhetorical situation present in any piece of communication; the triangle suggests the interdependent relationships among its three elements: **the voice** (the speaker or writer), **the audience** (the intended listeners or readers), and **the message** (the text being conveyed).



If each corner of the triangle is represented by one of the three elements of the rhetorical situation, then each side of the triangle depicts a particular relationship between two elements:

- **Tone.** The connection established between the **voice** and the **audience**.
- **Attitude.** The orientation of the **voice** toward the **message** it wants to convey.
- **Reception.** The manner in which the **audience** receives the **message** conveyed.

Rhetorical Appeals

In this section, we'll focus on how the rhetorical triangle can be used in service of argumentation, especially through the balanced use of ethical, logical, and emotional appeals: ethos, logos, and pathos, respectively.

In the preceding figure, you'll note that each appeal has been placed next to the corner of the triangle with which it is most closely associated:

- **Ethos.** Appeals to the credibility, reputation, and trustworthiness of the speaker or writer (most closely associated with the **voice**).
- **Pathos.** Appeals to the emotions and cultural beliefs of the listeners or readers (most closely associated with the **audience**).
- **Logos.** Appeals to reason, logic, and facts in the argument (most closely associated with the **message**).

Bonus Video

[//www.youtube.com/embed/wc1TrKIzAJM?modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0](https://www.youtube.com/embed/wc1TrKIzAJM?modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0)

Example of Logos, Pathos, Ethos

by Writing Class Presentation

Each of these appeals relies on a certain type of evidence: ethical, emotional, or logical. Based on your audience and purpose, you have to decide what combination of techniques will work best as you present your case.



When using a logical appeal, make sure to use sound inductive and deductive reasoning to speak to the reader's common sense. Specifically, avoid using emotional comments or pictures if you think your audience will see their use as

manipulative or inflammatory. For example, in an essay proposing that participating in high school athletics helps students develop into more successful students, you could show graphs comparing the grades of athletes and non-athletes, as well as high school graduation rates and post-high school education enrollment. These statistics would support your points in a logical way and would probably work well with a school board that is considering cutting a sports program.

The goal of an emotional appeal is to garner sympathy, develop anger, instill pride, inspire happiness, encourage a call to action, or trigger other emotions. When you choose this method, your goal is for your audience to react emotionally regardless of what they might think logically. In some situations, invoking an emotional appeal is a reasonable choice. For example, if you were trying to convince your audience that a certain drug is dangerous to take, you might choose to show a harrowing image of a person who has had a bad reaction to the drug. In this case, the image draws an emotional appeal and helps convince the audience that the drug is dangerous. Unfortunately, emotional appeals are also often used unethically to sway opinions without solid reasoning.

An ethical appeal relies on the credibility of the author. For example, a college professor who places a college logo on a website gains some immediate credibility from being associated with the college. An advertisement for tennis shoes using a well-known athlete gains some credibility. You might create an ethical appeal in an essay on solving a campus problem by noting that you are serving in student government. Ethical appeals can add an important component to your argument, but keep in mind that ethical appeals are only as strong as the credibility of the association being made.

Whether your argument relies primarily on logos, pathos, ethos, or a combination of these appeals, plan to make your case with your entire arsenal of facts, statistics, examples, anecdotes, illustrations, figurative language, quotations, expert opinions, discountable opposing views, and common ground with the audience. Carefully choosing these supporting details will control the tone of your paper as well as the success of your argument.

Logical, Emotional, and Ethical Fallacies

Rhetorical appeals have power. They can be used to motivate or to manipulate. When they are used irresponsibly, they lead to fallacies.

Check out the fallacy playlist of common fallacies provided by the [PBS Idea Channel](#).

Fallacy Playlist

[Rhetorical fallacies](#) are, at best, unintentional reasoning errors, and at worst, they are deliberate attempts to deceive. Fallacies are commonly used in advertising and politics, but they are not acceptable in academic arguments. The following are some examples of three kinds of fallacies that abuse the power of logical, emotional, or ethical appeals (logos, pathos, or ethos).

Logical Fallacies	
Logical Fallacies	Examples
Begging the question (or circular reasoning): The point is simply restated in different words as proof to support the point.	Tall people are more successful because they accomplish more.
Either/or fallacy: A situation is presented as an “either/or” choice when in reality, there are more than just two options.	Either I start to college this fall, or I work in a factory for the rest of my life.
False analogy: A comparison is made between two things that are not enough alike to support the comparison.	This summer camp job is like a rat cage. They feed us and let us out on a schedule.
Hasty generalization: A conclusion is reached with insufficient evidence.	I wouldn’t go to that college if I were you because it is extremely

	unorganized. I had to apply twice because they lost my first application.
Non sequitur: Two unrelated ideas are erroneously shown to have a cause-and-effect relationship.	If you like dogs, you would like a pet lion.
Post hoc ergo propter hoc (or false cause and effect): The writer argues that A caused B because B happened after A.	George W. Bush was elected after Bill Clinton, so it is clear that dissatisfaction with Clinton led to Bush's election.
Red herring: The writer inserts an irrelevant detail into an argument to divert the reader's attention from the main issue.	My room might be a mess, but I got an A in math.
Self-contradiction: One part of the writer's argument directly contradicts the overall argument.	Man has evolved to the point that we clearly understand that there is no such thing as evolution.
Straw man: The writer rebuts a competing claim by offering an exaggerated or oversimplified version of it.	Claim—You should take a long walk every day. Rebuttal—You want me to sell my car, or what?

Emotional Fallacies

Emotional Fallacies	Examples
Apple polishing: Flattery of the audience is disguised as a reason for accepting a claim.	You should wear a fedora. You have the perfect bone structure for it.
Flattery: The writer suggests that readers with certain positive traits would naturally agree with the writer's point.	You are a calm and collected person, so you can probably understand what I am saying.

Group think (or group appeal): The reader is encouraged to decide about an issue based on identification with a popular, high-status group.	The varsity football players all bought some of our fundraising candy. Do you want to buy some?
Riding the bandwagon: The writer suggests that since “everyone” is doing something, the reader should do it too.	The hot trend today is to wear black socks with tennis shoes. You’ll look really out of it if you wear those white socks.
Scare tactics (or veiled threats): The writer uses frightening ideas to scare readers into agreeing or believing something.	If the garbage collection rates are not increased, your garbage will likely start piling up.
Stereotyping: The writer uses a sweeping, general statement about a group of people in order to prove a point.	Women won’t like this movie because it has too much action and violence. OR Men won’t like this movie because it’s about feelings and relationships.

Ethical Fallacies

Ethical Fallacies	Examples
Argument from outrage: Extreme outrage that springs from an overbearing reliance on the writer’s own subjective perspective is used to shock readers into agreeing instead of thinking for themselves.	I was absolutely beside myself to think that anyone could be stupid enough to believe that the Ellis Corporation would live up to its commitments. The totally unethical management there failed to require the metal grade they agreed to. This horrendous mess we now have is completely their fault, and they must be held accountable.
False authority (or hero worship or appeal to authority or appeal to	LeBron James wears Nikes, and you should too.

celebrity): A celebrity is quoted or hired to support a product or idea to sway others' opinions.	
Guilt by association: An adversary's credibility is attacked because the person has friends or relatives who possibly lack in credibility.	We do not want people like her teaching our kids. Her father is in prison for murder.
Personal attack (or ad hominem): An adversary's personal attributes are used to discredit his or her argument.	I don't care if the government hired her as an expert. If she doesn't know enough not to wear jeans to court, I don't trust her judgment about anything.
Poisoning the well: Negative information is shared about an adversary so others will later discredit his or her opinions.	I heard that he was charged with aggravated assault last year, and his rich parents got him off.
Scapegoating: A certain group or person is unfairly blamed for all sorts of problems.	Jake is such a terrible student government president; it is no wonder that it is raining today and our spring dance will be ruined.

Do your best to avoid using these examples of fallacious reasoning, and be alert to their use by others so that you aren't "tricked" into a line of unsound reasoning. Developing the habit and skill of reading academic, commercial, and political rhetoric carefully will enable you to see through manipulative, fallacious uses of verbal, written, and visual language. Being on guard for these fallacies will make you a more proficient college student, a smarter consumer, and a more careful voter, citizen, and member of your community.

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Chapter 27: Rhetoric and Argumentation

Part 5: Chapter 27

T rue argumentation is the most important kind of communication in the academic and professional world. Used effectively, a speaker or writer can debate and share ideas in discourse communities. Argumentation holds both writers and readers to the highest standards of responsibility and ethics, and it is usually not what you see on cable news shows or, sadly, even in presidential debates. This section will show how rhetoric is used in service of argumentation.

Induction and Deduction

Bonus Video

[//www.youtube.com/embed/iRcNQkWNWNk?modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0](https://www.youtube.com/embed/iRcNQkWNWNk?modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0)

What are Deduction & Induction? – Gentleman Thinker by Philosophy Tube

Traditionally, arguments are classified as either inductive or deductive. Inductive arguments consider a number of results and form a generalization based on those results. In other words, say you sat outside a classroom building and tallied the number of students wearing jeans and the number wearing something other than jeans. If after one hour, you had tallied 360 students wearing jeans and thirty-two wearing other clothes, you could use inductive reasoning to make the generalization that most students at your college wear jeans to class. Here's another example.

While waiting for your little sister to come out of the high school, you saw fourteen girls wearing high heels. So you assume that high heels are standard wear for today's high school girls.

Deductive arguments begin with a general principle, which is referred to as a major premise. Then a related premise is applied to the major premise and a conclusion is formed. The three statements together form a syllogism. Here are some examples:

- Major premise: Leather purses last a long time.
 - Minor premise: I have a leather purse.
 - Conclusion: My purse will last a long time.
-
- Major premise: Tara watches a lot of television.
 - Minor premise: Tara is a very good student.
 - Conclusion: A teenager can be a good student even if he or she watches a lot of television.

Although these simple inductive and deductive arguments are fairly clean and easy to follow, they can be flawed because of their rigidity.

Let's revisit the "college students wear jeans" argument. What if you happened to be counting jeans wearers on a day that has been declared Denim Appreciation Day? Or conversely, what if you had taken the sample on the hottest day of the year in the middle of the summer session? Although it might be true that most students in your sample on that day wore jeans to class, the argument as it stands is not yet strong enough to support the statement.

Now consider the purse argument. The argument is not strong since a variety of

possible exceptions are obvious. First, not all leather purses last a long time since the leather could be strong, but the workmanship could be shoddy (challenge to major premise). Second, the quality of the leather in your particular purse could be such that it would not hold up to heavy use (challenge to minor premise). Third, a possible exception is that the argument does not take into account how long I have had my purse: even though it is made of leather, its lifespan could be about over. Since few issues are completely straightforward, it is often easy to imagine exceptions to simplistic arguments. For this reason, somewhat complex argument forms have been developed to address more complicated issues that require some flexibility.

Types of Argumentation

Three common types of argumentation are **Classical**, **Toulminian**, and **Rogerian**. You can choose which type to use based on the nature of your argument, the opinions of your audience, and the relationship between your argument and your audience.

Classical Argumentation

The typical format for a classical argument will likely be familiar to you:

- Introduction
 - Convince readers that the topic is worthy of their attention.
 - Provide background information that sets the stage for the argument.
 - Provide details that show you as a credible source
 - End with a thesis statement that takes a position on the issue or problem you have established to be arguable.
- Presentation of position
 - Give the reasons why the reader should share your opinion.
 - Provide support for the reasons.
 - Show why the reasons matter to the audience.
- Presentation and rebuttal of alternate positions

- Show that you are aware of opposing views.
 - Systematically present the advantages and disadvantages of the opposing views.
 - Show that you have been thorough and fair but clearly have made the correct choice with the stand you have taken.
- Conclusion
 - Summarize your argument.
 - Make a direct request for audience support.
 - Reiterate your credentials.

Toulminian Argumentation

Named for its creator, [Stephen Toulmin](#), includes three components: a claim, stated grounds to support the claim, and unstated assumptions called warrants. Here's an example:

- Claim: All homeowners can benefit from double-pane windows.
- Grounds: Double-pane windows are much more energy efficient than single-pane windows. Also, double-pane windows block distracting outside noise.
- Warrant: Double-pane windows keep houses cooler in summer and warmer in winter, and they qualify for the tax break for energy-efficient home improvements.

Rogerian Argumentation

The purest version of **Rogerian argumentation**, named for its creator, [Carl Rogers](#), aims for true compromise between two positions. It can be particularly appropriate when the logical argumentation you are addressing remains truly unresolved.

Bonus Video

[//www.youtube.com/embed/Z9knvRXU8zQ?modestbranding=1&rel=0&showin](https://www.youtube.com/embed/Z9knvRXU8zQ?modestbranding=1&rel=0&showin)

However, the Rogerian method has been put into service as a motivational technique, as in this example:

fo=0

What is Rogerian Argument? by FYC at USF

- Core argument: First-semester college students should be required to attend three writing sessions in the college writing center.
- Common ground: Many first-semester college students struggle with college-level work and the overall transition from high school to college.
- Link between common ground and core argument: Colleges want students to have every chance to succeed, and students who attend at least three writing sessions in the university writing lab are ninety percent more likely to succeed in college.

Rogerian argumentation can also be an effective standard debating technique when you are arguing for a specific point of view. Begin by stating the opposing view to capture the attention of audience members who hold that position and then show how it shares common ground with your side of the point. Your goal is to persuade your audience to come to accept your point by the time they read to the end of your argument. Applying this variation to the preceding example might mean leading off with your audience's greatest misgivings about attending the writing center, by opening with something like "First-semester college students are so busy that they should not be asked to do anything they do not really need to do."

Analytical and Problem-Solving Argumentation

Arguments of any kind are likely to either take a position about an issue or present a solution to a problem. Don't be surprised, though, if you end up doing both. If your goal is to analyze a text or a body of data and justify your interpretation with evidence, you are writing an analytical argument. Examples include the following:

- Evaluative reviews (of restaurants, films, political candidates, etc.)
- Interpretations of texts (a short story, poem, painting, piece of music, etc.)
- Analyses of the causes and effects of events (9/11, the Civil War, unemployment, etc.)

Problem-solving argumentation is not only the most complicated but also the most important type of all, and it involves several thresholds of proof. First, you have to convince readers that a problem exists. Second, you have to give a convincing description of the problem. Third, because problems often have more than one solution, you have to convince readers that your solution is the most feasible and effective. Think about the different opinions people might hold about the severity, causes, and possible solutions to these sample problems:

- Global warming
- Nonrenewable energy consumption
- The federal budget deficit
- Homelessness
- Rates of personal saving

Argumentation often requires a combination of analytical and problem-solving approaches. Whether the assignment requires you to analyze, solve a problem, or both, your goal is to present your facts or solution confidently, clearly, and completely. Despite the common root word, when writing an argument, you need to guard against taking an overly argumentative tone. Attempt to support your statements with evidence but do so without being unduly abrasive. Good argumentation allows us to disagree without being disagreeable.

Research and Revision in Argumentation

Argumentative writing follows the same writing process introduced in Part 2 of this book, so you will continue to use outlining, drafting, writing, and revision to develop your assignment. One distinct difference in argumentative writing is that

you may be required to include research to support your position. Try to remember that your college instructors are not interested in having you do in-depth research for its own sake, or to prove that you know how to incorporate a certain number of sources and document them appropriately. Your instructors want to introduce you to the research process because the inclusion of research is a core feature of a strong essay. In college-level writing, research is not meant merely to provide additional support for an already fixed idea you have about the topic, or to set up a “straw man” for you to knock down with ease. **Don’t fall into the trap of trying to make your research fit your existing argument.** You can avoid this trap by creating an annotated bibliography, which is introduced in [Chapter 35](#). Research conducted in good faith will almost certainly lead you to refine your ideas about your topic, leading to multiple revisions of your work. It might cause you even to change your topic entirely.

Revision is part of the design of higher education. If you embrace the “writing to think” and “writing to learn” philosophy and adopt the “composing habits of mind” with each draft, you will likely rethink your positions, do additional research, and make other general changes. As you conduct additional research between drafts, you are likely to find new information that will lead you to revise your core argument. Let your research drive your work, and keep in mind that your argument will remain in flux until your final draft. In the end, every final draft you produce should feel like a small piece of a vast and never ending conversation.

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Chapter 28: Arguments and Persuasive Writing

Part 5: Chapter 28

Learning to write argumentatively is an important part of academic writing and the following section from *Rhetoric and Composition*, introduces the concept of argument and the tools to create an argumentative essay.

What Is an Argument?

When you hear the word argument, what do you think of? A shouting match or a fist fight? When instructors use the word argument, they're typically thinking about something else. What they're actually referring to is a position supported by the analysis that preceded its conception, not necessarily supporting antagonism.

More to the point, instructors are talking about defending a certain point of view through writing or speech. Usually called a claim or a thesis, this point of view is concerned with an issue that doesn't have a clear right or wrong answer (e.g., four and two make six). Also, this argument should not only be concerned with personal opinion (e.g., I really like carrots). Instead, an argument might tackle issues like abortion, capital punishment, stem cell research, or gun control. However, what distinguishes an argument from a descriptive essay or report is that the argument must take a stance; if you're merely summarizing both sides of an issue or pointing out the pros and cons, you're not writing an argument. "Stricter gun control laws will likely result in a decrease in gun-related violence" is an argument.

Note that people can and will disagree with this argument, which is precisely why so many instructors find this type of assignment so useful — they make you think!

Academic arguments usually articulate an opinion. This opinion is always carefully defended with good reasoning and supported by plenty of research. Research? Yes, research! Indeed, part of learning to write effective arguments is finding reliable sources (or other documents) that lend credibility to your position. It's not enough to say "capital punishment is wrong because that's the way I feel."

Instead, you need to adequately support your claim by finding:

- Facts
- Statistics
- Quotations from recognized authorities, and any other types of evidence

You won't always win, and that's fine. The goal of an argument is simply to:

- Make a claim
- Support your claim with the most credible reasoning and any evidence you can muster
- Hope that the reader will at least understand your position
- Hope that your claim is taken seriously

Bonus Video

[//www.youtube.com/embed/n3MMERy4nWY?modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0](https://www.youtube.com/embed/n3MMERy4nWY?modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0)

How to win an argument, [Business Insider](#)

If you defend your argument's position with good reasoning and evidence (and follow other criteria in the teacher's rubric), you should earn a high grade, even if your instructor personally disagrees with the views you are defending.

We will be covering the basic format of how to structure an argument. This includes the general written argument

structure, and the position and proposal variations of that basic form. If you want to make a claim about a particular (usually controversial) issue, you can use the position argument form.

Alternately, if you would like to offer a solution to a particular situation that you see as problematic, such as the rising cost of education, you can use a proposal argument. By adapting one of these three methods, you will be well on the way to making your point. Argument structures are amazingly versatile. Once you become familiar with this basic structure of the argumentative essay, you will be able to clearly argue about almost anything!

“If you can’t annoy somebody, there’s little point in writing.”

–Kingsley Amis (1922 – 1995)

Basic Argument Essay Structure

Introduction

The first paragraph of your argument is used to introduce your topic and the issues surrounding it. This information needs to be introduced using clear, easily understandable language. Your readers need to know what you’re writing about before they can decide if they believe you or not.

Once you have introduced your general subject, it’s time to state your claim. Your claim will serve as the thesis for your essay. Make sure that you use clear and precise language. Your reader needs to understand exactly where you stand on the issue. The clarity of your claim affects your readers’ understanding of your views. Also, it’s important to highlight supporting information throughout the essay. These highlights will help keep the reader engaged, add support to your claim, and allow your reader to know what direction you will be taking with your argument in the body paragraphs.

By mentioning the points or arguments you will further discuss in the body, you are outlining your paper's goals. This part comes at the end of the thesis and can be named as the guide. The guide is a useful organizational tool for you as well as the readers. In addition, your audience will have a clear cut idea as to what will be discussed in the body.

Body

Once your position is stated you should establish your credibility. There are two or more sides to every argument. This means not everyone will agree with your viewpoint. So try to form a common ground with the audience. Think about who may be undecided or opposed to your viewpoint. Take the audience's age, education, values, gender, culture, ethnicity, and all other variables into consideration as you introduce your topic. These variables will affect your word choice, and could potentially open your audience's mind to consider your viewpoint.

Developing Your Argument

Back up your thesis with logical and persuasive arguments. During your pre-writing phase, outline the main points you might use to support your claim, and decide which are the strongest and most logical. Eliminate those which are based on emotion rather than fact. Your corroborating evidence should be well-researched, such as statistics, examples, and expert opinions. You can also reference personal experience, and it's a good idea to have a mixture. However, you should avoid leaning too heavily on personal experience, as you want to present an argument that appears objective as you are using it to persuade your reader.

There are a couple different methods of developing your argument. Two variations of the basic argument structure are the Position Method and the Proposal Method.

Position Method

The position method is used to try to convince your audience that you are in the right, and the other view of your argument is wrong.

Introduce and define your topic. Never assume that your reader is familiar with the issues surrounding your topic. This is your chance to set up the premise (point of view) you want to use. This is also a good time to present your claim statement.

Background information. Do your research! The more knowledgeable you are, the more concise an argument you will be able to give. You will now be able to provide your reader with the best information possible. This will allow your audience to read your paper with the same knowledge you possess on the topic. Information is the backbone to a solid argument.

Development

You have your argument, and you may have even stated your claim. Now, start developing your ideas. Provide evidence and reasoning.

Be prepared to deal with the opposition. There will be those who oppose your argument. Be prepared to answer those opinions or points of view with knowledgeable responses. If you have done your homework and know your material, you will be able to address any opposing arguments with ease and authority.

In conclusion... Now is the time to drive home your point. Re-emphasize your main arguments and claim statement.

Proposal Method

The proposal method of argument is used when there is a problematic situation, and you would like to offer a solution to the situation. The structure of the proposal method is similar to the above position method, but there are slight differences.

Introduce and define the nature of the problematic situation. Make sure to focus on the problem and its causes. This may seem simple, but many people focus solely on the effects of a problematic situation. By focusing on the actual problem, your readers will see your proposal as a solution to the problem. If you don't, your readers might see your solution as a mere complaint.

Propose a solution, or a number of solutions, to the problem. Be specific about these solutions. If you have one solution, you may choose to break it into parts and spend a paragraph or so describing each part. If you have several solutions, you may instead choose to spend a paragraph on each scenario. Each additional solution will add both depth and length to your argument. But remember to stay focused. Added length does not always equal a better argument.

Describe the workability of the various solutions. There are a variety of ways that this could be done. With a single-solution paper you could break the feasibility down into short and long term goals and plans. With a multiple-solution essay, you may instead highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the individual solutions, and establish which would be the most successful, based on your original statement of the problem and its causes.

Summarize and conclude your proposal. Summarize your solutions, re-state how the solution or solutions would work to remedy the problematic situation, and you're done.

Dealing with the Opposition

When writing an argument, expect that you will have opposition. Skeptical readers will have their own beliefs and points of view. When conducting your research, make sure to review the opposing side of your argument. You need to be prepared to counter those ideas. Remember, in order for people to give up their position, they must see how your position is more reasonable than their own. When you address the opposing point of view in your essay and demonstrate how your own claim is stronger, you neutralize their argument. By failing to address a non-coinciding view, you leave a reason for your reader to disagree with you, and therefore weaken your persuasive power. Methods of addressing the opposition vary. You may choose to state your main points, then address and refute the opposition, and then conclude. Conversely, you might summarize the opposition's views early in your argument, and then revisit them after you've presented your side or the argument. This will show how your information is more reasonable than their own.

Conclusion

You have introduced your topic, stated your claim, supported that claim with logical and reasonable evidence, and refuted your opposition's viewpoint. The hard work is done. Now it's time to wrap up your argument. By the time readers get to the end of your paper, they should have learned something. You should have learned something, too. Give readers an idea to take away with them. The conclusion should end the paper and support your position and the significance of your argument. One word of caution: avoid introducing any new information in your conclusion. If you find that there's another point that you wanted to include, revise your essay. Include this new information into the body of your essay. The conclusion should only review what the rest of your essay has offered.

Strengthening Your Argument

In argumentative writing, 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 to the Superbowl 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, s/he has also made the argument seem shallow and poorly researched. In addition, she has committed a third mistake: making a sweeping generalization that cannot be supported.

Use phrasing that does not:

- Alienate any part of your audience
- Make an argument that is poorly researched or shallow
- Make an unsupported generalization
- Contain mistakes that could ruin your argument
- Contain objective Language

In argumentative writing, your instructor may ask you to avoid using *I* and *My* (subjective) statements. 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 becomes 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 sounds like a problem.”

A small change like the removal of *I* and *My* 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.

The Fallacies of Argument

Now your paper is filled with quality research. You're feeling good about your paper. But when you get the paper back your instructor has left a comment like, "This is an argument fallacy". So now you're left wondering what is "false" about the argument; and what is this "argument fallacy"?

Argumentative fallacies are sometimes called logical fallacies. Usually these fallacies are created when the reasoning behind the argument lacks validity. A lack of validity weakens your argument, and then leads to a failure to provide a sufficient claim.

Don't feel badly if your instructor writes argumentative fallacy on your essay. This is a common error in argumentative papers. An argumentative fallacy can be caused by your negligence or lack of rigor and attention while making a certain argument. In other words, an undeveloped argument can resemble an argumentative fallacy. So, never generalize; don't just say and leave — pursue your point to its logical termination. Logical fallacies are discussed in more depth in [Chapter 26](#) of this textbook.

A Side Note

Many topics that are written about in college are very controversial. When approaching a topic it is critical that you think about your argument's implications. 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 with a different relationship to this topic. While you shouldn't let readers' 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 write, but if you have taken the time to think about the ideas that go into your paper, you should have no problem defending it.

Adapted from *Rhetoric and Composition*, 2013, used under creative commons 3.0 cc-by-sa

What is Persuasion?

The success of an argument can be measured by its persuasiveness. In the previous section, we discussed the basics of structuring argumentative essays. In this section, we hone in on some strategies of persuasion that can improve your argumentative writing.

Students often feel overwhelmed by the thought of writing persuasively, but persuasive writing techniques are present in many of the documents and images students review. The purpose of persuasion in writing is to convince, motivate, or move readers toward a certain point of view or opinion. The act of trying to persuade automatically implies more than one opinion on the subject can be argued, so it's important to understand that persuasive writing requires writers to take a stand on debatable topic.

The idea of an argument often conjures up images of two people yelling and screaming in anger. In writing, however, both the development and goal for an argument is different. A written argument requires a reasoned opinion supported and explained by evidence. To argue in writing is to advance knowledge and ideas in a positive way. Written arguments often fail when they employ ranting rather than reasoning.

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

The Structure of a Persuasive Essay

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

1. Introduction and thesis
2. Opposing and qualifying ideas
3. Strong evidence in support of claim

4. Style and tone of language
5. A compelling conclusion

Creating an Introduction and Thesis

The persuasive essay begins with an engaging introduction that presents the general topic. The introduction should create a foundation of knowledge for the reader, so you want to add any information or descriptions the reader will need to understand as they read the rest of the essay. The thesis typically appears somewhere in the introduction and states the writer's point of view.

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

Acknowledging Opposing Ideas and Limits to Your Argument

Because an argument implies differing points of view on the subject, students must be sure to acknowledge those opposing ideas. Avoiding ideas that conflict with your own gives the reader the impression that you may be uncertain, fearful, or unaware of opposing ideas. Thus it is essential that you not only address counterarguments but also do so respectfully.

Try to address opposing arguments earlier rather than later in your essay. Rhetorically speaking, ordering your essay so that your opposing argument appears at the beginning allows you to better address ideas that conflict with your own, so you can spend the rest of the essay countering those arguments and introducing ideas that support your position. This way, you leave your reader thinking about your argument rather than someone else's. You have the last word.

Acknowledging points of view different from your own also has the effect of fostering more credibility between you and the audience. They know from the outset that you are aware of opposing ideas and that you are not afraid to give them space.

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

Although tougher gun control laws are a powerful first step in decreasing violence in our streets, such legislation alone cannot end these problems since guns are not the only problem we face. Such a concession will be welcome by those who might disagree with this writer’s argument in the first place. To effectively persuade their readers, writers need to be modest in their goals and humble in their approach to encourage readers to listen to the ideas. See Table 28.1 below for some useful phrases of concession.

Table 28.1 Phrases of concession

Phrases of concession	
Granted that	Although
Still	Of Course
Yet	Though

Bias in Writing

Everyone has various biases on any number of topics. For example, you might have

a bias toward wearing black instead of brightly colored clothes or wearing jeans rather than formal wear. You might have a bias toward working at night rather than in the morning, or working by deadlines rather than completing tasks in advance. These examples identify minor biases, of course, but they still indicate preferences and opinions.

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

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

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

The Use of **I** in Writing

The use of *I* in writing is often a topic of debate, and the acceptance of its usage varies from instructor to instructor. It is difficult to predict the preferences for all your present and future instructors, but consider the effects it can potentially have on your writing.

Be mindful of the use of *I* in your writing because it can make your argument sound overly biased. There are two primary reasons:

1. Excessive repetition of any word will eventually catch the reader's attention—

and usually not in a good way. The use of *I* is no different.

2. The insertion of *I* into a sentence alters not only the way a sentence might sound but also the composition of the sentence itself. *I* is often the subject of a sentence. If the subject of the essay is supposed to be, say, smoking, then by inserting yourself into the sentence, you are effectively displacing the subject of the essay into a secondary position. In the following example, the subject of the sentence is underlined:

Smoking is bad.

I think smoking is bad.

In the first sentence, the rightful subject, *smoking*, is in the subject position in the sentence. In the second sentence, the insertion of *I* and *think* replaces *smoking* as the subject, which draws attention to *I* and away from the topic that is supposed to be discussed. Remember to keep the message (the subject) and the messenger (the writer) separate.

Ultimately the use of *I* in writing will be determined by your genre, instructor's preference, and the essay's goals.

Checklist

Developing Sound Arguments

Does my essay contain the following elements?

- An engaging introduction
- A reasonable, specific thesis that can be supported by evidence
- A varied range of evidence from credible sources
- Respectful acknowledgement and explanation of opposing ideas
- A style and tone of language that is appropriate for the subject and audience
- Acknowledgement of the argument's limits
- A conclusion that will adequately summarize the essay and reinforce the thesis

Fact and Opinion

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

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

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

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

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

Using Visual Elements to Strengthen Arguments

Adding visual elements to a persuasive argument can often strengthen its persuasive effect. There are two main types of visual elements: quantitative visuals and qualitative visuals.

Quantitative visuals

Quantitative visuals present data graphically. They allow the audience to see statistics spatially. The purpose of using quantitative visuals is to make logical appeals to the audience. For example, sometimes it is easier to understand the disparity in certain statistics if you can see how the disparity looks graphically. Bar graphs, pie charts, Venn diagrams, histograms, and line graphs are all ways of presenting quantitative data in spatial dimensions.



Qualitative visuals



Qualitative visuals present images that appeal to the audience's emotions. Photographs and pictorial images are examples of qualitative visuals. Such images often try to convey a story, and seeing an actual example can carry more power

than hearing or reading about the example. For example, one image of a malnourished child will likely have more of an emotional impact than pages dedicated to describing that same condition in writing.

Tips for Writing a Persuasive Essay

- Choose a topic that you feel passionate about. If your instructor requires you to write about a specific topic, approach the subject from an angle that interests you. Begin your essay with an engaging introduction. Your thesis should typically appear somewhere in your introduction.
- Start by acknowledging and explaining points of view that may conflict with your own to build credibility and trust with your audience. Also state the limits of your argument. This too helps you sound more reasonable and honest to those who may naturally be inclined to disagree with your view. By respectfully acknowledging opposing arguments and conceding limitations to your own view, you set a measured and responsible tone for the essay.
- Make your appeals in support of your thesis by using sound, credible evidence. Use a balance of facts and opinions from a wide range of sources, such as scientific studies, expert testimony, statistics, and personal anecdotes. Each piece of evidence should be fully explained and clearly stated.
- Make sure that your style and tone are appropriate for your subject and audience. Tailor your language and word choice to these two factors, while still being true to your own voice.
- Finally, write a conclusion that effectively summarizes the main argument and reinforces your thesis.

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Chapter 29: Sample Argument and Persuasion Essays

Part 5: Chapter 29

The following chapter contains sample argument and persuasion essays. The first essay below is not well-developed, and it was included in the textbook *A Guide to Perspective Analysis* to illustrate the contrast between writing that has undergone a revision process and writing that was slapped together at the last minute.

Those Misleading Manhattan Friends (Sample Essay)

Television. According to Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, television is a system for transmitting images and sound into a receiver. Television influences how we think. As part of the media, it shows us ways to consider the ways we see the world. In the show *Friends* three major contradictions can be found that can be seen by the discerning viewer. As this paper proceeds each of these contradictions will be made more clearer.

The first of these contradictions has to do with the economics of the major characters within the show *Friends*. Manhattan is an expensive place to live; it is expensive because the rents are high there. My friend lives in Manhattan. My friend pays a lot for rent in Manhattan. My friend pays over 2,000 dollars a month for a studio apartment in Manhattan. My friend has a good job in Manhattan and still has difficulty making ends meet in such an expensive city as Manhattan. Ross is a teacher. He teaches at the University. Ross lives in a nice apartment. Teachers make very little money. Even University teachers make very little money. Phoebe is a masseuse. She gets paid per job. She lives in a nice apartment. She makes 50 dollars per job. She is always at the coffee shop with her friends. How many jobs can she do in a week? Rents are just too high overall.

Another contradiction within the show *Friends* is their relationships. Ross and Rachel date each other. Ross and Rachel indubitably break up. This usually happens at the end of each season. They are still friends. I cannot be friends with anyone I break up with. My feckless girlfriend and I dated for six years. Then she changed 360 degrees into a different person. She broke my heart. I do not wish to talk to her anymore. Rachel and Ross have a kid together. Their kid is very cute. They were once married to each other. They still get together and go to two movies as if they simply have a causal relationship. This is a contradiction to. I think now Joey and Rachel are dating. I am sure that they will break up to.

Another contradiction within the show *Friends* has to do with the modern, complex, ever-changing, technological, fast paced world that we live in today. Few people stay in one place anymore. People move a lot. Only 1 friend from my high school still lives in the same area. Ross, Rachel, Joey, Chandler, Phoebe, and Monica never move. Except when they move in and out of each others apartments. They also never make new friends. Except when they date other people for about half a season and then get bored and come back and end up dating each other again.

In conclusion, *Friends* is full of mini and varied contradictions. It is not a very realistic show. For one, the characters live in Manhattan and they would not be able to afford to live there especially Ross and Phoebe. For two they date each other and have kids together and then break up but they still remain friends. And for three and finally they never move or make new friends in eleven years!!! Yet the show is popular. I suppose there are many reasons why it is popular.

This essay took less than an hour to write. I started with an outline for each of the five paragraphs and followed it precisely and quickly, throwing in the main ideas without further thought, revision, or editing (okay, I did challenge myself to include several common misspellings that spell check would not catch). Even still the piece is not completely hopeless. The notion that a show like *Friends* can lead audiences to accept false impressions of reality could have proven intriguing to explore, and if this essay were not written by me as a parody but by a student in

earnest, I would try to help the student focus the paper around this theme and further develop relevant ideas.

When you respond to the writing of your peers, keep in mind that we all have to write drafts and that it is always better to focus on the positive, for example, how the writing could become more effective, rather than the negative, and explicating what is wrong with it at the moment. In fact, when running writing workshops, I insist that all the feedback be stated in terms of what we like (so the writer knows what to keep or expand in subsequent drafts) and how it can be improved (so the writer has specific advice as to how to make the essay better). This helps writers get excited about the potential of their essays rather than depressed about their current shortcomings. Ultimately it's our attitude about our writing that causes us either to give up on it entirely or to continue to improve it.

Ultimately it's our attitude about our writing that causes us either to give up on it entirely or to continue to try to improve it.



The difference between the previous essay on *Friends* and the following one that I wrote on a strange museum in Los Angeles did not emerge from the potential interest of the subject matter but from the time and effort that I put into the writing of each. The piece that follows took several days and many drafts as I integrated experience, research, and critical examination to develop my analysis. When writing it, I used the advice I've given you throughout this book, so for the sake of review, I will explain how I created it before providing you with the finished draft.



Photo by [Cory Doctorow](#), CC BY-SA 2.0

When I first visited The Museum of Jurassic Technology I was dumbfounded by what awaited me inside the building. Stumbling through the dark building, I discovered a series of dioramas on such odd and diverse subjects as spores that take over the brains of ants, bats whose radars can pierce through lead, artifacts found in American trailer parks, illustrations of archaic beliefs and superstitions, and a convoluted and bizarre theory of how memory functions by a man I'd never heard of named Geoffrey Sonneabend. Later, when I discovered that parts of the collection were made up (including both Sonneabend and his theory of memory) and other parts were simply unremarkable, I felt the need to write about the experience in my journal:

How could I have been so stupid? "Museum of Jurassic Technology?" There

was no technology in the Jurassic period, just a bunch of dinosaurs stomping around. I let the word museum lead me to think that the rest of the title made sense. And I should have realized when I entered that the items in the collection have nothing in common with each other, have no remarkable characteristics, are scientifically impossible, or just don't make any sense. I consider myself a critical thinker but maybe I'm just as conditioned as everyone else to accept institutional authority.

As I reflected further on the significance of my visit, I decided that the museum is not the only place where questionable information gets passed off as objective and factual. In school, teachers often ask students to simply repeat information and seldom encourage them to critically examine it, a trend that has become even more common since standardized testing has dominated so much of the current curriculum. This emphasis on memorizing answers does not encourage us to think past the obvious, leading us to accept provisional theories as though they are universal truths. The museum makes us aware of this by using academic sounding phrases to get us to momentarily accept even the most ridiculous claims.

With this working thesis in mind, I set the stage for writing my essay. I researched the museum and related issues, evaluated each aspect of my visit in light of the Pentad, and brainstormed on the museum's wider significance. I then collated and reviewed all of my observations and notes into a first draft, focusing mostly on developing this thesis. I then wrote a second draft in which I included stronger transitions and more deliberate opening and closing paragraphs. Then I produced a third draft, in which I tried to make the style more accurate and varied. I showed this draft to some of my colleagues who gave me excellent suggestions concerning other sources to consult, parts I should cut or develop, and organizational tips. After this, I submitted it to the online journal *Americana* where, after completing more revisions suggested by their editors, it was originally published. When reading it, think about the process that went into creating it, and how it didn't spring out of the blue but developed slowly through careful consideration and deliberate revision.

Creating an essay like this takes time, but it is time well spent. Even if you never write another analytical essay after you finish school, the resulting mental stimulation will both enable and encourage you to think about your own life more deeply and help you discover ways to make it better. And analysis can also lead us to create a better world in general. Given the problems we face stemming from environmental damage, nuclear proliferation, and economic instability, we will need a massive amount of critical thinking spread throughout the entire world to insure our very survival. Because for many years I have studied just how creative and resourceful people can be, I believe we have the ability to solve these problems and live more fulfilling lives as we do so. This can only happen, however, when more of us take the time to slow down and analyze the world around us, so that we can add our perspectives to the written and spoken conversations that make up our culture, our history, and our lives.

Sample Persuasive Essay

Adapted from “Chapter 5” of *A Guide to Perspective Analysis*, 2012, used according to creative commons [CC BY-SA 3.0 US](#).

Part 6: Research Process, MLA and APA

Chapter 30: Developing Your Research Process

Chapter 31: Gathering Reliable Information

Chapter 31.1: Gathering Reliable Information contd.

Chapter 32: Evaluating Sources

Chapter 33: Compiling and Managing Research

Chapter 34: Drafting Your Paper

Chapter 35: Annotated Bibliography

Chapter 36: Using Modern Language Association (MLA) Style

Chapter 36.1: Tables, Figures, and In-text Citations

Chapter 36.2: Works Cited

Chapter 37: Formatting an APA Style Paper

Chapter 38: APA Citing and Referencing Techniques

Chapter 39: Creating an APA References Section

Chapter 30: Developing Your Research Process

Part 6: Chapter 30

The text *Successful Writing* stresses that when you perform research, you are essentially trying to solve a mystery—you want to know how something works or why something happened. In other words, you want to answer a question that you (and other people) have about the world. This is one of the most basic reasons for performing research.

But the research process does not end when you have solved your mystery. Imagine what would happen if a detective collected enough evidence to solve a criminal case, but she never shared her solution with the authorities. Presenting what you have learned from research can be just as important as performing the research. Research results can be presented in a variety of ways, but one of the most popular—and effective—presentation forms is the [research paper](#). A research paper presents an original thesis, or purpose statement, about a topic and develops that thesis with information gathered from a variety of sources.

If you are curious about the possibility of life on Mars, for example, you might choose to research the topic.

What will you do, though, when your research is complete? You will need to put your thoughts together in a logical, coherent manner. You may want to use the facts you have learned to create a narrative or to support an [argument](#). And you may want to show the results of your research to your friends, your teachers, or even the editors of magazines and journals. Writing a

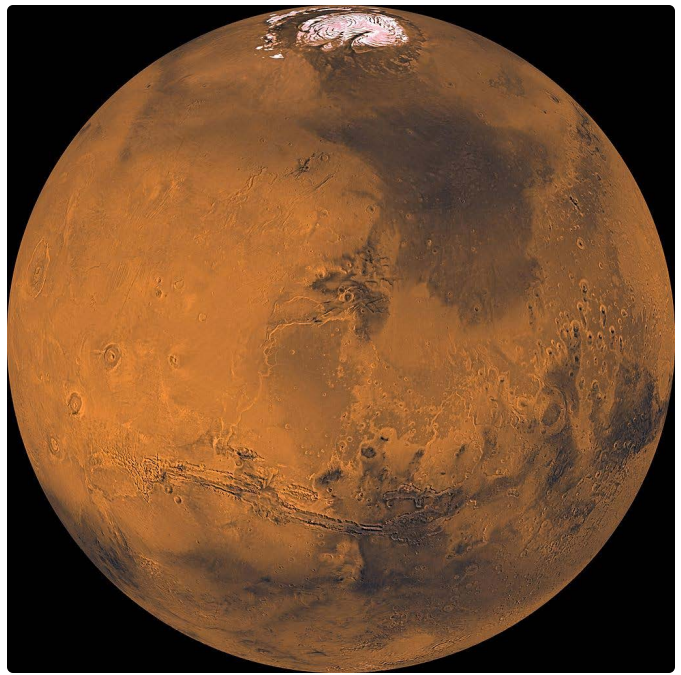


Photo by NASA/JPL/USGS, [CC 1.0](#)

research paper is an ideal way to organize thoughts, craft narratives or make arguments based on research, and share your newfound knowledge with the world.

Adapted from “[Chapter 11](#)” of *Successful Writing*, 2012, used according to creative commons [CC BY-SA 3.0 US](#)



No matter what field of study you are interested in, you will most likely be asked to write a research paper during your academic career. *Boundless Writing* explains that a research paper is an expanded essay that relies on existing discourse to analyze a perspective or construct an argument. Because a research paper includes an extensive information-gathering process in addition to the writing process, it is important to develop a research plan to ensure your final paper will accomplish its goals. As a researcher, you have countless resources at your disposal, and it can be difficult to sift through each source while looking for specific information. If you begin researching without a plan, you could find yourself wasting hours reading sources that will be of little or no help to your paper. To save time and effort, decide on a research plan before you begin.

Creating a Research Plan

Having to write a research paper may feel intimidating at first. After all, researching and writing a long paper requires time, effort, and organization. However, writing a research paper can also be a great opportunity to explore an interesting topic. The research process allows you to gain expertise on a topic of your choice, and the writing process helps you not only remember what you have learned, but also understand it on a deeper level.

A research plan should begin after you can clearly identify the focus of your argument. Narrow the scope of your argument by identifying the specific subtopic you will research. A broad search will yield thousands of sources, which makes it difficult to form a focused, coherent argument, and it is not possible to include every topic in your research. If you narrow your focus, however, you can find targeted resources that can be synthesized into a new argument.

After narrowing your focus, think about key search terms that will apply only to your subtopic. Develop specific questions that can be answered through your research process, but be careful not to choose a focus that is overly narrow. You should aim for a question that will limit search results to sources that relate to your topic, but will still result in a varied pool of sources to explore.





Painting by Don Troiani, Courtesy of The National Guard, [CC BY 2.0](#)

If you are studying the Battle of Gettysburg, for example, you might decide to look into any number of topics related to the battle: medical practices on the field, social differences between soldiers, or military maneuvers. If your topic is medical practices in battle, any search for “Battle of Gettysburg” would return far too many general results. You would also not want to search for a single instance of surgery, because you might not be able to find enough information on it. Find a happy medium between a too broad or too specific topic to research.

Another part of your research plan should include the type of sources you want to gather. The possibilities include articles, scholarly journals, primary sources, textbooks, encyclopedias, and more. Most search engines will allow you to limit the

search results by type of source. If you know that you are only looking for articles, you can exclude sources like interviews or [abstracts](#) from your search. If you are looking for specific kinds of [data](#), like images or graphs, you might want to find a [database](#) dedicated to that sort of source.

You can also limit the time period from which you will draw resources. Do you only want articles written in the past ten or twenty years? Do you want them from a specific span of time? Again, most search engines will allow you to limit results to anything written within the years you specify, and the choice to limit the time period will depend on your topic. Determining these factors will help you form a specific research plan to guide your process.

Example of a Research Process

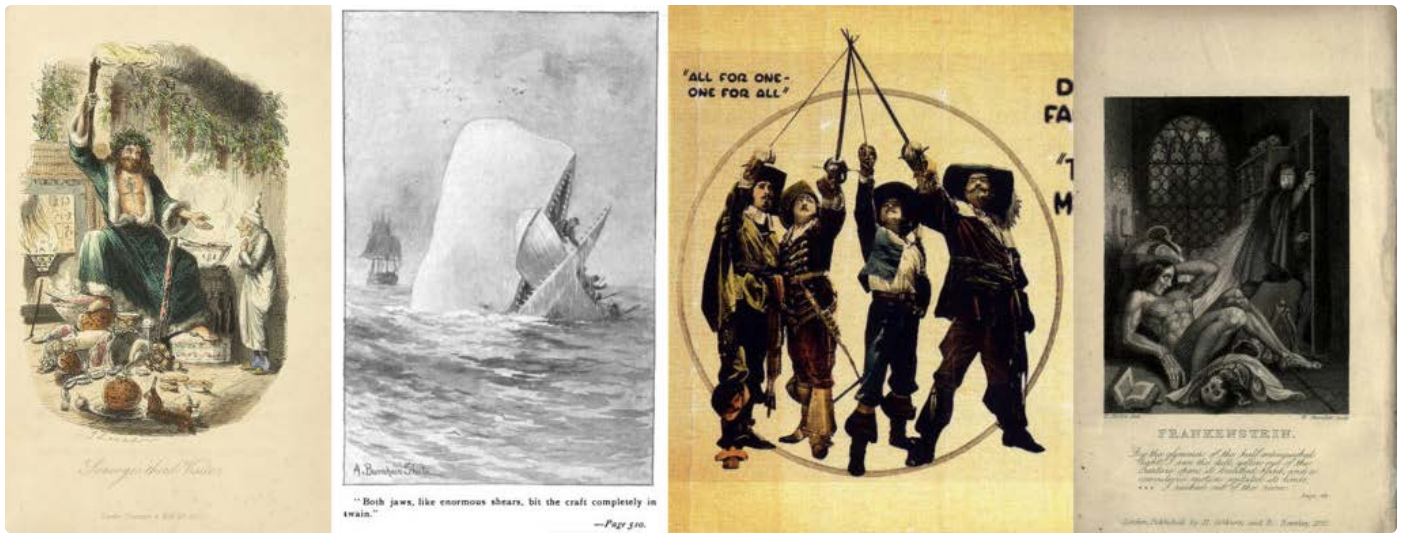
A successful research process should go through these steps:

- Decide on the topic.
- Narrow the topic in order to narrow search parameters.
- Create a question that your research will address.
- Generate sub-questions from your main question.
- Determine what kind of sources are best for your argument.
- Create a bibliography as you gather and reference sources.

Step One

Sometimes your instructor will provide a list of suggested topics. If so, you may benefit from identifying several possibilities before committing to one idea.

According to *Successful Writing*, it is important to know how to narrow down your ideas into a concise, manageable thesis. You may also use the list as a starting point to help you identify additional, related topics. Discussing your ideas with your instructor will help ensure that you choose a manageable topic that fits the requirements of the assignment. For example, in step one, you might decide that your topic will be 19th-century literature.

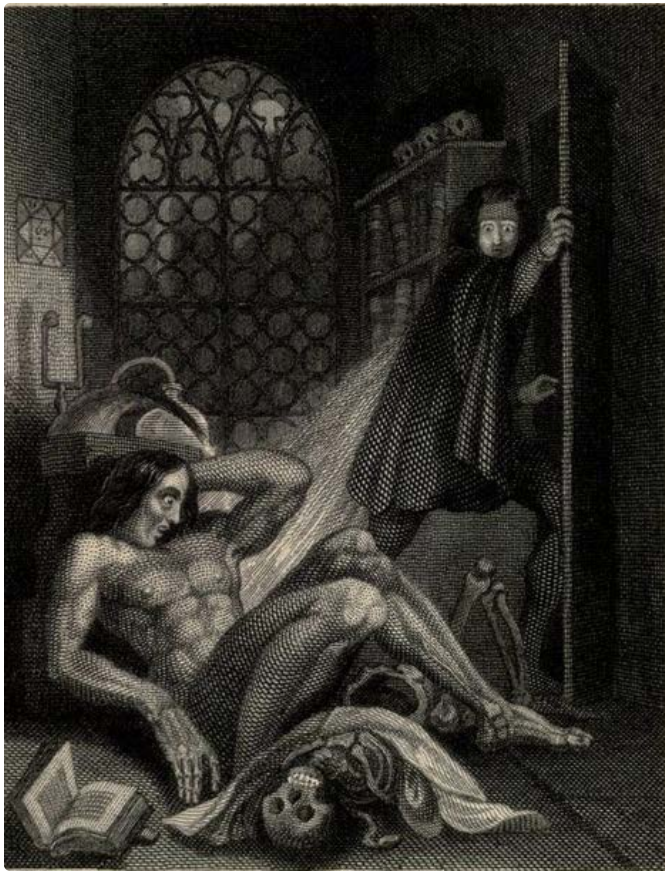


Step Two

Once you have a list of potential topics, you will need to choose one as the focus of your essay. You will also need to narrow your topic. Most writers find that the topics listed during the brainstorming or idea mapping stage are broad—too broad for the scope of the assignment (see chapter six, [Drafting Strategies](#) for tips on pre-writing). Researching an overly broad topic, such as sexual education programs or popularized diets, can be frustrating and overwhelming. Each topic has so many facets that it would be impossible to cover them all in a college research paper. However, more specific choices, such as the pros and cons of sexual education in kids’ television programs or the physical effects of the South Beach diet, are specific enough to write about without being too narrow to sustain an entire research paper.

A good research paper provides focused, in-depth information and analysis. If your topic is too broad, you will find it difficult to do more than skim the surface when you research it and write about it. Narrowing your focus is essential to making your topic manageable. To narrow your focus, explore your topic in writing, conduct preliminary research, and discuss both the topic and the research with others to help you determine the focus you are most interested in exploring.

So in step two you may narrow it down to 19th-century British science fiction,



and then narrow it down even further to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

Step Three

Then, in step three, you would come up with a research question. A good research question will help you narrow your research. One question might be,

“How does Mary Shelley’s vision of generative life relate to the scientific theories of life that were developed in the 19th century?”

Posing a historical question opens up research to more reference possibilities.

In forming a research question, you are setting a goal for your research. Your main research question should be substantial enough to form the guiding principle of your paper—but focused enough to guide your research. A strong research question requires you not only to find information but also to put together different pieces of information, interpret and analyze them, and figure out what you think. As you consider potential research questions, ask yourself whether they

would be too hard or too easy to answer.

Step Four

Next, in step four, you generate sub-questions from your main question. For instance,

“During the 19th century, what were some of the competing theories about how life is created?,”

and

“Did any of Mary Shelley’s other works relate to the creation of life?”

After you know what sub-questions you want to pursue, you’ll be able to move to step five.

Step Five

Now you will need to determine what kind of sources are best for your argument. Our example would lead us to possibly look at newspapers or magazines printed in the late 18th or early 19th century. In addition, books or essays on the topic, both contemporary and older, could be sources. It is likely that someone has researched your topic before, and even possibly a question similar to yours. *Boundless Writing* adds that books written since your time period on your specific topic could be a great source for further references. When you find a book that is written about your topic, check the bibliography for references that you can try to find yourself.

Step Six

As you accumulate sources, make sure you create a bibliography, or a list of sources that you’ve used in your research and writing process (keeping track of

those sources will help you to create your annotated bibliography, should your instructor require one. See [Chapter 35](#) for creating annotated bibliographies). And finally, have fun doing the research!

This chapter is a synthesis of two chapters:

Adapted from “Chapter 7” of [Writing](#), 2015, *used under creative commons CC-BY-SA 4.0* and “Chapter 11” of [Successful Writing](#), 2012, used according to creative commons [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#)

Chapter 31: Gathering Reliable Information

Part 6: Chapter 31

The textbook *Successful Writing* introduces strategies that will help you locate good information for any college-level paper. While you were choosing a paper topic and determining your research questions, you conducted preliminary research to stimulate your thinking. Your research proposal included some general ideas for how to go about your research—for instance, interviewing an expert in the field or analyzing the content of popular magazines. You may even have identified a few potential sources. Now it is time to conduct a more focused, systematic search for informative [primary sources](#) and [secondary sources](#).

Using Primary Secondary Sources

Writers classify research resources in two categories: primary sources and secondary sources. Primary sources are direct, firsthand sources of information or data. For example, if you were writing a paper about the First Amendment right to freedom of speech, the text of the First Amendment in the Bill of Rights would be a primary source.

Other primary sources include the following:

- Research Articles
- Literary Texts
- Historical documents such as diaries or letters
- Autobiographies or other personal accounts

Secondary sources discuss, interpret, analyze, consolidate, or otherwise rework information from primary sources. In researching a paper about the First

Amendment, you might read articles about legal cases that involved First Amendment rights, or editorials expressing commentary on the First Amendment. These sources would be considered secondary sources because they are one step removed from the primary source of information.

The following are examples of secondary sources:

- Magazine articles
- Biographical books
- Literary and scientific reviews
- Television documentaries

Your topic and purpose determine whether you must cite both primary and secondary sources in your paper. Ask yourself which sources are most likely to provide answers your research questions. If you are writing a research paper about reality television shows, you will need to use some reality shows as a primary source, but secondary sources, such as a reviewer's critique, are also important. If you are writing about the health effects of nicotine, you will probably want to read the published results of scientific studies, but secondary sources, such as magazine or journal articles discussing the outcome of a recent study, may also be helpful.

Once you have thought about what kinds of sources are most likely to help you answer your research questions, you may begin your search for print and electronic resources. The challenge here is to conduct your search efficiently, so writers use strategies to help them find the sources that are most relevant and reliable while steering clear of sources that will not be useful.

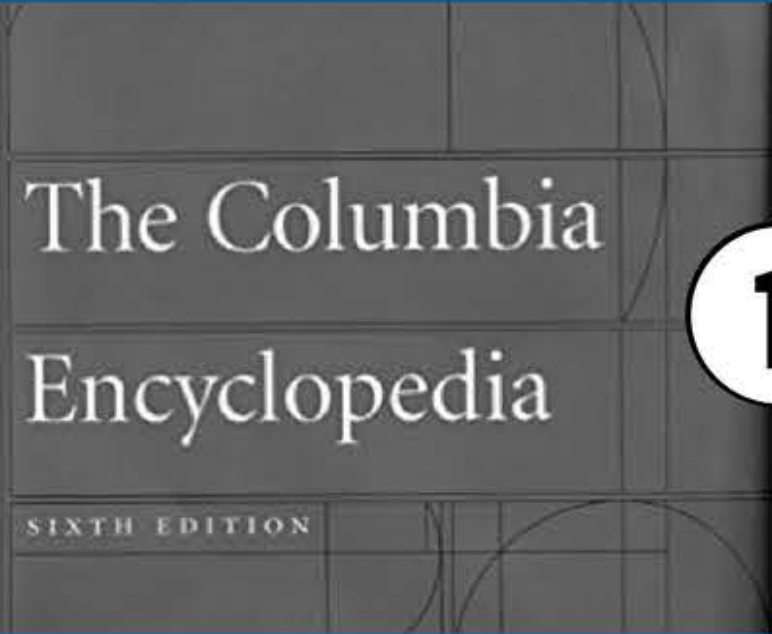
Finding Print Resources

Print resources include a vast array of documents and publications. Regardless of your topic, you will consult some print resources as part of your research. (You will use electronic sources as well, but it is not wise to limit yourself to electronic sources only, because some potentially useful sources may be available only in

print form.) Table 31.1 lists different types of print resources available at public and university libraries.

Table 31.1 Library Print Resources

Library Print Resources

The image shows the front cover of 'The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition'. The cover is dark grey with a grid pattern and some faint circular designs. The title 'The Columbia Encyclopedia' is printed in a large, white, serif font. Below it, in a smaller white font, it says 'SIXTH EDITION'.

The Columbia Encyclopedia

SIXTH EDITION

1

Reference Works

Reference works provide a summary of information about a particular topic. Almanacs, encyclopedias, atlases, medical reference books, and scientific abstracts are examples of reference works.

Nonfiction Books

Nonfiction books provide in-depth coverage of a topic. Trade books, biographies, and how-to guides are usually written for a general audience. Scholarly books/scientific studies are usually

The image shows the front cover of 'The Autobiography of Malcolm X'. The cover features a black and white photograph of a man, likely Malcolm X, in a suit and tie, looking slightly to the side. The title 'The Autobiography Of MALCOLM X' is printed in large, bold, white and red letters. Below the title, it says 'As told to ALEX HALEY'.

The Autobiography Of MALCOLM X

As told to
ALEX HALEY

The most important book I'll ever read. It changed the way I thought, it changed the way I acted. It has

2

scholarly articles are usually written for an audience that has specialized knowledge of a topic.



Periodicals and news sources

These sources are published at regular intervals. Newspapers, magazines, and academic journals are examples. Some periodicals appeal to general interest, while others are more specialized.

3

Government Publications

Federal, state, and local government agencies publish information on a variety of topics. Government publications include reports, legislation, court documents, public records, statistics, studies, guides, programs, and forms.

1
2
3
4
5

SENATE BILL 4
52ND LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SPECIAL SESSION, 2016
INTRODUCED BY
John Arthur Smith and Stuart Ingle

4

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12
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AN ACT
RELATING TO STATE EXPENDITURES; REMOVING CERTAIN RESTRICTIONS ON EXPENDITURES FROM THE PUBLIC SCHOOL CAPITAL OUTLAY FUND FOR BUILDING SYSTEM REPAIR, RENOVATION OR REPLACEMENT INITIATIVES; RESERVING AMOUNTS FROM THE PUBLIC SCHOOL CAPITAL OUTLAY FUND FOR APPROPRIATION TO THE INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIAL FUND OR THE TRANSPORTATION DISTRIBUTION OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOL FUND; MAKING



Business and nonprofit publications

Businesses and nonprofits produce publications designed to market a product, organization, or promote a cause. Examples include reports, newsletters,

5



include reports, newsletters,
advertisements, manuals,
and brochures.

Some of these resources are also widely available in electronic format. In addition to the resources noted in the table, library holdings may include primary texts such as historical documents, letters, and diaries.

When going about your research, you will likely use a variety of sources—anything from books and periodicals to video presentations and in-person interviews.

Your sources will include both primary sources and secondary sources. As you conduct research, you will want to take detailed, careful notes about your discoveries. These notes will help trigger your memory about each article's key ideas and your initial response to the information when you return to your sources during the writing process. As you read each source, take a minute to evaluate the reliability of each source you find.

Using Periodicals, Indexes, and Databases

Library catalogs can help you locate book-length sources, as well as some types of nonprint holdings, such as CDs, DVDs, and audio books. To locate shorter sources, such as magazine and journal articles, you will need to use a **periodical index** or an online **periodical database**.

These tools index the articles that appear in newspapers, magazines, and journals. Like catalogs, they provide publication information about an article and often allow users to access a summary or even the full text of the article.

Print indexes may be available in the periodicals section of your library. Increasingly, libraries use online databases that users can access through the

library website. A single library may provide access to multiple periodical databases. These can range from general news databases to specialized databases. Table 31.2 describes commonly used indexes and databases.

Table 31.2 Commonly Used Indexes and Databases

Resources	Format	Contents
eLibrary Academic (ProQuest)	Online	Database that archives content from newspapers, magazines, and dissertations
Psychology Collection (Gale)	Online	Database that archives content from journals in psychology and psychiatry
Business and Company ASAP (Gale) and Business Insights Essentials	Online	Database that archives business-related content from magazines and journals
CINAHL Complete, Health Reference Center Academic	Online	Databases that archive articles in medicine and health
EBSCOhost	Online	General database that provides access to articles on a wide variety of topics

Reading Popular and Scholarly Periodicals

When you search for periodicals, be sure to distinguish among different types. Mass-market publications, such as newspapers and popular magazines, differ from scholarly publications in their accessibility, audience, and purpose. Consult your instructor because they will often specify what resources you are required to use.

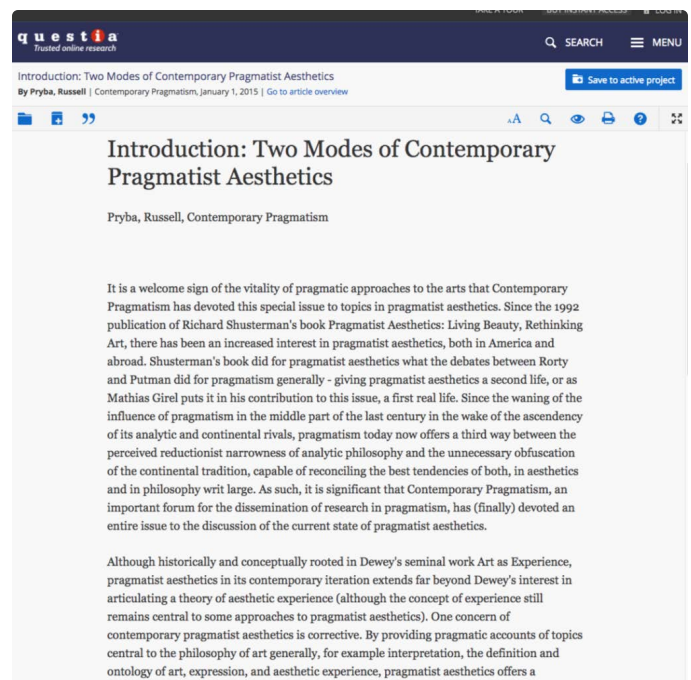
Newspapers and magazines are written for a broader audience than scholarly

journals. Their content is usually quite accessible and easy to read. Trade journals that target readers within a particular industry may presume the reader has background knowledge, but these publications are still reader-friendly for a broader audience. Their purpose is to inform and, often, to entertain or persuade readers as well.

Scholarly or academic journals are written for a much smaller and more expert audience. The creators of these publications assume that most of their readers are already familiar with the main topic of the journal, and the use of jargon is acceptable. The target audience is also highly educated. Informing is the primary purpose of a scholarly journal. While a journal article may advance an agenda or advocate a position, the content will still be presented in an objective style and formal tone. Entertaining readers with breezy comments and splashy graphics is not a priority.



Newspaper – The Guardian



Scholarly Journal – Philosophy

Because of these differences, scholarly journals are more challenging to read. That doesn't mean you should avoid them. On the contrary, they can provide in-depth

information unavailable elsewhere. Because knowledgeable experts carefully review the content before publication, scholarly journals are far more reliable than much of the information available in popular media. Seek out academic journals along with other resources. Just be prepared to spend a little more time processing the information.

Consulting a Reference Librarian

Sifting through library stacks and database search results to find the information you need can be like trying to find a needle in a haystack. If you are not sure how you should begin your search, or if it is yielding too many or too few results, you are not alone. Many students find this process challenging, although it does get easier with experience. One way to learn better search strategies is to consult a reference librarian.

Reference librarians are intimately familiar with the systems libraries use to organize and classify information and are skilled at assisting searchers find just what they are looking for, and helping you improve your research skills at the same time. The library home page can be found below.

[CNM Library Home Page](#)

Research Librarians at CNM can be found on six campuses. Table 31.3 “CNM Library Contact Information lists contact information for each branch.

Table 31.3 CNM Library Contact Information

Campus	Contact
Main Campus	(505) 224-3274
Westside Campus	(505) 224-4953
South Valley Campus	(505) 224-5016
Montoya Campus	(505) 224-5721

ATC Learning Commons	(505) 224-5152
Rio Rancho Campus	(505) 224-4953

CNM's librarians can help you locate a particular book in the library stacks, steer you toward useful reference works, provide tips on how to search databases and electronic research tools, or help you break down a complex research question. Take the time to see what resources you can find on your own, but if you encounter difficulties or just want to learn more, ask a librarian. CNM's librarians can be accessed via an [online chat](#) function under "Get Help" on the library homepage or you can email reference librarians at reference@cnm.edu.

Chapter 31.1: Gathering Reliable Information contd.

Part 6: Chapter 31

With the expansion of technology and media over the past few decades, a wealth of information is available to you in electronic format. Some types of resources, such as a television documentary, may only be available electronically. Other resources—for instance, many newspapers and magazines—may be available in both print and electronic form. The following are some of the electronic sources you might consult:

- Online databases
- CD-ROMs
- Web search engines
- Websites maintained by businesses, universities, nonprofit organizations, or government agencies
- Newspapers, magazines, and journals published on the web
- E-books
- Audio books
- Industry blogs
- Radio and television programs and other audio and video recordings
- Online discussion groups

The techniques you use to locate print resources can also help you find electronic resources efficiently. Libraries usually include CD-ROMs, audio books, and audio and video recordings among their holdings. You can locate these materials in the catalog using a keyword search.

CNM's databases can be accessed online from anywhere, and the bulk of CNM's library research is accessible through the internet. Library databases are not as easy to search as Google; however, the information you receive through the

databases is vetted, so you spend less time weeding through questionable sources. Your instructor will likely recommend that you use the library any time you need to use outside research. You can find popular articles on the databases, free of charge, and your student fees pay for your access to the libraries, so you might as well get your money's worth.

The library's databases are located on the library page:

[CNM Library Home Page](#)

On this page, you can search using OneSearch, the library's database which searches many databases at once. Or you can click on "databases" below the research button, and pick specific databases to search. They are divided up thematically by topic and discipline. Practice searching them before you have an assignment. The process may seem cumbersome at first, but becoming literate in research is a college competency that will benefit you throughout your educational career.

Using Internet Search Engines Efficiently

When faced with the challenge of writing a research paper, some students rely on popular search engines as their first source of information. Typing a keyword or phrase into a search engine instantly pulls up links to dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of related websites—what could be easier? Unfortunately, despite its apparent convenience, this research strategy has the following drawbacks to consider:

../assets/modules/inkling.annotated_image/widgets/annotated_image/index_240f9d51900e4b58beabd148362e2961.html?configFile=..%2F..%2F..%2F..%2Fwidget_data%2Fconfig%2F240f9d51900e4b58beabd148362e2961.json

Even though 18,000,000 hits is impressive, a general web search can provide a helpful overview of a topic and may pull up genuinely useful resources. To obtain the most out of a search engine, however, use strategies to make your search more efficient. Use multiple keywords and Boolean operators to limit your results.

Boolean operators, simple words like AND, OR, NOT, are used to refine database searches to help you filter your results in popular search engines.

While using a search engine, you can click on the Advanced Search link on any search engine's homepage to find additional options for streamlining your search. Depending on the specific search engine you use, the following options may be available:

- Limit results to websites that have been updated within a particular time frame.
- Limit results by language or country.
- Limit results to scholarly works available online.
- Limit results by file type.
- Limit results to a particular domain type, such as .edu (school and university sites) or .gov (government sites). This is a quick way to filter out commercial sites, which can often lead to more objective results; however, you will still need to use your critical thinking skills to determine whether a .gov or .edu site is credible. Sites with a variety of extensions can contain bias. Determine for yourself whether a site is appropriate for a college-level class. Read [Chapter 32](#) to further understand what makes a source credible.

You can then use the Bookmarks or Favorites feature of your web browser to save and organize sites that look promising.

Using Other Information Sources: Interviews

With so many print and electronic media readily available, it is easy to overlook another valuable information resource: other people. Consider whether you could use a person or group as a primary source. For instance, you might interview a professor who has expertise in a particular subject, a worker within a particular industry, or a representative from a political organization. Interviews can be a great way to obtain firsthand information while obtaining a first-hand perspective.

To get the most out of an interview, you will need to plan ahead. Contact your subject early in the research process and explain your purpose for requesting an interview, and prepare detailed questions.

Open-ended questions, rather than questions with simple yes-or-no answers, are more likely to lead to an in-depth discussion.

Schedule a time to meet, and be sure to obtain your subject's permission to record the interview. Take careful notes and be ready to ask follow-up questions based on what you learn.

Constructing a Working Thesis

As you begin reading and evaluating your research, you will likely start to come up with answers to your research question. When you start formulating these answers, you can begin drafting your working thesis.

A working thesis concisely states a writer's initial answer to the main research question; it does not merely state a fact or present a subjective opinion. Instead, it expresses a debatable idea or claim that you hope to prove through additional research. Your working thesis is called a working thesis for a reason—it is subject to change. As you learn more about your topic, you may change your thinking in light of your research findings. Let your working thesis serve as a guide to your

research, but do not be afraid to modify it based on what you learn.

Adapted from “[Chapter 11](#)” of *Successful Writing*, 2012, used according to creative commons [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#)

Chapter 32: Evaluating Sources

Part 6: Chapter 32

As you gather sources, the textbook *Successful Writing* explains that you will need to examine them with a critical eye. Smart researchers continually ask themselves two questions: “Is this source relevant to my purpose?” and “Is this source reliable?” The first question will help you avoid wasting valuable time reading sources that stray too far from your specific topic and research questions. The second question will help you find accurate, trustworthy sources.

Determining Whether a Source is Relevant

To weed through your stack of books and articles, skim their contents. Read quickly with your research questions and subtopics in mind. Table 32.1 “Tips for Skimming Books and Articles” explains how skimming can help you obtain a quick sense of what topics are covered. If a book or article is not especially relevant, put it aside. You can always come back to it later if you need to.

Table 32.1 Tips for Skimming Books and Articles

Tips for Skimming Books	Tips for Skimming Articles
1. Read the dust jacket and table of contents for a broad overview of the topics covered.	1. Skim the introduction and conclusion for summary material.
2. Use the index to locate more specific topics and see how thoroughly they are covered.	2. Skim through subheadings and text features such as sidebars.
3. Flip through the book and look for subtitles or key terms that correspond to your research.	3. Look for keywords related to your topic.

4. Journal articles often begin with an abstract or summary of the contents. Read it to determine the article's relevance to your research.

Determining Whether a Source is Reliable

All information sources are not created equally. Sources can vary greatly in terms of how carefully they are researched, written, edited, and reviewed for accuracy. Common sense will help you identify obviously questionable sources, such as tabloids that feature tales of alien abductions, or personal websites with glaring typos. Sometimes, however, a source's reliability—or lack of it—is not so obvious.

To evaluate your research sources, use critical thinking skills consciously and deliberately. You will consider criteria such as the type of source, its intended purpose and audience, the author's (or authors') qualifications, the publication's reputation, any indications of bias or hidden agendas, how current the source is, and the overall quality of the writing, thinking, and design.

Evaluating Types of Sources

The different types of sources you will consult are written for distinct purposes and with different audiences in mind. This accounts for other differences, such as the following:

Bonus Video

[//www.youtube.com/embed/PLTOVoHbH5c?modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0](https://www.youtube.com/embed/PLTOVoHbH5c?modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0)

Evaluating Sources for Credibility

- How thoroughly the writers cover a given topic.
- How carefully the writers' research and document facts.
- How editors review the work.
- What biases or agendas affect the content.

A journal article written for an academic audience for the purpose of expanding scholarship in a given field will take an approach quite different from a magazine feature written to inform a general audience. Textbooks, hard news articles, and websites approach a subject from different angles as well. To some extent, the type of source provides clues about its overall depth and reliability. Table 32.2 “Source Rankings” ranks different source types.

Table 32.2 Source Rankings

High Quality Sources

These sources provide the most in-depth information. They are researched and written by subject matter experts and are carefully reviewed.

- Scholarly books and articles in scholarly journals
- Trade books and magazines geared toward an educated general audience, such as Smithsonian Magazine or Nature
- Government documents, such as books, reports, and web pages
- Documents posted online by

Documents posted online by reputable organizations, such as universities and research institutes

- Textbooks and reference books, which are usually reliable but may not cover a topic in great depth

Varied-Quality Sources

These sources are often useful. However, they do not cover subjects in as much depth as high-quality sources, and they are not always rigorously researched and reviewed. Some, such as popular magazine articles or company brochures, may be written to market a product or a cause. Use them with caution.

- News stories and feature articles (print or online) from reputable newspapers, magazines, or organizations, such as Newsweek or the Public Broadcasting Service
- Popular magazine articles, which may or may not be carefully researched and fact checked
- Documents published by businesses and nonprofit organizations

Questionable Sources

These sources should be avoided. They are often

- Loosely regulated or unregulated media content, such as Internet discussion boards, blogs, free

written primarily to attract a large readership or present the author's opinions and are not subject to careful review.

discussion boards, blogs, free online encyclopedias, talk radio shows, television news shows with obvious political biases, personal websites, and chat rooms

Tip

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

Evaluating Credibility and Reputability

Even when you are using a type of source that is generally reliable, you will still need to evaluate the author's credibility and the publication itself on an individual basis. To examine the author's credibility or ethos—that is, how much you can believe of what the author has to say—review their credentials. What career experience or academic study shows that the author has the expertise to write

about this topic?

Keep in mind that expertise in one field is no guarantee of expertise in another, unrelated area. For instance, an author may have an advanced degree in physiology, but this credential is not a valid qualification for writing about psychology. Check credentials carefully.

Just as important as the author's credibility is the publication's overall reputability. Reputability refers to a source's standing and reputation as a respectable, reliable source of information. An established and well-known newspaper, such as *The New York Times* or *The Wall Street Journal*, is more reputable than a college newspaper put out by comparatively inexperienced students. A website that is maintained by a well-known, respected organization and regularly updated is more reputable than one created by an unknown author or group.

If you are using articles from scholarly journals, you can check databases that keep count of how many times each article has been cited in other articles. This can be a rough indication of the article's quality or, at the very least, of its influence and reputation among other scholars.

Checking for Biases and Hidden Agendas

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

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

Hidden agendas are goals that are not immediately obvious but influence how an

author presents the facts. For instance, an article about the role of beef in a healthy diet would be questionable if it were written by a representative of the beef industry—or by the president of an animal-rights organization. In both cases, the author would likely have a hidden agenda.

Using Current Sources

Be sure to seek out sources that are current or up to date. Depending on the topic, sources may become outdated relatively soon after publication, or they may remain useful for years. For instance, online social networking sites have evolved rapidly over the past few years. An article published in 2002 about this topic will not provide current information. On the other hand, a research paper on elementary education practices might refer to studies published decades ago by influential child psychologists and are still relevant.

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

Evaluating Overall Quality by Asking Questions

When you evaluate a source, consider the criteria previously discussed as well as your overall impressions of its quality. Read carefully, and notice how well the author presents and supports his or her statements. Stay actively engaged—do not simply accept an author’s words as truth. Ask questions to determine each source’s value. See Table 32.3 for a list of evaluative criteria.

Table 32.3 Source Evaluation Checklist

Is the type of source appropriate for my purpose? Is it a high-quality source or

one that needs to be looked at more critically?

Can I establish that the author is credible and the publication is reputable?

Does the author support ideas with specific facts and details that are carefully documented? Is the source of the author's information clear? (When you use secondary sources, look for sources that are not too removed from primary research.)

Does the source include any factual errors or instances of faulty logic?

Does the author leave out any information that I would expect to see in a discussion of this topic?

Do the author's conclusions logically follow from the evidence that is presented? Can I see how the author got from one point to another?

Is the writing clear and organized, and is it free from errors, clichés, and empty buzzwords? Is the tone objective, balanced, and reasonable? (Be on the lookout for extreme, emotionally charged language.)

Are there any obvious biases or agendas? Based on what I know about the author, are there likely to be any hidden agendas?

Are graphics informative, useful, and easy to understand? Are websites organized, easy to navigate, and free of clutter like flashing ads and unnecessary sound effects?

Is the source contradicted by information found in other sources? (If so, it is possible that your sources are presenting similar information but taking different perspectives, which requires you to think carefully about which sources you find more convincing and why. Be suspicious, however, of any source that presents facts that you cannot confirm elsewhere.)

Is the source contradicted by information found in other sources? (If so, it is possible that your sources are presenting similar information but taking different perspectives, which requires you to think carefully about which sources you find more convincing and why. Be suspicious, however, of any source that presents facts that you cannot confirm elsewhere.)

Chapter 33: Compiling and Managing Research

Part 6: Chapter 33

This chapter from *Successful Writing* explains that when your research is complete, your next step is to organize your findings and decide which sources to cite in your paper. You will also have an opportunity to evaluate the evidence you have collected and determine whether it supports your thesis, or the focus of your paper. You may decide to adjust your thesis or conduct additional research to ensure that your thesis is well supported.

As you determine which sources you will rely on most, it is important to establish a system for keeping track of your sources and taking notes. There are several ways to go about this, and no one system is necessarily superior. What matters is that you keep materials in order; record bibliographical information you will need later; and take detailed, organized notes.

Bonus Video

[//www.youtube.com/embed/dtxOKWRIJpk?modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0](https://www.youtube.com/embed/dtxOKWRIJpk?modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0)

RefME | Why Citations are Important

Keeping Track of Your Sources

Think ahead to a moment a few weeks from now, when you've written your research paper and are almost ready to submit it for a grade. There is just one task left—writing your list of sources.

As you begin typing your list, you realize you need to include the publication information for a book you cited frequently. Unfortunately, you already returned it to the library several days ago. You do not remember the URLs for some of the websites you used or the dates you accessed them—information that also must be included in your bibliography. With a sinking feeling, you realize that finding this information and preparing your bibliography will require hours of work.

This stressful scenario can be avoided. Taking time to organize source information now will ensure that you are not scrambling to find it at the last minute. Throughout your research, record bibliographical information for each source as soon as you begin using it. You may use pen-and-paper methods, such as a notebook or note cards, or maintain an electronic list. (If you prefer the latter option, many office software packages include separate programs for recording bibliographic information.)

Table 33.1 “Details for Commonly Used Source Types” shows the specific details you should record for commonly used source types. Use these details to develop a working bibliography—a preliminary list of sources that you will later use to develop the references section of your paper. You may wish to record information using the formatting system of the American Psychological Association (APA) or the Modern Language Association (MLA), which will save a step later on. (For more information on APA and MLA formatting, see chapters [36](#), [37](#), and [38](#).)

Table 33.1 Details for Commonly Used Source Types

Source type	Necessary information
Book	Author(s), title and subtitle, publisher, city of publication, year of publication
Essay or article published in a book	Include all the information you would for any other book. Additionally, record the essay’s or article’s title, author(s), the pages on which it appears, and the name of the book’s editor(s).
Periodical	Author(s), article title, publication title,

	date of publication, volume and issue number, and page numbers
Online Source	Author(s) (if available), article or document title, organization that sponsors the site, database name (if applicable), date of publication, date you accessed the site, and URL
Interview	Name of person interviewed, method of communication, date of interview

Your research may also involve less common types of sources not listed above.

Taking Notes Efficiently

Good researchers stay focused and organized as they gather information from sources. Before you begin taking notes, take a moment to step back and think about your goal as a researcher—to find information that will help you answer your research question. When you write your paper, you will present your conclusions about the topic supported by research. That goal will determine what information you record and how you organize it.

Writers sometimes get caught up in taking extensive notes, so much so that they lose sight of how their notes relate to the questions and ideas they started out with. Remember that you do not need to write down every detail from your reading. Focus on finding and recording details that will help you answer your research questions. The following strategies will help you take notes efficiently.

Use Headings to Organize Ideas

Whether you use old-fashioned index cards or organize your notes using word-processing software, record just one major point from each source at a time, and

use a heading to summarize the information covered. Keep all your notes in one file, digital or otherwise. Doing so will help you identify connections among different pieces of information, and it will help you make connections between your notes and the research questions and subtopics you identified earlier.

Know When to Summarize, Paraphrase, or Directly Quote a Source

Your notes will fall under three categories—summary notes, paraphrased information, and direct quotations from your sources. Effective researchers make choices about which type of notes is most appropriate for their purpose.

- Summary notes sum up the main ideas in a source in a few sentences or a short paragraph. A summary is considerably shorter than the original text, usually about ten percent of the original text, and captures only the major ideas. Use summary notes when you do not need to record specific details but you intend to refer to broad concepts the author discusses.
- Paraphrased notes restate a fact or idea from a source using your own words and sentence structure.
- Direct quotations use the exact wording used by the original source and enclose the quoted material in quotation marks. Consider copying direct quotations when an author expresses an idea in an especially lively or memorable way. However, do not rely exclusively on direct quotations in your note taking.

Most of your notes should be paraphrased from the original source. Paraphrasing as you take notes is usually a better strategy than copying direct quotations, because it forces you to think through the information in your source and understand it well enough to restate it. In short, it helps you stay engaged with the material instead of simply copying and pasting. Synthesizing will help you later when you begin planning and drafting your paper.

Maintain Complete, Accurate Notes

Regardless of the format used, any notes you take should include enough information to help you organize ideas and locate them instantly in the original text if you need to review them. Make sure your notes include the following elements:

- Heading summing up the main topic covered
- Author's name, a source code, or an abbreviated source title
- Page number
- Full URL of any pages buried deep in a website

Throughout the process of taking notes, be scrupulous about making sure you have correctly attributed each idea to its source. Always include source information so you know exactly which ideas came from which sources. Use quotation marks to set off any words or phrases taken directly from the original text. If you add your own responses and ideas, make sure they are distinct from ideas you quoted or paraphrased.

Finally, make sure your notes accurately reflect the content of the original text. Make sure quoted material is copied verbatim. If you omit words from a quotation, use ellipses to show the omission and make sure the omission does not change the author's meaning. Paraphrase ideas carefully, and check your paraphrased notes against the original text to make sure that you have restated the author's ideas accurately in your own words.

Use a System That Works for You

There are several formats you can use to take notes. No technique is necessarily better than the others—it is more important to choose a format you are comfortable using. Choosing the format that works best for you will ensure your notes are organized, complete, and accurate. Consider implementing one of these formats when you begin taking notes:

- **Use index cards.** This traditional format involves writing each note on a separate index card. It takes more time than copying and pasting into an electronic document, which encourages you to be selective in choosing which ideas to record. Recording notes on separate cards makes it easy to later organize your notes according to major topics. Some writers color-code their cards to make them still more organized
- **Use note-taking software.** Word-processing and office software packages often include different types of note-taking software. Although you may need to set aside some time to learn the software, this method combines the speed of typing with the same degree of organization associated with handwritten note cards.
- **Maintain a research notebook.** Instead of using index cards or electronic note cards, you may wish to keep a notebook or electronic folder, allotting a few pages (or one file) for each of your sources. This method makes it easy to create a separate column or section of the document where you add your responses to the information you encounter in your research.
- **Annotate your sources.** This method involves making handwritten notes in the margins of sources that you have printed or photocopied. If using electronic sources, you can make comments within the source document. For example, you might add comment boxes to a PDF version of an article. This method works best for experienced researchers who have already thought a great deal about the topic because it can be difficult to organize your notes later when starting your draft.

Choose one of the methods from the list to use for taking notes. Continue gathering sources and taking notes. In the next section, you will learn strategies for organizing and synthesizing the information you have found.

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Chapter 34: Drafting Your Paper

Part 6: Chapter 34

How you draft your paper depends on the genre of research paper you were assigned. Your teacher might ask for an informative research paper, an analytical research paper, an argumentative research paper, or a hybrid of these genres. Your purpose—whether to inform, persuade, or analyze—will affect your tone in your paper. As a student writer, you need to be actively thinking about these concepts as you develop your research paper. Not using the proper voice (informative vs. persuasive) and not considering the appropriate purpose will not only result in you losing out on points but also losing out on the educational objective of the assignment.

As you write, you will also need to think about how your sources work together with your ideas and thesis so that you can synthesize your sources. The following section recommends that you take notes as you research, and as you research, you will also want to take notes of where your sources cover similar or opposing ideas. You can make sense of those ideas in your paper insofar as they relate to your thesis.

Starting Your Rough Draft

At last, you are ready to begin writing the rough draft of your research paper. The textbook *Successful Writing* points out that although putting your thinking and research into words is exciting, it can also be challenging. In this section, you will learn strategies for handling the more challenging aspects of writing a research paper, such as integrating material from your sources, citing information correctly, and avoiding any misuse of your sources.

The Structure of a Research Paper

Research papers generally follow the same basic structure: an introduction that presents the writer's thesis, a body section that develops the thesis with supporting points and evidence, and a conclusion that revisits the thesis and provides additional insights or suggestions for further research.

Your writing voice will come across most strongly in your introduction and conclusion, as you work to attract your readers' interest and establish your thesis. These sections usually do not cite sources at length, since they focus on the big picture, not specific details. In contrast, the body of your paper will cite sources extensively. As you present your ideas, you will support your points with details from your research.

Writing Your Introduction

There are several approaches to writing an introduction, each of which fulfills the same goals. The introduction should grab the readers' attention, provide background information, and present the writer's thesis. Many writers like to begin with one of the following catchy openers:

- A surprising fact
- A thought-provoking question
- An attention-getting quote
- A brief anecdote that illustrates a larger concept
- A connection between your topic and your readers experiences

The next few sentences place the opening in context by presenting background information. From there, the writer builds toward a thesis, which is traditionally placed at the end of the introduction. Think of your thesis as a signpost that lets readers know what direction the paper is headed.

Writing Your Conclusion

In your introduction, you tell readers where they are headed. In your conclusion, you recap where they have been. For this reason, some writers prefer to write their

conclusions soon after they have written their introduction. However, this method may not work for all writers. Other writers prefer to write their conclusion at the end of the paper, after writing the body paragraphs. No process is absolutely right or absolutely wrong; find the one that best suits you.

No matter when you compose the conclusion, it should sum up your main ideas and revisit your thesis. The conclusion should not simply echo the introduction or rely on bland summary statements, such as “In this paper, I have demonstrated that....” In fact, avoid repeating your thesis verbatim from the introduction. Restate it in different words that reflect the new perspective gained through your research. That helps keep your ideas fresh for your readers. An effective writer might conclude a paper by asking a new question the research inspired, revisiting an anecdote presented earlier, or reminding readers of how the topic relates to their lives.

Using Source Material in Your Paper

One of the challenges of writing a research paper is successfully integrating your ideas with material from your sources. Your paper must explain what you think, or it will read like a disconnected string of facts and quotations. However, you also need to support your ideas with research, or they will seem insubstantial. How do you strike the right balance?

You have already taken a step in the right direction by writing your introduction. The introduction and conclusion function like the frame around a picture. They define and limit your topic and place your research in context.

In the body paragraphs of your paper, you will need to integrate ideas carefully at the paragraph level and at the sentence level. You will use topic sentences in your paragraphs to make sure readers understand the significance of any facts, details, or quotations you cite (see [Chapter 9](#) for more about developing paragraphs). You will also include sentences that transition between ideas from your research, either within a paragraph or between paragraphs. At the sentence level, you will need to think carefully about how you introduce paraphrased and quoted material.

Earlier you learned about summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting when taking notes. In the next few sections, you will learn how to use these techniques in the body of your paper to weave in source material to support your ideas.

Summarizing Sources

When you [summarize](#) material from a source, you zero in on the main points and restate them concisely in your own words. This technique is appropriate when only the major ideas are relevant to your paper or when you need to simplify complex information into a few key points for your readers.

Be sure to review the source material as you summarize it. Identify the main idea and restate it as concisely as you can—preferably in one sentence. Depending on your purpose, you may also add another sentence or two condensing any important details or examples. Check your summary to make sure it is accurate and complete.

A summary restates ideas in your own words—but for specialized or clinical terms, you may need to use terms that appear in the original source.

Paraphrasing Sources

When you paraphrase material from a source, restate the information from an entire sentence or passage in your own words, using your own original sentence structure. A paraphrased source differs from a summarized source in that you focus on restating the ideas, not condensing them.

Again, it is important to check your paraphrase against the source material to make sure it is both accurate and original. Inexperienced writers sometimes use the thesaurus method of paraphrasing—that is, they simply rewrite the source material, replacing most of the words with synonyms. This constitutes a misuse of sources, and copying sentence structure, or syntax, is also a form of academic dishonesty. A true paraphrase restates ideas using the writer's own language and style.

Quoting Sources Directly

Most of the time, you will summarize or paraphrase source material instead of quoting directly. Doing so shows that you understand your research well enough to write about it confidently in your own words. However, direct quotes can be powerful when used sparingly and with purpose.

Quoting directly can sometimes help you make a point in a colorful way. If an author's words are especially vivid, memorable, or well phrased, quoting them may help hold your reader's interest. Direct quotations from an interviewee or an eyewitness may help you personalize an issue for readers. And when you analyze primary sources, such as a historical speech or a work of literature, quoting extensively is often necessary to illustrate your points. These are valid reasons to use quotations.

Less experienced writers, however, sometimes overuse direct quotations in a research paper because it seems easier than paraphrasing. At best, this reduces the effectiveness of the quotations. At worst, it results in a paper that seems haphazardly pasted together from outside sources. Use quotations sparingly for greater impact.

When you do choose to quote directly from a source, follow these guidelines:

- Make sure you have transcribed the original statement accurately.
- Represent the author's ideas honestly. Quote enough of the original text to reflect the author's point accurately.
- Never use a stand-alone quotation. Always integrate the quoted material into your own sentence by creating a signal phrase.
- Use ellipses (...) if you need to omit a word or phrase. Use brackets [] if you need to replace a word or phrase.
- Make sure any omissions or changed words do not alter the meaning of the original text. Omit or replace words only when absolutely necessary to shorten the text or to make it grammatically correct within your sentence.
- Write away from the quote. Create an original sentence following the quote that introduces the connection you are making between your argument and the

quoted material.

- Include correctly formatted citations that follow the assigned style guide.

Documenting Sources Material

Throughout the writing process, be scrupulous about documenting information taken from sources. The purpose of doing so is two fold: 1) to give credit to other writers or researchers for their ideas, and 2) to allow your reader to follow up and learn more about the topic if desired. You will cite sources within the body of your paper and at the end of the paper in your bibliography.

Citing Sources in the Body of Your Paper

In-text citations document your sources within the body of your paper. These include vital pieces of information: with APA, the author's name and the year the source material was published; with MLA, the author's name and the page number where the reader can locate the quote. When quoting a print source, the citation should also include the page number where the quoted material originally appears. The page number will follow the year in the in-text citation. Page numbers are necessary when content has been directly quoted, and when content has been paraphrased at great length. When in doubt, ask a teacher or tutor for help, and if you must err, do it on the side of over-citing rather than under-citing. The consequences for the former are less substantial than for the latter.

Within a paragraph, this information may appear as part of your introduction to the material or as a parenthetical citation at the end of a sentence. Here is an example of a summary written in APA format.

Summary in APA

Leibowitz (2008) found that low-carbohydrate diets often helped subjects with Type II diabetes maintain a healthy weight and control blood-sugar levels.

The introduction to the source material includes the author's name followed by the year of publication in parentheses.

Summary

Low-carbohydrate diets often help subjects with Type II diabetes maintain a healthy weight and control blood-sugar levels (Leibowitz, 2008).

The parenthetical citation at the end of the sentence includes the author's name, a comma, and the year the source was published. The period at the end of the sentence comes after the parentheses.

Creating a List of References

Each of the sources you cite in the body text will appear in a references list at the end of your paper. While in-text citations provide the most basic information about the source, your references section will include additional publication details. In general, you will include the following information:

- The author's last name followed by his or her first (and sometimes middle) initial
- The year the source was published
- The source title
- For articles in periodicals, the full name of the periodical, along with the volume and issue number and the pages where the article appeared.

Additional information may be included for different types of sources, such as online sources.

Using Primary and Secondary Research

As you write your draft, be mindful of how you are using primary and secondary source material to support your points. Recall that primary sources present firsthand information. Secondary sources are one step removed from primary sources. They present a writer's analysis or interpretation of primary source materials. How you balance primary and secondary source material in your paper will depend on the topic and assignment.

Using Primary and Secondary Research

Some types of research papers must use primary sources extensively to achieve their purpose. Any paper that analyzes a primary text or presents the writer's own experimental research falls in this category. Here are a few examples:

- A paper for a literature course analyzing several poems by Emily Dickinson.
- A paper for a political science course comparing televised speeches delivered by two presidential candidates.
- A paper for a communication course discussing gender biases in television commercials.
- A paper for a business administration course that discusses the result of a survey the writer conducted with local businesses to gather information about their work-from-home and flextime policies.
- A paper for an elementary education course that discusses the result of an experiment the writer conducted to compare the effectiveness of two different methods of mathematical instruction.

For these types of papers, primary research is the main focus. If you are writing about a work (including non-print works, such as a movie or a painting), it is crucial to gather information and ideas from the original work, rather than relying solely on others' interpretations. And, of course, if you take the time to design and conduct your own field research, such as a survey, a series of interviews, or an experiment, you will want to discuss it in detail. For example, the interviews may provide interesting responses that you want to share with your reader.

Using Secondary Sources Effectively

For some assignments, it makes sense to rely more on secondary sources than primary sources. If you are not analyzing a text or conducting your own field research, you will need to use secondary sources extensively.

As much as possible, use secondary sources that are closely linked to primary research, such as a journal article presenting the results of the authors' scientific study or a book that cites interviews and case studies. These sources are more reliable and add more value to your paper than sources that are further removed from primary research. For instance, a popular magazine article on junk-food addiction might be several steps removed from the original scientific study on which it is loosely based. As a result, the article may distort, sensationalize, or misinterpret the scientists' findings.

Even if your paper is largely based on primary sources, you may use secondary sources to develop your ideas. For instance, an analysis of Alfred Hitchcock's films would focus on the films themselves as a primary source, but might also cite commentary from critics. A paper that presents an original experiment would include some discussion of similar, prior research in the field.

Tip

Some sources could be considered primary or secondary sources, depending on the writer's purpose for using them. For instance, if a writer's purpose is to inform readers about how the No Child Left Behind legislation has affected elementary education, a *Time* magazine article on the subject would be a secondary source. However, suppose the writer's purpose is to analyze how the news media has portrayed the effects of the No Child Left Behind legislation. In that case, articles about the legislation in news magazines like *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *US News & World Report* would be primary sources. They provide firsthand examples of the media coverage the writer is analyzing.

Avoiding Plagiarism

Your research paper presents your thinking about a topic, supported and developed by other people's ideas and information, so it is crucial to always distinguish between the two—as you conduct research, as you plan your paper, and as you write. Failure to do so can lead to plagiarism.

Bonus Video

[//www.youtube.com/embed/PmaB92ghGOM?modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0](https://www.youtube.com/embed/PmaB92ghGOM?modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0)

What is plagiarism and how to avoid it.

Intentional and Accidental Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the act of misrepresenting someone else's work as your own.

[CNM's academic dishonesty policy](#)

Sometimes a writer plagiarizes work on purpose—for instance, by purchasing an essay from a website and submitting it as original course work. In other cases, a writer may commit accidental plagiarism due to carelessness, haste, or misunderstanding. To avoid unintentional plagiarism, follow these guidelines:

- Understand what types of information must be cited.
- Understand what constitutes fair use of a source.
- Keep source materials and notes carefully organized.
- Follow guidelines for summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting sources.

When to Cite

Any idea or fact taken from an outside source must be cited, in both the body of your paper and the references list. The only exceptions are facts or general statements that are common knowledge. Common-knowledge facts or general statements are commonly supported by and found in multiple sources. For example, a writer would not need to cite the statement that most breads, pastas, and cereals are high in carbohydrates; this is well known and well documented. However, if a writer explained in detail the differences among the chemical structures of carbohydrates, proteins, and fats, a citation would be necessary. When in doubt, cite.

Fair Use

In recent years, issues related to the fair use of sources have been prevalent in popular culture. Recording artists, for example, may disagree about the extent to which one has the right to sample another's music. For academic purposes, however, the guidelines for fair use are reasonably straightforward.

Writers may quote from or paraphrase material from previously published works without formally obtaining the copyright holder's permission. **Fair use** means that the writer legitimately uses brief excerpts from source material to support and develop his or her own ideas. For instance, a columnist may excerpt a few sentences from a novel when writing a book review. However, quoting or paraphrasing another's work at excessive length, to the extent that large sections of the writing are unoriginal, is not fair use.

Working with Sources Carefully

Disorganization and carelessness sometimes lead to plagiarism. For instance, a writer may be unable to provide a complete, accurate citation if he didn't record bibliographical information. A writer may cut and paste a passage from a website into her paper and later forget where the material came from (**Tip:** Google your passage to find the source again!). A writer who procrastinates may rush through a draft, which easily leads to sloppy paraphrasing and inaccurate quotations. Any of these actions can create the appearance of plagiarism and lead to negative

consequences.

Carefully organizing your time and notes is the best guard against these forms of plagiarism. Maintain a detailed working bibliography and thorough notes throughout the research process. Check original sources again to clear up any uncertainties. Allow plenty of time for writing your draft so there is no temptation to cut corners.

Academic Integrity

The concepts and strategies discussed in this section connect to a larger issue—academic integrity. You maintain your integrity as a member of an academic community by representing your work and others' work honestly and by using other people's work only in legitimately accepted ways. It is a point of honor taken seriously in every academic discipline and career field.

Academic integrity violations have serious educational and professional consequences. Even when cheating and plagiarism go undetected, they still result in a student's failure to learn necessary research and writing skills. Students who are found guilty of academic integrity violations face consequences ranging from a failing grade to expulsion from the college or university. Employees may be fired for plagiarism and do irreparable damage to their professional reputation. In short, it is never worth the risk.

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Chapter 35: Annotated Bibliography

Part 6: Chapter 35

Part of the research process includes keeping track of your research through a working bibliography. One way to do this is through creating an annotated bibliography, a list of all the sources you have researched, including both their full bibliographic [citations](#) and some notes on how you might want to use each resource in your work.

The Writer's Handbook explains that to make the best use of your research time, thoroughly read each source that is clearly relevant and document all the pieces you might use from it so that you will have a good chance of not having to revisit it. But just in case, take care to bookmark the site (and additionally save it to a folder set up for your research project) so you can easily return to it later and collect the needed information.

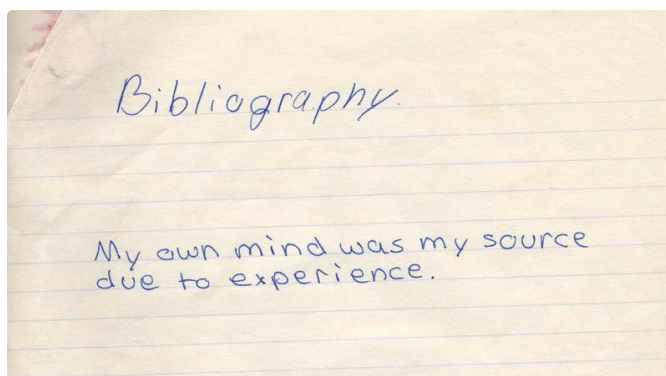


Photo by [papertrix](#), CC BY 2.0

235. Wigner, E. P. RELATIVISTIC INVARIANCE AND QUANTUM PHENOMENA. Rev. Mod. Phys. 29:255-268, Jly, 1957.

Considers the quantum limitations on the accuracy of the conversion of time-like measurements into space-like measurements, illustrated in figure 4, p.260. Space-like distances are measured by means of a clock.

236. WILL SPACE TRAVEL LENGTHEN LIFE? Popular Sci. 171:103, Oct. 1957.

Refers to an advertisement in Time magazine by the Martin Company titled "What is Time?" and asks why the Company should pose such an esoteric question.

"The reason is that the problem of speed vs time is no longer a matter for Einsteins. With rockets and satellites bristling all over, it becomes practical to know for sure whether time (hence life) is affected by speed."

According to a scientific experiment with a clock, or "a handy substitute - the meson" explained in the article, "a meson in flight lives about 15 times longer than a meson at rest. You can indeed put the brakes on time." (See Item 14 for scientific experiment.)

237. Windred, G. EVOLUTION OF THE NOTION OF TIME. Am. J. Sci. 30:383-391, Oct. 1935.

A sketch is given of the ideas of time found in mathematical physics from the time of Newton to the present day.

238. Winterberg, F. RELATIVISTISCHE ZEITDILATION EINES KUNSTLICHEN SATELLITEN. Astronautica Acta 2:25-29, 1955

Ideally when working on a research paper, you should keep an annotated bibliography of the sources you plan to use—include both the bibliographic information and notes on each source. Each entry should include the following elements:

- The complete citation information (in the format the assignment requires)
- A summary or paraphrase of the contents of the source in your words
- The direct quotations you may end up using (with page or paragraph numbers)
- Additional strategy notes about how you plan to use the source

For the citation, gather the following components:

Name of author, editor, sponsoring organization, discussion group, or list

- Title of article or subject line of discussion
- Title of journal or site that has published the article
- Version number or issue number, if applicable
- Date of publication
- Date you accessed the site

If a source does not appear to be as relevant as you initially thought it would be, document the situation in your log and move on. Don't try to jam it into the essay just because you spent time tracking it down. Good researchers and good writers know they'll encounter a few dead ends and bad leads.

Adapted from "Chapter Seven" of *Writers' Handbook*, 2012, used according to creative commons [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#)

Uses of an Annotated Bibliography

Boundless Writing explains that annotated bibliographies are useful for several reasons. If you keep one while you research, the annotated bibliography will function as a useful guide. Also, it will be easier for you to revisit sources later because you will already have notes explaining how you want to use each source. Additionally, if you find an annotated bibliography attached to one of the sources you are using, you can look at it to find other possible resources for your paper. While it's a good idea to keep a working annotated bibliography to help you during the writing process, you may also be assigned a more formal annotated bibliography for a course, such as English 1102, which often requires one. There are a few reasons your teachers might assign these: to review your sources, to help you summarize and evaluate your sources, to help you practice formal citation and to prepare you for upper division coursework.

Constructing Your Citations

To create a more formal annotated bibliography, make sure the first part of each entry in an annotated bibliography is the source's full citation. A description of

common citation practices can be found in the next few chapters. Two commonly assigned styles of citation are APA and MLA, and you will find details on both styles of citation in this textbook.

What to Include in a Formal Annotation

A good annotation has three parts, in addition to the complete bibliographic information for the source:

1. A brief summary of the source written in your own words
2. A critique and evaluation of credibility, and
3. An explanation of how you will use the source in your essay

Start by stating the main idea of the source. If you have space, note the specific information that you want to use from the source, such as quotations, chapters, or page numbers. Then explain if the source is credible, and note any potential bias you observe. Finally, explain how that information is useful to your own work.

You may also consider the including:

- An explanation about the authority and/or qualifications of the author
- The scope or main purpose of the work
- Any detectable bias or interpretive stance
- The intended audience and level of reading

Example Annotation

Source: Farley, John. "The Spontaneous-Generation Controversy (1700–1860): The Origin of Parasitic Worms." *Journal of the History of Biology*, 5 (Spring 1972), 95–125.

- Notes: This essay discusses the conversation about spontaneous generation that was taking place around the time that Frankenstein was written. In addition, it introduces a distinction between abiogenesis and heterogenesis. The author argues that the accounts of spontaneous generation from this time period were often based on incorrect assumptions: that the discussion was focused primarily on micro-organisms, and that spontaneous-generation theories were disproved by experiments. The author takes a scientific approach to evaluating theories of spontaneous generation, and the presentation of his argument is supported with sources. It is a reliable and credible source. The essay will be helpful in forming a picture of the early 19th-century conversation about how life is formed, as well as explaining the critical perception of spontaneous-generation theories during the 19th century.

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Chapter 36: Using Modern Language Association (MLA) Style

Part 6: Chapter 36

MLA style is often used in the liberal arts and humanities, and it provides a uniform framework for consistency across a document in several areas. MLA style provides a format for the manuscript text and parenthetical citations, or in-text citations. It also provides the framework for the works cited area for references at the end of the essay. MLA style emphasizes brevity and clarity. As a student writer, it is to your advantage to be familiar with both major styles, and this section will outline the main points of MLA as well as offer specific examples of commonly used references.

Tip

Remember that your writing represents you in your absence. The correct use of a citation style demonstrates your attention to detail and ability to produce a scholarly work in an acceptable style, and it can help prevent the appearance or accusations of plagiarism.

Your English teacher for this course may require your paper in MLA, though some English teachers will accept either APA or MLA style papers. If you are taking an English, art history, or music appreciation class, chances are that you will be asked to write an essay in MLA format.

One common question goes something like “What’s the difference?” referring to APA and MLA style, and it deserves our consideration. The liberal arts and humanities often reflect works of creativity that come from individual and

group effort, but they may adapt, change, or build on previous creative works. The inspiration to create something new, from a song to a music video, may contain elements of previous works. Drawing on your fellow artists and authors is part of the creative process, and so is giving credit where credit is due.

A reader interested in your subject wants not only to read what you wrote but also to be aware of the works that you used to create it. Adding citations provides your reader with the opportunity to locate and review your sources.

Readers want to examine your sources to see if you know your subject, if you missed anything, or if you offer anything new and interesting. Your new or up-to-date sources may offer the reader additional insight on the subject being considered. It also demonstrates that you, as the author, are up-to-date on what is happening in the field or on the subject. Giving credit where it is due enhances your credibility, and the MLA style offers a clear format to use.



Photo by [Craig Moe](#), CC BY 2.0

Like a mosaic, your sources act as pieces that clarify what your paper has to offer.

Incorporating uncredited work into your own writing is considered plagiarism. In the professional world, plagiarism results in loss of credibility and often compensation, including future opportunities. In a classroom setting, plagiarism results in a range of sanctions, from loss of a grade to expulsion from a school or university. In both professional and academic settings, the penalties are severe. MLA offers artists and authors a systematic style of reference, again giving credit where credit is due, to protect MLA users from accusations of plagiarism.

MLA style uses a citation in the body of the essay that links to the works cited page at the end. The in-text citation is offset with parentheses, clearly calling attention to itself for the reader. The reference to the author or title is like a signal to the reader that information was incorporated from a separate source. It also provides the reader with information to then turn to the works cited section of your essay (at the end) where they can find the complete reference. If you follow MLA style and indicate your source both in your essay and in the works cited section, you will prevent the possibility of plagiarism. If you follow MLA guidelines, pay attention to detail, and clearly indicate your sources, then this approach to formatting and

citation offers a proven way to demonstrate your respect for other authors and artists.

Five Reasons to Use MLA Style

1. To demonstrate your ability to present a professional, academic essay in the correct style
2. To gain credibility and authenticity for your work
3. To enhance the ability of the reader to locate information discussed in your essay
4. To give credit where credit is due and prevent plagiarism
5. To earn a good grade or demonstrate excellence in your writing

Before we transition to specifics, please consider one word of caution: consistency. If you are instructed to use the MLA style and need to indicate a date, you have options. For example, you could use an international or a US style:

International style: 18 May 1980 (day/month/year)

US style: May 18, 1980 (month/day/year)

If you use the US style, be consistent in its use. You have many options when writing in English as the language itself has several conventions, or acceptable ways of writing particular parts of speech or information.

Now let's transition from a general discussion on the advantages of MLA style to the requirements of a standard academic essay. Depending on your field of study, you may sometimes write research papers in either APA or MLA style. Recognize that each has its advantages and preferred use in fields and disciplines. It may be helpful for you to use both styles with proficiency.

Title Block Format

You never get a second chance to make a first impression, and your title block (not a separate title page; just a section at the top of the first page) makes an impression on the reader. If correctly formatted with each element of information in its proper place, form, and format, it says to the reader that you mean business, that you are a professional, and that you take your work seriously, so it should, in turn, be seriously considered.

MLA style has specific formatting rules for the first page of your paper. The video below gives you additional information on MLA.

Like the rest of your paper, everything on your first page, even the headers, should be double-spaced.

[//www.youtube.com/embed/24Y31UrG2q4?modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0](https://www.youtube.com/embed/24Y31UrG2q4?modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0)

The following information should be left-justified at the top of the first page (in the main part of the page, not the header):

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1. on the first line, your first and last name
2. on the second line, your instructor's name
3. on the third line, the name of the class
4. on the fourth line, the date

Here's an example:

Jones 1

Your name

Instructor's name

Course number

Date

Title of Paper

MLA Template

These elements should not be bolded, underlined, or italicized.

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

On the next double-spaced line after the title, you should start the first paragraph of your paper.

Overall Structure of an MLA Paper

Your MLA paper should include the following basic elements:

- Body
- Endnotes
- Works Cited
- General Formatting Rules

Font

Your paper should be written in 12-point text. Whichever font you choose, MLA requires that regular and italicized text be easily distinguishable from each other.

Times and Times New Roman are often recommended.

Line Spacing

All text in your paper should be double-spaced.

Margins

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

Indentation

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

Page Numbers

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

Use of Italics

In MLA style, you should italicize (rather than underline) the titles of books, plays, or other standalone works. You should also italicize (rather than underline) words or phrases you want to lend particular emphasis—though you should do this rarely.

Section Headings

Longer papers sometimes benefit from the added organization of section headings. Unlike some other citation styles (e.g., APA), MLA style does not have specific rules for how to format such headings. However, they recommend that you title each heading with an Arabic numeral, followed by a period and a space, followed by the section title in title case. Subsections should follow the same pattern, with additional numerals after the period (e.g., 1.2, 3.9).

Series and Lists

MLA style does not have specific rules for the formatting of series and lists, beyond mandating the use of the Oxford comma. If your instructor does not give you additional specific guidelines, you should fold any series or list into the paragraph rather than giving each element its own line. That is to say:

As is standard in most style guides, use semicolons rather than commas to separate the elements of the series if at least one of the elements includes a comma somewhere within it (known as an “internal comma”). For example: “Josie was so hungry she ate the brownie; the cupcake, wrapper and all; and the bowl of ice cream.”

General Grammar Rules

The Oxford comma (also called the serial comma) is the comma that comes after the second-to-last item in a series or list. For example:

The UK includes the countries of England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

In the above sentence, the comma immediately after “Wales” is the Oxford comma.

In general writing conventions, whether the Oxford comma should be used is actually a point of fervent debate among passionate grammarians. However, it’s a requirement in MLA style, so double-check all your lists and series to make sure you include it!

Sentence Spacing

MLA style in particular includes an explicit rule to use only single spaces after periods:

“Mary went to the store. She bought some milk. Then she went home.”

Chapter 36.1: Tables, Figures, and In-text Citations

Part 6: Chapter 36

Tables and Illustrations

When you need to summarize quantitative data, words can only go so far. Sometimes, using a chart, graph, or other visual representation can be useful in proving your point. However, it's important to make sure you incorporate this extra information in a way that is easy to understand and in line with the conventions set forth in MLA style.

MLA style specifies three ways of presenting images: tables, figures, and examples. We will focus on tables and figures here, since examples are used only for the presentation of musical scores.

Tip

Place tables and illustrations as close as possible to the text they reinforce or complement.

Tables

A table is a chart that presents numerical information in a grid format.

In MLA style, you should present a table immediately after the paragraph in which you mentioned it. When you mention a table in the text of your paper, make sure you refer to it by its number (e.g., “table 4”) rather than with a phrase like “the table below” or “this table.” For example:

The population of frogs in the river has decreased dramatically over the past

five years (see table 4).

The table itself should appear flush with the left margin.

Immediately above the table, write its number in the format “Table 1”, followed by a short but descriptive title on the next line; both should be flush with the left margin.

Immediately below the table, write the word “Source” (or “Sources”), followed by a colon, and then provide the source(s) of the information in the table. Include the citation information, with the same formatting, as in a note in MLA style (i.e., formatted the same as a citation in your Works Cited section, except using commas instead of periods). This source section should end with a period, and it should be formatted with a hanging indent (i.e., the first line should be flush with the left margin, and every subsequent line should be indented 0.5 inches).

The population of frogs in the river has decreased dramatically over the past five years
(see table 4).

Table 4

Frog populations in the Willamette River from 2009-2014 (Example not actual)

Year	Population
2009	3500
2010	3200
2011	2000
2012	1200
2013	500
2014	125

Source: Rottweiler, Florence T., "Amphibians Abound: Wildlife in the Willamette," *River Ecology Journal*, vol. 54, 1987, pp. 66–14.

Since you have provided the full citation information here, you do not need to also cite this source in the Works Cited section at the end of your paper.

Figures

A figure, by the MLA's definition, is anything that is not a table or an example. This is therefore the broadest category; it includes images, graphs, and anything else aside from a table or musical score.

Treat a figure much as you would treat a table, with two exceptions: (1) you may center it horizontally if you choose, and (2) all information about the figure, including its number ("Figure 1"; you may abbreviate to "Fig. 1" if you choose) and title ("Frogs in the Willamette River, 2012") should appear on the line immediately below the figure.

Pacific treefrogs are the most common frog species found in the Willamette Valley and throughout most of the west coast (see fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Gehling, TJ. *It's easy being green*. 2014. Flickr.com, <https://flic.kr/p/kQZJ4Z>. Accessed 3 January 2017.

Photo by [TJ Gehling](#), CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

The source information should appear on the next line after the figure title and on the same line as the figure title after the word “from.” As with a table, present the source information formatted as a note and with a hanging indent, and do not cite it again in your Works Cited section.

Parenthetical or In-Text Citations

You must cite your sources as you use them. In the same way that a table or figure should be located right next to the sentence that discusses it (see the previous example), parenthetical citations, or citations enclosed in parenthesis that appear in the text, are required. You need to cite all your information: if someone else wrote it, said it, drew it, demonstrated it, or otherwise expressed it, you need to

cite it.

The exception to this statement is common, widespread knowledge. For example, if you search online for MLA resources, and specifically MLA sample papers, you will find many similar discussions on MLA style. MLA is a style and cannot be copyrighted because it is a style, but the eighth edition of the MLA Handbook can be copyright protected. If you reference a specific page in that handbook, you need to indicate it. If you write about a general MLA style issue that is commonly covered or addressed in multiple sources, you do not. When in doubt, reference the specific resource you used to write your essay.

Your in-text, or parenthetical, citations should do the following:

- Clearly indicate the specific sources also referenced in the works cited
- Specifically identify the location of the information that you used
- Carefully create a clear and concise citation, always confirming its accuracy
- Check out the video below for more discussion of your in-text citations.

[//www.youtube.com/embed/3aN_OSMbnsI?
modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0](https://www.youtube.com/embed/3aN_OSMbnsI?modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0)

In your paper, when you quote directly from a source in their words, or when you paraphrase someone else's idea, you need to tell the reader what that source is so the author gets credit for their words and ideas. When you tell the reader the author's name and the date the source was published in the text of your paper, this is called an in-text citation.

Source by a Single Author

To cite this type of reference in the text, you should use what is known as a parenthetical—the citation information enclosed in parentheses—at the end of the relevant sentence. The parenthetical citation should include simply the author's last name (with no first or middle initial). If you're citing a direct quote, you also need to include the page number. For example:

Social representations theory posits that reified scientific knowledge that exists at the boundaries of a given society will be interpreted in meaningful and often simplified forms by the majority (Pauling 113).

Social representations theory “proposes a new hypothesis ...” (Pauling 113).

If you choose, you can integrate the author's name into the sentence itself—this is known as a “signal phrase”—and provide just the page number in parentheses:

Pauling posits that “scientific knowledge...” (113).

Source by Two Authors

Authors should be presented in the order in which they are listed on the published article. If you include the authors' names in the parenthetical, use the word "and" between the two names. For example:

Social representations theory posits that reified scientific knowledge that exists at the boundaries of a given society will be interpreted in meaningful and often simplified forms by the majority (Pauling and Liu 113).

Using a signal phrase:

Pauling and Liu (113) posit that ...

Source by Three or More Authors

For an article with three or more authors, to save space and to make your paper easier to read, you should use only the first author's last name followed by "[et al.](#)", and then the page number, if applicable ("et al." is short for "et alia," which means "and other people" in Latin—much like "etc." is short for "et cetera," which means "and other things" in Latin.):

(Pauling et al. 113)

Using a signal phrase

Pauling et al. posit ... "that the chicken came before the egg" (113).

Source by No Known Author

For an article with no known author, use the source title in place of the author's name, formatted as it would be (i.e., italicized or enclosed in quotation marks) in your Works Cited section:

(*"Bilingual Minds, Bilingual Bodies"* 4)

Using a signal phrase:

The article *"Bilingual Minds, Bilingual Bodies"* (4) claims ...

Multiple Publications by Different Authors

If you need to cite multiple publications by different authors in the same sentence, you should list the multiple sources in alphabetical order by author and use a semicolon to separate them.

... majority (Alford 24; Pauling 113; Sirkis 96).

Multiple Publications by the Same Author

If an author has multiple publications that you want to cite in the same sentence, include the author's name in a signal phrase and the titles of the referenced sources instead in the parentheticals:

Achenbach's recent research (*"Bibliography of Published Studies"* 17) demonstrates a radical shift in thinking from his stance of a decade ago (*"School-Age Assessments"* 39)...

When to Use a Block Quotation also known as a Long Quote

A typical quotation is enclosed in double quotation marks and is part of a sentence within a paragraph of your paper. However, if you want to quote more than four lines of prose (or three lines of verse) from a source, you should format the excerpt as a block quotation, rather than as a regular quotation within the text of a paragraph. Most of the standard rules for quotations still apply, with the following exceptions: a block quotation will begin on its own line, it will not be enclosed in quotation marks, and its in-text citation will come after the ending punctuation, not before it.

For example, if you wanted to quote the entire first paragraph of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, you would begin that quotation on its own line:

The first paragraph of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* is as follows:

Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank, and of having nothing to do: once or twice she had peeped into the book her sister was reading, but it had no pictures or conversations in it, 'and what is the use of a book,' thought Alice, 'without pictures or conversations?' (Carroll 98)

The full reference for this source would then be included in your Works Cited section at the end of your paper.

Block Quotes: Spacing and Alignment

The entire block quotation should be indented one inch from the left margin. The first line of the excerpt should not be further indented, unless you are quoting multiple paragraphs—in which case the first line of each quoted paragraph should be further indented 0.25 inches.

As should the rest of your paper, a block quotation in MLA style should be double-spaced. To better visually distinguish a block quotation from the surrounding text, be sure to leave an extra (blank) line both above and below your block quotation.

If quoting more than three lines of verse, maintain the original line breaks.

The first part of this chapter is adapted from *English for Business Success*, 2012, used according to creative commons 3.0 [cc-by-nc-sa](#)

Chapter 36.2: Works Cited

Part 6: Chapter 36

After the body of your paper comes the works cited page, and it features the reference sources used in your essay. When you create your works cited page, list the sources alphabetically by last name, or list them by title if the author is not known as is often the case of web-based articles. In MLA style, all the sources you cite throughout the text of your paper are listed together with all bibliographic information in the Works Cited section, which comes after the main text of your paper.

MLA is now in its eighth edition; this new version included significant changes to the way works cited pages are formatted. The sections below detail what is the same and what's different in MLA.

Formatting the Works Cited Section

The basic look of the works cited page is the same. The top of the page, as the rest of your paper, should still include the right-justified header of your last name and the page number.

On the first line, the title of the page—Works Cited—should appear centered, and not italicized or bolded. Like the rest of your paper, this page should be double-spaced and have 1-inch margins (don't skip an extra line between citations).

Starting on the next line after the page title, your references should be listed in alphabetical order by author. Multiple sources by the same author should be listed chronologically by year within the same group.

Each reference should be formatted with what is called a hanging indent. This means the first line of each reference should be flush with the left margin (i.e., not indented), but the rest of that reference should be indented 0.5 inches further. Any

word-processing program will let you format this automatically so you don't have to do it by hand.

Tip

In Microsoft Word, you simply highlight your citations, click on the small arrow right next to the word "Paragraph" on the home tab, and in the popup box choose "hanging indent" under the "Special" section. Click OK, and you're done.

Constructing a Citation

What has changed in MLA is how to construct your citations. The first step to building each citation is understanding the new changes to MLA format. Understanding the new guidelines for MLA requires [critical thinking](#). For this reason, you may have to read this section more than once. There's a lot to consider. You might even have to read it five or ten times to fully understand the way in which MLA now adheres to [principles of citing](#) rather than strict rules.

MLA 8 responds to the changes in how information is disseminated and published. The way we research has changed significantly since the birth of the Internet and social media. The changes in MLA respond to the way writers and researchers gather much research, online—writers can visit libraries without ever leaving the house. To cite correctly with this format, it is important to understand the principles of MLA documentation. With MLA 8, writers must consider the commonalities among sources, items like authors, titles, dates, as opposed to memorizing strict guidelines created specifically for each method of disseminating information.

The video below explains the changes in a slightly different way.

With this new MLA format, two writers

could cite the same source differently, depending on which parts of that source were most important to their paper. But whether a writer focuses on the director of a movie as opposed to the actors, that writer still needs to consider the important core elements of a citation, and the succession of core elements in a citation, along with these core elements' required punctuation, doesn't change.

Below, you will find the nine core elements of a Works Cited entry:

1. Author
2. Title of source
3. Title of container
4. Other contributors
5. Version
6. Number
7. Publisher
8. Publication date
9. Location

Each element is followed by a comma or a period, though the final element in a Works Cited entry is always followed by a period. Only the elements relevant to a particular source should be included in its Works Cited entry.

Consult the *MLA Handbook*, 8th Edition for more information. The MLA website also contains a helpful guide, including a practice template:

Bonus Video

[//www.youtube.com/embed/bjbMfL92b7g?modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0](https://www.youtube.com/embed/bjbMfL92b7g?modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0)

Understanding MLA Style (8th edition, 2016 updates)

A brief explanation of each of the nine elements follows.

Breaking Down Core Elements

Author

If the source is written by one author, the citation should begin with the author's last name, a comma, the rest of the author's name, and then a period. For example, if you're citing a source written by Zadie Smith, the citation should begin:

Smith, Zadie.

If the source is written by two authors, the citation should begin with the first author's last name, a comma, the rest of the first author's name, a comma, the second author's full name (in the normal order), and then a period. For example, if you're citing a source written by Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner, the citation should begin:

Twain, Mark, and Charles Dudley Warner.

If the source is written by three or more authors, the citation should begin with the first author's last name, a comma, the rest of the first author's name, a comma, and then et. al., which means "and others." For example, if you're citing a source written by Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams, the citation should begin:

Booth, Wayne C., et al.

Title of Source

If the source is what the MLA Handbook describes as “self-contained and independent,” such as a book or a collection of essays, stories, or poems by multiple authors, include the title in italics, followed by a period. For example, if you’re citing Zadie Smith’s novel *Swing Time*, the citation should begin:

Smith, Zadie. *Swing Time*.

Smith, Zadie. *Swing Time*.

If the source, on the other hand, is a work that appears within a larger work, such as a poem that appears with an anthology, include the title in quotations marks instead. (Make sure that the period following the title appears inside the closing quotation mark.) For example, if you’re citing Seamus Heaney’s poem “Digging” from his collection *Death of a Naturalist*, the citation should begin:

Heaney, Seamus. “Digging.”

Title of Container,

A container, in this context, is the larger work that contains the shorter work being cited. Seamus Heaney’s poetry collection *Death of a Naturalist*, for example, is the container for his poem “Digging.”

If the source you’re citing appears within a container,

continue the citation by including the title of the container in italics, followed by a comma:

Heaney, Seamus. “Digging.” *Death of a Naturalist*,

Here’s another example. In this case, the website *Slate* is the container for the article “Hackers Breached San Francisco’s Transit System and Demanded a Ransom”:

Grabar, Henry. “Hackers Breached San Francisco’s Transit System and Demanded a Ransom” *Slate*,

Other Contributors,

Sometimes there are other contributors to a work—in addition to the author or authors—who should be included in the Works Cited entry. Include a contributor if their contribution helps further identify the work or if their contribution is particularly relevant to your research.

If you include a contributor in your work cited entry, add a description of the contribution (“adapted by,” “directed by,” “edited by,” “illustrated by,” etc.), followed by the full name of the contributor and a comma.

For example, if you’re citing a work that has been translated from another language, continue the citation by including the phrase “translated by” followed by the full name of the translator and a comma:

Calvino, Italo. *Invisible Cities*. Translated by William

Weaver,

Or, for example, if your research relates to the illustrations contained within a work, continue the citation by including the phrase “Illustrated by” followed by the full name of the illustrator and a comma:

Bloom, Amy Beth. *Little Sweet Potato*.
Illustrated by Noah Z. Jones,

Version,

Some works are published in different versions or editions. If you’re citing a particular version of a work, continue the citation by including the version followed by a comma. Here are two examples:

Nelson, Philip. *Biological Physics: Energy, Information, Life*. Updated Version,

King, Laura A. *The Science of Psychology: An Appreciative Review*. 3rd ed.,

Number,

Similarly, some works are published in multiple numbers, volumes, issues, episodes, or seasons. If you’re citing a particular number of a work, continue the citation by including the number followed by a comma. Here are a few examples:

“Indigenous Rights in Canada: Contested Wilderness.” *The Economist*, Vol. 421, Number 9017,

Kirkman, Rodman. *The Walking Dead*. Illustrated by Charlie Adlard and Cliff Rathburn, Vol. 4: The Heart’s Desire,

“Airport 2010.” *Modern Family*. Written by Dan O’Shannon and Bill Wrubel, season 1, episode 22,

Publisher,

If the source is distributed by a publisher, blog network, or other organization, continue the citation by including the publisher, followed by a comma. Here are two examples:

McMillan, Robert. “Her Code Got Humans on the Moon—and Invented Software Itself.” *Wired*, Condé Nast,

Miranda, Lin-Manuel, and Jeremy McCarter. *Hamilton: The Revolution*. Grand Central Publishing,

Publication Date,

Continue the citation by including the available publication

date information most relevant to your source, followed by a comma. If you're citing a book, for example, a copyright year will suffice:

Fish, Stanley. *How Milton Works*. Belknap Press, 2001,

If you're citing a tweet, on the other hand, provide the day, month, year, and time, as some people and organizations tweet more than once a day:

@POTUS. "This Thanksgiving, we give thanks for our blessings, and work to fulfill the timeless responsibility we have as Americans to serve others." *Twitter*, 24 Nov. 2016, 2:05 p.m.,

Location.

Location, in this context, refers to the location (e.g. page number(s), DOI, URL, etc.) of a source within a container or the physical location of a live performance, lecture, or presentation. If applicable, continue the citation by including the location information, followed by a period. Here are a few examples:

Heaney, Seamus. "Casualty." *Field Work: Poems*, Farrar, Straux, and Giroux, 2009, pp. 13-16.

Grabar, Henry. "Hackers Breached San Francisco's Transit System and Demanded a Ransom," *Slate*, TheSlateGroup, 28 Nov. 2016, slate.com/blogs/future_tense/2016/11/28/

[san_francisco_muni_hacked_for_a_ransom_payment.html](#).

Ernst, Steve, and Liza Neustaetter. "Empowering Faculty and Students with High Quality Modular Courseware." *OLC Accelerate*, 18 Nov. 2016, Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Resort, Orlando.

Formatting the Works Cited Page

Your Works Cited entries should be listed in alphabetical order. Each reference should be formatted with what is called a hanging indent. This means the first line of each citation should be flush with the left margin (i.e., not indented), but the rest of that citation should be indented a half an inch from the left margin.

Any word-processing program will let you format this automatically so you don't have to do it by hand. (In Microsoft Word, for example, you simply highlight your citations, click on the small arrow right next to the word "Paragraph" on the home tab, and in the popup box choose "hanging indent" under the "Special" section. Click OK, and you're done.)

Multiple Publications by the Same Author

If you are referencing multiple publications by the same author (or group of authors), there is a special rule for denoting this. You should first order those articles alphabetically by source title in the Works Cited section. Then, replace the author's name (or list of names) with three hyphens, followed by a period, for all but the first entry by that author:

Works Cited

- Broodbank, Cyprian. "The Spirit is Willing." *Antiquity*, Vol. 66, Issue 251, Antiquity Publications LTD, 1992, pp. 823-830.
- Cherry, John F. "Beazley in the Bronze Age? Reflections on Attribution Studies in Aegean Prehistory." *Eikon: Aegean Bronze Age Iconography: Shaping a Methodology*, Petters Publishers, 1992, pp.123-144.
- Getz-Gentle, Pat. *Personal Styles in Early Cycladic Sculpture*. University of Wisconsin Press, 2001.
- Getz-Preziosi, Pat. *Sculptors of the Cyclades*. University of Michigan Press, 1987.
- Gill, David. Review of *Personal Styles in Cycladic Sculpture*, by Pat Getz-Gentle. *BMC Review Blog*, Bryn Mawr Classical Review, 2014, bmcreview.org/2014/07/20140712.html.

The Works Cited section of this chapter is adapted from "Chapter 7" of *Writing*, 2015, used under creative commons [CC-BY-SA 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/)

Chapter 37: Formatting an APA Style Paper

Part 6: Chapter 37

In this chapter, you will learn how to use APA style, the documentation and formatting style followed by the American Psychological Association. The textbook *Successful Writing* acknowledges that if you find that the rules of proper source documentation are difficult to keep straight, you are not alone. Writing a good research paper is, in and of itself, a major intellectual challenge. Having to follow detailed citation and formatting guidelines as well may seem like just one more task to add to an already-too-long list of requirements.

Following these guidelines, however, serves several important purposes. First, it signals to your readers that your paper should be taken seriously as a student's contribution to a given academic or professional field; it is the literary equivalent of wearing a tailored suit to a job interview. Second, it shows that you respect other people's work enough to give them proper credit for it. Finally, it helps your reader find additional materials if he or she wishes to learn more about your topic.

Furthermore, producing a letter-perfect APA-style paper need not be burdensome. Yes, it requires careful attention to detail. However, you can simplify the process if you keep these broad guidelines in mind:

- **Work ahead whenever you can.** Chapter 34 “Drafting Your Paper” includes tips for keeping track of your sources early in the research process, which will save time later on.
- **Get it right the first time.** Apply APA guidelines as you write, so you will not have much to correct during the editing stage. Again, putting in a little extra time early on can save time later.
- **Use the resources available to you.** In addition to the guidelines provided in this chapter, you may wish to consult the APA website at <http://www.apa.org> or the Purdue University Online Writing lab at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu>,

which regularly updates its online style guidelines.

General Formatting Guidelines

This chapter provides detailed guidelines for using the citation and formatting conventions developed by the American Psychological Association, or APA. Writers in disciplines as diverse as astrophysics, biology, psychology, and education follow APA style. The major components of a paper written in APA style are listed in the following box.

These are the major components of an APA-style paper:

- Title page
- Abstract
- Body, which includes the following:
 - Headings and, if necessary, subheadings to organize the content
 - In-text citations of research sources
- References page

All these components must be saved in one document, not as separate documents.

Title Page

The title page of your paper includes the following information:

- Title of the paper
- Author's name
- Name of the institution with which the author is affiliated
- Header at the top of the page with the paper title (in capital letters) and the page number (If the title is lengthy, you may use a shortened form of it in the

header.)

[//www.youtube.com/embed/pdAfIqRt60c?
modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0](https://www.youtube.com/embed/pdAfIqRt60c?modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0)

Purdue OWL: APA Formatting – The Basics

List the first three elements in the order given in the previous list, centered about one third of the way down from the top of the page. Use the headers and footers tool of your word-processing program to add the header, with the title text at the left and the page number in the upper-right corner. Your title page should look like the following example.

Beyond the Hype: Evaluating Low-Carb Diets

Jorge Ramirez

Anystate University

Abstract

The next page of your paper provides an abstract, or brief summary of your findings. An abstract does not need to be provided in every paper, but an abstract should be used in papers that include a hypothesis. A good abstract is concise—about one hundred to one hundred fifty words—and is written in an objective, impersonal style. Your writing voice will not be as apparent here as in the body of your paper. When writing the abstract, take a just-the-facts approach, and summarize your research question and your findings in a few sentences.

Abstract

Low-carbohydrate diets have become increasingly popular. Supporters claim they are notably more effective than other diets for weight loss and provide other health benefits such as lower blood pressure and improved cholesterol levels; however, some doctors believe these diets carry potential long-term health risks. A review of the available research literature indicates that low-carbohydrate diets are highly effective for short-term weight loss but that their long-term effectiveness is not significantly greater than other common diet plans. Their long-term effects on cholesterol levels and blood pressure are unknown; research literature suggests some potential for negative health outcomes associated with increased consumption of saturated fat. This conclusion points to the importance of following a balanced, moderate diet appropriate for the individual, as well as the need for further research.

Tip

Depending on your field of study, you may sometimes write research papers that present extensive primary research, such as your own experiment or survey. In your abstract, summarize your research question and your findings, and briefly indicate how your study relates to prior research in the field.

Margins, Pagination, and Headings

APA style requirements also address specific formatting concerns, such as margins, pagination, and heading styles, within the body of the paper. Review the following APA guidelines.

Use these general guidelines to format the paper:

1. Set the top, bottom, and side margins of your paper at 1 inch.
2. Use double-spaced text throughout your paper.
3. Use a standard font, such as Times New Roman or Arial, in a legible size (10- to 12-point).
4. Use continuous pagination throughout the paper, including the title page and the references section. Page numbers appear flush right within your header.
5. Section headings and subsection headings within the body of your paper use different types of formatting depending on the level of information you are presenting.

Visually, the hierarchy of information is organized as indicated in Table 37.1 “Section Headings”.

Table 37.1 “Section Headings”

Level of Information	Text example

Level 1	<i>Heart Disease</i>
Level 2	Lifestyle Factors That Reduce Heart Disease Risk
Level 3	Exercising regularly.
Level 4	Aerobic exercise.
Level 5	Country line dancing.

A college research paper may not use all the heading levels shown in Table 37.1 “Section Headings”, but you are likely to encounter them in academic journal articles that use APA style. For a brief paper, you may find that level 1 headings suffice. Longer or more complex papers may need level 2 headings or other lower-level headings to organize information clearly. Use your outline to craft your major section headings and determine whether any subtopics are substantial enough to require additional levels of headings.

Citation Guidelines

In-Text Citations

Throughout the body of your paper, include a citation whenever you quote or paraphrase material from your research sources. The purpose of citations is twofold: to give credit to others for their ideas and to allow your reader to follow up and learn more about the topic if desired. Your in-text citations provide basic information about your source; each source you cite will have a longer entry in the references section that provides more detailed information.

In-text citations must provide the name of the author or authors and the year the source was published. (When a given source does not list an individual author, you may provide the source title or the name of the organization that published the material instead.) When directly quoting a source, it is also required that you include the page number where the quote appears in your citation.

This information may be included within the sentence or in a parenthetical reference at the end of the sentence, as in these examples.

Epstein (2010) points out that “junk food cannot be considered addictive in the same way that we think of psychoactive drugs as addictive” (p. 137).

Here, the writer names the source author when introducing the quote and provides the publication date in parentheses after the author’s name. The page number appears in parentheses after the closing quotation marks and before the period that ends the sentence.

Addiction researchers caution that “junk food cannot be considered addictive in the same way that we think of psychoactive drugs as addictive” (Epstein, 2010, p. 137).

Here, the writer provides a parenthetical citation at the end of the sentence that includes the author’s name, the year of publication, and the page number separated by commas. Again, the parenthetical citation is placed after the closing quotation marks and before the period at the end of the sentence.

As noted in the book *Junk Food, Junk Science* (Epstein, 2010, p. 137), “junk food cannot be considered addictive in the same way that we think of psychoactive drugs as addictive.”

Here, the writer chose to mention the source title in the sentence (an optional piece of information to include) and followed the title with a parenthetical citation. Note that the parenthetical citation is placed before the comma that signals the end of the introductory phrase.

David Epstein's book *Junk Food, Junk Science* (2010) pointed out that "junk food cannot be considered addictive in the same way that we think of psychoactive drugs as addictive" (p. 137).

Another variation is to introduce the author and the source title in your sentence and include the publication date and page number in parentheses within the sentence or at the end of the sentence. As long as you have included the essential information, you can choose the option that works best for that particular sentence and source.

Citing a book with a single author is usually a straightforward task. Of course, your research may require that you cite many other types of sources, such as books or articles with more than one author or sources with no individual author listed. You may also need to cite sources available in both print and online and non-print sources, such as websites and personal interviews.

References List

The brief citations included in the body of your paper correspond to the more detailed citations provided at the end of the paper in the references section. In-text citations provide basic information—the author's name, the publication date, and the page number if necessary—while the references section provides more extensive bibliographical information. Again, this information allows your reader to follow up on the sources you cited and do additional reading about the topic if desired.

The specific format of entries in the list of references varies slightly for different source types, but the entries generally include the following information:

- The name(s) of the author(s) or institution that wrote the source
- The year of publication and, where applicable, the exact date of publication
- The full title of the source
- For books, the city of publication

- For articles or essays, the name of the periodical or book in which the article or essay appears
- For magazine and journal articles, the volume number, issue number, and pages where the article appears
- For sources on the web, the URL where the source is located

The references page is double spaced and lists entries in alphabetical order by the author's last name. If an entry continues for more than one line, the second line and each subsequent line are indented five spaces. Review the following example.

References

- Agatson, A. (2003). *The South Beach diet*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Griffin.
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- Gardner, C. D., Kiazand, A., Alhassan, S., Kim, S., Stafford, R. S., Balise, R. R....King, A. C. (2007). Comparison of the Atkins, Zone, Ornish, and LEARN Diets for change in weight and related risk factors among overweight premenopausal women. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 297(9), 969–977. <http://jama.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/full/297/9/969#AUTHINFO>
- Harvard School of Public Health. (2010). *The Nutrition Source*. Carbohydrates: Good carbs guide

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Chapter 38: APA Citing and Referencing Techniques

Part 6: Chapter 38

This section from *Successful Writing* covers the nitty-gritty details of in-text citations. You will learn how to format citations for different types of source materials, whether citing brief quotations, paraphrasing ideas, or quoting longer passages. You will also learn techniques for quoting and paraphrasing material effectively. Keep this section handy as a reference to consult while writing the body of your paper.

Formatting Cited Material: The Basics

As noted in previous sections of this book, in-text citations usually provide the name of the author(s) and the year the source was published. For direct quotations, the page number must also be included. Use past-tense verbs when introducing a quote—“Smith found...” and not “Smith finds....”

Formatting Brief Quotations

For brief quotations—fewer than forty words—use quotation marks to indicate where the quoted material begins and ends, and cite the name of the author(s), the year of publication, and the page number where the quotation appears in your source. Remember to include commas to separate elements within the parenthetical citation. Also, avoid redundancy. If you name the author(s) in your sentence, do not repeat the name(s) in your parenthetical citation. Review following the examples of different ways to cite direct quotations.

Chang (2008) emphasized that “engaging in weight-bearing exercise consistently is one of the single best things women can do to maintain good health” (p. 49).

The author's name can be included in the body of the sentence or in the parenthetical citation. Note that when a parenthetical citation appears at the end of the sentence, it comes after the closing quotation marks and before the period. The elements within parentheses are separated by commas.

Weight Training for Women (Chang, 2008) claimed that "engaging in weight-bearing exercise consistently is one of the single best things women can do to maintain good health" (p. 49).

Weight Training for Women claimed that "engaging in weight-bearing exercise consistently is one of the single best things women can do to maintain good health" (Chang, 2008, p. 49).

For APA, including the title of a source is optional.

In Chang's 2008 text *Weight Training for Women*, she asserts, "Engaging in weight-bearing exercise is one of the single best things women can do to maintain good health" (p. 49).

The author's name, the date, and the title may appear in the body of the text. Include the page number in the parenthetical citation. Also, notice the use of the verb asserts to introduce the direct quotation.

"Engaging in weight-bearing exercise," Chang asserts, "is one of the single best things women can do to maintain good health" (2008, p. 49).

You may begin a sentence with the direct quotation and add the author's name and a strong verb before continuing the quotation.

Formatting Paraphrased and Summarized Material

When you paraphrase or summarize ideas from a source, you follow the same guidelines previously provided, except that you are not required to provide the page number where the ideas are located. If you are summing up the main findings of a research article, simply providing the author's name and publication year may suffice, but if you are paraphrasing a more specific idea, consider including the page number.

Read the following examples.

Chang (2008) pointed out that weight-bearing exercise has many potential benefits for women.

Here, the writer is summarizing a major idea that recurs throughout the source material. No page reference is needed.

Chang (2008) found that weight-bearing exercise could help women maintain or even increase bone density through middle age and beyond, reducing the likelihood that they will develop osteoporosis in later life (p. 86).

Although the writer is not directly quoting the source, this passage paraphrases a specific detail, so the writer chose to include the page number where the information is located.

Formatting Longer Quotations

When you quote a longer passage from a source—forty words or more—use a different format to set off the quoted material. Instead of using quotation marks, create a block quotation by starting the quotation on a new line and indented five spaces from the margin. Note that in this case, the parenthetical citation comes after the period that ends the sentence. Here is an example:

In recent years, many writers within the fitness industry have emphasized the ways in which women can benefit from weight-bearing exercise, such as weightlifting, karate, dancing, stair climbing, hiking, and jogging. Chang (2008) found that engaging in weight-bearing exercise regularly significantly reduces women's risk of developing osteoporosis. Additionally, these exercises help women maintain muscle mass and overall strength, and many common forms of weight-bearing exercise, such as brisk walking or stair climbing, also provide noticeable cardiovascular benefits. (p. 93)

If you are quoting a passage that continues into a second paragraph, indent five spaces again in the first line of the second paragraph.

[//www.youtube.com/embed/qzKlb7E7ERc?
modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0](https://www.youtube.com/embed/qzKlb7E7ERc?modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0)

Tip

Be wary of quoting from sources at length. Remember, your ideas should drive the paper, and quotations should be used to support and enhance your points. Make sure any lengthy quotations that you include serve a clear purpose. Generally, no more than 10–15 percent of a paper should consist of quoted material.

Introducing Cited Material Effectively

Including an introductory phrase in your text, such as “Jackson wrote” or “Gonzales found,” often helps you integrate source material smoothly. This citation technique also helps convey that you are actively engaged with your source material. Unfortunately, during the process of writing your research paper, it is easy to fall into a rut and use the same few dull verbs repeatedly, such as “Jones said,” “Khalifa stated,” and so on.

Punch up your writing by using strong verbs that help your reader understand how the source material presents ideas. There is a world of difference between an author who “suggests” and one who “claims,” one who “questions” and one who “criticizes.” You do not need to consult your thesaurus every time you cite a source, but do think about which verbs will accurately represent the ideas and make your writing more engaging. The following table shows some possibilities.

Table 38.1 Strong Signal Phrase Verbs

Strong Verbs for Introducing Cited Material		
ask	suggest	question
explain	assert	claim

recommend	compare	contrast
propose	hypothesize	believe
insist	argue	find
determine	measure	assess
evaluate	conclude	study
warn	point out	sum up

Formatting In-Text Citations for Other Source Types

Print Sources

This section covers books, articles, and other print sources with one or more authors.

A Work by One Author

Always include the author's name and year of publication. Include a page reference whenever you quote a source directly. (See also the guidelines presented earlier in this chapter about when to include a page reference for paraphrased material.)

Chang (2008) emphasized that “engaging in weight-bearing exercise consistently is one of the single best things women can do to maintain good health” (p. 49).

Chang (2008) pointed out that weight-bearing exercise has many potential benefits for women.

Two or More Works by the Same Author

At times, your research may include multiple works by the same author. If the works were published in different years, a standard in-text citation will serve to distinguish them. If you are citing multiple works by the same author published in the same year, include a lowercase letter immediately after the year. Rank the sources in the order they appear in your references section, which is by alphabetical order. The source listed first includes an a after the year, the source listed second includes a b, and so on.

Rodriguez (2009a) criticized the nutrition-supplement industry for making unsubstantiated and sometimes misleading claims about the benefits of taking supplements. Additionally, he warned that consumers frequently do not realize the potential harmful effects of some popular supplements (Rodriguez, 2009b).

Works by Authors with the Same Last Name

If you are citing works by different authors with the same last name, include each author's initials in your citation, whether you mention them in the text or in parentheses. Do so even if the publication years are different.

J. S. Williams (2007) believes nutritional supplements can be a useful part of some diet and fitness regimens. C. D. Williams (2008), however, believes these supplements are overrated.

According to two leading researchers, the rate of childhood obesity exceeds the rate of adult obesity (K. Connelley, 2010; O. Connelley, 2010).

Studies from both A. Wright (2007) and C. A. Wright (2008) confirm the benefits of diet and exercise on weight loss.

A Work by Two Authors

When two authors are listed for a given work, include both authors' names each time you cite the work. If you are citing their names in parentheses, use an ampersand (&) between them. (Use the word and, however, if the names appear in your sentence.)

As Garrison and Gould (2010) pointed out, "It is never too late to quit smoking. The health risks associated with this habit begin to decrease soon after a smoker quits" (p. 101).

As doctors continue to point out, "It is never too late to quit smoking. The health risks associated with this habit begin to decrease soon after a smoker quits" (Garrison & Gould, 2010, p. 101).

A Work by Three to Five Authors

If the work you are citing has three to five authors, list all the authors' names the first time you cite the source. In subsequent citations, use the first author's name followed by the abbreviation et al. (Et al. is short for et alia, the Latin phrase for "and others.")

Henderson, Davidian, and Degler (2010) surveyed 350 smokers aged 18 to 30.

One survey, conducted among 350 smokers aged 18 to 30, included a detailed questionnaire about participants' motivations for smoking (Henderson, Davidian, & Degler, 2010).

Note that these examples follow the same ampersand conventions as sources with two authors. Again, use the ampersand only when listing authors' names in parentheses.

As Henderson et al. (2010) found, some young people, particularly young women, use smoking as a means of appetite suppression.

Disturbingly, some young women use smoking as a means of appetite suppression (Henderson et al., 2010).

Note how the phrase et al. is punctuated. No period comes after et, but al. gets a period because it is an abbreviation for a longer Latin word. In parenthetical references, include a comma after et al. but not before. Remember this rule by mentally translating the citation to English: "Henderson and others, 2010."

A Work by Six or More Authors

If the work you are citing has six or more authors, list only the first author's name, followed by et al., in your in-text citations. The other authors' names will be listed in your references section.

Researchers have found that outreach work with young people has helped reduce tobacco use in some communities (Costello et al., 2007).

A Work Authored by an Organization

When citing a work that has no individual author(s) but is published by an organization, use the organization's name in place of the author's name. Lengthy organization names with well-known abbreviations can be abbreviated. In your first citation, use the full name, followed by the abbreviation in square brackets. Subsequent citations may use the abbreviation only.

It is possible for a patient to have a small stroke without even realizing it (American Heart Association [AHA], 2010).

Another cause for concern is that even if patients realize that they have had a stroke and need medical attention, they may not know which nearby facilities are best equipped to treat them (AHA, 2010).

A Work with No Listed Author

If no author is listed and the source cannot be attributed to an organization, use the title in place of the author's name. You may use the full title in your sentence or use the first few words—enough to convey the key ideas—in a parenthetical reference. In the body of your text, follow standard conventions for using italics or quotations marks with titles:

- Use italics for titles of books or reports.
- Use quotation marks for titles of articles or chapters.

“Living With Diabetes: Managing Your Health” (2009) recommends regular exercise for patients with diabetes.

Regular exercise can benefit patients with diabetes (“Living with Diabetes,” 2009).

Rosenhan (1973) had mentally healthy study participants claim to be experiencing hallucinations so they would be admitted to psychiatric hospitals.

A Work Cited Within Another Work

To cite a source that is referred to within another secondary source, name the first source in your sentence. Then, in parentheses, use the phrase as cited in and the name of the second source author.

Rosenhan’s study “On Being Sane in Insane Places” (as cited in Spitzer, 1975) found that psychiatrists diagnosed schizophrenia in people who claimed to be experiencing hallucinations and sought treatment—even though these patients were, in fact, imposters.

Two or More Works Cited in One Reference

At times, you may provide more than one citation in a parenthetical reference, such as when you are discussing related works or studies with similar results. List the citations in the same order they appear in your references section, and separate the citations with a semicolon.

Some researchers have found serious flaws in the way Rosenhan’s study was conducted (Dawes, 2001; Spitzer, 1975).

Both of these researchers authored works that support the point being made in this sentence, so it makes sense to include both in the same citation.

A Famous Text Published in Multiple Editions

In some cases, you may need to cite an extremely well-known work that has been repeatedly republished or translated. Many works of literature and sacred texts, as well as some classic nonfiction texts, fall into this category. For these works, the original date of publication may be unavailable. If so, include the year of publication or translation for your edition. Refer to specific parts or chapters if you need to cite a specific section. Discuss with your instructor whether he or she would like you to cite page numbers in this particular instance.

In New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis, Freud explains that the “manifest content” of a dream—what literally takes place—is separate from its “latent content,” or hidden meaning (trans. 1965, lecture XXIX).

Here, the student is citing a classic work of psychology, originally written in German and later translated to English. Since the book is a collection of Freud’s lectures, the student cites the lecture number rather than a page number.

An Introduction, Foreword, Preface, or Afterword

To cite an introduction, foreword, preface, or afterword, cite the author of the material and the year, following the same format used for other print materials.

Electronic Sources

Whenever possible, cite electronic sources as you would print sources, using the author, the date, and where appropriate, a page number. For some types of electronic sources—for instance, many online articles—this information is easily available. Other times, however, you will need to vary the format to reflect the differences in online media.

Online Sources without Page Numbers

If an online source has no page numbers but you want to refer to a specific portion of the source, try to locate other information you can use to direct your reader to the information cited. Some websites number paragraphs within published articles; if so, include the paragraph number in your citation. Precede the paragraph number with the abbreviation for the word paragraph and the number of the paragraph (e.g., para. 4).

As researchers have explained, “Incorporating fresh fruits and vegetables into one’s diet can be a challenge for residents of areas where there are few or no easily accessible supermarkets” (Smith & Jones, 2006, para. 4).

Even if a source does not have numbered paragraphs, it is likely to have headings that organize the content. In your citation, name the section where your cited information appears, followed by a paragraph number.

The American Lung Association (2010) noted, “After smoking, radon exposure is the second most common cause of lung cancer” (What Causes Lung Cancer? section, para. 2).

This student cited the appropriate section heading within the website and then counted to find the specific paragraph where the cited information was located.

If an online source has no listed author and no date, use the source title and the abbreviation n.d. in your parenthetical reference.

It has been suggested that electromagnetic radiation from cellular telephones may pose a risk for developing certain cancers (“Cell Phones and Cancer,” n.d.).

Personal Communication

For personal communications, such as interviews, letters, and e-mails, cite the name of the person involved, clarify that the material is from a personal communication, and provide the specific date the communication took place. Note that while in-text citations correspond to entries in the references section, personal communications are an exception to this rule. They are cited only in the body text of your paper.

J. H. Yardley, M.D., believes that available information on the relationship between cell phone use and cancer is inconclusive (personal communication, May 1, 2009).

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Chapter 39: Creating an APA References Section

Part 6: Chapter 39

This section from *Successful Writing* provides detailed information about how to create the references section of your paper. You will review basic formatting guidelines and learn how to format bibliographical entries for various types of sources. This chapter is meant to be used as a reference tool while you write

Formatting the References Section: The Basics

At this stage in the writing process, you may already have begun setting up your references section. This section may consist of a single page for a brief research paper or may extend for many pages in professional journal articles. As you create this section of your paper, follow the guidelines provided here.

To set up your references section, use the insert page break feature of your word-processing program to begin a new page. Note that the header and margins will be the same as in the body of your paper, and pagination continues from the body of your paper. (In other words, if you set up the body of your paper correctly, the correct header and page number should appear automatically in your references section.) See additional guidelines below.

Formatting Reference Entries

Reference entries should include the following information:

- The name of the author(s)
- The year of publication and, where applicable, the exact date of publication
- The full title of the source
- For books, the city of publication

- For articles or essays, the name of the periodical or book in which the article or essay appears
- For magazine and journal articles, the volume number, issue number, and pages where the article appears
- For sources on the web, the URL where the source is located

[//www.youtube.com/embed/HpAOi8-WUY4?
modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0](https://www.youtube.com/embed/HpAOi8-WUY4?modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0)

Purdue OWL: APA Formatting: Reference List Basics

See the following examples for how to format a book or journal article with a single author.

Sample Book Entry

[../assets/modules/inkling.annotated_image/widgets/annotated_image/index_
dbe7e88b2dba41feb7c418d255ab694c.html?
configFile=../%2F../%2F../%2F../%2Fwidget_data%2Fconfig%2Fdbe7e88b2dba41feb
7c418d255ab694c.json](https://assets/modules/inkling.annotated_image/widgets/annotated_image/index_dbe7e88b2dba41feb7c418d255ab694c.html?configFile=../%2F../%2F../%2F../%2Fwidget_data%2Fconfig%2Fdbe7e88b2dba41feb7c418d255ab694c.json)

Sample Journal Article Entry

../assets/modules/inkling.annotated_image/widgets/annotated_image/index_24e3c42a395746aea737959914142746.html?configFile=../%2F../%2F../%2F../%2Fwidget_data%2Fconfig%2F24e3c42a395746aea737959914142746.json

The following box provides general guidelines for formatting the reference page. For the remainder of this chapter, you will learn how to format bibliographical entries for different source types, including multi-author and electronic sources.

APA General Guidelines

Formatting Reference Entries for Different Source Types

As is the case for in-text citations, formatting reference entries becomes more complicated when you are citing a source with multiple authors, citing various types of online media, or citing sources for which you must provide additional information beyond the basics listed in the general guidelines. The following guidelines illustrate how to format different reference entries.

Print Sources: Books

For book-length sources and shorter works that appear in a book, follow the guidelines that best describes your source.

A Book by Two or More Authors

List the authors' names in the order they appear on the book's title page. Use an ampersand (&) before the last author's name.

Campbell, D. T., & Stanley, J. C. (1963). *Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for research*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

An Edited Book with No Author

List the editor or editors' names in place of the author's name, followed by Ed. or Eds. in parentheses.

Myers, C., & Reamer, D. (Eds.). (2009). *2009 nutrition index*. San Francisco, CA: HealthSource, Inc.

An Edited Book with an Author

List the author's name first, followed by the title and the editor or editors. Note that when the editor is listed after the title, you list the initials before the last name.

../assets/modules/inkling.annotated_image/widgets/annotated_image/index_f534ae6d7f6d45fb85c6d7473a482a97.html?configFile=..%2F..%2F..%2F..%2Fwidget_data%2Fconfig%2Ff534ae6d7f6d45fb85c6d7473a482a97.json

A Translated Book

Include the translator's name after the title, and at the end of the citation, list the date the original work was published. Note that for the translator's name, you list the initials before the last name.

Freud, S. (1965). *New introductory lectures on psycho-analysis* (J.

Strachey, Trans.). New York, NY: W. W. Norton. (Original work published 1933).

A Book Published in Multiple Editions

If you are using any edition other than the first edition, include the edition number in parentheses after the title.

../assets/modules/inkling.annotated_image/widgets/annotated_image/index_bca8d800ed544a16b2f724a326913413.html?configFile=../assets/modules/inkling.annotated_image/widgets/annotated_image/index_bca8d800ed544a16b2f724a326913413.json

A Chapter in an Edited Book

List the name of the author(s) who wrote the chapter, followed by the chapter title. Then list the names of the book editor(s) and the title of the book, followed by the page numbers for the chapter and the usual information about the book's publisher.

../assets/modules/inkling.annotated_image/widgets/annotated_image/index_65ed5c0e047943648b1ce6129b6df5b5.html?configFile=../assets/modules/inkling.annotated_image/widgets/annotated_image/index_65ed5c0e047943648b1ce6129b6df5b5.json

A Work That Appears in an Anthology

Follow the same process you would use to cite a book chapter, substituting the article or essay title for the chapter title.

Beck, A. T., & Young, J. (1986). College blues. In D. Goleman & D. Heller

(Eds.), *The pleasures of psychology* (pp. 309-323). New York, NY: New American Library

An Article in a Reference Book

List the author's name if available; if no author is listed, provide the title of the entry where the author's name would normally be listed. If the book lists the name of the editor(s), include it in your citation. Indicate the volume number (if applicable) and page numbers in parentheses after the article title.

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Two or More Books by the Same Author

List the entries in order of their publication year, beginning with the work published first.

Swedan, N. (2001). *Women's sports medicine and rehabilitation*. Gaithersburg, MD: Aspen Publishers.

Swedan, N. (2003). *The active woman's health and fitness handbook*. New York, NY: Perigee.

If two books have multiple authors, and the first author is the same but the others are different, alphabetize by the second author's last name (or the third or fourth, if necessary).

Carroll, D., & Aaronson, F. (2008). *Managing type II diabetes*. Chicago, IL: Southwick Press.

Carroll, D., & Zuckerman, N. (2008). *Gestational diabetes*. Chicago, IL: Southwick Press.