

Accelerated English

Accelerated English

*ASHLEY PAUL, BUNKER HILL
COMMUNITY COLLEGE*



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PART I

UNIT I: INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

I. Assignment: What Is Culture? Discussion and Photo Activity

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Define what culture is
- Compare/understand different cultures
- Begin to understand southern culture

Open up the discussion by asking students what they think culture is.

Talk about different cultures that they are a part of – ethnic, religious, regional, gender — as well as more local cultures such as college student culture, then break that down into other subcultures like if the students are on a sports team or part of club. They might be part of baseball culture or theater culture.

Ice breaker, Photo activity

Have students get into groups of three or four.

Next, ask the students to go to their phones, computers, or tablets and pull up a picture that represents a culture that they belong to. They do not have to be in the picture. It can be a Google image.

Have the students share their pictures with their small group and explain how this represents a culture they belong to. As they are sharing, the instructor should walk around the room and ask to see the pictures and learn about the students as well.

After the instructor has visited with each group, he/she might share a picture on the smartboard that involves a culture they belong to. I share a picture that defines my southern culture since that is the theme of my class.

[A handout of this activity can be downloaded here.](#)

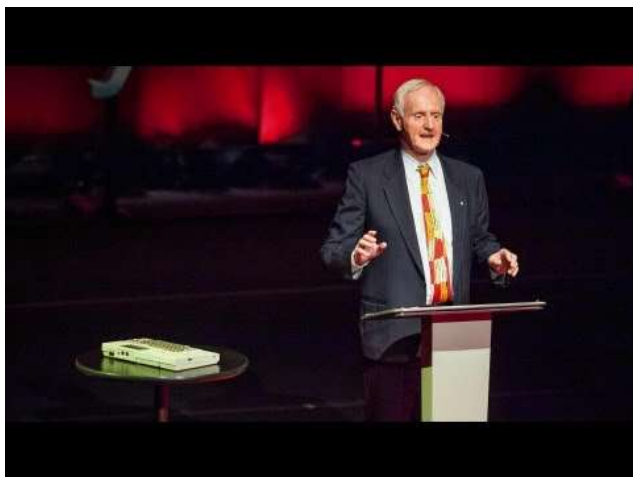
2. Reading Strategies

Introduction

Learning Objectives

- identify rhetorical context of a text (purpose, author, audience)
- identify previewing as a reading strategy
- identify active reading as a reading strategy
- identify summarizing as a reading strategy
- identify reviewing as a reading strategy

Months after he was born, in 1948, Ron McCallum became blind. In this charming, moving talk, he shows how he is able to read – and celebrates the progression of clever tools and adaptive computer technologies that make it possible.



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While most of us don't have the same issues with accessing reading material that McCallum does, many of us can benefit from some of the same strategies he uses.

This section focuses on strategies to make reading a more meaningful process. Some of these strategies incorporate technology, while others just rely on a set of practices that become stronger over time.

Scanning

The technique of scanning is a useful one to use if you want to get an overview of the text you are reading as a whole – its shape, the focus of each section, the topics or key issues that are dealt with, and so on. In order to scan a piece of text you might look for sub-headings or identify key words and phrases which give you clues about its focus. Another useful method is to read the first sentence or two of each paragraph in order to get the general gist of the discussion and the way that it progresses.



Scanning is used to find a particular piece of information. Run your eyes over the text looking for the specific piece of information you need. If you see words or phrases that you don't understand, don't worry when scanning.

Scanning is what you do to find an answer to a specific question. You may run your eyes quickly down the page in a zigzag or winding S pattern. If you are looking for a name, you note capital letters. For a date, you look for numbers. Vocabulary words may be boldfaced or italicized. When you scan for information, you read only what is needed.

Rhetorical Context

We're used to the idea of learning things from what we read. It's important to realize that we can learn a bit by looking at factors that are **outside** of a text, as well.



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Skimming



Skimming is used to quickly gather the most important information, or “gist.” Run your eyes over the text, noting important information. Use skimming to quickly get up to speed on a current business situation. It’s not essential to understand each word when skimming.

Skimming is covering the chapter to get some of the main ideas and a general overview of the material. It is what you do first when reading a chapter assignment. You don’t read for details at this point.

Here is how you skim a chapter:

1. Read the first paragraph of the chapter line by line.
2. Next, read all the bold print headings starting at the beginning.
3. Read the first sentence of every paragraph.
4. Study any pictures, graphs, charts, and maps.
5. Finally, read the last paragraph of the chapter.

As you skim, you could write down the main ideas and develop a chapter outline.

SQ3R

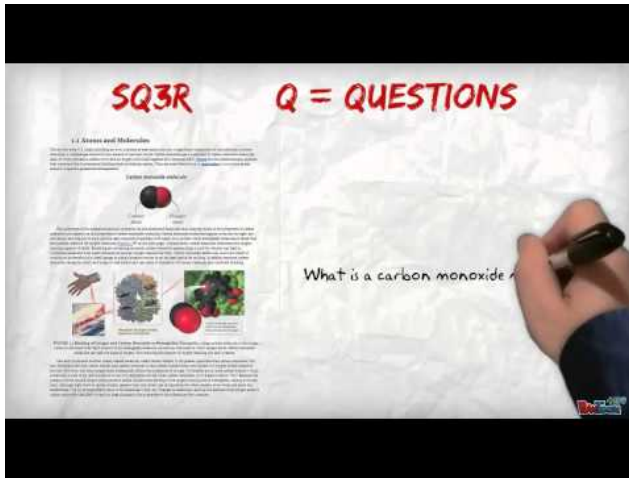
SQ3R is a useful technique for understanding written information. It helps you to create a good mental framework of a subject, into which you can fit the right facts. It helps you to set study goals and prompts you to use review techniques that will help you to remember.

The acronym SQ3R stands for the five sequential techniques you should use to read a book: **S**urvey, **Q**uestion, **R**ead, **R**ecite and **R**eview.

Phase	Description
Survey (S)	Scan the entire assignment to get an overview of the material. Read the headings to see the major points. Read the introductory paragraphs and the summary at the end of the chapter. Do not forget to look at the tables, pictures, etc. Remember, you are scanning the material and not actually reading every sentence.
Question (Q)	Make questions that can be answered during the reading of the material. This will give a purpose to your reading. Take a heading and turn it into a question. For example, if a heading in a chapter about Cell Division is in your biology text, make a question by turning the title around: “How does cell division occur?” or “How many steps are involved in cell division?”
Read (R)	Now you read the material trying to find answers to your questions. This is a careful reading, line by line. You may want to take notes or make flashcards.
Recite (R)	As you read, look away from your book and notes and try to answer your questions. This checks your learning and helps put that information in your memory.
Review (R)	To check your memory, scan portions of the material or your notes to verify your answers. Review the material and note the main points under each heading. This review step helps you retain the material.

What SQ3R Looks Like

This video demonstrates the SQ3R process in action.



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High-5 Reading Strategies

Click through following presentation to learn about a 5-step process for deeper reading comprehension and retention.



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Self-Check



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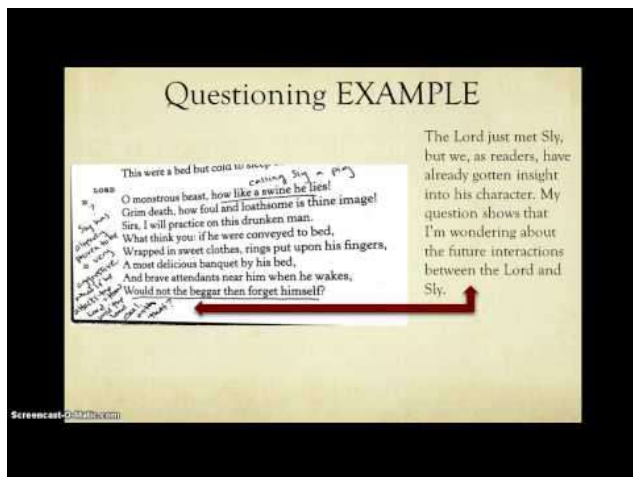
3. How to Write an Annotation

One of the greatest challenges students face is adjusting to college reading expectations. Unlike high school, students in college are expected to read more “academic” type of materials in less time and usually recall the information as soon as the next class.

The problem is many students spend hours reading and have no idea what they just read. Their eyes are moving across the page, but their mind is somewhere else. The end result is wasted time, energy, and frustration...and having to read the text again.

Although students are taught *how to read* at an early age, many are not taught *how to actively engage* with written text or other media. Annotation is a tool to help you learn how to actively engage with a text or other media.

View the following video about how to annotate a text.



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Annotating a text or other media (e.g. a video, image, etc.) is as much about you as it is the text you are annotating. What are YOUR responses to the author's writing, claims and ideas? What are YOU thinking as you consider the work? Ask questions, challenge, think!

When we annotate an author's work, our minds should *encounter* the mind of the author, openly and freely. If you met the author at a party, what would you like to tell to them; what would you like to ask them? What do you think they would say in response to your comments? You can be critical of the text, but you do not have to be. If you are annotating properly, you often begin to get ideas that have little or even nothing to do with the topic you are annotating. That's fine: it's all about generating insights and ideas of your own. Any good insight is worth keeping because it may make for a good essay or research paper later on.

The Secret is in the Pen

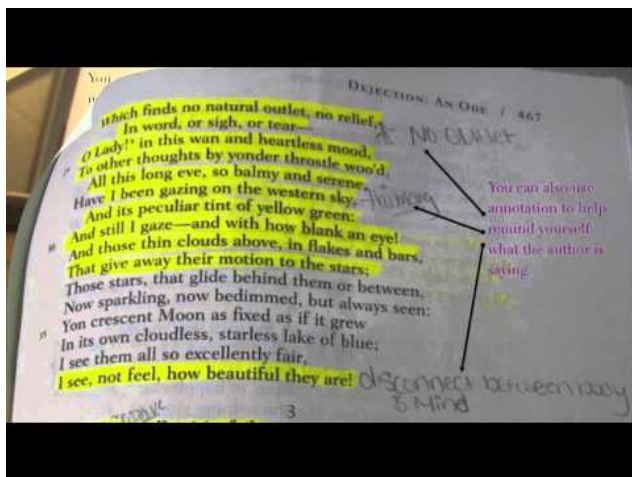
One of the ways proficient readers read is with a pen in hand. They know their purpose is to keep their attention on the material by:

- *Predicting* what the material will be about
- *Questioning* the material to further understanding
- *Determining* what's important
- *Identifying* key vocabulary
- *Summarizing* the material in their own words, and
- *Monitoring* their comprehension (understanding) during and after engaging with the material

The same applies for mindfully viewing a film, video, image or other media.

Annotating a Text

Review the video, “How to Annotate a Text.” Pay attention to both how to make annotations and what types of thoughts and ideas may be part of your annotations as you actively read a written text.



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Example Assignment Format: Annotating a Written Text

For the annotation of reading assignments in this class, you will cite and comment on a minimum of FIVE (5) phrases, sentences or passages from notes you take on the selected readings.

Here is an example format for an assignment to annotate a written text:

Passage #	Quotation and Location
1	Direct quote (paragraph #)
2	Direct quote (paragraph #)
3	Direct quote (paragraph #)
4	Direct quote (paragraph #)
5	Direct quote (paragraph #)

Example Assignment Format: Annotating Media

In addition to annotating written text, at times you will have assignments to annotate media (e.g., videos, images or other media). For the annotation of media assignments in this class, you will cite and comment on a minimum of THREE (3) statements, facts, examples, research or any combination of those from the notes you take about selected media.

Here is an example format for an assignment to annotate media:

Passage #	Describe Passage
1	Passage Description
2	Passage Description
3	Passage Description

4. "The Relationship Between Cell Phone Use and Academic Performance in a Sample of U.S. College Students" by Andrew Lepp, Jacob E. Barkley, and Aryn C. Karpinski

Abstract

The cell phone is ever-present on college campuses and is frequently used in settings where learning occurs. This study assessed the relationship between cell phone use and actual college grade point average (GPA) after controlling for known predictors. As such, 536 undergraduate students from 82 self-reported majors at a large, public university were sampled. A hierarchical regression ($R^2 = .449$) demonstrated that cell phone use was significantly ($p < .001$) and negatively ($\beta = -.164$) related to actual college GPA after controlling for demographic variables, self-efficacy for self-regulated learning, self-efficacy for academic achievement, and actual high school GPA, which were all significant predictors ($p < .05$). Thus, after controlling for other established predictors, increased cell phone use was associated with decreased academic performance. Although more research is needed to identify the underlying mechanisms, findings suggest a need to sensitize

students and educators about the potential academic risks associated with high-frequency cell phone use.

Introduction

Cell phones are an integral part of college life and culture. Even a casual observation of today's college students will reveal cell phones being used, both overtly and covertly, in every possible campus setting, including the classroom. Research suggests that college students frequently use the cell phone during class time despite rules against doing so (Tindell & Bohlander, 2012). As cell phone technology continues its rapid development, the device appears capable of contributing to student learning and improved academic performance. For example, modern "smartphones" provide students with immediate, portable access to many of the same education-enhancing capabilities as an Internet-connected computer, such as online information retrieval, file sharing, and interacting with professors and fellow students (Bull & McCormick, 2012; Tao & Yeh, 2013). Conversely, recent research suggests that many college students perceive the cell phone primarily as a leisure device, and most commonly use cell phones for social networking, surfing the Internet, watching videos, and playing games (Lepp, Li, & Barkley, 2015; Lepp, Barkley, Sanders, Rebold, & Gates, 2013). If typically utilized for leisure rather than education, then cell phones may disrupt learning within academic settings (Levine, Waite, & Bowman, 2007). Thus, the potential relationship between cell phone use and academic performance is not clear.

In support of the "cell phone as disrupter" hypothesis, a recent study by our group (Lepp et al., 2013) found that cell phone use was negatively associated with an objective measure of cardiorespiratory fitness in a sample of typical U.S. college students. Interview data collected for the study explained the negative

relationship by suggesting that cell phone use disrupts physical activity and encourages sedentary behavior. Unpublished interview data collected as part of the same study suggest that cell phone use may also disrupt behaviors conducive to academic success. For example, when asked to describe cell phone use habits, one participant stated, "I usually go on my phone if I'm bored sitting there in class. Or during homework I'll take little Twitter breaks." Another student said, "If I'm in class and I'm bored then I'll use my phone to look on Facebook. I think it's just kind of a habit now that I have, which probably isn't a good one. But, it's just that I always have it [the phone] on me."

Across the interviews, such statements were more common among high-frequency cell phone users than among low-frequency users. These statements suggest that some students, particularly high-frequency users, may have difficulty regulating their cell phone use during academic endeavors such as class participation, homework, and studying. Thus, the purpose of the present study was to investigate the relationship between cell phone use and academic performance in a large sample of U.S. college students.

Literature Review

Although the cell phone is likely to be on hand while college students are in class and studying, research investigating its relationship to academic performance is limited. In an early study of the phenomenon, Sánchez-Martínez and Otero (2009) used a combination of self-reported monthly cell phone expenses and frequency of use data to identify intensive cell phone users in a large sample of Spanish high school students. In the study, intensive cell phone use was related to school failure as well as other negative behaviors such as smoking and excessive alcohol use. More recent studies operationalize cell phone use as calling and texting while

utilizing a variety of measures for academic performance. For example, Jacobsen and Forste (2011) identified a negative relationship between calling, texting, and self-reported grade point average (GPA) among university students in the United States. Similarly, Hong, Chiu, and Hong (2012) found that calling and texting were positively correlated with a self-reported measure of academic difficulty among a sample of female, Taiwanese university students. While these studies provide a starting point for understanding the relationship between cell phone use and academic performance, they neither use objective measures of academic performance nor do they take into account the cell phone's expanding capabilities beyond calling and texting.

Modern cell phones enable users to access a variety of electronic media at almost any time and any place. Popular activities such as playing video games, surfing the Internet, and monitoring social media sites are now all easily accomplished with most cell phones. Researchers have linked each of these activities, independent of cell phone use, to academic performance. For example, heavy video game playing has been associated with lower GPAs (Jackson, von Eye, Fitzgerald, Witt, & Zhao, 2011; Jackson, von Eye, Witt, Zhao, & Fitzgerald, 2011). Also, low levels of Internet use have been associated with improved academic performance (Chen & Peng, 2008). Chen and Tzeng (2010) found that among heavy Internet users information seeking was associated with better academic performance, while video game playing was associated with lower levels of academic performance. Several recent studies have identified a negative relationship between social-networking site use (e.g., Facebook, MySpace, Twitter) and academic performance (e.g., Rosen, Carrier, & Cheever, 2013; Stollak, Vandenberg, Burklund, & Weiss, 2011). In particular, Kirschner and Karpinski (2010) demonstrated that Facebook users have a lower self-reported GPA and spend fewer hours per week studying than nonusers. Likewise, Junco (2012a, 2012b) found a strong, negative relationship between time spent on Facebook and actual cumulative GPA. These negative relationships have been found in populations across the

world, including North America, Europe, and Asia (e.g., Chen & Tzeng, 2010; Karpinski, Kirschner, Ozer, Mellott, & Ochwo, 2013).

Recently, multitasking has emerged as a possible explanation for the negative relationship between electronic media use (including cell phone use) and academic performance (Jacobsen & Forste, 2011; Junco & Cotton, 2011;2012; Karpinski et al., 2013; Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010; Rosen et al.,2013; Wood et al., 2012). Indeed, several studies reveal that students frequently report using a variety of electronic media including cell phones while in class, studying, and doing homework (Jacobsen & Forste, 2011;Junco & Cotton, 2012; Sánchez-Martínez & Otero, 2009; Tindell & Bohlander, 2012). Several recent studies, using a variety of methods, identify a negative relationship between multitasking and academic performance. First, Wood et al. (2012) measured the influence of multitasking with an array of electronic media on students' ability to learn from typical, university classroom lectures. Emailing, MSN messaging, and Facebook use via computer were all investigated as was cell phone texting. Results showed that multitasking with any of the technologies was associated with lower scores on follow-up tests compared with students who did not multitask. Second, Junco and Cotton (2012) used a hierarchical regression to determine the power of multitasking to predict actual cumulative college GPA. Results showed that Facebook-multitasking and texting-multitasking were significantly and negatively related to college GPA after controlling for sex, actual high school GPA, time preparing for class, and a student's Internet skills. Finally, Rosen et al. (2013) observed the study behaviors as well as study settings of a sample of middle school, high school, and university students. Participants were observed for 15 min with on-task and off-task behavior recorded every minute. Results showed that participants typically became distracted by media such as Facebook and texting after less than 6 min of studying. Furthermore, measurements of daily Facebook use and daily texting behavior predicted off-task behavior during study periods as well as self-reported GPA.

In review, emerging research suggests that texting, Internet use,

email, and social-networking sites such as Facebook can potentially increase multitasking and task-switching during academic activities and decrease academic performance. Notably, all of these previously investigated activities can now be accomplished with a single, Internet-connected cell phone. Therefore, measurements of cell phone use should not be limited to only texting and calling but should take this wide array of activities into account. Furthermore, and in consideration of the ubiquity of the cell phone, the relationship between this expanded definition of cell phone use and academic performance warrants investigation.

Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Academic Performance

In addition to improving the way cell phone use is measured, a better understanding of the relationship between cell phone use and academic performance requires incorporating additional, well-established predictors into any statistical models designed to assess this relationship. An abundance of research suggests that self-efficacy beliefs are among the strongest predictors of academic performance (for a comprehensive review, see Pajares, 1996). Generally speaking, self-efficacy describes an individual's belief in his or her capabilities to organize and execute the behaviors necessary for success; as such, self-efficacy beliefs are a key mechanism in human agency (Bandura, 1982). Self-efficacy beliefs are domain specific; thus, research has identified self-efficacy beliefs pertinent to academic performance (Pajares, 1996). The strength of academic self-efficacy constructs is their influence over behavior. Students who report high academic self-efficacy apply greater effort to academic pursuits, are more persistent in the face of obstacles, and exhibit a greater interest in learning (Schunk, 1984, 1989). In addition, research illustrates that academic self-efficacy can mediate the effects of academic ability (Pajares, 1996). As a result, academic self-efficacy is positively correlated with virtually

all measures of academic performance, including semester grades, cumulative GPA, homework, test scores, and writing assignments (Multon, Brown, & Lent, 1991; Pajares, 1996).

Research has demonstrated that efficacy beliefs are often better predictors of academic performance than other commonly used social-psychological variables (e.g., Klomegah, 2007; Paulsen & Gentry, 1995; Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). For example, self-efficacy proved to be the strongest predictor of college student's academic performance in a model including task value, goal orientations, metacognitive self-regulation, self-regulation, and learning strategies (Al-Harthi & Was, 2010). Two self-efficacy constructs in particular have received much attention for their ability to predict academic performance (Pajares, 1996). These are self-efficacy for self-regulated learning (SE:SRL) and self-efficacy for academic achievement (SE:AA; Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992). SE:SRL concerns an individual's belief in his or her capabilities to proactively regulate his or her learning on the path to academic achievement. This includes belief in one's ability to resist distractions while learning and to create study environments conducive to learning. As such, it is an important variable to consider when exploring the relationship between potential distractors such as cell phones or other new media and academic performance (LaRose & Eastin, 2004; LaRose, Lin, & Eastin, 2003; LaRose, Mastro, & Eastin, 2001; Odaci, 2011). A related construct is SE:AA, which describes an individual's belief in his or her capabilities to learn material from specific content areas such as math, science, and history. As originally conceived and validated by Zimmerman et al. (1992), SE:SRL influences SE:AA, which in turn influences final academic achievement. As predicted by the original model and subsequently verified, previous academic performance can influence both SE:SRL and SE:AA (Caprara, Vecchione, Alessandri, Gerbino, & Barbaranelli, 2011).

Research Question

Considering the existing research, as well as the unpublished interview data presented in the introduction of this article, it is hypothesized that cell phone use and academic performance are related. However, in assessing this relationship, there is a need to consider important statistical controls such as SE:SRL, SE:AA, and previous academic performance (i.e., high school GPA). Similarly, research suggests that choice in academic major, as well as demographic and behavioral factors, may also be predictive of academic performance and should, therefore, be considered. This study considered four such factors: sex, cigarette smoking, class standing, and undergraduate major. Indeed, there are well-established sex-related differences in college students' academic performance (Peter & Horn, 2005). Likewise, cigarette smoking has been associated with problematic cell phone use and poor academic performance (DeBerard, Spielmans, & Julka, 2004; Sánchez-Martínez & Otero, 2009). Class standing and undergraduate major may also be potential predictors (Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010; Sulaiman & Mohezar, 2006). In addition, there is a need to operationalize cell phone use more broadly (i.e., assess total cell phone use) in consideration of the device's increased functionality. Finally, there is a need to use objective measures of academic performance such as students' official cumulative GPA. This study fulfills these many needs by answering the following question: What is the relationship between total cell phone use (i.e., calling, texting, video games, social networking, surfing the Internet, software-based applications, etc.) and academic performance (i.e., actual college GPA) after controlling for previously identified predictors of academic performance (i.e., actual high school GPA, SE:SRL, SE:AA, sex, cigarette use, class standing, and academic major)?

Method

The dependent variable for this study, academic performance, was objectively assessed using participants' actual cumulative college GPA. In addition, actual high school GPA was used as a statistical control. Because these are sensitive data, and collecting them involves accessing participants' official academic records, participants were assured that data collection, storage, and reporting would guarantee confidentiality and anonymity. Participants were recruited during class time from courses that typically attract students from a diversity of undergraduate majors. Representative courses include introduction to sociology, general biology, American politics, human nutrition, and world history. During class time, the principal investigators explained the methods to all students present, answered questions, addressed concerns, and ensured that the informed consent document was read, understood, and signed. After this, a survey was distributed and completed during class by all students who consented to participate in the study. On the survey, students provided their university email address, which was later used to access their academic records. If students did not consent to have their GPA retrieved, they did not participate in the study. This method produced an initial sample size of 536 undergraduate students from 82 self-reported majors.

Measures

The survey took approximately 10 min to complete. Students first provided basic demographic and lifestyle information. Students completed the validated SE:SRL (Zimmerman et al., 1992) and SE:AA scales (Zimmerman et al., 1992). Participants also provided information regarding their cell phone use as operationalized by Lepp et al. (2013) and, finally, their email addresses. Email addresses

were used to access each student's official academic records from which college and high school GPAs were collected.

SE:SRL is an 11-item scale that measures how well students believe that they can use a variety of self-regulated learning strategies such as finish homework assignments by deadlines, study when there are other interesting things to do, concentrate on school subjects, and arrange a place to study without distractions (Zimmerman et al., 1992, p. 668). SE:AA is a nine-item scale that measures how well students believe that they can achieve success in important academic domains such as reading, writing, English grammar, mathematics, science, social studies, and computer use. For the items in both self-efficacy measures, students used a seven-point Likert-type scale to rate their perceived capability to do well (i.e., 1 = *not too well* to 7 = *very well*). Responses for the items in each scale were summed, thereby producing a total score. Higher scores indicate greater self-efficacy. Both scales have been previously validated and found to have strong internal consistency (coefficient $\alpha = .87$ and $.70$, respectively; Zimmerman et al., 1992). Since their development, both have been consistently shown to be reliable predictors of academic performance in variety settings (Pajares, 1996). Likewise, the SE:SRL and SE:AA scales demonstrated strong internal consistency with this study's sample of undergraduate students (coefficient $\alpha = .84$ and $.73$, respectively; $N = 536$).

Total daily cell phone use was measured using the following item: "As accurately as possible, please estimate the total amount of time you spend using your mobile phone each day. Please consider all uses except listening to music. For example: consider calling, texting, sending photos, gaming, surfing the Internet, watching videos, Facebook, email, and all other uses driven by "apps" and software."

Participants provided best estimates for hours of cell phone use per day and minutes per day. Total use in minutes was calculated for each participant as $\text{hours} \times 60 + \text{minutes}$. In developing this measure of total cell phone use, two focus groups of undergraduate students reviewed the question for content validity criteria, including (a)

clarity in wording, (b) relevance of the items, (c) use of standard English, (d) absence of biased words and phrases, (e) formatting of items, and (f) clarity of the instructions (Fowler, 2002). Most students provided feedback from the criteria categories of (a), (b), (c), and (f). Appropriate alterations were made to the survey based upon the responses and suggestions. In consideration of this measure's construct validity, participants' daily text messaging and daily calling were assessed as this is how cell phone use has been operationalized in previous research (e.g., Jacobsen & Forste, 2011). Total daily cell phone use (calling, texting plus all other uses such as Internet browsing and games) was positively correlated with daily texting ($r = .430, p < .001$) and daily calling ($r = .210, p < .001$), suggesting that the measures are related but not identical. In addition, we assessed construct validity in a small group ($N = 21$) of undergraduate college students at the same university from which the present sample was culled. Self-reported total cell phone use (minutes) as assessed by this measure had a large, significant correlation ($r = .510, p = .018$) to objectively measured cell phone use (minutes) obtained by accessing students' actual cell phone records (unpublished data). Thus, this self-report measure was carefully developed to assure content validity, while subsequent testing provided evidence of construct and criterion validity.

Data Analysis

All analyses were performed using SPSS for Windows (Version 18.0, SPSS Inc, Evenston, Illinois). First, independent samples t tests were used to examine differences in GPA between males and females and smokers and nonsmokers. Likewise, ANOVA was used to examine differences in GPA between class (i.e., freshman, sophomore, junior, senior) and a categorization of students based on the college that houses their major (i.e., education, health, and human services; arts and sciences; business and communications). Second, Pearson's

correlations were performed to examine the relationships between the following variables: college GPA, SE:SRL, SE:AA, high school GPA, and total cell phone use. Third, hierarchical regression was used to answer this study's central research question:

- **Research Question 1:** What is the relationship between total cell phone use and academic performance after controlling for known predictors? Toward this end, the following model was initially proposed:

College GPA = sex, smoker,
class standing, college major
(Block 1)
+ SE : AA (Block 2) +
SE : SRL (Block 3) +
high school GPA (Block 4)
+ total daily cell phone use (Block 5).

The categorical variables of interest were assessed in the first block of this model: sex, cigarette smoking, class, and college. Blocks 2 to 4 in this model are identical to the model developed by Zimmerman et al. (1992) and supported by others (e.g., Caprara et al., 2011) to predict academic performance. Block 5 added cell phone use to the model and thereby tested whether or not daily cell phone use uniquely predicted college academic performance (GPA) after controlling for these other, previously established variables.

Finally, to further illustrate the relationship between cell phone use and GPA, a tertile split for cell phone use was performed. Students in this final sample ($N = 518$) were divided into the following groups: low cell phone use group ($M = 94.6$ min per day, $SD = 41.0$, $n = 180$), moderate use group ($M = 235.1$ min per day, $SD = 45.2$, $n = 173$), and high use group ($M = 601.3$ min per day, $SD = 226.8$, $n =$

164). An ANOVA was then utilized to compare mean GPA across the three cell phone use groups (high, moderate, low). Post hoc *t* tests were performed for any significant main effect.

Results

Assumption Checking, Descriptive Statistics, and Preliminary Analyses

Before conducting any descriptive or inferential statistics, an examination of outliers (i.e., cell phone use, GPA, age, SE:SRL, SE:AA) was conducted. Following the method of Rosen et al. (2013), total cell phone use values that were more than 3 standard deviations from the mean were truncated to exactly 3 standard deviations from the mean. This procedure was applied to measures of total cell phone use for seven participants. Outliers on any of the remaining variables were removed from the study. This procedure resulted in 18 cases being removed and yielded a final analysis sample of 518 students. The age range of the data set was 18 to 28, with a mean of 20.28 ($SD = 1.78$). The data set was evenly distributed by class (freshmen = 132, sophomores = 139, juniors = 134, and seniors = 113). Females comprised 69% of the data set ($n = 360$), which is greater than the percentage of females (59%) in the overall undergraduate student body of the University.

From this data set, the assumptions of regression were examined, and a preliminary analysis was performed to assess the linearity of the relationship between the study's independent continuous variables (SE:SRL, SE:AA, high school GPA, total cell phone use) and college GPA. Using a Lack of Fit Test, the assumption of linearity was upheld ($p = .906$). The assumptions of normality and homoskedasticity were also met using residual scatterplots.

On average, students reported spending 300 min per day using their cell phones ($SD = 243$). The sample's mean GPA was 3.03 ($SD = 0.60$). Independent sample t tests demonstrated significant differences between males and females ($p < .001$) and smokers and nonsmokers ($p < .001$). Females' GPA ($M = 3.09$, $SD = 0.63$) was significantly higher than males' ($M = 2.88$, $SD = 0.62$), and nonsmokers' GPA ($M = 3.07$, $SD = 0.64$, $n = 432$) was significantly higher than smokers' ($M = 2.80$, $SD = 0.58$, $n = 85$). An ANOVA demonstrated significant differences in mean GPA between the four classes ($p < .001$). Freshmen had a mean GPA of 3.21 ($SD = 0.67$), sophomores had a mean GPA of 2.93 ($SD = 0.64$), juniors had a mean GPA of 3.02 ($SD = 0.55$), and seniors had a mean GPA of 2.94 ($SD = 0.48$). Finally, the 82 self-reported majors were categorized into three groups based on the college housing the major (education, health, and human services; arts and sciences; business and communications). An ANOVA found no significant difference in mean GPA between these three groups ($p = .081$). Thus, this variable was not included in further analysis.

Table 1 provides descriptive statistics for the continuous variables used in this model. Table 2 illustrates the results of Pearson's correlations. There are several significant correlations worth noting. There was a significant, negative correlation between cell phone use and college GPA ($p < .001$). There was a significant, positive correlation between both measures of self-efficacy (SE:SRL, SE:AA) and college GPA ($p < .001$). There was a significant, negative correlation between both measures of self-efficacy (SE:SRL, SE:AA) and cell phone use ($p \leq .041$). Finally, high school GPA was significantly and positively correlated with college GPA ($p < .001$).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics.			
	N	M	SD
College GPA	518	3.03	0.601
High School GPA	483	3.22	0.473
SE:SRL	518	56.42	8.96
SE:AA	518	44.44	7.07
Cell phone use	518	300.55	243.52

Note. GPA = grade point average; SE:SRL = self-efficacy for self-regulated learning; SE:AA = self-efficacy for academic achievement.

Table 2. Pearson Correlation Coefficients (r).				
	College GPA	High School GPA	SE:SRL	SE:AA
High School GPA	.611***			
SE:SRL	.341***	.242***		
SE:AA	.200***	.275***	.456***	
Cell phone use	-.234***	-.168***	-.90*	-.239***

Note. GPA = grade point average; SE:SRL = self-efficacy for self-regulated learning; SE:AA = self-efficacy for academic achievement.

* $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

Hierarchical Regression

As described above, the preliminary analysis supported testing the following hierarchical regression model:

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College GPA = sex, smoker,
class standing (Block 1) +
SE : AA (Block 2)
+ SE : SRL (Block 3) +
high school GPA (Block 4) +
total daily cell phone use (Block 5).

Table 3 provides the model summary results for the hierarchical regression predicting college GPA with total cell phone use as the final block in the model. Each block significantly added to the prediction of the criterion variable. In Block 1, females had a significantly greater GPA than males ($\beta = .120, p = .007$), nonsmokers had a significantly higher GPA than smokers ($\beta = .155, p = .001$), and class standing proved significant as well ($\beta = -.111, p = .013$). In Block 2, there was a significant, positive relationship between college GPA and SE:AA ($\beta = .210, p < .001$). In Block 3, there was a significant, positive relationship between college GPA and SE:SRL ($\beta = .289, p < .001$). In Block 4, there was a significant, positive relationship between college GPA and high school GPA ($\beta = .553, p < .001$). Finally, there was a significant, negative relationship between total daily cell phone use and college GPA ($\beta = -.164, p < .001$). This total model explained 44.9% of the variance in college GPA ($R^2 = .449$).

**Table 3. Hierarchical
Regression Predicting College
GPA: Model Summary.**

	Sex/ class/ smoke Block 1	SE:AA Block 2	SE:SRL Block 3	HS GPA Block 4	CP use Block 5
R ²	.058	.101	.165	.425	.449
ΔR ²	.058	.043	.064	.259	.024
ΔF	9.755	22.922	36.580	213.86	20.454
p	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

Note. GPA = grade point average; SE:SRL = self-efficacy for self-regulated learning; SE:AA = self-efficacy for academic achievement; HS = high school; CP = cell phone.

Finally, the ANOVA comparing GPA across the three cell phone use groups (low, moderate, high) revealed a significant main effect ($F = 11.70, df = 2, p < .001$). Specifically, the high cell phone use group had a GPA ($M = 2.84, SD = 0.61$) that was significantly lower ($p < .001$) than both the moderate use group ($M = 3.06, SD = .61$) and the low use group ($M = 3.15, SD = 0.45$). There was not a statistically significant difference between the low use and moderate use groups ($p = .175$).

Discussion

This study was exploratory in nature. Therefore, the findings are best understood as initial steps into a new line of inquiry. The study's aim was to assess the relationship between cell phone use and academic performance after controlling for known predictors

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of academic performance. A hierarchical regression was used for this purpose allowing for the development of a model which used sex, cigarette smoking behavior, class standing, SE:AA, SE:SRL, and high school GPA to predict college GPA. Each of these variables were significant predictors of college GPA. Females, as has been the recent trend, had higher GPAs than males (Peter & Horn, 2005). Smokers, as suggested in previous research, had lower GPAs than nonsmokers (DeBerard et al., 2004; Sánchez-Martínez & Otero, 2009). Class was a significant predictor as well, with freshmen and juniors doing slightly better academically than sophomores and seniors in this sample. As expected, SE:SRL, SE:AA, and high school GPA were all positively associated with GPA (Zimmerman et al., 1992). Finally, total cell phone use (min/day) was added to the end of this regression model. After controlling for the previously established predictors of academic performance, total cell phone use was found to be a significant negative predictor of GPA. These results suggest that given two college students from the same university with the same class standing, same sex, same smoking habits, same belief in their ability to self-regulate their learning and do well academically, and same high school GPA—the student who uses the cell phone more on a daily basis is likely to have a lower GPA than the student who uses the cell phone less.

Previous research suggests that college students' cell phone use may be a distraction in academic settings (Levine et al., 2007). Two previous studies using large random samples of college students found that 89% (N = 302) and 83% (N = 251) of the students surveyed perceived the cell phone primarily as a leisure device rather than as an educational tool (Barkley & Lepp, 2013; Lepp et al., 2013). Because the cell phone is ever-present and commonly used for leisure, it is likely that it occasionally distracts from learning in class, in the library, in the dormitories, and in any other setting utilized by students for academic purposes. In addition, there is a growing amount of research that suggests electronic media in any form encourages multitasking (Jacobsen & Forste, 2011; Junco & Cotton, 2011, 2012; Karpinski et al., 2013; Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010; Wood

et al., 2012) and task-switching (Rosen et al., 2013), both of which are negatively related to academic performance.

Considering these explanations, it is likely that the modern cell phone creates a temptation to surf the Internet, check social media (e.g., Facebook), play video games, contact friends, explore new applications, or engage with any number of cell-phone-based leisure activities, which some students fail to resist when they should otherwise be focused on academics. As such, the negative relationship between cell phone use and academic performance identified here could be attributed to students' decreased attention while studying or a diminished amount of time dedicated to uninterrupted studying. Indeed, a similar argument has been proffered to explain the negative relationship between general social-networking site use or Facebook use and academic performance (Karpinski et al., 2013; Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010). Future research should examine the many potential underlying reasons for the negative relationship identified here, including time spent studying and multitasking. Of course, this line of research has demonstrated only relationships and not causality. Thus, there is a need to explore these relationships over time and with experimental designs.

There is also a need to better understand how specific cell phone uses are related to academic performance. While this study found that cell phone use as a whole was negatively associated with academic performance, the relationship may vary with particular uses. In other words, contrary to the findings presented here, there may be specific uses that are positively related to academic performance. For example, Norris (1996) found that while TV watching as a whole was negatively associated with political participation, watching TV news and public affairs programming was positively associated with political participation. Likewise, Chen and Tzeng (2010) found that using the Internet for information seeking was associated with better academic performance, while using the Internet for video game playing was associated with lower levels of academic performance. Finally, Junco (2012a) found that the

total amount of time college students spend on Facebook, as well as the total number of times students check Facebook, were negatively associated with campus engagement. However, some Facebook activities such as creating events and RSVPing for events were positively associated with campus engagement. Thus, assessing cell phone use as a whole is likely to provide only a partial understanding of an undoubtedly complex relationship. Additional research assessing time devoted to specific cell phone uses such as gaming, social networking, information search, and the use of educational software (apps) is needed.

While these findings build upon and extend previous research in this area, there are limitations. First, cell phone use was self-reported. Although the self-report measure used in this study was carefully developed to assure content validity and a subsequent test provided evidence of criterion validity, research by Boase and Ling (2013) illustrates that continuous, open-ended self-report cell phone measures are at risk of overreporting use. In lieu of objective data, future studies may seek to further validate this measure. Furthermore, future studies should assess the time devoted to common specific uses such as social networking, gaming, and information search, in addition to measuring overall use as was done here. Second, the sample consisted of undergraduate college students from a single, large, public university in the Midwestern United States. Although the behavioral norms governing cell phone use appear to be consistent among today's college students (Anderson & Rainie, 2011; Tindell & Bohlander, 2012), attempts to generalize these results to other populations should be made with caution. Therefore, future research should include college students from different types of universities and from different geographic regions. In addition, high school and junior high school students should be studied as recent research suggests that the relationships identified here may be evident in younger students as well (Rosen et al., 2013).

Conclusion

This research utilized a more holistic measure of cell phone use than previous studies. The measure accounts for the cell phone's expanded capabilities in the realm of social networking, gaming, and Internet use. After controlling for SE:SRL, SE:AA, and other important predictors such as actual high school GPA, this measure of cell phone use was a significant and negative predictor of college students' academic performance, objectively measured as cumulative GPA. Presently, cell phone use is a dominant and defining characteristic of this generation of college students and often occurs during class time, while completing homework, and while studying (Smith, Raine, & Zickuhr, 2011; Tindell & Bohlander, 2012). Therefore, more research is needed to better understand the mechanisms underlying this relationship. Even so, educators and administrators in higher education may wish to carefully consider policies regarding cell phone use in the classroom, laboratories, and other settings where learning occurs. Undoubtedly, the capability of the cell phone to entertain, connect, and inform will continue its rapid development. As such, cell phones and related devices will only increase in popularity and use. Therefore, there is a need to better understand how this technology can be harnessed to make a genuine contribution to student learning. We may discover conditions where learning is enhanced by having the cell phone on; likewise, we may discover conditions where learning is enhanced by having it off.

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5. Assignment: Practice Exit Exam

Directions

Read the article “The Relationship Between Cell Phone Use and Academic Performance in a Sample of U.S. College Students” by Andrew Lepp, Jacob E. Barkley, and Aryn C. Karpinski.

Write an essay in response to one of the prompts listed below. The essay should be between 350-500 words in length and your essay should meet the following criteria:

1. Have a clear introduction that states the main theme or thesis of the essay
2. Have a clear beginning, middle and end.
3. Makes explicit reference to both the reading and to your own/others experience with the topic.
4. Provide enough detailed discussion of ideas so that a reader could learn something significant about your thinking on this topic
5. Use proof reading and editing effectively so that your surface error rate (grammar, spelling, punctuation) does not interfere with a readers understanding.

Your essay should address one of the prompts listed below.

1. The article discusses both the positive and negative effects of cellphone use in the classroom. Based on your own experience, which position do you agree with? Be sure to make direct reference to the article.
2. According to the article, “multitasking has emerged as a

possible explanation for the negative relationship between electronic media use (including cell phone use) and academic performance.” Compare or contrast your experience with multi-tasking. Be sure to make direct reference to the article.

[A handout of this assignment is available here.](#)

PART II

UNIT 2: WRITING PROCESS

6. Introduction to Writing Process

Why is it necessary to think of writing as a process?

As students, we're used to thinking of "essay" as a noun. It's often seen as an obligation, a task, a chore.



But the origin of the word "essay" is actually as a verb, meaning "to attempt." Thought of in this way, writing an essay can be seen as an open, inviting exercise. It's a way of exploring a new concept. It's using writing as thinking.

A mountain climber wouldn't attempt a new technically-challenging climb without a lot of planning and preparation ahead of time. Essayists also need planning and preparation for new technical challenges.

The **writing process** supports the exploratory, open-ended nature of essay writing. It gives you guidance towards a final product, while still allowing you room to explore along the way.

THE WRITING PROCESS



We'll spend this module exploring each stage of the writing process, showing how stages overlap and intersect to lead you towards writing success.

Learning Objectives

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

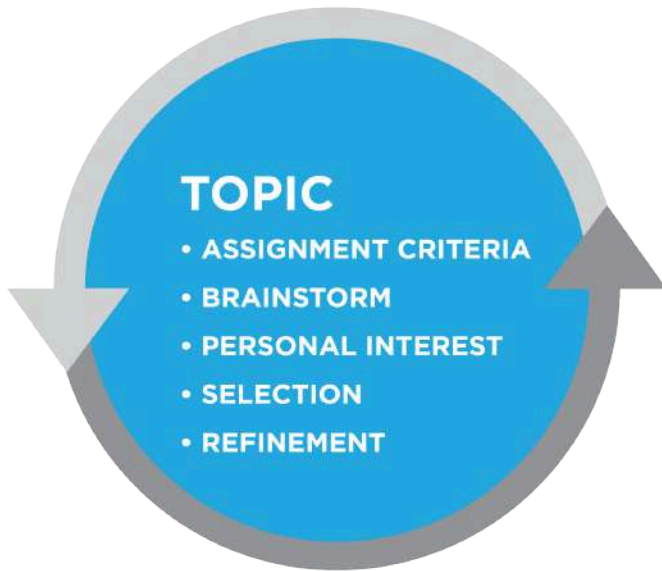
- Identify topic selection activities
- Identify prewriting activities
- Identify activities to find evidence in support of a claim
- Identify essay organizational techniques
- Identify drafting activities
- Identify revision activities
- Identify proofreading activities

7. Selecting a Topic

Introduction

Learning Objectives

- identify strategies for personalizing an assigned topic
- identify strategies for finding a focus for an unassigned topic
- identify strategies for moving from general to specific



Some instructors who assign writing projects will leave the choice of what to write about up to you. Others will have a very defined set of topics for you to write from. But even when an instructor assigns a given topic or offers a choice of assigned topics, you have a lot of opportunity for creativity.

The real issue here is **approach**. When you come to an assigned essay as a project, how you first engage with it will determine your overall experience. Some students see any writing assignment as an externally imposed task — something they have to do in order to pass the course. This approach will guarantee that those students will eventually hate their assignments, possibly their instructor, and when push comes to shove the whole project of being in school.

Solution: Choosing an Approach to Your Topic

Deliberately choosing how you approach your topic will help you not only choose one that will satisfy the requirements, but also ensure that you enjoy the process of research and writing. After all, no one on earth can do what you do. So, only you can figure out how to write a great essay in your own voice.

It all starts with selecting a topic. How you approach that selection process is vastly important.

The key is to identify what made you take the class in the first place. Something about this class captured your fancy and made you register (particularly in the case of an elective), so place that interest at the heart of your topic.

Look to what you were interested in as a way of finding your paper topic! Use that initial fascination to twist the topic of your paper so that it becomes an excuse to wallow in whatever got you interested in that class in the first place.

Avoiding the Pit of Despair

Whatever you do, don't fall into the trap of thinking that your work is simply a required box that needs to be checked and you can't bring any creativity to the table. Even if the class was required for your program or degree, you still chose that program. There are ways to make almost any writing task enjoyable, or at least something you gain something interesting out of.

How to Come Up With a Topic to Write About

Many people are intimidated by the thought of writing. One of the biggest factors that can contribute to writers' block is not knowing what to write about. If you can find a topic that interests you, your writing will likely flow more readily and you will be more likely to write a successful piece. Use a variety of strategies for coming up with something to write about to find what works best for your writing and learning style.



Understand the Essay Assignment

Understanding the assigned essay is the first step to coming up with a topic. Knowing the type of essay that is expected, the length of the essay, and to what degree research is expected will all determine the scope of the topic you will choose.

Evaluate the Purpose of the Assignment

The purpose of the assignment will also determine the type of topic. A persuasive essay, for example, will have a much different type of topic than a personal experience essay.

- Look for key action words like *compare*, *analyze*, *describe*, *synthesize*, and *contrast*. These words will help you determine what your teacher wants you to do in the essay.

Select a Topic from a Provided List

If your instructor has provided a list of topics for you, choose a topic from the given list. It is likely that the topics have been gathered together because they are an appropriate scope and breadth and the instructor has found that the topics have led to successful essays in the past.

- Choose the topic for which a main idea comes most naturally and for which you feel you can develop the paper easily.

Brainstorm a List of Ideas

Write down a list of ideas that come to mind. They don't have to be good ideas, but it's good to just start writing a list to get your ideas flowing. Just write down everything you can think of; you can evaluate the ideas later.

This video demonstrates that writers of all levels and experiences value the process of brainstorming. Watch brainstorming in action for a television sitcom.

Freewrite for a Predetermined Amount of Time

Decide ahead of time how long you want to freewrite, then just write without stopping.

- Most people write for 10-20 minutes.
- Do not stop writing, even if you need to just write “blah blah blah” in the middle of a sentence.
- Hopefully, you will write yourself towards a useful thought or idea through freewriting. Even if it does not give you content you can use in your essay, it can be a valuable writing warm-up.

Create a Visual Representation of Your Ideas

Especially if you are a visual learner, creating a visual representation of your ideas may help you stumble onto or narrow down ideas to a good topic.

- Use a mind map. The center of the mind map contains your main argument, or thesis, and other ideas branch off in all directions.
- Draw an idea web. This a visual that uses words in circles connected to other words or ideas. Focusing on the connections between ideas as well as the ideas themselves may help you generate a topic.

Remember What the Teacher Focused On In Class

If you are writing an essay for a class, think about what the teacher

spent a lot of time talking about in class. This may make a good choice for an essay, as the teacher clearly thinks it's something important.

- Review your class notes and see if there is anything that stands out as interesting or important.
- Review any handouts or focus sections of a text that were assigned.

Think About What Interests You



Writing

something you care about or that you are interested in is much easier than making yourself write about things that seem boring. Make a list of your interests and see if there is a way to connect one or more of them to your essay.

Consider the List You Have Generated

Write a few additional notes next to each potential topic and evaluate whether each item would be an appropriate topic. At this

point, you should be able to narrow your list down to a few good choices.

- You may want to ask your teacher if you have narrowed down your ideas to two or three items. She may have some insight as to which topic would be the most successful.
 - Go back and look at the original assignment again and determine which of your narrowed topics will best fit with the intent of the essay assignment.
-

When to Narrow Down a Topic

Most students will have to narrow down their topic at least a little. The first clue is that your paper needs to be narrowed is simply the length your professor wants it to be. You can't properly discuss "war" in 1,000 words, nor talk about orange rinds for 12 pages.

Steps to Narrowing a Topic

1. First start out with a general topic. Take the topic and break it down into categories by asking the five W's and H.
 - Who? (American Space Exploration)
 - What? (Manned Space Missions)
 - Where? (Moon Exploration)
 - When? (Space exploration in the 1960's)
 - Why? (Quest to leave Earth)
 - How? (Rocket to the Moon: Space Exploration)

- Now consider the following question areas to generate specific ideas to narrow down your topic.
 - Problems faced? (Sustaining Life in Space: Problems with space exploration)
 - Problems overcome? (Effects of zero gravity on astronauts)
 - Motives? (Beating the Russians: Planning a moon mission)
 - Effects on a group? (Renewing faith in science: aftershock of the Moon mission)
 - Member group? (Designing a moon lander: NASA engineers behind Apollo 11)
 - Group affected? (From Test Pilots to Astronauts: the new heroes of the Air force)
 - Group benefited? (Corporations that made money from the American Space Program)
 - Group responsible for/paid for _____ (The billion dollar bill: taxpayer reaction to the cost of sending men to the moon)
- Finally, refine your ideas by considering the **S.O.C.R.A.P.R.** model.
 - **S** = Similarities (Similar issues to overcome between the 1969 moon mission and the planned 2009 Mars Mission)
 - **O** = Opposites (American pro and con opinions about the first mission to the moon)
 - **C** = Contrasts (Protest or patriotism: different opinions about cost vs. benefit of the moon mission)
 - **R** = Relationships (the NASA family: from the scientists on earth to the astronauts in the sky)
 - **A** = Anthropomorphisms [interpreting reality in terms of human values] (Space: the final frontier)
 - **P** = Personifications [giving objects or descriptions human qualities] (the eagle has landed: animal symbols and metaphors in the space program)
 - **R** = Repetition (More missions to the moon: Pro and Con American attitudes to landing more astronauts on the

moon)

Self-Check



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8. Prewriting

Introduction

Learning Objectives

- identify purpose and defining characteristics of prewriting
- identify various prewriting strategies, including freewriting, listing, questioning, clustering, and dialoguing
- identify rhetorical context for the writing task
- identify working thesis statement



Many students — and some teachers — want to skip the pre-writing stage of the writing process because they see it as unnecessarily burdensome and time-consuming. However, teachers who dismiss the pre-writing stage as being completely unnecessary are performing a disservice to many of their students. Pre-writing is an essential part of the entire writing process because it enables you to begin documenting the process by which the eventual essay will be formed and evaluated.

The term “pre-writing” may be a bit misleading because writing can and often does occur at this critical stage. For example, written notes and outlines, including graphic organizers, can serve as a record of one’s ideas and the sources of those ideas. A preliminary thesis or hypothesis could inform the process and the product.

Many people do brainstorm via their thoughts without recording those ideas and sources in permanent form prior to the next steps in the writing process. Most developing writers, however, need to

record their pre-writing ideas in permanent form so that those ideas can clearly inform and guide the thinking and writing process, resulting in a coherent, well-organized product or text.

Prewriting Strategies

The term “pre-writing” conjures up a lot of strange activities and practices. You’ve probably tried many different prewriting strategies in the past, and may have a good idea of what works for you and what doesn’t.

Keep in mind that the KIND of writing project you’re working on can impact how effective a particular technique is to use in a given situation. Something that you’ve relied on before may not be as effective as you move into new subjects. Experiment often.

Make it fun! Here are some to try:

Freewriting

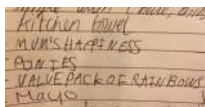


Set a timer for a short amount of time (5 minutes or 10 minutes are good options). During that period, write anything that comes to mind related to your topic. The goal is to not worry about what comes out of your pen or keyboard. Instead, just free your mind to associate as it wishes. It’s amazingly productive for rich ideas, and it’s nice not to have to worry about spelling and grammar.

If it’s hard for you to “turn off” the worry about writing well,

challenge yourself to write a few awful, terrible sentences as the beginning.

List-Making



If you're a list-maker by nature, there's no reason not to harness that for academic writing purposes. Jot notes about major ideas related to the subject you're working with. This also works well with a time limit, like 10 minutes. A bonus feature—after you've had time to reflect on your list, you can rearrange it in hierarchical order, and create a basic outline quickly.

Clustering



Also known as “mapping,” this is a more visual form of brainstorming. It asks you to come up with topic ideas, and draw lines to connect ideas and figure out sub-categories and related ideas. You can end up with a quite extensive “bubble cloud” as a result. This also works well within a time limit, like 10 minutes.

Questioning



The way to find answers is to ask questions—seems simple enough. This applies to early-stage writing processes, just like everything else. When you have a topic in mind, asking and answering questions about it is a good way to figure out directions your writing might take.

Start with just listing the questions. What do you want or need to know the answers to regarding your topic?

Dialoging



Another approach to getting inside a topic is to imagine two people talking about it. Write out a script for two characters you invent. Give them names and brief personalities—why are they interested in this subject? Assume one of them knows more than the other about it.

An option is to find another person to participate with you. Write down a back and forth conversation you have about the topic. Try texting or emailing one another to make it feel authentic.

Rhetorical Context For Yourself as a Writer

External forces work to shape any text you read. The author's background, the intended audience, and the intended purpose of a text combine to influence the text itself.

The same is true for items you write. Who you are as an author, who you anticipate as your audience, and what your purpose for writing is, will all shape what you produce.

This presentation addresses considerations about Author, Audience, and Purpose when you write.



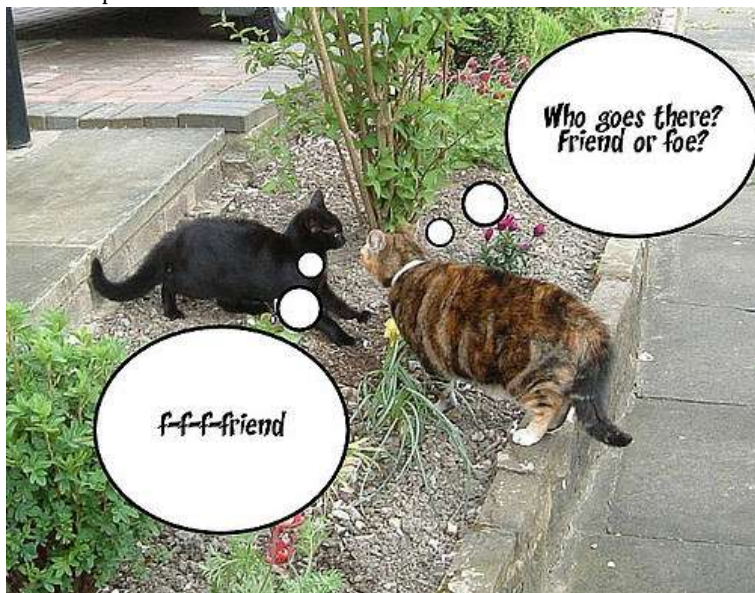
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The Working Thesis Statement

Students often see a thesis statement as an object of mystery. It helps to realize that they are friend, not foe. They are often quite

useful tools, both in helping you write and in making sure the final product is powerful.



Simply put, a **thesis** tells the reader your topic and your position on that topic.

When you've decided on a topic and explored it with prewriting activities, drafting a **working thesis** is a very helpful next step. As the name implies, a working thesis is a work in progress—it helps you form initial ideas, but is open to change as you keep working on the project.

A working thesis statement is just like a regular thesis statement, except that you can tweak it and change it as you research and write. It's sort of like making a plan for the weekend on Tuesday night: you know the plan will probably be modified, but it's a good place to start. — Portland State University Writing Center¹

1. ["Step Three: Developing a Working Thesis Statement"](#)

Self-Check



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[Writing Resources Guided Tour](#)

9. Finding Evidence

Introduction

Learning Objectives

- identify experience or examples from personal life as they relate to the topic
- identify strategies for preliminary research on the topic
- identify strategies for synthesis of research and personal ideas
- identify effective techniques for quoting a source
- identify effective techniques for paraphrasing a source
- identify effective techniques for summarizing a source



Watch this clip from the TV show *Mythbusters*. It presents a common argument: that the U.S. government perpetrated a conspiracy to fake the moon landing in 1969.



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(The video has an instrumental soundtrack but no voice-over.)

The argument for the Moon Landing Hoax depends upon two

pieces of evidence: the flag was waving when there should be no wind; and the sun did not cast parallel shadows, as it apparently should have. How did you react to this evidence?

If you are like most people, you reacted with skepticism. Did the picture alone convince you that the shadows were wrong? Is it possible that the shadows were actually parallel, and that the photograph was simply unclear? Could you tell that the flag's movement was caused by the wind on the moon, or could the astronaut have been moving the flagpole? Did you even know that flags are not supposed to flap on the moon?

Even if you offer “hard” facts like photographs or smoking guns as evidence, your readers will not find your argument convincing unless you show that these facts actually support your claims. You should provide as evidence not only reliable facts—facts drawn from sources your readers trust—but also the right kinds of facts—facts that are directly relevant to your claim and appropriate to the kind of argument you are making. If you can't do this, you may have to make an additional argument showing that your evidence is relevant, reliable, and connected to your claims. If you can't show this, you shouldn't expect your evidence to persuade your readers.

For these reasons, the evidence presented in the Moon Landing Hoax clip is not convincing. No source is listed for the information given; we cannot be sure that these are the most reliable photographs and video footage available. The evidence is also unexplained. In short, the evidence here does not prove that the moon landing was a hoax—but it may accomplish the ad's goal, which is to provide just enough evidence to get us to watch the show.

The following section will address how to supply evidence that is convincing, and supportable, as part of your academic writing.

Support and Elaboration



Support and elaboration consist of the specific details and information writers use to develop their topic. The key to developing support and elaboration is getting *specific*. Good writers use concrete, specific details, and relevant information to establish mental images for their readers.

Two important concepts in support and elaboration are *sufficiency* and *relatedness*.

Sufficiency refers the amount of detail — is there enough detail to support the topic? Any parent who has asked his or her child what happened at school knows how hard it is to get a child to elaborate on a subject. Good writers supply their readers with sufficient details to comprehend what they have written. In narrative writing, this means providing enough descriptive details for the reader to construct a picture of the story in their mind. In expository writing, this means not only finding enough information to support your purpose, whether it is to inform or persuade your audience, but also finding information that is credible and accurate.

Sufficiency, however, is not enough. The power of your information is determined less by the quantity of details than by their *quality*.

Relatedness refers to the quality of the details and their relevance to the topic. Good writers select only the details that will support their focus, deleting irrelevant information. In narrative writing, details should be included only if they are concrete, specific details that contribute to, rather than detract from, the picture provided by the narrative. In expository writing, information should be included only if it is relevant to the writer's goal and strengthens rather than weakens the writer's ability to meet that goal.

Guiding Questions for Support and Elaboration

FOR NARRATIVE WRITING:

- Is your story developed with specific details that are related to the main event?
- Do all of the details move the story along?
- Does your story have enough elaboration so that your reader can see and feel what is happening? Can you show me an example where your reader can see or feel what is happening?

FOR INFORMATIONAL WRITING:

- Is your essay developed with specific information (facts, statistics, etc.) that is related to the main topic?
- Does all of the information support the main topic?
- Does your essay have enough information to fulfill

your reader's needs?

FOR ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING:

- Is your essay developed with specific details that are related to the main topic?
- Does all of the information support the main argument?
- Does your essay have enough supporting evidence to persuade your reader?

Preliminary Research



In the preliminary research stage, the you'll begin the process of finalizing your topic, continuing to refine your working thesis, and documenting the sources to be used for guidance and support.

Techniques and Strategies

- use an online search engine (like Google) or print resources (like magazines and books) at the local media center or library to gain familiarity with a topic
- read a text's table of contents, index, and chapter headings in order to determine your primary interest for the assignment
- examine sources to determine the availability of authentic, credible, current resources for your topic
- select a final topic for a thesis that permits focused research and writing

Finding the Scope

The preliminary research stage serves as an important connection between pre-writing and formulating a thesis. This stage is characterized by many of the components of the pre-writing stage, such as gathering information from a variety of sources. But rather than thinking broadly, as in pre-writing, the goal in the preliminary research stage is to narrow things down and home in on a reasonable scope for the topic.

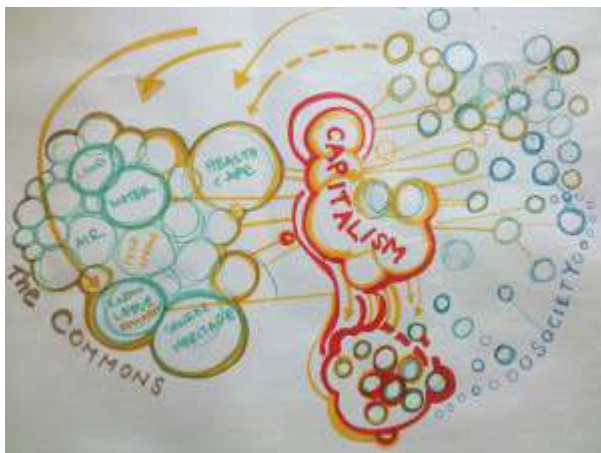
This stage enables you to understand which of your ideas can be documented by sources. Even an opinion piece needs to be validated through documented research. Preliminary research also permits you to change your mind about the intended topic before too much time and effort are committed to the process.

Blending Source Material with Your Own Work

The process of research can be fun, interesting work. Sometimes it can be hard to stop researching, and start writing. You may also find that you find so many great ideas from research, that it's hard to say anything unique yourself.

The goal of most college writing, though, is to showcase your own ideas. The research should take a back seat to your personal thoughts.

In practical terms, some ways to develop and back up your assertions include:



- **Blend sources with your assertions.** Organize your sources before and as you write so that they blend, even within paragraphs. Your paper—both as a whole and at the paragraph level—should reveal relationships among your sources, and should also reveal the relationships between your own ideas and those of your sources.
- **Write an original introduction and conclusion.** As much as is practical, make the paper's introduction and conclusion your own ideas or your own understanding of the ideas from your research. Use sources minimally in your introduction and

conclusion.

- **Open and close paragraphs with originality.** In general, use the openings and closing of your paragraphs to reveal your work—“enclose” your sources among your assertions. At a minimum, create your own topic sentences and wrap-up sentences for paragraphs.
- **Use transparent rhetorical strategies.** When appropriate, outwardly practice such rhetorical strategies as analysis, synthesis, comparison, contrast, summary, description, definition, evaluation, classification, and even narration. Prove to your reader that you are *thinking* as you write.

Also, you must clarify where your own ideas end and the cited information begins. Part of your job is to help your reader draw the line between these two things, often by the way you create context for the cited information. A phrase such as “A 1979 study revealed that...” is an obvious announcement of citation to come.

Another recommended technique is the insertion of the author’s name into your sentence to announce the beginning of your cited information.

When to Quote, Paraphrase, or Summarize a Source

When you present evidence from a source, you have three options:



- **Quote** the source by using its exact language with quotation marks or in a block quotation.
- **Paraphrase** the source by restating a short passage in your own words.
- **Summarize** the source by restating its ideas in fewer words than the original.

Which option you choose depends on how much of a source you are using, how you are using it, and what kind of paper you are writing, since different fields use sources in different ways. You have to decide each case individually, but here are some general guidelines:

- **If it's long, summarize.** If a passage is more than a paragraph or two, summarize it. Never quote or paraphrase long passages.
- **Don't quote too much.** If you use many passages from sources, do not quote them all. Too many quotations will make readers wonder whether you have contributed any of your own ideas.
- **In the sciences and experimental social sciences, paraphrase and summarize.** In these fields, it's usually the results that matter, not the words used to report them.
- **In the humanities and qualitative social sciences, quote only when the exact words matter.** If a passage from a source is your primary evidence, quote it (or, if it is too long, quote parts

of it). If you address the exact words of a secondary source, quote them.

NOTE: You must **always** cite the source of every quotation, paraphrase, and summary, both in your text and in your bibliography or works cited. If you fail to do so, even by accident, you open yourself to a charge of plagiarism.

Quoting

In general, do not quote a source unless its exact words matter to your argument. You should think about quoting a source

- when the quoted words are your primary evidence (for instance, in an English paper you might quote from a novel; in a history paper you might quote from an official record; or in a sociology paper you might quote an informant)
- when the passage raises an important objection that you rebut, and you want to show that you are not misrepresenting it or taking it out of context
- when the words of a passage are original, odd, or otherwise too useful to lose in a paraphrase
- when a secondary source supports your claim and is written by an important authority who will give your argument credibility

Paraphrasing

In a paraphrase, you restate a passage in your own words. You should think about paraphrasing a source

- when a source's ideas or information, but not its language, are important to your argument (for example, if the result of a study of earthworms supports your claim, but its exact language doesn't matter)
- when you can state the ideas of a source more clearly or concisely than the original
- when a source uses technical terms that are unfamiliar to your readers
- when you use many passages from sources (so that you can avoid having too many quotations)

Summarizing

In a summary, you report the main ideas in a passage in fewer words than the original. You should think about summarizing a source

- when a passage from a source is too long to quote or paraphrase
- when only the main ideas of a source are relevant to your argument (for example, if you want to address only the claim and reasons in an argument, not its evidence or warrants)
- when the details in a source might distract or confuse readers (for example, if a source raises issues that might interest your readers but are not relevant to your argument)

Self-Check



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10. Drafting

Introduction

Learning Objectives

- identify strategies for drafting from an outline
- identify considerations unique to early drafts
- identify the value of multiple drafts

We're ready to dive into the process of writing, proper.

As we do, consider these observations from Dr. Pat Thomson, from the School of Education at The University of Nottingham.



There is a strong temptation to send things off too early. Finishing a first draft usually feels like a win – even a triumph. You didn’t know that it was going to be possible to write that much and here it is – all your words in one place. You rush to get it to your professor and then wait impatiently for the response. And when it comes, it suggests major revisions... Corrections beyond editing? This is a disaster. I am hopeless. The thesis/paper is doomed. I will never finish. The professor is an unfeeling monster.

Not true. All it takes is revision, some of which could have been done in the first place if we hadn’t felt so darned elated that we’d actually produced a text.

But on the other hand...some people are feel

deeply that their writing isn't going to be good enough, now in the first draft, and probably ever. All of the research on writer's block suggests that people who aim for perfection the first time round are likely to seriously inhibit their writing. They agonize over phrases, work on a first sentence until they can't face it any more, take weeks to get a few pages written to their impossibly high expectations. We often see this kind of person characterized in movies – the unsuccessful writer who begins confidently on a first sentence but some hours later is surrounded by crumpled-up papers and sits despondently, staring sadly at a blank screen. Academic writers do this too.

Part of the problem seems to be that in conversations about academic writing we don't talk enough about the inevitability of the crappy first draft and the importance of revising. We don't suggest that it takes more than one go to reach the levels of polished prose that we admire. But really – let me reiterate – it doesn't happen straight away. If we just read finished articles and never see work in progress – and how many of us actually do get to see the work of experienced writers along the way – then we have no idea how much revising good academic writers actually do.

Using an Outline to Write a Paper

The main difference between outlining a reading and outlining your

own paper is the source of the ideas. When you outline something someone else wrote, you are trying to represent their ideas and structure. When outlining your own paper, you will need to focus on your own ideas and how best to organize them. Depending on the type of writing assignment, you might want to incorporate concepts and quotations from various other sources, but your interpretation of those ideas is still the most important element. Creating an outline based on the principles outlined above can help you to put your ideas in a logical order, so your paper will have a stronger, more effective argument.

Step 1: Figure out your main points and create the headings for your outline

Once you have come up with some ideas for your paper, you will need to organize those ideas. The first step is to decide what your main points will be. Use those main ideas as the headings for your outline. Remember to start with your introduction as the first heading, add headings for each main idea in your argument, and finish with a conclusion.

For example, an outline for a five-paragraph essay on why I love my dog might have the following headings:

I. INTRODUCTION

II. BODY PARAGRAPH 1: My Dog is a Good Companion

III. BODY PARAGRAPH 2: My Dog is Well-Behaved

IV. BODY PARAGRAPH 3: My Dog is Cute

V. CONCLUSION

Since the topic is why I love my dog, each of the body paragraphs will present one reason why I love my dog. Always make sure your main ideas directly relate to your topic!

You can order your main ideas based on either the strength of your argument (i.e. put your most convincing point first) or on some other clear organizing principle. A narrative on how you became

a student at this college would most likely follow a chronological approach, for example. Don't worry if you are not completely satisfied with the ordering; you can always change it later. This is particularly easy if you are creating your outline in a word-processing program on a computer: you can drag the items into different positions to test out different orderings and see which makes the most sense.

Step 2: Add your supporting ideas

The next step is to fill in supporting ideas for each of your main ideas. Give any necessary explanations, descriptions, evidence, or examples to convince the reader that you are making a good point. If you are using quotes, add those here. Remember to include the appropriate citation based on whichever format your teacher requires; having that information in your outline will speed things up when you write your paper (since you won't have to go hunting for the bibliographic information) and make it easier to avoid plagiarism.

To continue the example above, a writer might fill in part II of the outline as follows:

II. Body Paragraph 1: My Dog is a Good Companion

A. My dog is fun

1. My dog likes to play
2. My dog likes to go on walks

B. My dog is friendly

1. My dog likes to cuddle
2. My dog likes people

This section is focused on the idea that "I love my dog because he is a good companion." The two first-level subheadings are general reasons why he is a good companion: he is fun (A) and he is friendly (B). Each of those ideas is then further explained through examples: My dog is fun because he like to play and go on walks. I know my

dog is friendly since he enjoys cuddling and like people. Even more detail could be added by including specific games my dog likes to play, behaviors that tell me he like to go on walks, and so. The more detail you add, the easier it will be to write you paper later on!

In terms of how to organize your subheadings, again try to present these supporting ideas in a logical order. Group similar ideas together, move from general concepts to more specific examples or explanations, and make sure each supporting idea directly relates to the heading or subheading under which it falls.

When you have finished adding supporting ideas, read through the outline to see if there is anywhere you think your argument has holes or could be further fleshed out. Make sure that your ideas are in the most logical order. Don't be afraid to test out different orderings to see what makes the most sense!

Step 3: Turn your headings and subheadings into complete sentences

Once you have added as much detail as possible and your outline is complete, save it as a new file on your computer (or type it into the computer). If your main and supporting ideas in the outline are not already in sentence form, turn each item into one or more complete sentences. This will help you to see more clearly idea where to divide up your paragraphs. When writing a short to medium length paper, each heading (or main idea) will typically correspond to one paragraph. For longer papers, each heading may be a section and your first (or even second) level of subheading will eventually become your paragraphs. See how many sentences fall under each heading to get a rough idea of what correspondence makes the most sense for your paper.

Step 4: Construct your paragraphs

Next, start at the beginning of your outline and go through point by point. Delete the outline formatting (indentations and letter/numeral designations) and start to put your sentences together into paragraphs. You may need to add transition phrases or even extra sentences to make sure your prose flows naturally. You might also find that even though your ideas seemed to make sense in the outline, you need to add still more details here or change the order of your ideas for everything to fully make sense. You may even find that you have too many ideas or that some ideas are not really all that relevant and need to be cut. That is perfectly normal. The outline is a plan to help you get organized, but you always have the flexibility to change it to fit the needs of your assignment.

Remember to start a new paragraph whenever you introduce a new idea (or when a paragraph has gotten very long and the reader needs a break). Again, you will probably want to add transition phrases or sentences to connect each paragraph to what came before and to help the reader follow your argument.

Once you have finished turning your outline into paragraphs, you should have a decent first draft of your paper. Now you just need to proofread and revise (and repeat) until you are ready to turn in your assignment!

Crappy First Drafts

Essay assignments are such high-stakes tasks, that we feel a lot of pressure to do serious work, and perform well, at every stage of the writing process. Sure, prewriting can be kind of fun, and outlining can get us excited about the possibilities a project can hold.

At the time of starting to write a first draft, however, the pressure

starts to mount. Sometimes we can feel locked into the need to get everything perfect, that it can be paralyzing.

The thing to remember is that EVERY first draft is crappy. Everyone's.



Consider this blog post by Melissa Ward:

“The first draft of anything is shit.” —Ernest Hemingway

I should be able to stop here, leaving you with Hemingway’s sage and true statement, and go work onto something else, maybe my own shitty first draft of a blog post. But I won’t because I know most of you refuse to accept this truth.

No, instead you think if you beat your head against your desk hard enough and long enough, you will craft some 24k golden prose, words so sweet and deftly written that you’ll bring tears to the eyes of babes.

Well you won't. So stop it.

Still don't believe me? Are you saying, "Melissa, how do you know how well I write?" To this, I say, that doesn't matter. If you can't learn to write a shitty first draft, getting whatever it is out of your system, then you're never going to have the energy to keep writing. You're not going to learn how to take risks, because you'll never let yourself write anything less than perfect on the first go.

FREAKING STOP IT. Write some garbage. Let it spew forth, and once you've finally emptied that stinking pustule, take a step away and come back later. Put on some gloves and dig through the pile you emptied out on those pages, and you'll begin to find some gems. Use them to write a good second draft, and then repeat until you have an excellent final draft.

If you don't believe me, then see what Anne Lamott has to say about it. Lamott's [*Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*](#) has a chapter titled "Shitty First Drafts." The book was required reading when I took my short fiction workshop in college, and it's a great book for all writers.

The shitty first draft isn't about encouraging bad writing ... it's about encouraging writing AT ALL. You'll never write a page if you keep stopping yourself within the first sentence or two and rewriting. Free yourself and learn to love the shitty first draft.

The crappy first draft can be very liberating. If it doesn't have to be

good, then we feel a lot more freedom to get started and get it over with.

Trust in the process. Write crap. Plenty of time later to refine it.

Time Management for College Writers



Your only goal during the first draft is to get things down on the page so that you can start rewriting. The first draft has no other value. Regardless of how many faults it has, the first draft accomplishes its entire purpose merely by coming into existence. — Richard K. Neumann, *Legal Reasoning and Legal Writing*

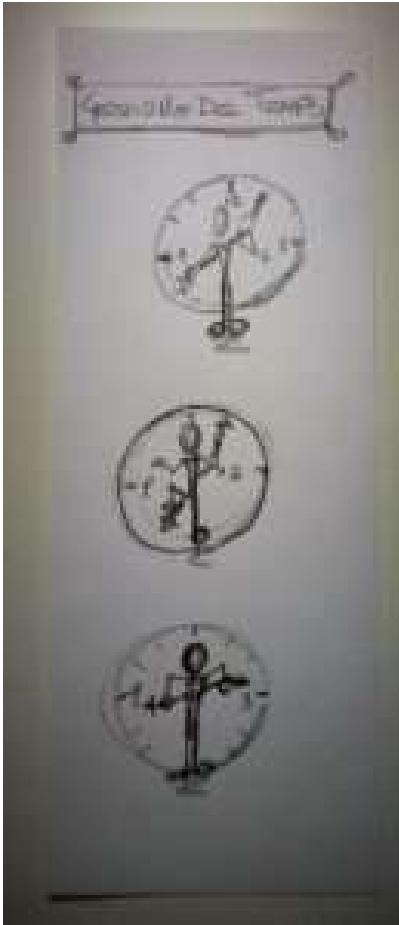
Budgeting the time it takes to create an essay is really important, but it's not usually explicitly discussed in classrooms. Consider the following advice as you map out your time between the date you're given a writing assignment and the date it's due.

Writing

- **Plan on 20 minutes, minimum, per typed page.**
- **Start writing your rough draft as soon as you can.** Once you have those first words on paper, the rest is much easier.
- **Find your best time of day and write then.** Never put off writing until you are tired or sleepy. Tired writing is almost always bad writing.
- **For short essays, allow an absolute minimum of 10 minutes per paragraph.** “Short” means fewer than 3 pages of typed text. Thus, for a four-paragraph essay allow at least 40 minutes for the first draft.
- **For longer essays, allow an absolute minimum of one hour to produce every three typed pages of rough draft.** You don’t have to write it all at one sitting, but budget enough total time to complete a rough draft without feeling any time pressure.
- **Once your rough draft is done, leave it until the next day (at least!) before revising it.** This way you’ll be able to look at it with “fresh eyes” and recognize room for improvement.

Rewriting

You and your classmates may assume that the first draft is the most important part of writing. Actually, the first draft is the LEAST important part. The analysis and reflection you do in the process of revision and proofreading are much more valuable contributions toward a strong final product.



- **Allow at least the same amount of time for revision and proofreading as you did for writing the rough draft.** The more important the writing project, the more time will be needed in revising and proofreading. This means that a very important three-page, typed paper would require a total of at least two to three hours to complete in final form.
- **Revise first.** Allow enough time before your final deadline to rewrite nine-tenths of your paper (or to start over with some

components, if necessary).

- **Leave enough time to read the text out loud or to have someone else read it out loud to you.** This is one of the most important things you can do to as a scholar to ensure the quality of your text. Your ears will detect elements that are out of place more readily than your eyes will see them.
 - **If your mother language is not English, or if you have more than average difficulty with spelling, punctuation, or grammar, consult a tutor.** While you don't want anyone else to rewrite your paper, a native speaker of English can offer advice and coaching on wording things most effectively.
 - **Proofread last.** The time necessary for this process depends on the length of the paper. The best method for this is to print out the paper, proofread it in hard copy (or, even better, have someone else correct it), make the necessary corrections on the computer text, and only then print out the final version.
 - **Save your final copy in several ways.** Back it up on your computer files, through a cloud storage, on a flash drive, and/or in your school's electronic class platform. You never know when the unexpected will happen. Almost every student experiences a major electronic data loss at some point, and it can be devastating.
 - **Keep secure, permanent electronic and paper files of all papers you write in college.** You never know when you may need to consult them again.
-

Self-Check



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II. Revising

Introduction

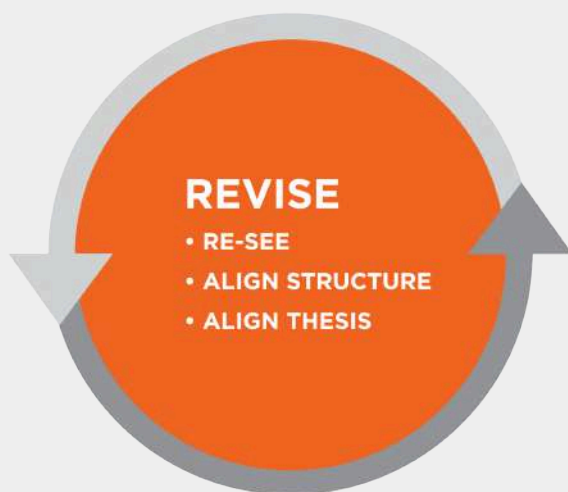
Learning Objectives

- identify the process of seeking input on writing from others
- identify strategies for incorporating personal and external editorial comments
- identify methods for re-seeing a piece of writing
- identify higher order concerns for revision

Taken literally, revision is re-vision — literally re-seeing the paper in front of you.

The act of revision centers heavily around the practice of questioning your work. As you read through this section, and consider your own habits when it comes to revision, consider this list of guiding questions from The Writing Center at UNC-Chapel Hill.

Revision Checklist



Subject, Audience, Purpose

1. What's the most important thing I want to say about my subject?
2. Who am I writing this paper for? What would my reader want to know about the subject? What does my reader already know about it?
3. Why do I think the subject is worth writing about? Will my reader think the paper was worth

reading?

4. What verb explains what I'm trying to do in this paper (tell a story, compare X and Y, describe Z)?
5. Does my first paragraph answer questions 1-4? If not, why not?

Organization

1. How many specific points do I make about my subject? Did I overlap or repeat any points? Did I leave my points out or add some that aren't relevant to the main idea?
2. How many paragraphs did I use to talk about each point?
3. Why did I talk about them in this order? Should the order be changed?
4. How did I get from one point to the next? What signposts did I give the reader?

Paragraphing (Ask these questions of every paragraph)

1. What job is this paragraph supposed to do? How does it relate to the paragraph before and after it?
2. What's the topic idea? Will my reader have trouble finding it?
3. How many sentences did it take to develop the

topic idea? Can I substitute better examples, reasons, or details?

4. How well does the paragraph hold together? How many levels of generality does it have? Are the sentences different lengths and types? Do I need transitions? When I read the paragraph out loud, did it flow smoothly?

Sentences (Ask these questions of every sentence)

1. Which sentences in my paper do I like the most? The least?
2. Can my reader “see” what I’m saying? What words could I substitute for people, things, this/that, aspect, etc.?
3. Is this sentence “fat”?
4. Can I combine this sentence with another one?
5. Can I add adjectives and adverbs or find a more lively verb?

Things to Check Last

1. Did I check spelling and punctuation? What kinds of grammar or punctuation problems did I have in my last paper?
2. How does my paper end? Did I keep the

promises I made to my reader at the beginning of the paper?

3. When I read the assignment again, did I miss anything?
4. What do I like best about this paper? What do I need to work on in the next paper?

— from *A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers* by Erika Lindemann

Respond and Redraft

There are several steps to turn a first (or second, or third!) draft of a piece of writing into the final version. There is no way to get to that wonderful final draft without all the steps in between.

Professors often ask for draft essays in order to guide you as your writing develops. As you progress from 1st to 2nd draft, or from 2nd (3rd or 4th) to final draft, seeking input from others can help you get a fresh perspective on your work.

Find a Trusted Reader

A survival tip for college is to develop relationships with people whose opinions you trust. You'll want to be able to draw on these people to give valuable, helpful, supportive feedback on your writing.



As you first get started with college classes, you'll likely participate in peer reviews for essay assignments. Show your appreciation to your classmates who offer you helpful feedback. Note which of your classmates whose writing you admire. Try to continue working with these people as much as possible.

Also take advantage of your school's Writing Center, if possible. Most tutoring centers will welcome talking with you at any stage of your essay-writing process. **Note:** tutors won't just "fix" a paper draft. They will talk with you about what areas you are concerned with, and offer strategies to help focus YOU as YOU revise your paper.

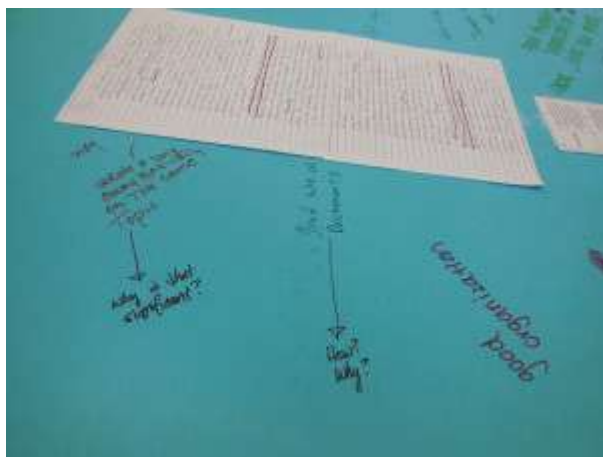
Finally, your professor will likely be happy to talk over a draft with you, as well. Some classes will require you to turn in a rough draft for a grade and instructor comments, but most won't. Nonetheless, your professors expect you to write multiple drafts, and will welcome a visit during office hours to talk about how to make your paper as strong as it can possibly be.

Respond to your reader's comments

Whether you received comments from your professor, your friends,

or a peer review, your edits are a way to *respond* to their questions and comments. Was your reader confused by what you thought was a really good point? Edit your paragraph so that your idea becomes clearer. Use specific pieces of evidence, such an important quote or statistic, to strengthen the paragraph. You can even try responding to the comments aloud—and then write them down in your draft in appropriately “academic” language.

Redraft your essay



Really going from draft to final version requires rethinking the flow of logic in your writing. For instance, you might realize that a sentence buried on the 3rd page of your paper would be an excellent “hook.” To use it well, you will need to redraft, moving it to the opening and altering the rest of the material on page 3 as well.

Redrafting means looking again at how each piece of your argument fits together in the whole.

- Shift paragraphs around—don’t worry about losing your train of thought.
- Delete unnecessary information—or if you think it fits better

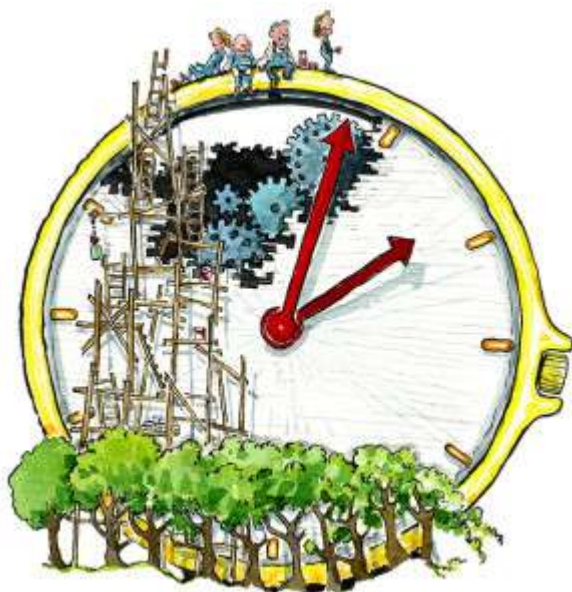
elsewhere, re-place it.

- Outlining your paper as it stands in the current draft can be very helpful for figuring out how you are presenting your ideas and can make it much easier to see where you need to reorder your information, add more support, or delete unnecessary material.
 - If you are a visual person, try a craftsy approach. Print your essay out (single-sided) and cut it into paragraph-long pieces. Shuffle the pieces around so that you've mixed up their original order entirely. Then individually read and place the pieces/paragraph in the order that the ideas connect. As you tape or pin the parts together, you might find that the paragraphs are coming together in different ways than in your original draft.
-

Higher Order Concerns

You've written a draft of your paper. Now your work is done, so you should just turn it in, right? No, WAIT! Step away from the computer, take a deep breath, and don't submit that assignment just yet.

You should always revise and proofread your paper. A first draft is usually a very rough draft. It takes time and at least two (or more!)



additional

passes through to really make sure your argument is strong, your writing is polished, and there are no typos or grammatical errors. Making these efforts will always give you a better paper in the end.

Try to wait a day or two before looking back over your paper. If you are on a tight deadline, then take a walk, grab a snack, drink some coffee, or do something else to clear your head so you can read through your paper with fresh eyes. The longer you wait, the more likely it is you will see what is actually on the page and not what you meant to write.

What to Look for in the First Pass(es): Higher-Order Concerns

Typically, early review passes of a paper should focus on the larger issues, which are known as **higher-order concerns**. Higher-order concerns relate to the strength of your ideas, the support for your argument, and the logic of how your points are presented. Some

important higher-order concerns are listed below, along with some questions you can ask yourself while proofreading to see if your paper needs work in any of these areas:

- **The Thesis Statement:**

- Does your paper have a clear thesis statement? If so, where is it?
- Does the introduction lead up to that thesis statement?
- Does each paragraph directly relate back to your thesis statement?

- **The Argument:**

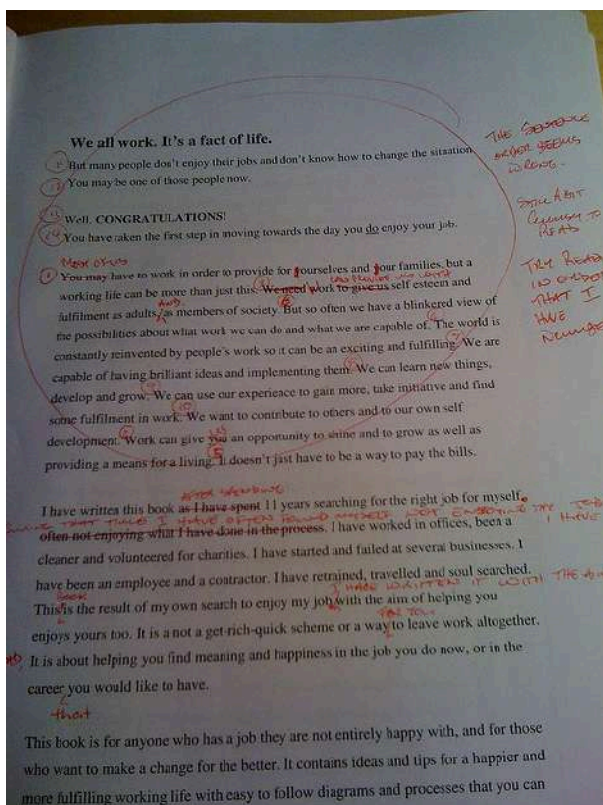
- Is your thesis statement supported by enough evidence?
- Do you need to add any explanations or examples to better make your case?
- Is there any unnecessary or irrelevant information that should be removed?

- **Large-Scale Organization:**

- Could your paper be easily outlined or tree-diagrammed?
- Are your paragraphs presented in a logical order?
- Are similar ideas grouped together?
- Are there clear transitions (either verbal or logical) that link each paragraph to what came before?

- **Organization within Paragraphs:**

- Is each paragraph centered around one main idea?
- Is there a clear topic sentence for each paragraph?
- Are any of your paragraphs too short or too long?
- Do all the sentences in each paragraph relate back to their respective topic sentences?
- Are the sentences presented in a logical order, so each grows out of what came before?



The

Assignment Instructions:

- Does your paper answer all aspects of the writing prompt?
- Have you completed all of the tasks required by the instructor?
- Did you include all necessary sections (for example, an abstract or reference list)?
- Are you following the required style for formatting the paper as a whole, the reference list, and/or your citations? (That last question is technically a lower-order concern, but it falls under the assignment instructions and is something where you could easily lose points if you don't follow instructions.)

When reading through your early draft(s) of your paper, mark up your paper with those concerns in mind first. Keep revising until you have fixed all of these larger-scale issues.

Your paper may change a lot as you do this – that’s completely normal!

You might have to add more material; cut sentences, paragraphs, or even whole sections; or rewrite significant portions of the paper to fix any problems related to these higher-order concerns. This is why you should be careful not to get too bogged down with small-scale problems early on: **there is no point in spending a lot of time fixing sentences that you end up cutting because they don’t actually fit in with your topic.**

Self-Check



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12. Proofreading

Introduction

Learning Objectives

- identify lower order concerns for revision
- identify strategies for improving sentence clarity
- identify strategies for recognizing potential grammatical issues in a draft
- identify strategies for recognizing potential spelling issues in a draft
- identify strategies for recognizing potential punctuation issues in a draft

Pr



Proofreading is the final dust-and-polish pass-through of your writing. Though it's the last step of writing, it's what will make the first impression people have of your work.

John Green, author of *The Fault in Our Stars*, walks through some of his favorite typos from history in the video below. Each of these fundamentally changed the way people read the works in question. Proofreading (or a lack thereof) can have lasting impact!



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Lower Order Concerns

What to Look for in the Later Proofreading Pass(es): Lower-Order Concerns

Once you have fully addressed the higher-order concerns with an essay draft, you can focus on more local fixes or **lower-order concerns**. Lower-order concerns include writing style, wording, typos, and grammar issues.



Yes, it's true: grammar is a lower-order concern! Even though students are often very concerned that their grammar needs to be fixed, it is actually more important to focus on the quality of your ideas and the logic of how they are presented first. That's not to say you shouldn't worry about grammar; it's just that you shouldn't make it a main focus until closer to the end of the writing process.

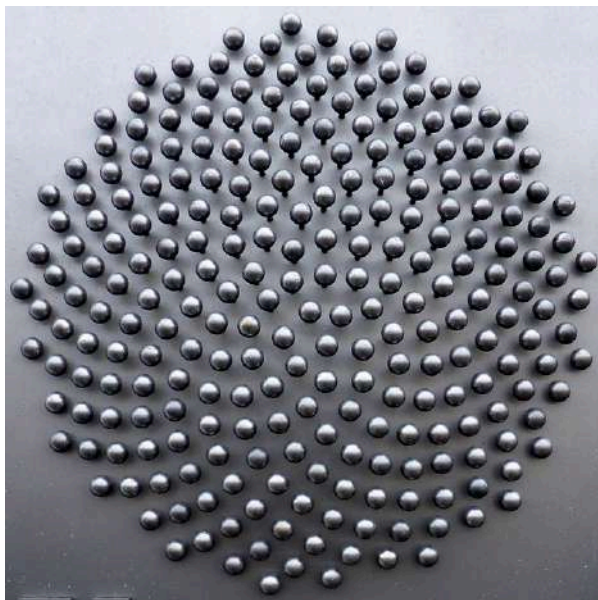
Some typical lower-order concerns are listed below, along with some questions that can help you recognize aspects in need of revision:

- **Style:**
 - Are you using an appropriate tone?
 - Are you following the conventions that are typical of your discipline?
 - Are you using the required style for formatting?
- **Wording:**
 - Are you always picking the word that has the precise meaning you want?
 - Are there any places where your wording is confusing or where your sentences are long and hard to follow?
 - Are there any awkward phrases?

- Are you writing as simply and concisely as possible?
- Are there any redundant words or sentences that should be removed?
- **Grammar:**
 - Do you have any sentence fragments or run-on sentences?
 - Are your subjects and verbs in agreement?
 - Are you handling your plurals and possessives correctly?
 - Are there any punctuation errors?
- **Typos:**
 - Are there missing words?
 - Are any words misspelled (be especially careful to watch out for words that spell-check won't catch, for example typing "can" when you meant "van")?
 - Are there any extra spaces that need to be removed?

Cleaning up these local issues is the final stage in the writing process. Think of this as polishing up your writing, so that the quality of your prose matches the quality of your ideas.

Other Tips for Proofreading



- Always read slowly and carefully when proofreading. Don't rush! If you try to go too fast, you will probably miss errors you would otherwise catch.
- Read your paper out loud. This can be very helpful for catching typos, missing words, awkward phrasings, and overly long or confusing sentences.
- Pretend you are the reader, not the author of the paper. Try to look at what you wrote from the perspective of someone who does not know all the things you know. Would a reasonably intelligent audience be able to understand your prose and be convinced by your argument?
- Keep track of any errors you consistently make (within a single paper or in multiple papers).
- Get feedback on your paper from your teacher, a classmate or friend, a tutor, or all of the above.

The Change-Up Method

The following video walks us through a simple but effective way to proofread our writing. It's helpful to see that even professional writers and editors make mistakes in their drafts that need to be corrected before sharing with the world.

<https://youtu.be/Tk0x6tEWXzs>

[A transcript for this video can be downloaded here \(.docx file\).](#)

The steps include

- changing the font style and size
 - making the line spacing bigger
 - reading the text backwards, from last sentence to first sentence
-

Proofreading Strategies

Below, you'll see a long list of potential items to look for in the proofreading process. Because everyone has a unique writing style, some of these items are much more likely to apply to you (and be helpful for you to consider) than others.

As you continue to write papers and get feedback on them in college, make note of the concerns that show up in your writing again and again. Make your own customized list of proofreading tips, to save time in the future.

Some suggestions to get you started—again, not all of these will apply to each paper, each time.



Editing for Language

With language, the overall question is whether you are using the most accurate language possible to describe your ideas. Your reader will have an easier time understanding what you want to say if you're precise. Be sure to check for the following.

- **Pronounclarity:** Make sure it's clear what each "it," "he," and "she" refers to.
- **Precise vocabulary:** Make sure every word means what you intend it to mean. Use a dictionary to confirm the meaning of any word about which you are unsure.
- **Defined terms:** When using terms specific to your topic, make sure you define them for your readers who may not be familiar with them. If that makes the paragraph too bulky, consider using a different term.
- **Properly placed modifiers:** Make sure your reader can clearly discern what each adjective and adverb is meant to describe.
- **Hyperbole:** See if you can eradicate words like "amazing" and "gigantic" in favor of more precise descriptions. Also examine each use of the word "very" and see if you can find a more

precise adjective that doesn't require its use.

Finally, pay attention to wordiness. Writing that is clean, precise, and simple will always sound best.

Editing for Sentence Construction

If you want to make everything easy for your audience to read and understand, start by simplifying your sentences. If you think a sentence is too complicated, rephrase it so that it is easier to read, or break it into two sentences. Clear doesn't have to mean boring.



Consider how balanced your sentences are within a paragraph. You don't want every sentence to have identical length and structure or to begin the same way. Instead, vary your sentence style.

This is also the time to add transitions between phrases and sentences that aren't connected smoothly to each other. You don't need to introduce every sentence with "then," "however," or "because." Using these words judiciously, though, will help your reader see logical connections between the different steps of your argument.

Suggestions While Proofreading

1. Remove unnecessary words such including *that*, *very*, *just*, *so*, and *actually*.
2. Avoid the passive voice. Rewrite sentences that include *am*, *is*, *was*, *were*, *be*, *being*, and *been* so that the sentence reads in the active voice.
3. Don't end sentences with a preposition. For example, don't end sentences with these words: *in*, *for*, *at*, *with*, *by*, and *from*.
4. Is the content in past, present, or future tense? Do a scan to make sure you use the same tense from start to finish.
5. Are you writing in first, second, or third person? Do a scan to make sure you use a consistent voice throughout. Generally, avoid second person pronouns—"you"—throughout an essay, unless you have specific reasons to in the assignment. Use the "find" feature in your word processor to locate any that may have slipped in. Likewise, only use first person pronouns—"I," "me," "we," etc.,—if your assignment calls for it.
6. Have you used one space after each sentence or two spaces? Double check for consistency.
7. Run spell check, but also check for commonly misspelled words that your spell check might not pick up. Here's a quick list:
 - To/ Too/ Two
 - Than/ Then
 - Trail/ Trial
 - Were/ Where/ We're
 - It's/ Its
 - Lose/ Loose
 - Complement/ Compliment
 - Their/ There/ They're
 - Compliant/ Complaint
8. What words do you commonly misspell?

9. Eliminate words you overuse. Keep a running list near your workspace that notes words you rely heavily on, and edit use the “Find” feature of your word processor to search for them while editing.
-

Self-Check



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PART III

UNIT 3: WRITING STRUCTURE

13. Organizing

Introduction

Learning Objectives

- identify appropriate rhetorical pattern for the topic and the task
- identify components of an effective thesis statement
- identify components of an effective logical argument
- identify components of an effective paragraph
- identify components of an effective essay body
- identify components of an effective introduction
- identify components of an effective conclusion



You may hear the terms **structure** and **organization** used interchangeably when it comes to essay writing. Both are important aspects, but they do have an important distinction.

Structure refers to the function a particular piece of your essay serves in the essay. Elements like introductions, body paragraphs, and conclusions are structural components of an essay. It's similar to the structure of a house: certain spaces are designated as a bedroom, a bathroom, a kitchen, and so forth.

As we know, houses appear in many different shapes and sizes, even though they contain all of these similar features. You might say that the *structure* of a house can be *organized* in many different ways. In writing, organization is where your unique approach as an author comes into play. In what particular order are body paragraphs placed? Why?



In short, structure is the **what**, and organization is the **why**.

As a writer, you'll identify what pieces are necessary for your essay to include. Then you'll determine what order those pieces will appear in, and how they connect together.

How to Write a Thesis Statement

Whether you are writing a short essay or a doctoral dissertation, your thesis statement will arguably be the most difficult sentence to formulate. An effective thesis statement states the purpose of the paper and, therefore, functions to control, assert and structure your entire argument. Without a sound thesis, your argument may sound weak, lacking in direction, and uninteresting to the reader.

Start with a question — then make the answer your thesis

Regardless of how complicated the subject is, almost any thesis can be constructed by answering a question.



- **Question:** “What are the benefits of using computers in a fourth-grade classroom?”
- **Thesis:** “Computers allow fourth graders an early advantage in technological and scientific education.”
- **Question:** “Why is the Mississippi River so important in Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn*?”
 - **Thesis:** “The river comes to symbolize both division and progress, as it separates our characters and country while still providing the best chance for Huck and Jim to get to know one another.”
- **Question:** “Why do people seem to get angry at vegans, feminists, and other ‘morally righteous’ subgroups?”
 - **Thesis:** “Through careful sociological study, we’ve found that people naturally assume that “morally righteous” people look down on them as “inferior,” causing anger and conflict where there generally is none.”

Tailor your thesis to the type of paper you're writing

Not all essays persuade, and not all essays teach. The goals of your paper will help you find the best thesis.

- **Analytical:** Breaks down something to better examine and understand it.
 - Ex. "This dynamic between different generations sparks much of the play's tension, as age becomes a motive for the violence and unrest that rocks King Lear."
- **Expository:** Teaches or illuminates a point.
 - Ex. "The explosion of 1800's philosophies like Positivism, Marxism, and Darwinism undermined and refuted Christianity to instead focus on the real, tangible world."
- **Argumentative:** Makes a claim, or backs up an opinion, to change other peoples' minds.
 - Ex. "Without the steady hand and specific decisions of Barack Obama, America would never have recovered from the hole it entered in the early 2000's."

Ensure your thesis is provable



Do not come up with your thesis and then look it up later. The thesis is the end point of

your research, not the beginning. You need to use a thesis you can actually back up with evidence.

Good Theses Examples:

- “By owning up to the impossible contradictions, embracing them and questioning them, Blake forges his own faith, and is stronger for it. Ultimately, the only way for his poems to have faith is to temporarily lose it.”
- “According to its well-documented beliefs and philosophies, an existential society with no notion of either past or future cannot help but become stagnant.”
- “By reading “Ode to a Nightingale” through a modern deconstructionist lens, we can see how Keats viewed poetry as shifting and subjective, not some rigid form.”

Bad Theses Examples:

- “The wrong people won the American Revolution.” While striking and unique, who is “right” and who is “wrong” is exceptionally hard to prove, and very subjective.
- “The theory of genetic inheritance is the binding theory of every human interaction.” Too complicated and overzealous. The scope of “every human interaction” is just too big
- “Paul Harding’s novel *Tinkers* is ultimately a cry for help from a clearly depressed author.” Unless you interviewed Harding extensively, or had a lot of real-life sources, you have no way of proving what is fact and what is fiction.”

Get the sound right



You want your thesis statement to be identifiable as a thesis statement. You do this by taking a very particular tone and using specific kinds of phrasing and words. Use words like “because” and language which is firm and definitive.

Example thesis statements with good statement language include:

- “Because of William the Conqueror’s campaign into England, that nation developed the strength and culture it would need to eventually build the British Empire.”
- “Hemingway significantly changed literature by normalizing simplistic writing and frank tone.”

Know where to place a thesis statement

Because of the role thesis statements play, they appear at the beginning of the paper, usually at the end of the first paragraph or somewhere in the introduction. Although most people look for the thesis at the end of the first paragraph, its location can depend on a number of factors such as how lengthy of an introduction you need before you can introduce your thesis or the length of your paper.

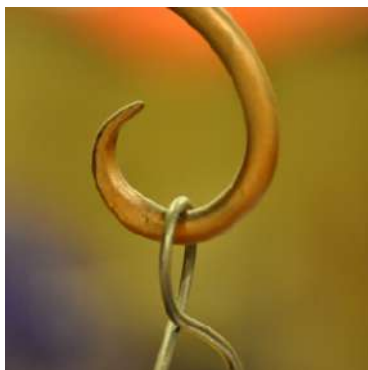
Limit a thesis statement to one or two sentences in length

Thesis statements are clear and to the point, which helps the reader identify the topic and direction of the paper, as well as your position towards the subject.

Text Structures

A **text structure** is the framework of a text's beginning, middle, and end. Different narrative and expository genres have different purposes and different audiences, and so they require different text structures. Beginnings and endings help link the text into a coherent whole.

BEGINNINGS: HOOKING YOUR READER



Where to begin is a crucial decision for a writer. Just as a good beginning can draw a reader into a piece of writing, a mediocre beginning can discourage a

reader from reading further. The beginning, also called the **lead** or the **hook**, orients the reader to the purpose of the writing by introducing characters or setting (for narrative) or the topic, thesis, or argument (for expository writing). A good beginning also sets up expectations for the purpose, style, and mood of the piece. Good writers know how to hook their readers in the opening sentences and paragraphs by using techniques such as dialogue, flashback, description, inner thoughts, and jumping right into the action.

WHAT'S IN THE MIDDLE?

The organization of the middle of a piece of writing depends on the genre. Researchers have identified five basic organizational structures: **sequence**, **description**, **cause and effect**, **compare and contrast**, and **problem and solution**.

Sequence uses time, numerical, or spatial order as the organizing structure. Some narrative genres that use a chronological sequence structure are personal narrative genres (memoir, autobiographical incident, autobiography), imaginative story genres (fairytales, folktales, fantasy, science fiction), and realistic fiction genres. Narrative story structures include an initiating event, complicating actions that build to a high point, and a resolution. Many narratives also include the protagonist's goals and obstacles that must be overcome to achieve those goals.

Description is used to describe the characteristic features and events of a specific subject ("My Cat") or a general category ("Cats"). Descriptive reports may be arranged according to categories of related attributes, moving from general categories of features to specific attributes.

Cause and Effect structure is used to show causal relationships between events. Essays demonstrate cause and effect by giving reasons to support relationships, using the word "because." Signal

words for cause and effect structures also include if/then statements, “as a result,” and “therefore.”

Comparison and Contrast structure is used to explain how two or more objects, events, or positions in an argument are similar or different. Graphic organizers such as venn diagrams, compare/contrast organizers, and tables can be used to compare features across different categories. Words used to signal comparison and contrast organizational structures include “same,” “alike,” “in contrast,” “similarities,” “differences,” and “on the other hand.”

Problem and Solution requires writers to state a problem and come up with a solution. Although problem/solution structures are typically found in informational writing, realistic fiction also often uses a problem/solution structure.

ENDINGS: BEYOND “HAPPILY EVER AFTER”

Anyone who has watched a great movie for ninety minutes only to have it limp to the finish with weak ending knows that strong endings are just as critical to effective writing as strong beginnings. And anyone who has watched the director’s cut of a movie with all the alternate endings knows that even great directors have trouble coming up with satisfying endings for their movies. Just like directors, writers have to decide how to wrap up the action in their stories, resolving the conflict and tying up loose ends in a way that will leave their audience satisfied.



The type of ending an author chooses depends on his or her purpose. When the purpose is to entertain, endings may be happy or tragic, or a surprise ending may provide a twist. Endings can be circular, looping back to the beginning so readers end where they began, or they can leave the reader hanging, wishing for more. Endings can be deliberately ambiguous or ironic, designed to make the reader think, or they can explicitly state the moral of the story, telling the reader what to think. Strong endings for expository texts can summarize the highlights, restate the main points, or end with a final zinger statement to drive home the main point to the audience.

Components of an Effective Paragraph

Every paragraph in the body of an essay consists of three main parts: a topic sentence, some supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence. Transition words and phrases provide links between individual paragraphs, and so are important to consider, as well.

Of these elements, the **topic sentences** are the most important to building a strong essay, and deserve the most attention.

Topic Sentences

A clear topic sentence in each paragraph will assist with essay organization. Consider writing topic sentences early in the process, while you're working on an outline. You can return later to fill in the rest of the paragraph. Having these single sentences figured out early makes the rest of the essay much easier to write!

Devote each body paragraph of an essay to discussing only the point of its topic sentence. If something is interesting to you, but not directly related to the topic sentence, save it for elsewhere in the essay (or hang on to it for a future writing task!). This will help keep your essay focused and effective.

Ensure that your topic sentence is directly related to your main argument or thesis.

Make sure that your topic sentence offers a “preview” of your paragraph's discussion. Many beginning writers forget to use the first sentence this way, and end up with sentences that don't give a clear direction for the paragraph.

For example, compare these two first sentences:

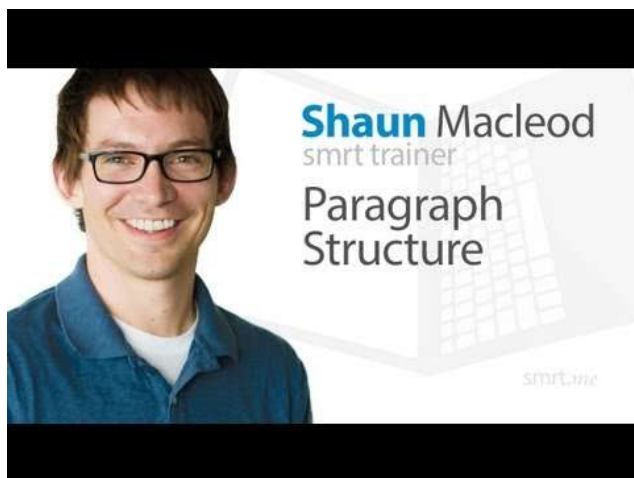
Thomas Jefferson was born in 1743.

Thomas Jefferson, who was born in 1743, became one of the most important people in America by the end of the 18th century.

- The first sentence doesn't give a good direction for the paragraph. It states a fact but leaves the reader clueless about the fact's relevance. The second sentence contextualizes the fact and lets the reader know what the rest of the paragraph will discuss.

Supporting & Concluding Sentences

This video walks through all three components of an effective paragraph, giving good examples of what supporting statements and concluding sentences might look like.



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Transitions

You spend so much time thinking about the ideas of an academic essay that the way these ideas connect makes perfect sense to you.

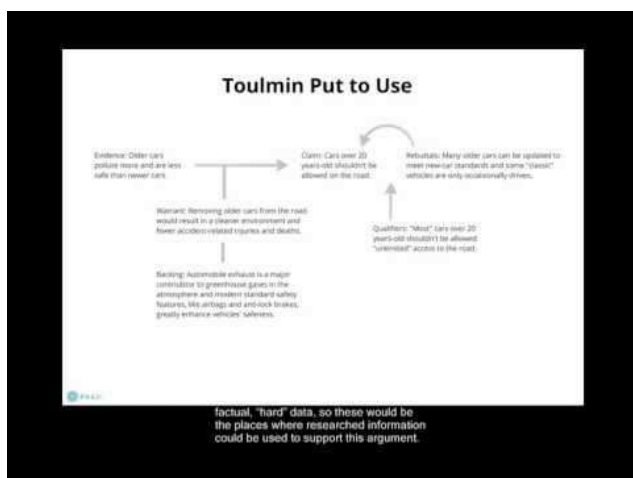
Keep in mind, though, that readers of your essay aren't nearly as familiar with the subject as you are, and will need your guidance.

Transitional phrases, usually found at the beginning of body paragraphs, will allow your reader to follow your train of thought. Phrases like “likewise” or “in contrast” are key indicators as to what relationship different paragraphs have to one another.

- Transitions help underline your essay’s overall organizational logic. For example, beginning a paragraph with something like “Despite the many points in its favor, Mystic Pizza also has several elements that keep it from being the best pizza in town” allows your reader to understand how this paragraph connects to what has come before.
 - Transitions can also be used inside paragraphs. They can help connect the ideas within a paragraph smoothly so your reader can follow them.
 - If you’re having a lot of trouble connecting your paragraphs, your organization may be off. Experiment with different paragraph order, to see if that helps.
-

The Toulmin Model

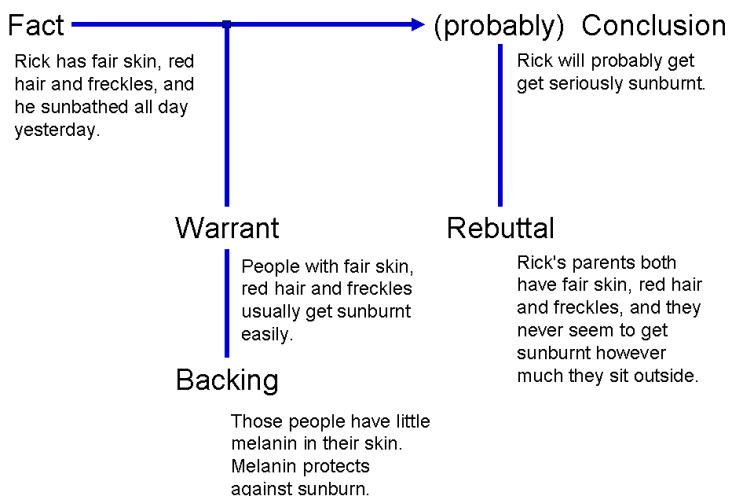
The following video introduces the components of a particular type of persuasive writing, The Toulmin Model. It can be useful to think about **claims** and **evidence** in your writing, and what unstated assumptions (**warrants**) might be influencing you.



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This image shows how conclusions are reached, using the Toulmin model of arguments.



In essays using the Toulmin model, warrants aren't usually stated explicitly in writing. They are often shared beliefs between a reader and the writer, however.

Consider what assumptions you make about your chosen subject, that your reader likely also agrees with. What assumptions do you have that your readers may not share?

Self-Check



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14. Organizing an Essay

There are many elements that must come together to create a good essay. The topic should be clear and interesting. The author's voice should come through, but not be a distraction. There should be no errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, or capitalization. Organization is one of the most important elements of an essay that is often overlooked. An organized essay is clear, focused, logical and effective.

Organization makes it easier to understand the thesis. To illustrate, imagine putting together a bike. Having all of the necessary tools, parts, and directions will make the job easier to complete than if the parts are spread across the room and the tools are located all over the house. The same logic applies to writing an essay. When all the parts of an essay are in some sort of order, it is both easier for the writer to put the essay together and for the reader to understand the main ideas presented in the essay.

Photo of a white kitchen lit with windows. Rows of glass jars line shelves over the countertop, and a hanging rack of pans and pots appears beneath that. Although organization makes tasks easier to complete, there is not just one way of organizing. For example, there are hundreds of ways to organize a kitchen. The glasses can go in the cupboard to the right of the sink or to the left of it. The silverware can be placed in any number of drawers. Pots and pans can be hung on hooks over the island in the center of the kitchen or hidden in cupboard space beneath the counter. It does not matter as much where these items are placed, but that they are organized in a logical manner. Essays, like kitchens, can also be organized in different ways. There are three common strategies; however, it is important to note that these are broad

categories. Variations of these strategies can be used, and they may be combined with one another.¹

Strategy 1. Reverse Outlining

If your paper is about Huckleberry Finn, a working thesis might be: “In Huckleberry Finn, Mark Twain develops a contrast between life on the river and life on the shore.” However, you might feel uncertain if your paper really follows through on the thesis as promised.

This paper may benefit from reverse outlining. Your aim is to create an outline of what you’ve already written, as opposed to the kind of outline that you make before you begin to write. The reverse outline will help you evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of both your organization and your argument.

Read the draft and take notes

Read your draft over, and as you do so, make very brief notes in the margin about what each paragraph is trying to accomplish.

Outline the Draft

After you’ve read through the entire draft, transfer the brief notes to a fresh sheet of paper, listing them in the order in which they appear. The outline might look like this:

- Paragraph 1: Intro
- Paragraph 2: Background on Huck Finn
- Paragraph 3: River for Huck and Jim
- Paragraph 4: Shore and laws for Huck and Jim
- Paragraph 5: Shore and family, school
- Paragraph 6: River and freedom, democracy

1. Organizing an Essay

- Paragraph 7: River and shore similarities
- Paragraph 8: Conclusion

Examine the Outline

Look for repetition and other organizational problems. In the reverse outline above, there's a problem somewhere in Paragraphs 3-7, where the potential for repetition is high because you keep moving back and forth between river and shore.

Re-examine the Thesis, the Outline, and the Draft Together

Look closely at the outline and see how well it supports the argument in your thesis statement. You should be able to see which paragraphs need rewriting, reordering or rejecting. You may find some paragraphs are tangential or irrelevant or that some paragraphs have more than one idea and need to be separated.

Strategy 2. Talk It Out

If your paper is about President Roosevelt's New Deal, and your thesis is: "The New Deal was actually a conservative defense of American capitalism." This strategy forces to explain your thinking to someone else.

working [Drawing of two men sitting at a cafe table talking. They are wearing period dress \(bowlers, suits, bow ties\).](#)

Find a Friend, your T.A., your Professor, a relative, a Writing Center tutor, or any sympathetic and intelligent listener.

People are more accustomed to talking than writing, so it might be beneficial to explain your thinking out loud to someone before organizing the essay. Talking to someone about your ideas may also relieve pressure and anxiety about your topic.

Explain What Your Paper Is About

Pay attention to how you explain your argument verbally. It is likely that the order in which you present your ideas and evidence to

your listener is a logical way to arrange them in your paper. Let's say that you begin (as you did above) with the working thesis. As you continue to explain, you realize that even though your draft doesn't mention "private enterprise" until the last two paragraphs, you begin to talk about it right away. This fact should tell you that you probably need to discuss private enterprise near the beginning.

Take Notes

You and your listener should keep track of the way you explain your paper. If you don't, you probably won't remember what you've talked about. Compare the structure of the argument in the notes to the structure of the draft you've written.

Get Your Listener to Ask Questions

As the writer, it is in your interest to receive constructive criticism so that your draft will become stronger. You want your listener to say things like, "Would you mind explaining that point about being both conservative and liberal again? I wasn't sure I followed" or "What kind of economic principle is government relief? Do you consider it a good or bad thing?" Questions you can't answer may signal an unnecessary tangent or an area needing further development in the draft. Questions you need to think about will probably make you realize that you need to explain more your paper. In short, you want to know if your listener fully understands you; if not, chances are your readers won't, either.²

Strategy 3. Paragraphs

Readers need paragraph breaks in order to organize their reading. Writers need paragraph breaks to organize their writing. A paragraph break indicates a change in focus, topic, specificity, point

2. Reorganizing Your Draft

of view, or rhetorical strategy. The paragraph should have one main idea; the topic sentence expresses this idea. The paragraph should be organized either spatially, chronologically, or logically. The movement may be from general to specific, specific to general, or general to specific to general. All paragraphs must contain developed ideas: comparisons, examples, explanations, definitions, causes, effects, processes, or descriptions. There are several concluding strategies which may be combined or used singly, depending on the assignment's length and purpose:

- a summary of the main points
- a hook and return to the introductory “attention-getter” to frame the essay
- a web conclusion which relates the topic to a larger context of a greater significance
- a proposal calling for action or further examination of the topic
- a question which provokes the reader
- a quote
- a vivid image or compelling narrative³

Put Paragraphs into Sections

You should be able to group your paragraphs so that they make a particular point or argument that supports your thesis. If any paragraph, besides the introduction or conclusion, cannot fit into any section, you may have to ask yourself whether it belongs in the essay.

Re-examine each Section

Assuming you have more than one paragraph under each section, try to distinguish between them. Perhaps you have two arguments in favor of that can be distinguished from each other by author, logic, ethical principles invoked, etc. Write down the distinctions — they will help you formulate clear topic sentences.

3. Parts of an Essay

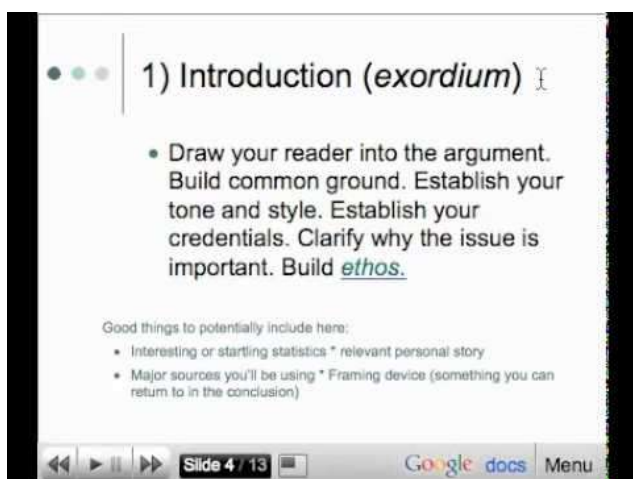
Re-examine the Entire Argument

Which section do you want to appear first? Why? Which Second? Why? In what order should the paragraphs appear in each section? Look for an order that makes the strongest possible argument.⁴

4. Reorganizing Your Draft

15. Classical Essay Structure

The following videos provide an explanation of the classical model of structuring a persuasive argument. [You can access the slides alone, without narration, here.](#)



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7) Conclusion (*peroration*)

- Whatever you do, end strongly. Finish with conviction. After all, if you aren't convinced, why should your reader be?

Good things to potentially include here:

- * Amplification of earlier arguments * Review of main points
- Reference to something in introduction (framing technique)
- Plea for action on the part of your reader * call for response from opposition

Slide 10 / 13

Google docs Menu

The image is a screenshot of a Google Docs presentation slide. The slide has a white background with a black border. At the top left, there are three colored dots (green, blue, red) and a vertical line. The title '7) Conclusion (*peroration*)' is in a large, bold, black font. Below the title is a bullet point: '• Whatever you do, end strongly. Finish with conviction. After all, if you aren't convinced, why should your reader be?'. Below this is a section header 'Good things to potentially include here:' followed by a list of three items: '* Amplification of earlier arguments * Review of main points', '• Reference to something in introduction (framing technique)', and '• Plea for action on the part of your reader * call for response from opposition'. At the bottom of the slide, there is a navigation bar with a play button, a 'Slide 10 / 13' indicator, and 'Google docs' and 'Menu' links.

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<https://library.achievingthedream.org/bhccacceleratedenglish/?p=33>

16. Formulating a Thesis

You need a good thesis statement for your essay but are having trouble getting started. You may have heard that your thesis needs to be specific and arguable, but still wonder what this really means.

Let's look at some examples. Imagine you're writing about John Hughes's film [*Sixteen Candles*](#) (1984).

You take a first pass at writing a thesis:

Sixteen Candles is a romantic comedy about high school cliques.

Is this a strong thesis statement? Not yet, but it's a good start. You've focused on a topic—high school cliques—which is a smart move because you've settled on one of many possible angles. But the claim is weak because it's not yet arguable. Intelligent people would generally agree with this statement—so there's no real “news” for your reader. You want your thesis to say something surprising and debatable. If your thesis doesn't go beyond summarizing your source, it's descriptive and not yet argumentative.

The key words in the thesis statement are “romantic comedy” and “high school cliques.” One way to sharpen the claim is to *start asking questions*.

For example, how does the film represent high school cliques in a surprising or complex way? How does the film reinforce stereotypes about high school groups and how does it undermine them? Or why does the film challenge our expectations about romantic comedies by focusing on high school cliques? If you can answer one of those questions (or others of your own), you'll have a strong thesis.



Tip : Asking “how” or “why” questions will help you refine your thesis, making it more arguable and interesting to your readers.



Take 2. You revise the thesis. Is it strong now?

Sixteen Candles is a romantic comedy criticizing the divisiveness created by high school cliques.

You're getting closer. You're starting to take a stance by arguing that the film identifies "divisiveness" as a problem and *criticizes* it, but your readers will want to know how this plays out and why it's important. Right now, the thesis still sounds bland – not risky enough to be genuinely contentious.

Tip: Keep raising questions that test your ideas. And ask yourself the "so what" question. Why is your thesis interesting or important?

Take 3. Let's try again. How about this version?

Although the film *Sixteen Candles* appears to reinforce stereotypes about high school cliques, it undermines them in important ways, questioning its viewers' assumptions about what's normal.

Bingo! This thesis statement is pretty strong. It challenges an obvious interpretation of the movie (that is just reinforces stereotypes), offering a new and more complex reading in its place. We also have a sense of why this argument is important. The film's

larger goal, we learn, is to question what we think we understand about normalcy.



What's a Strong Thesis?

As we've just seen, a strong thesis statement crystallizes your paper's argument and, most importantly, it's *arguable*.

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

Exercises for Drafting an Arguable Thesis

A good thesis will be *focused* on your object of study (as opposed to making a big claim about the world) and will introduce the *key words* guiding your analysis.

To get started, you might experiment with some of these “mad libs.” They’re thinking exercises that will help propel you toward an arguable thesis.

By examining _____ [topic/approach], we can see _____ [thesis—the claim that’s surprising], which is important because _____.[1]

Example:

“By examining *Sixteen Candles* through the lens of Georg Simmel’s writings on fashion, we can see that the protagonist’s interest in fashion as an expression of her conflicted desire to be seen as both unique and accepted by the group. This is important because the film offers its viewers a glimpse into the ambivalent yearnings of middle class youth in the 1980s.

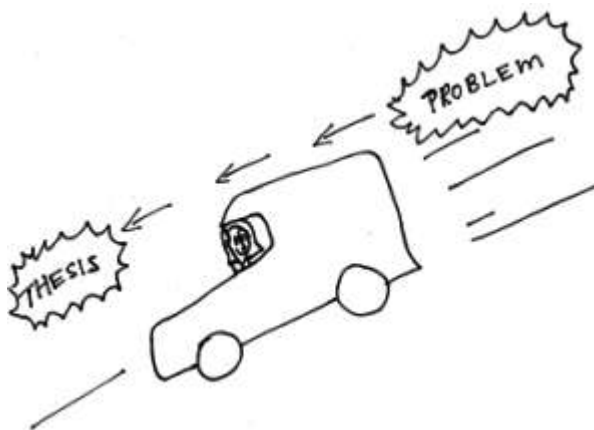


Although _____ readers might assume _____ [the commonplace idea you’re challenging], I argue that _____ [your surprising claim].

Example:

Although viewers might assume the romantic comedy *Sixteen Candles* is merely entertaining, I believe its message is political. The film uses the romance between Samantha, a middle class sophomore, and Jake, an affluent senior, to reinforce the fantasy that anyone can become wealthy and successful with enough cunning and persistence.

Still Having Trouble? Let's Back Up...



It helps to understand why readers value the arguable thesis. What larger purpose does it serve? Your readers will bring a set of expectations to your essay. The better you can anticipate the expectations of your readers, the better you'll be able to persuade them to entertain seeing things your way.

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

We all bring important past experiences and beliefs to our interpretations of texts, objects, and problems. You can harness these observational powers to engage critically with what you are studying. The key is to be alert to what strikes you as strange, problematic, paradoxical, or puzzling about your object of study. If

you can articulate this and a claim in response, you're well on your way to formulating an arguable thesis in your introduction.

How do I set up a “problem” and an arguable thesis in response?

All good writing has a purpose or motive for existing. Your thesis is your surprising response to this problem or motive. This is why it seldom makes sense to start a writing project by articulating the thesis. The first step is to articulate the question or problem your paper addresses.



Here are some possible ways to introduce a conceptual problem in your paper's introduction.

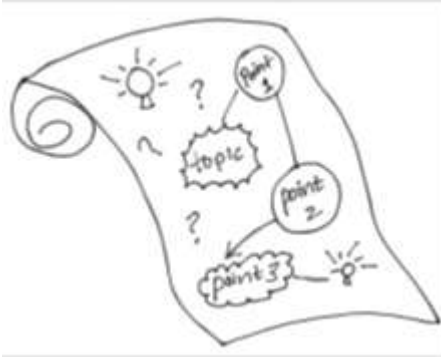
1. **Challenge a commonplace interpretation** (or your own first impressions).



How are readers likely to interpret this source or issue? What might intelligent readers think at first glance? (Or, if you've been given secondary sources or have been asked to conduct research to locate secondary sources, what do other writers or scholars assume is true or important about your primary source or issue?)

What does this commonplace interpretation leave out, overlook, or under-emphasize?

2. Help your reader see the complexity of your topic.



Identify and describe for your reader a paradox, puzzle, or contradiction in your primary source(s).

What larger questions does this paradox or contradiction raise for you and your readers?

3. If your assignment asks you to do research, piggyback off another scholar's research.



Summarize for your reader another scholar's argument about

your topic, primary source, or case study and tell your reader why this claim is interesting.

Now explain how you will extend this scholar's argument to explore an issue or case study that the scholar doesn't address fully.

4. If your assignment asks you to do research, identify a gap in another scholar's or a group of scholars' research.

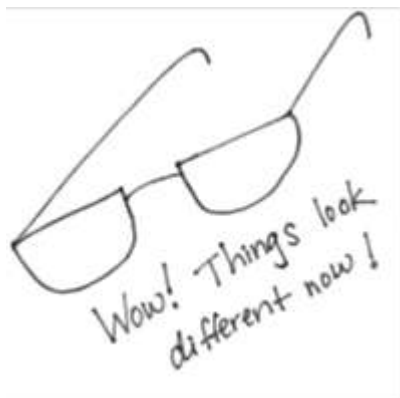


Summarize for your reader another scholar's argument about your topic, primary source, or case study and tell your reader why this claim is interesting. Or, summarize how scholars in the field tend to approach your topic.

Next, explain what important aspect this scholarly representation misses or distorts. Introduce your particular approach to your topic and its value

5. If your assignment asks you to do research,

bring in a new lens for investigating your case study or problem.



Summarize for your reader how a scholar or group of scholars has approached your topic.

Introduce a theoretical source (possibly from another discipline) and explain how it helps you address this issue from a new and productive angle.



Tip: your introductory paragraph will probably look like this:



Testing Your Thesis

You can test your thesis statement's arguability by asking the following questions:



Does my thesis only or mostly summarize my source?

If so, try some of the exercises above to articulate your paper's conceptual problem or question.



Is my thesis arguable –can it be supported by evidence in my source, and is it surprising and contentious?

If not, return to your sources and practice the exercises above.



Is my thesis about my primary source or case study, or is it about the world?

If it's about the world, revise it so that it focuses on your primary

source or case study. Remember you need solid evidence to support your thesis.

“Formulating a Thesis” was written by Andrea Scott, Princeton University

Acknowledgements

I'd like to thank my current and former colleagues in the Princeton Writing Program for helping me think through and test ways of teaching the arguable thesis. Special thanks go to Kerry Walk, Amanda Irwin Wilkins, Judy Swan, and Keith Shaw. A shout-out to Mark Gaipa as well, whose cartoons on teaching source use remain a program favorite.

[1] Adapted from Erik Simpson's "Five Ways of Looking at a Thesis" at <http://www.math.grinnell.edu/~simpson/Teaching/fiveways.html>

17. 5 Ways of Looking at a Thesis

1. A thesis says something a little strange.

Consider the following examples:

A: By telling the story of Westley and Buttercup's triumph over evil, *The Princess Bride* affirms the power of true love.



B: Although the main plot of *The Princess Bride* rests on the natural power of true love, an examination of the way that fighting sticks—baseball bats, tree branches, and swords—link the frame story to the romance plot suggests that the grandson is being trained in true love, that love is not natural but socialized.

I would argue that both of these statements are perfectly correct, but they are not both strange. Only the second one says something, well, weird. Weird is good. Sentence A encourages the paper to produce precisely the evidence that *The Princess Bride* presents

explicitly; sentence B ensures that the paper will talk about something new.

Romeo and Juliet concerns the dangers of family pride, *Frankenstein* the dangers of taking science too far. Yup. How can you make those things unusual? Good papers go out on a limb. They avoid ugly falls by reinforcing the limb with carefully chosen evidence and rigorous argumentation.

2. A thesis creates an argument that builds from one point to the next, giving the paper a direction that your reader can follow as the paper develops.

This point often separates the best theses from the pack. A good thesis can prevent the two weakest ways of organizing a critical paper: the pile of information and the plot summary with comments. A paper that presents a pile of information will frequently introduce new paragraphs with transitions that simply indicate the addition of more stuff. (“Another character who exhibits these traits is X,” for instance.) Consider these examples:

A: The Rules and Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey* both tell women how to act.

B: By looking at *The Rules*, a modern conduct book for women, we can see how Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey* is itself like a conduct book, questioning the rules for social success in her society and offering a new model.

Example A would almost inevitably lead to a paper organized as a pile of information. A plot summary with comments follows the chronological development of a text while picking out the same element of every segment; a transition in such a paper might read, “In the next scene, the color blue also figures prominently.” Both

of these approaches constitute too much of a good thing. Papers must compile evidence, of course, and following the chronology of a text can sometimes help a reader keep track of a paper's argument. The best papers, however, will develop according to a more complex logic articulated in a strong thesis. Example B above would lead a paper to organize its evidence according to the paper's own logic.

3. A thesis fits comfortably into the Magic Thesis Sentence (MTS).

The MTS: By looking at _____, we can see _____, which most readers don't see; it is important to look at this aspect of the text because _____.

Try it out with the examples from the first point:

A: By telling the story of Westley and Buttercup's triumph over evil, *The Princess Bride* affirms the power of true love.

B: Although the main plot of *The Princess Bride* rests on the natural power of true love, an examination of the way that fighting sticks–baseball bats, tree branches, and swords–link the frame story to the romance plot suggests that the grandson is being trained in true love, that love is not natural but socialized.

Notice that the MTS adds a new dimension to point number one above. The first part of the MTS asks you to find something strange (“which most readers don't see”), and the second part asks you to think about the importance of the strangeness. Thesis A would not work at all in the MTS; one could not reasonably state that “most readers [or viewers] don't see” that film's affirmation of true love, and the statement does not even attempt to explain the importance of its claim. Thesis B, on the other hand, gives us a way to complete the MTS, as in “By looking at the way fighting sticks link the plot and frame of *The Princess Bride*, we can see the way the grandson is trained in true love, which most people don't see; it is important to

look at this aspect of the text because unlike the rest of the film, the fighting sticks suggest that love is not natural but socialized.” One does not need to write out the MTS in such a neat one-sentence form, of course, but thinking through the structure of the MTS can help refine thesis ideas.

4. A thesis says something about the text(s) you discuss *exclusively*.

If your thesis could describe many works equally well, it needs to be more specific. Let’s return to our examples from above:

A: By telling the story of Westley and Buttercup’s triumph over evil, *The Princess Bride* affirms the power of true love.

B: Although the main plot of *The Princess Bride* rests on the natural power of true love, an examination of the way that fighting sticks—baseball bats, tree branches, and swords—link the frame story to the romance plot suggests that the grandson is being trained in true love, that love is not natural but socialized.

Try substituting other works:

A: By telling the story of Darcy and Elizabeth’s triumph over evil, *Pride and Prejudice* affirms the power of true love.

Sure, that makes sense. Bad sign.

B: Although the main plot of *Pride and Prejudice* rests on the natural power of true love, an examination of the way that fighting sticks—baseball bats, tree branches, and swords—link the frame story to the romance plot suggests that the grandson is being trained in true love, that it is not natural but socialized.



Um, nope. Even if you have never read *Pride and Prejudice*, you can probably guess that such a precise thesis could hardly apply to other works. Good sign.

5. A thesis makes a lot of information irrelevant.

If your thesis is specific enough, it will make a point that focuses on only a small part of the text you are analyzing. You can and should ultimately apply that point to the work as a whole, but a thesis will call attention to specific parts of it. Let's look at those examples again. (This is the last time, I promise.)

A: By telling the story of Westley and Buttercup's triumph over evil, *The Princess Bride* affirms the power of true love.

B: Although the main plot of *The Princess Bride* rests on the natural power of true love, an examination of the way that fighting sticks—baseball bats, tree branches, and swords—link the frame story to the romance plot suggests that the grandson is being trained in true love, that love is not natural but socialized.

One way of spotting the problem with example A is to note that a simple plot summary would support its point. That is not of true example B, which tells the reader exactly what moments the paper will discuss and why.

If you find that your paper leads you to mark relevant passages on virtually every page of a long work, you need to find a thesis that helps you focus on a smaller portion of the text. As the MTS reminds us, the paper should still strive to show the reader something new about the text as a whole, but a specific area of concentration will help, not hinder, that effort.

18. Thesis 21 Activity

Time to complete: 50 Minutes.

Materials needed: Writing Thesis Statements Handout (attached)

Blank 3 x 5 notecards

- Give students the Writing Thesis Statements Handout the class before you plan to do this

activity and have them complete it for homework. You can create specific topics that are

related to current essay you are working on. The handout provided is related to the first

essay of my Southern Culture class which is a Critical Analysis. Also have them watch

the YouTube Video “Writing Ninja: Writing a Strong Thesis Statement.”

- On the day of the activity, have them get out the thesis worksheet and discuss the

elements of an effective thesis statement.

- Give each student a notecard. Tell them to pick the thesis statement from the worksheet

that they think is best and write it on the notecard. Remind them not to put their name on

the card.

- Take up the worksheet.
- Tell them that when the music starts (I played fast banjo music from YouTube, but one

class requested a song, so I played it instead) to stand up and pass their notecard to

another student. Tell them to keep passing, and passing, and passing until the music

stops. When the music stops, they should partner with the person nearest and have a seat

where they are. They do not need to return to their original desk.

- They should read both statements together out loud. Then, they should rank the

statements giving each card a score—the scores should total to 7 points. For example, if

the thesis statements are pretty equal give one a 3 and one a 4 to equal 7. If one is really

good and the other isn't a thesis statement at all, give the good one a 7 and the other a 0

(totaling 7 points). Other options are 6 and 1 or 5 and 2 (I write the scoring options on the board).

- Tell them to score the statements and put the score on the back.
- Repeat passing and scoring two more times.
- After the last scoring, ask the students to total the points on the card they end up with.

Ask if anyone has 21 points? Then count down. Put the top three thesis statements on the

board. Talk about what makes them effective. Ask who they belong to and give them

recognition if they want to claim their statement.

Practice Writing Thesis Statements

Remember, a thesis statement tells the reader what your essay will be about while providing three reasons to support your main idea.

Look at the following topics and their example thesis statements:

- a) Topic—Society and Class in “A Good Man is Hard to Find”
Thesis—The Grandmother in “A Good Man is Hard to Find” demonstrates a particular social class of the South. She associates being from the upper-class through superficial elements such as who one descends from, how one speaks and acts, and how one dresses.

For the following topic, come up with a thesis statement of your own. Make sure the thesis statement states the main idea and has three reasons to support the topic.

1. Topic—The importance of Family in *Incidents in a Life of a Slave Girl*

Thesis—

2. Topic— The portrayal of slaver in *Incidents in a Life of a Slave Girl*

Thesis—

3. Topic— Racial stereotypes in *Incidents in a Life of a Slave Girl*

Thesis—

4. Topic—Significance of the setting in “The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County”

Thesis—

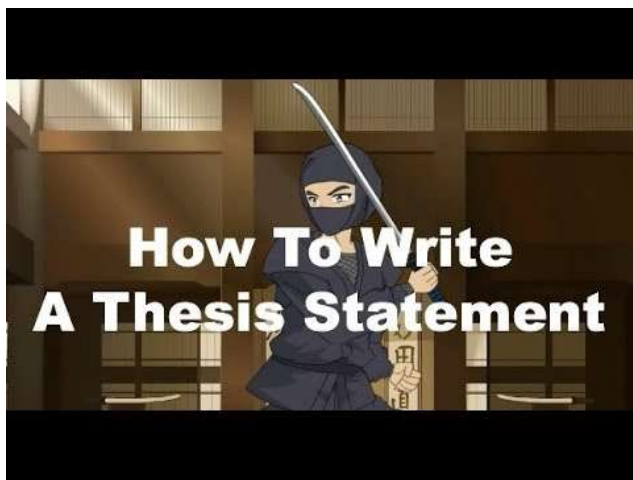
5. Topic— Character analysis of Smiley in “The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County”

Thesis—

6. Topic—The importance of animals in “The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County”

Thesis—

19. Writing Ninjas: How to Write a Strong Thesis Statement



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://library.achievingthedream.org/bhccacceleratedenglish/?p=37>

20. Process: Writing a Thesis Statement

Thesis statements are easy to construct if you: 1. can condense your secondary sources—that you’ve read and understood—into a “main idea and argument” grid (explained below); and 2. answer a framework of organizational questions (also below). These two steps can help to ensure that your thesis simultaneously situates an idea within a particular “conversation” and specifies a unique perspective/makes a new argument/contribution to the conversation.

1. Condensing secondary sources:

- a. Include some brief information each of your secondary sources (books, journal articles, etc.) on a grid so that you can organize the authors’ main ideas and perspectives in one space. For instance,

Author	Main Idea	Argument
Jones	Climate change policy	Climate change policy is at a standstill because the government is concerned about economic growth
Smith	Climate change policy	Climate change policy ought to be communicated as an ethical imperative because that will motivate the public to respond
Taylor	Climate change policy	Climate change policy needs to be communicated to the public by interdisciplinary teams of academics and politicians

b. Once you've created an organizational table, you'll want to examine it for commonalities/linkages among the authors' ideas and arguments. In the example above, all authors have written about climate change policy, so now you know that you'll need to include something like this phrase, "climate change policy," in your thesis statement. Regarding the authors' arguments, Jones argues about how climate change policy is affected by the government's concern with economic growth; Smith argues that it needs to be communicated as an ethical imperative; and Taylor argues that it needs to be communicated by interdisciplinary teams.

c. Given this information, the first half of your thesis – which explains the specific topic – needs to explain to the audience/reader that you are writing specifically about climate change policy. The second half of your thesis – which contextualizes the argument – needs to

explain to the audience/reader your interpretation of these authors' arguments. For instance, you may choose to argue that:

- i. climate change policy regarding the effect of government policies about economic growth is the greater imperative for accomplishing more effective climate change policies in the U.S.

- ii. ethical imperatives are the motivating factor for encouraging the public to respond – causing academic institutions to work with government officials/decision-makers in responding to the public's opinion/support of climate change policy as an ethical concern

d. The examples above are hypothetical; and only two of the many, creative possibilities for interpreting an *argument* out of a specific *topic*. Whereas an argument seeks to persuade an audience/reader about a way of interpreting others' information, a topic simply describes how to categorize/identify where the argument “fits” (i.e. which generalized group of people would be concerned with reading your writing)

e. Hint: oftentimes, the authors of academic journal articles conclude their arguments by suggesting potential research questions that they believe ought to be addressed in future scholarship. These suggestions can potentially provide some really excellent information about how to begin articulating a unique argument about a specific topic.

21. Creating Paragraphs

A paragraph is a self-contained portion of your argument. Paragraphs will begin by making a claim that connects back to your thesis. The body of the paragraph will present the evidence, reasoning and conclusions that prove 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.

How Many Paragraphs Do You Need?

There is no set number for how many paragraphs a paper should have. You will need one for an introduction and one for a conclusion, but after that the number can vary. However, you will need one paragraph for every claim that makes up your argument.

Paragraphs should be used to develop one idea at a time rather than contain many different ideas and claims. If you have a lot of ideas and claims to address, you may be tempted to combine related claims into the same paragraph. Combining different points in the same paragraph cuts down on how much space you have to argue each point. This will divide your reader's attention and make your argument less thorough.

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 their focus, they will have a much easier time following your argument.

Some writing manuals will direct you to have one paragraph for every point made in your thesis. The general idea behind this rule is a good one – you need to address every point, and you will need

at least a paragraph for each. However, do not feel like you can only devote one paragraph to each point. If your argument is complex, you may need to have subsections for each of your main points. Each one of those supporting points should be its own paragraph.

Using Topic Sentences

Every paragraph of argument should begin with a topic sentence that tells the reader what the paragraph will prove. By providing the reader with expectations at the start of the paragraph, you help them 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 your thesis statement – if you cannot find a way to describe a paragraph in relation to your thesis, you probably do not need it for your argument.

Creating Good Paragraphs

If the thesis contains multiple points or assertions, each body paragraph should support or justify them, preferably in the order the assertions were originally stated in the thesis. Thus, the topic sentence for the first body paragraph will refer to the first point in the thesis sentence and the topic sentence for the second body paragraph will refer to the second point in the thesis sentence. Each body paragraph is something like a miniature essay in that they each need an introductory sentence that makes an important and interesting argument, and that they each need a good closing sentence in order to produce a smooth transition between one point and the next. Transitions from one argument to the next, as well as within paragraphs, are important to add coherence to your paper.

22. Paragraphs

What this handout is about

This handout will help you understand how paragraphs are formed, how to develop stronger paragraphs, and how to completely and clearly express your ideas.

What is a paragraph?

Paragraphs are the building blocks of papers. Many students define paragraphs in terms of length: a paragraph is a group of at least five sentences, a paragraph is half a page long, etc. In reality, though, the unity and coherence of ideas among sentences is what constitutes a paragraph. A paragraph is defined as “a group of sentences or a single sentence that forms a unit” (Lunsford and Connors 116). Length and appearance do not determine whether a section in a paper is a paragraph. For instance, in some styles of writing, particularly journalistic styles, a paragraph can be just one sentence long. Ultimately, a paragraph is a sentence or group of sentences that support one main idea. In this handout, we will refer to this as the “controlling idea,” because it controls what happens in the rest of the paragraph.

How do I decide what to put in a paragraph?

Before you can begin to determine what the composition of a particular paragraph will be, you must first decide on a working

thesis for your paper. What is the most important idea that you are trying to convey to your reader? The information in each paragraph must be related to that idea. In other words, your paragraphs should remind your reader that there is a recurrent relationship between your thesis and the information in each paragraph. A working thesis functions like a seed from which your paper, and your ideas, will grow. The whole process is an organic one—a natural progression from a seed to a full-blown paper where there are direct, familial relationships between all of the ideas in the paper.

The decision about what to put into your paragraphs begins with the germination of a seed of ideas; this “germination process” is better known as brainstorming. There are many techniques for brainstorming; whichever one you choose, this stage of paragraph development cannot be skipped. Building paragraphs can be like building a skyscraper: there must be a well-planned foundation that supports what you are building. Any cracks, inconsistencies, or other corruptions of the foundation can cause your whole paper to crumble.

So, let's suppose that you have done some brainstorming to develop your thesis. What else should you keep in mind as you begin to create paragraphs? Every paragraph in a paper should be

- **Unified**—All of the sentences in a single paragraph should be related to a single controlling idea (often expressed in the topic sentence of the paragraph).
- **Clearly related to the thesis**—The sentences should all refer to the central idea, or thesis, of the paper (Rosen and Behrens 119).
- **Coherent**—The sentences should be arranged in a logical manner and should follow a definite plan for development (Rosen and Behrens 119).
- **Well-developed**—Every idea discussed in the paragraph should be adequately explained and supported through evidence and details that work together to explain the paragraph's controlling idea (Rosen and Behrens 119).

How do I organize a paragraph?

There are many different ways to organize a paragraph. The organization you choose will depend on the controlling idea of the paragraph. Below are a few possibilities for organization, with brief examples.

- **Narration:** Tell a story. Go chronologically, from start to finish. ([See an example.](#))
- **Description:** Provide specific details about what something looks, smells, tastes, sounds, or feels like. Organize spatially, in order of appearance, or by topic. ([See an example.](#))
- **Process:** Explain how something works, step by step. Perhaps follow a sequence—first, second, third. ([See an example.](#))
- **Classification:** Separate into groups or explain the various parts of a topic. ([See an example.](#))
- **Illustration:** Give examples and explain how those examples prove your point. (See the detailed example in the next section of this handout.)

5-step process to paragraph development

Let's walk through a 5-step process to building a paragraph. Each step of the process will include an explanation of the step and a bit of “model” text to illustrate how the step works. Our finished model paragraph will be about slave spirituals, the original songs that African Americans created during slavery. The model paragraph uses illustration (giving examples) to prove its point.

Step 1. Decide on a controlling idea and create a topic sentence

Paragraph development begins with the formulation of the controlling idea. This idea directs the paragraph's development. Often, the controlling idea of a paragraph will appear in the form of a topic sentence. In some cases, you may need more than one sentence to express a paragraph's controlling idea. Here is the controlling idea for our "model paragraph," expressed in a topic sentence:

Model controlling idea and topic sentence— *Slave spirituals often had hidden double meanings.*

Step 2. Explain the controlling idea

Paragraph development continues with an expression of the rationale or the explanation that the writer gives for how the reader should interpret the information presented in the idea statement or topic sentence of the paragraph. The writer explains his/her thinking about the main topic, idea, or focus of the paragraph. Here's the sentence that would follow the controlling idea about slave spirituals:

Model explanation—*On one level, spirituals referenced heaven, Jesus, and the soul; but on another level, the songs spoke about slave resistance.*

Step 3. Give an example (or multiple examples)

Paragraph development progresses with the expression of some type of support or evidence for the idea and the explanation that

came before it. The example serves as a sign or representation of the relationship established in the idea and explanation portions of the paragraph. Here are two examples that we could use to illustrate the double meanings in slave spirituals:

Model example A— *For example, according to Frederick Douglass, the song “O Canaan, Sweet Canaan” spoke of slaves’ longing for heaven, but it also expressed their desire to escape to the North. Careful listeners heard this second meaning in the following lyrics: “I don’t expect to stay / Much longer here. / Run to Jesus, shun the danger. / I don’t expect to stay.”*

Model example B— *Slaves even used songs like “Steal Away to Jesus (at midnight)” to announce to other slaves the time and place of secret, forbidden meetings.*

Step 4. Explain the example(s)

The next movement in paragraph development is an explanation of each example and its relevance to the topic sentence and rationale that were stated at the beginning of the paragraph. This explanation shows readers why you chose to use this/or these particular examples as evidence to support the major claim, or focus, in your paragraph.

Continue the pattern of giving examples and explaining them until all points/examples that the writer deems necessary have been made and explained. NONE of your examples should be left unexplained. You might be able to explain the relationship between the example and the topic sentence in the same sentence which introduced the example. More often, however, you will need to explain that relationship in a separate sentence. Look at these explanations for the two examples in the slave spirituals paragraph:

Model explanation for example A— *When slaves sang this song, they could have been speaking of their departure from this life and*

their arrival in heaven; however, they also could have been describing their plans to leave the South and run, not to Jesus, but to the North.

Model explanation for example B—*[The relationship between example B and the main idea of the paragraph's controlling idea is clear enough without adding another sentence to explain it.]*

Step 5. Complete the paragraph's idea or transition into the next paragraph

The final movement in paragraph development involves tying up the loose ends of the paragraph and reminding the reader of the relevance of the information in this paragraph to the main or controlling idea of the paper. At this point, you can remind your reader about the relevance of the information that you just discussed in the paragraph. You might feel more comfortable, however, simply transitioning your reader to the next development in the next paragraph. Here's an example of a sentence that completes the slave spirituals paragraph:

Model sentence for completing a paragraph— *What whites heard as merely spiritual songs, slaves discerned as detailed messages. The hidden meanings in spirituals allowed slaves to sing what they could not say.*

Notice that the example and explanation steps of this 5-step process (steps 3 and 4) can be repeated as needed. The idea is that you continue to use this pattern until you have completely developed the main idea of the paragraph.

Here is a look at the completed “model” paragraph:

Slave spirituals often had hidden double meanings. On one level, spirituals referenced heaven, Jesus, and the soul, but on another level, the songs spoke about slave resistance. For example, according to Frederick Douglass, the song “O Canaan, Sweet Canaan” spoke of slaves’ longing for heaven, but it also expressed their desire to escape to the North. Careful listeners heard this second meaning in the

following lyrics: “I don’t expect to stay / Much longer here. / Run to Jesus, shun the danger. / I don’t expect to stay.” When slaves sang this song, they could have been speaking of their departure from this life and their arrival in heaven; however, they also could have been describing their plans to leave the South and run, not to Jesus, but to the North. Slaves even used songs like “Steal Away to Jesus (at midnight)” to announce to other slaves the time and place of secret, forbidden meetings. What whites heard as merely spiritual songs, slaves discerned as detailed messages. The hidden meanings in spirituals allowed slaves to sing what they could not say.

Troubleshooting paragraphs

1) Problem: the paragraph has no topic sentence. Imagine each paragraph as a sandwich. The real content of the sandwich—the meat or other filling—is in the middle. It includes all the evidence you need to make the point. But it gets kind of messy to eat a sandwich without any bread. Your readers don’t know what to do with all the evidence you’ve given them. So, the top slice of bread (the first sentence of the paragraph) explains the topic (or controlling idea) of the paragraph. And, the bottom slice (the last sentence of the paragraph) tells the reader how the paragraph relates to the broader argument. In the original and revised paragraphs below, notice how a topic sentence expressing the controlling idea tells the reader the point of all the evidence.

Original paragraph

Piranhas rarely feed on large animals; they eat smaller fish and aquatic plants. When confronted with humans, piranhas’ first instinct is to flee, not attack. Their fear of humans makes sense. Far more piranhas are eaten by people than people are eaten by piranhas. If the fish are well-fed, they won’t bite humans.

Revised paragraph

Although most people consider piranhas to be quite dangerous, they are, for the most part, entirely harmless. Piranhas rarely feed on large animals; they eat smaller fish and aquatic plants. When confronted with humans, piranhas' first instinct is to flee, not attack. Their fear of humans makes sense. Far more piranhas are eaten by people than people are eaten by piranhas. If the fish are well-fed, they won't bite humans.

Once you have mastered the use of topic sentences, you may decide that the topic sentence for a particular paragraph really shouldn't be the first sentence of the paragraph. This is fine—the topic sentence can actually go at the beginning, middle, or end of a paragraph; what's important is that it is in there somewhere so that readers know what the main idea of the paragraph is and how it relates back to the thesis of your paper. Suppose that we wanted to start the piranha paragraph with a transition sentence—something that reminds the reader of what happened in the previous paragraph—rather than with the topic sentence. Let's suppose that the previous paragraph was about all kinds of animals that people are afraid of, like sharks, snakes, and spiders. Our paragraph might look like this (the topic sentence is underlined):

Like sharks, snakes, and spiders, piranhas are widely feared. Although most people consider piranhas to be quite dangerous, they are, for the most part, entirely harmless. Piranhas rarely feed on large animals; they eat smaller fish and aquatic plants. When confronted with humans, piranhas' first instinct is to flee, not attack. Their fear of humans makes sense. Far more piranhas are eaten by people than people are eaten by piranhas. If the fish are well-fed, they won't bite humans.

2) Problem: the paragraph has more than one controlling idea.

If a paragraph has more than one main idea, consider eliminating sentences that relate to the second idea, or split the paragraph into two or more paragraphs, each with only one main idea. In the following paragraph, the final two sentences branch off into a different topic; so, the revised paragraph eliminates them and

concludes with a sentence that reminds the reader of the paragraph's main idea.

Original paragraph

Although most people consider piranhas to be quite dangerous, they are, for the most part, entirely harmless. Piranhas rarely feed on large animals; they eat smaller fish and aquatic plants. When confronted with humans, piranhas' first instinct is to flee, not attack. Their fear of humans makes sense. Far more piranhas are eaten by people than people are eaten by piranhas. ~~A number of South American groups eat piranhas. They fry or grill the fish and then serve them with coconut milk or tucupi, a sauce made from fermented manioc juices.~~

Revised paragraph

Although most people consider piranhas to be quite dangerous, they are, for the most part, entirely harmless. Piranhas rarely feed on large animals; they eat smaller fish and aquatic plants. When confronted with humans, piranhas' first instinct is to flee, not attack. Their fear of humans makes sense. Far more piranhas are eaten by people than people are eaten by piranhas. *If the fish are well-fed, they won't bite humans.*

3) Problem: transitions are needed within the paragraph. You are probably familiar with the idea that transitions may be needed between paragraphs or sections in a paper (see our handout on this subject). Sometimes they are also helpful within the body of a single paragraph. Within a paragraph, transitions are often single words or short phrases that help to establish relationships between ideas and to create a logical progression of those ideas in a paragraph. This is especially likely to be true within paragraphs that discuss multiple examples. Let's take a look at a version of our piranha paragraph that uses transitions to orient the reader:

Although most people consider piranhas to be quite dangerous, they are, except in two main situations, entirely harmless. Piranhas rarely feed on large animals; they eat smaller fish and aquatic plants. When confronted with humans, piranhas' instinct is to flee, not attack. But there are two situations in which a piranha bite is likely. The first is

when a frightened piranha is lifted out of the water—for example, if it has been caught in a fishing net. The second is when the water level in pools where piranhas are living falls too low. A large number of fish may be trapped in a single pool, and if they are hungry, they may attack anything that enters the water.

In this example, you can see how the phrases “the first” and “the second” help the reader follow the organization of the ideas in the paragraph.

Works consulted

We consulted these works while writing the original version of this handout. This is not a comprehensive list of resources on the handout’s topic, and we encourage you to do your own research to find the latest publications on this topic. Please do not use this list as a model for the format of your own reference list, as it may not match the citation style you are using. For guidance on formatting citations, please see the [UNC Libraries citation tutorial](#).

Lunsford, Andrea and Robert Collins. *The St. Martin’s Handbook, Annotated Instructor’s Edition*. 5th Ed. New York: St. Martin’s, 2003.

Rosen, Leonard and Laurence Behrens. *The Allyn and Bacon Handbook, Annotated Instructor’s Edition*. 4th Ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000.

23. How to Write Introductory Paragraphs



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

[https://library.achievingthdream.org/
bhccacceleratedenglish/?p=41](https://library.achievingthdream.org/bhccacceleratedenglish/?p=41)

24. Assignment: Writing Effective Intros Activity

Instructor Guidelines

Time: 50 min.-1 hr 15 min.

Materials needed:

- students need original intro from an essay
- 8 Ways to Begin an Essay handout

Directions

1. Have students copy and paste the introductory paragraph from any essay on to a blank word document.
2. Watch the YouTube video “How to write introductory paragraphs” and discuss the different ways to begin an essay. Provide the supplemental handout (see below)—8 Ways to begin an essay.
3. Have students look at their current introduction. Ask: What method did you use to write your intro? Title it “Intro 1—Method”, i.e. Intro 1—Anecdote or Intro 1—Quotation. Type the label above the paragraph. You may have used more than one method or no method at all. You can note such in the label.
4. Now, choose two other methods for beginning the essay. For example, if you already started with questions, then try writing a new intro by starting with a quote. Then try another intro starting with one of the other methods. You can choose any method you like.

5. The new intros should be completely different. The topic should not change in anyway and the thesis will remain the same. They are simply writing new intros for the chosen essay.
6. Once they have written the two new intros, they should clear their desks of everything except the three intros. They should also keep a writing utensil.
7. Play music and have the students walk around. When the music stops, they sit at someone else's desk. They read the three intros and mark which one they find most interesting. They can mark it with a star or checkmark or something. Do this for as many rounds as time allows. Toward the end of class, have them return to their original seat and see which intro their classmates liked best. Then have a discussion to see who thinks they will use their new intro for the next draft of the essay.

8 Ways to Begin Your Essay

1. Use a rhetorical question—Pose a [*question*](#) related to your subject and then answer it (or invite your readers to answer it). This will get the reader think about your topic.
 - Have you ever imagined what it would be like to be cold and hungry every night? To not have a warm bed to lie in? To not have friends or family to take care of you? This is what over 1.5 million Americans face every day (economist.com).
2. State an interesting fact about your subject.
 - In 2014, 1.49 million people used temporary shelter and another 578, 000 didn't have shelter at all, sleeping in

tents, cars, and doorways when the required “point-in-time” survey took place which is required by the federal government every two year during which volunteers walk around cities counting the homeless (economist.com).

3. Present your thesis as a recent discovery or revelation.
 - I’ve finally figured out how we can solve the issue of homelessness—we must make these people visible and provide the housing they need to get them off the streets.
4. Briefly describe the place that serves as the primary [setting](#) of your essay.
 - It was a bitter cold night as I weaved my way through the crowds of homeless people standing around metal barrels, blazing with fire, under the interstate exchange. A hard wind blew through the tunnel, and the men and women huddled together around the fires to gather whatever warmth they could. The place was barren minus a few shopping carts filled with bags of recyclables. All around me, people slept on the ground on top of cardboard boxes covered with the newspapers. The lucky few had ratty sleeping bags or torn blankets to cover themselves with.
5. Recount an incident that dramatizes your subject.
 - One October afternoon as I walking through Cambridge square, I was struck by the sad eyes of a young man asking for money. He couldn’t have been more than 18. His face was dirty and his hair was greasy. He wore mismatched clothes and his toes poked through the holes in his shoes. I didn’t have any cash, so I gave him a granola bar from lunch bag. I wondered how he ended up here. I wondered how we might be able to help him.

6. Use the [narrative](#) strategy of delay: put off identifying your subject just long enough to pique your readers' interest without frustrating them.
 - We see them everywhere in the city. On the street corners. In the subways. Even more so, we might smell them. The pungent odor of onions and celery. We smell their leftover urine in the elevator carts. We hear them ask for money. We hear them shake their cups, clinking like tic tacs. They are the homeless.
7. Using the [historical present tense](#), relate an incident from the past as if it were happening now.
 - I pull up to the intersection. The light turns red, so I must stop. A man with a sign and a dog stands on the street corner. I make eye contact. His sign says he's hungry. I always carry snacks, so I roll down my window and give him two tangerines. He thanks me with a toothless smile. That was ten years ago and the first time I had given something to a homeless person. That was just the beginning. Now, it has become my cause—my passion.
8. Reveal a secret about yourself or make a candid observation about your subject.
 - I try to avoid contact. If I don't make eye contact, I won't feel badly about giving him nothing. I can't help it. I look up at him at the very last minute. He stands without putting weight one foot. His sign says he just had surgery—that he's a homeless vet—that he's been sober for 33 years. I offer him a granola bar. He says he can't eat that because his mouth is wired shut. I keep walking. The guilt overcomes me and I wish I could do more.

[A handout of this activity can be found here.](#)

25. Conclusions

What this handout is about

This handout will explain the functions of conclusions, offer strategies for writing effective ones, help you evaluate your drafted conclusions, and suggest conclusion strategies to avoid.

About conclusions

Introductions and conclusions can be the most difficult parts of papers to write. While the body is often easier to write, it needs a frame around it. An introduction and conclusion frame your thoughts and bridge your ideas for the reader.

Just as your introduction acts as a bridge that transports your readers from their own lives into the “place” of your analysis, your conclusion can provide a bridge to help your readers make the transition back to their daily lives. Such a conclusion will help them see why all your analysis and information should matter to them after they put the paper down.

Your conclusion is your chance to have the last word on the subject. The conclusion allows you to have the final say on the issues you have raised in your paper, to summarize your thoughts, to demonstrate the importance of your ideas, and to propel your reader to a new view of the subject. It is also your opportunity to make a good final impression and to end on a positive note.

Your conclusion can go beyond the confines of the assignment. The conclusion pushes beyond the boundaries of the prompt and allows you to consider broader issues, make new connections, and elaborate on the significance of your findings.

Your conclusion should make your readers glad they read your paper. Your conclusion gives your reader something to take away that will help them see things differently or appreciate your topic in personally relevant ways. It can suggest broader implications that will not only interest your reader, but also enrich your reader's life in some way. It is your gift to the reader.

Strategies for writing an effective conclusion

One or more of the following strategies may help you write an effective conclusion.

- Play the “So What” Game. If you're stuck and feel like your conclusion isn't saying anything new or interesting, ask a friend to read it with you. Whenever you make a statement from your conclusion, ask the friend to say, “So what?” or “Why should anybody care?” Then ponder that question and answer it. Here's how it might go:

You: *Basically, I'm just saying that education was important to Douglass.*

Friend: *So what?*

You: *Well, it was important because it was a key to him feeling like a free and equal citizen.*

Friend: *Why should anybody care?*

You: *That's important because plantation owners tried to keep slaves from being educated so that they could maintain control. When Douglass obtained an education, he undermined that control personally.*

You can also use this strategy on your own, asking yourself “So What?” as you develop your ideas or your draft.

- Return to the theme or themes in the introduction. This

strategy brings the reader full circle. For example, if you begin by describing a scenario, you can end with the same scenario as proof that your essay is helpful in creating a new understanding. You may also refer to the introductory paragraph by using key words or parallel concepts and images that you also used in the introduction.

- Synthesize, don't summarize: Include a brief summary of the paper's main points, but don't simply repeat things that were in your paper. Instead, show your reader how the points you made and the support and examples you used fit together. Pull it all together.
- Include a provocative insight or quotation from the research or reading you did for your paper.
- Propose a course of action, a solution to an issue, or questions for further study. This can redirect your reader's thought process and help her to apply your info and ideas to her own life or to see the broader implications.
- Point to broader implications. For example, if your paper examines the Greensboro sit-ins or another event in the Civil Rights Movement, you could point out its impact on the Civil Rights Movement as a whole. A paper about the style of writer Virginia Woolf could point to her influence on other writers or on later feminists.

Strategies to avoid

- Beginning with an unnecessary, overused phrase such as "in conclusion," "in summary," or "in closing." Although these phrases can work in speeches, they come across as wooden and trite in writing.
- Stating the thesis for the very first time in the conclusion.
- Introducing a new idea or subtopic in your conclusion.
- Ending with a rephrased thesis statement without any

substantive changes.

- Making sentimental, emotional appeals that are out of character with the rest of an analytical paper.
- Including evidence (quotations, statistics, etc.) that should be in the body of the paper.

Four kinds of ineffective conclusions

1. The “That’s My Story and I’m Sticking to It” Conclusion. This conclusion just restates the thesis and is usually painfully short. It does not push the ideas forward. People write this kind of conclusion when they can’t think of anything else to say. Example: In conclusion, Frederick Douglass was, as we have seen, a pioneer in American education, proving that education was a major force for social change with regard to slavery.
2. The “Sherlock Holmes” Conclusion. Sometimes writers will state the thesis for the very first time in the conclusion. You might be tempted to use this strategy if you don’t want to give everything away too early in your paper. You may think it would be more dramatic to keep the reader in the dark until the end and then “wow” him with your main idea, as in a Sherlock Holmes mystery. The reader, however, does not expect a mystery, but an analytical discussion of your topic in an academic style, with the main argument (thesis) stated up front. Example: (After a paper that lists numerous incidents from the book but never says what these incidents reveal about Douglass and his views on education): So, as the evidence above demonstrates, Douglass saw education as a way to undermine the slaveholders’ power and also an important step toward freedom.
3. The “America the Beautiful”/“I Am Woman”/“We Shall Overcome” Conclusion. This kind of conclusion usually draws

on emotion to make its appeal, but while this emotion and even sentimentality may be very heartfelt, it is usually out of character with the rest of an analytical paper. A more sophisticated commentary, rather than emotional praise, would be a more fitting tribute to the topic. Example: Because of the efforts of fine Americans like Frederick Douglass, countless others have seen the shining beacon of light that is education. His example was a torch that lit the way for others. Frederick Douglass was truly an American hero.

4. The “Grab Bag” Conclusion. This kind of conclusion includes extra information that the writer found or thought of but couldn’t integrate into the main paper. You may find it hard to leave out details that you discovered after hours of research and thought, but adding random facts and bits of evidence at the end of an otherwise-well-organized essay can just create confusion. Example: In addition to being an educational pioneer, Frederick Douglass provides an interesting case study for masculinity in the American South. He also offers historians an interesting glimpse into slave resistance when he confronts Covey, the overseer. His relationships with female relatives reveal the importance of family in the slave community.

Works consulted

We consulted these works while writing the original version of this handout. This is not a comprehensive list of resources on the handout’s topic, and we encourage you to do your own research to find the latest publications on this topic. Please do not use this list as a model for the format of your own reference list, as it may not match the citation style you are using. For guidance on formatting citations, please see the [UNC Libraries citation tutorial](#).

All quotations are from:

Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an*

American Slave, edited and with introduction by Houston A. Baker, Jr., New York: Penguin Books, 1986.

Strategies for Writing a Conclusion. Literacy Education Online, St. Cloud State University. 18 May 2005 <<http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/acadwrite/conclude.html>>.

Conclusions. Nesbitt-Johnston Writing Center, Hamilton College. 17 May 2005 <<http://www.hamilton.edu/academic/Resource/WC/SampleConclusions.html>>.

PART IV

UNIT 4: THE LITERARY ANALYSIS

26. Assignment: Critical Analysis Essay

Assignment Sheet—Essay #1: Critical Analysis (700-1000 words)

For this essay, you will be doing a critical analysis on any of the literary readings assigned for this class. The purpose of this assignment is to get you to move beyond the surface level meaning of a text and to analyze its deeper meaning.

Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to-

- move beyond summarizing the story
- assess or analyze what you read
- offer interpretations and judgments about what you read
- give evidence to support your evaluation

A Successful Essay:

- Will properly introduce the story and author
- Will provide a clear thesis that makes a claim about a story and uses evidence to support that claim
- Will thoroughly analyze a reading, not merely summarize it
- Will properly integrate evidence from the reading in MLA format

TOPICS

1. Analyze the plot, the meaning of the sequence of events in one of the literary readings. When analyzing the plot, one should not simply list the events that occur but rather WHY they occur. You want to make your assertion arguable. Perhaps you want to argue about a cause or an effect of a certain event. Perhaps you want to show how an event changed a character or what the underlying message is behind the event. Why did the author make a certain event occur? What was the effect on the audience?
2. Analyze an important symbol or motif (series of interlinked symbols), in one of the readings. Tell us what you think a certain symbol in the story represents. For example: In “A Good Man is Hard to Find” religion symbolizes_____ or In “Everyday Use” the quilt symbolizes_____. Be sure to use direct description from the text to describe the symbol and use examples to prove what it symbolizes. Remember that colors can also be symbolic.
3. Analyze an important character in one of the readings. Why did the author represent a character in a certain way? What underlying message is the author trying to send? Is the character stereotypical or unusual in any way? Why would the author portray him/her that way? What are the motives of the character? What actions characterize him/her? Did the character have a change of heart? What caused it?

A Checklist

1. Make sure your final version is in MLA format (Times New

Roman, size 12, double-spaced) including in-text citations when referring to the reading and a works cited page.

2. When referring to the reading, remember that the author isn't necessarily the one telling the story. If it is fiction, it probably has a narrator. Thus, you would want to refer to the "narrator" or "speaker" when referencing the reading.
3. Come up with your own title. The title of your essay should not be the title of the reading you are analyzing. The title should make it clear what your essay is about. Do not underline, bold, or italicize your title.
4. There is no need to say "I think" or "I believe" as you are writing this essay. Because you are the writer, we inherently know that these are your beliefs.
5. In the introduction, be sure to formally introduce the reading that you are analyzing it by mentioning the title and the author. Also, provide a brief summary of the story. For example: In the short story, "A Good Man is Hard to Find" by Flannery O'Connor, we read about a family who goes on a road trip to Florida where a series of events leads to their eventual demise.
6. The thesis should come at the end of the introduction. It should consist of a claim + evidence. For example: In "A Good Man is Hard to Find," the grandmother tries to manipulate her son, her grandchildren, and the Misfit in order to get her way. Because of her manipulative ways, her entire family meets its end.
7. When writing about literature, one must always use present tense.
8. Be sure each body paragraph starts with claim and NOT summary.

Claim: The grandmother tries to manipulate her son, Bailey, in order to get her way.

Summary: In the beginning of the story, the grandmother and her son Bailey are sitting at the kitchen table. The

grandmother is reading and newspaper and tells her son that they should not go to Florida because there is a misfit on the loose.

You always want to start with a claim and then go to the story for evidence. i.e. The grandmother tries to manipulate her son, Bailey, in order to get her way. One example that shows how the grandmother tries to manipulate her son is when she tells him that they shouldn't go to Florida because there is a criminal on the loose. She tells him that it would be dangerous to take his children there. She's trying to manipulate Bailey by making him feel like a bad parent for putting his children in harm's way when the real reason she doesn't want to go to Florida is because she wants to go East Tennessee instead. Another way the grandmother tries to manipulate her son is when she.... So on, and so forth.

[A handout of this assignment can be found here.](#)

27. Introduction to Reading and Interpreting Literary Texts

Writing is not life, but I think that sometimes it can be a way back to life. — Stephen King, *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*



Learning Outcomes

- Identify the key features of prose
- Identify the key features of poetry
- Identify and describe the major critical approaches to literary interpretation: New Criticism/Formalism, Reader-Response, Feminism, and Marxism

28. How to Analyze a Short Story

What Is a Short Story?

A short story is a work of short, narrative prose that is usually centered around one single event. It is limited in scope and has an introduction, body and conclusion. Although a short story has much in common with a novel (See How to Analyze a Novel), it is written with much greater precision. You will often be asked to write a literary analysis. An analysis of a short story requires basic knowledge of literary elements. The following guide and questions may help you:



Old Fence. A short story has a structure and a message. Can you analyze this picture in much the same way as a short story?

Setting

Setting is a description of where and when the story takes place. In a short story there are fewer settings compared to a novel. The time is more limited. Ask yourself the following questions:

- How is the setting created? Consider geography, weather, time

of day, social conditions, etc.

- What role does setting play in the story? Is it an important part of the plot or theme? Or is it just a backdrop against which the action takes place?

Study the time period, which is also part of the setting, and ask yourself the following:

- When was the story written?
- Does it take place in the present, the past, or the future?
- How does the time period affect the language, atmosphere or social circumstances of the short story?

Characterization

Characterization deals with how the characters in the story are described. In short stories there are usually fewer characters compared to a novel. They usually focus on one central character or protagonist. Ask yourself the following:

- Who is the main character?
- Are the main character and other characters described through dialogue – by the way they speak (dialect or slang for instance)?
- Has the author described the characters by physical appearance, thoughts and feelings, and interaction (the way they act towards others)?
- Are they static/flat characters who do not change?
- Are they dynamic/round characters who DO change?
- What type of characters are they? What qualities stand out? Are they stereotypes?
- Are the characters believable?

Plot and structure

The plot is the main sequence of events that make up the story. In short stories the plot is usually centered around one experience or significant moment. Consider the following questions:

- What is the most important event?
- How is the plot structured? Is it linear, chronological or does it move around?
- Is the plot believable?

Narrator and Point of view

The narrator is the person telling the story. Consider this question: Are the narrator and the main character the same?

By point of view we mean from whose eyes the story is being told. Short stories tend to be told through one character's point of view. The following are important questions to consider:

- Who is the narrator or speaker in the story?
- Does the author speak through the main character?
- Is the story written in the first person “I” point of view?
- Is the story written in a detached third person “he/she” point of view?
- Is there an “all-knowing” third person who can reveal what all the characters are thinking and doing at all times and in all places?

Conflict

Conflict or tension is usually the heart of the short story and is

related to the main character. In a short story there is usually one main struggle.

- How would you describe the main conflict?
- Is it an internal conflict within the character?
- Is it an external conflict caused by the surroundings or environment the main character finds himself/herself in?

Climax

The climax is the point of greatest tension or intensity in the short story. It can also be the point where events take a major turn as the story races towards its conclusion. Ask yourself:

- Is there a turning point in the story?
- When does the climax take place?

Theme

The theme is the main idea, lesson, or message in the short story. It may be an abstract idea about the human condition, society, or life. Ask yourself:

- How is the theme expressed?
- Are any elements repeated and therefore suggest a theme?
- Is there more than one theme?

Style

The author's style has to do with the his or her vocabulary, use

of imagery, tone, or the feeling of the story. It has to do with the author's attitude toward the subject. In some short stories the tone can be ironic, humorous, cold, or dramatic.

- Is the author's language full of figurative language?
- What images are used?
- Does the author use a lot of symbolism? Metaphors (comparisons that do not use "as" or "like") or similes (comparisons that use "as" or "like")?

Your literary analysis of a short story will often be in the form of an essay where you may be asked to give your opinions of the short story at the end. Choose the elements that made the greatest impression on you. Point out which character/characters you liked best or least and always support your arguments.

29. Literary Criticism

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

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



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the

text. You can view it online here:

[https://library.achievingthedream.org/
bhccacceleratedenglish/?p=48](https://library.achievingthedream.org/bhccacceleratedenglish/?p=48)

Why Write Literary Criticism?

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

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

Diverse Rhetorical Situations

The genre of literary interpretation is more specialized than most of the other genres addressed in this section, as suggested by the table below. People may discuss their reactions to literary works informally (at coffee houses, book clubs, or the gym) but the lion’s

share of literary criticism takes place more formally: in college classrooms, professional journals, academic magazines, and Web sites.

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

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

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

Note: If you are interested in learning more about these theories, review either [Skylar Hamilton Burris' Literary Criticism: An Overview of Approaches](#) or [Dino F. Felluga's Undergraduate Guide to Critical Theory](#)

- [Schools of Literary Criticism](#)
- [New Criticism](#): Focuses on "objectively" evaluating the text, identifying its underlying form. May study, for example, a text's use of imagery, metaphor, or symbolism. Isn't concerned with

matters outside the text, such as biographical or contextual information. Online Examples: [A Formalist Reading of Sandra Cisneros's "Woman Hollering Creek"](#), [Sound in William Shakespeare's The Tempest by Skylar Hamilton Burris](#)

- [Reader-Response](#): Criticism Focuses on each reader's personal reactions to a text, assuming meaning is created by a reader's or interpretive community's personal interaction with a text. Assumes no single, correct, universal meaning exists because meaning resides in the minds of readers. Online Examples: [Theodore Roethke's "My Papa's Waltz": A Reader's Response \(PDF\)](#)
- Feminism: Criticism Focuses on understanding ways gender roles are reflected or contradicted by texts, how dominance and submission play out in texts, and how gender roles evolve in texts. Online Example: ["The Yellow Wall-Paper": A Twist on Conventional Symbols, Subverting the French Androcentric Influence by Jane Le Marquand](#)
- New Historicism Focuses on understanding texts by viewing texts in the context of other texts. Seeks to understand economic, social, and political influences on texts. Tend to broadly define the term "text," so, for example, the Catholic Church could be defined as a "text." May adopt the perspectives of other interpretive communities—particularly reader-response criticism, feminist criticism, and Marxist approaches—to interpret texts. Online Example [Monstrous Acts by Jonathan Lethem](#)
- Media Criticism Focuses on writers' use of multimedia and hypertexts. Online Examples [The Electronic Labyrinth by Christopher Keep, Tim McLaughlin, and Robin Parmar](#)
- Psychoanalytical Criticism Focuses on psychological dimensions of the work. Online Examples: [A Freudian Approach to Erin McGraw's "A Thief" by Skylar Hamilton Burris](#)
- Marxist Criticism Focuses on ways texts reflect, reinforce, or challenge the effects of class, power relations, and social roles. Online Example: [A Reading of Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery"](#)

[by Peter Kosenko](#)

- Archetypal Criticism Focuses on identifying the underlying myths in stories and archetypes, which reflect what the psychologist Carl Jung called the “collective unconsciousness.” Online Example: [A Catalogue of Symbols in The Awakening by Kate Chopin by Skylar Hamilton Burris](#)
- Postcolonial Criticism Focuses on how Western culture’s (mis)representation of third-world countries and peoples in stories, myths, and stereotypical images encourages repression and domination. Online Example: [Other Voices](#)
- Structuralism/Semiotics Focuses on literature as a system of signs where meaning is constructed in a context, where words are inscribed with meaning by being compared to other words and structures. Online Example: [Applied Semiotics \[Online journal with many samples\]](#)
- Post-Structuralism/Deconstruction Focuses, along with Structuralism, on viewing literature as a system of signs, yet rejects the Structuralist view that a critic can identify the inherent meaning of a text, suggesting, instead that literature has no center, no single interpretation, that literary language is inherently ambiguous

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

In addition, literary theories have unique ways to develop and substantiate arguments. Some theories draw extensively on the work of other critics, while others concentrate on the reader’s thoughts and feelings. Some theories analyze a work from an

historical perspective, while others focus solely on a close reading of a text.

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

Focus

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

Development

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

Below are some of the questions invoked by popular literary theories. Consider these questions as you read a work, perhaps taking notes on your thoughts as you reread. You may focus on

using one theory to “read and interpret” text or, more commonly, you may compare the critical concerns of different theories.

New Criticism/Formalism

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

Reader-Response Criticism

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

Feminist Criticism

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

New Historicism Criticism

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

Media Criticism

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

Cite from the Work

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

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

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

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

The first thing to see, looking away over the water, was a kind of dull line — that was the woods on t'other side — you couldn't make nothing else out; then a pale place in the sky; then more paleness, spreading around; then the river

softened up, away off, and warn't black any more, but gray; . . . sometimes you could hear a sweep screaming; or jumbled up voices, it was so still, and sounds come so far; and by-and-by you could see a streak on the water which you know by the look of the streak that there's a snag there in the swift current which breaks on it and makes the streak look that way; and you see the mist curl up off of the water, and the east reddens up, and the river, and you make out a log cabin in the edge of the woods, away on the bank on t'other side of the river, . . . then the nice breeze springs up, and comes fanning you from over there, so cool and fresh, and sweet to smell, on account of the woods and the flowers; . . . and next you've got the full day, and everything smiling in the sun, and the song-birds just going at it! (129-130)

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

However, Huck includes a number of details within this passage that would seem to work against the language of natural beauty. After describing the gradually brightening sky, Huck notes that “you could see little dark spots drifting along, ever so far away — trading scows, and such things; and long black streaks — rafts.” The sun rise reveals not only natural objects (the brightening sky, the “snag,” the “mist”), but also brings into view man-made objects (“trading scows” and “rafts”) that signify human society’s presence in this natural environment. Similarly, Huck speculates that the picturesque “log cabin” on the distant shore is a “woodyard, likely, and piled by them cheats so you can throw a dog through it anywheres.” Here the marker of human society takes on a sinister tone of corruption as Huck describes how unscrupulous wood sellers stack wood loosely to cheat their customers. Finally, although the breeze is “sweet

to smell,” Huck assures the reader that this isn’t always the case: “but sometimes not that way, because they’ve left dead fish laying around, gars, and such, and they do get pretty rank.”

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

Cite Other Critics’ Interpretations of the Work

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

Below is a sample passage that illustrates how other critics’ works can inspire an author and guide him or her in constructing a counter

argument, support an author's interpretation, and provide helpful biographical information.

In her critical biography of Shirley Jackson, Lenemaja Friedman notes that when Shirley Jackson's story "The Lottery" was published in the June 28, 1948 issue of the *New Yorker* it received a response that "no *New Yorker* story had ever received": hundreds of letters poured in that were characterized by "bewilderment, speculation, and old-fashioned abuse."¹ It is not hard to account for this response: Jackson's story portrays an "average" New England village with "average" citizens engaged in a deadly rite, the annual selection of a sacrificial victim by means of a public lottery, and does so quite deviously: not until well along in the story do we suspect that the "winner" will be stoned to death by the rest of the villagers.

Organization

The format for literary critiques is fairly standard:

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

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

Literary critiques are arguments. As such, your instructors expect

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

- In "The Yellow Wallpaper," by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, the protagonist is oppressed and represents the effect of the oppression of women in society. This effect is created by the use of complex symbols such as the house, the window, and the wall-paper which facilitate her oppression as well as her self expression. [“‘The Yellow Wall-Paper’: A Twist on Conventional Symbols” by Liselle Sant]
- “The Yellow Wallpaper” by Charlotte Gilman is a sad story of the repression that women face in the days of the late 1800’s as well as being representative of the turmoil that women face today. [Critique of “The Yellow Wallpaper” by Brandi Mahon]
- “The Yellow Wallpaper,” written by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, is a story of a woman, her psychological difficulties and her husband’s so called therapeutic treatment of her ailments during the late 1800s. . . Gilman does well throughout the story to show with descriptive phrases just how easily and effectively the man “seemingly” wields his “maleness” to control the woman. But, with further interpretation and insight I believe Gilman succeeds in nothing more than showing the weakness of women, of the day, as active persons in their own as well as society’s decision making processes instead of the strength of men as women dominating machines. “The View from the Inside” by Timothy J. Decker
- In *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain creates a strong opposition between the freedom of Huck and Jim’s life on the raft drifting down the Mississippi River, which represents “nature,” and the confining and restrictive life on the shore, which represents “society.” [“All I wanted was a

change': Positive Images of Nature and Society in Chapter 19 of Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" from Professor Matthew Hurt's "Sample Essays for English 103: Introduction to Fiction"]

- In Gabriel Garcia Marquez's short story, "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings," an unexpected visitor comes down from the sky, and seems to test the faith of a community. The villagers have a difficult time figuring out just how the very old man with enormous wings fits into their lives. Because this character does not agree with their conception of what an angel should look like, they try to determine if the aged man could actually be an angel. In trying to prove the origin of their visitor, the villagers lose faith in the possibility of him being an angel because he does not adhere to their ordered world. Marquez keeps the identity of the very old man with enormous wings ambiguous to critique the villagers and, more generally, organized religion for having a lack of faith to believe in miracles that do not comply with their master narrative. ["Prove It: A Critique of the Villagers' Faith in 'A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings'" from Sample Essays for English 103: Introduction to Fiction, Professor Matthew Hurt]

Style

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

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

- Protagonist: The protagonist is the major character of the

story; typically the character must overcome significant challenges.

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

30. "The Story of an Hour" by Kate Chopin

Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble, great care was taken to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband's death.

It was her sister Josephine who told her, in broken sentences; veiled hints that revealed in half concealing. Her husband's friend Richards was there, too, near her. It was he who had been in the newspaper office when intelligence of the railroad disaster was received, with Brently Mallard's name leading the list of "killed." He had only taken the time to assure himself of its truth by a second telegram, and had hastened to forestall any less careful, less tender friend in bearing the sad message.

She did not hear the story as many women have heard the same, with a paralyzed inability to accept its significance. She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister's arms. When the storm of grief had spent itself she went away to her room alone. She would have no one follow her.

There stood, facing the open window, a comfortable, roomy armchair. Into this she sank, pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into her soul.

She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breath of rain was in the air. In the street below a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which someone was singing reached her faintly, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves.

There were patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds that had met and piled one above the other in the west facing her window.

She sat with her head thrown back upon the cushion of the chair,

quite motionless, except when a sob came up into her throat and shook her, as a child who has cried itself to sleep continues to sob in its dreams.

She was young, with a fair, calm face, whose lines bespoke repression and even a certain strength. But now there was a dull stare in her eyes, whose gaze was fixed away off yonder on one of those patches of blue sky. It was not a glance of reflection, but rather indicated a suspension of intelligent thought.

There was something coming to her and she was waiting for it, fearfully. What was it? She did not know; it was too subtle and elusive to name. But she felt it, creeping out of the sky, reaching toward her through the sounds, the scents, the color that filled the air.

Now her bosom rose and fell tumultuously. She was beginning to recognize this thing that was approaching to possess her, and she was striving to beat it back with her will—as powerless as her two white slender hands would have been. When she abandoned herself a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips. She said it over and over under the breath: “free, free, free!” The vacant stare and the look of terror that had followed it went from her eyes. They stayed keen and bright. Her pulses beat fast, and the coursing blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body.

She did not stop to ask if it were or were not a monstrous joy that held her. A clear and exalted perception enabled her to dismiss the suggestion as trivial. She knew that she would weep again when she saw the kind, tender hands folded in death; the face that had never looked save with love upon her, fixed and gray and dead. But she saw beyond that bitter moment a long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely. And she opened and spread her arms out to them in welcome.

There would be no one to live for during those coming years; she would live for herself. There would be no powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow-creature. A kind

intention or a cruel intention made the act seem no less a crime as she looked upon it in that brief moment of illumination.

And yet she had loved him—sometimes. Often she had not. What did it matter! What could love, the unsolved mystery, count for in the face of this possession of self-assertion which she suddenly recognized as the strongest impulse of her being!

“Free! Body and soul free!” she kept whispering.

Josephine was kneeling before the closed door with her lips to the keyhole, imploring for admission. “Louise, open the door! I beg; open the door—you will make yourself ill. What are you doing, Louise? For heaven’s sake open the door.”

“Go away. I am not making myself ill.” No; she was drinking in a very elixir of life through that open window.

Her fancy was running riot along those days ahead of her. Spring days, and summer days, and all sorts of days that would be her own. She breathed a quick prayer that life might be long. It was only yesterday she had thought with a shudder that life might be long.

She arose at length and opened the door to her sister’s importunities. There was a feverish triumph in her eyes, and she carried herself unwittingly like a goddess of Victory. She clasped her sister’s waist, and together they descended the stairs. Richards stood waiting for them at the bottom.

Someone was opening the front door with a latchkey. It was Brently Mallard who entered, a little travel-stained, composedly carrying his grip-sack and umbrella. He had been far from the scene of the accident, and did not even know there had been one. He stood amazed at Josephine’s piercing cry; at Richards’ quick motion to screen him from the view of his wife.

When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease—of the joy that kills.

3I. Discussion Questions for "Story of an Hour" by Kate Chopin

1. What is the significance of Mrs. Mallard's "heart trouble"?
2. What is the significance of freedom in the story? How does the author portray this idea?
3. Describe Mrs. Mallard's reaction to the death of her husband. Why do you think she feels this way?
4. What does Richards represent in the story?
5. What does Josephine represent in the story?
6. What view of marriage is portrayed in the story? Can this view still apply today?
7. Describe Mrs. Mallard's journey in the story.

[A handout with these questions is available here.](#)

32. "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" by Mark Twain

In compliance with the request of a friend of mine, who wrote me from the East, I called on good-natured, garrulous old Simon Wheeler, and inquired after my friend's friend, *Leonidas W. Smiley*, as requested to do, and I hereunto append the result. I have a lurking suspicion that *Leonidas W. Smiley* is a myth; that my friend never knew such a personage; and that he only conjectured that, if I asked old Wheeler about him, it would remind him of his infamous *Jim Smiley*, and he would go to work and bore me nearly to death with some infernal reminiscence of him as long and tedious as it should be useless for me. If that was the design, it certainly succeeded.

I found Simon Wheeler dozing comfortably by the bar-room stove of the old, dilapidated tavern in the ancient mining camp of Angel's, and I noticed that he was fat and bald-headed, and had an expression of winning gentleness and simplicity upon his tranquil countenance. He roused up and gave me good-day. I told him a friend of mine had commissioned me to make some inquiries about a cherished companion of his boyhood named *Leonidas W. Smiley*—Rev. *Leonidas W. Smiley*—a young minister of the Gospel, who he had heard was at one time a resident of Angel's Camp. I added that, if Mr. Wheeler could tell me any thing about this Rev. *Leonidas W. Smiley*, I would feel under many obligations to him.

Simon Wheeler backed me into a corner and blockaded me there with his chair, and then sat me down and reeled off the monotonous narrative which follows this paragraph. He never smiled, he never frowned, he never changed his voice from the gentle-flowing key to which he tuned the initial sentence, he never betrayed the slightest

suspicion of enthusiasm; but all through the interminable narrative there ran a vein of impressive earnestness and sincerity, which showed me plainly that, so far from his imagining that there was any thing ridiculous or funny about his story, he regarded it as a really important matter, and admired its two heroes as men of transcendent genius in *finesse*. To me, the spectacle of a man drifting serenely along through such a queer yarn without ever smiling, was exquisitely absurd. As I said before, I asked him to tell me what he knew of Rev. Leonidas W. Smiley, and he replied as follows. I let him go on in his own way, and never interrupted him once:

There was a feller here once by the name of *Jim Smiley*, in the winter of '49—or may be it was the spring of '50—I don't recollect exactly, somehow, though what makes me think it was one or the other is because I remember the big flume wasn't finished when he first came to the camp; but any way he was the curiosest man about always betting on any thing that turned up you ever see, if he could get anybody to bet on the other side; and if he couldn't, he'd change sides. Any way that suited the other man would suit him—any way just so's he got a bet, *he* was satisfied. But still he was lucky, uncommon lucky; he most always come out winner. He was always ready and laying for a chance; there couldn't be no solitry thing mentioned but that feller'd offer to bet on it, and take any side you please, as I was just telling you. If there was a horse-race, you'd find him flush, or you'd find him busted at the end of it; if there was a dog-fight, he'd bet on it; if there was a cat-fight, he'd bet on it; if there was a chicken-fight, he'd bet on it; why, if there was two birds sitting on a fence, he would bet you which one would fly first; or if there was a camp-meeting, he would be there reg'lar, to bet on Parson Walker, which he judged to be the best exhorter about here, and so he was, too, and a good man. If he even seen a straddle-bug start to go anywheres, he would bet you how long it would take him to get wherever he was going to, and if you took him up, he would foller that straddle-bug to Mexico but what he would find out where he was bound for and how long he was on the road. Lots of

the boys here has seen that Smiley, and can tell you about him. Why, it never made no difference to *him*—he would bet on *any* thing—the dangdest feller. Parson Walker’s wife laid very sick once, for a good while, and it seemed as if they warn’t going to save her; but one morning he come in, and Smiley asked how she was, and he said she was considerable better—thank the Lord for his inf’nit mercy—and coming on so smart that, with the blessing of Prov’dence, she’d get well yet; and Smiley, before he thought, says, “Well, I’ll risk two-and-a-half that she don’t, any way.”

This-yer Smiley had a mare—the boys called her the fifteen-minute nag, but that was only in fun, you know, because, of course, she was faster than that—and he used to win money on that horse, for all she was so slow and always had the asthma, or the distemper, or the consumption, or something of that kind. They used to give her two or three hundred yards start, and then pass her under way; but always at the fag-end of the race she’d get excited and desperate-like, and come cavorting and straddling up, and scattering her legs around limber, sometimes in the air, and sometimes out to one side amongst the fences, and kicking up m-o-r-e dust, and raising m-o-r-e racket with her coughing and sneezing and blowing her nose—and always fetch up at the stand just about a neck ahead, as near as you could cipher it down.

And he had a little small bull pup, that to look at him you’d think he wan’t worth a cent, but to set around and look ornery, and lay for a chance to steal something. But as soon as the money was up on him, he was a different dog; his under-jaw’d begin to stick out like the fo’castle of a steamboat, and his teeth would uncover, and shine savage like the furnaces. And a dog might tackle him, and bully-rag him, and bite him, and throw him over his shoulder two or three times, and Andrew Jackson—which was the name of the pup—Andrew Jackson would never let on but what *he* was satisfied, and hadn’t expected nothing else—and the bets being doubled and doubled on the other side all the time, till the money was all up; and then all of a sudden he would grab that other dog jest by the j’int of his hind leg and freeze to it—not chaw, you understand, but only jest

grip and hang on till they throwed up the sponge, if it was a year. Smiley always come out winner on that pup, till he harnessed a dog once that didn't have no hind legs, because they'd been sawed off by a circular saw, and when the thing had gone along far enough, and the money was all up, and he come to make a snatch for his pet holt, he saw in a minute how he'd been imposed on, and how the other dog had him in the door, so to speak, and he 'peared surprised, and then he looked sorter discouraged-like, and didn't try no more to win the fight, and so he got shucked out bad. He give Smiley a look, as much as to say his heart was broke, and it was *his* fault, for putting up a dog that hadn't no hind legs for him to take holt of, which was his main dependence in a fight, and then he limped off a piece and laid down and died. It was a good pup, was that Andrew Jackson, and would have made a name for hisself if he'd lived, for the stuff was in him, and he had genius—I know it, because he hadn't had no opportunities to speak of, and it don't stand to reason that a dog could make such a fight as he could under them circumstances, if he hadn't no talent. It always makes me feel sorry when I think of that last fight of his'n, and the way it turned out.

Well, this-yer Smiley had rat-tarriers, and chicken cocks, and tom-cats, and all them kind of things, till you couldn't rest, and you couldn't fetch nothing for him to bet on but he'd match you. He ketched a frog one day, and took him home, and said he cal'klated to edercate him; and so he never done nothing for three months but set in his back yard and learn that frog to jump. And you bet you he *did* learn him, too. He'd give him a little punch behind, and the next minute you'd see that frog whirling in the air like a doughnut—see him turn one summerset, or may be a couple, if he got a good start, and come down flat-footed and all right, like a cat. He got him up so in the matter of catching flies, and kept him in practice so constant, that he'd nail a fly every time as far as he could see him. Smiley said all a frog wanted was education, and he could do most any thing—and I believe him. Why, I've seen him set Dan'l Webster down here on this floor—Dan'l Webster was the name of the frog—and sing out, “Flies, Dan'l, flies!” and quicker'n you could wink, he'd spring

straight up, and snake a fly off'n the counter there, and flop down on the floor again as solid as a gob of mud, and fall to scratching the side of his head with his hind foot as indifferent as if he hadn't no idea he'd been doin' any more'n any frog might do. You never see a frog so modest and straight-for'ard as he was, for all he was so gifted. And when it come to fair and square jumping on a dead level, he could get over more ground at one straddle than any animal of his breed you ever see. Jumping on a dead level was his strong suit, you understand; and when it come to that, Smiley would ante up money on him as long as he had a red. Smiley was monstrous proud of his frog, and well he might be, for fellers that had travelled and been everywhere, all said he laid over any frog that ever *they* see.

Well, Smiley kept the beast in a little lattice box, and he used to fetch him down town sometimes and lay for a bet. One day a feller—a stranger in the camp, he was—come across him with his box, and says,

“What might it be that you’ve got in the box?”

And Smiley says, sorter indifferent like, “It might be a parrot, or it might be a canary, may be, but it ain’t—it’s only just a frog.”

And the feller took it, and looked at it careful, and turned it round this way and that, and says, “H’m—so’t is. Well, what’s *he* good for?”

“Well,” Smiley says, easy and careless, “he’s good enough for *one* thing, I should judge—he can out-jump ary frog in Calaveras county.”

The feller took the box again, and took another long, particular look, and give it back to Smiley, and says, very deliberate, “Well, I don’t see no p’int about that frog that’s any better’n any other frog.”

“May be you don’t,” Smiley says. “May be you understand frogs, and may be you don’t understand ’em; may be you’ve had experience, and may be you ain’t, only a amature, as it were. Any ways, I’ve got *my* opinion, and I’ll risk forty dollars that he can out-jump any frog in Calaveras county.”

And the feller studied a minute, and then says, kinder sad like, “Well, I’m only a stranger here, and I ain’t got no frog; but if I had a frog, I’d bet you.”

And then Smiley says, “That’s all right—that’s all right—if you’ll

hold my box a minute, I'll go and get you a frog." And so the feller took the box, and put up his forty dollars along with Smiley's, and set down to wait.

So he set there a good while thinking and thinking to hisself, and then he got the frog out and prized his mouth open and took a teaspoon and filled him full of quail shot—filled him pretty near up to his chin—and set him on the floor. Smiley he went to the swamp and slopped around in the mud for a long time, and finally he ketched a frog, and fetched him in, and give him to this feller, and says:

"Now, if you're ready, set him alongside of Dan'l, with his fore-paws just even with Dan'l, and I'll give the word." Then he says, "One—two—three—jump!" and him and the feller touched up the frogs from behind, and the new frog hopped off, but Dan'l give a heave, and hysted up his shoulders—so—like a Frenchman, but it wan't no use—he couldn't budge; he was planted as solid as an anvil, and he couldn't no more stir than if he was anchored out. Smiley was a good deal surprised, and he was disgusted too, but he didn't have no idea what the matter was, of course.

The feller took the money and started away; and when he was going out at the door, he sorter jerked his thumb over his shoulders—this way—at Dan'l, and says again, very deliberate, "Well, I don't see no pints about that frog that's any better'n any other frog."

Smiley he stood scratching his head and looking down at Dan'l a long time, and at last he says, "I do wonder what in the nation that frog throw'd off for—I wonder if there ain't some thing the matter with him—he 'pears to look mighty baggy, somehow." And he ketched Dan'l by the nap of the neck, and lifted him up and says, "Why, blame my cats, if he don't weigh five pound!" and turned him upside down, and he belched out a double handful of shot. And then he see how it was, and he was the maddest man—he set the frog down and took out after that feller, but he never ketched him. And—

(Here Simon Wheeler heard his name called from the front yard, and got up to see what was wanted.) And turning to me as he moved

away, he said: "Just set where you are, stranger, and rest easy—I an't going to be gone a second."

But, by your leave, I did not think that a continuation of the history of the enterprising vagabond *Jim* Smiley would be likely to afford me much information concerning the Rev. *Leonidas W.* Smiley, and so I started away.

At the door I met the sociable Wheeler returning, and he buttonholed me and recommenced:

"Well, this-yer Smiley had a yaller one-eyed cow that didn't have no tail, only just a short stump like a bannanner, and—"

"Oh, hang Smiley and his afflicted cow!" I muttered, good-naturedly, and bidding the old gentleman good-day, I departed.

33. Discussion Questions for “The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County” by Mark Twain

1. What is the significance of the setting in the story?
2. Why is Wheeler trying to get people to listen to his tall tales?
3. Do a character analysis of Smiley.
4. What stereotypes are present about westerners?
5. Do a character analysis of Wheeler.

[A handout with these questions is available here.](#)

34. "Moriah's Mourning" by Ruth McEnery Stuart

Moriah was a widow of a month, and when she announced her intention of marrying again, the plantation held its breath. Then it roared with laughter.

Not because of the short period of her mourning was the news so incredible. But by a most exceptional mourning Moriah had put herself upon record as the most inconsolable of widows.

So prompt a readjustment of life under similar conditions was by no means unprecedented in colored circles.

The rules governing the wearing of the mourning garb are by no means stringent in plantation communities, and the widow who for reasons of economy or convenience sees fit to wear out her colored garments during her working hours is not held to account for so doing if she appear at all public functions clad in such weeds as she may find available. It is not even needful, indeed, that her supreme effort should attain any definite standard. Anybody can collect a few black things, and there is often an added pathos in the very incongruity of some of the mourning toilettes that pass up the aisles of the colored churches.

Was not the soul of artlessness expressed in the first mourning of a certain young widow, for instance, who sewed upon her blue gown all the black trimming she could collect, declaring that she "would 'a' dyed de frock th'oo an' th'oo 'cep'n' it would 'a' swunked it up too much"? And perhaps her sympathetic companions were quite as *naïve* as she, for, as they aided her in these first hasty stitches, they poured upon her wounded spirit the healing oil of full and sympathetic approval, as the following remarks will testify.

"Dat frock mo'ns all right, now de black bows is on it."

"You kin put any colored frock in mo'nin' 'cep'n' a red one. Sew black on red, an' it laughs in yo' face."

"I'm a-sewin' de black fringe on de josey, Sis Jones, 'case fringe hit mo'ns a heap mo'nfuler 'n ribbon do."

Needless to say, a license so full and free as this found fine expression in a field of flowering weeds quite rare and beautiful to see.

Moriah had proven herself in many ways an exceptional person even before the occasion of her bereavement, and in this, contrary to all precedent, she had rashly cast her every garment into the dye-pot, sparing not even so much as her underwear.

Moriah was herself as black as a total eclipse, tall, angular, and imposing, and as she strode down the road, clad in the sombre vestments of sorrow, she was so noble an expression of her own idea that as a simple embodiment of dignified surrender to grief she commanded respect.

The plantation folk were profoundly impressed, for it had soon become known that her black garb was not merely a thing of the surface.

"Moriah sho' does mo'n for Numa. She mo'ns fom de skin out." Such was popular comment, although it is said that one practical sister, to whom this "inward mo'nin'" had little meaning, ventured so far as to protest against it.

"Sis Moriah," she said, timidly, as she sat waiting while Moriah dressed for church—"Sis Moriah, look ter me like yo'd be 'feerd dem black shimmies 'd draw out some sort o' tetter on yo' skin," to which bit of friendly warning Moriah had responded, with a groan, and in a voice that was almost sepulchral in its awful solemnity, "*When I mo'n I mo'n!*"

Perhaps an idea of the unusual presence of this great black woman may be conveyed by the fact that when she said, as she was wont to do in speaking of her own name, "I'm named Moriah—after a Bible mountain," there seemed a sort of fitness in the name and in the juxtaposition neither the sacred eminence or the woman suffered a loss of dignity.

And this woman it was who, after eight years of respectable

wifehood and but four weeks of mourning her lost mate, calmly announced that she was to be married again.

The man of her choice—I use the expression advisedly—was a neighbor whom she had always known, a widower whose bereavement was of three months' longer standing than her own.

The courtship must have been brief and to the point, for it was positively known that he and his *fiancée* had met but three times in the interval when the banns were published.

He had been engaged to whitewash the kitchen in which she had pursued her vocation as cook for the writer's family.

The whitewashing was done in a single morning, but a second coating was found necessary, and it is said by one of her fellow-servants, who professes to have overheard the remark, that while Pete was putting the finishing-touches to the bit of chimney back of her stove, Moriah, who stooped at the oven door beside him, basting a roast turkey, lifted up her stately head and said, archly, breaking her mourning record for the first time by a gleaming display of ivory and coral as she spoke,

“Who'd ‘a’ thought you'd come into my kitchen to do yo' secon' co'tin', Pete?”

At which, so says our informant, the whitewash brush fell from the delighted artisan's hands, and in a shorter time than is consumed in the telling, a surprised and smiling man was sitting at her polished kitchen table chatting cosily with his mourning hostess, while she served him with giblets and gravy and rice and potatoes “an' coffee b'iled expressly.”



"A SURPRISED AND SMILING MAN WAS SITTING AT HER POLISHED KITCHEN TABLE"

It was discovered that the kitchen walls needed a third coating. This took an entire day, "because," so said Pete, "de third coat, hit takes mo' time to soak in."

And then came the announcement. Moriah herself, apparently in nowise embarrassed by its burden, bore the news to us on the following morning. There was no visible change of front in her bearing as she presented herself—no abatement of her mourning.

"Mis' Gladys," she said, simply, "I come ter give you notice dat I gwine take fo' days off, startin' nex' Sunday."

"I hope you are not in any new trouble, Moriah?" I said, sympathetically.

"Well, I don' know ef I is or not. Me an' Pete Pointdexter, we done talked it over, an' we come ter de conclusion ter marry."

I turned and looked at the woman—at her black garments, her still serious expression. Surely my hearing was playing me false. But catching my unspoken protest, she had already begun to explain.

"Dey ain't no onrespec' ter de dead, Mis' Gladys, in marryin'," she

began. “De onrespec’ is in de *carryin’s on* folks does *when* dey marry. Pete an’ me, we ‘low ter have eve’ything quiet an’ solemncholy—an’ pay all due respects—right an’ left. Of co’se Pete’s chillen stands up fur dey mammy, an’ dey don’t take no stock in him ma’yin’ ag’in. But Caline she been dead *long enough*—mos’ six mont’s—countin’ fo’ weeks ter de mont’. An’ as fur me, I done ‘ranged ter have eve’ything did ter show respec’s ter Numa.” (Numa was her deceased husband.) “De organ-player he gwine march us in chu’ch by de same march he played fur Numa’s fun’al, an’ look like dat in itse’f is enough ter show de world dat I ain’t forgot Numa. An’, tell de trufe, Mis’ Gladys, ef Numa was ter rise up f’om his grave, I’d sen’ Pete a-flyin’ so fast you could sen’ eggs to market on his coat tail.

“You see, de trouble is I done had my eye on Pete’s chillen ever sence dey mammy died, an’ ef dey ever was a set o’ onery, low-down, sassy, no-‘count little niggers dat need takin’ in hand by a able-bodied step-mammy, dey a-waitin’ fur me right yonder in Pete’s cabin. My hand has des nachelly itched to take aholt o’ dat crowd many a day—an’ ever sence I buried Numa of co’se I see de way was open. An’ des as soon as I felt like I could bring myse’f to it, I—well—Dey warn’t no use losin’ time, an’ so I tol’ you, missy, *dat de kitchen need’ white-washin’.*”

“And so you sent for him—and proposed to him, did you?”

“P’opose to who, Mis’ Gladys? I’d see Pete in de sinkin’ swamp ‘fo’ I’d p’opose to him!”

“Then how did you manage it, pray?”

“G’way, Mis’ Gladys! Any wide-awake widder ‘oman dat kin get a widder man whar he can’t he’p but see her move round at her work for two days hand-runnin’, an’ can’t mesmerize him so’s he’ll ax her to marry him—Um—hm! I’d undertake ter do dat, even ef I warn’t no cook; but wid seasonin’s an’ flavors to he’p me—Law, chile! dey warn’t no yearthly ‘scape fur dem chillen!

“I would ‘a’ waited,” she added, presently—“I would ‘a’ waited a reas’nable time, ‘cep’n dat Pete started gwine ter chu’ch, an’ you know yo’s’e’f, missy, when a well-favored widder man go ter seek

consolation fom de pulpit, he's might' ap' ter find it in de congergation."

As I sat listening to her quiet exposition of her scheme, it seemed monstrous.

"And so, Moriah," I spoke now with a ring of real severity in my voice—"and so you are going to marry a man that you confess you don't care for, just for the sake of getting control of his children? I wouldn't have believed it of you."

"Well—partly, missy." She smiled a little now for the first time. "Partly on dat account, an' partly on his'n. Pete's wife Ca'line, she was a good 'oman, but she was mighty puny an' peevish; an' besides dat, she was one o' deze heah naggers, an' Pete is allus had a purty hard pull, an' I lay out ter give him a better chance. Eve'y bit o' whitewashin' he'd git ter do 'roun' town, Ca'line she'd swaller it in medicine. But she was a good 'oman, Ca'line was. Heap o' deze heah naggers is good 'omans! Co'se I don't say I loves Pete, but I looks ter come roun' ter 'im in time. Ef I didn't, I wouldn't have him."

"And how about his loving you?"

"Oh, Mis' Gladys, you is so searching!" She chuckled. "Co'se he say he loves me already better'n he love Ca'line, but of co'se a widder man he feels obleeged ter talk dat-a-way. An' ef he didn't have the manners ter say it, I wouldn't have him, to save his life; but *ef he meant it, I'd despise him*. After Ca'line lovin' de groun' he tread fur nine long yeahs, he ain't got no right ter love no 'oman better'n he love her des 'caze he's a-projec'in' ter git married to 'er. But of co'se, Mis' Gladys, I ca'culates ter outstrip Ca'line in co'se o' time. Ef I couldn't do dat—an' she in 'er grave—an' *me a cook*—I wouldn't count myse'f much. An' den, time I outstrips her an' git him over, heart *an'* soul, I'll know it by de signs."

"Why will you know it more than you know it now? He can but swear it to you."

"Oh no, missy. When de rock bottom of a man's heart warms to a 'oman, he eases off fom swearin' 'bout it. Deze heah men wha' swear so much, dey swear des as much ter convince deyselves as dey does ter ketch a 'oman's ear. No, missy. Time I got him heart *an'* soul, I

looks for him to commence to th'ow up Ca'line's ways ter me. Heap of 'em does dat des ter ease dey own consciences an' pacify a dead 'oman's ghost. Dat's de way a man nachelly do. But he won't faze me, so long as I holds de fort! An' fur de chillen, co'se quick as I gits 'em broke in I'll see dat dey won't miss Ca'line none. Dat little teether, I done tol' Pete ter fetch her over ter me right away. Time I doctors her wid proper teas, an' washes her in good warm pot-liquor, I'll make a fus'-class baby out'n her."

Moriah had always been a good woman, and as she stood before me, laying bare the scheme that, no matter what the conditions, had in it the smallest selfish consideration, I felt my heart warm to her again, and I could not but feel that the little whitewasher—a kindly, hard-pressed family man of slight account—would do well to lay his brood upon her ample bosom.

Of course *she* was marrying *him*, and her acquisition of family would inevitably become pensioners upon our bounty; but this is not a great matter in a land where the so-called "cultivation" of the soil is mainly a question of pruning and selection, and clothes grow upon the commonest bush.

As she turned to go, I even offered her my best wishes, and when I laughingly asked her if I might help her with her wedding-dress, she turned and looked at me.

"Bless yo' heart, Mis' Gladys," she exclaimed, "I *ain't gwine* out o' mo'nin'! I gwine marry Pete in des what I got on my back. I'll *marry* him, an' I'll take dem little no-'counts o' his'n, an' I'll make *folks* out'n 'em 'fo' I gits th'ough wid 'em, ef Gord spares me; but he nee'n't ter lay out ter come in 'twix' me an' my full year o' mo'nin' fur Numa. When I walks inter dat chu'ch, 'cep'n' fur de owange wreaf, which of co'se in a Christian ma'iage I'm boun' ter wear, folks 'll be a heap mo' 'minded o' Numa 'n dey will o' de bridegroom. An' dem chillen o' his'n, which ain't nuver is had no proper mo'nin' fur dey mammy—no mo' 'n what color Gord give 'em in dey skins—I gwine put 'em in special secon' mo'nin', 'cordin' to de time dey ought ter been wearin' it; an' when we walks up de island o' de chu'ch, dey got ter foller, two by two, keepin' time ter de fun'al march. You come ter de weddin', Mis'

Gladys, an' I lay you'll 'low dat I done fixed it so dat, while I'm a-lookin' out fur de livin', de dead ain't gwine feel slighted, right nur left."

She was starting away again, and once more, while I wished her joy, I bade her be careful to make no mistake. A note of sympathy in my voice must have touched the woman, for she turned, and coming quite up to me, laid her hand upon my lap.

"Missy," she said, "I don't believe I gwine make no mistake. You know I allus did love chillen, an' I ain't nuver is had none o' my own, an' dis heah seemed like my chance. An' I been surveyin' de lan'scape o'er tryin' ter think about eve'ything I can do *ter start right*. I'm a-startin' wid dem chillen, puttin' 'em in mo'nin' fur Ca'line. Den, fur Pete, I gwine ring de changes on Ca'line's goodness tell he ax me, *for Gord sake, ter stop*, so, in years ter come, he won't have nothin' ter th'ow up ter me. An' you know de reason I done tooken fo' days off, missy? I gwine on a weddin'-trip down ter Pine Bluff, an' I wants time ter pick out a few little weddin'-presents to fetch home ter Pete."

"Pete!" I cried. "Pete is going with you, of course?"

"Pete gwine wid me? Who sesso? No, ma'am! Why, missy, how would it look fur me ter go a-skylarkin' roun' de country wid Pete—*an' me in mo'nin'*?"

"No, indeedy! I gwine leave Pete home ter take keer dem chillen, an' I done set him a good job o' whitewashin' to do while I'm gone, too. De principles' weddin'-present I gwine fetch Pete is a fiddle. Po' Pete been wantin' a good fiddle all his life, an' he 'ain't nuver is had one. But, of co'se, I don't 'low ter let him play on it tell de full year of mo'nin' is out."

35. Discussion Questions for “Moriah’s Mourning” by Ruth McEnery Stuart

1. Describe how race is depicted in the story.
2. How is marriage depicted in the story?
3. Do a character analysis of Moriah.
4. Why do you think Moriah’s peers react the way they do to the fact that Moriah is getting married again?
5. Why do you think she gets remarried so quickly?
6. How is the use of local dialect effective/ineffective?
7. What racial stereotypes are broken or reinforced?
8. What gender stereotypes are broken or reinforced?

[A handout with these questions is available here.](#)

36. "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass" Chapter 1

I was born in Tuckahoe, near Hillsborough, and about twelve miles from Easton, in Talbot county, Maryland. I have no accurate knowledge of my age, never having seen any authentic record containing it. By far the larger part of the slaves know as little of their ages as horses know of theirs, and it is the wish of most masters within my knowledge to keep their slaves thus ignorant. I do not remember to have ever met a slave who could tell of his birthday. They seldom come nearer to it than planting-time, harvest-time, cherry-time, spring-time, or fall-time. A want of information concerning my own was a source of unhappiness to me even during childhood. The white children could tell their ages. I could not tell why I ought to be deprived of the same privilege. I was not allowed to make any inquiries of my master concerning it. He deemed all such inquiries on the part of a slave improper and impertinent, and evidence of a restless spirit. The nearest estimate I can give makes me now between twenty-seven and twenty-eight years of age. I come to this, from hearing my master say, some time during 1835, I was about seventeen years old.

My mother was named Harriet Bailey. She was the daughter of Isaac and Betsey Bailey, both colored, and quite dark. My mother was of a darker complexion than either my grandmother or grandfather.

My father was a white man. He was admitted to be such by all I ever heard speak of my parentage. The opinion was also whispered that my master was my father; but of the correctness of this opinion, I know nothing; the means of knowing was withheld from me. My mother and I were separated when I was but an infant—before I knew her as my mother. It is a common custom, in the part of Maryland from which I ran away, to part children from their

mothers at a very early age. Frequently, before the child has reached its twelfth month, its mother is taken from it, and hired out on some farm a considerable distance off, and the child is placed under the care of an old woman, too old for field labor. For what this separation is done, I do not know, unless it be to hinder the development of the child's affection toward its mother, and to blunt and destroy the natural affection of the mother for the child. This is the inevitable result.

I never saw my mother, to know her as such, more than four or five times in my life; and each of these times was very short in duration, and at night. She was hired by a Mr. Stewart, who lived about twelve miles from my home. She made her journeys to see me in the night, travelling the whole distance on foot, after the performance of her day's work. She was a field hand, and a whipping is the penalty of not being in the field at sunrise, unless a slave has special permission from his or her master to the contrary—a permission which they seldom get, and one that gives to him that gives it the proud name of being a kind master. I do not recollect of ever seeing my mother by the light of day. She was with me in the night. She would lie down with me, and get me to sleep, but long before I waked she was gone. Very little communication ever took place between us. Death soon ended what little we could have while she lived, and with it her hardships and suffering. She died when I was about seven years old, on one of my master's farms, near Lee's Mill. I was not allowed to be present during her illness, at her death, or burial. She was gone long before I knew any thing about it. Never having enjoyed, to any considerable extent, her soothing presence, her tender and watchful care, I received the tidings of her death with much the same emotions I should have probably felt at the death of a stranger.

Called thus suddenly away, she left me without the slightest intimation of who my father was. The whisper that my master was my father, may or may not be true; and, true or false, it is of but little consequence to my purpose whilst the fact remains, in all its glaring odiousness, that slaveholders have ordained, and by law

established, that the children of slave women shall in all cases follow the condition of their mothers; and this is done too obviously to administer to their own lusts, and make a gratification of their wicked desires profitable as well as pleasurable; for by this cunning arrangement, the slaveholder, in cases not a few, sustains to his slaves the double relation of master and father.

I know of such cases; and it is worthy of remark that such slaves invariably suffer greater hardships, and have more to contend with, than others. They are, in the first place, a constant offence to their mistress. She is ever disposed to find fault with them; they can seldom do any thing to please her; she is never better pleased than when she sees them under the lash, especially when she suspects her husband of showing to his mulatto children favors which he withholds from his black slaves. The master is frequently compelled to sell this class of his slaves, out of deference to the feelings of his white wife; and, cruel as the deed may strike any one to be, for a man to sell his own children to human flesh-mongers, it is often the dictate of humanity for him to do so; for, unless he does this, he must not only whip them himself, but must stand by and see one white son tie up his brother, of but few shades darker complexion than himself, and ply the gory lash to his naked back; and if he lisp one word of disapproval, it is set down to his parental partiality, and only makes a bad matter worse, both for himself and the slave whom he would protect and defend.

Every year brings with it multitudes of this class of slaves. It was doubtless in consequence of a knowledge of this fact, that one great statesman of the south predicted the downfall of slavery by the inevitable laws of population. Whether this prophecy is ever fulfilled or not, it is nevertheless plain that a very different-looking class of people are springing up at the south, and are now held in slavery, from those originally brought to this country from Africa; and if their increase do no other good, it will do away the force of the argument, that God cursed Ham, and therefore American slavery is right. If the lineal descendants of Ham are alone to be scripturally enslaved, it is certain that slavery at the south must soon become

unscriptural; for thousands are ushered into the world, annually, who, like myself, owe their existence to white fathers, and those fathers most frequently their own masters.

I have had two masters. My first master's name was Anthony. I do not remember his first name. He was generally called Captain Anthony—a title which, I presume, he acquired by sailing a craft on the Chesapeake Bay. He was not considered a rich slaveholder. He owned two or three farms, and about thirty slaves. His farms and slaves were under the care of an overseer. The overseer's name was Plummer. Mr. Plummer was a miserable drunkard, a profane swearer, and a savage monster. He always went armed with a cowskin and a heavy cudgel. I have known him to cut and slash the women's heads so horribly, that even master would be enraged at his cruelty, and would threaten to whip him if he did not mind himself. Master, however, was not a humane slaveholder. It required extraordinary barbarity on the part of an overseer to affect him. He was a cruel man, hardened by a long life of slaveholding. He would at times seem to take great pleasure in whipping a slave. I have often been awakened at the dawn of day by the most heart-rending shrieks of an own aunt of mine, whom he used to tie up to a joist, and whip upon her naked back till she was literally covered with blood. No words, no tears, no prayers, from his gory victim, seemed to move his iron heart from its bloody purpose. The louder she screamed, the harder he whipped; and where the blood ran fastest, there he whipped longest. He would whip her to make her scream, and whip her to make her hush; and not until overcome by fatigue, would he cease to swing the blood-clotted cowskin. I remember the first time I ever witnessed this horrible exhibition. I was quite a child, but I well remember it. I never shall forget it whilst I remember any thing. It was the first of a long series of such outrages, of which I was doomed to be a witness and a participant. It struck me with awful force. It was the blood-stained gate, the entrance to the hell of slavery, through which I was about to pass. It was a most terrible spectacle. I wish I could commit to paper the feelings with which I beheld it.

This occurrence took place very soon after I went to live with my old master, and under the following circumstances. Aunt Hester went out one night,—where or for what I do not know,—and happened to be absent when my master desired her presence. He had ordered her not to go out evenings, and warned her that she must never let him catch her in company with a young man, who was paying attention to her belonging to Colonel Lloyd. The young man's name was Ned Roberts, generally called Lloyd's Ned. Why master was so careful of her, may be safely left to conjecture. She was a woman of noble form, and of graceful proportions, having very few equals, and fewer superiors, in personal appearance, among the colored or white women of our neighborhood.

Aunt Hester had not only disobeyed his orders in going out, but had been found in company with Lloyd's Ned; which circumstance, I found, from what he said while whipping her, was the chief offence. Had he been a man of pure morals himself, he might have been thought interested in protecting the innocence of my aunt; but those who knew him will not suspect him of any such virtue. Before he commenced whipping Aunt Hester, he took her into the kitchen, and stripped her from neck to waist, leaving her neck, shoulders, and back, entirely naked. He then told her to cross her hands, calling her at the same time a d—d b—h. After crossing her hands, he tied them with a strong rope, and led her to a stool under a large hook in the joist, put in for the purpose. He made her get upon the stool, and tied her hands to the hook. She now stood fair for his infernal purpose. Her arms were stretched up at their full length, so that she stood upon the ends of her toes. He then said to her, "Now, you d—d b—h, I'll learn you how to disobey my orders!" and after rolling up his sleeves, he commenced to lay on the heavy cowskin, and soon the warm, red blood (amid heart-rending shrieks from her, and horrid oaths from him) came dripping to the floor. I was so terrified and horror-stricken at the sight, that I hid myself in a closet, and dared not venture out till long after the bloody transaction was over. I expected it would be my turn next. It was all new to me. I had never seen any thing like it before. I had always

lived with my grandmother on the outskirts of the plantation, where she was put to raise the children of the younger women. I had therefore been, until now, out of the way of the bloody scenes that often occurred on the plantation.

37. Discussion Questions for Chapter 1 of Frederick Douglass's Slave Narrative

1. Why did slave owners want to keep slaves' birthdays secret?
2. Why is it important for Douglass to know his birthday?
3. Who was Douglass's father?
4. Why didn't Douglass know his mother?
5. What did the slave owner do to keep the baby slaves on the plantation?
6. How did the slave owner's wife feel about the children that her husband fathered?
7. Describe the relationship between Hester and Loyd Ned.

[A handout with these questions is available here.](#)

38. "Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl" by Harriet Jacobs, Chapter 1

I. Childhood

I was born a slave; but I never knew it till six years of happy childhood had passed away. My father was a carpenter, and considered so intelligent and skilful in his trade, that, when buildings out of the common line were to be erected, he was sent for from long distances, to be head workman. On condition of paying his mistress two hundred dollars a year, and supporting himself, he was allowed to work at his trade, and manage his own affairs. His strongest wish was to purchase his children; but, though he several times offered his hard earnings for that purpose, he never succeeded. In complexion my parents were a light shade of brownish yellow, and were termed mulattoes. They lived together in a comfortable home; and, though we were all slaves, I was so fondly shielded that I never dreamed I was a piece of merchandise, trusted to them for safe keeping, and liable to be demanded of them at any moment. I had one brother, William, who was two years younger than myself—a bright, affectionate child. I had also a great treasure in my maternal grandmother, who was a remarkable woman in many respects. She was the daughter of a planter in South Carolina, who, at his death, left her mother and his three children free, with money to go to St. Augustine, where they had relatives. It was during the Revolutionary War; and they were captured on their passage, carried back, and sold to different purchasers. Such was the story my grandmother used to tell me; but I do not remember all the particulars. She was a little girl when she was captured and sold

to the keeper of a large hotel. I have often heard her tell how hard she fared during childhood. But as she grew older she evinced so much intelligence, and was so faithful, that her master and mistress could not help seeing it was for their interest to take care of such a valuable piece of property. She became an indispensable personage in the household, officiating in all capacities, from cook and wet nurse to seamstress. She was much praised for her cooking; and her nice crackers became so famous in the neighborhood that many people were desirous of obtaining them. In consequence of numerous requests of this kind, she asked permission of her mistress to bake crackers at night, after all the household work was done; and she obtained leave to do it, provided she would clothe herself and her children from the profits. Upon these terms, after working hard all day for her mistress, she began her midnight bakings, assisted by her two oldest children. The business proved profitable; and each year she laid by a little, which was saved for a fund to purchase her children. Her master died, and the property was divided among his heirs. The widow had her dower in the hotel which she continued to keep open. My grandmother remained in her service as a slave; but her children were divided among her master's children. As she had five, Benjamin, the youngest one, was sold, in order that each heir might have an equal portion of dollars and cents. There was so little difference in our ages that he seemed more like my brother than my uncle. He was a bright, handsome lad, nearly white; for he inherited the complexion my grandmother had derived from Anglo-Saxon ancestors. Though only ten years old, seven hundred and twenty dollars were paid for him. His sale was a terrible blow to my grandmother, but she was naturally hopeful, and she went to work with renewed energy, trusting in time to be able to purchase some of her children. She had laid up three hundred dollars, which her mistress one day begged as a loan, promising to pay her soon. The reader probably knows that no promise or writing given to a slave is legally binding; for, according to Southern laws, a slave, *being* property, can *hold* no property. When my grandmother

lent her hard earnings to her mistress, she trusted solely to her honor. The honor of a slaveholder to a slave!

To this good grandmother I was indebted for many comforts. My brother Willie and I often received portions of the crackers, cakes, and preserves, she made to sell; and after we ceased to be children we were indebted to her for many more important services.

Such were the unusually fortunate circumstances of my early childhood. When I was six years old, my mother died; and then, for the first time, I learned, by the talk around me, that I was a slave. My mother's mistress was the daughter of my grandmother's mistress. She was the foster sister of my mother; they were both nourished at my grandmother's breast. In fact, my mother had been weaned at three months old, that the babe of the mistress might obtain sufficient food. They played together as children; and, when they became women, my mother was a most faithful servant to her whiter foster sister. On her death-bed her mistress promised that her children should never suffer for any thing; and during her lifetime she kept her word. They all spoke kindly of my dead mother, who had been a slave merely in name, but in nature was noble and womanly. I grieved for her, and my young mind was troubled with the thought who would now take care of me and my little brother. I was told that my home was now to be with her mistress; and I found it a happy one. No toilsome or disagreeable duties were imposed on me. My mistress was so kind to me that I was always glad to do her bidding, and proud to labor for her as much as my young years would permit. I would sit by her side for hours, sewing diligently, with a heart as free from care as that of any free-born white child. When she thought I was tired, she would send me out to run and jump; and away I bounded, to gather berries or flowers to decorate her room. Those were happy days—too happy to last. The slave child had no thought for the morrow; but there came that blight, which too surely waits on every human being born to be a chattel.

When I was nearly twelve years old, my kind mistress sickened and died. As I saw the cheek grow paler, and the eye more glassy, how earnestly I prayed in my heart that she might live! I loved her;

for she had been almost like a mother to me. My prayers were not answered. She died, and they buried her in the little churchyard, where, day after day, my tears fell upon her grave.

I was sent to spend a week with my grandmother. I was now old enough to begin to think of the future; and again and again I asked myself what they would do with me. I felt sure I should never find another mistress so kind as the one who was gone. She had promised my dying mother that her children should never suffer for any thing; and when I remembered that, and recalled her many proofs of attachment to me, I could not help having some hopes that she had left me free. My friends were almost certain it would be so. They thought she would be sure to do it, on account of my mother's love and faithful service. But, alas! we all know that the memory of a faithful slave does not avail much to save her children from the auction block.

After a brief period of suspense, the will of my mistress was read, and we learned that she had bequeathed me to her sister's daughter, a child of five years old. So vanished our hopes. My mistress had taught me the precepts of God's Word: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them." But I was her slave, and I suppose she did not recognize me as her neighbor. I would give much to blot out from my memory that one great wrong. As a child, I loved my mistress; and, looking back on the happy days I spent with her, I try to think with less bitterness of this act of injustice. While I was with her, she taught me to read and spell; and for this privilege, which so rarely falls to the lot of a slave, I bless her memory.

She possessed but few slaves; and at her death those were all distributed among her relatives. Five of them were my grandmother's children, and had shared the same milk that nourished her mother's children. Notwithstanding my grandmother's long and faithful service to her owners, not one of her children escaped the auction block. These God-breathing machines are no more, in the sight of their masters, than the cotton they plant, or the horses they tend.

39. Discussion Questions for "Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl" Chapter 1

1. In what ways is the role of family important?
2. How is slavery represented in this chapter?
3. How is freedom represented in this chapter?
4. How is the grandmother portrayed?

[A handout with these questions is available here.](#)

PART V

UNIT 5: PEER EDITING WORKSHOPS

40. General Revision Points to Consider

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- Discuss the process of revision
- List three general elements of every document that require revision

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

General revision requires attention to content, organization, style, and readability. These four main categories should give you a

template from which to begin to explore details in depth. A cursory review of these elements in and of itself is insufficient for even the briefest review. Across this chapter we will explore ways to expand your revision efforts to cover the common areas of weakness and error. You may need to take some time away from your document to approach it again with a fresh perspective. Writers often juggle multiple projects that are at different stages of development. This allows the writer to leave one document and return to another without losing valuable production time. Overall, your goal is similar to what it was during your writing preparation and production: a clear mind.

Evaluate Content

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

Evaluate Organization

Organization is another key aspect of any document. Standard formats that include an introduction, body, and conclusion may be part of your document, but did you decide on a direct or indirect approach? Can you tell? A direct approach will announce the main point or purpose at the beginning, while an indirect approach will present an introduction before the main point. Your document may use any of a wide variety of organizing principles, such as chronological, spatial, compare/contrast. Is your organizing principle clear to the reader?



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

Evaluate Style

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

Evaluate Readability

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

You can often use the "Tools" menu of your word processing program to determine the approximate reading level of your document. The program will evaluate the number of characters per word, add in the number of words per sentence, and come up with a rating. It may also note the percentage of passive sentences, and other information that will allow you to evaluate readability. Like any computer-generated rating, it should serve you as one point of

evaluation, but not the only point. Your concerted effort to choose words you perceive as appropriate for the audience will serve you better than any computer evaluation of your writing.

Key Takeaway

The four main categories—content, organization, style, and readability—provide a template for general revision.

Exercises

1. Select a document, such as an article from a Web site, newspaper, magazine, or a piece of writing you have completed for a course. Evaluate the document according to the four main categories described in this section. Could the document benefit from revision in any of these areas? Discuss your findings with your classmates.
2. Interview a coworker or colleague and specifically ask how much time and attention they dedicate to the revision process of their written work. Compare your results with classmates.
3. Find a particularly good example of writing according to the above criteria. Review it and share it with your classmates.
4. Find a particularly bad example of writing according to

the above criteria. Review it and share it with your classmates.

4I. Specific Revision Points to Consider

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

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

- List six specific elements of every document to check for revision

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

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

Let's examine these characteristics one by one.

Format

Format is an important part of the revision process. Format involves the design expectations of author and audience. If a letter format normally designates a date at the top, or the sender's address on the left side of the page before the salutation, the information should be in the correct location. Formatting that is messy or fails to conform to the company style will reflect poorly on you before the reader even starts to read it. By presenting a document that is properly formatted according to the expectations of your organization and your readers, you will start off making a good impression.

Facts

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

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

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

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

Names

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

Spelling

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

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

Punctuation

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

Table 12.1 “Punctuation Marks” lists twelve punctuation marks

that are commonly used in English in alphabetical order along with an example of each.

Table 12.1 Punctuation Marks

	Symbol	Example
Apostrophe	'	Michele's report is due tomorrow.
Colon	:	This is what I think; you need to revise your paper.
Comma	,	The report advised us when to sell, what to sell, and where to find buyers.
Dash	—	This is more difficult than it seems—buyers are scarce when credit is tight.
Ellipsis	...	Lincoln spoke of “a new nation...dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.”
Exclamation Point	!	How exciting!
Hyphen	–	The question is a many-faceted one.
Parentheses	()	To answer it (or at least to begin addressing it) we will need more information.
Period	.	The answer is no. Period. Full stop.
Question Mark	?	Can I talk you into changing your mind?
Quotation Marks	“ ”	The manager told him, “I will make sure Renée is available to help you.”
Semicolon	;	Theresa was late to the meeting; her computer had frozen and she was stuck at her desk until a tech rep came to fix it.

It may be daunting to realize that the number of possible punctuation errors is as extensive as the number of symbols and constructions available to the author. Software program may catch many punctuation errors, but again it is the committed writer that makes the difference. Here we will provide details on how to avoid mistakes with three of the most commonly used punctuation marks: the comma, the semicolon, and the apostrophe.

Commas

The comma is probably the most versatile of all punctuation marks. This means you as a writer can use your judgment in many cases as to whether you need a comma or not. It also means that the possible errors involving commas are many. Commas are necessary some of the time, but careless writers often place a comma in a sentence where it is simply not needed.

Commas are used to separate two independent clauses joined by a conjunction like “but,” “and,” and “or.”

Example

The advertising department is effective, but don't expect miracles in this business climate.

Commas are not used simply to join two independent clauses. This is known as the comma splice error, and the way to correct it is to insert a conjunction after the comma.

Examples

The advertising department is effective, the sales department needs to produce more results.

The advertising department is effective, *but* the sales department needs to produce more results.

Commas are used for introductory phrases and to offset clauses that are not essential to the sentence. If the meaning would remain intact without the phrase, it is considered nonessential.

Examples

After the summary of this year's sales, the sales department had good reason to celebrate.

The sales department, *last year's winner of the most productive award*, celebrated their stellar sales success this year.

The sales department celebrated their stellar sales success this year.

Commas are used to offset words that help create unity across a sentence like “however” and “therefore.”

Examples

The sales department discovered, *however*, that the forecast for next year is challenging.

However, the sales department discovered that the forecast for next year is challenging.

Commas are often used to separate more than one adjective modifying a noun.

Example

The sales department discovered the *troublesome, challenging* forecast for next year.

Commas are used to separate addresses, dates, and titles; they are also used in dialogue sequences.

Examples

John is from Ancud, Chile.

Katy was born on August 2, 2002.

Mackenzie McLean, D. V., is an excellent veterinarian.

Lisa said, “When writing, omit needless words.”

Semicolons

Semicolons have two uses. First, they indicate relationships among groups of items in a series when the individual items are separated by commas. Second, a semicolon can be used to join two independent clauses; this is another way of avoiding the comma splice error mentioned above. Using a semicolon this way is often

effective if the meaning of the two independent clauses is linked in some way, such as a cause–effect relationship.

Examples

Merchandise on order includes women’s wear such as sweaters, skirts, and blouses; men’s wear such as shirts, jackets, and slacks; and outwear such as coats, parkas, and hats.

The sales campaign was successful; without its contributions our bottom line would have been dismal indeed.

Apostrophes

The apostrophe, like the semicolon, has two uses: it replaces letters omitted in a contraction, and it often indicates the possessive.

Because contractions are associated with an informal style, they may not be appropriate for some professional writing. The business writer will—as always—evaluate the expectations and audience of the given assignment.

Examples

It’s great news that sales were up. It is good news that *we’ve* managed to reduce our advertising costs.

When you indicate possession, pay attention to the placement of the apostrophe. Nouns commonly receive “s” when they are made possessive. But plurals that end in “s” receive a hanging apostrophe when they are made possessive, and the word “it” forms the possessive (“its”) with no apostrophe at all.

Examples

Mackenzie’s sheep are ready to be sheared.

The parents’ meeting is scheduled for Thursday.

We are willing to adopt a dog that has already had its shots.

Grammar

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

Jean Wyrick has provided a list of common errors in grammar to watch out for, which we have adapted here for easy reference (Wyrick, 2008). In each case, the error is in *italics* and the [correct form] is italicized within square bracket.

Subject-Verb Agreement

The subject and verb should agree on the number under consideration. In faulty writing, a singular subject is sometimes mismatched with a plural verb form, or vice versa.

Examples

Sales have not been consistent and they *doesn't* [do not] reflect your hard work and effort.

The president appreciates your hard work and *wish* [wishes] to thank you.

Verb Tense

Verb tense refers to the point in time where action occurs. The

most common tenses are past, present, and future. There is nothing wrong with mixing tenses in a sentence if the action is intended to take place at different times. In faulty or careless writing, however, they are often mismatched illogically.

Examples

Sharon was under pressure to finish the report, so she uses *[used]* a shortcut to paste in the sales figures.

The sales department holds a status meeting every week, and last week's meeting *will be [was]* at the Garden Inn.

Split Infinitive

The infinitive form of verb is one without a reference to time, and in its standard form it includes the auxiliary word “to,” as in “to write is to revise.” It has been customary to keep the “to” next to the verb; to place an adverb between them is known as splitting the infinitive. Some modern writers do this all the time (for example, “to boldly go...”), and since all grammar is essentially a set of customs that govern the written word, you will need to understand what the custom is where you work. If you are working with colleagues trained across the last fifty years, they may find split infinitives annoying. For this reason, it's often best to avoid splitting an infinitive wherever you can do so without distorting the meaning of the sentence.

Examples

The Marketing Department needs assistance to *accurately understand* our readers *[to understand our readers accurately]*.

David pondered *how to best revise [how best to revise]* the sentence.

Double Negative

A double negative uses two negatives to communicate a single idea, duplicating the negation. In some languages, such as Spanish, when the main action in the sentence is negative, it is correct to express the other elements in the sentence negatively as well. However, in English, this is incorrect. In addition to sounding wrong (you can often hear the error if you read the sentence out loud), a double negative in English causes an error in logic, because two negatives cancel each other out and yield a positive. In fact, the wording of ballot measures is often criticized for confusing voters with double negatives.

Examples

John *doesn't need no* [any] assistance with his sales presentation. [Or *John needs no assistance with his sales presentation.*]

Jeri *could not find no* [any] reason to approve the request. [Or *Jeri could find no reason to approve the request.*]

Irregular Verbs

Most verbs represent the past with the addition of the suffix “ed,” as in “ask” becomes “asked.” Irregular verbs change a vowel or convert to another word when representing the past tense. Consider the irregular verb “to go”; the past tense is “went,” not “goed.”

Examples

The need *arised* [arose] to seek additional funding.

Katy *leaped* [leapt] onto the stage to introduce the presentation.

Commas in a Series

A comma is used to separate the items in a series, but in some writing styles the comma is omitted between the final two items of the series, where the conjunction joins the last and next-to-last items. The comma in this position is known as the “serial comma.” The serial comma is typically required in academic writing and typically omitted in journalism. Other writers omit the serial comma if the final two items in the series have a closer logical connection than the other items. In business writing, you may use it or omit it according to the prevailing style in your organization or industry. Know your audience and be aware of the rule.

Examples

Lisa is an amazing wife, mother, teacher, *gardener, and editor*.

Lisa is an amazing wife, mother teacher, *gardener and editor*.

Lisa is an amazing teacher, editor, gardener, *wife and mother*.

Faulty Comparisons

When comparing two objects by degree, there should be no mention of “est,” as in “biggest” as all you can really say is that one is bigger than the other. If you are comparing three or more objects, then “est” will accurately communicate which is the “biggest” of them all.

Examples

Between the twins, Mackenzie is the *fastest* [*faster*] of the two.

Among our three children, Mackenzie is the *tallest*.

Dangling Modifiers

Modifiers describe a subject in a sentence or indicate how or when the subject carried out the action. If the subject is omitted, the modifier intended for the subject is left dangling or hanging out on its own without a clear relationship to the sentence. Who is doing the seeing in the first sentence?

Examples

Seeing the light at the end of the tunnel, celebrations were in order.

Seeing the light at the end of the tunnel, *we decided* that celebrations were in order.

Misplaced Modifiers

Modifiers that are misplaced are not lost, they are simply in the wrong place. Their unfortunate location is often far from the word or words they describe, making it easy for readers to misinterpret the sentence.

Examples

Trying to avoid the deer, *the tree* hit my car.

My car hit the tree when I tried to avoid a deer in the road.

Key Takeaway

By revising for format, facts, names, spelling,

punctuation, and grammar, you can increase your chances of correcting many common errors in your writing.

Exercises

1. Select a news article from a news Web site, newspaper, or magazine. Find as many facts in the article as you can that could require fact-checking. Then check as many of these facts as you can, using sources available to you in the library and on the Internet. Did you find any errors in the article? Discuss your findings with your classmates.
2. Find an example of an assertion without attribution and share it with classmates.
3. Find an example of an error in a published document and share it with classmates.
4. Interview a coworker or colleague and specifically ask them to share a story where an error got past them during the revision process and made it to print or publication. How did they handle it? How much time did it take to correct? What did they learn from the experience? Compare your results with classmates.

42. Revising and Editing

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- Identify major areas of concern in the draft essay during revising and editing.
- Use peer reviews and editing checklists to assist revising and editing.
- Revise and edit the first draft of your essay and produce a final draft.

Revising and editing are the two tasks you undertake to significantly improve your essay. Both are very important elements of the writing process. You may think that a completed first draft means little improvement is needed. However, even experienced writers need to improve their drafts and rely on peers during revising and editing. You may know that athletes miss catches, fumble balls, or overshoot goals. Dancers forget steps, turn too slowly, or miss beats. For both athletes and dancers, the more they practice, the stronger their performance will become. Web designers seek better images, a more clever design, or a more appealing background for their web pages. Writing has the same capacity to profit from improvement and revision.

Understanding the Purpose of Revising and Editing

Revising and editing allow you to examine two important aspects of your writing separately, so that you can give each task your undivided attention.

- When you revise, you take a second look at your ideas. You might add, cut, move, or change information in order to make your ideas clearer, more accurate, more interesting, or more convincing.
- When you edit, you take a second look at how you expressed your ideas. You add or change words. You fix any problems in grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure. You improve your writing style. You make your essay into a polished, mature piece of writing, the end product of your best efforts.

Tip

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

- Take a break. You are proud of what you wrote, but you might be too close to it to make changes. Set aside your writing for a few hours or even a day until you can look at it objectively.
- Ask someone you trust for feedback and

constructive criticism.

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

Many people hear the words *critic*, *critical*, and *criticism* and pick up only negative vibes that provoke feelings that make them blush, grumble, or shout. However, as a writer and a thinker, you need to learn to be critical of yourself in a positive way and have high expectations for your work. You also need to train your eye and trust your ability to fix what needs fixing. For this, you need to teach yourself where to look.

Creating Unity and Coherence

Following your outline closely offers you a reasonable guarantee that your writing will stay on purpose and not drift away from the controlling idea. However, when writers are rushed, are tired, or cannot find the right words, their writing may become less than they want it to be. Their writing may no longer be clear and concise, and they may be adding information that is not needed to develop the main idea.

When a piece of writing has unity, all the ideas in each paragraph and in the entire essay clearly belong and are arranged in an order that makes logical sense. When the writing has coherence, the ideas flow smoothly. The wording clearly indicates how one idea leads to another within a paragraph and from paragraph to paragraph.

Tip

Reading your writing aloud will often help you find problems with unity and coherence. Listen for the clarity and flow of your ideas. Identify places where you find yourself confused, and write a note to yourself about possible fixes.

Creating Unity

Sometimes writers get caught up in the moment and cannot resist a good digression. Even though you might enjoy such detours when you chat with friends, unplanned digressions usually harm a piece of writing.

Mariah stayed close to her outline when she drafted the three body paragraphs of her essay she tentatively titled “Digital Technology: The Newest and the Best at What Price?” But a recent shopping trip for an HDTV upset her enough that she digressed from the main topic of her third paragraph and included comments about the sales staff at the electronics store she visited. When she revised her essay, she deleted the off-topic sentences that affected the unity of the paragraph.

Read the following paragraph twice, the first time without Mariah’s changes, and the second time with them.

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

Tip

When you reread your writing to find revisions to make, look for each type of problem in a separate sweep. Read it straight through once to locate any problems with unity. Read it straight through a second time to find problems with coherence. You may follow this same practice during many stages of the writing process.

Writing at Work

Many companies hire copyeditors and proofreaders to help them produce the cleanest possible final drafts of large writing projects.

Copyeditors are responsible for suggesting revisions and style changes; proofreaders check documents for any errors in capitalization, spelling, and punctuation that have crept in. Many times, these tasks are done on a freelance basis, with one freelancer working for a variety of clients.

Creating Coherence

Careful writers use transitions to clarify how the ideas in their sentences and paragraphs are related. These words and phrases help the writing flow smoothly. Adding transitions is not the only way to improve coherence, but they are often useful and give a mature feel to your essays. Table 7.3 “Common Transitional Words and Phrases” groups many common transitions according to their purpose.

Table 7.3 Common Transitional Words and Phrases

Transitions That Show Sequence or Time

after	before	later
afterward	before long	meanwhile
as soon as	finally	next
at first	first, second, third	soon
at last	in the first place	then

Transitions That Show Position

above	across	at the bottom
at the top	behind	below
beside	beyond	inside
near	next to	opposite
to the left, to the right, to the side	under	where

Transitions That Show a Conclusion

indeed	hence	in conclusion
in the final analysis	therefore	thus

Transitions That Continue a Line of Thought

consequently	furthermore	additionally
because	besides the fact	following this idea further
in addition	in the same way	moreover
looking further	considering..., it is clear that	

Transitions That Change a Line of Thought

but	yet	however
nevertheless	on the contrary	on the other hand

Transitions That Show Importance

above all	best	especially
in fact	more important	most important
most	worst	

Transitions That Introduce the Final Thoughts in a Paragraph or Essay

finally	last	in conclusion
---------	------	---------------

most of all

least of all

last of all

All-Purpose Transitions to Open Paragraphs or to Connect Ideas Inside Paragraphs

admittedly

at this point

certainly

granted

it is true

generally speaking

in general

in this situation

no doubt

no one denies

obviously

of course

to be sure

undoubtedly

unquestionably

Transitions that Introduce Examples

for instance

for example

Transitions That Clarify the Order of Events or Steps

first, second, third

generally, furthermore, in the first place,
finally also, last

in the first place,
furthermore, finally

in the first place,
likewise, lastly

After Maria revised for unity, she next examined her paragraph about televisions to check for coherence. She looked for places where she needed to add a transition or perhaps reword the text to make the flow of ideas clear. In the version that follows, she has already deleted the sentences that were off topic.

Tip

Many writers make their revisions on a printed copy and then transfer them to the version on-screen. They conventionally use a small arrow called a caret (^) to show where to insert an addition or correction.

Finally, Nothing is more confusing to me than choosing among televisions. It confuses lots of people who want a new high-definition digital television (HDTV) with a large screen to watch sports and DVDs on. You face decisions you never had to make with the old, bulky picture-tube televisions. The first big decision is the screen resolution you want. Screen resolution means the number of horizontal scan lines the screen can show. This resolution is often 1080p, or full HD, or 768p. The trouble is that if you have a smaller screen, 32 inches or 37 inches diagonal, you won't be able to tell the difference with the naked eye. The second Important decision you face as you walk around the sales floor is whether to get a plasma screen or an LCD. Along with the choice of display type, a further decision involves the screen size and features. Plasma flat-panel television screens can be much larger in diameter than their LCD rivals. Plasma screens show truer blacks and can be viewed at a wider angle than current LCD screens. Large flat-panel plasma screens are much more expensive than flat-screen LCD models. Don't buy more television than you need!

Being Clear and Concise

Some writers are very methodical and painstaking when they write a first draft. Other writers unleash a lot of words in order to get out all that they feel they need to say. Do either of these composing styles match your style? Or is your composing style somewhere in between? No matter which description best fits you, the first draft of almost every piece of writing, no matter its author, can be made clearer and more concise.

If you have a tendency to write too much, you will need to look for unnecessary words. If you have a tendency to be vague or imprecise in your wording, you will need to find specific words to replace any overly general language.

Identifying Wordiness

Sometimes writers use too many words when fewer words will appeal more to their audience and better fit their purpose. Here are some common examples of wordiness to look for in your draft. Eliminating wordiness helps all readers, because it makes your ideas clear, direct, and straightforward.

- **Sentences that begin with**

There is

or

There are

Wordy: There are two major experiments that the Biology Department sponsors.**Revised:** The Biology Department sponsors two major experiments.

- **Sentences with unnecessary modifiers.****Wordy:** Two extremely famous and well-known consumer advocates spoke eloquently in favor of the proposed important legislation.**Revised:** Two well-known consumer advocates spoke in favor of the proposed legislation.

- **Sentences with deadwood phrases that add little to the meaning.** Be judicious when you use phrases such as *in terms of*, *with a mind to*, *on the subject of*, *as to whether or not*, *more or less*, *as far as...is concerned*, and similar expressions. You can usually find a more straightforward way to state your point.**Wordy:** As a world leader in the field of green technology, the company plans to focus its efforts in the area of geothermal energy.A report as to whether or not to use geysers as an energy source is in the process of preparation.**Revised:** As a world leader in green technology, the company plans to focus on geothermal energy.A report about using geysers as an energy source is in preparation.

- **Sentences in the passive voice or with forms of the verb *to be*.** Sentences with passive-voice verbs often create confusion,

because the subject of the sentence does not perform an action. Sentences are clearer when the subject of the sentence performs the action and is followed by a strong verb. Use strong active-voice verbs in place of forms of *to be*, which can lead to wordiness. Avoid passive voice when you can. **Wordy:** It might perhaps be said that using a GPS device is something that is a benefit to drivers who have a poor sense of direction. **Revised:** Using a GPS device benefits drivers who have a poor sense of direction.

- **Sentences with constructions that can be shortened.** **Wordy:** The e-book reader, which is a recent invention, may become as commonplace as the cell phone. My over-sixty uncle bought an e-book reader, and his wife bought an e-book reader, too. **Revised:** The e-book reader, a recent invention, may become as commonplace as the cell phone. My over-sixty uncle and his wife both bought e-book readers.

Choosing Specific, Appropriate Words

Most college essays should be written in formal English suitable for an academic situation. Follow these principles to be sure that your word choice is appropriate.

- **Avoid slang.** Find alternatives to *bummer*, *kewl*, and *rad*.
- **Avoid language that is overly casual.** Write about “men and women” rather than “girls and guys” unless you are trying to create a specific effect. A formal tone calls for formal language.
- **Avoid contractions.** Use *do not* in place of *don’t*, *I am* in place of *I’m*, *have not* in place of *haven’t*, and so on. Contractions are considered casual speech.
- **Avoid clichés.** Overused expressions such as *green with envy*, *face the music*, *better late than never*, and similar expressions are empty of meaning and may not appeal to your audience.

- **Be careful when you use words that sound alike but have different meanings.** Some examples are *allusion/illusion*, *complement/compliment*, *council/counsel*, *concurrent/consecutive*, *founder/flounder*, and *historic/historical*. When in doubt, check a dictionary.
- **Choose words with the connotations you want.** Choosing a word for its connotations is as important in formal essay writing as it is in all kinds of writing. Compare the positive connotations of the word *proud* and the negative connotations of *arrogant* and *conceited*.
- **Use specific words rather than overly general words.** Find synonyms for *thing*, *people*, *nice*, *good*, *bad*, *interesting*, and other vague words. Or use specific details to make your exact meaning clear.

Now read the revisions Mariah made to make her third paragraph clearer and more concise. She has already incorporated the changes she made to improve unity and coherence.

confuses buyers more than purchasing. Finally, nothing ^{is more confusing to me than choosing among televisions—it confuses lots of people who want a new high-definition digital television (HDTV), with a large} and with screen to watch sports and DVDs on. ^{There's good reason for this confusion. You face decisions you never had to make with the old, bulky picture-tube televisions.} The first ^{involves} which big decision is^a the screen resolution, you want. ^{Screen resolution means the number of horizontal scan lines the screen can show. This resolution is often expressed as 1080p,} or full HD, or ^{or} 768p, which is half that. The trouble is that^a if you have a smaller screen, viewers will not ^{between these} 32-inch or 37-inch diagonal ^{you won't} be able to tell the difference^a with the naked eye. The second important decision you face as you walk around the sales floor is whether to get a plasma screen or an LCD screen. Along with the choice of display type, a further decision buyers face is screen size and features. Plasma flat-panel television screens can be much larger in diameter than their LCD rivals. Plasma ^{deeper} screens show ^{more} blacks and can be viewed at a wider angle than current LCD screens. However, large flat-panel plasma screens are much more expensive than flat-screen LCD. Only after buyers are totally certain they know what they want should they open their wallets. ^{Don't buy more television than you need it.}

Completing a Peer Review

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

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

You can work with a partner in your class and identify specific ways to strengthen each other's essays. Although you may be

uncomfortable sharing your writing at first, remember that each writer is working toward the same goal: a final draft that fits the audience and the purpose. Maintaining a positive attitude when providing feedback will put you and your partner at ease. The box that follows provides a useful framework for the peer review session.

Questions for Peer Review

Title _____ of _____ essay:

— Date: _____

— Writer's _____ name:

— Peer _____ reviewer's _____ name:

1. This essay is about _____
_____.
2. Your main points in this essay are _____
_____.
3. What I most liked about this essay is _____
_____.
4. These three points struck me as your strongest:
 1. Point: _____

_____Why:

2. Point:

_____Why:

3. Point:

_____Why:

5. These places in your essay are not clear to me:

1. Where:

_____Needs improvement
because_____

2. Where:

_____Needs improvement because

3. Where:

_____Needs improvement because

6. The one additional change you could make that would improve
this essay significantly is

_____.

Writing at Work

One of the reasons why word-processing programs build in a reviewing feature is that workgroups have become a common feature in many businesses. Writing is often collaborative, and the members of a workgroup and their supervisors often critique group members' work and offer feedback that will lead to a better final product.

Using Feedback Objectively

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

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

Using Feedback from Multiple Sources

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

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

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

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

Editing Your Draft

If you have been incorporating each set of revisions as Mariah has, you have produced multiple drafts of your writing. So far, all your changes have been content changes. Perhaps with the help of peer feedback, you have made sure that you sufficiently supported your ideas. You have checked for problems with unity and coherence. You have examined your essay for word choice, revising to cut unnecessary words and to replace weak wording with specific and appropriate wording.

The next step after revising the content is editing. When you edit, you examine the surface features of your text. You examine your spelling, grammar, usage, and punctuation. You also make sure you use the proper format when creating your finished assignment.

Tip

Editing often takes time. Budgeting time into the writing process allows you to complete additional edits after revising. Editing and proofreading your writing helps you

create a finished work that represents your best efforts.

Here are a few more tips to remember about your readers:

- Readers do not notice correct spelling, but they *do* notice misspellings.
- Readers look past your sentences to get to your ideas—unless the sentences are awkward, poorly constructed, and frustrating to read.
- Readers notice when every sentence has the same rhythm as every other sentence, with no variety.
- Readers do not cheer when you use *there*, *their*, and *they're* correctly, but they notice when you do not.
- Readers will notice the care with which you handled your assignment and your attention to detail in the delivery of an error-free document.

The last section of this book offers a useful review of grammar, mechanics, and usage. Use it to help you eliminate major errors in your writing and refine your understanding of the conventions of language. Do not hesitate to ask for help, too, from peer tutors in your academic department or in the college's writing lab. In the meantime, use the checklist to help you edit your writing.

Checklist

Editing Your Writing

Grammar

- Are some sentences actually sentence fragments?

- Are some sentences run-on sentences? How can I correct them?
- Do some sentences need conjunctions between independent clauses?
- Does every verb agree with its subject?
- Is every verb in the correct tense?
- Are tense forms, especially for irregular verbs, written correctly?
- Have I used subject, object, and possessive personal pronouns correctly?
- Have I used *who* and *whom* correctly?
- Is the antecedent of every pronoun clear?
- Do all personal pronouns agree with their antecedents?
- Have I used the correct comparative and superlative forms of adjectives and adverbs?
- Is it clear which word a participial phrase modifies, or is it a dangling modifier?

Sentence Structure

- Are all my sentences simple sentences, or do I vary my sentence structure?
- Have I chosen the best coordinating or subordinating conjunctions to join clauses?
- Have I created long, overpacked sentences that should be shortened for clarity?
- Do I see any mistakes in parallel structure?

Punctuation

- Does every sentence end with the correct end punctuation?
- Can I justify the use of every exclamation point?
- Have I used apostrophes correctly to write all singular and plural possessive forms?
- Have I used quotation marks correctly?

Mechanics and Usage

- Can I find any spelling errors? How can I correct them?
- Have I used capital letters where they are needed?
- Have I written abbreviations, where allowed, correctly?
- Can I find any errors in the use of commonly confused words, such as *to/too/two*?

Tip

Be careful about relying too much on spelling checkers and grammar checkers. A spelling checker cannot recognize that you meant to write *principle* but wrote *principal* instead. A grammar checker often queries constructions that are perfectly correct. The program does not understand your meaning; it makes its check against a general set of formulas that might not apply in each instance. If you use a grammar checker, accept the suggestions that make sense, but consider why the suggestions came up.

Tip

Proofreading requires patience; it is very easy to read past a mistake. Set your paper aside for at least a few hours,

if not a day or more, so your mind will rest. Some professional proofreaders read a text backward so they can concentrate on spelling and punctuation. Another helpful technique is to slowly read a paper aloud, paying attention to every word, letter, and punctuation mark.

If you need additional proofreading help, ask a reliable friend, a classmate, or a peer tutor to make a final pass on your paper to look for anything you missed.

Formatting

Remember to use proper format when creating your finished assignment. Sometimes an instructor, a department, or a college will require students to follow specific instructions on titles, margins, page numbers, or the location of the writer's name. These requirements may be more detailed and rigid for research projects and term papers, which often observe the American Psychological Association (APA) or Modern Language Association (MLA) style guides, especially when citations of sources are included.

To ensure the format is correct and follows any specific instructions, make a final check before you submit an assignment.

Key Takeaway

- Revising and editing are the stages of the writing process in which you improve your work before producing a final draft.
- During revising, you add, cut, move, or change information in order to improve content.
- During editing, you take a second look at the words and sentences you used to express your ideas and fix any problems in grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure.
- Unity in writing means that all the ideas in each paragraph and in the entire essay clearly belong together and are arranged in an order that makes logical sense.
- Coherence in writing means that the writer's wording clearly indicates how one idea leads to another within a paragraph and between paragraphs.
- Transitional words and phrases effectively make writing more coherent.
- Writing should be clear and concise, with no unnecessary words.
- Effective formal writing uses specific, appropriate words and avoids slang, contractions, clichés, and overly general words.
- Peer reviews, done properly, can give writers objective feedback about their writing. It is the writer's responsibility to evaluate the results of peer reviews and incorporate only useful feedback.
- Remember to budget time for careful editing and proofreading. Use all available resources, including

editing checklists, peer editing, and your institution's writing lab, to improve your editing skills.

Exercises

1. Answer the following two questions about Mariah's paragraph in "Creating Unity" above:

- Do you agree with Mariah's decision to make the deletions she made? Did she cut too much, too little, or just enough? Explain.
- Is the explanation of what screen resolution means a digression? Or is it audience friendly and essential to understanding the paragraph? Explain.

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

2. Now start to revise the first draft of the essay you wrote. Reread it to find any statements that affect the unity of your writing. Decide how best to revise.

3. Answer the following questions about Mariah's revised paragraph in "Creating Coherence."

- Do you agree with the transitions and other changes that Mariah made to her paragraph? Which would you keep and which were unnecessary? Explain.
- What transition words or phrases did Mariah add to

her paragraph? Why did she choose each one?

- What effect does adding additional sentences have on the coherence of the paragraph? Explain. When you read both versions aloud, which version has a more logical flow of ideas? Explain.

4. Now return to the first draft of the essay you wrote and revise it for coherence. Add transition words and phrases where they are needed, and make any other changes that are needed to improve the flow and connection between ideas.

5. Answer the following questions about Mariah's revised paragraph:

- Read the unrevised and the revised paragraphs aloud. Explain in your own words how changes in word choice have affected Mariah's writing.
- Do you agree with the changes that Mariah made to her paragraph? Which changes would you keep and which were unnecessary? Explain. What other changes would you have made?
- What effect does removing contractions and the pronoun you have on the tone of the paragraph? How would you characterize the tone now? Why?

6. Now return once more to your essay in progress. Read carefully for problems with word choice. Be sure that your draft is written in formal language and that your word choice is specific and appropriate.

7. Exchange essays with a classmate and complete a peer review of each other's draft in progress. Remember to give positive feedback and to be courteous and polite in your

responses. Focus on providing one positive comment and one question for more information to the author.

8. Work with two partners. Go back to #3 in this lesson and compare your responses about Mariah's paragraph with your partners'. Recall Mariah's purpose for writing and her audience. Then, working individually, list where you agree and where you disagree about revision needs.

9. With the help of the checklist, edit and proofread your essay.

43. Questions: Workshop Guidelines

Here are some questions to guide you as you help your classmates with their papers. It is also helpful to ask these questions of yourself as you read over your drafts. Answer all questions in complete sentences in the margin of the essay. Do not write on this piece of paper.

1. What do you think the controlling purpose/main idea of this paper is? Is there a clear thesis statement? If so, what is it? If not, what could it be? Does it have 2-3 reasons why they believe what they believe?
2. Does this paper have a point? Why is it important? What is their argument? Underline it and reiterate it the margins.
3. Does the author use specific examples?
4. What are these examples? Make note of them in the essays and say why they are good.
5. Does the author overuse 2nd person (you)? Circle all instances of you.
6. Is the introduction exciting? Does it make you want to keep reading? Give the author a comment about his/her intro.
7. Where could the author add more description or make things clearer? Make note of these places in the essay and let them know what they could add.
8. Is there any information that is irrelevant or just doesn't seem to fit? Can it be eliminated? Make note of these sections in the essay.
9. What did you find particularly effective or successful in this draft? Let the author know in your end note.
10. Do you have a favorite part? What is it? Put this in the end note or mark the places in the margins.

11. Is there a paragraph addressing each point in the thesis? If not, what parts have the left out. If there is, which paragraph is developed the best. Which one needs more work? Make notations in the margins.
12. Which area of this paper needs the most work and revision? Make notations in the margins.
13. Underline all in-text citations. If there are none, make a note to the author where they should be added.
14. Other comments or suggestions?—Write this in the end note.
15. Is there a works cited page? If so, check the format. If not, remind them to add in one.

[A handout of this resource is available here.](#)

PART VI

UNIT 6: PRACTICE EXAM MATERIALS

44. "Multiple Intelligences" by Fred Mednick

Overview

Is intelligence innate? Genetic? Fixed?

Generally, this is how intelligence has been viewed – as a quantity. Recently, new views have emerged with enormous implications for education. This new perspective asserts that intelligence can be measured in different ways, that it grows, and it is more quality than quantity. It used to be that the question was asked: “Is s/he smart?” New questions now ask: ” **How** is s/he smart?” The emphasis is on the various ways in which we demonstrate multiple intelligences, rather than a single intelligence. The readings and assignments that follow discuss multiple intelligences, provide an opportunity for you to apply them, and a way of determining how to assess students.

Howard Gardner created a list of seven intelligences. The first two are ones that have been typically valued in schools; the next three are usually associated with the arts; and the final two are what Howard Gardner called “personal intelligences.”

Linguistic intelligence involves sensitivity to spoken and written language, the ability to learn languages, and the capacity to use language to accomplish certain goals. This intelligence includes the ability to effectively use language to express oneself rhetorically or poetically, and language as a means to remembering information. Writers, poets, lawyers, and speakers are among those that Howard Gardner sees as having high linguistic intelligence.

Logical-mathematical intelligence consists of the capacity to analyze problems logically, carry out mathematical operations, and investigate issues scientifically. In Howard Gardner’s words, it entails the ability to detect patterns, reason deductively, and think

logically. This intelligence is most often associated with scientific and mathematical thinking.

Musical intelligence involves skill in the performance, composition, and appreciation of musical patterns. It encompasses the capacity to recognize and compose musical pitches, tones, and rhythms. According to Howard Gardner musical intelligence runs in an almost structural parallel to linguistic intelligence.

Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence entails the potential of using one's whole body or parts of the body to solve problems. It is the ability to use mental abilities to coordinate bodily movements. Howard Gardner sees mental and physical activity as related.

Spatial intelligence involves the potential to recognize and use the patterns of wide space and more confined areas.

Interpersonal intelligence is concerned with the capacity to understand the intentions, motivations, and desires of other people. It allows people to work effectively with others. Educators, salespeople, religious and political leaders and counselors all need a well-developed interpersonal intelligence.

Intrapersonal intelligence entails the capacity to understand oneself, to appreciate one's feelings, fears and motivations. In Howard Gardner's view it involves having an effective working model of ourselves, and to be able to use such information to regulate our lives.

In *Frames of Mind* Howard Gardner treated the personal intelligences "as a piece." Because of their close association in most cultures, they are often linked together. However, he still argues that it makes sense to think of two forms of personal intelligence. Gardner claimed that the seven intelligences rarely operate independently. They are used at the same time and tend to complement each other as people develop skills or solve problems.

In essence, Howard Gardner argues that he was making two essential claims about multiple intelligences:

1. The theory is an account of human cognition in its fullness.
The intelligences provided "a new definition of human nature,

cognitively speaking” (Gardner 1999: 44). Human beings are organisms who possess a basic set of intelligences.

2. People have a unique blend of intelligences. Gardner argues that the big challenge facing the deployment of human resources “is how to best take advantage of the uniqueness conferred on us as a species exhibiting several intelligences.”

Also, these intelligences, according to Howard Gardner, are amoral – they can be put to constructive or destructive use.

The Appeal of Multiple Intelligences

Howard Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences has not been readily accepted within academic psychology. However, it has met with a strong positive response from many educators. It has been embraced by a range of educational theorists, and, significantly, applied by teachers and policymakers to the challenges of schooling. A number of schools have looked to structure curricula according to the intelligences, and to design classrooms and even whole schools to reflect the understandings that Howard Gardner develops. The theory can also be found in use within pre-school, higher, vocational, and adult-education initiatives.

This appeal was not, at first, obvious.

At first, this diagnosis would appear to sound a “death knell” for formal education. It is hard to teach one intelligence; what if there are seven? It is hard to enough to teach even when anything can be taught; what to do if there are distinct limits and strong constraints on human cognition and learning?

Howard Gardner responds to these questions by first making the point that psychology does not directly dictate education, “It merely helps one to understand the conditions within which education takes place.” Even more: Seven kinds of intelligence would allow

seven ways to teach, rather than one. In addition, paradoxically, constraints can be suggestive and ultimately freeing.

Mindy L. Kornhaber, a researcher at Harvard University, has identified a number of reasons why teachers and policymakers have responded positively to Howard Gardner's presentation of multiple intelligences. Among these are the fact that the theory validates educators' everyday experience: students think and learn in many different ways. It also provides educators with a conceptual framework for organizing and reflecting on curriculum assessment and pedagogical practices. In turn, this reflection has led many educators to develop new approaches that might better meet the needs of the range of learners in their classrooms.

Some issues and problems

As with all theories in education, multiple intelligences theory has its critics. Some maintain that longitudinal studies still bear out the power of genetics and intelligence as a fixed quantity. They argue that this theory apologizes for lack of intellectual achievement. Others argue that the ability to measure or test for such intelligences undermines its core assertions. In short, such critics claim: "If you can't test it, it's not valid."

Dr. Gardner contests such claims of validity by arguing for a different view of standardized testing that is not biased in favor of only one kind of intelligence at the expense of others. He also notes the achievements of students in non-academic settings and the tragedy of exclusion that results when whole segments of the population are not served because their intelligences do not have the opportunity for expression.

Implications of Multiple Intelligences for Schools

In terms of Culture it means support for diverse learners and hard work; acting on a value system that maintains that diverse students can learn and succeed; that learning is exciting; and that hard work by teachers is necessary.

In terms of Readiness it means awareness-building for implementing multiple intelligences. Building staff awareness of multiple intelligences and of the different ways that students learn.

Rather than using the theory as an end in and of itself, multiple intelligences can be used as a Tool to promote high-quality student work

It can foster Collaboration – informal and formal exchanges – sharing ideas and constructive suggestions by the staff.

It allows for Choice – meaningful curriculum and assessment options; embedding curriculum and assessment in activities that are valued both by students and the wider culture.

It employs the Arts to develop children's skills and understanding within and across disciplines.

Inventory of Your Intelligences

HOW TO GET TO THE ONLINE INVENTORY:

To explore your intelligences, [visit "Lessons for Hope."](#) Read the screen that comes up, especially the directions under the title "Explore Your Intelligences" and click on the button at the bottom of that screen that says "Continue."

In this interactive activity, you will see that each person has all of the intelligences in varying degrees. This is intended to be a fun exercise – answer the questions to the best of your ability. At the end of the activity, a unique "Multiple Intelligences Self-Profile" will

be generated. The results are not absolute indicators of intelligence – they are simply meant to give you the opportunity to learn more about your unique combination of intelligences.

Multiple Intelligences

Overview

Verbal-Linguistic –

The capacity to learn through words and grammatical logic

Learns from the spoken and written word, in many forms; reads, comprehends, and summarizes effectively

Logical-Mathematical

– The capacity for inductive and deductive thinking and reasoning, as well as the use of numbers and the recognition of abstract patterns

Learns through using objects and moving them about, quantity, time, cause and effect; solves problems logically; understands patterns and relationships and makes educated guesses; can handle diverse skills such as advanced math, and represent them in graphic form; works with models; gathers evidence; builds strong arguments.

Visual-Spatial – The ability to visualize objects and spatial dimensions, and create internal images and pictures

Learns by seeing and observing – shapes, faces, colors; uses detail in visual images; learns through visual media; enjoys doodling, drawing; makes three-dimensional objects and moves them around; sees forms where others do not; enjoys abstractions and subtle patterns.

Body-Kinesthetic –

The wisdom of the body and the ability to control physical motion

Learns through touching and moving; developed coordination and timing; participation and involvement; role plays. Engages in games, assembles objects; acts. Sensitive to physical environment; dexterity and balance; creates new forms that move.

Musical-Rhythmic –

The ability to recognize tonal patterns and sounds, as well as a sensitivity to rhythms and beats

Learns through sound; eager to discuss music and its meaning; sings and plays an instrument; improvises and interprets

Interpersonal – The capacity for person-to-person communications and relationships

Learns through interactions, social relationships; perceives feelings, thoughts, motivations of others; collaborates; influences opinions; understands in verbal and non-verbal ways; takes in diverse points of view; mediates, organizes, develops new social processes and methods.

Intrapersonal – The spiritual, inner states of being, self-reflection, and awareness	Learns through range of personal emotions; finds outlets for feelings; identifies and pursues personal goals; curious about big questions; manages to learn through on-going attempts at gathering in ideas; insightful; empowers others.
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Additional Intelligences

Since Howard Gardner's original listing of the intelligences in **Frames of Mind** (1983) there has been a great deal of discussion as to other possible candidates for inclusion – **naturalistic intelligence** (the ability of people to draw upon the resources and features of the environment to solve problems); **spiritual intelligence** (the ability of people to both access and use, practically, the resources available in somewhat less tangible, but nonetheless powerful lessons of the spirit); **moral intelligence** (the ability to access and use certain truths).

Emotional Intelligence

In a 1994 report on the current state of emotional literacy in the U.S., author Daniel Goleman stated:

“...in navigating our lives, it is our fears and envies, our rages and depressions, our worries and anxieties that steer us day to day. Even the most academically brilliant among us are vulnerable to being undone by unruly emotions. The price we pay for emotional literacy is in failed marriages and troubled families, in stunted social and work lives, in deteriorating physical health and mental anguish and, as a society, in tragedies such as killings...”

Goleman attests that the best remedy for battling our emotional shortcomings is preventive medicine. In other words, we need to place as much importance on teaching our children the essential

skills of Emotional Intelligence as we do on more traditional measures like IQ and GPA (Grade Point Average).

Exactly what is Emotional Intelligence? The term encompasses the following 5 characteristics and abilities:

1. Self-awareness – knowing your emotions, recognizing feelings as they occur, and discriminating between them.
2. Mood management – handling feelings so they're relevant to the current situation and you react appropriately.
3. Self-motivation – “gathering up” your feelings and directing yourself towards a goal, despite self-doubt, inertia, and impulsiveness.
4. Empathy – recognizing feelings in others and tuning into their verbal and nonverbal cues.
5. Managing relationships – handling interpersonal interaction, conflict resolution, and negotiations.

Why We Need Emotional Intelligence

Research in brain-based learning suggests that emotional health is fundamental to effective learning. According to a report from the National Center for Clinical Infant Programs, the most critical element for a student's success in school is an understanding of how to learn. (*Emotional Intelligence*, p. 193.) The key ingredients for this understanding are:

- Confidence
- Curiosity
- Intentionality
- Self-control
- Relatedness
- Capacity to communicate
- Ability to cooperate

These traits are all aspects of Emotional Intelligence. Basically, a student who learns to learn is much more apt to succeed. Emotional Intelligence has proven a better predictor of future success than traditional methods like the GPA, IQ, and standardized test scores.

Hence, the great interest in Emotional Intelligence on the part of corporations, universities, and schools nationwide. The idea of Emotional Intelligence has inspired research and curriculum development. Researchers have concluded that people who manage their own feelings well and deal effectively with others are more likely to live content lives. Plus, happy people are more apt to retain information and do so more effectively than dissatisfied people.

Building one's Emotional Intelligence has a lifelong impact. Many parents and educators, alarmed by increasing levels of conflict in young schoolchildren – from low self-esteem to early drug and alcohol use to depression – are rushing to teach students the skills necessary for Emotional Intelligence. Also, in corporations, the inclusion of Emotional Intelligence in training programs has helped employees cooperate better and be more motivated, thereby increasing productivity and profits.

“Emotional Intelligence is a master aptitude, a capacity that profoundly affects all other abilities, either facilitating or interfering with them.” (Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, p. 80.)

45. Practice Exit Exam: "Multiple Intelligences"

Directions

Read the article "Multiple Intelligences" by Fred Mednick. Write an essay in response to one of the prompts listed below. The essay should be between 350–500 words in length and your essay should meet the following criteria:

1. Have a clear introduction that states the main theme or thesis of the essay
2. Have a clear beginning, middle and end.
3. Makes explicit reference to both the reading and to your own/others' experience with the topic.
4. Provide enough detailed discussion of ideas so that a reader could learn something significant about your thinking on this topic.
5. Use proof reading and editing effectively so that your surface error rate (grammar, spelling, punctuation) does not interfere with a reader's understanding.

Your essay should address one of the prompts listed below.

1. The article discusses multiple intelligences, and the critics of this theory claim that if the intelligence can't be tested, then it isn't valid. Based on your own experience, do you agree or disagree with these critics?
2. According to the article, there are seven different types of intelligence, but only three are really valued in school. Compare and/or contrast your experience with this. What

types of intelligences do you see valued in school? Be sure to make direct reference to the article.

[A handout of this resource is available here.](#)

46. "Piracy Gave Me A Future" by Daniel Starkey

Poverty traps its victims in intellectual dead zones. I don't pirate games anymore, but when I needed it, it gave me access to the literature and artistic inspiration of my generation.



As a kid, I stole from everyone.

An unattended purse in a restaurant? Easy \$5. Pokémon cards at Target? Pocketed. I even marked my best friends, waking up early on days I'd sleep over to rifle through their house to see what I could nab.

"I need this," I'd tell myself.

For a time, that thin justification worked. My family didn't have any money, and when the Pokémon craze hit, I wanted in. Everyone else had massive collections, but all I had was a single starter deck I'd coaxed my babysitter into buying me (it was the one with

Ninetails). Ashamed to pull out my paltry collection in front of the other kids, jealousy fueled me.

After each snag, I'd put on airs and feign ignorance long enough for suspicion to drop. I was, after all, just a kid. Few suspected how much I'd taken. Eventually, I stopped stealing, at least in such direct, aggressive ways. I didn't outgrow that class consciousness, though. I knew when others had something I didn't, and I was still jealous.

It was more than just jealousy, of course. Being poor and acutely aware of that fact as a child is a strange experience. You know enough to understand that there's injustice, but you don't yet know why or how it happened. Much less what you can do about it. I had a hard time understanding that it wasn't my fault, and to a large degree not my mom's either. Instead, it left me feeling less valuable than my other classmates. Their access to art, books, movies and games that I couldn't afford left me feeling alone and confused: Was I somehow less deserving? So I exercised the one bit of agency I had in my life. I stole.

Things started to change for me in middle school. I was accepted into a charter school, founded with the purpose of lifting kids up out of poverty with education. We were required to learn Latin and wear school uniforms, but most of us were still from the inner city. Classmates often came from broken homes, and many, like me, didn't know their fathers. I felt comfortable, oddly secure for the first time in my life.

That year was also the same that my mom got her first computer. On the few occasions she'd give up control of the PC, I'd scour the internet looking new things to learn. I had an insatiable appetite for ideas, though I'd spent most of my life with limited ways to feed it. Even before I started stealing Pokémon cards, I would often just sit down and read encyclopedias when I got the chance. I was desperate, starved for knowledge and culture.

The Internet said I didn't have to be hungry; it was a tool that opened up the world. I didn't need money to read books through [Project Gutenberg](#), or search the web for answers to questions I'd always been afraid to ask. And, I soon discovered, I didn't necessarily

need money to play computer games either, so long as I was willing to pirate them.

In a way, downloading games didn't feel that different from searching the web for information. The internet held out the promise of free and equal access to information, and piracy seemed like a natural extension of my quest for knowledge. I wanted to experience art and culture that spoke to me just as much as I wanted answers to my questions. And suddenly I could have them all: I was a nameless, faceless entity, free of the chains of my economic class. Piracy was freeing.

A couple years later, my mom had an accident and ended up taking more than a year off from work. Money got tighter than ever, and there was no way she could afford to replace her computer as it aged into obsolescence. Soon it was too out of date to play newer games, and I felt alone again, unable to participate in the culture building and growing around me. I wasn't yet old enough to hold a job myself, and when I asked my mom for an allowance, she responded with a somber look that said, "With what money?" It wasn't that she didn't want to give me more—every parent does—she simply couldn't. So I went back to stealing.

Before too long I had \$300 as well as a spare monitor and case, enough to build a basic system. My first pirated PC game was *Deus Ex*. I'd heard about it a few times, and it sounded interesting. "A game about politics," was how a friend pitched it to me, though it's also been described as a "cyberpunk-themed action role-playing video game." Within a few hours I had it running on my cobbled together PC, and it was a revelation.

Deus Ex was the first game I'd seen that listed its primary influences, which included philosophers like Hobbes, Voltaire, Locke. They were wealthy men, to be sure, but learning about their work set me on the path to learning about sociology, about history, about how much all media is one long chain of slightly modified ideas, with each new link adding a new twist or perspective. The game's themes also spoke to some of the most personal concerns

of my life, including economic class, injustice, about the disempowered fighting against a wealthy ruling class.

It was also a game where actions had serious consequences, and taking the quick, easy path could cause enormous harm to innocent bystanders. It was a message I took to heart. Playing through *Deus Ex* helped me realize that there are always consequences you can't quite see, and that my thefts over the years had surely left a wake of victims who had suffered—particularly the ones where I had taken physical goods and money. If they worked for minimum wage, even my quick, pilfered fiver could have been an hour or more of their life.

But what I learned from the game also helped solidify my belief that online piracy, at least in the context of my own circumstances, was still justified. Yes, downloading an illicit digital work can cause a sort of a harm to the creators or corporations that aren't receiving revenue, particularly independent developers, but when I weighed it against the desperation of my poverty and the worthlessness it made me internalize, there was no comparison.

Even in independent games, piracy isn't always as cut and dry as it seems. While it can have [big impacts](#) on some games, other small developers have discovered [counterintuitive benefits](#) to piracy, [embraced it](#), or at least become more empathetic to it.

Some, perhaps most, people in industrialized countries have the luxury of seeking out media they care about and stories that speak to them, and they can afford to support that work with their money. But for others like me, it can feel like a seemingly insurmountable struggle. To live even in relative poverty deprives of you new ideas; it deprives you of the tools and education you need to escape. In the most severe cases, it locks you out of society—out of voting, out of socializing, and out of connecting with others.

Poverty is often cyclical because it traps its victims in intellectual dead zones. We know that without stimulation and without challenge, the mind, like the belly, starves.

I don't pirate games anymore, and I don't support pirating games if you can afford to buy them. But when I needed it, piracy gave me

hope. When I considered dropping out of high school, giving up on my future, and damning myself to repeat the cycle of poverty, I was able to look back on the sea of literature and countless games I'd downloaded for answers and inspiration. They not only helped me realize that I wasn't as alone as I thought, but allowed me to develop the fluency necessary to start making informed, critical works of my own.

I wasn't just taking the easy way out by pirating, because the way I had to travel wasn't easy any way you look at it. I was trying to equalize a playing field that I knew was stacked against me. Piracy helped do that, by giving me access to art and books and games that allowed me to better myself, and inspired me to become who I am today.

Piracy gave me a future.

47. Practice Exit Exam: "Piracy Gave Me a Future"

Directions

Read the article "Piracy Gave Me a Future" by Daniel Starkey. Write an essay in response to one of the prompts listed below. The essay should be between 350–500 words in length and your essay should meet the following criteria:

1. Have a clear introduction that states the main theme or thesis of the essay
2. Have a clear beginning, middle and end.
3. Makes explicit reference to both the reading and to your own/others' experience with the topic.
4. Provide enough detailed discussion of ideas so that a reader could learn something significant about your thinking on this topic
5. Use proof reading and editing effectively so that your surface error rate (grammar, spelling, punctuation) does not interfere with a reader's understanding.

Your essay should address one of the prompts listed below.

1. The article poses the moral dilemma of doing something illegal for his own growth and prosperity—that, in a way, he deserved to pirate games on the internet. Based on your own experience, do you agree or disagree with the author? Be sure to reference the reading directly.
2. According to the article, the author says that piracy helped get him out of poverty. Compare and/or contrast his experience

with your own. Has there been something that helped you get out of situation? Be sure to make direct reference to the reading.

[A handout of this resource is available here.](#)

48. Example Exit Exam Essay

Jane Doe

Professor P

ENG

July 1, 2015

The Rise of the Internet is Detrimental to our Minds

In the article, “The Internet,” by Steven Johnson, he writes about how the rise of the Internet has actually helped our society. His thesis states that the Internet has challenged our minds in three ways: it has made us more participatory, it teaches us new platforms, and it makes us more social. Based on my own experience, I disagree with Johnson because the internet is actually detrimental to our minds making us less participatory and less social.

One reason I disagree with Johnson is because the Internet actually makes us less participatory. Johnson argues that “the networked computer makes you lean in, focus, engage, while the television encourages you to zone out” (120). He’s saying that when one is on the computer, they are actually participating more than they are if they are watching TV. I disagree with this because I constantly see people who are on the Internet, and they are completely zoned out. For example, yesterday, I was trying to ask my husband a question, but he was on the Internet playing Clash of Clans, so I had to repeat myself several times. He was zoned out playing his game and didn’t hear what I said. Thus, this shows that when people are on the Internet, they are just as zoned out as when they watch TV; therefore, their minds are not being challenged.

Another reason I disagree with Johnson is because the Internet actually makes us less social. Johnson claims that “new social networking applications [...] are augmenting our people skills as well, widening our social networks, and creating new possibilities for strangers to share ideas and experiences” (122). While this might

be the case, it leaves people who are looking at these sites totally oblivious to the “real” people around them. Thus, making them less social in real world experiences. For example, every day when I am riding the train, I look around and see all sorts of people that I would love to chat with to make my commute go by more quickly. Who knows? I might even make a new friend. However, I do not have this opportunity because they are too busy “socializing” over the Internet rather than actually developing the skills to communicate in real life. Because of these social-interactions online, people are no longer challenged to meet the people right in front of them.

Overall, the Internet may be challenging us, but at what cost to our real world experiences? When one lives in the virtual world “participating” and “socializing,” are they letting real life pass them by? I think they are, and because of this, I disagree with Johnson that the Internet is challenging our minds. Instead, the Internet is detrimental to our minds in that it makes us less participatory and less social in our real lives.

[A handout of this resource is available here.](#)

49. Exit Exam Outline

Name_____

Introduction–

Directly state the author's name and the title of the article:_____

Summary _____ of _____ article:

Restatement of prompt/thesis statement:

Body Paragraph One–

1. Topic sentence for body paragraph one:

Example from text:

Explanation of text example:

Transition Sentence:

Personal Example:

Explanation of personal example (how does it connect to the text?):

Concluding sentence:

Body Paragraph Two–

1. Topic sentence for body paragraph Two:

Example from text:

Explanation of text example:

Transition Sentence:

Personal Example:

Explanation of personal example (how does it connect to the text?):

Concluding sentence:

Conclusion—
Restatement of Thesis:

of

Final	Thoughts:

[A handout of this resource is available here.](#)

50. Exit Exam Format and Structure

Introduction

1. Directly state the author's name and the title of the article
2. Tell us what the article is about
3. Include a thesis that restates the prompt
4. Be sure to include all elements of the prompt

In the article, “Back to Basics” by Diane Ravitch, she writes about the downfalls of the American school systems arguing that girls play dumb because they are embarrassed about being smart. According to my own experience in high school, the arguments that seem to be most valid are that girls play dumb because of peer pressure and because they aren't as encouraged by their parents.

Body Paragraph 1

1. Begin with a topic sentence which reiterates the part of the thesis you plan to write about.
2. Give an example from the text supporting your topic sentence.
3. Tell us how this example supports your topic sentence.
4. Transition sentence.
5. Give us an example from your personal experience that supports topic sentence.
6. Tell us how this example supports your topic sentence.

According to Ravitch, girls often play dumb because of peer pressure, and this point is valid based on my own experience in high school. As Ravitch tells us, girls often pretend to be dumb because if they act smart, they will be ostracized by their peers. Due to peer pressure, the girls pretend like they aren't making good grades even if they are because they don't want to be labeled a geek or nerd. I experienced something similar in high school. I always made straight A's on my Calculus tests. However, when my peers were all discussing how they bombed the test, I pretended that I did too so that I could fit in. This shows that what Ravitch is arguing is valid. Girls would rather play dumb than be left out of group activities or labeled.

Body Paragraph 2

1. Same instructions as Body Paragraph 1.

Another valid point of Ravitch's argument is that girls don't show how smart they are because they aren't pushed as hard by their parents like boys are. Ravitch writes that one of the cultural problems undermining academics is "the negative attitude of parents who urge their sons to strive and achieve but not their daughters" (3). She believes that because more parents push their sons to do better in school that they ultimately score better on tests. I saw this between my brother and me. We were only 11 months apart, and when it came time to take SATs and to apply for college, my parents pushed my brother and even got him tutoring. Thus, he scored better on the tests and got into a better school. This discouraged me from wanting to do well and reiterates Ravitch's point that girls do worse in school because of their parents.

Body Paragraph 3

1. If you have a third point in your thesis, it will be discussed here. Some prompts will specifically ask for you to write about three things. If it does not, then two will suffice.
2. Follow the same rules as above.

Conclusion

1. Wrap everything up.
2. Restate your thesis in some manner.

Personally, I have experienced the peer pressure and lack of parental support that Ravitch talks about in her essay, “Back to Basics” when it comes to letting others know if I am doing well in school. It is unfortunate that these things take place, and society should do more to prevent them. We should encourage our girls to brag about their good grades and parents should encourage both genders equally. This way, everyone will do well in school.

[A handout of this resource is available here.](#)

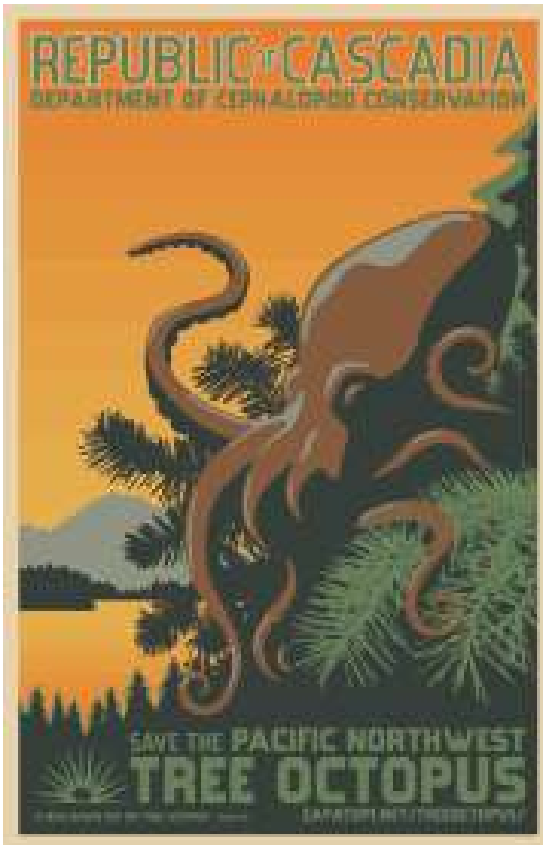
PART VII

UNIT 7: THE RESEARCH PROCESS

51. Introduction to Research Process

Why is it necessary to identify components of the research process?

The Pacific Northwest Tree Octopus



A few years ago a little-known animal species suddenly made headlines. The charming but elusive Tree Octopus became the focal point of internet scrutiny.

If you've never heard of the Pacific Northwest Tree Octopus, take

a few minutes to learn more about it [on this website, devoted to saving the endangered species](#).

You can also watch this brief video for more about the creatures:



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<https://library.achievingthedream.org/bhccacceleratedenglish/?p=73>

Source Reliability

If you're starting to get the feeling that something's not quite right here, you're on the right track. The Tree Octopus website is a hoax, although a beautifully done one. There is no such creature, unfortunately.

USING SOURCES IN RESEARCH



Many of us feel that “digital natives”—people who have grown up using the internet—are naturally web-savvy. However, a 2011 U.S. Department of Education study that used the Tree Octopus website as a focal point revealed that students who encountered this website completely fell for it. According to an NBC news story by Scott Beaulieu, “In fact, not only did the students believe that the tree octopus was real, they actually refused to believe researchers when they told them the creature was fake.”¹

While this is a relatively harmless example of a joke website, it

1. <http://www.nbcconnecticut.com/news/local/An-Octopus-in-a-Tree-Seems-Real-115497484.html>

helps to demonstrate that anyone can say anything they want on the internet. A good-looking website can be very convincing, regardless of what it says. The more you research, the more you'll see that sometimes the least-professional-looking websites offer the most credible information, and the most-professional-looking websites can be full of biased, misleading, or outright wrong information.

There are no hard and fast rules when it comes to resource reliability. Each new source has to be evaluated on its own merit, and this module will offer you a set of tools to help you do just that.

In this module, you'll learn about tips and techniques to enable you to find, analyze, integrate, and document sources in your research.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section you will be able to

- Identify preliminary, intermediate, and advanced search techniques
- Identify methods of analysis to assess the quality and reliability of a source
- Identify issues of plagiarism and academic dishonesty
- Identify MLA document formatting and citation practices

52. MLA Documentation

Introduction

Learning Objectives

- identify reasons for the use of MLA formatting and documentation
- identify MLA document formatting, including page layout
- identify the components of MLA Works Cited citations
- identify the components of MLA in-text citations



Checklist for documenting sources.

“MLA” stands for Modern Language Association. This is a professional organization for scholars of language and literature.

But why does this group of people have so much influence on the appearance of papers you write in college?

The MLA, like many other academic organizations, publishes a scholarly journal and has done so for decades. In years before computers were common, the editors of this journal required

typed submissions for publication to follow a common formatting template.

The professors who were following this format to write their own work recognized the value of having some standard of uniform appearance. They started asking their students to follow the same format when they typed essays for class projects.

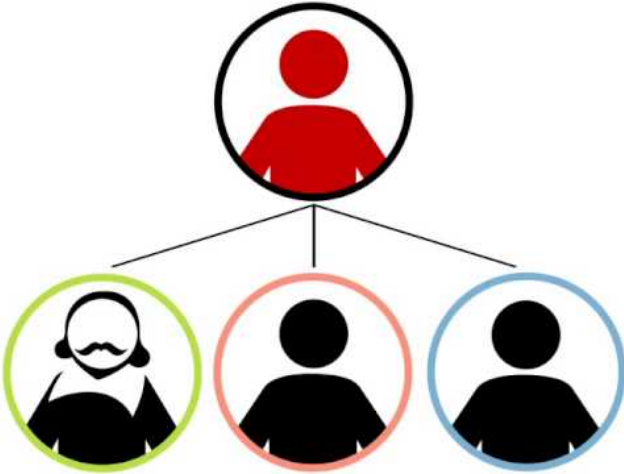
Fast forward to now, and we have a thick set of guidelines for how the first page of an essay should look, what margins and font are appropriate, and what a Works Cited entry for a blog post should look like.

The ultimate goal for MLA formatting and citation standards is so that everyone has a common template to draw from. While they may feel like unbreakable rules, try to remember that they were created to serve a common need, with your interests in mind.

Overview of MLA Documentation

MLA style is one of the most common citation and formatting styles you will encounter in your academic career. Any piece of academic writing can use MLA style, from a one-page paper to a full-length book. It is widely used by in many high school and introductory college English classes, as well as scholarly books and professional journals. If you are writing a paper for a literature or media studies class, it is likely your professor will ask you to write in MLA style.

The importance of using citations is explained in the following video:



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<https://library.achievingthedream.org/bhccacceleratedenglish/?p=74>

The Purpose of MLA Style

The MLA style guide aims to accomplish several goals:

1. to ensure consistent use of the English language in academic writing;
2. to ensure consistent formatting and presentation of information, for the sake of clarity and ease of navigation; and
3. to ensure proper attribution of ideas to their original sources, for the sake of intellectual integrity.

Citation Resources

There are many fantastic resources out there that can make the formatting and citation process easier. Some common style guides are found at:

- [The Purdue Online Writing Lab](#): this is a popular resource that concisely explains how to properly format and cite in various academic styles.
- [EasyBib](#): in addition to having a style guide, this website allows you to paste in information from your research and will create and save citations for you.

Reference management websites and applications can also assist you in tracking and recording your research. Most of these websites will even create the works cited page for you! Some of the most popular citation tools are:

- [Zotero](#)
- [RefME](#)
- [BibMe](#)

The New Edition

The newest edition of the MLA Handbook, the 8th Edition, was released in April 2016. This text will focus on the newest changes, but you should be aware that some institutions or instructors may still utilize the previous 7th edition of the handbook. While the overall principles of creating a works cited page and using in-text citations remains the same, there are a few key changes and

updates that make the citation process easier for our modern uses. For example, the guidelines now state that you should always include a URL of an internet source, you can use alternative author names, such as Twitter handles, and you no longer need to include the publisher (in some instances), and you don't need to include the city where a source was published. These new changes are less nit-picky and allow for a more streamlined citation process that will work with the wide variety of source locations (i.e., YouTube videos, songs, clips from TV episodes, websites, periodicals, books, academic journals, poems, interviews, etc.).

Document Formatting

Overall Structure of an MLA Paper

Your MLA paper should include the following basic elements:

1. Body
2. (If applicable) Endnotes
3. Works Cited

Sample Paper

Visit the [Modern Language Association website](#) to see an example of a student paper following MLA guidelines.

General MLA 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.
- **Sentence Spacing:** Include just one single space after a period before the next sentence: “Mary went to the store. She bought some milk. Then she went home.”
- **The first page:** Like the rest of your paper, everything on your first page, even the headers, should be double-spaced. The following information should be left-justified in regular font at the top of the first page (in the main part of the page, not the header):
 - on the first line, your first and last name
 - on the second line, your instructor's name

- on the third line, the name of the class
- on the fourth line, the date
- **The title:** After the header, the next double-spaced line should include the title of your paper. This should be centered and in title case, and it should not be bolded, underlined, or italicized (unless it includes the name of a book, in which case just the book title should be italicized).
- **The Oxford Comma:** 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 previous 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!

MLA Formatting

Watch this video to review all of the basic formatting recommendations:



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://library.achievingthedream.org/bhccacceleratedenglish/?p=74>

Formatting the Works Cited Section

In MLA style, all the sources you cite throughout the text of your paper are listed together in full in the Works Cited section, which comes after the main text of your paper.

- **Page numbers:** Just as the rest of your paper, the top of the page should retain the right-justified header with your last

name and the page number.

- **Title:** On the first line, the title of the page—"Works Cited"—should appear centered, and not italicized or bolded.
- **Spacing:** 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).
- **Alphabetical order:** 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.
- **Hanging indents:** 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. (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.)

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- Hymowitz, Kay S. "The Incredible Shrinking Father." *City Journal*, Spring 2007, www.city-journal.org/html/17_2_artificial_insemination.html.
- Marecotty, Josephine, and Chen May Yee. "New World of Fertility Medicine Is a Big-Money Marketplace." *Seacoastonline.com*, Local Media Group, 30 Oct. 2007, www.seacoastonline.com/article/20071030/PARENTS/71029007.

Creating Works Cited Entries

Although there are still distinct rules you need to follow to create a citation, the rules in MLA 8 are less rigid than before and allow for you to look for the main components of a citation and construct it yourself. This means you will need to think about the source and its information, select the appropriate components, and organize it in a logical and useful manner.

Regardless of the source type, you are now asked to locate the same "core elements" from your sources and place them in a standard order in order to create citations. These core elements are explained in detail below. **Note that you do not need to memorize every step of this process**, but should take this opportunity to understand how citations are created. You can

always return to this page, to the MLA handbook, or to online resources to help you create the citations you need for your paper.

Click through the following slides to learn more about each component and to see examples of MLA citations.

You can also [download the presentation here](#).

Click on the image below to take you to a video explanation on how to identify the core elements of a citation.



[MLA 8th edition – UWF](#) from [Joshua Vossler](#) on [Vimeo](#).

Practice

Click [“Get Started” at the MLA Style Center](#) to practice creating citations.

In-Text Citations

In your paper, when you quote directly from a source in its words, or when you paraphrase someone else's idea, you need to tell the reader what that source is so the author gets credit. When you tell the reader the author's name in the text of your paper, this is called an in-text citation.

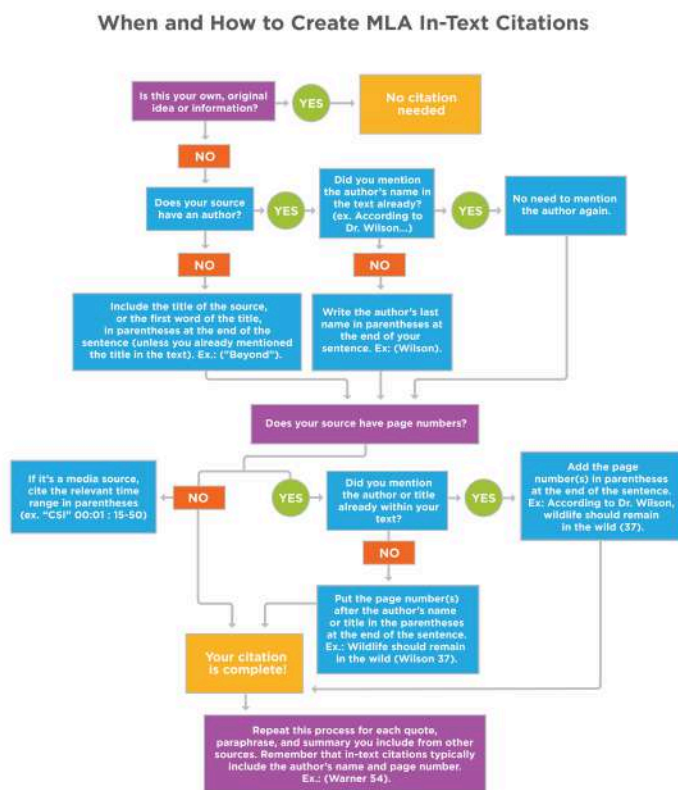
Direct Quote

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In-Text citations are placed in parentheses, and have two components:

- The first word found in the full citation on the Works Cited page (usually the last name of the author)
- The location of the direct quote or paraphrase (usually a page

number)



In-Text citations should be placed directly after the direct quote or paraphrase, or in a place that is a natural pause and does not cause the reader to become distracted while reading the body of your work.

Example:

In order to prevent starvation, Watney knew exactly what he needed to do. “My best bet for making calories is potatoes” (Weir 17).

When using the author’s name in the sentence, only include the page number in the parentheses.

Example:

Seuss’s use of words such as “lurk” and “dank” help students understand the type of character that the Once-ler is (6).

MLA REFERENCE

Leaving the ground in sod increases the organic matter of the soil by 15% in 10 years (Alison 45).

AUTHOR (LAST NAME) + PAGE NUMBER

Write author (last name) and page number in parentheses. If the author is already mentioned in the statement, just put the page number in parentheses. If there are two authors, name them both with “and” in the middle. Use commas if there are more than two authors. Place the citation before a punctuation mark. E.g. Leaving the ground in sod increases the organic matter of the soil by 15% in 10 years (Alison 45).

When to Use a Block Quotation

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. It should be indented one inch from the left margin.

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 and format it 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.

Self-Check



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53. Finding Sources

Introduction

Learning Objectives

- identify preliminary research strategies (developing a research plan, basic online searching, using Google)
- identify intermediate research strategies (advanced online searches, finding scholarly sources and primary and secondary sources, librarian consultation)
- identify advanced search strategies (advanced library searches, library databases, keyword and field searches)

There are lots of reasons to include research in an academic essay.



- Reading what others have written about a topic clearly helps you become better-informed about it
- Sharing what you've learned about the topic in your essay demonstrates your knowledge
- Quoting or paraphrasing experts in the field establishes your own credibility as an author on the topic
- Responding to what's already been said on a topic, by including your unique perspective, allows your essay to enter the broader conversation, and shape how others feel about the issue

And, the biggest motivation of all: it's a requirement for an assignment (because your instructor wants you to do all of those things above).

We've learned that the writing process is a series of flexible steps that help you break a large project into smaller, bite-size pieces. Research is also a **process**. It's not something that can be accomplished well in one single step, but rather done in stages, with time for reflection and analysis in between.

The first part of that process is simply knowing where to look, and that's what we'll explore in the following pages.

Preliminary Research Strategies

THE RESEARCH PROCESS



The first step towards writing a research paper is pretty obvious: find sources. Not everything that you find will be good, and those that are good are not always easily found. Having an idea of what you're looking for—what will most help you develop your essay and enforce your thesis—will help guide your process.

Example of a Research Process

A good research process should go through these steps:

1. Decide on the topic.
2. Narrow the topic in order to narrow search parameters.
3. Create a question that your research will address.
4. Generate sub-questions from your main question.
5. Determine what kind of sources are best for your argument.
6. Create a bibliography as you gather and reference sources.

Each of these is described in greater detail below.

Pre-Research

A research plan should begin after you can clearly identify the focus of your argument. First, inform yourself about the basics of your topic (Wikipedia and general online searches are great starting points). Be sure you've read all the assigned texts and carefully read the prompt as you gather preliminary information. This stage is sometimes called **pre-research**.

A broad online search will yield thousands of sources, which no one could be expected to read through. To make it easier on yourself, the next step is to narrow your focus. Think about what kind of position or stance you can take on the topic. What about it strikes you as most interesting? Refer back to the prewriting stage of the writing process, which will come in handy here.

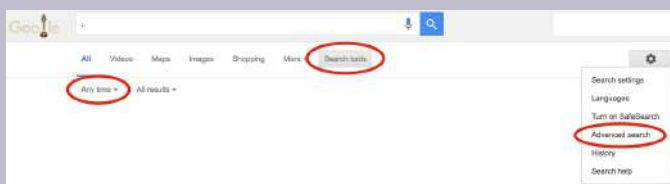


Books, books, books ...Do not start research haphazardly—come up with a plan first.

Preliminary Search Tips

1. It is okay to start with [Wikipedia](#) as a reference, but do not use it as an official source. Look at the links and references at the bottom of the page for more ideas.
2. Use “Ctrl+F” to find certain words within a webpage in order to jump to the sections of the article that interest you.
3. Use [Google Advanced Search](#) to be more specific in your search. You can also use tricks to be more specific within the main [Google Search Engine](#):

1. Use quotation marks to narrow your search from just tanks in WWII to “Tanks in WWII” or “Tanks” in “WWII”.
2. Find specific types of websites by adding “site:.gov” or “site:.edu” or “site:.org”. You can also search for specific file types like “filetype:.pdf”.
4. Click on “Search Tools” under the search bar in Google and select “Any time” to see a list of options for time periods to help limit your search. You can find information just in the past month or year, or even for a custom range.



Use features already available through Google Search like Search Tools and Advanced Search to narrow and refine your results.

As you narrow your focus, create a list of questions that you'll need to answer in order to write a good essay on the topic. The research process will help you answer these questions.

Another part of your research plan should include the type of sources you want to gather. Keep track of these sources in a bibliography and jot down notes about the book, article, or document and how it will be useful to your essay. This will save you a lot of time later in the essay process—you'll thank yourself!

Level Up Your Google Game

10 Google Quick Tips

We all know how to Google...but we may not be getting as much out of it as we'd like. The following video walks through ten easy tips for getting you closer to what you're looking for.

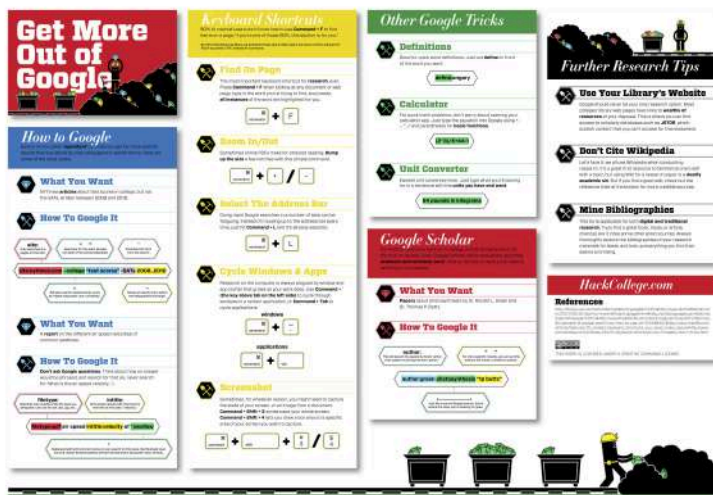


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Getting More Out of Google

For a visual representation of additional online search tips, click the image below.



Click on this Infographic to open it and learn tricks for getting more out of Google.

Intermediate Search Strategies

“Popular” vs. “Scholarly” Sources

Research-based writing assignments in college will often require that you use **scholarly sources** in the essay. Different from the types

of articles found in newspapers or general-interest magazines, scholarly sources have a few distinguishing characteristics.

	Popular Source	Scholarly Source
Intended Audience	Broad: readers are not expected to know much about the topic already	Narrow: readers are expected to be familiar with the topic before-hand
Author	Journalist: may have a broad area of specialization (war correspondent, media critic)	Subject Matter Expert: often has a degree in the subject and/or extensive experience on the topic
Research	Includes quotes from interviews. No bibliography.	Includes summaries, paraphrases, and quotations from previous writing done on the subject. Footnotes and citations. Ends with bibliography.
Publication Standards	Article is reviewed by editor and proofreader	Article has gone through a peer-review process, where experts on the field have given input before publication

Where to Find Scholarly Sources



The first step in finding scholarly resources is to look in the right place. Sites like Google, Yahoo, and Wikipedia may be good for popular sources, but if you want something you can cite in a scholarly paper, you need to find it from a scholarly database.

Two common scholarly databases are Academic Search Premier and ProQuest, though many others are also available that focus on specific topics. Your school library pays to subscribe to these databases, to make them available for you to use as a student.

You have another incredible resource at your fingertips: your college's librarians! For help locating resources, you will find that librarians are extremely knowledgeable and may help you uncover sources you would never have found on your own—maybe your school has a microfilm collection, an extensive genealogy database, or access to another library's catalog. You will not know unless you utilize the valuable skills available to you, so be sure to find out how to get in touch with a research librarian for support!

Primary and Secondary Sources

A primary source is an original document. Primary sources can come in many different forms. In an English paper, a primary source might be the poem, play, or novel you are studying. In a history paper, it may be a historical document such as a letter, a journal, a map, the transcription of a news broadcast, or the original results of a study conducted during the time period under review. If you conduct your own field research, such as surveys, interviews, or experiments, your results would also be considered a primary source. Primary sources are valuable because they provide the researcher with the information closest to the time period or topic at hand. They also allow the writer to conduct an original analysis of the source and to draw new conclusions.

Secondary sources, by contrast, are books and articles that analyze primary sources. They are valuable because they provide other scholars' perspectives on primary sources. You can also analyze them to see if you agree with their conclusions or not.

Most college essays will use a combination of primary and secondary sources.

Google Scholar

An increasingly popular article database is [Google Scholar](#). It looks like a regular Google search, and it aims to include the vast majority of scholarly resources available. While it has some limitations (like not including a list of which journals they include), it's a very useful tool if you want to cast a wide net.

Here are three tips for using Google Scholar effectively:

1. **Add your topic field (economics, psychology, French, etc.) as**

one of your keywords. If you just put in “crime,” for example, Google Scholar will return all sorts of stuff from sociology, psychology, geography, and history. If your paper is on crime in French literature, your best sources may be buried under thousands of papers from other disciplines. A set of search terms like “crime French literature modern” will get you to relevant sources much faster.

2. **Don’t ever pay for an article.** When you click on links to articles in Google Scholar, you may end up on a publisher’s site that tells you that you can download the article for \$20 or \$30. Don’t do it! You probably have access to virtually all the published academic literature through your library resources. Write down the key information (authors’ names, title, journal title, volume, issue number, year, page numbers) and go find the article through your library website. If you don’t have immediate full-text access, you may be able to get it through inter-library loan.
3. **Use the “cited by” feature.** If you get one great hit on Google Scholar, you can quickly see a list of other papers that cited it. For example, the search terms “crime economics” yielded this hit for a 1988 paper that appeared in a journal called *Kyklos*:

[The economics of crime deterrence: a survey of theory and evidence](#)

[S Cameron - Kyklos, 1988 - Wiley Online Library](#)

Since BECKER [1968] economists have generated a large literature on crime. Deterrence effects have figured prominently; few papers [eg HOCH, 1974] omit consideration of these. There are two reasons why a survey of the economics of deterrence is timely. Firstly, there ...
[Cited by 392](#) [Related articles](#) [All 5 versions](#) [Cite](#) [Save](#)

Google Scholar search results.

Using Google Scholar

Watch this video to get a better idea of how to utilize Google Scholar for finding articles. While this video shows specifics for setting up an account with Eastern Michigan University, the same principles apply to other colleges and universities. Ask your librarian if you have more questions.



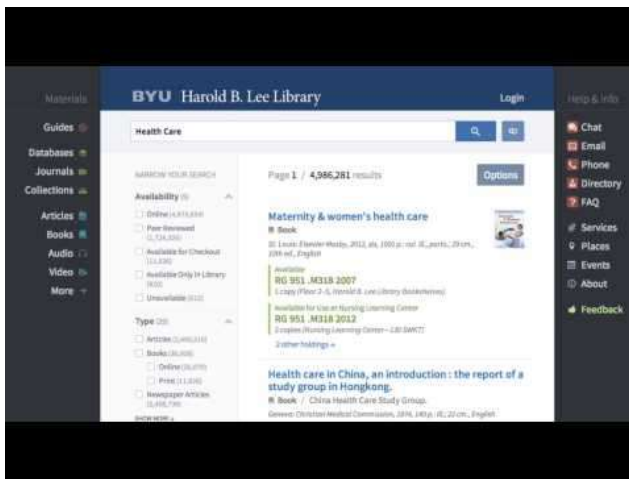
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Advanced Search Strategies

As we learned earlier, the strongest articles to support your academic writing projects will come from scholarly sources. Finding exactly what you need becomes specialized at this point, and requires a new set of searching strategies beyond even Google Scholar.

For this kind of research, you'll want to utilize library databases, as this video explains.

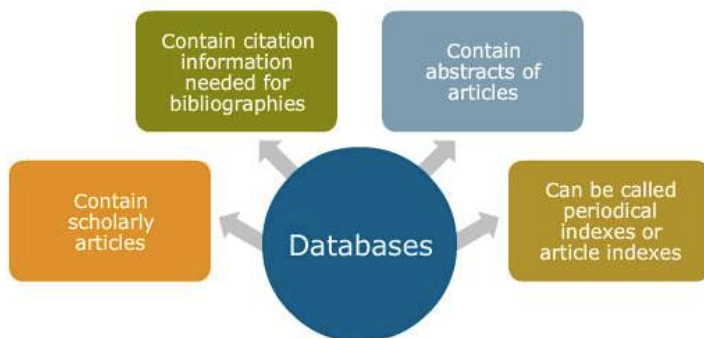


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Many journals are sponsored by academic associations. Most of your professors belong to some big, general one (such as the [Modern Language Association](#), the [American Psychological Association](#), or the [American Physical Society](#)) and one or more smaller ones

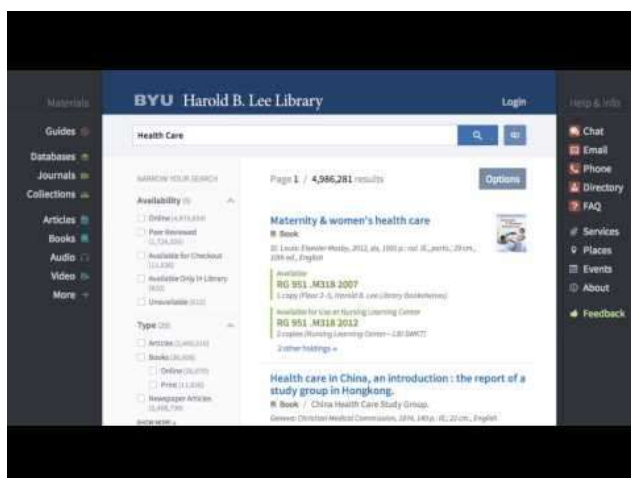
organized around particular areas of interest and expertise (such as the [Association for the Study of Food and Society](#) and the [International Association for Statistical Computing](#)).



Finding articles in databases

Your campus library invests a lot of time and care into making sure you have access to the sources you need for your writing projects. Many libraries have online research guides that point you to the best databases for the specific discipline and, perhaps, the specific course. Librarians are eager to help you succeed with your research—it's their job and they love it!—so don't be shy about asking.

The following video demonstrates how to search within a library database. While the examples are specific to Northern Virginia Community College, the same general search tips apply to nearly all academic databases. On your school's library homepage, you should be able to find a general search button and an alphabetized list of databases. Get familiar with your own school's library homepage to identify the general search features, find databases, and practice searching for specific articles.



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How to Search in a Database

Scholarly databases like the ones your library subscribes to work differently than search engines like Google and Yahoo because they offer sophisticated tools and techniques for searching that can improve your results.

Databases may look different but they can all be used in similar ways. Most databases can be searched using **keywords** or **fields**. In a keyword search, you want to search for the main concepts or synonyms of your keywords. A field is a specific part of a record in

a database. Common fields that can be searched are author, title, subject, or abstract. If you already know the author of a specific article, entering their “Last Name, First Name” in the author field will pull more relevant records than a keyword search. This will ensure all results are articles written by the author and not articles about that author or with that author’s name. For example, a keyword search for “Albert Einstein” will search anywhere in the record for Albert Einstein and reveal 12, 719 results. Instead, a field search for Author: “Einstein, Albert” will show 54 results, all written by Albert Einstein.

Learn More

[This short video](#) demonstrates how to perform a title search within the popular EBSCO database, *Academic Search Complete*.

Practice: Keyword Search

1. Identify the keywords in the following research question: “How does repeated pesticide use in agriculture impact soil and groundwater pollution?”

[practice-area rows="2"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

Pesticide, agriculture, soil, groundwater, pollution. You want to focus on the main idea and can ignore common words that don’t have any meaning.

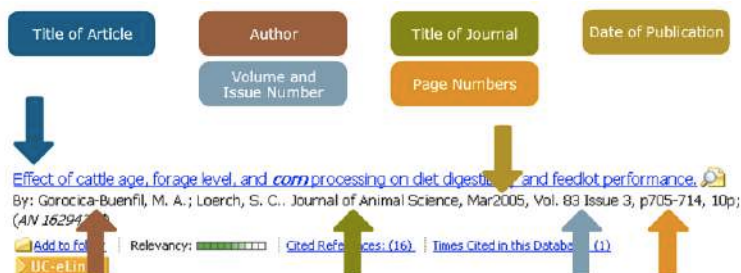
2. When you search, it's helpful to think of synonyms for your keywords to examine various results. What synonyms can you think of for the keywords identified in the question above?

[practice-area rows="2"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

Pesticide: agrochemicals, pest management, weed management, diazinan, malathion. **Agriculture:** farming, food crops, specific types of crops. **Soil:** earth, clay, organic components. **Groundwater:** watershed, water resources, water table, aquatics, rivers, lakes. **Pollution:** environmental impact, degradation, exposure, acid rain

Sometimes you already have a citation (maybe you found it on Google Scholar or saw it linked through another source), but want to find the article. Everything you need to locate your article is already found in the citation.



CC-BY-NC-SA image from [UCI Libraries Begin Research Online Workshop Tutorial](#).

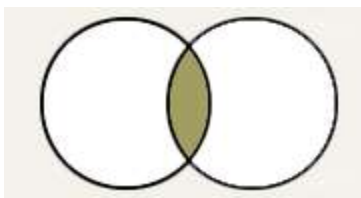
Many databases, including the library catalog, offer tools to help you

narrow or expand your search. Take advantage of these. The most common tools are Boolean searching and truncation.

Boolean Searching

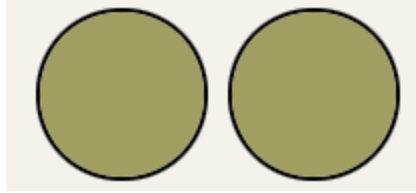
Boolean searching allows you to use AND, OR, and NOT to combine your search terms. Here are some examples:

1. **“Endangered Species” AND “Global Warming”** When you combine search terms with AND, you’ll get results in which BOTH terms are present. Using AND limits the number of results because all search terms must appear in your results.



“Endangered Species” AND “Global Warming” will narrow your search results to where the two concepts overlap.

2. **“Arizona Prisons” OR “Rhode Island Prisons”** When you use OR, you’ll get results with EITHER search term. Using OR increases the number of results because either search term can appear in your results.



“Arizona Prisons” OR “Rhode Island Prisons” will increase your search results.

3. **“Miami Dolphins” NOT “Football”** When you use NOT, you’ll get results that exclude a search term. Using NOT limits the number of results.



“Miami Dolphins” NOT “Football” removes the white circle (football) from the green search results (Miami Dolphins).

Truncation

Truncation allows you to search different forms of the same word at the same time. Use the root of a word and add an asterisk (*) as a substitute for the word’s ending. It can save time and increase your search to include related words. For example, a search for

“Psycho*” would pull results on psychology, psychological, psychologist, psychosis, and psychoanalyst.

Self-Check



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54. Source Analysis

Introduction

Learning Objectives

- identify the relationship between a potential source and the writing task
- identify strategies for evaluating the rhetorical context (author, purpose, audience) of a source
- identify strategies for evaluating the authority, reliability, and effectiveness of a source (the C.R.A.A.P. method)
- identify strategies for comparison and synthesis between multiple sources



Good researchers and writers examine their sources critically and actively. They do not just compile and summarize these research sources in their writing, but use them to create their own ideas, theories, and, ultimately, their own, new understanding of the topic they are researching. Such an

approach means not taking the information and opinions that the sources contain at face value and for granted, but to investigate, test, and even doubt every claim, every example, every story, and every conclusion.

In this section you'll learn about analyzing sources and how to utilize the C.R.A.A.P test to verify that your source is useful and relevant.

Evaluating Sources



You will need to evaluate each source you consider using by asking two questions:

- Is this source trustworthy?
- Is this source suitable?

Not every suitable source is trustworthy, and not every trustworthy source is suitable.

Determining Suitability

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

Determining Trustworthiness

Click through the slideshow to read about techniques for analyzing sources and differentiating between popular and scholarly sources.

Tools for Evaluating Sources

Need a good way to evaluate a source? Take a look at its “craap”!

The C.R.A.A.P. method is a way to determine the validity and relevance of a source. C.R.A.A.P. stands for

- **C:** Currency. When was the information published?
- **R:** Relevance. How relevant to your goals is the information?
- **A:** Authority. How well does the author of the information know the information?
- **A:** Accuracy. How reliable is the information?
- **P:** Purpose. Why does this information exist in this way?

If the source you're looking at is fairly current, relevant, and accurate, it's probably a good source to use. Depending on the aim

of your paper, you'll be looking for an authority and purpose that are unbiased and informative.



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Using Sources in Your Paper

Within the pages of your research essay, it is important to properly reference and cite your sources to avoid plagiarism and to give credit for original ideas.

There are three main ways to put a source to use in your essay: you can quote it, you can summarize it, and you can paraphrase it.

Quoting



Direct quotations are words and phrases that are taken directly from another source, and then used word-for-word in your paper. If you incorporate a direct quotation from another author's text, you must put that quotation or phrase in quotation marks to indicate that it is not your language.

When writing direct quotations, you can use the source author's name in the same sentence as the quotation to introduce the quoted text and to indicate the source in which you found the text. You should then include the page number or other relevant information in parentheses at the end of the phrase (the exact format will depend on the formatting style of your essay).

Summarizing

Summarizing involves condensing the main idea of a source into a much shorter overview. A summary outlines a source's most important points and general position. When summarizing a source, it is still necessary to use a citation to give credit to the original author. You must reference the author or source in the appropriate citation method at the end of the summary.

Paraphrasing

When paraphrasing, you may put any part of a source (such as a phrase, sentence, paragraph, or chapter) into your own words.

You may find that the original source uses language that is more clear, concise, or specific than your own language, in which case you should use a direct quotation, putting quotation marks around those unique words or phrases you don't change.

It is common to use a mixture of paraphrased text and quoted words or phrases, as long as the direct quotations are inside of quotation marks.

Providing Context for Your Sources



Whether you use a direct quotation, a summary, or a paraphrase, it is important to distinguish the original source from your ideas, and to explain how the cited source fits into

Sources that are not properly integrated into your paper are like "bricks without mortar: you have the essential substance, but there's nothing to hold it together, rendering the whole thing formless" (Smith).

your argument. While the use of quotation marks or parenthetical citations tells your reader that these are not your own words or ideas, you should follow the quote with a description, in your own terms, of what the quote says and why it is relevant to the purpose of your paper. You should not let quoted or paraphrased text stand alone in your paper, but rather, should integrate the sources into your argument by providing context and explanations about how each source supports your argument.¹

-
1. [Smith, Matt. "Putting It All Together: Thesis Synthesis." Web log post. Walden University Writing Center, 12 Apr. 2013. Web. 04 Apr. 2016.](#)

Using Multiple Sources

Sources are a great help for understanding a topic more deeply. But what about when sources don't quite agree with one another, or challenge what you have experienced yourself?

This is where your skill of **synthesis** comes into play, as a writer. Synthesizing includes comparison and contrast, but also allows you to combine multiple perspectives on a topic to reach a deeper understanding.

This video explains the process of synthesis in action.



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Self-Check



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55. Writing Ethically

Introduction

Learning Objectives

- identify the definition of academic dishonesty
- identify the definition of intentional and unintentional plagiarism
- identify reasons for concerns about plagiarism and academic dishonesty in academic settings
- identify strategies to avoid intentional and unintentional plagiarism and academic dishonesty

Building on the ideas of others is a key component of academic writing. It's expected that you will consult what others have done, and use their thinking to inform your own.

Giving credit to those sources as you go is the expectation. It is expected that you will use sources ethically—note whose words and ideas you are using, exactly where you use them.

This is an idea many writers at all levels struggle with, as this video demonstrates.



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Using sources ethically takes practice, which is what we will do below.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty or **academic misconduct** is any type of cheating that occurs in relation to a formal academic exercise. It can include

- **Plagiarism:** The adoption or reproduction of original creations of another author (person, collective, organization, community

or other type of author, including anonymous authors) without due acknowledgment.

- **Fabrication:** The falsification of data, information, or citations in any formal academic exercise.
- **Deception:** Providing false information to an instructor concerning a formal academic exercise—*e.g.*, giving a false excuse for missing a deadline or falsely claiming to have submitted work.
- **Cheating:** Any attempt to obtain assistance in a formal academic exercise (like an examination) without due acknowledgment.
- **Bribery** or paid services: Giving assignment answers or test answers for money.
- **Sabotage:** Acting to prevent others from completing their work. This includes cutting pages out of library books or willfully disrupting the experiments of others.
- **Professorial misconduct:** Professorial acts that are academically fraudulent equate to academic fraud and/or grade fraud.
- **Impersonation:** assuming a student's identity with intent to provide an advantage for the student.

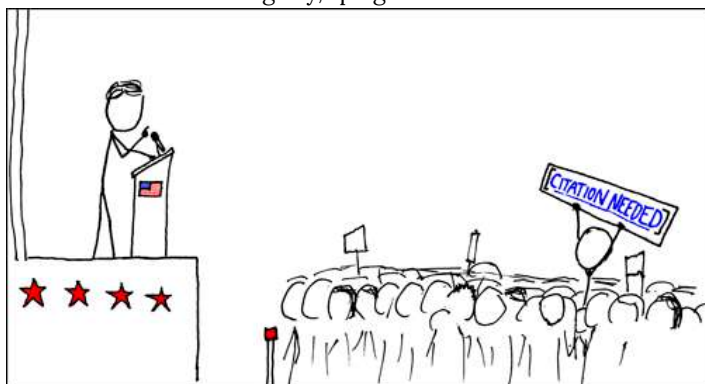
Watch this video to deepen your understanding about the importance of practicing academic honesty.

<https://youtu.be/JylxFnk7btU>

Defining Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the unauthorized or uncredited use of the writings or ideas of another in your writing. While it might not be as tangible

as auto theft or burglary, plagiarism is still a form of theft.



Examples of plagiarism include:

- Turning in someone else's paper as your own
- Using the exact words of a source without quotation marks and/or a citation
- Taking an image, chart, or statistic from a source without telling where it originated
- Copying and pasting material from the internet without quotation marks and/or a citation
- Including another person's idea without crediting the author

In the academic world, plagiarism is a serious matter because ideas in the forms of research, creative work, and original thought are highly valued. Chances are, your school has strict rules about what happens when someone is caught plagiarizing. The penalty for plagiarism is severe, everything from a failing grade for the plagiarized work, a failing grade for the class, or expulsion from the institution.

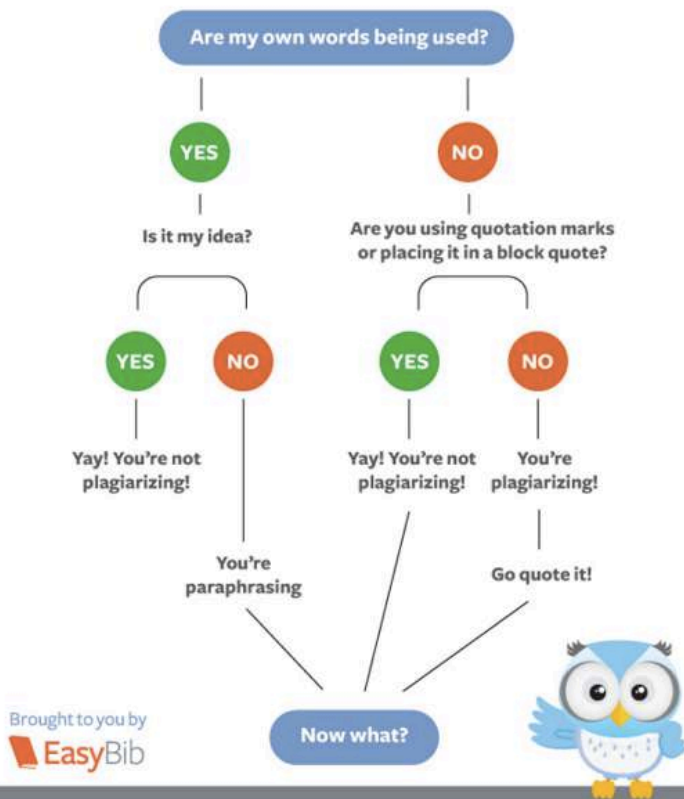
You might not be aware that plagiarism can take several different forms. The most well known, **intentional or purposeful plagiarism**, is handing in an essay written by someone else and representing it as your own, copying your essay word for word from a magazine or journal, or downloading an essay from the Internet.

A much more common and less understood phenomenon

is **unintentional or accidental plagiarism**. Accidental plagiarism is the result of improperly paraphrasing, summarizing, quoting, or citing your evidence in your academic writing. Generally, writers accidentally plagiarize because they simply don't know or they fail to follow the rules for giving credit to the ideas of others in their writing.

Both intentional and unintentional plagiarism are wrong, against the rules, and can result in harsh punishments. Ignoring or not knowing the rules of how to not plagiarize and properly cite evidence might be an *explanation*, but it is not an excuse.

A GENERAL GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING WRITTEN PLAGIARISM



ADD A CITATION AND BIBLIOGRAPHY!

How to Recognize Plagiarism. Indiana University Bloomington's School of Education, 2005. Web.
<<https://www.indiana.edu/~isd/inverview.html>>.

Avoiding Plagiarism

Tip #1: Make Sure You Are Very Certain about

What Is and is Not Plagiarism



The graphic features a map of Canada with a speech bubble pointing to a small area in the west. The text in the speech bubble reads: "Canada's aboriginal population makes up 4.3% of the total Canadian population." Above the map, the text "Not Common Knowledge" is written in a stylized font. Below the map, there is a logo for "Virtual HIGH SCHOOL" with a red apple icon.

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
<https://library.achievingthedream.org/bhccacceleratedenglish/?p=77>

Tip #2: Give Yourself Plenty of Time to Complete an Assignment

Running out of time on an assignment is a main cause of plagiarism. Rushing to meet a deadline can result in carelessness (leading to unintentional plagiarism – see the next tip) and the desire to find a quick, easy solution such as copying someone else's work. Don't give in to that temptation! Plagiarism is a serious academic offense, and the chance of being caught (which is likely) is not worth it.

Avoid this situation entirely by starting your assignment far ahead of time and planning out when you will complete each phase of the writing process. Even if your teacher does not require you to turn in materials for each stage of the [writing process](#) (i.e. brainstorming, creating a thesis statement, outlining, drafting, revising, etc.), set your own personal deadlines for each step along the way and make sure to give yourself more than enough time to finish everything.

Tip #3: Document Everything

Plagiarism isn't always a conscious choice. Sometimes it can be unintentional, typically resulting from poor documentation of one's sources during the research phase. For example, sometimes students will write down an idea from a source using words identical to or very close to those in the original, but then when they go to write their paper forget that the material was not already in their own words. Adopting good research habits can prevent this type of plagiarism.

Print, photocopy, or scan the relevant pages of every source you are using (including the title and copyright pages, since they have the information you need for a bibliographic citation). When taking notes by hand (or typed into a file), list the bibliographic information for each source you use. Make sure to put quotation marks around any wordings taken directly from the source (and note the page where you found it), and remember to put everything else into your own words right away, so there is no danger of forgetting something is a quote. Documenting where all of your ideas, information, quotations, and so on come from is an important step in avoiding plagiarism.

Tip #4: Don't Include Too Much Material Taken from Other Sources



Tips for integrating sources into your research.

Writing assignments are about your ideas, your interpretations, and your ability to synthesize information. You should use relevant sources to support your ideas using evidence such as quotes, paraphrases, and summaries, as well as statistics and other data.

But don't lose sight of the fact that your argument is central! Including too much

material from other sources can result in a paper that feels like it has been pasted together from a variety of authors, rather than a cohesive essay. Such papers also run a much higher risk of setting off plagiarism warnings in SafeAssign or other plagiarism-detecting software. Try to find a balance: use enough evidence from credible sources to prove your points but don't let the ideas of others take the place of your own thoughts.

Tip #5: When in Doubt, Give a Citation

There are certain types of information – typically referred to as common knowledge – that don't require a citation when you include them in your writing. These are facts that are widely known and can be easily found in a number of sources. They are not ideas that originated with one particular source. Examples include scientific facts (for example, that solid, liquid, and gas are three states of matter), general historical information (for example, that George

Washington was the first US president), or even information commonly known to certain groups of people but not others (for example, most musicians know that a C major triad includes the notes C, E, and G, even though many non-musicians would have no idea what a C major triad is).

For everything else, you need to include a citation, regardless of whether you are quoting directly from the source, paraphrasing it, or giving a summary. If you are at all unsure whether something qualifies as common knowledge or not, give a citation. You can also consult a more experienced figure in your field, such as your instructor, to find out if something counts as common knowledge or not.

In academic writing, the **“Quote Sandwich” approach** is useful for incorporating other writers’ voices into your essays. It gives meaning and context to a quote, and helps you avoid plagiarism. This 3-step approach offers your readers a deeper understanding of what the quote is and how it relates to your essay’s goals.

1. **Step 1:** Provide context for the source. If you haven’t used it yet in the essay, tell us the source’s title and author (if known), and any other information that’s relevant, like the purpose of the organization that published it, for instance.
2. **Step 2:** Provide the quote itself. Be sure to format correctly and use quotation marks around exact language.
3. **Step 3:** Provide a summary and/or analysis of what the quote says, and how it relates to the

subject matter of your essay and your thesis.

Self-Check



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

[https://library.achievingthedream.org/
bhccacceleratedenglish/?p=77](https://library.achievingthedream.org/bhccacceleratedenglish/?p=77)

56. MLA Activity

MLA Form, Citation, and Documentation—Practice Exercise

Name: _____

Section 1

On the next page, you will find a document in which there are ten MLA format issues noted with callout boxes (the boxes that read “comment.”) In the box, please note briefly the nature of the error for each.

Section 2

On the second page, you will find three sources that this person used for their paper. Please create a Works Cited page in proper MLA format on a new page. Please note that you will not need all of the information that is provided.

Please consult the MLA Guide at The Owl at Purdue (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>) to find the answers. Do not guess. This will be graded for accuracy.

John Doe
Professor Smith

ENG 111-05

February 2, 2016

The Negative Effects of Headphone Use

Have you ever asked a friend a question and gotten no response? Then you quickly realize that he or she is wearing earbuds and they have the volume up so loudly, that he cannot hear you at all? This probably happens to most of us on a regular basis. The question is, how bad is this for us? According to Virginia Heffernan's article, *Against Headphones*, wearing earbuds can have detrimental effects on our hearing. Her article traces the beginning of headphones from 1910 to their present day use and popularity citing research and studies showing how bad headphone use is ("Against Headphones"). I agree with Heffernan that headphone use is bad for our hearing and it also makes us antisocial.

One reason I agree with Heffernan that using headphones is a bad idea is because it is detrimental to our hearing. According to Heffernan, "a study published in August in *The Journal of the American Medical Association*" showed that "The number of teenagers with hearing loss—from slight to severe—has jumped 33 percent since 1994" (Heffernan 1). It is believed that that is due to teenagers listening to loud music through headphones. I have experienced something similar with my nieces and nephews who are teenagers now and they are constantly wearing headphones. Whenever I go home to visit, I can barely have a conversation with them because they always have in their ear buds. Then when they take them out, I have to constantly repeat myself because they cannot hear what I'm saying. According to Virginia, "One in five teenagers in America can't hear rustles or whispers" as stated in the same study mentioned earlier. I believe this is based on how often I have to repeat myself when speaking to my nieces and nephews. Because of this, I think that headphones should not be worn for long periods of time or at high volumes.

Another reason I agree with Heffernan that using headphones is a bad idea is because they also make people less social. As stated in the article, "...the downside is plain, too: it's antisocial" (Heffernan

pg. 1). The author goes on to quote Llewellyn Hinkes Jones from *The Atlantic* as telling us that music should be a shared experience—that it should be listened to with other people—like having dinner—not done alone (Heffernan, 3) . However, it seems these days, most people do it alone. As I step onto the orange line train headed to school in the mornings, I observe the people around me. I would say that nine out of 10 have on earbuds, and they are listening to something or staring at their phones specifically so that they do not have engage or socialize with others. Think about the interesting conversations that we miss out on because we are too involved in our music to look at what's around us. Thus, I think we should take off the headphones and engage with real people in the real world, becoming more social in the process.

The popularity of earbuds is clear as evidenced in our everyday lives. However, what is the cost of wearing them? In the 30 years, will we all have to wear hearing aids because of the damage we have done in our teens and twenties? Not to mention, what relationships have missed out on because we were living in our own little bubble, listening to what's on our headphones instead of engaging with others? I challenge you to listen to Heffernan's argument and be aware of the detrimental of effects of headphones. Think about it the next time you go to pop in those earbuds. Is it worth it?

Section B

On a separate piece of paper, please create a **complete** MLA Works Cited Page for the following three entries. You should note that not all the information provided below will be used.

Resource 1—An article from a web magazine

Author: Heffernan, Virginia.

Article title: Against Headphones

Location: New York Times Magazine online

Website: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/09/magazine/09FOB-medium-t.html>

Date accessed: November 21, 2015

Date published: January 7, 2011

Resource 2—An article from an online database

Source: Occupational Health (OCCUP HEALTH), Jul2014; 66(7): 6-6.
(1p)

Publication Type: Journal Article – pictorial

Language: English

ISSN: 0029-7917

Date of publication: 2015-07-12

Accession Number: 107868584

Database: CINAHL

Date of Access: December 1, 2015

Resource 3—A Page on a Web Site

Name of page: Hearing Loss and Headphones—Is anyone listening?

URL: <http://www.osteopathic.org/osteopathic-health/about-your-health/health-conditions-library/general-health/Pages/headphone-safety.aspx>

Date of access: December 1, 2014

Published by: American Osteopathic Association

[A handout of this resource is available here.](#)

PART VIII

UNIT 8: THE ILLUSTRATION/EXAMPLE ESSAY

57. Assignment: Research Essay

Research Essay (700-1000 words)

ENG 095/111

Learning Outcomes

Students will learn how to

- identify and explore a specific topic in depth.
- expand and complicate their own thinking and experiences with the topic through an exploration of various other perspectives.
- evaluate and synthesize these various perspectives to arrive, at the end, at a specific thesis.
- Identify and incorporate 2-3 outside resources

Characteristics of the Exploratory Essay

A successful essay

- provides an introduction that offers the reader background information and leads to a question or focus that will be explored or analyzed.
- adopts an inquiring and objective tone by the use of third-

person voice (first-person point of view is appropriate when describing personal experience).

- uses concrete details and examples, including quotations/paraphrases from sources, as designated by the instructor, as well as the student's own observations.
- Incorporates outside resources using proper MLA format including a works cited page.

Topic 1: Subcultures within Cultures

One way to analyze “culture” is to characterize it by its shared set of values, goals, and practices. By extension, Dobb defines “subculture” as the “culture of a specific segment of people within a society, differing from the dominant culture in some significant respects, such as in certain norms and values” (qtd. in Spann 315). For example, one could argue that NASCAR fans constitute a specific subculture among sports fans in general. Spann goes even one step further by describing possible subcultures among NASCAR fans themselves.

For this topic, explore a specific “subculture” within Southern culture by identifying its common values, interests, and goals as well as by analyzing its (complementary or antagonistic) relationship to the larger community.

Some subcultures to consider:

- Greek life
- Nascar
- Rodeo
- Gun Ownership
- Religion
- White supremacists
- Rednecks

Primary Exploration

- Carefully consider the following questions:
 - Identify a few subcultures and reflect on how they emerged.
 - What are the identifying values and goals of some of the subcultures you have identified?
 - What is the make-up of these subcultures in terms of class, age, race, and gender?
 - What differences exist between the members of these subcultures and the culture at large? How do these differences manifest themselves?
 - What other facets of culture (clothing, music, food, etc.) are typical of this subculture?
 - What TV shows or movies do you know that portray a specific subculture? What do you believe is the principal goal or message of this TV show or movie?
- Discuss the topic with a friend, co-worker, family member, whose class, gender, ethnicity, age, or other differences may provide a fresh perspective on the topic from your own.
- Explore sources from BHCC library.

Topic 2: It's a Family Tradition

Traditions can be created by our surroundings and background. The family home, the town and area in which we grow up, the places we travel to, the shopping malls in which we hang out, and the virtual spaces we visit—all these places have an impact on the person we become and the values we cherish. In the South, like in

all other cultures, there are some traditions that have been taking place for decades.

For this topic, explore a Southern tradition and its implications on Southern culture or its role in American culture. You may also consider looking at a tradition that no longer exists.

Some traditions to consider:

- College Football/tailgating
- Hunting as a rite of passage
- Mud riding
- Farming
- Music
- Dialect/accent
- Crawfish Boils
- Mardi Gras

Primary Exploration

- Carefully consider the following questions:
 - Identify a few traditions and research their history.
 - How did the traditions get started? By whom? Why do you think they still sustain today?
 - What differences exist between these traditions and traditions of other cultures? Are there similarities?
 - What do you want to know more about the tradition?
 - Are there traditions that have died out? Why are they no longer around?
- Discuss the topic with a friend, co-worker, family member, whose class, gender, ethnicity, age, or other differences may provide a fresh perspective on the topic from your own.
- Explore sources from BHCC library.

One Possible Method of Organization

Introduction

- Create a lead-in “hook” to engage your readers’ interest (e.g., a striking quotation gleaned from your exploratory research, an anecdote or scenario, a related current event).
- Provide brief background information to bring your readers up to speed: Why should readers care about this topic as a subject of inquiry? What relevance does it have to their lives today?
- Provide a brief overview of different perspectives on the topic.
- Present a focus question to stimulate your readers’ thinking.

Body

- Discuss each perspective or idea separately in one or more paragraphs.
- Include transitions between your discussions of each perspective/idea.
- Begin each perspective/idea with a clear topic sentence and conclude each with a closure/ clincher sentence.
- Support all viewpoints with details and specific examples, possibly making use of comparison and contrast.

Conclusion

- Bring readers back to the focus question of your exploration.
- Present your opinion or perspective on the topic (your thesis) and provide reasons for your opinion.
- Show how your thesis has emerged from your interaction with the varying perspectives presented by your sources.

[This resource is available as a handout here.](#)

58. Introduction to Illustration/Example Essay

Illustration/Example

To illustrate means to show or demonstrate something clearly. An effective illustration essay clearly demonstrates and supports a point through the use of examples and/or evidence. Ultimately, you want the evidence to help the reader “see” your point, as one would see a good illustration in a magazine or on a website. The stronger your evidence is, the more clearly the reader will consider your point.

In this module, you will develop your skills in illustration/example writing.

Module Outcomes

After successfully completing this module, you should be able to:

1. Determine the purpose and structure of the illustration essay.
2. Understand how to write an illustration essay.

59. "She's Your Basic L.O.L. in N.A.D" by Perri Klass

In “She’s Your Basic L.O.L. in N.A.D,” pediatrician and writer Perri Klass discusses the medical-speak she encountered in her training as a doctor and its underlying meaning.

Click on the link to view the essay: [“She’s Your Basic L.O.L. in N.A.D” by Perri Klass](#)

As you read, look for the following:

- The author’s primary thesis or theme
- The examples provided by each author to assert the theme
- See if you can determine which essay uses “multiple” examples (a series of brief examples to illustrate or assert the thesis) and which essay uses “extended” examples (longer examples explained through multiple sentences or paragraphs)

60. "April & Paris" by David Sedaris

In "April & Paris," writer David Sedaris explores the unique impact of animals on the human psyche.

Click on the link to view the essay: ["April & Paris" by David Sedaris](#)

As you read, look for the following:

- The author's primary thesis or theme
- The examples provided by the author to assert the theme
- See if you can determine which essay uses "multiple" examples (a series of brief examples to illustrate or assert the thesis) and which essay uses "extended" examples (longer examples explained through multiple sentences or paragraphs)

6I. Writing for Success: Illustration/Example

ANONYMOUS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This section will help you determine the purpose and structure of illustration/ example in writing.

The Purpose of Illustration in Writing

To illustrate means to show or demonstrate something clearly. An effective illustration essay, also known as an example essay, clearly demonstrates and supports a point through the use of evidence.

The controlling idea of an essay is called a thesis. A writer can use different types of evidence to support his or her thesis. Using scientific studies, experts in a particular field, statistics, historical events, current events, analogies, and personal anecdotes are all ways in which a writer can illustrate a thesis. Ultimately, you want the evidence to help the reader “see” your point, as one would see a good illustration in a magazine or on a website. The stronger your evidence is, the more clearly the reader will consider your point.

Using evidence effectively can be challenging, though. The

evidence you choose will usually depend on your subject and who your reader is (your audience). When writing an illustration essay, keep in mind the following:

- Use evidence that is appropriate to your topic as well as appropriate for your audience.
- Assess how much evidence you need to adequately explain your point depending on the complexity of the subject and the knowledge of your audience regarding that subject.

For example, if you were writing about a new communication software and your audience was a group of English-major undergrads, you might want to use an analogy or a personal story to illustrate how the software worked. You might also choose to add a few more pieces of evidence to make sure the audience understands your point. However, if you were writing about the same subject and your audience members were information technology (IT) specialists, you would likely use more technical evidence because they would be familiar with the subject.

Keeping in mind your subject in relation to your audience will increase your chances of effectively illustrating your point.

The Structure of an Illustration Essay

The controlling idea, or thesis, belongs at the beginning of the essay. Evidence is then presented in the essay's body paragraphs to support the thesis. You can start supporting your main point with your strongest evidence first, or you can start with evidence of lesser importance and have the essay build to increasingly stronger evidence. This type of organization is called "order of importance."

Transition words are also helpful in ordering the presentation of evidence. Words like first, second, third, currently, next, and finally all help orient the reader and sequence evidence clearly.

Because an illustration essay uses so many examples, it is also helpful to have a list of words and phrases to present each piece of evidence. Certain [transitional words and phrases](#) aid in keeping the reader oriented in the sequencing of a story. Some of these phrases are listed here:

Phrases of Illustration

case in point	for example
for instance	in particular
in this case	one example/another example
specifically	to illustrate

Vary the phrases of illustration you use. Do not rely on just one. Variety in choice of words and phrasing is critical when trying to keep readers engaged in your writing and your ideas.

Writing an Illustration Essay

First, decide on a topic that you feel interested in writing about. Then create an interesting introduction to engage the reader. The main point, or thesis, should be stated at the end of the introduction.

Gather evidence that is appropriate to both your subject and your audience. You can order the evidence in terms of importance, either from least important to most important or from most important to least important. Be sure to fully explain all of your examples using strong, clear supporting details.

Illustration/Example Essay Example

Letter to the City

By Scott McLean in *Writing for Success*

To: Lakeview Department of Transportation

From: A Concerned Citizen

The intersection of Central Avenue and Lake Street is dangerous and demands immediate consideration for the installation of a controlling mechanism. I have lived in Lakeview my entire life, and during that time I have witnessed too many accidents and close calls at that intersection. I would like the Department of Transportation to answer this question: how many lives have to be lost on the corner of Central Avenue and Lake Street before a street light or stop sign is placed there?

Over the past twenty years, the population of Lakeview has increased dramatically. This population growth has put tremendous pressure on the city's roadways, especially Central Avenue and its intersecting streets. At the intersection of Central Avenue and Lake Street it is easy to see how serious this problem is. For example, when I try to cross Central Avenue as a pedestrian, I frequently wait over ten minutes for the cars to clear, and even then I must rush to the median. I will then have to continue to wait until I can finally run to the other side of the street. On one hand, even as a

physically fit adult, I can run only with significant effort and care. Expecting a senior citizen or a child to cross this street, on the other hand, is extremely dangerous and irresponsible. Does the city have any plans to do anything about this?

Recent data show that the intersection of Central Avenue and Lake Street has been especially dangerous. According to the city's own statistics, three fatalities occurred at that intersection in the past year alone. Over the past five years, the intersection witnessed fourteen car accidents, five of which were fatal. These numbers officially qualify the intersection as the most fatal and dangerous in the entire state. It should go without saying that fatalities and accidents are not the clearest way of measuring the severity of this situation because for each accident that happens, countless other close calls never contribute to city data. I hope you will agree that these numbers alone are sufficient evidence that the intersection at Central Avenue and Lake Street is hazardous and demands immediate attention.

Nearly all accidents mentioned are caused by vehicles trying to cross Central Avenue while driving on Lake Street. I think the City of Lakeview should consider placing a traffic light there to control the traffic going both ways. While I do not have access to any resources or data that can show precisely how much a traffic light can improve the intersection, I think you will agree that a controlled busy intersection is much safer than an uncontrolled one. Therefore, at a minimum, the city must consider making the intersection a four-way stop.

Each day that goes by without attention to this issue

is a lost opportunity to save lives and make the community a safer, more enjoyable place to live. Because the safety of citizens is the priority of every government, I can only expect that the Department of Transportation and the City of Lakeview will act on this matter immediately. For the safety and well-being of Lakeview citizens, please do not let bureaucracy or money impede this urgent project.

Sincerely,

A Concerned Citizen

Key Takeaways

- An illustration essay clearly explains a main point using evidence.
- When choosing evidence, always gauge whether the evidence is appropriate for the subject as well as the audience.
- Organize the evidence in terms of importance, either from least important to most important or from most important to least important.
- Use time transitions to order evidence.
- Use phrases of illustration to call out examples.

PART IX

UNIT 9: THE NARRATIVE ESSAY

62. Assignment: Narrative Essay

Narrative Essay—Writing about your Cooking Experience (700-1000 words)

ENG 095/111 Cluster

For this essay, you will be choosing a traditional southern dish¹. You will briefly research the dish to find out some background information about it, and you will find a recipe because you will be making the dish. Once you have made the dish, you will be writing a narrative essay about the experience.

A narrative essay tells the story about an experience using specific and sensory details to convey the story to the reader. You want the reader to feel as if they are there with you during the experience. Thus, you are not simply listing the events, but instead, you are describing them in a manner that feels realistic.

This essay is connected to final project at the end of the semester where you will do a short presentation (via Prezi) about your dish and cook it to share with the class on the last day of class (Dec. 15). Thus, I encourage you to take pictures or video while you're cooking so you have something to include in the final project. This will also help you document the experience which will aid in the writing process.

1. Your dish must be made from scratch. No buying the food or choosing a recipe that includes “instant” options (i.e. instant grits or instant pudding).

Learning Outcomes

Students will learn to

- Tell a story about a specific experience.
- Use descriptive and sensory detail to convey the story.
- Use properly formatted dialogue when necessary.
- Convey key points of the story in time order.
- Use a subjective stance to convey the story.

Characteristics of the Narrative Essay

A successful essay

- Introduces the dish of choice and gives some background information on the dish in the introduction.
- Provides a thesis in the introduction that gives an overall impression of the experience.
- Uses specific and sensory details that make the reader feel as if they are there with you during the experience (i.e. smells, sights, sounds, feelings, tastes).
- Events for activities in time sequence (Beginning, middle, end, aftermath).
- Uses first person point of view (I, me).
- Uses one tense throughout the story (usually past tense).
- Everything in the essay refers back to the overall impression of the experience as stated in the thesis.
- Uses transitional phrases to help the reader follow the events.
- Adheres to MLA format.

One Possible Method of Organization

Introduction

- Introduce the dish that you cooked by telling us what's in it. Also, do some research to give us some brief background information about the dish. What makes it southern? What's its origin? How did it become a staple of southern cuisine?
- Lead up to your overall impression of the experience.
- Present your thesis statement which should include the overall impression. Was it challenging? Exciting?

Body

- Present your experience in time order.
- Use transitions to move from moment to moment.
- Use sensory details to convey the experience to the reader.
- Be sure that all descriptions of the event relate back to your overall impression.

Conclusion

- Restate your thesis and overall impressions in slightly different terms.
- Offer some insight about the experience. Would you do it again? What might you do differently next time?

Possible dishes to choose from (everyone must choose something different):

1. Buttermilk biscuits
2. Cornbread
3. Cornbread dressing
4. Fried chicken
5. Fried okra
6. Jambalaya
7. Gumbo
8. Etoufee
9. Collard greens
10. Green bean casserole
11. Banana pudding
12. Fruit Cobbler
13. Pecan pie
14. Sweet potato pie
15. Sweet potato casserole
16. Shrimp and grits
17. Cheesy grits casserole
18. Southern style pulled pork

[A handout of this resource is available here.](#)

63. Introduction to Narrative Essay

Narrative Essay

Reflect for a moment on the last memorable story you heard, told, or read. What made the story remain with you? Was it a compelling character or participant in the action? An interesting set of circumstances? Was it told in an amusing or serious manner, and did it make you react emotionally?

Everyone loves a good story, and each day we seek out good stories in a variety of media: novels, short stories, newspapers, works of fine art, blogs, even notes and posts on social media pages.

Narration is the art of storytelling, and in this module, you will investigate the ways in which writers employ common narration strategies to engage readers from the beginning to the end of a significant event. You will also look critically at some examples of effective narration as you draft your narrative essay.

Module Outcomes

After successfully completing this module, you should be able to:

1. Describe the purpose, basic components, characteristics, and structure of narrative writing
2. Demonstrate writing techniques of a narrative essay

64. Student Sample: Narrative Essay

Instructions: Read the student essay, “Melon Harvest,” by J. Workman. First read the NON-ANNOTATED student essay, and then compare it to the ANNOTATED version of the same essay. The purpose of annotation is to help you think deeply about a text as you read it. Notice how the annotated comments analyze and respond to the essay.

This is a model for how to engage with and annotate the writing you will encounter in this course.

Melon Harvest (Non-Annotated Version)

By J. Workman

At two in the afternoon I drove the five miles from our apartment complex into downtown Texarkana to drop off voter registration forms and mail paperwork about my recent change in residency to my employer. My husband’s job had brought me to this small city straddling the border of Texas and Arkansas, where everything still felt quaint and unfamiliar.

Driving home down Jefferson Avenue on the Arkansas side of town I passed a grocery store parking lot where a farmer had parked his beat-up truck and shoddy trailer under a faded awning. The trailer was loaded up with the last of his watermelon harvest—late season, probably sweet as they come. The truck bed held early season sweet potatoes. End of the summer fare and beginning of the winter stores, all in one load. The farmer’s back was facing me as he helped a woman buying watermelons. His arms were huge and his

shoulders wider than a yardstick. He was tall, big, sunburned on his neck and upper arms.

Without warning, tears filled my eyes. Although this farmer was a stranger to me, I recognized his profile. I knew his stories, including the toil, drudgery and poverty that too often mark a hard-working farmer's life. That life was just two generations back for me: my Grandma Wanda grew up a farmer's daughter. Great Grandpa George was a farmer and cowhand and blacksmith and sheep shearer and whatever else he could do to put food on the table.

Although rural communities surrounded Texarkana, somehow I was surprised to see this hardscrabble farmer here, now today. He was the real thing. This man wasn't like the hippie organic growers at the Santa Monica farmer's market I visited every Saturday before I moved from L.A. He wasn't a part-timer coming to town only seasonally with a load of grapes or melons. This man was no immigrant laborer from Mexico or El Salvador or Guatemala who came in the 1990s to work the farms on behalf of the white owners. He was not the descendent of Latin American or Asian laborers who came three generations ago and now own farms themselves.

This was a homegrown, Caucasian, American farmer, but the not-quite-Norman Rockwell kind. He was a "dirt farmer," as my new neighbor Billy described the type, himself the son of a sharecropper. He grew whatever he could coax out of the land, working those acres generation after generation to hold onto the family homestead. This farmer was young, early thirties perhaps, close to my own age (although you can't really tell after awhile because farmers take on the age of the earth). Seeing him hit close to home for me, too much a reminder of the hardship and poverty of my own family's roots, uncomfortably manifest today in another family's ongoing hardship.

Wiping my eyes, I realized I was projecting all this onto some random roadside farmer, and I didn't even stop to buy a melon. I thought about it, but I didn't really want to have to eat a whole watermelon on my own. More than that, I didn't know how I would

explain to him the tears I knew would stream from my eyes as I hefted the melon and counted out the bills.

Turning the corner into our apartment complex I passed the Greyhound station just in time to be a voyeur viewing a private moment between a mother and son. She was sending him off, probably to a city somewhere. He was a big, overweight, sloppy but good-natured looking boy. For the second time tears sprang to my eyes, and I couldn't say quite say why. After all, my parents put me on a Greyhound bus to go back to college after the holidays one winter. My father said it was a mandatory life experience, taking the bus to school. When I complained, he told me it was good motivation to finish college and get a good job. I can't say he was wrong about that.

But here in Texarkana my tears flowed again for that mother and son and the harshness of the big city world out beyond this place. I cried for the harshness of my citified eyes judging these homespun people in their quaint small place with its oddities and familiarities, its first names and slow-moving afternoons and churches bigger than stadiums.

I cried for how God must love the humility of a place like this, a town that unobtrusively preserves a Bible in the courthouse and trusts this nation could never do wrong. Perhaps in some ways this is a better place—better than me and the world I'm from. But in some ways it's also a dying place, dying like a field of vines after the melons are harvested, wilting in the sunlight of America's finest hour.

Annotated Version

Click on the link to view the annotated version of the essay: [“Melon Harvest,” by J. Workman](#)

65. "Shooting an Elephant" by George Orwell

In "Shooting an Elephant," author George Orwell finds himself in a position of authority as an Indian community encounters a rampaging elephant.

Click on the link to view the essay: ["Shooting an Elephant" by George Orwell](#)

As you are reading, identify the following:

- The "situation"
- The "complications"
- The "lesson" the author learned from the experience

66. "Sixty-nine Cents" by Gary Shteyngart

In "Sixty-nine Cents," author Gary Shteyngart describes a coming-of-age experience as a first-generation Russian-Jewish immigrant in modern America.

Click on the link to view the essay: ["Sixty-nine Cents" by Gary Shteyngart](#)

As you are reading, identify the following:

- The "situation"
- The "complications"
- The "lesson" the author learned from the experience.

67. Writing for Success: Narration

ANONYMOUS

This section will help you determine the purpose and structure of narration in writing.

The Purpose of Narrative Writing

Narration means the art of storytelling, and the purpose of narrative writing is to tell stories. Any time you tell a story to a friend or family member about an event or incident in your day, you engage in a form of narration. In addition, a narrative can be factual or fictional. A factual story is one that is based on, and tries to be faithful to, actual events as they unfolded in real life. A fictional story is a made-up, or imagined, story; the writer of a fictional story can create characters and events as he or she sees fit.

The big distinction between factual and fictional narratives is based on a writer's purpose. The writers of factual stories try to recount events as they actually happened, but writers of fictional stories can depart from real people and events because the writers' intents are not to retell a real-life event. Biographies and memoirs are examples of factual stories, whereas novels and short stories are examples of fictional stories.

Know Your Purpose

Because the line between fact and fiction can often blur, it is helpful to understand what your purpose is from the beginning. Is it important that you recount history, either your own or someone else's? Or does your interest lie in reshaping the world in your own image—either how you would like to see it or how you imagine it could be? Your answers will go a long way in shaping the stories you tell.

Ultimately, whether the story is fact or fiction, 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.

The Structure of a Narrative Essay

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. Certain [transitional words and phrases](#) aid in keeping the reader oriented in the sequencing of a story. Some of these phrases are listed here:

Chronological Transitional Words

after/afterward	as soon as	at last	before
currently	during	eventually	meanwhile
next	now	since	soon
finally	later	still	then
until	when/whenever	while	first, second, third

Other basic components of a narrative are:

- 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, also known as the protagonist.
- 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.

Writing a Narrative Essay

When writing a narrative essay, start by asking yourself if you want to write a factual or fictional story. Then freewrite, brainstorm, or mindmap about topics that are of general interest to you. For more information about pre-writing, review the materials in “My Writing Process – Prewriting and Draft.”

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 climax at a central conflict that must be resolved by the end of the story. The use of strong details is crucial as you describe the events and characters in your narrative. You want the reader to emotionally engage with the world that you create in writing.

Keep the Senses in Mind

To create strong details, keep the human senses in mind. You want your reader to be immersed in the world that you create, so focus on details related to sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch as you describe people, places, and events in your narrative.

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. Finally, your conclusion should help resolve the central conflict of the story and impress upon your reader the ultimate theme of the piece.

Narratives Tell A Story

Every day, you relate stories to other people through simple exchanges. You may have had a horrible experience at a restaurant the night before, or you may have had some good news you are ready to share. In each one of these experiences there's a story, and when you begin to share a personal experience, you often communicate in a narrative mode.

Although narratives can vary widely, most share several common features. Generally, storytellers establish:

- *Characters*, the person/people (sometimes they are animals) the story is about, which may include the storyteller
- *Conflict*, or struggle in the story, that builds their audience's interest
- *Details*, or descriptions, that appeal to the senses of sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste
- A *sequence of events* in a *plot*, or order of what happens in the story, that keeps the audience engaged as the story unfolds
- Reflection of events around a *theme*, or unifying idea, for telling the story

Narratives of Love and War

Consider two narratives that couldn't be more different—a tale of love and a story of war: John Hodgman's sweet, geeky tale of falling in love and Emmanuel Jal's story of being a child soldier and learning to forgive his enemies. Review these videos below then engage in a discussion following the directions as listed.

John Hodgman: *A Brief Digression on Matters of Lost Time*



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

[https://library.achievingthedream.org/
bhccacceleratedenglish/?p=91](https://library.achievingthedream.org/bhccacceleratedenglish/?p=91)

Emmanuel Jal: *The Music of a War Child*



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://library.achievingthedream.org/bhccacceleratedenglish/?p=91>

Narrative Essay Example

Read the following example of a narrative essay. Note how it reflects the basic components and common features of narratives, as discussed above.

My College Education

By Scott McLean, in *Writing for Success*

The first class I went to in college was philosophy, and it changed my life forever. Our first assignment was to write a short response paper to the Albert Camus essay “The Myth of Sisyphus.” I was

extremely nervous about the assignment as well as college. However, through all the confusion in philosophy class, many of my questions about life were answered.

I entered college intending to earn a degree in engineering. I always liked the way mathematics had right and wrong answers. I understood the logic and was very good at it. So when I received my first philosophy assignment that asked me to write my interpretation of the Camus essay, I was instantly confused. What is the right way to do this assignment, I wondered? I was nervous about writing an incorrect interpretation and did not want to get my first assignment wrong. Even more troubling was that the professor refused to give us any guidelines on what he was looking for; he gave us total freedom. He simply said, “I want to see what you come up with.”

Full of anxiety, I first set out to read Camus’s essay several times to make sure I really knew what it was about. I did my best to take careful notes. Yet even after I took all these notes and knew the essay inside and out, I still did not know the right answer. What was my interpretation? I could think of a million different ways to interpret the essay, but which one was my professor looking for? In math class, I was used to examples and explanations of solutions. This assignment gave me nothing; I was completely on my own to come up with my individual interpretation.

Next, when I sat down to write, the words just did not come to me. My notes and ideas were all present, but the words were lost. I decided to try every prewriting strategy I could find. I brainstormed, made idea maps, and even wrote an outline. Eventually, after a lot of stress, my ideas became more organized and the words fell on the page. I had my interpretation of “The Myth of Sisyphus,” and I had my main reasons for interpreting the essay. I remember being unsure of myself, wondering if what I was saying made sense, or if I was even on the right track. Through all the uncertainty, I continued writing the best I could. I finished the conclusion paragraph, had my spouse proofread it for errors, and turned it in the next day simply hoping for the best.

Then, a week or two later, came judgment day. The professor gave our papers back to us with grades and comments. I remember feeling simultaneously afraid and eager to get the paper back in my hands. It turned out, however, that I had nothing to worry about. The professor gave me an A on the paper, and his notes suggested that I wrote an effective essay overall. He wrote that my reading of the essay was very original and that my thoughts were well organized. My relief and newfound confidence upon reading his comments could not be overstated.

What I learned through this process extended well beyond how to write a college paper. I learned to be open to new challenges. I never expected to enjoy a philosophy class and always expected to be a math and science person. This class and assignment, however, gave me the selfconfidence, 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.

Key Takeaways

- Narration is the art of storytelling.
- Narratives can be either factual or fictional. In either case, narratives should emotionally engage the reader.
- Most narratives are composed of major events sequenced in chronological order.
- Time transition words and phrases are used to orient the

reader in the sequence of a narrative.

- The four basic components to all narratives are plot, character, conflict, and theme.
- The use of sensory details is crucial to emotionally engaging the reader.
- A strong introduction is important to hook the reader. A strong conclusion should add resolution to the conflict and evoke the narrative's theme.

68. Student Sample: Narrative Essay

My College Education

The first class I went to in college was philosophy, and it changed my life forever. Our first assignment was to write a short response paper to the Albert Camus essay “The Myth of Sisyphus.” I was extremely nervous about the assignment as well as college. However, through all the confusion in philosophy class, many of my questions about life were answered.

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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.

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69. 5 Senses Activity

Time: 45-50 minutes

Materials needed:

- some type of wrapped candy (I use Hershey kisses)
- Sensory Details handout

1. Write on the board the following:

Looks like Feels like Sounds like Smells like Tastes like

2. Go over the sensory details handout.
3. Give each student a piece of candy and tell them not to touch it. First, ask them what it looks like. Encourage them to use comparisons. Write their observations on the board under the appropriate column.
4. Then, have them pick up the candy and feel it and describe it. Write the descriptions under the column.
5. Do this for each category. For sounds like, have them unwrap it and tell you what it sounds like. Then they can smell and then eat it.

[A handout of this resource is available here.](#)

70. Sensory Details Examples

Personal Narrative Essay

Sensory details appeal to the five senses: sight, sound, smell, touch, taste. When writing a personal narrative, your objective is to get the reader to feel like they are there with you. Adding sensory details will help you achieve this goal.

Sight (this is used most often, but trying using all of them!)

- Dark green of rolling pastures
- the streets glistened like shiny ornaments after the rain
- the slivered moon sat in the sky like an old fingernail clipping
- the flashing blue lights from the police cruiser lit up our dark house

Sound

- The walls shook and vibrated like the tail of a rattle snake
- Ice crackled and pinged against the family room window like a baseball striking a bat
- Wind swirled around our beach house whistling loudly to a terrible tune
- The television buzzed as it shut off, and the furnace sighed one last time before the house fell silent.
- The cracking of wood splitting punctuated each burst of fire

like an exclamation point.

- the sounds of emergency sirens awakened the still roads wailing like a newborn baby

Smell

- the baking cake filled the kitchen with aroma of vanilla
- cinnamon-scented candle reminded of the Big Red gum my father chewed
- the beach air smelled of seaweed and salt
- the warm summer air smelled of freshly cut grass

Touch

- The heavy quilt felt like an x-ray vest draped across our legs
- The prickly feathers of the boa stuck my neck
- The puppy's nose was dry like sandpaper
- The sand was hot and grainy like my morning grits.

Taste

- Sweet, juicy strawberries
- Sour lemonade
- salty chips
- juicy tartness of orange
- rancid butter

[A handout of this resource is available here.](#)

71. Show Don't Tell

Instructor Directions

Read the following two accounts of the same events:

Paragraph One

When John got home from class, he felt sad. He turned on the radio for a while but turned it back off because it seemed like the music only reminded him of her. Now, he was even more depressed. He decided food might make him happier. He walked to the kitchen and opened the cabinet to find a box of Oreo cookies. This made him sad and angry because the two of them had just eaten Oreos together last week. With a tragic mixture of sadness and anger, he shut the cabinet. He wasn't hungry anyway.

Paragraph Two

When John got home from class, he let his backpack slide to the carpet as he slumped into the recliner. He shuffled to the radio and put it on his favorite country station. The lyrics sung about a man losing his wife and his dog in the same day. The words stung John's ears, and he quickly hit the power button to silence the words. His eyes burned. He thought about Allyson, and wondered what she was doing. He imagined slow dancing with her to that song like they had at the school dance. His face turned pale, and he dragged himself to the kitchen and opened the cabinet to find a box of Oreos. His

mind flashed back to one week earlier when she had sat with him in this very kitchen and eaten Oreos with him. He slammed the cabinet door shut with a loud thwack that sounded like a pop gun. His stomach felt hollow like a Halloween jack-o-lantern. He marched to his room and crawled into bed, hiding his head under the covers. Maybe some sleep would help him forget about the pain in his chest.

Which of these paragraphs do you find more interesting? Why?

(On the board)

Find a way to convey the meaning of the sentence below by showing and not telling.

Break the class into 5 groups and give each group one of the following sentences. Tell them to write a paragraph showing and not telling.

1. Julia is a germ-a-phobe.
2. James is a neat-freak when it comes to the interior of his car.
3. Tracy is totally disgusted by her snobby sister.
4. Alan is really into the guitar.
5. Julie is the crazy cat lady.
6. Dave is obsessed with his dog Trigger.

Give them time to write their paragraphs. When finished, have them share their paragraphs with the class and the class will try to guess what they are showing.

[A handout of this resource is available here.](#)

PART X

UNIT 10: THE FINAL PROJECT AND PORTFOLIO

72. Assignment: The Final Project

The Final Project (due the last day of class):

Make your Southern dish, again, to share with the class. On the last day of class, you will bring in your dish, do a 2-3 minute presentation about your dish incorporating information from your research and telling us about your experience making the dish, and then we all get to taste what you made.

For the presentation, use PowerPoint or Prezi. Incorporate pictures of the dish and tell us about your experience. This should be 3-5 slides long.

You will also write a 250-500 word process memo about the experience making the dish a second time. How was it different than the first experience? What did you do differently? Was it better or worse? In what ways? Would you make this dish again? Did you like it? Why/why not?

You will submit this memo along with the PowerPoint/Prezi Presentation the Final Project link on Moodle under Week 15. You can attach the power point or copy and paste the link to your Prezi in the text box. For the memo, you can attach a word document or copy and paste the memo to the text box.

[A handout of this resource is available here.](#)

73. Reflection



Sometimes the process of figuring out who you are as writers requires reflection, a “looking back” to determine what you were thinking and how your thinking changed over time, relative to key experiences. Mature learners set goals, and achieve them by charting a course of action and making adjustments along the way when they encounter obstacles. They also build on strengths and seek reinforcement when weaknesses surface. What makes them *mature*? They’re not afraid to make mistakes (own them even), and they know that struggle can be a rewarding part of the process. By equal measure, mature learners celebrate their strengths and use them strategically. By adopting a reflective position, they can pinpoint areas that work well and areas that require further help—and all of this without losing sight of their goals.

You have come to this course with your own writing goals. Now is a good time to think back on your writing practices with reflective

writing, also called metacognitive writing. Reflective writing helps you think through and develop your intentions as writers. Leveraging reflective writing also creates learning habits that extend to any discipline of learning. It's a set of procedures that helps you step back from the work you have done and ask a series of questions: Is this really what I wanted to do? Is this really what I wanted to say? Is this the best way to communicate my intentions? Reflective writing helps you authenticate your intentions and start identifying places where you either hit the target or miss the mark. You may find, also, that when you communicate your struggles, you can ask others for help! Reflective writing helps you trace and articulate the patterns you have developed, and it fosters independence from relying too heavily on an instructor to tell you what you are doing. Throughout this course, you have been working toward an authentic voice in your writing. Your reflection on writing should be equally authentic or honest when you look at your purposes for writing and the strategies you have been leveraging all the while.

74. Assignment: Reflection Essay

This final essay is more like a freewrite. I am not looking for typical essay structure—no need for an intro, thesis, body paragraphs, etc.

This is informal writing so that I can get some feedback about your semester. I do expect it to be in MLA format and to be grammatically correct.

This essay should consist of three paragraphs. The first paragraph should be about your experiences in the classroom. What activities did you find to be most helpful? What activities did you find to be least helpful? Please be specific. Look back at Moodle to see what activities we did and think about how they did or didn't help you. Were there readings that you especially liked or didn't like?

The second paragraph should be about your writing process. How did your process change or remain the same during this class? What do you think you improved the most on? What do you think you need more work on?

The third paragraph should be about changes that could be made in the course. What do you think I should change next time around? Is there something that you would have liked to cover more? Is there something that you feel we covered too much?

Feel free to add any additional information you deem pertinent to the discussion.

Please take this seriously. I use this information to improve the class experience each semester, and I really appreciate your feedback. Your grade is based on honesty and quality, not whether you did or didn't like something (I won't take it personally ☺).

This essay should be placed in your portfolio—due the last day of class.

[A handout of this resource is available here.](#)

75. Assignment: Portfolio

Portfolio- ENG 095/III Cluster

If you do not turn in your portfolio, you cannot pass this class. The portfolio is due IN CLASS on the last day of class at the beginning of class. You may turn it in early if you wish, but you should be sure that everything is done before you do. I would suggest spending as much time on it as possible. You should come to class ready to turn it in on the last day of class. Do not plan on organizing your portfolio in class because you will be presenting your final projects that day. Portfolios will be considered late after the start of class time. You will lose 10 points per day for late portfolios. All late portfolios must be submitted to my office, B350H.

The portfolio is worth 65% of your grade (half process, half product). It consists of the following:

- Paper 1—3 rough drafts, 1 final draft

- Paper 2—3 rough drafts, 1 final draft

- Paper 3—3 rough drafts, 1 final draft

- Reflection Essay

Your portfolio should be in a two pocket folder (No Binders!). On the left side, please place the following:

- Paper One- The Literary Analysis Essay (700-1000)

- draft one- with comments from your peers

- draft two- with comments from me

- draft three- comments from your peers

- Paper Two- The Exploratory/Research Essay (700-1000)

- draft one- with comments from your peers

- draft two- with comments from me

- draft three- with comments from your peers

- Paper Three- The Narrative Essay (700-1000)

- draft one- with comments from your peers

-draft two- comments from me

-draft three-comments from your peers

Please paper clip all drafts of each paper together. For example, drafts one, two, and three of paper one should be paper clipped; then drafts one, two, and three of paper two should be paper clipped, etc. so that you end up with three bundles—one for each paper. Furthermore, all pages of each draft must be stapled together.

You will lose points if this is not done correctly.

On the right side, please place the following (this ordering works from top to bottom):

1. The reflection essay
2. The final draft of essay 1
3. The final drafts of essay 2
4. The final draft of essay 3

Final Drafts and Reflection Essay must be as follows:

1. MLA format-double space with your name, my name, class time, and date in the left hand corner and your last name and the page number in the upper right hand corner. Also, Times New Roman size 12 (no exceptions) 1" margins, title centered
2. Parenthetical citations in MLA format
3. Works Cited Page in MLA format (all essays except for the reflection essay)

-You will lose significant points if these directions are not followed properly

[A handout of this resource is available here.](#)