

## English Composition II



# English Composition II

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PART I  
INSTRUCTOR RESOURCES



# I. Download for Offline Use

The course is currently available to download in the following formats:

- [PDF](#)

## 2. ENGL 1302 – Capstone Essay

**Module one: Research proposal (1000 word minimum)** – This module teaches State of Texas ACGM Course Objectives (Student Learning Outcomes) 1, 2, 3, and 4, with an emphasis on 3.

ACGM Course Objectives (Student Learning Outcomes):

- Demonstrate knowledge of individual and collaborative writing processes;
- Develop ideas with appropriate support and attribution;
- Write in a style appropriate to audience and purpose;
- Read, reflect, and respond critically to a variety of texts;
- Use Edited American English in academic essays.

The proposal is an introduction of the research topic. Students will identify the topic of the semester's research paper and the argument being made, as well as explaining why and how the topic is being written about. Think of this like a conversation (in a more academic/formal tone than just talking amongst friends). If someone asked what the student is writing about, this paper would be his or her answer to explain it.

The Research Proposal should contain (in a logical order):

- **Introduction:** A specific, clear statement of the topic
  - The research question/thesis: What the student wishes to learn or prove about the topic
    - How did the student arrive at the thesis question?
    - Explain the interest in the topic.
- **Body:** What is the purpose of the research question (persuade, inform, argue, etc)?
  - What are some potential difficulties the student foresees

with the research?

- What preliminary research (if any) has been done? Briefly summarize those results.
- **Conclusion:** What does the student hope readers will take away from the finished product (the research paper)?

**Module Two: Reader-response/interpretive/close reading essay (1000 word minimum)** – This module teaches State of Texas ACGM Course Objectives (Student Learning Outcomes) 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, with emphasis on 3 (analyze, interpret, and evaluate texts) and 5 (conventions of citation styles).

ACGM Course Objectives (Student Learning Outcomes):

- Demonstrate knowledge of individual and collaborative writing processes;
- Develop ideas with appropriate support and attribution;
- Write in a style appropriate to audience and purpose;
- Read, reflect, and respond critically to a variety of texts;
- Use Edited American English in academic essays.

The Reader Response/Interpretive/Close Reading Essay asks students to look at their research & consider how it applies to the chosen topic – does it support the argument/thesis, does it contradict the point (in which case, students will explain where the problem with that research lies), does it set up the argument/provide context, etc?

The Reader-Response/Interpretive/Close Reading essay should contain (in a logical order):

- **Introduction:** State the argument or claim culminating in the thesis statement.
- **Body of Essay**
  - **Summary of sources:** For each source, write a summary of the source.
  - **Analysis & response:** For each source used, provide an

analysis and response.

- **Quotations/Paraphrasing:** Students will need to include at least one direct quote (word for word) OR paraphrase (putting it in their own words) with a parenthetical in-text citation per source in this assignment; these quotations should be properly formatted/sandwiched in the text.
- **Conclusion:** Wrap up the current discussion; explain how these sources affect the topic or offer a discussion about why these sources are important to what has been discussed (a mini “so what?” paragraph).
- **Properly formatted Works Cited/Reference/Citations page:** Cite the sources quoted in the essay in the proper citation format assigned (APA, MLA, Chicago, etc).

**Module 3: Formal multi-source research paper (1200-1500 words) as capstone**, with various appropriate scaffolding as chosen by the instructor but to include reading in the form of conclusion of the research process; informal writings; and some collaborative element. This module teaches State of Texas ACGM Course Objectives (Student Learning Outcomes) 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, with emphasis on 2 (synthesize sources), 3 (analyze, interpret, and evaluate texts) and 5 (conventions of citation styles).

ACGM Course Objectives (Student Learning Outcomes):

- Demonstrate knowledge of individual and collaborative writing processes;
- Develop ideas with appropriate support and attribution;
- Write in a style appropriate to audience and purpose;
- Read, reflect, and respond critically to a variety of texts;
- Use Edited American English in academic essays.

The Research Paper is a cohesive, persuasive argument about the chosen topic, with integrated source material to support the given claim, adding transitions & clarifying information (or cutting extraneous information) as necessary. It is a culmination of the



Research Proposal & Reader Response/Interpretive/Close Reading assignments.

The Research Essay should contain (in a logical order):

- **Introduction** of topic & a clear statement of the thesis/argument statement, with a brief explanation of interest in the topic
- **Body of Paper**
  - **Minimum of 3 properly integrated outside/secondary, academic sources**
  - **In-text Citations:** Each source used in the essay needs to have at least one direct quotation or paraphrase done as a properly formatted in-text citation within the text of the essay.
  - **Analysis & explanation** of the argument & source materials together
- A **Conclusion** that wraps up the argument and ends the discussion without merely repeating or summarizing the thesis/essay; it offers an explanation of why the topic is important & why the reader should care about the argument.
- **Properly formatted Works Cited/Reference/Citations page:** Cite the sources quoted in the essay in the proper citation format assigned (APA, MLA, Chicago, etc).

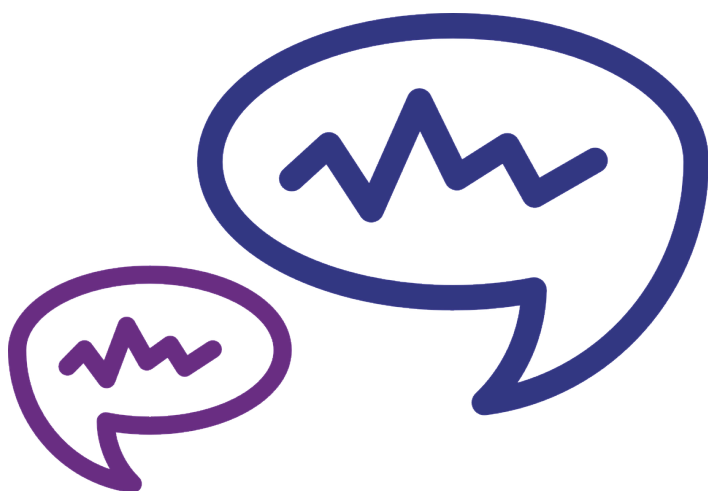


PART II

# MODULE I: GRAMMAR



### 3. Why Is Grammar Important?

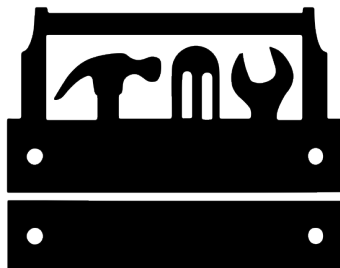


Take a moment and try to imagine a world without language: written, signed, or spoken. It's pretty hard to conceptualize, right? Language is a constant presence all around us. It's how we communicate with others; without language it would be incredibly difficult to connect people.

Many people are self-conscious of their speech and worry that the way they talk is incorrect: this simply isn't true. There are several different types of English—all of which are equally dynamic and complex. However, each variety is appropriate in different situations. When you're talking to your friends, you should use slang and cultural references—if you speak in formal language, you can easily come off as uptight or rude. If you're sending a quick casual message—via social media or texting—you don't need to worry too much about capitalization or strict punctuation. Feel free

to have five exclamation points standing alone, if that gets your point across.

However, there's this thing called Standard American English. This type of English exists the sake of communication across cultural lines, where standardized rules and conventions are necessary. How many times have you heard people of older generations ask just what



*smh* or *rn* mean? This is where grammar comes in. Grammar is a set of rules and conventions that dictate how Standard American English works. These rules are simply tools that speakers of a language can use. When you learn how to use the language, you can craft your message to communicate exactly what you want to convey.

Additionally, when you speak or write with poor grammar, others will often make judgements about who you are as a person. As Williams and Colomb say, “Follow all the rules all the time because sometime, someone will criticize you for something.”<sup>1</sup>

## Code Switching

*Code switching* is the ability to use two different varieties (or dialects) of the same language. Most people do this instinctively.

1. Williams, Joseph M. and Gregory G. Colomb. *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace*. 3rd ed. Boston: Longman. 2012, p. 14.

If you were writing a paper, you might say something like “The experiment requires not one but four different procedures” in order to emphasize number. In an informal online setting, on the other hand, you might say something like “I saw two (2) buses drive past.”

The most important facet of code switching is knowing when to use which variety. In formal academic writing, standardized English is the correct variety to use. As you go through this module, remember that these are the rules for just one type of English.

## 4. Introduction to Nouns

Nouns are a diverse group of words, and they are very common in English. Nouns are a category of words defining **things**—people, places, items, concepts. The video below is brief introduction to them and the role they play:



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

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=21#oembed-1>

As we've just learned, a noun is the name of a person (Dr. Sanders), place (Lawrence, Kansas, factory, home), thing (scissors, saw, book), or idea (love, truth, beauty, intelligence).

Let's look at the following examples to get a better idea of how nouns work in sentences. All of the nouns have been bolded:

- The one **experiment** that has been given the most **attention** in the **debate** on **saccharin** is the 1977 Canadian **study** done on **rats**.
- The multi-fuel **capacity** of the Stirling **engine** gives it a versatility not possible in the internal combustion **engine**.
- The regenerative cooling **cycle** in the **engines** of

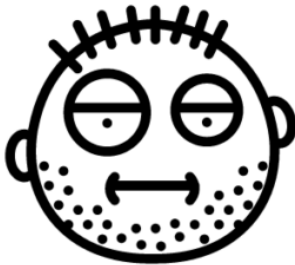


the Space **Shuttle** is made up of high pressure **hydrogen** that flows in **tubes** connecting the **nozzle** and the combustion **chamber**.

## Types of Nouns

Of the many different categories of nouns, a couple deserve closer attention here.

### Common vs. Proper Noun



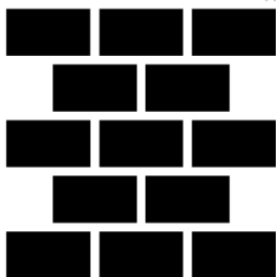
vs.



Common nouns are generic words, like *tissue*. They are lower-cased (unless they begin a sentence). A proper noun, on the other hand, is the name of a specific thing, like the brand name *Kleenex*. Proper nouns are always capitalized.

- common noun: name
- proper noun: Ester

## Concrete vs. Abstract Noun



vs.



Concrete nouns are things you can hold, see, or otherwise sense, like *book*, *light*, or *warmth*.

Abstract nouns, on the other hand, are (as you might expect) abstract concepts, like *time* and *love*.

- concrete noun: rock
- abstract noun: justice

The rest of this section will dig into other types of nouns: count v. non-count nouns, compound nouns, and plural nouns.

### *Practice*

Look at each of the following nouns and determine if they are common or proper and if they are concrete or abstract. For example:

- *justice* is a common abstract noun.

Buddhi sm	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	Rob ert	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]
cathed ral	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	tale nt	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

Buddhi sm	<i>Buddhism</i> is a proper abstract noun.	Rob ert	<i>Robert</i> is a proper concrete noun.
cathed ral	<i>cathedral</i> is a common concrete noun.	tale nt	<i>talent</i> is a common abstract noun

## 5. Regular Plural Nouns

A plural noun indicates that there is more than one of that noun (while a singular noun indicates that there is just one of the noun). Most plural forms are created by simply adding an -s or -es to the end of the singular word. For example, there's one



**dog** (singular), but three **dogs** (plural). However, English has both regular and irregular plural nouns. Regular plurals follow this rule (and other similar rules), but irregular plurals are, well, not regular and don't follow a "standard" rule.

Let's start with regular plurals: **regular plural nouns** use established patterns to indicate there is more than one of a thing.

### Recognize nouns marked with plural form -s.

As was mentioned earlier, we add the plural suffix -s to most words:

- cat → cats
- bear → bears
- zebra → zebras

However, after sounds s, z, sh, ch, and j, we add the plural suffix -es:

- class → classes
- sash → sashes
- fox → foxes

Some words that end in z also double their ending consonant, like *quizzes*.

## Practice

Do you know how to spell the plurals for the following words?

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
book	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	peach	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]
chair	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	buzz	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]
picture	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	watch	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
book	<i>books</i>	peach	<i>peaches</i>
chair	<i>chairs</i>	buzz	<i>buzzes</i>
picture	<i>pictures</i>	watch	<i>watches</i>

## After the letter o.

We also add the plural suffix *-es* to most words that end in *o*:

- potato → potatoes
- hero → heroes
- mosquito → mosquitoes

However, when the words have a foreign origin (e.g.,Latin, Greek, Spanish), we just add the plural suffix -s

- taco → tacos
- avocado → avocados
- maestro → maestros

**Note:** While you won't be expected to know which words have a foreign origin, being familiar with (or memorizing) some common words that use this plural can be really helpful. And remember, if you're ever in doubt, the dictionary is there for you!

Practice

What are the correct plurals for the following words?

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
solo	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	portfolio	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]
veto	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	memo	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]
echo	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	radio	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]
avocado	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	zero	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]
studio	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	potato	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>	<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>
solo	solos	portfolio	<i>portfolios</i>
veto	<i>veto</i> es	memo	<i>memos</i>
echo	<i>echo</i> es	radio	<i>radios</i>
avocado	<i>avocado</i> s	zero	<i>zeroes</i>
studio	<i>studio</i> s	potato	<i>potatoes</i>

## After *-y* and *-f, -fe*

When a word ends in *y* and there is a consonant before *y*, we change the *y* to *i* and add *-es*.

- sky → skies
- candy → candies
- lady → ladies

However, if the *y* follows another vowel, you simply add an *-s*.

- alloy → alloys
- donkey → donkeys
- day → days

## Practice

What are the correct plurals for the following words?

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
supply	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	key	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]
fly	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	play	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]
ally	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	boy	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
supply	<i>supplies</i>	key	<i>keys</i>
flies	<i>fries</i>	play	<i>plays</i>
ally	<i>allies</i>	boy	<i>boys</i>

When a word ends in *-f* or *-fe*, we change the *f* to *v* and add *-es*.

- leaf → leaves
- life → lives
- calf → calves

However, if there are two terminal *fs* or if you still pronounce the *f* in the plural, then you simply add an *-s*:

- cliff → cliffs
- chief → chiefs



- reef → reefs

Practice

What are the correct plurals for the following words?

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
wolf	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	self	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]
sheaf	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	roof	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]
knife	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	thief	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
wolf	wolves	self	selves
sheaf	sheaves	roof	roofs
knife	knives	thief	thieves

## 6. Irregular Plural Nouns

**Irregular plurals**, unlike regular plurals, don't necessarily follow any particular pattern—instead, they follow a lot of *different* patterns. Because of this, irregular plurals require a lot of

memorization; you need to remember which nouns belong to which type of pluralization. Mastering irregulars uses a different region of your brain than regular pluralization: it's an entirely different skill set than regular pluralization. So don't get too frustrated if you can't remember the correct plural. If you're ever in doubt, the dictionary is there for you.



### No Change (Base Plurals)

The first kind of irregular plural we'll talk about is the **no-change** or **base plural**. In these words, the singular noun has the exact same form as the plural. Most no-change plurals are types of animals:

- sheep
- fish
- deer
- moose

## Mid-Word Vowel Change

In a few words, the mid-word vowels are changed to form the plural. This video lists all seven of these words and their plurals.



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

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=23#oembed-1>

**Note:** The plural for a computer mouse (as opposed to the fuzzy animal) can either be *mice* or *mouses*. Some people prefer *mouses* as it creates some differentiation between the two words.

## Plural *-en*

And last we have **plural *-en***. In these words *-en* is used as the plural ending instead of *-s* or *-es*.

- child → children
- ox → oxen
- brother → brethren
- sister → sistren

**Note:** *Brethren* and *sistren* are antiquated terms that you're unlikely to run into in your life; however, since these are the only four words in English that use this plural, all four have been included above.

## Practice

What are the correct plurals for the following words?

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
goose	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	moose	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]
fish	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	child	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]
man	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	tooth	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
goose	<i>geese</i>	moose	<i>moose</i>
fish	<i>fish</i>	child	<i>children</i>
man	<i>men</i>	tooth	<i>teeth</i>

## Borrowed Words *-i, -en, -a, -es, -ae*

The last category of irregular plurals is borrowed words. These words are native to other languages (e.g., Latin, Greek) and have retained the pluralization rules from their original tongue.

### Singular *-us*; Plural *-i*

- cactus → cacti
- fungus → fungi
- syllabus → syllabi

In informal speech, *cactuses* and *funguses* are acceptable. *Octopuses* is preferred to *octopi*, but *octopi* is an accepted word.

### Singular *-a*; Plural *-ae*

- formula → formulae (sometimes *formulas*)
- vertebra → vertebrae
- larva → larvae

### Singular *-ix, -ex*; Plural *-ices, -es*

- appendix → appendices (sometimes *appendixes*)
- index → indices

Singular *-on, -um*; Plural *-a*

- criterion → criteria
- bacterium → bacteria
- medium → media

Singular *-is*; Plural *-es*

- analysis → analyses
- crisis → crises
- thesis → theses

Practice

What are the correct plurals for the following words?

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
memorandum	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	emphasis	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]
focus	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	basis	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]
nucleus	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	phenomenon	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]
appendix	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	curriculum	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]
parenthesis	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	hypothesis	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]
stimulus	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	vertebra	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]

## Show Answer

<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>	<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>
memorandum	<i>memoranda</i>	emphasis	<i>emphases</i>
focus	<i>foci</i> ( <i>focuses</i> is also acceptable)	basis	<i>bases</i>
nucleus	<i>nuclei</i>	phenomenon	<i>phenomena</i>
appendix	<i>appendices</i> ( <i>appendixes</i> is also acceptable)	curriculum	<i>curricula</i>
parenthesis	<i>parentheses</i>	hypothesis	<i>hypotheses</i>
stimulus	<i>stimuli</i>	vertebra	<i>vertebrae</i>

## 7. Count vs. Non-Count Nouns

A **count noun** (also **countable noun**) is a noun that can be modified by a numeral (*three chairs*) and that occurs in both singular and plural forms (*chair, chairs*). The can also be preceded by words such as *a, an, or the* (*a chair*). Quite literally, count nouns are nouns which can be counted.

A **non-count noun** (also **mass noun**), on the other hand, has none of these properties. It can't be modified by a numeral (*three furniture* is incorrect), occur in singular/plural (*furnitures* is not a word), or co-occur with *a, an, or the* (*a furniture* is incorrect). Again, quite literally, non-count nouns are nouns which cannot be counted.

### *Example: Chair vs. Furniture*

The sentence pairs below compare the count noun *chair* and the non-count noun *furniture*.



There are **chairs** in the room. (correct)  
There are **furnitures** in the room. (incorrect)

There is **a chair** in the room. (correct)  
There is **a furniture** in the room. (incorrect)

There is **chair** in the room. (incorrect)  
There is **furniture** in the room. (correct)

**Every chair** is man made. (correct)  
**Every furniture** is man made. (incorrect)

**All chair** is man made. (incorrect)  
**All furniture** is man made. (correct)

There are **several chairs** in the room. (correct)  
There are **several furnitures** in the room. (incorrect)



## Determining the Type of Noun

In general, a count noun is going to be something you can easily count—like *rock* or *dollar bill*. Non-count nouns, on the other hand, would be more difficult to count—like *sand* or *money*. If you ever want to identify a singular non-count noun, you need a phrase beforehand—like *a grain of sand* or *a sum of money*.

## Practice

Select the correct word to complete each sentence.  
Determine whether the correct word is a count or a non-count noun.

1. The internet is contains a lot of (information / fact).
2. The internet contains a lot of (informations / facts).
3. We each have a (work / job) to do.
4. We each have (work / job) to do.

Show Answer

1. The internet is full of **information**. *Information* is a non-count noun.
2. The internet contains many **facts**. *Facts* is a count noun. The word “informations” is incorrect because *information* is non-count and doesn’t have a plural form.
3. We each have a **job** to do. *Job* is a count noun, so it needs an article (*a*).
4. We each have **work** to do. *Work* is a non-count noun.

## Less, Fewer, Many, and Much

The adjectives *less* and *fewer* are both used to indicate a smaller amount of the noun they modify. *Many* and *much* are used to indicate a large amount of something. People often will use these

pairs words interchangeably; however, the words *fewer* and *many* are used with count nouns, while *less* and *much* are used with non-count nouns:

- The pet day care has **fewer** dogs than cats this week.
- Next time you make these cookies, you should use **less** sugar.
- **Many** poets struggle when they try to determine if a poem is complete or not.
- There's too **much** goodness in her heart for her own good.

You may have noticed that *much* has followed the adverb *too* in this example (*too much*). This is because you rarely find *much* by itself. You don't really hear people say things like "Now please leave me alone; I have *much* research to do." The phrase "a lot of" has taken its place in current English: "I have a lot of research to do." A *lot of* can be used in the place of either *many* or *much*:

- **A lot of** poets struggle when they try to determine if a poem is complete or not.
- There's **a lot of** goodness in her heart for her own good.

## *Practice*

Read the following sentences. Decide if the bolded words have been treated correctly as count or non-count nouns.

1. Satya has a lot of **clothings**. Her mother has told her that before she can buy any more, she must get rid of five **shirts** and two **pants**.
2. There were much types of **food** at the event, including different **soups**, **salads**, and **desserts**.

3. Miguel loved studying **outer space**—especially the different **galaxy**.

Show Answer

1. No. All three nouns (*clothings*, *shirts*, and *pants*) have been treated as count nouns. However, only *shirts* is a count noun. The correct sentence would be “Satya has a lot of **clothing**. Her mother has told her that before she can buy any more, she must get rid of five shirts and two **pairs of pants**.”
  - Please note that even though the word *pants* ends in an s, it is not actually plural (or singular; it’s non-count!). The correct way to create a plural is *pairs of pants*.
2. No. *Food* is a non-count noun, so it takes *many* not *much*. However, *soups*, *salads*, and *desserts* are all plural count nouns and have been treated correctly. The correct sentence would be “There were **many** types of food at the event, including different soups, salads, and desserts.
3. No. *Outer space* is non-count, and has been treated as such, but *galaxy* is a count noun, and has been treated as a non-count. The correct sentence would be “Miguel loved studying outer space—especially the different **galaxies**.”

Choose the correct word to fill in the blanks in the following sentences:

1. You can only be in this line if you have fifteen items or \_\_\_\_.

2. Evelyn was disappointed in the weather forecast; there was \_\_\_\_\_ rain predicted. She preferred dry weather.
3. I had a lengthy list of my \_\_\_\_\_ ideas for the project.

Show Answer

1. You can only be in this line if you have fifteen items or **fewer**.
  - Because *items* is a count noun, *fewer* is required here. This may surprise you, since many stores have a “fifteen items or less” line, but, using *less* is grammatically incorrect. However, the prevalence of this phrase has made it so stores sound uppity if they use *fewer* instead of *less*. Some stores are avoiding this entire issue by saying “around fifteen items” instead.
2. Evelyn was disappointed in the weather forecast; there was **a lot of** rain predicted. She preferred dry weather.
  - While *much* would also fit in this blank, the phrase *a lot of* is much more common and more likely to be used.
3. I had a lengthy list of my **many** ideas for the project.
  - The adjective is modifying the count-noun *ideas*, so *many* is needed in this instance.

## 8. Compound Nouns

A **compound noun** is a noun phrase made up of two nouns, e.g. *bus driver*, in which the first noun acts as a sort of adjective for the second one, but without really describing it. (For example, think about the difference between a *black bird* and a *blackbird*.)



Figure 1. A crow is a black bird, while a blackbird is a specific species of bird.

**Compound nouns** can be made up of two or more other words, but each compound has a single meaning. They may or may not be hyphenated, and they may be written with a space between words—especially if one of the words has more than one syllable, as in *living room*. In that regard, it's necessary to avoid the oversimplification of saying that two single-syllable words are written together as one word. Thus, *tablecloth* but *table mat*, *wine glass* but *wineglassful* or *key ring* but *keyholder*. Moreover, there are cases which some people/dictionaries will write one way while others write them another way. Until very recently we wrote *(the) week's end*, which later became *week-end* and then our beloved *weekend*.

# Types of Compound Nouns

Short compounds may be written in three different ways:

- **The solid or closed forms** in which two usually moderately short words appear together as one. Solid compounds most likely consist of short units that often have been established in the language for a long time. Examples are *housewife*, *lawsuit*, *wallpaper*, *basketball*, etc.
- **The hyphenated form** in which two or more words are connected by a hyphen. This category includes compounds that contain suffixes, such as *house-build(er)* and *single-mind(ed)(ness)*. Compounds that contain articles, prepositions or conjunctions, such as *rent-a-cop* and *mother-of-pearl*, are also often hyphenated.
- **The open or spaced form** consisting of newer combinations of usually longer words, such as *distance learning*, *player piano*, *lawn tennis*, etc.

Hyphens are often considered a squishy part on language (we'll discuss this further in [Hyphens and Dashes](#)). Because of this, usage differs and often depends on the individual choice of the writer rather than on a hard-and-fast rule. This means open, hyphenated, and closed forms may be encountered for the same compound noun, such as the triplets *container ship/container-ship/containership* and *particle board/particle-board/particleboard*. If you're ever in doubt whether a compound should be closed, hyphenated, or open, dictionaries are your best reference.

## Plurals

The process of making compound nouns plural has its own set of

conventions to follow. In all forms of compound nouns, we pluralize the chief element of a compound word (i.e., we pluralize the primary noun of the compound).

- fisher**man** → fisher**men**
- black **bird** → black **birds**
- **brother**-in-law → **brothers**-in-law

The word *hand-me-down* doesn't have a distinct primary noun, so its plural is *hand-me-downs*.

Practice

What are the correct plurals for the following words?

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
do-it-yours elf	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	rabbit's foot	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]
have-not	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	time-o ut	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]
spoonful	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	lieuten ant general	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]
runner-up	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	passerb y	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]

Show Answer



<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>	<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>
do-it-yours elf	do-it-yoursel ves	rabbit's foot	rabbits' feet
have-not	have-nots	time-out	time-outs
spoonful	spoonfuls	lieutenant general	lieutenant generals
runner-up	runners-up	passerby	passersby

# 9. Practice Activities: Nouns

## Plural Nouns

Here are some additional exercises to practice using nouns:

### Regular Plural Nouns

Look at each plural word in the table below. Write the singular version of the word and explain which rule the plural has used in its formation. For example:

- vultures* is the plural of *vulture*. Despite *vultures* ending in *-es*, you simply add an *-s* to form the plural, as the *e* is a part of the singular word.
- fries* is the plural of *fry*. To form the plural, the *y* was changed to an *i*, and we added *-es*.

trees	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	sopranos	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	watches	[P ro
tomatoes	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	waltzes	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	wrists	[P ro
reefs	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	leaves	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	flies	[P ro
cafes	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	caves	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	boys	[P ro

Show Answer

reefs	reefs is the plural of reef. -s is added. It is an exception to the rule.	leaves	leaves is the plural of leaf. the f is changed to a v, and -es is added	flies	flies is the plural of fly. the y is changed to an i, and -es is added
cafes	cafes is the plural of cafe. the -s is added (note that cafe is sometimes spelled with an accent mark: café)	caves	caves is the plural of cave. the -s is added	boys	boys is the plural of boy. -s is added because the y follows a vowel
trees	trees is the plural of tree. -s is added	sopranos	sopranos is the plural of soprano. -s is added despite the word ending in an o, because the word is borrowed from Italian	watches	watches is the plural of watch. -es is added because the word ends in ch
tomatoes	tomatoes is the plural of tomato. -es is added because it's a native English word	waltzes	waltzes is the plural of waltz. -es is added because the word ends in z	wrists	wrists is the plural of wrist. -s is added

## Irregular Plural Nouns

Look at each plural word in the table below. Write the singular version of the word and explain which rule the plural has used in its formation. For example:

- *oxen* is the plural of *ox*. This is an *-en* noun. To form the plural, an *-en* was added.
- *stimuli* is the plural of *stimulus*. The singular ends with a *-us*, so the plural ends with an *-i*.

children	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	moose	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	teeth
squid	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	men	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	lice
memoranda	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	hypotheses	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	phenomena
parentheses	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	emphases	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	nuclei
foci	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	vertebrae	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	appendages

Show Answer

children	<i>children</i> is the plural of <i>child</i> . This is an <i>-en</i> noun. To form the plural, an <i>-ren</i> was added.	moose	<i>moose</i> is the plural of <i>moose</i> . This is a no-change plural. The singular and plural have the same form.	teeth	<i>teeth</i> is the plural of <i>tooth</i> . This is a mid-word vowel change plural. The <i>oo</i> in <i>tooth</i> was changed to an <i>ee</i> .
squid	<i>squid</i> is the plural of <i>squid</i> . This is a no-change plural. The singular and plural have the same form.	men	<i>men</i> is the plural of <i>man</i> . This is a mid-word vowel change plural. The <i>a</i> in <i>man</i> was changed to an <i>e</i> .	lice	<i>lice</i> is the plural of <i>louse</i> . This is a mid-word vowel change plural. The <i>ouse</i> in <i>louse</i> was changed to an <i>ice</i> .
memoranda	<i>memoranda</i> is the plural of <i>memorandum</i> . The singular ends with <i>-um</i> , so the plural ends with <i>-a</i> .	hypotheses	<i>hypotheses</i> is the plural of <i>hypothesis</i> . The singular ends with <i>-is</i> , so the plural ends with <i>-es</i> .	phenomena	<i>phenomena</i> is the plural of <i>phenomenon</i> . The singular ends with <i>-on</i> , so the plural ends with <i>-a</i> .
parentheses	<i>parentheses</i> is the plural of <i>parenthesis</i> . The singular ends with <i>-is</i> , so the plural ends with <i>-es</i> .	emphases	<i>emphases</i> is the plural of <i>emphasis</i> . The singular ends with <i>-is</i> , so the plural ends with <i>-es</i> .	nuclei	<i>nuclei</i> is the plural of <i>nucleus</i> . The singular ends with <i>-us</i> , so the plural ends with <i>-i</i> .

foci	foci is the plural of focus. The singular ends with -us, so the plural ends with -i. <i>focus</i> is also an acceptable plural	vertebrae	vertebrae is the plural of vertebra. The singular ends with -a, so the plural ends with -ae.	appendices	appendices is the plural of appendix. The singular ends with -ix, so the plural ends with -ices.
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Regular and Irregular Plural Nouns

Look at each word in the table below. Identify if the words is singular or plural, then write the other version of the word and explain which rule the plural has used in its formation. For example:

- stimuli* is the plural of *stimulus*. The singular ends with a -us, so the plural ends with an -i.
- ox* is the singular of *oxen*. This is an -en noun. To form the plural, an -en was added.

chiefs	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	toys	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	quiz	[prac rows
bacterium	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	crisis	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	criteria	[prac rows
octopus	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	larvae	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	indices	[prac rows
wolves	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	sheep	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	woman	[prac rows

Show Answer

chiefs	<i>chiefs</i> is the plural of <i>chief</i> . -s is added. It is an exception to the rule.	toys	<i>toys</i> is the plural of <i>toy</i> . -s is added because the y follows a vowel	quiz	<i>quiz</i> is the singular of <i>quizzes</i> . -es is added because the word ends in z. This word needs an additional z added to the plural
bacterium	<i>bacterium</i> is the singular of <i>bacteria</i> . The singular ends with -um, so the plural ends with -a.	crisis	<i>crisis</i> is the singular of <i>crises</i> . The singular ends with -is, so the plural ends with -es.	criteria	<i>criteria</i> is the plural of <i>criterion</i> . The singular ends with -on, so the plural ends with -a.
octopus	<i>octopus</i> is the singular of <i>octopuses</i> . Plural forms of singular words that ends with -us typically end with -i, but <i>octopuses</i> is the preferred plural ( <i>octopi</i> is also accepted)	larvae	<i>larvae</i> is the plural of <i>larva</i> . The singular ends with -a, so the plural ends with -ae.	indices	<i>indices</i> is the plural of <i>index</i> . The singular ends with -ex, so the plural ends with -ices.
wolves	<i>wolves</i> is the plural of <i>wolf</i> . The noun ends with an f, so it is changed to a v, and -es is added.	sheep	This is a no-change plural. The singular and plural have the same form, so <i>sheep</i> could be singular or plural	woman	<i>woman</i> is the singular of <i>women</i> . This is a mid-word vowel change plural. The a in <i>woman</i> was changed to an e.

## Count v. Non-Count Nouns

### Many? Much? Fewer? Less?

Read the following sentences. Choose the correct words to complete each sentence.

1. There was (many / much) food at the event. There were (less / fewer) soups than salads and even (less / fewer) desserts.
2. As a geologist, Liam spends a lot of time around (rock / rocks) and (dirt / dirt).
3. Arturo had too much (water / drinks) before his workout.

Show Answer

1. There was **much** food at the event. There were **fewer** soups than salads and even (less / fewer) desserts.
  - Food is non-count, so it takes *much* not *many*. Soups and desserts are both count, so they take *fewer* not *less*.
  - Even though *much* is technically correct, you may want to use *a lot* instead. It has a much less antiquated feel.
2. As a geologist, Liam spends a lot of time around **rocks** and **dirt**.
  - Rocks is count, so it does have a plural. Since we are talking about different items, there must be more than one, so *rocks* is correct.
  - Dirt is non-count, so it does not have a plural.
3. Arturo had too much **water** before his workout.
  - *Much* must be followed by a non-count noun. Of the two options (*water* and *drinks*) *water* is the non-count noun.



If *many* were used instead of *much*, the correct sentence would be “Arturo had too *many drinks* before his workout.”

## Compound Nouns

Read the following sentence. Are the compound nouns in each being used correctly? How would you create the plural form of each compound noun?

1. Idrissa has two sister in laws and one brother in law.
2. High blood pressure can lead to multiple types of heart disease.
3. When I was four, I was determined to be an astronaut, a fire-fighter, and a sous chef.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

1. Idrissa has two **sisters-in-law** and one **brother-in-law**.
  - Both compounds should be hyphenated, not compounds. *Sister* and *brother* are the main parts of each compound, so the correct pluralizations would be *sisters-in-law* not *sister-in-laws*.
2. High **blood pressure** can lead to multiple types of heart disease.
  - This sentence is correct. The compound should be open (no hyphenation). The correct plural would be *blood pressures*.
3. When I was four, I was determined to be an astronaut, a **firefighter**, and a **sous-chef**.

- *Firefighter* compound should be closed (no space or hyphenation). The correct plural would be *firefighters*.
- *Sous-chef* should be hyphenated. The correct plural would be *sous-chefs*.

## Nouns

Identify errors in the following as you read the passage:

- pluralization
- count vs. non-count nouns
- common vs. proper nouns
- compound nouns

Explain why each error is incorrect, and explain how to correct the error. The sentences have been numbered to help you organize your comments.

(1) Marie Curie, who conducted pioneering research on radio-activity, was the first woman to win a nobel prize, the first person to win twice, and the only person to win twice in multiple sciencees (she won in physics and chemistries).  
 (2) She was also the first woman to become a professor at the University of Paris.

(3) In 1910—four years after the death of her husband—Curie succeeded in isolating radium; she also defined an international standard for radioactive emissions that was eventually named for her and Pierre: the curie. (4) Her achievements included the development of the theory of radioactivity (a term that she coined), the creation of techniques to isolate radioactive isotopes, and the discovery of two elements: a polonium and a radium.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

The list below identifies all of the errors in noun treatment. Any incorrect words have been enclosed in quotation marks.

1. The compound noun “radio-activity” should not have a hyphen; it is a closed compound: *radioactivity*. It has been treated correctly as a non-count noun, however. *Nobel Prize* should be capitalized because it is a proper noun. “Sciences” has been pluralized incorrectly; the correct spelling is *sciences* since the word *science* takes regular pluralization. “Chemistries” is a non-count noun, so it does not have a plural form; the correct word is *chemistry*.
2. There are no errors in this sentence.
3. There are no errors in this sentence. You may want to capitalize the word *curie* in this sentence, since it is named after a person. However, this is not a literal use of the name. As a unit, the word has become a common noun instead of a proper noun.
4. “Achievementes” has been pluralized incorrectly; the correct spelling is *achievements* since the word *achievement* takes regular pluralization. The non-count noun *radioactivity* has been treated correctly; however, the non-count nouns *polonium* and *radium* have not. They should not have articles before them; thus, “the discovery of two new elements: polonium and radium” is correct.

## 10. Introduction to Pronouns

Anna decided at the beginning of Anna's first semester of college that Anna would run for thirty minutes every day. Anna knew that Anna would be taking a literature class with a lot of reading, so instead of buying print copies of all the novels Anna's teacher assigned, Anna bought the audiobooks. That way Anna could listen to the audiobooks as Anna ran.



Did this paragraph feel awkward to you? Let's try it again using pronouns:

Anna decided at the beginning of **her** first semester of college that **she** would run for thirty minutes every day. **She** knew that **she** would be taking a literature class with a lot of reading, so instead of buying hard copies of all the novels **her** teacher assigned, Anna bought the audiobooks. That way **she** could listen to **them** as **she** ran.

This second paragraph is much more natural. Instead of repeating nouns multiple times, we were able to use pronouns. You've likely hear the phrase "a pronoun replaces a noun"; this is *exactly* what a pronoun does. Because a pronoun is replacing a noun, its meaning is dependent on the noun that it is replacing. This noun is called the **antecedent**. Let's look at the two sentences we just read again:

- Because a pronoun is replacing a noun, **its** meaning is dependent on the noun that **it** is replacing. This noun is called

an **antecedent**.

There are two pronouns here: *its* and *it*. *Its* and *it* both have the same antecedent: “a pronoun.” Whenever you use a pronoun, you must also include its antecedent. Without the antecedent, your readers (or listeners) won’t be able to figure out what the pronoun is referring to. Let’s look at a couple of examples:

- Jason likes it when people look to him for leadership.
- Trini brushes her hair every morning.
- Billy often has to clean his glasses.
- Kimberly is a gymnast. She has earned several medals in different competitions.

So, what are the antecedents and pronouns in these sentences?

- *Jason* is the antecedent for the pronoun *him*.
- *Trini* is the antecedent for the pronoun *her*.
- *Billy* is the antecedent for the pronoun *his*.
- *Kimberly* is the antecedent for the pronoun *she*.

## *Practice*

Identify the antecedent in the following examples:

1. The bus is twenty minutes late today, like it always is.
2. I would never be caught dead wearing boot sandals. They are an affront to nature.

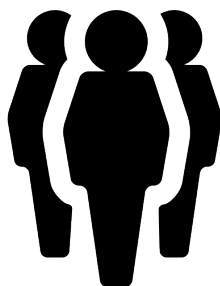
Show Answer

1. **The bus** is the antecedent for the pronoun *it*.
2. **boot sandals** is the antecedent for the pronoun *they*.

There are several types of pronouns, including personal, demonstrative, indefinite, and relative pronouns. The next few pages will cover each of these.

## II. Personal Pronouns

Personal pronouns are what most people think of when they see the word *pronoun*. Personal pronouns include words like *he*, *she*, and *they*. The following sentences give examples of personal pronouns used with antecedents (remember, an antecedent is the noun that a pronoun refers to!):



- **That man** looks as if **he** needs a new coat. (*the noun phrase that man is the antecedent of he*)
- **Kat** arrived yesterday. I met **her** at the station. (*Kat is the antecedent of her*)
- When **they** saw us, **the lions** began roaring (*the lions is the antecedent of they*)
- **Adam and I** were hoping no one would find **us**. (*Adam and I is the antecedent of us*)

**Note:** Pronouns like *I*, *we*, and *you* don't always require an explicitly stated antecedent. When a speaker says something like "I told you the zoo was closed today," it's implied that the speaker is the antecedent for *I* and the listener is the antecedent for *you*.

Pronouns may be classified by three categories: person, number, and case.

# Person

**Person** refers to the relationship that an author has with the text that he or she writes, and with the reader of that text. English has three persons (first, second, and third):

- **First-person** is the speaker or writer him- or herself. The first person is personal (*I, we, etc.*)
- **Second-person** is the person who is being directly addressed. The speaker or author is saying this is about you, the listener or reader.
- **Third-person** is the most common person used in academic writing. The author is saying this is about other people. In the third person singular there are distinct pronoun forms for male, female, and neutral gender.

Person		Pronouns
First		I, me, we, us
Second		you
	Male	he, him
Third	Female	she, her
	Neutral	it, they, them

## Practice

Select the response from the list that best completes the sentence.

1. Sandra often put other people’s needs before her own. That’s why people loved (her / me) so much.



2. Vindira and Frank always let us know when (he / they) were coming into town.
3. I told Bruno (he / it) will need three things in order to be successful: determination, discipline, and dexterity.

#### Show Answers

1. Sandra often put other people's needs before her own. That's why people loved **her** so much.
  - *Her* is the correct choice because it is a singular feminine third-person pronoun.
2. Vindira and Frank always let us know when **they** were coming into town.
  - *They* is the correct choice because it is a plural third-person pronoun.
3. I told Bruno **he** will need three things in order to be successful: determination, discipline, and dexterity.
  - *He* is the correct choice because it is a singular masculine third-person pronoun.

## Number

There are two **numbers**: **singular** and **plural**. As we learned in nouns, singular words refer to only one thing while plural words refer to more than one of a thing (I stood alone while *they* walked together).

Person	Number	Pronouns
<b>First</b>	Singular	I, me
	Plural	we, us
<b>Second</b>	Singular	you
	Plural	you
<b>Third</b>		he, him
	Singular	she, her
		it
	Plural	they, them

## Case

English personal pronouns have two cases: **subject** and **object** (there are also possessive pronouns, which we'll discuss next). **Subject-case pronouns** are used when the pronoun is doing the action. (I like to eat chips, but she does not). **Object-case pronouns** are used when something is being done to the pronoun (John likes me but not her). This video will further clarify the difference between subject- and object-case:



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

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=28#oembed-1>

## Practice

Select the response from the list that best completes the sentence.

1. I don't know if I should talk to (he / him). (He / Him) looks really angry today.
2. Enrico and Brenna are coming over for dinner tomorrow night. (They / Them) will be here at 6:00.
3. Melissa loves music. (She / Her) listens to it when I drive (she / her) to work.

Show Answer

1. I don't know if I should talk to **him**. **He** looks really angry today.
2. Enrico and Brenna are coming over for dinner tomorrow night. **They** will be here at 6:00.
3. Melissa loves music. **She** listens to it when I drive **her** to work.

## Reflexive Pronouns

**Reflexive pronouns** are a kind of pronoun that are used when the subject and the object of the sentence are the same.

- **Jason** hurt **himself**. (*Jason* is the antecedent of *himself*)
- **We** were teasing **each other**. (*we* is the antecedent of *each other*)

This is true even if the subject is only implied, as in the sentence “Don’t hurt yourself.” You is the unstated subject of this sentence.



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here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=28#oembed-2>

## Practice

Read at the following sentences. Should the reflexive pronoun be used? Why or why not?

1. Aisha let (her / herself) in when she arrived.
2. Feel free to let (you / yourself) in when you get here!
3. Andrés asked Jada if she would let (him / himself) in when (she / herself) arrived.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

1. Aisha let **herself** in when she arrived.
  - Aisha is the subject and object of the sentence.
2. Feel free to let **yourself** in when you get here!
  - You is the implied subject of the sentence, so

the reflexive *yourself* is appropriate as the object of the sentence.

3. Andrés asked Jada if she would let **him** in when **she** arrived.
  - While *Andrés* is the subject of the sentence, *Andrés* is not the subject of the dependent clause that *him* appears in (if she would let him in). In this clause, *she* is the subject, so the reflexive pronoun cannot be used here.
  - *She* is the subject of the clause “when she arrived.” Since it’s a subject, the reflexive cannot be used.

## Possessive Pronouns

Possessive pronouns are used to indicate possession (in a broad sense). Some occur as independent phrases: *mine*, *yours*, *hers*, *ours*, *yours*, *theirs*. For example, “Those clothes are **mine**.” Others must be accompanied by a noun: *my*, *your*, *her*, *our*, *your*, *their*, as in “I lost **my** wallet.” *His* and *its* can fall into either category, although *its* is nearly always found in the second.

Both types replace possessive noun phrases. As an example, “Their crusade to capture our attention” could replace “The advertisers’ crusade to capture our attention.”

This video provides another explanation of possessive pronouns:





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

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=28#oembed-3>

## Practice

Select the response from the list that best completes the sentence.

1. Hey, that's (my / mine)!
2. Carla gave Peter (her / hers) phone number.
3. Remember to leave (their / theirs) papers on the table.

Show Answer

1. Hey, that's **mine**!
2. Carla gave Peter **her** phone number.
3. Remember to leave **their** papers on the table.

## Review

The table below includes all of the personal pronouns in the English language. They are organized by person, number, and case:

Person	Number	Subject	Object	Reflexive	Possessive	
First	Singular	I	me	myself	my	mine
	Plural	we	us	ourselves	our	ours
Second	Singular	you	you	yourself	your	yours
	Plural	you	you	yourselves	your	yours
		he	him	himself	his	his
Third	Singular	she	her	herself	her	hers
		it	it	itself	its	its
	Plural	they	them	themselves	their	theirs

## 12. Practice Activities: Personal Pronouns

### Determining Person

In the following sentences, determine the person for each pronoun:

1. Don't forget to give Marieke her keys.
2. Itzel and Camila were the top ranking doubles team at OSU.  
They hadn't been defeated all year.
3. You will need three things in order to be successful:  
determination, discipline, and dexterity.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

1. The pronoun is **her**. *Her* is a feminine third-person pronoun.
2. The pronoun is **they**. *They* is a neutral third-person pronoun.
3. The pronoun is **you**. *You* is a second-person pronoun

### Classifying Pronouns

In the following sentences, identify the person, case, and number of each pronoun:

1. Even though he knew he might regret it, Dirron decided to let himself ignore his responsibilities for a day.
2. Elena knew she should have spent more time on homework this semester, but binge-watching TV had tripped her up again



and again.

3. Next Saturday, I have to take all three of my little sisters to the zoo. It's certainly going to be an ordeal.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

1. There are five pronouns: *he*, *he*, *it*, *himself*, *his*
  - *He* is a subject case, singular, masculine third-person pronoun.
  - *He* is a subject case, singular, masculine third-person pronoun.
  - *It* is an object case, singular, neutral third-person pronoun.
  - *Himself* is a reflexive, singular, masculine third-person pronoun.
  - *His* is a possessive, singular, masculine third-person pronoun.
2. There are two pronouns: *she* and *her*.
  - *She* is a subject case, singular, feminine third-person pronoun.
  - *Her* is an object case, singular, feminine third-person pronoun.
3. There are three pronouns: *I*, *my*, and *it*.
  - *I* is a subject case, singular, first-person pronoun.
  - *My* is a possessive, singular, first-person pronoun.
  - *It* is a subject case, singular, neutral third-person pronoun.

## Possessive Forms

In each sentence, select the correct possessive pronoun. Identify why you selected the pronoun you did:

1. Eloá was positive that it was (her / hers) pie that I was eating.
2. I was sure it was (my / mine).
3. Jake and Suren refused to give (their / theirs) opinions on the subject.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

1. Eloá was positive that it was **her** pie that I was eating. The pronoun is followed by the noun *box of cereal*, so it should be the adjective form.
2. I was sure it was **mine**. The pronoun stands on its own, so it should be the independent form.
3. Jake and Suren refused to give **their** opinions on the subject. The pronoun is followed by the noun *opinions*, so it should be the adjective form.

## Choosing the Right Pronoun

In each sentence, fill in the blank with the correct pronoun. Identify why you selected the pronoun you did:

1. André told me that it was \_\_\_\_ box of cereal, but I couldn't remember having bought \_\_\_\_.
2. Amelia and Ajani still haven't arrived. I should make sure \_\_\_\_ texted \_\_\_\_.
3. You shouldn't be so worried about what other people think. The only person \_\_\_\_ need to please is \_\_\_\_.

4. George Washington was the first president of the United States. \_\_\_\_ set the standard of only serving two terms of office. However, \_\_\_\_ wasn't illegal to serve over two terms until 1951.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

1. The context of the sentence gives hints that André thinks the box of cereal belongs to the speaker of the sentence. The correct sentence would be "André told me that it was **my** box of cereal, but I couldn't remember having bought **it**."
  - My is a possessive, singular, first-person pronoun. It is followed by the noun *box of cereal*, so it appears in its adjective form, rather than as *mine*.
  - It is a subject case, singular, neutral third-person pronoun.
2. There are two sentence that make sense here: "Amelia and Ajani still haven't arrived. I should make sure **I** texted **them**," or "Amelia and Ajani still haven't arrived. I should make sure **they** texted **me**." The correct sentence depends on who did (or didn't do) the texting.
  - I is a subject case, singular, first-person pronoun.
  - They is a subject case, plural, third-person pronoun.
  - Them is a object case, plural, third-person pronoun.
  - Me is a object case, singular, first-person pronoun.
3. You shouldn't be so worried about what other people think. The only person **you** need to please is **you**.
  - You is an subject case, singular, second-person pronoun.
  - You is an object case, singular, second-person pronoun. *Yourself* would also be ok here, since the subject and object of the sentence are the same.

4. George Washington was the first president of the United States. **He** set the standard of only serving two terms of office. However, **it** wasn't illegal to serve over two terms until 1951.
- *He* is a subject case, singular, masculine third-person pronoun.
  - *It* is a subject case, singular, neutral third-person pronoun.

## 13. Demonstrative Pronouns

Demonstrative pronouns substitute for things being pointed out. They include *this*, *that*, *these*, and *those*. *This* and *that* are singular; *these* and *those* are plural.

The difference between *this* and *that* and between *these* and *those* is a little more subtle. *This* and *these* refer to something that is “close” to the speaker, whether this closeness is physical, emotional, or temporal. *That* and *those* are the opposite: they refer to something that is “far.”



- Do I actually have to read all of *this*?
  - The speaker is indicating a text that is close to her, by using “this.”
- *That* is not coming anywhere near me.
  - The speaker is distancing himself from the object in question, which he doesn’t want to get any closer. The far pronoun helps indicate that.
- You’re telling me you sewed all of *these*?
  - The speaker and her audience are likely looking directly at the clothes in question, so the close pronoun is appropriate.
- *Those* are all gross.
  - The speaker wants to remain away from the gross items in question, by using the far “those.”

**Note:** these pronouns are often combined with a noun. When this happens, they act as a kind of adjective instead of as a pronoun.

- Do I actually have to read all of *this* contract?
- *That* thing is not coming anywhere near me.
- You're telling me you sewed all of *these* dresses?
- *Those* recipes are all gross.

The antecedents of demonstrative pronouns (and sometimes the pronoun *it*) can be more complex than those of personal pronouns:

- **Animal Planet's puppy cam has been taken down for maintenance.** I never wanted *this* to happen.
- I love Animal Planet's panda cam. **I watched a panda eat bamboo for half an hour.** *It* was amazing.

In the first example, the antecedent for *this* is the concept of the puppy cam being taken down. In the second example, the antecedent for *it* in this sentence is the experience of watching the panda. That antecedent isn't explicitly stated in the sentence, but comes through in the intention and meaning of the speaker.

## *Practice*

In the following sentences, determine if *this*, *that*, *these*, or *those* should be used.

1. Lara looked at her meal in front of her. “\_\_\_\_\_ looks great!” she said.
2. Tyesha watched the '67 Mustang drive down the street. “What I wouldn’t give for one of \_\_\_\_\_.”
3. “What do you think of \_\_\_\_\_?” Ashley asked, showing me the three paint samples she had picked out.

Show Answer

1. Lara looked at her meal in front of her. “**This** looks great!” she said.
  - The meal is right in front of Lara, and there is only one meal. *This* is the correct pronoun.
2. Tyesha watched the '67 Mustang drive down the street. “What I wouldn’t give for one of **those**.”
  - The Mustang is far away (and getting further away as it drives off). The phrase “one of \_\_\_\_\_” requires a plural word in the blank. *Those* is the correct pronoun. A singular version of the sentence would be something like “What I wouldn’t give to own **that**.” *That* is the correct pronoun for singular things that are far away.
3. “What do you think of **these**?” Ashley asked, showing me the three paint samples she had picked out.
  - The paint samples are in immediate focus (whether Ashley is holding them or looking at them online), and there are three of them. *These* is the correct pronoun.

# 14. Indefinite Pronouns

These pronouns can be used in a couple of different ways:

- They can refer to members of a group separately rather than collectively. (To **each** his or her own.)
- They can indicate the non-existence of people or things. (**Nobody** thinks that.)
- They can refer to a person, but are not specific as to first, second or third person in the way that the personal pronouns are. (**One** does not clean **one's** own windows.)



Please note that all of these pronouns are singular. The table below shows the most common indefinite pronouns:

anybody	anyone	anything	each	either	every
everybody	everyone	everything	neither	no one	nobody
nothing	nobody else	somebody	someone	something	one

**Note:** Sometimes third-person personal pronouns are sometimes used without antecedents—this applies to special uses such as dummy pronouns and generic *they*, as well as cases where the referent is implied by the context.



- You know what *they* say.
- It's a nice day today.

Please note that all of these pronouns are singular. Look back at the example “To **each** his or her own.” Saying “To each their own” would be incorrect, since *their* is a plural pronoun and *each* is singular. We'll discuss this in further depth in [Antecedent Agreement](#).

## Practice

Identify the indefinite pronouns in the following sentences. Is the best indefinite used, or is there another indefinite that would fit better?

1. Everyone should take the time to critically think about what he or she wants out of life.
2. If I had to choose between singing in public and swimming with leeches, I would choose neither.
3. Yasmin knew everything was wrong, but she couldn't figure out what.
4. If nobody else enrolls in this class, it will be cancelled this semester.

Show Answer

1. **Everyone** is the indefinite pronoun. *He or she* is a pronoun with the antecedent *everyone*.

2. The indefinite pronoun **neither** is used in this sentence. It is likely being used correctly, indicating that the speaker does not want to complete the actions stated earlier in the sentence. However, if the speaker thought that both singing in public and swimming with leeches were fun, the indefinite pronoun *either* would be the appropriate word to use.
3. The indefinite pronoun **everything** is used in this sentence. However, based on the rest of the sentence, it doesn't quite fit. If everything is wrong, you wouldn't need to figure out exactly what's happening. The indefinite pronoun *something* would fit better here.
  - Yasmin knew **something** was wrong, but she couldn't figure out what.

If everything is, in fact, wrong, perhaps the word *what* needs to be changed.
  - Yasmin knew everything was wrong, but she couldn't figure out **how it had happened**.
  - Yasmin knew everything was wrong, but she couldn't figure out **why**.
4. The indefinite pronoun **nobody else** is used in this sentence. If there are already some students enrolled in the class, then *nobody else* is being used correctly. If there aren't any students in the course, then *nobody* should be used instead.

## 15. Relative Pronouns

There are five relative pronouns in English: *who*, *whom*, *whose*, *that*, and *which*. These pronouns are used to connect different clauses together. For example:

- Belen, **who** had starred in six plays before she turned seventeen, knew that she wanted to act on Broadway someday.
  - The word *who* connects the phrase “had starred in six plays before she turned seventeen” to the rest of the sentence.
- My daughter wants to adopt the dog **that** doesn’t have a tail.
  - The word *that* connects the phrase “doesn’t have a tail” to the rest of the sentence.

These pronouns behave differently from the other categories we’ve seen. However, they are pronouns, and it’s important to learn how they work.

Two of the biggest confusions with these pronouns are *that* vs. *which* and *who* vs. *whom*. The two following videos help with these:

### That vs. Which



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

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=32#oembed-1>

## Who vs. Whom



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=32#oembed-2>

### Practice

Does the following paragraph use relative pronouns correctly? Explain why or why not for each relative pronoun.

(1) Katerina, whom had taken biology once already, was still struggling to keep the steps of cellular respiration straight. (2) She knew the process took place in animals, which take in oxygen and put out carbon dioxide. (3) She also knew that plants underwent the process of photosynthesis. (4) However, the individual steps of the process seemed beyond her understanding.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

There are three relative pronouns in this passage.

Sentence 1 has the relative pronoun *whom*. *Whom* is incorrect in this instance; the object case is not needed

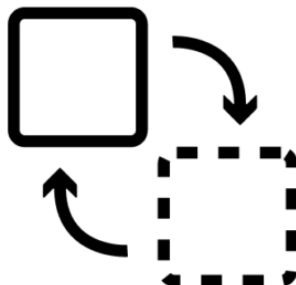
here. The sentence should start with “Katerina, who had taken biology once already. . . .”

In sentence 2, the relative pronoun *which* is used correctly. *Which* is appropriate to use with the noun *animals*, and the clause is set off with commas.

*That* is used correctly in sentence 3. It connects *knew* with what she knew.

# 16. Antecedent Clarity

We've already defined an **antecedent** as the noun (or phrase) that a pronoun is replacing. The phrase "antecedent clarity" simply means that it should be clear who or what the pronoun is referring to. In other words, readers should be able to understand the sentence the first time they read it—not the third,



forth, or tenth. In this page, we'll look at some examples of common mistakes that can cause confusion, as well as ways to fix each sentence.

Let's take a look at our first sentence:

Rafael told Matt to stop eating his cereal.

When you first read this sentence, is it clear if the cereal Rafael's or Matt's? Is it clear when you read the sentence again? Not really, no. Since both Rafael and Matt are singular, third person, and masculine, it's impossible to tell whose cereal is being eaten (at least from this sentence).

How would you best revise this sentence? Type your ideas in the text frame below, and then look at the suggested revisions.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

## Show Possible Revisions

Let's assume the cereal is Rafael's:

- Rafael told Matt to stop eating Rafael's cereal.
- Matt was eating Rafael's cereal. Rafael told him to stop it.

What if the cereal is Matt's?:

- Rafael told Matt to stop eating Matt's cereal.

- Matt was eating his own cereal when Rafael told him to stop.

These aren't the only ways to revise the sentence. However, each of these new sentences has made it clear whose cereal it is.

Were those revisions what you expected them to be?

Let's take a look at another example:

Zuly was really excited to try French cuisine on her semester abroad in Europe. They make all sorts of delicious things.

When you read this example, is it apparent who the pronoun *they* is referring to? You may guess that *they* is referring to the French—which is probably correct. However, this is not actually stated, which means that there isn't actually an antecedent. Since every pronoun needs an antecedent, the example needs to be revised to include one.

How would you best revise this sentence? Type your ideas in the text frame below, and then look at the suggested revisions.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

### **Show Possible Revisions**

Let's assume that it is the French who make great cuisine:

- Zuly was really excited to try French cuisine on her semester abroad in Europe. The French make all sorts of delicious things.
- Zuly was really excited to try the cuisine in France on her semester abroad in Europe. The French make all sorts of delicious things.
- Zuly was really excited to try French cuisine on her semester abroad in Europe. The people there make all sorts of delicious things.
- One of the things Zuly was really excited about on her semester abroad in Europe was trying French cuisine. It comprises all sorts of delicious things.

As you write, keep these two things in mind:

- Make sure your pronouns always have an antecedent.
- Make sure that it is clear what their antecedents are.

## *Practice*

Use the context clues to figure out which pronoun to use to complete the sentences. Select the response from the list that best completes the sentence.

1. Alex and Jordan went for a bike ride and stopped for lunch. When the waiter came, (Jordan / he / she) knew what she wanted to order but (Alex / he / she) did not.
2. Because (Jordan / she) loves cheese, (Jordan / she) ordered a slice of pizza.

### **Show Answer**

1. Alex and Jordan went for a bike ride and stopped for lunch. When the waiter came, **Jordan** knew what **she** wanted to order but **Alex** did not. (We cannot use a pronoun until we know the person. In this case, repeat the name. Note the *she* gives us the clue that Jordan is female.)
2. Because **Jordan** loves cheese, **she** ordered a slice of pizza. (Mention noun before using the pronoun.)

Let's try a more complicated paragraph:

3. Edward is a year older than his brother Alphonse. When (he / Edward) graduated high school, he took a



gap year so that (he / Edward) could travel and study sciences not offered at the local college. (He / Alphonse) was so jealous that (he / Alphonse) also took a gap year when he graduated.

**Show Answer**

3. Edward is a year older than his brother Alphonse. When **Edward** graduated high school, he took a gap year so that **he** could travel and study sciences not offered at the local college. **Alphonse** was so jealous that **he** also took a gap year when he graduated.

# 17. Antecedent Agreement

As you write, make sure that you are using the correct pronouns. When a pronoun matches the person and number of its antecedent, we say that it **agrees** with its antecedent. Let's look at a couple of examples:



- I hate it when Zacharias tells me what to do. **He's** so full of **himself**.
- The Finnegans are shouting again. I swear you could hear **them** from across town!

In the first sentence, *Zacharias* is singular, third person, and masculine. The pronouns *he* and *himself* are also singular, third person, and masculine, so they agree. In the second sentence, *the Finnegans* is plural and third person. The pronoun *them* is also plural and third person.

When you select your pronoun, you also need to ensure you use the correct case of pronoun. Remember we learned about three cases: subject, object, and possessive. The case of your pronoun should match its role in the sentence. For example, if your pronoun is doing an action, it should be a subject:

- **He** runs every morning.
- **I** hate it when **she** does this.

However, when something is being done to your pronoun, it should be an object:

- Birds have always hated **me**.
- My boss wanted to talk to **him**.
- Give **her** the phone and walk away.

## *Practice*

Replace each bolded word with the correct pronoun:

1. **Hannah** had always loved working with plants.
2. People often lost patience with **Colin**.
3. Justin was unsure how well **Justin** and Terry would together.
4. **Alicia and Katie** made a formidable team.

### **Show Answer**

1. **She** had always loved working with plants.
2. People often lost patience with **him**.
3. Justin was unsure how well **he** and Terry would together.
4. **They** made a formidable team.

However, things aren't always this straightforward. Let's take a look at some examples where things are a little more confusing.

## **Person and Number**

Some of the trickiest agreements are with indefinite pronouns:

- Every student should do his or her best on this assignment.

- If nobody lost his or her scarf, then where did this come from?

As we learned earlier in this outcome, words like *every* and *nobody* are singular, and demand singular pronouns. Here are some of the words that fall into this category:

anybody	anyone	anything	each	either	every
everybody	everyone	everything	neither	no one	nobody
nothing	one	somebody	someone	something	

Some of these may feel “more singular” than others, but they all are technically singular. Thus, using “he or she” is correct (while *they* is incorrect).

However, as you may have noticed, the phrase “he or she” (and its other forms) can often make your sentences clunky. When this happens, it may be best to revise your sentences to have plural antecedents. Because “he or she” is clunky, you’ll often see issues like this:

The way each individual speaks can tell us so much about him or her. It tells us what groups they associate themselves with, both ethnically and socially.

As you can see, in the first sentence, *him or her* agrees with the indefinite pronoun *each*. However, in the second sentence, the writer has shifted to the plural *they*, even though the writer is talking about the same group of people. When you write, make sure your agreement is correct and **consistent**.

## Practice

Here’s a paragraph that uses “he or she” liberally:

Every writer will experience writer’s block at some

point in his or her career. He or she will suddenly be unable to move on in his or her work. A lot of people have written about writer's block, presenting different strategies to "beat the block." However, different methods work for different people. Each writer must find the solutions that work best for him or her.

How would you best revise this paragraph? Type your ideas in the text frame below, and then look at the suggested revisions.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

#### Show Possible Revisions

There are a couple of different ways you could revise this paragraph:

- Writers will all experience writer's block at some point in their careers. They will suddenly be unable to move on in their work. A lot of people have written about writer's block, presenting different strategies to "beat the block." However, different methods work for different people. Writers must find the solutions that work best for them.
- As a writer, you will experience writer's block at some point in your career. You will suddenly be unable to move on in your work. A lot of people have written about writer's block, presenting different strategies to "beat the block." However, different methods work for different people. You must find the solutions that work best for you.

Were those revisions what you expected them to be?

## Singular They

As we've just seen, indefinite pronouns demand singular pronouns, like in "To each his or her own." However, in informal speech, you'll often hear things like "To each their own" or "Someone is singing in the hallway. If they haven't stopped in five minutes, I'm going to have to take drastic measures." If you think about your own speech, it's very likely that you use *they* as a singular pronoun for someone whose gender you don't know.

So why do people use *they* this way, even though it's a plural? It likely stems from the clunkiness of the phrase "he or she." It is also possible that *they* is following the same evolution as the word *you*. In Early Modern English, *you* was used as either a plural, second-person pronoun or as a polite form for the more common, singular *thee*. However, *you* eventually overtook almost all of the second-person pronouns, both singular and plural.

While this use of the singular *they* is still not "officially" correct—and you definitely shouldn't use this in your English papers—it's interesting to watch English change before our very eyes.

## Case

Some of the most common pronoun mistakes occur with the decision between "you and I" and "you and me." People will often say things like "You and me should go out for drinks." Or—thinking

back on the rule that it should be “you and I”—they will say “Susan assigned the task to both you and I.” However, both of these sentences are wrong. Remember that every time you use a pronoun you need to make sure that you’re using the correct case.

Let’s take a look at the first sentence: “You and me should go out for drinks.” Both pronouns are the subject of the sentence, so they should be in subject case: “You and I should go out for drinks.”

In the second sentence (Susan assigned the task to both you and I), both pronouns are the object of the sentence, so they should be in object case: “Susan assigned the task to both you and me.”

# 18. Practice Activities:

## Pronouns

### Identifying Pronouns

As you read the following passage, identify all of the pronouns, as well as what type of pronoun each is. Remember, there are four types of pronouns we learned about: personal, demonstrative, indefinite, and relative pronouns.

(1) Louis Charles Joseph Blériot (1872–1936) was a French aviator, inventor, and engineer. (2) In 1909, **he** became world famous for making the first flight across the English Channel in a heavier than air aircraft, winning a prize of £1,000 offered by the *Daily Mail* newspaper. (3) The prize was widely seen as a way to gain cheap publicity when **it** was first announced by the paper—**no one** thought **this** feat could actually be accomplished. (4) The Paris newspaper *Le Matin* commented that there was no chance of the prize being won. (5) Blériot would prove **everyone** wrong.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

Here is a list of the pronouns in the passage:

1. There are no pronouns in this sentence.
2. This sentence contains the personal pronoun *he*. *He* is a singular, subject case, masculine third-person pronoun.
3. This sentence has two pronouns: *it*, *no one*, and *that*.
  - *It* is a singular, subject case, neutral third-person pronoun.
  - *No one* is an indefinite pronoun.



- *This* is a demonstrative pronoun; in this instance it's being used like an adjective.
4. This sentence contains the relative pronoun *that*; it connects *commented* to the statement made by *Le Matin*.
  5. This sentence contains the indefinite pronoun *everyone*.

## Finding the Antecedent

Identify the antecedents and pronouns in the following examples:

1. Somebody must have found my cell phone. He or she has been using up all my data!
2. People asked Jorge to review their papers so often that he started a small editing business.
3. He's been talking for over two hours. This is unbearable.
4. Henry called his parents every week.
5. There are forty bracelets in this box. Are you telling me you made all of those?

Show Answer

1. Somebody is the antecedent for *He or she*. The pronoun *my* doesn't have an explicit antecedent, but it's assumed that the speaker or writer is the antecedent for *my*.
2. There are two pronoun/antecedent pairs in this sentence. People is the antecedent for *their*, and Jorge is the antecedent for *he*.
3. The experience of him talking for over two hours is the antecedent for *this*.
4. Henry is the antecedent for *his*.
5. Forty bracelets is the antecedent for *those*.

## Antecedent Clarity

Read the following passage, then re-write it using as many pronouns as possible, while still retaining clarity.

Marina and Marina's twin sister Adriana often fought over small things. Marina frequently took Adriana's clothes without asking and never returned them. Adriana always ate the last piece of dessert, even if Mariana had saved it for Mariana. However, Mariana always made sure Adriana knew about the sales at Adriana's favorite stores, and Adriana baked Mariana's favorite cookies at least once a month.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

Here is one possible solution:

Marina and **her** twin sister Adriana often fought over small things. Marina frequently took Adriana's clothes without asking and never returned them. Adriana always ate the last piece of dessert, even if Mariana had saved it for **herself**. However, Mariana always made sure Adriana knew about the sales at Adriana's favorite stores, and Adriana baked Mariana's favorite cookies at least once a month.

You could possibly say "Mariana made sure Adriana knew about the sales at her favorite stores," but there is still room for misinterpretation, so saying "Adriana's favorite stores" is more clear.

# 19. Introduction to Verbs

## Identify Verb Types and Their Correct Conjugation

From 2002 to 2006, The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) ran a media campaign entitled “Verb: It’s What You Do.” This campaign was designed to help teens get and stay active, but it also provided a helpful soundbite for defining verbs: “It’s what you do.”

Verbs are often called the “action” words of language. As we discuss verbs, we will learn that this isn’t always the case, but it is a helpful phrase to remember just what verbs are.



Traditionally, verbs are divided into three groups: active verbs (these are “action” words), linking verbs, and helping verbs (these two types of verbs are not “action” words). In this outcome, we’ll discuss all three of these groups. We’ll also learn how verbs work and how they change to suit the needs of a speaker or writer.

## 20. Active Verbs

Active verbs are the simplest type of verb: they simply express some sort of action. Watch this video introduction to verbs:



One or more  
interactive elements

has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=37#oembed-1>

Let's look at the example verbs from the video one more time:

- *contain*
- *roars*
- *runs*
- *sleeps*

All of these verbs are active verbs: they all express an action.

### *Practice*

Identify the active verbs in the following sentences:

1. Dominic paints the best pictures of meerkats.
2. Sean's hair curled really well today.
3. Elephants roam the savanna.
4. Billy ate an entire loaf of bread in one sitting.

Show Answer

1. Dominic **paints** the best pictures of meerkats.
2. Sean's hair **curled** really well today.
3. Elephants **roam** the savanna.
4. Billy **ate** an entire loaf of bread in one sitting.

## Transitive and Intransitive Verbs

Active verbs can be divided into two categories: transitive and intransitive verbs. A **transitive verb** is a verb that requires one or more objects. This contrasts with intransitive verbs, which do not have objects.

It might be helpful to think of it this way: transitive verbs have to be *done* to something or someone in the sentence. Intransitive verbs only have to be done *by* someone.

Let's look at a few examples of transitive verbs:

- We are going to **need** a bigger boat.
  - The object in this sentence is the phrase "a bigger boat." Consider how incomplete the thought would be if the sentence only said "We are going to need." Despite having a subject and a verb, the sentence is meaningless without the object phrase.
- She hates **filling out** forms.

- Again, leaving out the object would cripple the meaning of the sentence. We have to know that *forms* is what she hates filling out.
- *Hates* is also a transitive verb. Without the phrase “filling out forms,” the phrase “She hates” doesn’t make any sense.
- Sean **hugged** his brother David.
  - You can see the pattern. . . . *Hugged* in this sentence is only useful if we know who Sean squeezed. David is the object of the transitive verb.

Intransitive verbs, on the other do not take an object.

- John **sneezed** loudly.
  - Even though there’s another word after *sneezed*, the full meaning of the sentence is available with just the subject *John* and the verb *sneezed*: “John sneezed.” Therefore, *sneezed* is an intransitive verb. It doesn’t have to be done to something or someone.
- My computer completely **died**.
  - Again, *died* here is enough for the sentence to make sense. We know that the computer (the subject) is what died.

This video provides a more in-depth explanation of transitive and intransitive verbs and how they work:



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

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=37#oembed-2>

**Note:** there are some verbs that can act as both transitive and intransitive verbs (the video defined these as bitransitive verbs):

Intransitive	Transitive
The fire has <b>burned</b> for hundreds of years.	Miranda <b>burned</b> all of her old school papers.
Don't let the engine stop <b>running</b> !	Karl <b>ran</b> the best horse track this side of the river.
The vase <b>broke</b> .	She <b>broke</b> the toothpick.
Does your dog <b>bite</b> ?	The cat <b>bit</b> him.
Water <b>evaporates</b> when it's hot.	Heat <b>evaporates</b> water.

## Practice

Read the following sentences. Are the verbs in each transitive or intransitive?

1. Liv fell out of the car.
2. Ian has written over four hundred articles on the subject.
3. Christopher sings really well.
4. Marton wondered about a lot of things.
5. Cate gave great gifts.

Show Answer

1. Alba **fell** out of the car. *Fell* is intransitive; it doesn't require an object.
2. Ian **has written** over four hundred articles on the subject. *Has written* is transitive; it has an object: *articles*.
3. Javier **sings** really well. *Sings* is intransitive; it doesn't require an object.
  - Note that *sings* can also be a transitive verb. In the sentence “Lorena sang three songs in the show last night,” the verb *sing* has the object *songs*.
4. Marton **wondered** about a lot of things. *Wondered* is intransitive; it doesn't require an object.
5. Cate **gave** great gifts. *Gave* is transitive; it has an object: *gifts*.

## Multi-Word Verbs

Multi-word verbs are a subclass of active verbs. They are made up of multiple words, as you might have guessed. They include things like *stirfry*, *kickstart*, and *turn in*. Multi-word verbs often have a slightly different meaning than their base parts. Take a look at the difference between the next two sentences:

- Ben carried the boxes out of the house.
- Ben carried out the task well.

The first sentence uses a single word verb (*carried*) and the preposition *out*. If you remove the preposition (and its object), you



get “Ben carried the boxes,” which makes perfect sense. In the second sentence, *carried out* acts as a single entity. If you remove *out*, the sentence has no meaning: “Ben carried the task well” doesn’t make sense.

Let’s look at another example:

- She’s been shut up in there for years.
- Dude, shut up.

Can you see how the same principles apply here? Other multi-word verbs include *find out*, *make off with*, *turn in*, and *put up with*.

## 21. Linking Verbs

A linking verb is a verb that links a subject to the rest of the sentence. There isn't any "real" action happening in the sentence. Sentences with linking verbs become similar to math equations. The verb acts as an equal sign between the items it links.



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here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=38#oembed-1>

As the video establishes, *to be* verbs are the most common linking verbs (*is*, *was*, *were*, etc.). David and the bear establish that there are other linking verbs as well. Here are some illustrations of other common linking verbs:

- Over the past five days, Charles **has become** a new man.
  - It's easy to reimagine this sentence as "Over the past five days, Charles = a new man."
- Since the oil spill, the beach **has smelled** bad.
  - Similarly, one could also read this as "Since the oil spill, the beach = smelled bad."
- That word processing program **seems** adequate for our needs.
  - Here, the linking verb is slightly more nuanced than an equals sign, though the sentence construction overall is

similar. (This is why we write in words, rather than math symbols, after all!)

- This calculus problem **looks** difficult.
- With every step Jake took, he could **feel** the weight on his shoulders growing.

## Practice

Read each sentence and determine whether its verb is a linking verb or not:

1. Terry smelled his yogurt to see if it was still good.
2. Rosa looks intimidating.
3. Amy looked over at the clock to check the time.
4. Gina smelled like chrysanthemums and mystery.
5. Raymond is a fantastic boss.

Show Answer

1. Terry **smelled** his yogurt to see if it was still good. *Smelled* is an active verb in this sentence.
2. Rosa **looks** intimidating. *Looks* is a linking verb in this sentence.
3. Amy **looked** over at the clock to check the time. *Looked* is an active verb in this sentence.
4. Gina **smelled** like chrysanthemums and mystery. *Smelled* is a linking verb in this sentence.
5. Raymond **is** a fantastic boss. *Is* is a linking verb in this sentence.

## 22. Helping Verbs

Helping verbs (sometimes called *auxiliary verbs*) are, as the name suggests, verbs that help another verb. They provide support and add additional meaning. Here are some examples of helping verbs in sentences:



- Mariah **is** looking for her keys still.
- Kai **had** checked the weather three times already, but he looked one more time to see if the forecast **had** changed.
- What ever happens, **do** not let the water level drop below this line.

As you just saw, helping verbs are usually pretty short, and they include things like *is*, *had*, and *do* (we'll look at a more complete list later). Let's look at some more examples to examine exactly what these verbs do. Take a look at the sentence "I have finished my dinner." Here, the main verb is *finish*, and the helping verb *have* helps to express tense. Let's look at two more examples:

- By 1967, about 500 U.S. citizens **had** received heart transplants.
  - While *received* could function on its own as a complete thought here, the helping verb *had* emphasizes the distance in time of the date in the opening phrase.
- **Do** you want tea?
  - *Do* is a helping verb accompanying the main verb *want*, used here to form a question.
- Researchers **are** finding that propranolol is effective in the treatment of heartbeat irregularities.

- The helping verb *are* indicates the present tense, and adds a sense of continuity to the verb *finding*.
- He **has** given his all.
  - *Has* is a helping verb used in expressing the tense of *given*.

The following table provides a short list of some verbs that can function as helping verbs, along with examples of the way they function. [A full list of helping verbs can be found here.](#)

Helping Verb	Function	Examples
be	Express tense (the tense depends on the conjugation of <i>to be</i> ; <i>is</i> is present, <i>was</i> is past, <i>will be</i> is future, etc.) and a sense of continuity.	He <b>is</b> sleeping.
	Express tense (the tense depends on the conjugation of <i>to be</i> ; <i>are</i> is present, <i>were</i> is past, <i>will be</i> is future, etc.) and indicate the passive voice	They <b>were</b> seen.
can	Express ability	I <b>can</b> swim. Such things <b>can</b> help.
could	Express possibility	That <b>could</b> help.
do	Express negation (requires the word <i>not</i> )	You <b>do</b> not understand.
	Ask a question	<b>Do</b> you want to go?
have	Express tense (the tense depends on the conjugation of <i>to be</i> ; <i>are</i> is present, <i>were</i> is past, <i>will be</i> is future, etc.) and indicate a sense of completion	They <b>have</b> understood.
might	Express possibility	We <b>might</b> give it a try.
must	Express confidence in a fact	It <b>must</b> have rained.
should	Express a request	You <b>should</b> listen.
	Express likelihood	That <b>should</b> help.
will	Express future tense	We <b>will</b> eat pie. The sun <b>will</b> rise tomorrow at 6:03.
would	Express future likelihood	Nothing <b>would</b> accomplish that.

The negative forms of these words (*can't*, *don't*, *won't*, etc.) are also helping verbs.

**Note:** The helping verbs *to be*, *to have*, and *would* are used to indicate tense. We'll discuss exactly how they function in more depth in [Text: Complex Verb Tenses](#).

## Practice

Identify the helping verbs in the sentences below:

1. Damian can't work tonight. Do you want his shift?
2. Cassandra couldn't afford to give up.
3. Richard was exercising when Barbara finally found him.

Show Answer

1. Damian can't work tonight. Do you want his shift?
  - *Can't* helps *work*. In this sentence it is used to express ability (in this case, the not turns it into a lack of ability).
  - *Do* helps *want*. In this sentence, it is used to make a question.
2. Cassandra **couldn't** afford to give up.
  - *Couldn't* helps *afford*. In this sentence, it indicates how possible the verb *afford* is.
3. Richard **was** exercising when Barbara finally found him.

- *Was* accompanies *exercising*. In this sentence, it is used to indicate the tense.



## 23. Simple Verb Tenses

What is tense? There are three standard tenses in English: past, present and future. All three of these tenses have simple and more complex forms. For now we'll just focus on the simple present (things happening now), the simple past (things that happened before), and the simple future (things that will happen later).

### Tenses

#### Present Tense

Watch this quick introduction to the present tense:



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

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=40#oembed-1>

#### Past Tense

Watch this quick introduction to the past tense:



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## Future Tense

Watch this quick introduction to the future tense:



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**Note:** You may have noticed that in the present tense video David talked about “things that are happening right now” and that he mentioned there were other ways to create the past and future tense. We’ll discuss these in further depth in Advanced Verb Tenses.

# Conjugation

Most verbs will follow the pattern that we just learned in the previous videos:

Person	Past	Present	Future
I	verb + <i>ed</i>	verb	will verb
We	verb + <i>ed</i>	verb	will verb
You	verb + <i>ed</i>	verb	will verb
He, She, It	verb + <i>ed</i>	verb + s (or <i>es</i> )	will verb
They	verb + <i>ed</i>	verb	will verb

## *To Walk*

Let’s look at the verb *to walk* for an example:

Person	Past	Present	Future
I	walked	walk	will walk
We	walked	walk	will walk
You	walked	walk	will walk
He, She, It	walked	walks	will walk
They	walked	walk	will walk

### *Practice*

Change the tense of each sentence as directed below. You can type your answers in the text field below:

1. Make this sentence present tense: Alejandra directed a play.
2. Make this sentence past tense: Lena will show me how to use a microscope.
3. Make this sentence future tense: Gabrielly eats a lot of hamburgers.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

1. Alejandra **directs** a play.
2. Lena **showed** me how to use a microscope.
3. Gabrielly **will eat** a lot of hamburgers.

## Irregular Verbs

There are a lot of irregular verbs. Unfortunately, there's a lot of memorization involved in keeping them straight. This video shows a few of the irregular verbs you'll have to use the most often (to be, to have, to do, and to say):



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here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=40#oembed-4>

[Here's a list of several irregular past tense verbs.](#)

## Practice

Change the tense of each sentence as directed below. You can type your answers in the text field below:

1. Make this sentence present tense: Ysabella was really good at getting others to open up.
2. Make this sentence past tense: Rodrigo will have a B+ in his math class.
3. Make this sentence future tense: Amanda said she didn't want to go to the party.
4. Make this sentence past tense: Jordan does five hundred sit-ups.
5. Make this sentence present tense: Marcela ran a car wash down the street from my house.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

1. Ysabella **is** really good at getting others to open up.
2. Rodrigo **had** a B+ in his math class.
3. Amanda **will say** she **doesn't** want to go to the party.
  - Notice that when the tense of the first verb changed, the tense of the second verb did as well.
4. Jordan **did** five hundred sit-ups.
5. Marcela **runs** a car wash down the street from my house.

## 24. Subject & Verb Agreement

The basic idea behind sentence agreement is pretty simple: all the parts of your sentence should match (or **agree**). Verbs need to agree with their subjects in **number** (singular or plural) and in **person** (first, second, or third). In order to check agreement, you simply need to find the verb and ask who or what is doing the action of that verb.



### Person

Agreement based on grammatical person (first, second, or third person) is found mostly between verb and subject. For example, you can say “I am” or “he is,” but not “I is” or “he am.” This is because the grammar of the language requires that the verb and its subject agree in person. The pronouns *I* and *he* are first and third person respectively, as are the verb forms *am* and *is*. The verb form must be selected so that it has the same person as the subject.

### Number

Agreement based on grammatical number can occur between verb and subject, as in the case of grammatical person discussed above. In fact the two categories are often conflated within verb

conjugation patterns: there are specific verb forms for first person singular, second person plural and so on. Some examples:

- I really **am** (1st pers. singular) vs. **We** really **are** (1st pers. plural)
- The **boy sings** (3rd pers. singular) vs. The **boys sing** (3rd pers. plural)

## More Examples

Compound subjects are plural, and their verbs should agree. Look at the following sentence for an example:

- A pencil, a backpack, and a notebook **were** issued to each student.

Verbs will never agree with nouns that are in prepositional phrases. To make verbs agree with their subjects, follow this example:

- The direction of the three plays **is** the topic of my talk.

The subject of “my talk” is *direction*, not *plays*, so the verb should be singular.

In the English language, verbs usually follow subjects. But when this order is reversed, the writer must make the verb agree with the subject, not with a noun that happens to precede it. For example:

- Beside the house **stand** sheds filled with tools.

The subject is *sheds*; it is plural, so the verb must be *stand*.

## Agreement

All regular verbs (and nearly all irregular ones) in English agree in the third-person singular of the present indicative by adding a suffix of either *-s* or *-es*.

Look at the present tense of *to love*, for example:

Person	Number	
	Singular	Plural
First	<i>I love</i>	<i>we love</i>
Second	<i>you love</i>	<i>you love</i>
Third	<i>he/she/it loves</i>	<i>they love</i>

The highly irregular verb *to be* is the only verb with more agreement than this in the present tense:

Person	Number	
	Singular	Plural
First	<i>I am</i>	<i>we are</i>
Second	<i>you are</i>	<i>you are</i>
Third	<i>he/she/it is</i>	<i>they are</i>

### *Practice*

Choose the correct verb to make the sentences agree:

1. Ann (walk / walks) really slowly.
2. You (is / am / are) dating Tom?
3. Donna and April (get / gets) along well.



4. Chris and Ben (is / am / are) the best duo this company has ever seen.

Show Answer

1. Ann **walks** really slowly.
  - *Ann* is a singular, third-person subject.
2. You **are** dating Tom?
  - *You* is a singular, second-person subject.
3. Donna and April **get** along well.
  - *Donna and April* is a plural, third-person subject.
4. Chris and Ben **are** the best duo this company has ever seen.
  - *Chris and Ben* is a plural, third-person subject.

## 25. Verb Tense Consistency

One of the most common mistakes in writing is a lack of tense consistency. Writers often start a sentence in one tense but ended up in another. Look back at that sentence. Do you see the error? The first verb *start* is in the present tense, but *ended* is in the past tense. The correct version of the sentence would be “Writers often start a sentence in one tense but end up in another.”

These mistakes often occur when writers change their minds halfway through writing the sentence, or when they come back and make changes but only end up changing half the sentence. It is very important to maintain a consistent tense, not just in a sentence but across paragraphs and pages. Decide if something happened, is happening, or will happen and then stick with that choice.

Read through the following paragraphs. Can you spot the errors in tense?

If you want to pick up a new outdoor activity, hiking is a great option to consider. It's a sport that is suited for a beginner or an expert—it just depended on the difficulty hikes you choose. However, even the



earliest beginners can complete difficult hikes if they pace themselves and were physically fit.

Not only is hiking an easy activity to pick up, it also will have some great payoffs. As you walked through canyons and climbed up mountains, you can see things that you wouldn't otherwise. The views are breathtaking, and you will get a great opportunity to meditate on the world and your role in it. The summit of a mountain is unlike any other place in the world.

What errors did you spot? Let's take another look at this passage.

This time, the tense-shifted verbs have been bolded, and the phrases they belong to have been underlined:

If you want to pick up a new outdoor activity, hiking is a great option to consider. It's a sport that is suited for a beginner or an expert—it just **depended** on the difficulty hikes you choose. However, even the earliest beginners can complete difficult hikes if they pace themselves and **were** physically fit.

Not only is hiking an easy activity to pick up, it also **will have** some great payoffs. As you **walked** through canyons and **climbed up** mountains, you can see things that you wouldn't otherwise. The views are breathtaking, and you **will get** a great opportunity to meditate on the world and your role in it. The summit of a mountain is unlike any other place in the world.

As we mentioned earlier, you want to make sure your whole passage is consistent in its tense. You may have noticed that the most of the verbs in this passage are in present tense—this is especially apparent if you ignore those verbs that have been bolded. Now that we've established that this passage should be in the present tense, let's address each of the underlined segments:

- It's a sport that is suited for a beginner or an expert—it just **depended** on the difficulty hikes you choose.
  - *depended* should be the same tense as *is*; it just **depends** on the difficulty
- if they pace themselves and **were** physically fit.
  - *were* should be the same tense as *pace*; if they pace themselves and **are** physically fit.
- Not only is hiking an easy activity to pick up, it also **will have** some great payoffs.
  - *will have* should be the same tense as *is*; it also **has** some great pay offs
- As you **walked** through canyons and **climbed** up mountains
  - *walked* and *climbed* are both past tense, but this doesn't

match the tense of the passage as a whole. They should both be changed to present tense: As you **walk** through canyons and **climb** up mountains.

- The views are breathtaking, and you **will get** a great opportunity to meditate on the world and your role in it.
  - *will get* should be the same tense as *are*; you **get** a great opportunity

Here's the corrected passage as a whole; all edited verbs have been bolded:

If you want to pick up a new outdoor activity, hiking is a great option to consider. It's a sport that can be suited for a beginner or an expert—it just **depends** on the difficulty hikes you choose. However, even the earliest beginners can complete difficult hikes if they pace themselves and **are** physically fit.

Not only is hiking an easy activity to pick up, it also **has** some great payoffs. As you **walk** through canyons and **climb** up mountains, you can see things that you wouldn't otherwise. The views are breathtaking, and you **get** a great opportunity to meditate on the world and your role in it. The summit of a mountain is unlike any other place in the world.

## *Practice*

Read the following sentences and identify any errors in verb tense. Type your corrections in the text frame below:

1. Whenever Maudeline goes to the grocery store, she had made a list and stick to it.
2. This experiment turned out to be much more

complicated than Felipe thought it would be. It ended up being a procedure that was seventeen steps long, instead of the original eight that he had planned.

3. I applied to some of the most prestigious medical schools. I hope the essays I write get me in!

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

1. *had made* and *stick* do not match the present tense that was set up by *goes*. The sentence should read, "Whenever Maudeline goes to the store, she **makes** a list and **sticks** to it."
2. This sentence is correct.
3. *applied* and *write* do not match tense. If you've already applied, hopefully you've already written your essays as well! The sentences should read, "I applied to some of the most prestigious medical schools. I hope the essays I **wrote** get me in!"

## 26. Introduction to Non-Finite Verbs

Just when we thought we had verbs figured out, we're brought face-to-face with a new animal: the non-finite verbs. These words *look* similar to verbs we've already been talking about, but they *act* quite different than those other verbs.

By definition, a non-finite verb cannot serve as the root of an independent clause. In practical terms, this means that they don't serve as the action of a sentence. They also don't have a tense. While the sentence around them may be past, present, or future tense, the non-finite verbs themselves are neutral. There are three types of non-finite verbs: gerunds, participles, and infinitives.

- Gerunds all end in *-ing*: *skiing, reading, dancing, singing*, etc. Gerunds act like nouns and can serve as subjects or objects of sentences.
- A participle is used as an adjective or an adverb. There are two types of participle in English: the past and present participles.
  - The present participle also takes the *-ing* form: (e.g., *writing, singing, and raising*).
  - The past participle typically appears like the past tense, but some have different forms: (e.g., *written, sung* and *raised*).
- The infinitive is the basic dictionary form of a verb, usually preceded by *to*. Thus *to go* is an infinitive.

## 27. Gerunds

Gerunds all end in *-ing*: *skiing*, *reading*, *dancing*, *singing*, etc. Gerunds **act like nouns** and can serve as subjects or objects of sentences. Let's take a look at a few examples:

The following sentences illustrate some uses of gerunds:

- **Swimming** is fun.
  - Here, the subject is *swimming*, the gerund.
  - The verb is the linking verb *is*.
- I like **swimming**.
  - This time, the subject of this sentence is the pronoun *I*.
  - The verb is *like*.
  - The gerund *swimming* becomes the direct object.
- I never gave **swimming** all that much effort.
  - break these down too
- Do you fancy **going out**?
  - break these down too
- After **being elected president**, he moved with his family to the capital.
  - break these down too

Gerunds can be created using helping verbs as well:

- **Being deceived** can make someone feel angry.
- **Having read the book once before** makes me more prepared.

Often the “doer” of the gerund is clearly signaled:

- We enjoyed **singing** yesterday (we ourselves sang)
- The cat responded by **licking** the cream (the cat licked the cream)

- His heart is set on **being** awarded the prize (he hopes that he himself will be awarded the prize)
- Tomás likes **eating** apricots (Tomás himself eats apricots)

However, sometimes the “doer” must be overtly specified, typically in a position immediately before the non-finite verb:

- We enjoyed their **singing**.
- We were delighted at Bianca **being** awarded the prize.

## Practice

Identify the gerunds and their roles in the following sentences:

1. Sam was really bad at gardening.
2. Studying is one of Jazz’s favorite things to do.
3. Danny just wanted to go skateboarding.

Show Answer

1. Sam was really bad at **gardening**.
  - *Gardening* is the object of the prepositional phrase “bad at gardening.”
2. **Studying** is one of Jazz’s favorite things to do.
  - *Studying* is the subject of the sentence.
3. Danny just wanted to go **skateboarding**.
  - *Skateboarding* is the direct object of the sentence.



## 28. Participles

A **participle** is a form of a verb that is used in a sentence to modify a noun, noun phrase, verb, or verb phrase, and then plays a role similar to an adjective or adverb. It is one of the types of nonfinite verb forms.

The two types of participle in English are traditionally called the **present participle** (forms such as *writing*, *singing* and *raising*) and the **past participle** (forms such as *written*, *sung* and *raised*).

### The Present Participle

Even though they look exactly the same, gerunds and present participles do different things. As we just learned, the gerund acts as a noun: e.g., “I like *sleeping*”; “*Sleeping* is not allowed.” Present participles, on the other hand, act similarly to an adjective or adverb: e.g., “The *sleeping* girl over there is my sister”; “*Breathing* heavily, she finished the race in first place.”

The present participle, or participial phrases (clauses) formed from it, are used as follows:

- as an adjective phrase modifying a noun phrase: *The man **sitting** over there is my uncle.*
- adverbially, the subject being understood to be the same as that of the main clause: ***Looking** at the plans, I gradually came to see where the problem lay. He shot the man, **killing** him.*
- more generally as a clause or sentence modifier: *Broadly **speaking**, the project was successful.*

The present participle can also be used with the helping verb *to be* to form a type of present tense: *Marta was **sleeping**.* (We'll discuss

this further in [Advanced Verb Tenses](#).) This is something we learned a little bit about in helping verbs and tense.

## The Past Participle

Past participles often look very similar to the simple past tense of a verb: *finished, danced*, etc. However, some verbs have different forms. Reference lists will be your best help in finding the correct past participle. [Here is one such list of participles](#). Here's a short list of some of the most common irregular past participles you'll use:

Verb	Simple Past	Past Participle
to be	was/were	been
to become	became	become
to come	came	come
to do	did	done
to give	gave	given
to go	went	gone
to know	knew	known
to run	ran	run
to see	saw	seen
to speak	spoke	spoken
to take	took	taken
to write	wrote	written

**Note:** Words like *bought* and *caught* are the correct past participles—not *boughten* or *caughten*.

Past participles are used in a couple of different ways:

- as an adjective phrase: The chicken **eaten** by the children was contaminated.
- adverbially: **Seen** from this perspective, the problem presents no easy solution.
- in a nominative absolute construction, with a subject: The task **finished**, we returned home.

The past participle can also be used with the helping verb *to have* to form a type of past tense (which we'll talk about in [Advanced Verb Tenses](#)): The chicken has **eaten**. It is also used to form the passive voice: Tianna was **voted** as most likely to succeed. When the passive voice is used following a relative pronoun (like *that* or *which*) we sometimes leave out parts of the phrase:

- He had three things **that were taken** away from him
- He had three things *taken* away from him

In the second sentence, we removed the words *that were*. However, we still use the past participle *taken*. The removal of these words is called *elision*. Elision is used with a lot of different constructions in English; we use it to shorten sentences when things are understood. However, we can only use elision in certain situations, so be careful when removing words! (We'll discuss this further in [Using the Passive Voice](#).)

## Practice

Identify the participles in the following sentences, as well as the functions they perform:

1. Tucker had always wanted a pet dog.
2. Having been born in the 1990s, Amber often found herself surrounded by nostalgia.
3. Rayssa was practicing her flute when everything suddenly went wrong.

Show Answer

1. The past participle is *wanted*. In this case, it is used alongside the helping verb *had* to form the past tense.
2. *Having been born in the 1990s* is a present participle phrase. It is used adverbially, and the subject is the same as the subject of the main phrase: Amber. Additionally, *been* is the past participle. It is used alongside the helping verb *having* to give a sense of the past tense.
3. *Practicing* is the present participle. It, along with the helping verb *was*, create a sense of continuity or process.

## 29. Infinitives

To be or not to be, that is the question.

—Hamlet

### The *to*-Infinitive

The infinitive is the basic dictionary form of a verb, usually preceded by *to* (when it's not, it's called the **bare infinitive**, which we'll discuss more later). Thus *to go* is an infinitive. There are several different uses of the infinitive. They can be used alongside verbs, as a noun phrase, as a modifier, or in a question.

### With Other Verbs

The *to*-infinitive is used with other verbs (we'll discuss exceptions when we talk about the bare infinitive):

- I aim **to convince** him of our plan's ingenuity.
- You already know that he'll fail **to complete** the task.

You can also use multiple infinitives in a single sentence: “Today, I plan **to run** three miles, **to clean** my room, and **to update** my budget.” All three of these infinitives follow the verb *plan*. Other verbs that often come before infinitives include *want*, *convince*, *try*, *able*, and *like*.

## As a Noun Phrase

The infinitive can also be used to express an action in an abstract, general way: “**To err** is human”; “**To know** me is **to love me**.” No one in particular is completing these actions. In these sentences, the infinitives act as the subjects.

Infinitives can also serve as the object of a sentence. One common construction involves a dummy subject (*it*): “It was nice **to meet** you.”

## As a Modifier

Infinitives can be used as an adjective (e.g., “A request **to see** someone” or “The man **to save** us”) or as an adverb (e.g., “Keen **to get** on,” “Nice **to listen** to,” or “In order **to win**”).

## In Questions

Infinitives can be used in elliptical questions as well, as in “I don’t know where **to go**.”

**Note:** The infinitive is also the usual dictionary form or citation form of a verb. The form listed in dictionaries is the bare infinitive, although the *to*-infinitive is often used in referring to verbs or in defining other verbs: “The word *amble* means ‘to walk slowly’”; “How do we conjugate the verb *to go*?”

Certain helping verbs do not have infinitives, such *will*, *can*, and *may*.

## Split Infinitives?

One of the biggest controversies among grammarians and style writers has been the appropriateness of separating the two words of the *to*-infinitive as in “to *boldly* go.” Despite what a lot of people have declared over the years, there is absolutely nothing wrong with this construction. It is 100 percent grammatically sound.

Part of the reason so many authorities have been against this construction is likely the fact that in languages such as Latin, the infinitive is a single word, and cannot be split. However, in English the infinitive (or at least the *to*-infinitive) is two words, and a split infinitive is a perfectly natural construction.

### *Try to versus Try and*

One common error people make is saying *try and* instead of *try to*, as in “I’ll *try and* be there by 10:00 tomorrow.” However, *try* requires a *to*-infinitive after it, so using *and* is incorrect. While this construction is acceptable in casual conversation, it is not grammatically correct and should not be used in formal situations.

## Practice

Identify the infinitives in the following sentences:

1. Paulina is the girl to beat.
2. It was really nice to hear from you again.
3. It looks like Dash wants to fail.

Show Answer

1. The infinitive *to beat* is used in this instance. It acts as an adjective, describing what kind of girl Paulina is.
2. The infinitive *to hear* is used in this instance. It acts as the object of the sentence.
3. The infinitive *to fail* is used in this instance. It works along with the verb *want*.

## The Bare Infinitive

As we mentioned previously, the infinitive can sometimes occur without the word *to*. The form without *to* is called the **bare infinitive** (the form with *to* is called the **to-infinitive**). In the following sentences both *sit* and *to sit* would each be considered an infinitive:

- I want **to sit** on the other chair.
- I can **sit** here all day.

Infinitives have a variety of uses in English. Certain contexts call for the *to*-infinitive form, and certain contexts call for the bare



infinitive; they are not normally interchangeable, except in occasional instances like after the verb *help*, where either can be used.

As we mentioned earlier, some verbs require the bare infinitive instead of the *to*-infinitive:

- The helping verb *do*
  - Does she **dance**?
  - Zi doesn't **sing**.
- Helping verbs that express tense, possibility, or ability like *will*, *can*, *could*, *should*, *would*, and *might*
  - The bears will **eat** you if they catch you.
  - Lucas and Gerardo might **go** to the dance.
  - You should **give** it a try.
- Verbs of perception, permission, or causation, such as *see*, *watch*, *hear*, *make*, *let*, and *have* (after a direct object)
  - Look at Caroline **go**!
  - You can't make me **talk**.
  - It's so hard to let someone else **finish** my work.

The bare infinitive can be used as the object in such sentences like "What you should do is **make** a list." It can also be used after the word *why* to ask a question: "Why **reveal** it?"

The bare infinitive can be tricky, because it often looks exactly like the present tense of a verb. Look at the following sentences for an example:

- You **lose** things so often.
- You can **lose** things at the drop of a hat.

In both of these sentences, we have the word *lose*, but in the first sentence it's a present tense verb, while in the second it's a bare infinitive. So how can you tell which is which? The easiest way is

to try changing the subject of the sentence and seeing if the verb should change:

- She **loses** things so often.
- She can **lose** things at the drop of a hat.

## Practice

Identify the infinitives in the following sentences:

1. What you should do is stop talking for a moment and listen.
2. Oh, that must be Lebo at the door.
3. Why walk when I could run?

Show Answer

1. What you should do is **stop** talking for a moment and **listen**.
  - There are two infinitives in this sentence: *stop* and *listen*. They are both the objects of the sentence. This sentence also includes the gerund *talking*, which the object in the phrase “stop talking.”
2. Oh, that must **be** Lebo at the door.
  - The infinitive *be* works with the helping verb *must*.
3. Why **walk** when I could **run**?
  - There are two infinitives in this

sentence: *walk* and *run*. *Walk* follows the word *why*, and it is asking a question. *Run* works with the helping verb *could*.

## 30. Advanced Verb Tenses

Now we've mastered the different pieces that we need to understand in order to discuss some more advanced tenses. These advanced tenses were mentioned briefly in [Helping Verbs](#), and they came up again in [Participles](#). These forms are created with different forms of *to be* and *to have*:

- He **had eaten** everything by the time we got there.
- She **is waiting** for us to get there!
- He **will have broken** it by next Thursday, you can be sure.
- She **was singing** for eight hours.

Was working	Is working	Will be working
<b>WORKED</b>	<b>WORK</b>	<b>WILL WORK</b>
Had been working	Has been working	Will have been working
Had worked	Has worked	Will have worked

When you combine a form of *to be* with the present participle, you create a **continuous tense**; these tenses indicate a sense of continuity. The subject of the sentence was (or is, or will be) doing that thing for awhile.

- **Present:** is working
- **Past:** was working
- **Future:** will be working (You can also say “is going to be working.”)

## Practice

Convert these sentences from simple tenses to continuous tenses:

1. Ivone wrote a collection of short stories entitled *Vidas Vivas*.
2. As a pilot, Sara will fly a lot of cross-country flights.
3. Zachy reads all of the latest articles on archeology.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

1. The past continuous is *was* + present participle, so the correct sentence is
  - Ivone **was writing** a collection of short stories entitled *Vidas Vivas*.
2. The future continuous is either *will be* + present participle or *is going to be* + present participle:
  - As a pilot, Sara **will be flying** a lot of cross-country flights.
  - As a pilot, Sara **is going to be flying** a lot of cross-country flights.
3. The present continuous is *is* + present participle, so the correct sentence is:
  - Zachy **is reading** all of the latest articles on archeology.

When you combine a form of *to have* with the past participle of a

verb, you create a **perfect tense**; these tenses indicate a sense of completion. This thing had been done for a while (or has been, or will have been).

- **Present:** has worked
- **Past:** had worked
- **Future:** will have worked

## *Practice*

Convert these sentences from simple tenses to perfect tenses:

1. Ivone wrote a collection of short stories entitled *Vidas Vivas*.
2. As a pilot, Sara will fly a lot of cross-country flights.
3. Zachy reads all of the latest articles on archeology.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

1. The past perfect is *had* + past participle:
  - Ivone **had written** a collection of short stories entitled *Vidas Vivas*.
2. The future perfect is *will have* + past participle:
  - As a pilot, Sara **will have flown** a lot of cross-country flights.
3. The present perfect is *has* + past participle:
  - Zachy **has read** all of the latest articles on

archeology.

You can also use these together. *To have* must always appear first, followed by the past participle *been*. The present participle of any verb can then follow. These **perfect continuous tenses** indicate that the verb started in the past, and is still continuing:

- **Present:** has been working
- **Past:** had been working
- **Future:** will have been working

## Practice

Convert these sentences from simple tenses to perfect continuous tenses:

1. Ivone wrote a collection of short stories entitled *Vidas Vivas*.
2. As a pilot, Sara will fly a lot of cross-country flights.
3. Zachy reads all of the latest articles on archeology.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

1. The past perfect continuous is *had been* + present participle:
  - Ivone **had been writing** a collection of short stories entitled *Vidas Vivas*.

2. The future perfect continuous is *will have been* + present participle:
  - As a pilot, Sara **will have been flying** a lot of cross-country flights.
3. The present perfect continuous is *has been* + present participle:
  - Zach **has been reading** all of the latest articles on archeology.

Sometimes these verb tenses can be split by adverbs: “Zach **studiously** reading all of the latest articles on archeology.”

Now that we’ve learned about *how* we create each of these tenses, let’s practice using them. In this exercise, you will be asked to create some original writing. As you do so, use both simple and complex verb tenses.

## *Practice*

Look at the following schedule for a Writer’s Workshop. Write a passage about the schedule as if it were Tuesday at 12:30.



	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
10:00	Check-In	Genre Speakers	Meet Editors/Agents
11:00	Group Orientation	Genre Speakers	
12:00	Lunch	Lunch	Check-Out
1:00		Professional Critiques	
2:00	Peer-to-Peer Critique		
3:00		Key-Note Speaker	

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

While there are an infinite number of passages you could write, compare the tenses in your passage to ours:

This Writer's Workshop has been going since yesterday. This morning, several genre speakers talked about the quirks of their genres. By the time attendees heard these talks, they had completed their peer-to-peer critiques, and were ready to learn more specific things about the genre they aspire to write in. After lunch today, each attendee will meet with a professional for a critique of the work. When that has finished, the key-note speaker will give an address. Tomorrow there will be a meet and greet with editors and agents. By noon tomorrow, the workshop will have ended.

# 31. Practice Activities: Verbs

## Verb Types

Read the following sentences. In each sentence, identify the active, linking, and helping verbs.

1. Guilherme should arrive in the next three minutes.
2. The buffet looked delicious as we walked by.
3. Harper couldn't afford another missed assignment.
4. Pietra has an extensive rock collection. She is particularly proud of her obsidian samples.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

1. Guilherme **should arrive** in the next three minutes.
  - *Should* is a helping verb. It expresses likelihood.
  - *Arrive* is the active (main) verb in this sentence. It is intransitive.
2. The buffet **looked** delicious as we **walked** by.
  - *Looked* is a linking verb; the buffet isn't actually completing any actions.
  - *Walked* is an active verb. It is intransitive.
3. Harper **couldn't afford** another missed assignment.
  - *Couldn't* helps *afford*. In this sentence, it indicates how possible the verb *afford* is.
  - *Afford* is an active verb. It is transitive: its object is

“another missed assignment.”

4. Pietra **has** an extensive rock collection. She **is** particularly proud of her obsidian samples.
- *Has* is an active verb. It is transitive: its object is “an extensive rock collection.”
  - *Is* is a linking verb: She = particularly proud

## Non-Finite Verbs

As you read the following passage, identify the different non-finite verbs and their roles in the text.

The Australian magpie is a medium-size black and white bird native to Australia. Feeding magpies is a common practice among households around the country, and there generally is a peaceful co-existence. However, in the spring a small minority of breeding magpies (almost always males) become aggressive and swoop and attack passersby. Being unexpectedly swooped while cycling can result in loss of control of the bicycle, which may cause injury. Cyclists can deter attack by attaching a long pole with a flag to a bike. Using cable ties on helmets has become common as well, and it appears to be an effective deterrent.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Gerunds

Here is the passage with all the gerunds bolded:

The Australian magpie is a medium-size black and white bird native to Australia. **Feeding** magpies is a common practice among households around the country, and there generally is a peaceful co-existence. However, in the spring a small minority of breeding magpies (almost always males) become aggressive and swoop and attack passersby. **Being**

unexpectedly swooped while **cycling** can result in loss of control of the bicycle, which may cause injury. Cyclists can deter attack by **attaching** a long pole with a flag to a bike. **Using** cable ties on helmets has become common as well, and it appears to be an effective deterrent.

1. *Feeding magpies* is the subject of this sentence.
2. *Being unexpectedly swooped* is the subject of this sentence.
3. *While cycling* is a prepositional phrase. *Cycling* is the object of this phrase.
4. *By attaching a long pole with a flag to a bike* is a prepositional phrase. *Attaching* is the object of this phrase.
5. *Using cable ties on helmets* is the subject of this sentence.

### Show Participles

Here is the passage with all the participles bolded. Past participles have also been italicized.

The Australian magpie is a medium-size black and white bird native to Australia. *Feeding magpies* is a common practice among households around the country, and there generally is a peaceful co-existence. However, in the spring a small minority of **breeding** magpies (almost always males) become aggressive and swoop and attack passersby. *Being unexpectedly swooped* while cycling can result in loss of control of the bicycle, which may cause injury. Cyclists can deter attack by attaching a long pole with a flag to a bike. Using cable ties on helmets has become common as well, and it appears to be an effective deterrent.

1. *Breeding* is a present participle serving as an adjective. It modifies the noun *magpies*.
2. *Swooped* is a past participle. It works with the gerund *being* as a part of the subject of the sentence: *Being unexpectedly swooped while cycling*. “Being swooped” is a passive voice construction, so it requires the past participle.

## Show Infinitives

Here is the passage with all the infinitives bolded:

The Australian magpie is a medium-size black and white bird native to Australia. Feeding magpies is a common practice among households around the country, and there generally is a peaceful co-existence. However, in the spring a small minority of breeding magpies (almost always males) become aggressive and swoop and attack passersby. Being unexpectedly swooped while cycling can **result** in loss of control of the bicycle, which may **cause** injury. Cyclists can **deter** attack by attaching a long pole with a flag to a bike. Using cable ties on helmets has become common as well, and it appears **to be** an effective deterrent.

1. *Result* is the bare-infinitive. It works with the verb *can*. *Can* indicates a possibility in this sentence.
2. *Cause* is the bare-infinitive. It works with the verb *may*. *May* indicates a possibility in this sentence.
3. *Deter* is the bare-infinitive. It works with the verb *can*. *Can* indicates a possibility in this sentence.
4. *To be* is the to-infinitive. It works with the verb *appears*.

## Simple Tenses to Advanced Tenses

Follow the instructions in each item:

1. Convert this sentence from a simple tense to a continuous tense: Calebe will file a complaint against the city.
2. Convert this sentence from a simple tense to a perfect tense: Cecilia swore to never again eat another slice of carrot cake.
3. Convert this sentence from a simple tense to a perfect continuous tenses: Avi sings with his friends at least once a week.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

1. The future continuous is either *will be* + present participle or *is going to be* + present participle:
  - Calebe **will be filing** a complaint against the city.
  - Calebe **is going to be filing** a complaint against the city.
2. The past perfect is *had* + past participle:
  - Cecília **had sworn** to never again eat another slice of carrot cake.
3. The present continuous is *has been* + present participle:
  - Avi **has been singing** with his friends at least once a week.

## 32. Introduction to Adjectives and Adverbs

Adjectives and adverbs describe things. For example, compare the phrase “the bear” to “the harmless bear” or the phrase “run” to “run slowly.”

In both of these cases, the adjective (*harmless*) or adverb (*slowly*) changes how we understand the phrase. When you first read the word *bear*, you probably didn’t imagine a harmless bear. When you saw the word *run* you probably didn’t think of it as something done slowly.

Adjectives and adverbs modify other words: they change our understanding of things.

For a catchy introduction to these words in song, watch the following videos.



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here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=49#oembed-1>



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here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=49#oembed-2>

## 33. Functions of Adjectives

An adjective modifies a noun; that is, it provides more detail about a noun. This can be anything from color to size to temperature to personality. Adjectives usually occur just before the nouns they modify. In the following examples, adjectives are in bold, while the nouns they modify are in italics (the **big** bear):



- The generator is used to convert **mechanical** *energy* into **electrical** *energy*.
- The **steel** *pipes* contain a **protective sacrificial** *anode* and are surrounded by **packing** *material*.

Adjectives can also follow a linking verb. In these instances, adjectives can modify pronouns as well. In the following examples, adjectives are still bold, while the linking verb is in italics this time (the sun is **yellow**):

- The schoolhouse *was* **red**.
- I *looked* **good** today.
- She *was* **funny**.

Numbers can also be adjectives in some cases. When you say “Seven is my lucky number,” *seven* is a noun, but when you say “There are seven cats in this painting,” *seven* is an adjective because it is modifying the noun *cats*.



## Practice

Identify the adjectives in the following sentences:

1. Of the four seasons, fall is my favorite; I love the red leaves, the cool weather, and the brisk wind.
2. My roommate, on the other hand, thinks that summer is the best season.
3. I think she is crazy.
4. Fall is better than summer. Summer is too hot and muggy to be enjoyable.

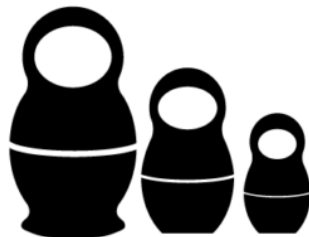
Show Answer

The adjectives have been bolded in the sentences below:

1. Of the **four** seasons, fall is my **favorite**; I love the **red** leaves, the **cool** weather, and the **brisk** wind.
2. My roommate, on the other hand, thinks that summer is the **best** season.
3. I think she is **crazy**.
4. Fall is **better** than summer. Summer is too **hot** and **muggy** to be **enjoyable**. (All of these adjectives follow linking verbs.)

## Comparable Adjectives

Some adjectives are **comparable**. For example, a person may be polite, but another person may be more polite, and a third person may be the most polite of the three. The word *more* here modifies the adjective *polite* to indicate a comparison is being made (a



**comparative**), and *most* modifies the adjective to indicate an absolute comparison (a **superlative**).

There is another way to compare adjectives in English. Many adjectives can take the suffixes *-er* and *-est* (sometimes requiring additional letters before the suffix; see forms for *far* below) to indicate the comparative and superlative forms, respectively:

*great, greater, greatest*

*deep, deeper, deepest*

*far, farther, farthest*

Some adjectives are *irregular* in this sense:

*good, better, best*

*bad, worse, worst*

*little, less, least*

Another way to convey comparison is by incorporating the words *more* and *most*. There is no simple rule to decide which means is correct for any given adjective, however. The general tendency is for shorter adjectives to take the suffixes, while longer adjectives do not—but sometimes *sound* of the word is the deciding factor.

*more beautiful* not *beautifuler*

*more pretentious* not *pretentiouser*

While there is no perfect rule to determine which adjectives will

or won't take *-er* and *-est* suffixes, this video lays out some “sound rules” that can serve as helpful guidelines:



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here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=50#oembed-1>

## *A Note about Fun*

The adjective *fun* is one of the most notable exceptions to the rules. If you follow the sound rules we just learned about, the comparative should be *funner* and the superlative *funnest*. However, for a long time, these words were considered non-standard, with *more fun* and *most fun* acting as the correct forms.

The reasoning behind this rule is now obsolete (it has a lot to do with the way *fun* became an adjective), but the stigma against *funner* and *funnest* remains. While the tides are beginning to change, it's safest to stick to *more fun* and *most fun* in formal situations (such as in academic writing or in professional correspondence).

## Practice

What are the correct comparative and superlative forms for the adjectives below?

Adjective	Comparative	Superlative
fun	more fun (or funner, conversationally)	most fun (or funnest, conversationally)
red	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]
shimmering	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]
fresh	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]
popular	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]
squishy	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]
quiet	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]
large	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

Adjective	Comparative	Superlative
<i>fun</i>	<i>more fun</i> (or <i>funner</i> , conversationally)	<i>most fun</i> (or <i>funnest</i> , conversationally)
red	redder	reddest
shimmery	more shimmery	most shimmery
fresh	fresher	freshest
popular	more popular	most popular
squishy	squishier	squishiest
quiet	quieter	quietest
large	larger	largest

## Non-Comparable Adjectives

Many adjectives do not naturally lend themselves to comparison. For example, some English speakers would argue that it does not make sense to say that one thing is “more ultimate” than another, or that something is “most ultimate,” since the word *ultimate* is already an absolute. Such adjectives are called **non-comparable adjectives**. Other examples include *dead*, *true*, and *unique*.

**Note:** Native speakers will frequently play with non-comparable adjectives. Although *pregnant* is logically non-comparable (someone is pregnant or she is not), you may hear a sentence like “She looks more and more pregnant each day.” Likewise *extinct* and *equal* appear to

be non-comparable, but one might say that a language about which nothing is known is “more extinct” than a well-documented language with surviving literature but no speakers, and George Orwell once wrote “All animals are equal, but some are more equal than others.”

## Practice

Look at the following list of adjectives. Are they comparable or non-comparable? Explain your reasoning why. If the adjective is comparable, list its comparative and superlative forms. For example:

- *Tall* is a comparable adjective. Height exists on a scale; there are many different heights. The comparative is *taller*, and the superlative is *tallest*.
- *Dead* is a non-comparable. You are either dead or alive. However, this concept is played with in the movie *The Princess Bride*. Miracle Max says Wesley is “only mostly dead.” Max is expressing the fact that Wesley is still alive, despite being very close to death’s door.

---

impossible	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	large	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]
pretty	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]	nuclear	[practice-area rows="1"][/practice-area]

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## Show Answer

impossible	<p><i>Impossible</i> is a non-comparable adjective. <i>Impossible</i> is defined as something that can't happen; this can't be graded on a scale. However, people will play on this for emphasis: "That's the most impossible idea I've ever heard."</p>	large	<p><i>Large</i> is a comparable adjective. Size exists on a scale. The comparative is <i>larger</i>, and the superlative is <i>largest</i>.</p>
pretty	<p><i>Pretty</i> is a comparable adjective. Attractiveness exists on a scale. The comparative is <i>prettier</i>, and the superlative is <i>prettiest</i>.</p>	nuclear	<p><i>Nuclear</i> is a non-comparable adjective. It is a classification, not a gradable quality. In phrases like "the most nuclear weapons" <i>most</i> is referring to how many weapons there are, not "how nuclear" the weapons are.</p>

## 34. Functions of Adverbs

Adverbs can perform a wide range of functions: they can modify verbs, adjectives, and even other adverbs. They can come either before or after the word they modify. In the following examples, adverbs are in bold, while the words they modify are in italics (the **quite** handsome man):



- The desk is made of an **especially** *corrosion-resistant industrial* steel.
- The power company uses huge generators which are **generally** *turned* by steam turbines.
- Jaime won the race, because he *ran* **quickly**.
- This fence was *installed* **sloppily**. It needs to be redone.

An adverb may provide information about the manner, place, time, frequency, certainty, or other circumstances of the activity indicated by the verb. Some examples, where again the adverb is in bold and the words modified are in italics:

- Suzanne sang **loudly** (*loudly* modifies the verb *sang*, indicating the manner of singing)
- We left it **here** (*here* modifies the verb phrase *left it*, indicating place)
- I worked **yesterday** (*yesterday* modifies the verb *worked*, indicating time)
- He **undoubtedly** did it (*undoubtedly* modifies the verb phrase *did it*, indicating certainty)
- You **often** make mistakes (*often* modifies the verb phrase *make mistakes*, indicating frequency)



They can also modify noun phrases, prepositional phrases, or whole clauses or sentences, as in the following examples. Once again the adverbs are in bold, while the words they modify are in italics.

- I bought **only** the fruit (*only* modifies the noun phrase *the fruit*)
- Roberto drove us **almost** to the station (*almost* modifies the prepositional phrase *to the station*)
- **Certainly** we need to act (*certainly* modifies the sentence as a whole)

## Practice

Identify the adverbs in these paragraphs:

Mass extinctions are insanely catastrophic—but important—events that punctuate the history of life on Earth. The Jurassic/Cretaceous boundary was originally thought of to represent a mass extinction, but has subsequently been “downgraded” to a minor extinction event based on new discoveries.

However, compared to other important stratigraphic boundaries, like the end-Triassic or the end-Cretaceous, the Jurassic/Cretaceous boundary remains really poorly understood.

Show Answer

There are five adverbs in the paragraphs:

insanely; originally; subsequently; really; poorly

Here the adverbs have been bolded:

Mass extinctions are **insanely** catastrophic—but important—events that punctuate the history of life

on Earth. The Jurassic/Cretaceous boundary was **originally** thought of to represent a mass extinction, but has **subsequently** been “downgraded” to a minor extinction event based on new discoveries.

However, compared to other important stratigraphic boundaries, like the end-Triassic or the end-Cretaceous, the Jurassic/Cretaceous boundary remains **really poorly** understood.

## Intensifiers and Adverbs of Degree

Adverbs can also be used as modifiers of adjectives, and of other adverbs, often to indicate degree. Here are a few examples:

- You are **quite** right (the adverb *quite* modifies the adjective *right*)
- Milagros is **exceptionally** pretty (the adverb *exceptionally* modifies the adjective *pretty*)
- She sang **very** loudly (the adverb *very* modifies another adverb—*loudly*)
- Wow! You ran **really** quickly! (the adverb *really* modifies another adverb—*quickly*)

Other intensifiers include *mildly*, *pretty*, *slightly*, etc.

This video provides more discussion and examples of intensifiers:



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

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=51#oembed-1>

Adverbs may also undergo comparison, taking comparative and superlative forms. This is usually done by adding *more* and *most* before the adverb (*more slowly*, *most slowly*). However, there are a few adverbs that take non-standard forms, such as *well*, for which *better* and *best* are used (i.e., “He did **well**, she did **better**, and I did **best**”).

**Note:** When using intensifiers alongside the adverb *also*, *also* should always appear first: “He also really loved pie” is correct, while “He really also loved pie” is not.

## Very

Some people are of the opinion that the words *very* and *really* indicate weak writing. You’ve probably seen lists of adjectives to use instead of these adverbs (along with an adjective). While this can be true in some cases (*enormous* or *gigantic* would probably serve better than “really big”), *very* and *really* aren’t terrible words. As in most cases, you just need to be conscious of your choices. When you

use these adverbs, pause and see if there's a better way to word what you're saying.

## Relative Adverbs

Relative adverbs are a subclass of adverbs that deal with space, time, and reason. In this video, David gives a quick intro to the three most common relative adverbs: *when*, *where*, and *why*.



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here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=51#oembed-2>

As we just learned, we can use these adverbs to connect ideas about where, when, and why things happen.

### *Practice*

Read the following questions and turn them into statements using relative adverbs:

1. Where did Nina last see her keys?
2. When are the repairmen going to get here?

3. Why did the desk just collapse?

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

1. I don't know where Nina last saw her keys.
2. I don't know when the repairmen are going to get here.
3. I don't know why the desk just collapsed.

## 35. Differences between Adjectives and Adverbs

As we've learned, adjectives and adverbs act in similar but different roles. A lot of the time this difference can be seen in the structure of the words:

- A **clever** new idea.
- A **cleverly** developed idea.

*Clever* is an adjective, and *cleverly* is an adverb. This adjective + *ly* construction is a short-cut to identifying adverbs.

<https://youtu.be/b4KybdSiIFc>

While *-ly* is helpful, it's not a universal rule. Not all words that end in *-ly* are adverbs: *lovely*, *costly*, *friendly*, etc. Additionally, not all adverbs end in *-ly*: *here*, *there*, *together*, *yesterday*, *aboard*, *very*, *almost*, etc.

Some words can function both as an adjective and as an adverb:

- *Fast* is an adjective in “a **fast** car” (where it qualifies the noun *car*), but an adverb in “he drove fast” (where it modifies the verb *drove*).
- *Likely* is an adjective in “a likely outcome” (where it modifies the noun *outcome*), but an adverb in “we will likely go” (where it modifies the verb *go*).

## 36. Common Mistakes with Adjectives and Adverbs

### Adjectives

If you're a native English speaker, you may have noticed that “the big red house” sounds more natural than “the red big house.” The video below explains the order in which adjectives occur in English:



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here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=53#oembed-1>

### Practice

Select the adjectives that are in a natural sounding word order for each sentence.

1. She found a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ record in her attic
  - a. dusty, Jazz, old
  - b. old, dusty, Jazz
  - c. Jazz, dusty, old

2. He walked into a pole because he was distracted by a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ dog.
- a. adorable, tiny, brown
  - b. tiny, adorable, brown
  - c. tiny, brown, adorable
3. The crowd was astounded when the professional chess player arrived wearing a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ suit to his match.
- a. antique, blue, cashmere
  - b. cashmere, blue, antique
  - c. blue, antique, cashmere
4. For her daughter's birthday, she made a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ doll house.
- a. cute, wooden, yellow
  - b. wooden, yellow, cute
  - c. cute, yellow, wooden

Show Answers

- 1. b. old, dusty, Jazz
- 2. a. adorably, tiny, brown
- 3. a. antique, blue, cashmere
- 4. c. cute, yellow, wooden



# Adverbs

## *Only*

Have you ever noticed the effect the word *only* can have on a sentence, especially depending on where it's placed? Let's look at a simple sentence:

She loves horses.

Let's see how *only* can influence the meaning of this sentence:

- *Only* she loves horses.
  - No one loves horses but her.
- She *only* loves horses.
  - The one thing she does is love horses.
- She loves *only* horses.
  - She loves horses and nothing else.

*Only* modifies the word that directly follows it. Whenever you use the word *only* make sure you've placed it correctly in your sentence.

## *Literally*

A linguistic phenomenon is sweeping the nation: people are using *literally* as an intensifier. How many times have you heard things like “It was literally the worst thing that has ever happened to me,” or “His head literally exploded when I told him I was going to be late again”? Some people love this phrase while it makes other people want to pull their hair out.

So what's the problem with this? According to Merriam-Webster's Dictionary, the actual definition of *literal* is as follows:

- involving the ordinary or usual meaning of a word
- giving the meaning of each individual word
- completely true and accurate : not exaggerated<sup>1</sup>

According to this definition, *literally* should be used only when something actually happened. Our cultural usage may be slowly shifting to allow *literally* as an intensifier, but it's best to avoid using *literally* in any way other than its dictionary definition, especially in formal writing.

### *Practice*

Which of the following sentences use the adverb *literally* correctly?

1. A pirate only sails the seas.
2. Daveed often takes things too literally.
3. Tommy literally died when he heard the news.
4. In their vows, they promised to love only each other.
5. Teddy is literally the best person on the planet.

Show Answer

1. "[Literal](#)." Merriam-Webster.com. Merriam-Webster, n.d. Web. 20 June 2016.

1. This sentence is probably not true. It implies that a pirate sails the seas, and does nothing else. It may be an acceptable sentence if you're exaggerating on purpose, but a more likely sentence would be "A pirate sails only the seas." (A pirate sails the seas, and nowhere else.)
2. This sentence is correct.
3. This sentence is incorrect (hopefully). Try replacing *literally* with *practically* or *nearly*.
4. This sentence is correct.
5. This sentence may or may not be true; it's something that would be very hard to verify. When you're being purposefully hyperbolic, this may be okay in a non-formal setting, but you may want to consider replacing *literally* with an intensifier like *actually* or omitting the adverb altogether, since *literally* has such a stigma around it.

## Mistaking Adverbs and Adjectives

One common mistake with adjectives and adverbs is using one in the place of the other. For example:

- I wish I could write as neat as he can.
  - The word should be *neatly*, an adverb, since it's modifying a verb.
- Well, that's real nice of you.
  - Should be *really*, an adverb, since it's modifying an adjective

Remember, if you're modifying a noun or pronoun, you should use an adjective. If you're modifying anything else, you should use an adverb.

## *Good v. Well*

One of the most commonly confused adjective/adverb pairs is *good* versus *well*. There isn't really a good way to remember this besides memorization. *Good* is an adjective. *Well* is an adverb. Let's look at a couple of sentence where people often confuse these two:

- She plays basketball good.
- I'm doing good.

In the first sentence, *good* is supposed to be modifying *plays*, a verb; therefore the use of *good*—an adjective—is incorrect. *Plays* should be modified by an adverb. The correct sentence would read “She plays basketball well.”

In the second sentence, *good* is supposed to be modifying *doing*, a verb. Once again, this means that *well*—an adverb—should be used instead: “I'm doing well.”

**Note:** The sentence “I'm doing good” can be grammatically correct, but only when it means “I'm doing good things,” rather than when it is describing how a person is feeling.

## Practice

Select the correct modifier for each sentence:

1. Billy has to work (real / really) hard to be (healthy / healthily).
2. Kate is really (good / well) with bows. She shoots really (good / well).
3. Eli reads (quick / quickly), and he retains the information (good / well).

Show Answer

1. Billy has to work **really** hard to be **healthy**.
  - Remember that *to be* is a linking verb. Linking verbs often connect the subject of the sentence (Billy) to an adjective that describes it (*healthy*).
2. Kate is really **good** with bows. She shoots really **well**.
3. Eli reads **quickly**, and he retains the information **well**.

## 37. Practice Activities: Adjectives and Adverbs

## Adjectives

## Comparable or Non-Comparable?

Read the following passage. Identify the adjectives, and categorize them by comparable and non-comparable.

The Principality of Sealand has been described as the world's smallest nation. However, it is more accurate to describe it as an unrecognized micronation. It claims Roughs Tower, an offshore platform located approximately 7.5 miles off the coast of Suffolk, England, as its territory. Roughs Tower is a disused Maunsell Sea Fort, originally called HM Fort Roughs, built as an anti-aircraft defensive gun platform by the British during World War II.

Since 1967, the decommissioned HM Fort Roughs has been occupied by family and associates of Paddy Roy Bates, who claim that it is an independent sovereign state. However, Sealand is not officially recognized by any established sovereign state. Bates moved to the mainland when he became elderly, naming his son Michael regent.

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[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]
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Show Answer

The \_\_\_\_\_ adjectives  
are *smallest, accurate, unrecognized, Roughs, offshore, Roughs, disused, Maunsell Sea, anti-aircraft, defensive, gun,*

*decommissioned, independent, sovereign, recognized, established, sovereign, elderly*

Here's the passage again with all the adjectives bolded:

The Principality of Sealand has been described as the world's **smallest** nation. However, it is **more accurate** to describe it as an **unrecognized** micronation. It claims **Roughs** Tower, an **offshore** platform located approximately 7.5 miles off the coast of Suffolk, England, as its territory. **Roughs** Tower is a **disused Maunsell Sea** Fort, originally called HM Fort Roughs, built as an **anti-aircraft defensive gun** platform by the British during World War II.

Since 1967, the **decommissioned** HM Fort Roughs has been occupied by family and associates of Paddy Roy Bates, who claim that it is an **independent sovereign** state. However, Sealand is not officially **recognized** by any **established sovereign** state. Bates moved to the mainland when he became **elderly**, naming his son Michael regent.

The comparable adjectives are *smallest, accurate, unrecognized, offshore, disused, defensive, independent, recognized, established, and elderly*.

The non-comparable adjectives are *Roughs, Maunsell Sea, anti-aircraft, gun, decommissioned, and sovereign*. As you can see, several of these non-comparable adjectives are places or things that have acted as adjectives in this passage (like *Maunsell Sea* and *gun*).

Now that you've identified the comparable adjectives, write their comparative and superlative forms in the text frame below:

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

Adjective	Comparative	Superlative
small	smaller	smallest
accurate	more accurate	most accurate
unrecognized	more unrecognized	most unrecognized
offshore	more offshore	most offshore
disused	more disused	most disused
defensive	more defensive	most defensive
independent	more independent	most independent
recognized	more recognized	most recognized
established	more established	most established
elderly	more elderly	most elderly

## Adjective Order

Read the following sentences. Are the adjectives in the correct order? Type any corrections in the text frame below:

1. Ramin was throwing a party out at his ancient stone big house.
2. Can you believe James lost his leather dumb Italian wallet?
3. Sofia was transfixed by that green big singing fish.
4. He bought a pink new nice bouquet of flowers.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

1. *Ancient* describes age, *stone* describes material, and *big* describes size. The correct order would be size, age, material:
  - Ramin was throwing a party out at his big ancient stone house.
2. *Leather* describes material, *dumb* describes opinion, and *Italian*



describes origin. The correct order would be opinion, origin, material:

- Can you believe James lost his dumb Italian leather wallet?
3. *Green* describes color, *big* describes size, and *singing* describes purpose. The correct order would be size, color, purpose:
- Sofia was transfixed by that big green singing fish.
4. *Pink* describes color, *new* describes age, *nice* describes opinion. The correct order would be opinion, age, color:
- He bought a nice new pink bouquet of flowers.

## Adverbs

### Intensifiers and Adverbs of Degree

Read the following passage and identify the adverbs. Are the intensifiers and adverbs of degree being used well? Or would you suggest revision? The sentences have been numbered to aid you in your comments.

(1) Wojtek (usually spelled Voytek in English) was a Syrian brown bear found in Iran and literally adopted by soldiers of the 22nd Artillery Supply Company of the Polish II Corps. (2) Wojtek initially had problems swallowing and was fed with condensed milk from an old vodka bottle. (3) Later in life, he was oftenly rewarded with beer, which became his favorite drink. (4) He really also enjoyed smoking (or eating) cigarettes.

(5) To get him onto a British transport ship when the unit sailed from Egypt, Wojtek was officially drafted into the Polish

Army as a Private and was listed among the soldiers of the 22nd Artillery Supply Company. (6) As an enlisted soldier of the company, with his own paybook, rank, and serial number, he lived either with the other soldiers in tents or by himself in a special wooden crate, which was transported by truck. (7) According to numerous accounts, Wojtek helped by carrying ammunition during the Battle of Monte Cassino—he never dropped a single crate. (8) In recognition of the bear's immensely popularity, the HQ approved a depiction of a bear carrying an artillery shell as the official emblem of the 22nd Company.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

1. The adverb *literally* is misused here. The soldiers did not actually adopt the bear (filling out papers), they simply took the bear in. The best solution is to omit the adverb entirely.
2. The adverb *initially* is used correctly.
3. The adverb *later* is correct; *oftenly* is not a word; the correct word is *often*.
4. Should be *also really*, not *really also*. *Also* is modifying the phrase “really enjoyed smoking,” so it should come before the phrase, not in the middle of it.
5. The adverb *officially* is used correctly.
6. There are no adverbs in this sentence.
7. The adverb *never* is used correctly.
8. *Immensely* should be the adjective *immense*. *Popularity* is a noun.

## 38. Introduction to Other Parts of Speech

We've covered the majority of parts of speech: nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. So, what's left?

What remains are the little connecting word categories: conjunctions, prepositions, and articles. These small words may not seem as important as verbs, nouns, and adjectives, but they are the backbone of English: these are the words that give our language structure.



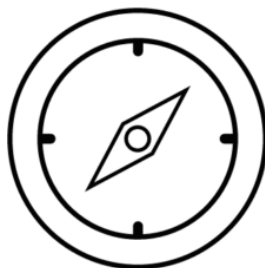
- Conjunctions connect words and ideas together.
- Prepositions indicate relationships.
- Articles provide information about nouns.

## 39. Conjunctions

Conjunctions are the words that join sentences, phrases, and other words together. Conjunctions are divided into several categories, all of which follow different rules. We will discuss coordinating conjunctions, adverbial conjunctions, and correlative conjunctions.

### Coordinating Conjunctions

The most common conjunctions are *and*, *or*, and *but*. These are all **coordinating conjunctions**. Coordinating conjunctions are conjunctions that join, or coordinate, two or more equivalent items (such as words, phrases, or sentences). The mnemonic acronym



FANBOYS can be used to remember the most common coordinating conjunctions: *for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, and *so*.

- **For:** presents a reason (“They do not gamble or smoke, for they are ascetics.”)
- **And:** presents non-contrasting items or ideas (“They gamble, and they smoke.”)
- **Nor:** presents a non-contrasting negative idea (“They do not gamble, nor do they smoke.”)
- **But:** presents a contrast or exception (“They gamble, but they don’t smoke.”)
- **Or:** presents an alternative item or idea (“Every day they gamble, or they smoke.”)
- **Yet:** presents a contrast or exception (“They gamble, yet they

don't smoke.”)

- **So:** presents a consequence (“He gambled well last night, so he smoked a cigar to celebrate.”)

Here are some examples of these used in sentences:

- Nuclear-powered artificial hearts proved to be complicated, bulky, **and** expensive.
- In the 1960s, artificial heart devices did not fit well **and** tended to obstruct the flow of venous blood into the right atrium.
- The blood vessels leading to the device tended to kink, obstructing the filling of the chambers **and** resulting in inadequate output.
- Any external injury **or** internal injury put patients at risk of uncontrolled bleeding because the small clots that formed throughout the circulatory system used up so much of the clotting factor.
- The current from the storage batteries can power lights, **but** the current for appliances must be modified within an inverter.

## *Practice*

Are the correct coordinating conjunctions being used in each of the following sentences? Explain your reasoning why or why not:

1. I love boxing or sewing. They're both a lot of fun.
2. Martin is pretty good at writing, for Jaden is better.
3. Juana had to choose. Would she join the red team and the blue team?

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

### Show Answer

1. The conjunction *or* presents an alternative. However, the second sentence indicates that the speaker enjoys both activities. The correct sentence would use *and*: “I love boxing **and** sewing. They’re both a lot of fun.”
2. The conjunction *for* presents a reason. It’s unlikely that Jaden being better is the reason Martin is pretty good at writing, so a different conjunction should be used. *But* would be a good fit here, since the ideas contrast: “Martin is pretty good at writing, **but** Jaden is better.”
3. The conjunction *and* presents non-contrasting items or ideas. Since the first sentence sets up a choice, we know that Juana can’t be on both teams. The conjunction *or* presents an alternative and is the correct conjunction to use in this sentence: “Would she join the red team **or** the blue team?”

As you can see from the examples above, a comma only appears before these conjunctions sometimes. So how can you tell if you need a comma or not? There are three general rules to help you decide.

## Rule 1: Joining Two Complete Ideas

Let’s look back at one of our example sentences:

The current from the storage batteries can power lights, but the current for appliances must be modified within an inverter.

There are two complete ideas in this sentence. A complete idea

has both a subject (a noun or pronoun) and a verb. The subjects have been italicized, and the verbs bolded:

- the *current* from the storage batteries **can power** lights
- the *current* for appliances **must be modified** within an inverter.

Because each of these ideas could stand alone as a sentence, the coordinating conjunction that joins them must be preceded by a comma. Otherwise you'll have a run-on sentence.

Run-on sentences are one of the most common errors in college-level writing. Mastering the partnership between commas and coordinating conjunctions will go a long way towards resolving many run-on sentence issues in your writing. We'll talk more about run-ons a strategies to avoid them in [Run-on Sentences](#).

## Rule 2: Joining Two Similar Items

So what if there's only one complete idea, but two subjects or two verbs?

- Any external injury or internal injury put patients at risk of uncontrolled bleeding because the small clots that formed throughout the circulatory system used up so much of the clotting factor.
  - This sentence has two subjects: *external injury* and *internal injury*. They are joined with the conjunction *and*; we don't need any additional punctuation here.

- In the 1960s, artificial heart devices did not fit well and tended to obstruct the flow of venous blood into the right atrium.
  - This sentence has two verbs: *did not fit well* and *tended to obstruct*. They are joined with the conjunction *and*; we don't need any additional punctuation here.

## Rule 3: Joining Three or More Similar Items

So what do you do if there are three or more items?

- Anna loves to run, David loves to hike, and Luz loves to dance.
- Fishing, hunting, and gathering were once the only ways for people do get food.
- Emanuel has a very careful schedule planned for tomorrow. He needs to work, study, exercise, eat, and clean.

As you can see in the examples above, there is a comma after each item, including the item just prior to the conjunction. There is a little bit of contention about this, but overall, most styles prefer to keep the additional comma (also called the serial comma). We discuss the serial comma in more depth in [Commas](#).

### *Starting a Sentence*

Many students are taught—and some style guides maintain—that English sentences should not start with coordinating conjunctions.

This video shows that this idea is not actually a rule. And



it provides some background for why so many people may have adopted this writing convention:



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

<https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=56#oembed-1>

## *Practice*

Are the following sentences correctly punctuated?

1. Ricardo finished one song today and he wants to get three more done by the end of the week.
2. My sisters leave their shoes all over the house, and forget where they put them.
3. I wanted to call my friend, but she lost her phone a few days ago.
4. Vesna had already chosen the green car so I took the blue one.
5. Do you want to go to the planetarium or to the bowling alley?

Show Answer

1. Incorrect: a comma is required before *and*.
  - Ricardo finished one song today, and he wants to get three more done by the end of the week.
2. Incorrect: there is no comma required before *and*.
  - My sisters leave their shoes all over the house and forget where they put them.
3. Correct.
4. Incorrect: a comma is required before *so*.
  - Vesna had already chosen the green car, so I took the blue one.
5. Correct.

## Adverbial Conjunctions

*Adverbial conjunctions* link two separate thoughts or sentences. When used to separate thoughts, as in the example below, a comma is required on either side of the conjunction.

The first artificial hearts were made of smooth silicone rubber, which apparently caused excessive clotting and, **therefore**, uncontrolled bleeding.



When used to separate sentences, as in the examples below, a semicolon is required before the conjunction and a comma after.

- The Kedeco produces 1200 watts in 17 mph winds using a 16-foot rotor; **on the other hand**, the Dunlite produces 2000 watts in 25 mph winds.
- For short periods, the fibers were beneficial; **however**, the eventual buildup of fibrin on the inner surface of the device would impair its function.
- The atria of the heart contribute a negligible amount of energy; **in fact**, the total power output of the heart is only about 2.5 watts.

Adverbial conjunctions include the following words; however, it is important to note that this is by no means a complete list.

---

therefore	however	in other words
thus	then	otherwise
nevertheless	on the other hand	in fact

---

## *Practice*

Fill in the missing punctuation marks for the sentences below. Type the corrected sentences in the text frame below:

1. My roommate decided to drive to work \_\_  
therefore \_\_ I decided to get a ride with her.
2. We needed to turn left on 140th Street. That street  
\_\_ however \_\_ was under construction.
3. In other words \_\_ we couldn't turn on the street

we needed to.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

1. My roommate decided to drive to work \_\_;\_\_  
therefore \_\_,\_\_ I decided to get a ride with her.
  - There is a complete idea before and after *therefore*. Thus, this sentence needs a semicolon (or a period) before the conjunction and a comma afterward.
2. We needed to turn left on 140th Street. That street \_\_,\_\_ however \_\_,\_\_ was under construction.
  - *However* comes in the middle of a complete idea; it just needs commas on either side of it.
3. In other words \_\_,\_\_ we couldn't turn on the street we needed to.
  - *In other words* comes before a complete idea. We just need a comma at the end of the conjunction.

## Correlative Conjunctions

**Correlative conjunctions** are word pairs that work together to join words and groups of words of equal weight in a sentence. This video will define this types of conjunction before it goes through five of the most common correlative conjunctions:



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here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=56#oembed-2>

The table below shows some examples of correlative conjunctions being used in a sentence:

Correlative Conjunction	Example
either...or	You <b>either</b> do your work <b>or</b> prepare for a trip to the office. (Either do, or prepare)
neither...nor	<b>Neither</b> the basketball team <b>nor</b> the football team is doing well.
not only...but (also)	He is <b>not only</b> handsome, <b>but also</b> brilliant. (Not only A, but also B) <b>Not only</b> is he handsome, <b>but also</b> he is brilliant. (Not only is he A, but also he is B.)
both...and	<b>Both</b> the cross country team <b>and</b> the swimming team are doing well.
whether...or	You must decide <b>whether</b> you stay <b>or</b> you go. (It's up to you) <b>Whether</b> you stay <b>or</b> you go, the film must start at 8 pm. (It's not up to you)
just as...so	<b>Just as</b> many Americans love basketball, <b>so</b> many Canadians love ice hockey.
as much...as	Football is <b>as much</b> an addiction <b>as</b> it is a sport.
no sooner...than	<b>No sooner</b> did she learn to ski, <b>than</b> the snow began to thaw.
rather...than	I would <b>rather</b> swim <b>than</b> surf.
the...the	<b>The</b> more you practice dribbling, <b>the</b> better you will be at it.
as...as	Football is <b>as</b> fast <b>as</b> hockey (is (fast)).

## Practice

Rewrite the following items. Your new sentences should use correlative conjunctions. Type your revisions in the text frame below:

1. She finished packing right when the moving truck

showed up.

2. There are two shifts you can work: Thursday night or Saturday afternoon.
3. Chemistry and physics are both complex.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

1. The only correlative conjunction that deals with time is *no sooner...than*. Your sentence should look something like “**No sooner** did she finish packing, **than** the moving truck showed up.”
2. There are two correlative conjunctions that involve a positive choice: *either...or* and *whether...or* (*Neither...nor* involves a negative choice). Your revision should look something like one of these:
  - You can work **either** Thursday night **or** Saturday afternoon.
  - You must choose **whether** you will work Thursday night **or** Saturday afternoon.
3. There are two correlative conjunctions that involve similar items: *as...as* and *just as...as*. Your revision should look something like one of these:
  - Chemistry is **as** complex **as** physics.
  - **Just as** chemistry is complex, **so** physics is complex.

# Subordinating Conjunctions

**Subordinating conjunctions**, are conjunctions that join an independent clause and a dependent clause. Here are some examples of subordinating conjunctions:



- The heart undergoes two cardiac cycle periods: diastole, **when** blood enters the ventricles, and systole, **when** the ventricles contract and blood is pumped out of the heart.
- **Whenever** an electron acquires enough energy to leave its orbit, the atom is positively charged.
- **If** the wire is broken, electrons will cease to flow and current is zero.
- I'll be here **as long as** it takes for you to finish.
- She did the favor **so that** he would owe her one.

Let's take a moment to look back at the previous examples. Can you see the pattern in comma usage? The commas aren't dependent on the presence subordinating conjunctions—they're dependent on the placement of clauses they're in. Let's revisit a couple examples and see if we can figure out the exact rules:

- The heart undergoes two cardiac cycle periods: diastole, **when** blood enters the ventricles, and systole, **when** the ventricles contract and blood is pumped out of the heart.
  - These clauses are both extra information: information that is good to know, but not necessary for the meaning of the sentence. This means they need commas on either side.
- **Whenever** an electron acquires enough energy to leave its orbit, the atom is positively charged.



- In this sentence, the dependent clause comes before an independent clause. This means it should be followed by a comma.
- She did the favor **so that** he would owe her one.
  - In this sentence, the independent clause comes before an dependent clause. This means no comma is required.

The most common subordinating conjunctions in the English language are shown in the table below:

after	although	as	as far as	as if	as long as	as soon as
as though	because	before	even if	even though	every time	if
in order that	since	so	so that	than	though	unless
until	when	whenever	where	whereas	wherever	while



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odessaenglishcomp2/?p=56#oembed-3](https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=56#oembed-3)

## Practice

All of the commas have been removed from the following passage. Re-type the passage in the text frame below,

adding in the correct punctuation. Identify all of the subordinating conjunctions as well.

Thales came to the silent auction in order to win the chance to be drawn by his favorite artist. Before anyone else could bid Thales went to the bidding sheet and placed an aggressive bid. He knew he would have to come back and check on it while the auction was still open but he felt confident in his ability to win. He was determined to win the auction even if it took all of his money to do so.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

Here is the passage again. The subordinating conjunctions have been bolded, and the correct commas added:

Thales came to the silent auction **in order** to win the chance to be drawn by his favorite artist. **Before** anyone else could bid \_\_, \_\_ Thales went to the bidding sheet and placed an aggressive bid. He knew he would have to come back and check on it **while** the auction was still open \_\_, \_\_ but he felt confident in his ability to win. He was determined to win the auction **even if it took** all of his money to do so.

Note that the comma following the dependent clause “while the auction was still open” is because of the coordinating conjunction *but*, not because of the subordinate conjunction at the beginning of the clause.

# 40. Practice Activities: Conjunctions

## Coordinating Conjunctions

In this practice, you will combine multiple sentences into a single sentence. For example, look at the sentences “Clint was very skilled at his job. Wade was very skilled at his job.” You would combine these two sentences into something like this, using coordinating conjunctions:

- Clint and Wade were both very skilled at their jobs.
- Clint was very skilled at his job, and Wade was too.

When you combine sentences, you can remove repeated information. As you complete this exercise, type your answers in the text frame below.

1. Wade was really impressed by Clint. Wade was anxious about working with him.
2. Clint thought Wade was annoying. Clint thought Wade was unpredictable. Clint thought Wade was possibly dangerous.
3. In the end, Clint worked well with Wade. In the end, Wade worked well with Clint.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

While there are several possible answers, let's walk through a couple of options for each item.

1. In this first item, both sentences have the same

subject: *Wade*. Since they have the same subject, we can turn these two sentences into a single sentence with two verbs. Since the ideas present a contrast, the conjunction *but* is a good choice for this sentence:

- Wade was really impressed by Clint but was anxious about working with him.
  - Wade was really impressed by Clint, but he was anxious about working with Clint.
2. All three of the sentences in this item have the same subject and verb. We can combine them together by joining these three similar items:
- Clint thought Wade was annoying, unpredictable, and possibly dangerous.
3. This last item is a little trickier. While the two sentences are very similar, they have different subjects and objects (the thing the sentence does something to or with). We could combine just the introductory phrase and then join the two sentences together, or we could change the wording of the sentence a little bit:
- In the end, Clint worked well with Wade, and Wade worked well with Clint.
  - In the end, Clint and Wade worked well together.

## Different Types of Conjunctions

All of the conjunctions have been removed from the following passage. Which conjunctions would best fill the gaps? Explain your reasoning why. The sentences have been numbered to aid you in your comments.

(1) Karni's roommate, Joana, decided to drive to work; \_\_\_\_\_, Karni rode into the city with her. (2) They needed to turn left on 140th Street, \_\_\_\_\_ that street was under construction. (3) \_\_\_\_\_ Karni could say anything, \_\_\_\_\_, Joana had already found an alternate route.

(4) \_\_\_\_\_ did Karni arrive at work, \_\_\_\_\_ her boss told her she would be working with her coworker Ian on her next project. (5) Karni was really impressed by Ian's professional accomplishments, \_\_\_\_\_ she was anxious about working with him. (6) Karni thought Ian was annoying, unpredictable, \_\_\_\_\_ reckless.

(7) \_\_\_\_\_, Karni was willing to put aside her opinions to get the job done. (8) She knew Ian would put in his best effort \_\_\_\_\_ they worked together, \_\_\_\_\_ she felt she could do no less—\_\_\_\_\_ he frustrated her. (9) Personal relationships are often \_\_\_\_\_ important \_\_\_\_\_ professional skills.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

Here are the sentences with suggested conjunctions. These are not the only possible solutions. If you answered something different, compare your reasoning with the reasoning provided below.

1. Karni's roommate, Joana, decided to drive to work; **therefore**, Karni rode into the city with her.
  - As the punctuation currently exists (a semicolon followed by a comma), the sentence needs an adverbial conjunction. However, using *therefore* here feels a little stuffy. If you change the semicolon to a comma and remove the second comma, you can then use the coordinating conjunction *so* instead, which feels more natural: ". . . , so Karni rode into the city with her."
2. They needed to turn left on 140th Street, **but** that street was under construction.

- Since the blank is preceded only by a comma, a coordinating conjunction should go here. The conjunction *but* has the most appropriate meaning in this sentence.
3. **Before** Karni could say anything, **however**, Joana had already found an alternate route.
- Since there is no comma after the first blank, we know we need a subordinating conjunction here. *Before* makes the most sense here.
  - Since this blank appears in the middle of an idea, we know we need an adverbial conjunction here. *However* makes the most sense here.
4. **No sooner** did Karni arrive at work, **than** her boss told her she would be working with her coworker Ian on her next project.
- The two blanks in this sentence indicate a correlative conjunction. The sentence indicates the two things happened at the same time, so *no sooner . . . than* is the correct option here.
5. Karni was really impressed by Ian's professional accomplishments, **but** she was anxious about working with him.
- Since the blank is preceded only by a comma, a coordinating conjunction should go here. The conjunction *but* has the most appropriate meaning in this sentence.
6. Karni thought Ian was annoying, unpredictable, **and** reckless.
- Since the blank is preceded only by a comma, a coordinating conjunction should go here. The conjunction *and* has the most appropriate meaning in this sentence.

7. **However**, Karni was willing to put aside her opinions to get the job done.
- Since the blank is followed by a comma, we know we need an adverbial conjunction here. *However* makes the most sense here.
8. She knew Ian would put in his best effort **while** they worked together, **so** she felt she could do no less—**even if** he frustrated her.
- Since there is no comma before or after the first blank, we know we need a subordinating conjunction here. *While* makes the most sense here, but *as long as* or *if* would also work.
  - Since the blank is preceded only by a comma, a coordinating conjunction should go here. The conjunction *so* has the most appropriate meaning in this sentence.
  - This blank is a little trickier; it is preceded by a dash, which can stand in for a lot of different punctuation marks. A subordinating conjunction is likely the best solution. We've used *even if* here, but there are a lot of possibilities, including *even though*.
9. Personal relationships are often **as** important **as** professional skills.
- The two blanks in this sentence indicate a correlative conjunction. The sentence indicates the two things of equal importance, so *as . . . as* is the correct option here.

## 41. Prepositions

Prepositions are relation words; they can indicate location, time, or other more abstract relationships. Prepositions are noted in bold in these examples:



- The woods **behind** my house are super creepy **at** night.
- She sang **until** three in the morning.
- He was happy **for** them.

A preposition combines with another word (usually a noun or pronoun) called the complement. Prepositions are still in bold, and their complements are in italics:

- The woods **behind** *my house* are super creepy **at** *night*.
- She sang **until** *three in the morning*.
- He was happy **for** *them*.

Prepositions generally come before their complements (e.g., **in** England, **under** the table, **of** Jane). However, there are a small handful of exceptions, including **notwithstanding** and **ago**:

- *Financial limitations* **notwithstanding**, Phil paid back his debts.
- He was released *three days* **ago**.

Prepositions of location are pretty easily defined (*near*, *far*, *over*, *under*, etc.), and prepositions about time are as well (*before*, *after*, *at*, *during*, etc.). Prepositions of “more abstract relationships,” however,



are a little more nebulous in their definition. The video below gives a good overview of this category of prepositions:



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

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=58#oembed-1>

**Note:** The video said that prepositions are a closed group, but it never actually explained what a closed group is. Perhaps the easiest way to define a closed group is to define its opposite: an open group. An open group is a part of speech allows new words to be added. For example, nouns are an open group; new nouns, like *selfie* and *blog*, enter the language all the time (verbs, adjectives, and adverbs are open groups as well).

Thus a closed group simply refers to a part of speech that doesn't allow in new words. All of the word types in this section—prepositions, articles, and conjunctions—are closed groups.

So far, all of the prepositions we've looked at have been one word (and most of them have been one syllable). The most common prepositions are one-syllable words. According to one ranking, the most common English prepositions are *on*, *in*, *to*, *by*, *for*, *with*, *at*, *of*, *from*, *as*.

There are also some prepositions that have more than one word:

- in spite of (She made it to work in spite of the terrible traffic.)
- by means of (He traveled by means of boat.)
- except for (Joan invited everyone to her party except for Ben.)
- next to (Go ahead and sit down next to Jean-Claude.)

## Practice

Identify the prepositions in the following sentences:

1. I love every painting by Vermeer except for *The Girl with the Pearl Earring*.
2. In spite of their fight, Beatriz wanted to know if she would still see Alexandre before lunch.
3. He only talks about two things: his band and his dogs.

Show Answer

The prepositions have been bolded in the sentences below:

1. I love every painting **by** Vermeer **except for** *The Girl **with** the Pearl Earring*.
2. **In spite of** their fight, Beatriz wanted to know if she would still see Alexandre **before** lunch.
3. He only talks **about** two things: his band and his dogs.

## Using Prepositions

A lot of struggles with prepositions come from trying to use the

correct preposition. Some verbs require specific prepositions. Here's a table of some of the most commonly misused preposition/verb pairs:

different from	comply with	dependent on	think of or about
need of	profit by	glad of	bestow upon

Some verbs take a different preposition, depending on the object of the sentence:

agree with a person	agree to a proposition	part from (a person)	part with (a thing)
differ from (person or thing)	differ from or with an opinion	confide in (to trust in)	confide to (to intrust to)
reconcile with (a person)	reconcile to (a statement or idea)	confer on (to give)	confer with (to talk with)
compare with (to determine value)	compare to (because of similarity)	convenient to (a place)	convenient for (a purpose)

When multiple objects take the same preposition, you don't need to repeat the preposition. For example, in the sentence "I'll read any book by J.K. Rowling or R. L. Stine," both *J. K. Rowling* and *R. L. Stine* are objects of the preposition *by*, so it only needs to appear once in the sentence. However, you can't do this when you have different prepositions. Let's look at this using a common phrase: "We fell out of the frying pan and into the fire." If you leave out one of the prepositions, as in "We fell out of the frying pan and the fire," the sentence is saying that we fell out of the frying pan *and* out of the fire, which would be preferable, but isn't the case in this idiom.

## Prepositions in Sentences

You'll often hear about **prepositional phrases**. A prepositional

phrase includes a preposition and its complement (e.g., “**behind** the house” or “**a long time ago**”). These phrases can appear at the beginning or end of sentences. When they appear at the beginning of a sentence, they typically need a comma afterwards:

- You can drop that off behind the house.
- A long time ago, dinosaurs roamed the earth.
- As the saying goes, hard work always pays off.

## Ending a Sentence with a Preposition



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here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=58#oembed-2>

As we just learned, it is totally okay to end a sentence with a preposition. And, as we saw, it can often make your writing smoother and more concise to do so.

However, it's still best to avoid doing it unnecessarily. If your sentence ends with a preposition and would still mean the same thing without the preposition, take it out. For example:

- Where are you at?
- That's not what it's used for.

If you remove *at*, the sentence becomes “Where are you?” This means the same thing, so removing *at* is a good idea. However, if you remove *for*, the sentence becomes “That's not what it's used,” which doesn't make sense.

## Practice

Read each sentence and determine if the prepositions are being used correctly. If they are not, re-write the sentence.

1. Do you have any idea why Olivia keeps calling for?
2. You have no idea how much trouble you're in.
3. Luiz agreed with hand his credit card over to the cashier.
4. Last week Ngozi reconciled to the new prices and her new co-worker.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

1. Incorrect. The preposition *for* does not work with the preposition *why*. There are two potential revisions for this sentence:
  - Do you have any idea *why* Olivia keeps calling?
  - Do you have any idea **what** Olivia keeps calling **for**?
2. Correct. The preposition **in** at the end of the sentence is necessary. "You have no idea how much trouble you are" means something different than the sentence's original intent.
3. Incorrect. The preposition is **with**. You agree with a person or an idea, but you agree to do something:
  - Luiz agreed **to** hand his credit card to the cashier.

- Luiz agreed **with** handing his credit card to the cashier.
  - This sentence is still awkward; the first revision is the best choice.
- 4. Incorrect. There's a missing preposition in the sentence. It should read: "Last week Ngozi reconciled to the new prices and with her new co-worker." You reconcile to a fact and *with* a person.

## 42. Articles

There are three articles in the English language: *the*, *a*, and *an*. These are divided into two types of articles: definite (*the*) and indefinite (*a*, *an*). The definite article indicates a level of specificity that the indefinite does not. “An apple” could refer to any apple; however “the apple” is referring back to a specific apple.

Thus, when using the definite article, the speaker assumes the listener knows the identity of the noun’s referent (because it is obvious, because it is common knowledge, or because it was mentioned in the same sentence or an earlier sentence). Use of an indefinite article implies that the speaker assumes the listener does not have to be told the identity of the referent.

There are also cases where no article is required:

- with generic nouns (plural or uncountable): *cars have accelerators*, *happiness is contagious*, referring to cars in general and happiness in general (compare *the happiness I felt yesterday*, specifying particular happiness);
- with many proper names: *Sabrina*, *France*, *London*, etc.

Watch this quick introduction to indefinite and definite articles and the difference between the two:



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

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=59#oembed-1>

## Indefinite Article

The indefinite article of English takes the two forms *a* and *an*. These can be regarded as meaning “one,” usually without emphasis.

### Distinction between *a* and *an*

You’ve probably learned the rule that *an* comes before a vowel, and that *a* comes before a consonant. While this is generally true, it’s more accurate to say that *an* comes before a vowel *sound*, and *a* comes before a consonant *sound*. Let’s look at a couple of examples with *a*:



- *a box*
- *a HEPA filter* (HEPA is pronounced as a word rather than as letters)
- *a one-armed bandit* (pronounced “won. . .”)
- *a unicorn* (pronounced “yoo. . .”)

Let’s try it again with *an*:



- *an apple*
- *an EPA policy* (the letter E read as a letter still starts with a vowel sound)
- *an SSO* (pronounced “es-es-oh”)
- *an hour* (the *h* is silent)
- *an heir* (pronounced “air”)



**Note:** Some speakers and writers use *an* before a word beginning with the sound *h* in an unstressed syllable: *an historical novel*, *an hotel*. However, where the *h* is clearly pronounced, this usage is now less common, and *a* is preferred.

## *Practice*

Look at the following words. When they require an indefinite article, should it be *a* or *an*?

1. ewe
2. SEO specialist
3. apple
4. URL
5. herb

Show Answer

1. a ewe: The word is pronounced “you”; it starts with a consonant sound.
2. an SEO specialist: The word is pronounced “es-ee-oh”; it starts with a vowel sound.
3. an apple: The word starts with, *a*, a vowel sound.
4. a URL: The word is pronounced “yoo-ar-el”; it starts with a consonant sound.
5. an herb: The *h* is silent, so the word is pronounced “erb”; it starts with a vowel sound.

## Definite Article



The definite article *the* is used when the referent of the noun phrase is assumed to be unique or known from the context. For example, in the sentence “The boy with glasses was looking at the moon,” it is assumed that in the context the reference can only be to one boy and one moon.

*The* can be used with both singular and plural nouns, with nouns of any gender, and with nouns that start with any letter. This is different from many other languages which have different articles for different genders or numbers. *The* is the most commonly used word in the English language.

### *Practice*

Choose the article that should go in each sentence:

1. Every day, I eat (a / an / the) egg salad sandwich.
2. I love looking at (a / an / the) stars with you.
3. Dani was planning to buy (a / an / the) book she had been eyeing as soon as she got paid.
4. (A / An / The) brain like that will get you far in life.

Show Answer

1.     an; Every day, I eat **an** egg salad sandwich.
  - Since you can only eat a sandwich once, there must be a different sandwich every day—thus we need an indefinite article. *Egg* starts with an *e* sound, so it requires *an* not *a*.
2.     the; I love looking at **the** stars with you.
  - *stars* is plural, so it cannot take an indefinite article
3.     the; Dani was planning to buy **the** book she had been eyeing as soon as she got paid.
  - While *a* would be an acceptable answer (as *book* starts with a consonant sound), the sentence implies that there is a specific book she wants. Thus, the definite article is required.
4.     a; **A** brain like that will get you far in life.
  - The sentence is about one “brain like that”; there could be several, but the sentence is just talking about one. Thus, the indefinite article is required. *Brain* starts with a consonant sound, so *a* is required, not *an*.

## Word Order

In most cases, the article is the first word of its noun phrase, preceding all other adjectives and modifiers.

*The* little old red bag held *a* very big surprise.

There are a few exceptions, however:

- Certain determiners, such as *all*, *both*, *half*, *double*, precede the definite article when used in combination (*all the team*, *both the girls*, *half the time*, *double the amount*).
- *Such* and *what* precede the indefinite article (*such an idiot*, *what a day!*).
- Adjectives qualified by *too*, *so*, *as* and *how* generally precede the indefinite article: *too great a loss*, *so hard a problem*, *as delicious an apple as I have ever tasted*, *I know how pretty a girl she is*.
- When adjectives are qualified by *quite* (particularly when it means “fairly”), the word *quite* (but not the adjective itself) often precedes the indefinite article: *quite a long letter*. **Note:** the phrase *a quite long letter* is also a correct construction. However the two have different meanings:
  - In *quite a long letter*, *quite* modifies *letter*: it’s quite a letter.
  - In *a quite long letter*, *quite* modifies *long*: the letter is quite long.

## Practice

Read the following passage and make any necessary changes. Explain your reasoning for each change.

A Hubble Space Telescope (HST) is a space telescope that was launched into low Earth orbit in 1990, and remains in operation. Although not the first space telescope, Hubble is one of the largest and most versatile, and is well known as both an vital research tool and an public relations boon for astronomy. The HST is named after the astronomer Edwin Hubble.

Hubble's orbit outside the distortion of Earth's atmosphere allows it to take extremely high-resolution images. Hubble has recorded the some of most detailed visible-light images ever, allowing the deep view into space and time.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

Here is the corrected passage. Each correction has been numbered. Explanations for each correction are given below the passage.

(1) **The** Hubble Space Telescope (HST) is a space telescope that was launched into low Earth orbit in 1990, and remains in operation. Although not the first space telescope, Hubble is one of the largest and most versatile, and is well known as both (2) **a** vital research tool and (3) **a** public relations boon for astronomy. The HST is named after the astronomer Edwin Hubble.

Hubble's orbit outside the distortion of Earth's atmosphere allows it to take extremely high-resolution images. Hubble has recorded (4) **some of the** most detailed visible-light images ever, allowing (5) **a** deep view into space and time.

So why were these changes necessary?

1. There is only one Hubble Space Telescope, so it requires the definite article: *the*.
2. *Vital* starts with a consonant sound, so it requires *a* not *an*.
3. *Public* starts with a consonant sound, so it requires *a* not *an*.
4. As we discussed, phrases like "some of" are

exceptions to the general word order rule, and they come before articles.

5. There are several different views into space, and this is just one of them. Thus, we need to use the indefinite article. *Deep* starts with a consonant, so it requires *a* not *an*.

PART III

## MODULE 2: PUNCTUATION





## 43. Introduction to Punctuation

### Identify Common Punctuation Marks and Their Rules for Correct Usage

In this short skit, comedian Victor Borge illustrates just how prevalent punctuation is (or should be) in language.

[https://youtu.be/Qf\\_TDuhk3No](https://youtu.be/Qf_TDuhk3No)

As you've just heard, punctuation is everywhere. While it can be a struggle at first to learn the rules that come along with each mark, punctuation is here to help you: these marks were invented to guide readers through passages—to let them know how and where words relate to each other. When you learn the rules of punctuation, you equip yourself with an extensive toolset so you can better craft language to communicate the exact message you want.



As we mentioned at the beginning of this module, different style

guides have slightly different rules for grammar. This is especially true when it comes to punctuation. This outcome will cover the MLA rules for punctuation, but we'll also make note of rules from other styles when they're significantly different.

## 44. Ending Punctuation

There are three common punctuation marks that come at the end of a sentence: the period (.), the question mark (?), and the exclamation point (!). A sentence is always followed by a single space, no matter what the concluding punctuation is.

### Periods

Periods indicate a neutral sentence, and as such are by far the most common ending punctuation mark. They've been at the end of every sentence on this page so far.



### Question Marks

A question mark comes at the end of a question. A question is a request for information. The information requested should be provided in the form of an answer.

A rhetorical question is asked to make a point, and does not expect an answer (often the answer is implied or obvious). Some questions are used principally as polite requests (e.g., “Would you pass the salt?”).



All of these questions can be categorized as direct questions, and all of these questions require a question mark at their ends.

## Indirect Questions

Indirect questions can be used in many of the same ways as direct ones, but they often emphasize knowledge or lack of knowledge:

- I can't guess **how Tamika managed it**.
- I wonder **whether I looked that bad**.
- Cecil asked **where the reports were**.

Such clauses correspond to **direct questions**, which are questions actually asked. The direct questions corresponding to the examples above are *How did Tamika manage it?* *Did I look that bad?* *Where are the reports?* Notice how different word order is used in direct and indirect questions: in direct questions the verb usually comes before the subject, while indirect questions the verb appears second. Additionally, question marks should not be used at the end of indirect questions.

### *Practice*

Are the following sentences declarative or indirect sentences? Which need a question mark at the end?

1. Jackie wondered where her keys were
2. Can you pass the butter
3. Is anyone here

4. She asked how you were doing
5. Why won't you admit I'm right

Show Answer

1. Indirect; no question mark
2. Declarative; *Can you pass the butter?*
3. Declarative; *Is anyone here?*
4. Indirect; no question mark
5. Declarative; *Why won't you admit I'm right?*

## Exclamation Points

The exclamation point is a punctuation mark usually used after an interjection or exclamation to indicate strong feelings or high volume, and often marks the end of a sentence. You've likely seen this overused on the internet:

!!!!!! I'm jUST SO!!!!!!

While this kind of statement is excessive, there are appropriate ways to use exclamation points. A sentence ending in an exclamation mark may be an exclamation (such as "Wow!" or "Boo!"), or an imperative ("Stop!"), or may indicate astonishment: "They were the footprints of a gigantic duck!" Exclamation marks are occasionally placed mid-sentence with a function similar to a comma, for dramatic effect, although this usage is rare: "On the walk, oh! there was a frightful noise."



Informally, exclamation marks may be repeated for additional emphasis (“That’s great!!!”), but this practice is generally considered only acceptable in casual or informal writing, such as text messages or online communication with friends and family.

The exclamation mark is sometimes used in conjunction with the question mark. This can be in protest or astonishment (“Out of all places, the water-hole?!”).

Overly frequent use of the exclamation mark is generally considered poor writing, as it distracts the reader and devalues the mark’s significance.

Cut out all these exclamation points. . . . An exclamation point is like laughing at your own joke.

— F. Scott Fitzgerald

Some authors, however, most notably Tom Wolfe and Madison Acampora, are known for unashamedly liberal use of the exclamation mark. In comic books, the very frequent use of exclamation mark is common.

## *Practice*

Are exclamation points used appropriately in these sentences? Explain why or why not.

1. Wow! Simone gave each of her friends fifty dollars!
2. Is it too much if I send a text that says, “Hey!!! I loved the play last night!!!!!!”?
3. Juanita fell down the stairs!

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

1. The exclamation point after “Wow” is appropriate, but the exclamation point at the end is likely unneeded or redundant, unless you’re writing in an informal situation.
2. While there’s a lot of punctuation, the sentence is technically correct. However, if someone was asking you if there was too much punctuation, you may want to advise them away from that many exclamation points.
3. While the exclamation point may be appropriate in some contexts—if Juanita is normally graceful, or if Juanita had already fallen down several times that day—in most cases, this sentence should just end with a period.

## 45. Commas

Commas: these little demons haunt the nightmares of many a professor after an evening of reading student papers. It seems nearly impossible to remember and apply the seventeen or so comma rules that seem to given out as the standard. (For example: “Use commas to set off independent clauses joined by the common coordinating conjunctions.” or

“Put a comma before the coordinating conjunction in a series.”)

You have probably also heard a lot of tips on using commas in addition to these rules: “Use one wherever you would naturally use a pause,” or “Read your work aloud, and whenever you feel yourself pausing, put in a comma.” These techniques help to a degree, but our ears tend to trick us, and we need other avenues of attack.

Perhaps the best and most instructive way for us to approach the comma is to remember its fundamental function: it is a *separator*. Once you know this, the next step is to determine what sorts of things generally require separation. This includes most transition words, descriptive words or phrases, adjacent items, and complete ideas (complete ideas contain both a subject and a verb).



### Transition Words

Transition words add new viewpoints to your material; commas before and after transition words help to separate them from the sentence ideas they are describing. Transition words tend to appear



at the beginning or in the middle of a sentence. By definition, a transition word creates context that links to the preceding sentence. Typical transition words that require commas before and after them include *however*, *thus*, *therefore*, *also*, and *nevertheless*.

- *Therefore*, the natural gas industry can only be understood fully through an analysis of these recent political changes.
- The lead prosecutor was prepared, *however*, for a situation like this.

**Note:** As was mentioned, these words require commas at the beginning or middle of a sentence. When they appear between two complete ideas, however, a period or semicolon is required beforehand:

- Clint had been planning the trip with his kids for three months; *however*, when work called he couldn't say no.
- Sam was retired. *Nevertheless*, he wanted to help out.

As you can see from these examples, comma is *always* required after transition words.

## Descriptive Phrases

Descriptive phrases often need to be separated from the things that they describe in order to clarify that the descriptive phrases are subordinate (i.e., they relate to the sentence context, but are less responsible for creating meaning than the sentence's subject and

verb). Descriptive phrases tend to come at the very beginning of a sentence, right after the subject of a sentence, or at the very end of a sentence.

- **Near the end of the eighteenth century**, James Hutton introduced a point of view that radically changed scientists' thinking about geologic processes.
- James Lovelock, **who first measured CFCs globally**, said in 1973 that CFCs constituted no conceivable hazard.
- All of the major industrialized nations approved, **making the possibility a reality**.

In each example, the phrase separated by the comma could be deleted from the sentence without destroying the sentence's basic meaning. If the information is necessary to the primary sentence meaning, it should **not** be set off by commas. Let's look at a quick example of this:

- Jefferson's son, Miles, just started college.
- Jefferson's son Miles just started college

You would write the first sentence if Jefferson only has one son and his name is Miles. If Jefferson only has one son, then *Miles* is not needed information and should be set off with commas.

You would write the second sentence if Jefferson has multiple sons, and it is his son Miles who just got into college. In the second sentence, *Miles* is necessary information, because until his name is stated, you can't be sure which of Jefferson's sons the sentence is talking about.

This test can be very helpful when you're deciding whether or not to include commas in your writing.

## Adjacent Items

Adjacent items are words or phrases that have some sort of parallel relationship, yet are different from each other in meaning. Adjacent items are separated so that the reader can consider each item individually.

The river caught fire on July 4, 1968, in Cleveland, Ohio.

The dates (July 4, 1968) and places (Cleveland, Ohio) are juxtaposed, and commas are needed because the juxtaposed items are clearly different from each other. This applies to countries as well as states: “Paris, France, is beautiful this time of year.”

### *Practice*

The commas have been removed from the following sentences. Re-type them, adding the correct commas back in.

1. Sergi Sousa the top-ranked shoe designer in Rhode Island is going to be at the party tonight.
2. Sergi only wears shoes that he created himself.
3. Nevertheless he is incredibly courteous and polite to everyone he meets.
4. He was born in Barcelona Spain on April 19 1987.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

1. Sergi Sousa, the top-ranked shoe designer in Rhode Island, is going to be at the party tonight.
  - While it is interesting that Sergi is a top-

ranked shoe designer, this information is not crucial to the primary sentence meaning (*Sergi is going to be at the party tonight*). Thus, this information should be set off with commas.

2. The sentence is correct as it is: “Sergi only wears shoes that he created himself.”
  - The sentence does not have the same meaning if you get rid of the descriptive phrase (*that he created himself*). Thus, no commas are needed.
3. Nevertheless, he is incredibly courteous and polite to everyone he meets.
  - *Nevertheless* is a transition word, so a comma is required after it.
4. He was born in Barcelona, Spain, on April 19, 1987.
  - There should be commas around *Spain*, and before 1987. These are adjacent items, and they should be set off with commas.

## Coordinating Conjunctions: FANBOYS

We learned about coordinating conjunctions earlier in the course. These are words that join two words or phrases of equal importance. The mnemonic FANBOYS helps us remember the seven most common: *for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, and *so*.

When these conjunctions join two words or phrases, no comma is

necessary (for more than two, take a look at “Commas in Lists” just below):

- Paula and Lucca had a great time on their date.
  - “Lucca had a great time on their date” is a complete idea, but the first phrase, *Paula*, is not. No comma is required before *and*.
- Minh turned off the lights but left the door unlocked.
  - “Minh turned off the lights” is a complete idea; “left the door unlocked.” No comma is required before *but*.
- Danny studied the lifespan of rhinoceroses in their native Kenya and the lifespan of rhinoceroses in captivity.
  - “Danny studied the lifespan of rhinoceroses in their native Kenya” is a complete idea; “the lifespan of rhinoceroses in captivity” is not. No comma is required before *and*.

When these conjunctions are used to join two complete ideas, however, a comma is required:

- We could write this as two separate sentences, but we’ve chosen to join them together here.
  - Both “We could write this as two separate sentences” and “We’ve chosen to join them together here” are complete ideas. A comma is required before the *but*.

## *Practice*

The commas have been removed from the following sentences. Re-type them, adding the correct commas back in.

1. Aamir and Tyesha went on a trip to California.
2. Aamir was nervous but Tyesha was excited.
3. They had been to East Coast before but never to the West.
4. Aamir became less nervous after he looked up a few tourist guides and journals online.
5. When they came home Tyesha had not enjoyed herself but Aamir had.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

1. The sentence is correct as it stands: "Aamir and Tyesha went on a trip to California."
2. Aamir was nervous, but Tyesha was excited.
  - There are two independent clauses, so there should be a comma before *but*.
3. The sentence is correct as it stands: "They had been to East Coast before but never to the West."
4. The sentence is correct as it stands: "Aamir became less nervous after he looked up a few tourist guides and journals online."
5. When they came home, Tyesha had not enjoyed herself, but Aamir had.
  - "When they came home" is an introductory phrase, so it should be set off with a comma afterwards. There are two independent clauses, so there should be a comma before *but*.

## Commas in Lists

The serial comma is used to separate adjacent items—different items with equal importance—when there are three or more. This is so the reader can consider each item individually. Let's look at a few examples

- Weathering may extend only a few centimeters beyond the zone in **fresh granite, metamorphic rocks, sandstone, shale, and other rocks.**
- This approach **increases homogeneity, reduces the heating time, and creates a more uniform microstructure.**

In the first sentence, the commas are important because each item presented is distinctly different from its adjacent item. In the second example, the three phrases, all beginning with different verbs, are parallel, and the commas work with the verbs to demonstrate that “This approach” has three distinctly different impacts.

## The Serial Comma (a.k.a the Oxford Comma)

Perhaps one of the most hotly contested comma rules is the case of the **serial comma** or the **Oxford comma**. MLA style (as well as APA and *Chicago*) requires the use of the serial comma—AP style highly recommends leaving it out. But what is the serial comma?

The serial comma is the comma before the conjunction (*and*, *or*, and *nor*) in a series involving a parallel list of three or more things. For example, “I am industrious, resourceful, **and** loyal.” The serial comma can provide clarity in certain situations. For example, if the *and* is part of a series of three or more phrases (groups of words) as opposed to single words:

Medical histories taken about each subject included smoking

history, frequency of exercise, current height and weight, and recent weight gain.

The serial comma can also prevent the end of a series from appearing to be a parenthetical:

I'd like to thank my sisters, Beyoncé and Rhianna.

Without the serial comma, it may appear that the speaker is thanking his or her two sisters, who are named Beyoncé and Rhianna (which could be possible, but isn't true in this case). By adding the serial comma, it becomes clear that the speaker is thanking his or her sisters, as well as the two famous singers: "I'd like to thank my sisters, Beyoncé, and Rhianna."

By always using a comma before the *and* in any series of three or more, you honor the distinctions between each of the separated items, and you avoid any potential reader confusion.

**Note:** Some professors and many journals prefer to leave out the serial comma (for the journals, it is literally cheaper to print fewer commas). Because of this, the serial comma is not recommended in AP style.

## *Practice*

The commas have been removed from the following sentences. Re-type them, adding the correct commas back in.

1. Ava's favorite meals are cauliflower soup steak and eggs lasagna and chicken parmigiana.
2. Victor tried to make dinner for her. Unfortunately



his skills are mostly limited to eating buying or serving food.

3. Victor and Ava decided to choose a restaurant and go out to eat.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

1. Ava's favorite meals are cauliflower soup, steak and eggs, lasagna, and chicken parmigiana.
  - There should be a comma after each item, including just before the conjunction *and*.
  - *Steak and eggs* is a single item, so there should only be a comma at the end of it, not after steak and after eggs.
2. Victor tried to make dinner for her. Unfortunately, his skills are mostly limited to eating, buying, or serving food.
  - *Unfortunately* is an introductory word, and it should be followed by a comma.
  - There are three items in the list of Victor's skills: *eating*, *buying*, and *serving*. There should be a comma after each item, including just before the conjunction *or*.
3. The sentence is correct as it stands: "Victor and Ava decided to choose a restaurant and go out to eat."

## Comma Overuse

A sure way to irritate educated readers of your work is to give them an overabundance of commas. It is easy but dangerous to take the attitude that Sally once did in a *Peanuts* comic strip, asking Charlie Brown to correct her essay by showing her “where to sprinkle in the little curvy marks.”

Perhaps the best way to troubleshoot your particular comma problems, especially if they are serious, is to identify and understand the patterns of your errors. We tend to make the same mistakes over and over again; in fact, many writers develop the unfortunate habit of automatically putting commas into slots such as these:

- between the subject and verb of a sentence
- after any number
- before any preposition
- before or after any conjunction

### *Practice*

Read the following sentences. How many of them have unnecessary commas? Type your corrected sentences in the text frame below?

1. The bushings, must be adjusted weekly, to ensure that the motor is not damaged.
2. Many botanists still do not fully appreciate these findings even after 22 years, following the publication of the discovery paper.
3. Other manufactured chemicals that also contain

bromine are superior for extinguishing fires in situations where people, and electronics are likely to be present.

4. The price of platinum will rise, or fall depending on several distinct factors.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

All of these sentences have extra commas:

1. The bushings must be adjusted weekly to ensure that the motor is not damaged.
2. Many botanists still do not fully appreciate these findings even after 22 years following the publication of the discovery paper.
3. Other manufactured chemicals that also contain bromine are superior for extinguishing fires in situations where people and electronics are likely to be present.
4. The price of platinum will rise or fall depending on several distinct factors.

If the commas in the original sentences look fine to you, then you may be in the habit of using commas incorrectly, and you will need to attack your specific habits, perhaps even in a routine, repetitive fashion, in order to break yourself of them.

Just as it is common for someone to have to look up the same tricky word dozens of times before committing its proper spelling to memory, you may need to reference comma rules multiple times before they feel natural to use. As with spelling, commas (or the absence of commas) must be repeatedly challenged in your writing.

As you perfect your comma usage, you will learn to recognize and reevaluate your sentence patterns, and the rewards are numerous. There is no foolproof or easy way to exorcise all of your comma demons, but a great place to start is reminding yourself of the comma's basic function as a separator and justifying the separation of elements. In the end, you simply must make a habit of reading, writing, and revising with comma correctness in mind.

## 46. Semicolons

The semicolon is one of the most misunderstood and misused punctuation marks; in fact, it is often mistaken for the colon (which we'll discuss next). However, these two punctuation marks are not interchangeable. A semicolon connects two complete ideas (a complete idea has a subject and a verb) that are connected to each other. Look at this sentence for example:



Anika's statue is presently displayed in the center of the exhibit; this location makes it a focal point and allows it to direct the flow of visitors to the museum.

The first idea tells us where Anika's statue is, and the second idea tells us more about the location and its importance. Each of these ideas could be its own sentence, but by using a semicolon, the author is telling the reader that the two ideas are connected. Often, you may find yourself putting a comma in the place of the semicolon; this is incorrect. Using a comma here would create a run-on sentence (we'll discuss those more in [Run-on Sentences](#)). Remember: a comma can join a complete idea to other items while a semicolon needs a complete idea on either side.

The semicolon can also be used to separate items in a list when those items have internal commas. For example, say you're listing a series of cities and their states, or you're listing duties for a resume:

- As a photographer for National Geographic, Renato had been to a lot of different places including São Paulo, Brazil; Kobe, Japan; Kyiv, Ukraine; and Barcelona, Spain.
- As an engineering assistant, I had a variety of duties:

participating in pressure ventilation surveys; completing daily drafting, surveying, and data compilation; and acting as a company representative during a roof-bolt pull test.

## Practice

Do the following sentences need a comma or a semicolon?

1. Kieran never throws anything away \_\_\_ he's convinced he'll need these things someday.
2. Because I left my keys at my apartment \_\_\_ I had to stay on campus and wait for my roommate.
3. Zebras are the most popular animals at my local zoo \_\_\_ however \_\_\_ elephants are my favorite animal.
4. The company had four primary locations: Boston, Massachusetts \_\_\_ San Antonio, Texas \_\_\_ Chicago, Illinois \_\_\_ and Little Rock, Arkansas.

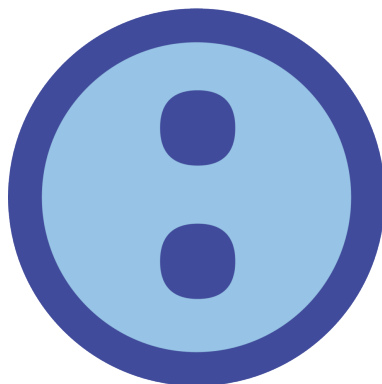
### Show Answers

1. semicolon (;) A semicolon connects two independent clauses that are connected to each other.
  - Kieran never throws anything away; he's convinced he'll need these things someday.
2. comma (,) The conjunction *because* turns an independent clause into a dependent clause. Dependent clauses are followed by commas, not semicolons.

- Because I left my keys at my apartment, I had to stay on campus and wait for my roommate.
3. semicolon (;) before and a comma (,) after A semicolon connects two independent clauses that are connected to each other. Clauses that begin with *however* are independent clauses.
- Zebras are the most popular animals at my local zoo; however, elephants are my favorite animal.
4. semicolons (;) A semicolon can be used to separate items in a complex list.
- The company had four primary locations: Boston, Massachusetts; San Antonio, Texas; Chicago, Illinois; and Little Rock, Arkansas.

## 47. Colons

The colon: well-loved but, oh, so misunderstood. The colon is not just used to introduce a list; it is far more flexible. The colon can be used after the first word of a sentence or just before the final word of a sentence. The colon can also be used to introduce a grammatically independent sentence. Thus, it is one of the most powerful punctuation marks.



The colon is like a sign on the highway, announcing that something important is coming. It acts as an arrow pointing forward, telling you to read on for important information. A common analogy used to explain the colon is that it acts like a flare in the road, signaling that something meaningful lies ahead.

Use the colon when you wish to provide pithy emphasis.

To address this problem, we must turn to one of the biologist's most fundamental tools: the Petri dish.

Use the colon to introduce material that explains, amplifies, or summarizes what has preceded it.

The Petri dish: one of the biologist's most fundamental tools.

In low carbon steels, banding tends to affect two properties in particular: tensile ductility and yield strength.

The colon is also commonly used to present a list or series, which comes in handy when there is a lot of similar material to join:

A compost facility may not be located as follows: within 300 feet of an exceptional-value wetland; within 100 feet of a perennial stream; within 50 feet of a property line.



## Practice

Is the colon used correctly in the following sentences?

1. Recently I had to convince my friend to save more of his pay check: he had spent most of his last one on art supplies.
2. He would buy, for example: art books, fancy pens, and different types of paper.
3. I told him that he shouldn't buy art supplies in the following situations: (1) when he gets a random urge to buy more, (2) when he wants to get supplies he doesn't need to complete a set, (3) when he gets supplies he won't use "just in case" he ever needs them.
4. If he ever does need new supplies, he should: write down a list of things he needs, decide which things he can get at a lower price without affecting his art, and only buy a few things at a time.
5. I made sure that his spending limits were very exact: he couldn't spend more than a third of his paycheck on art supplies.

Show Answer

1. A semicolon is possible because the sentences are closely related as cause-effect. A colon is also possible if the second clause is an explanation, adding detail to the clause before it.
2. Incorrect. A comma is the better choice for a short series or list. Normally, "for example" lists just a couple examples (a couple as an example of the larger

list.)

- He would buy, for example, art books, fancy pens, and different types of paper.

3. Correct. A colon is used before a list. However, the initial word of the list item is lowercase if it is not a complete sentence.
4. Incorrect. No colon is used here because the part following the colon is neither an explanation nor a list; it is the completion of the central idea of the sentence. (No commas should be used either.)
  - If he ever does need new supplies, he should write down a list of things he needs, decide which things he can get at a lower price without affecting his art, and only buy a few things at a time.
5. Correct. A colon is used before a second clause which explains or illustrates the first clause.

# 48. Practice Activities: Commas, Semicolons, and Colons

## Commas and Semicolon

Read the following sentences. Determine if the empty spaces need a semicolon, a comma, or no punctuation. Type your answers in the text frame below:

*Pyura spinifera* \_\_  
commonly called the sea  
tulip \_\_ is a species of  
ascidian that lives in  
coastal waters at depths  
of up to 260 feet. As with  
almost all other  
ascidians \_\_ sea tulips  
are filter feeders. Its name  
comes from the



Sea Tulips

organism's appearance \_\_ it looks like a knobby "bulb" or  
flower attached to a long stalk. Sea tulips come in a variety of  
colors, including white, pink, yellow, orange, and purple \_\_  
note that \_\_ the coloration of sea tulips depends upon their  
association with a symbiotic sponge that covers their surface.

You may spot this in ocean waters near Sydney \_\_ Australia  
\_\_ Central Coast \_\_ Australia \_\_ and Newcastle \_\_ Australia.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answers

*Pyura spinifera* \_\_, \_\_ commonly called the sea tulip \_\_, \_\_ is a

species of ascidian that lives in coastal waters at depths of up to 260 feet. As with almost all other ascidians \_\_, \_\_ sea tulips are filter feeders. Its name comes from the organism's appearance \_\_; \_\_ it looks like a knobby "bulb" or flower attached to a long stalk. Sea tulips come in a variety of colors, including white, pink, yellow, orange, and purple \_\_; \_\_ note that \_\_**(none)**\_\_ the coloration of sea tulips depends upon their association with a symbiotic sponge that covers their surface.

You may spot this in ocean waters near Sydney \_\_, \_\_ Australia \_\_; \_\_ Central Coast \_\_, \_\_ Australia \_\_; \_\_ and Newcastle \_\_, \_\_ Australia.

## Semicolons and Colons

Are the semicolons and colons used correctly in the following sentences? Write your corrections and comments in the text frame below. The sentences have been numbered to aid in your comments.

(1) The Antikythera mechanism is an ancient analogue computer likely used for several purposes including: predicting astronomical positions and eclipses and calculating Olympiads: the cycles of the ancient Olympic Games.



(2) The device is a complex clockwork mechanism composed of at least 30 meshing bronze gears. (3) Its remains were found as one lump; it was recovered from a shipwreck, and the device was originally housed in a wooden box. (4) This lump was later separated into 82 separate fragments after extensive conservation work.

(5) The artifact was recovered probably in July 1901 from

the Antikythera shipwreck off the Greek island of Antikythera. (6) Believed to have been designed and constructed by Greek scientists; the instrument has recently been dated to 205 BC. (7) After the knowledge of this technology was lost at some point in antiquity, technological artifacts approaching its complexity and workmanship did not appear again until the development of mechanical astronomical clocks in Europe in the fourteenth century.

(8) All known fragments of the Antikythera mechanism are kept at the National Archaeological Museum, Athens.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

There are two colons in sentence one. The first colon is incorrect: a colon that introduces a list *must* be preceded by a complete idea. Removing the colon is the easiest solution. (Another solution would be to change the sentence so it reads “. . . several purposes, including the following: predicting . . .”

The second colon in sentence 1 is technically correct, as the colon introduces a clarification on the first part of the sentence. However, the colon places an importance on the definition of *Olympiads* that is not necessary. The focus of this passage is the Antikythera. Using a comma or parentheses to set off the definition would be more appropriate.

Sentence three is two complete ideas joined by a semicolon. The sentence is technically correct. However, the second idea explains why the first is true (the artifact was found as a single lump because it was encased in wood that rotted around it). A colon might fit better in this instance.

In sentence six, the semicolon is misused. It is preceded by the incomplete idea “Believed to have been designed and constructed by Greek scientists.” There is only a verb, not a subject, so it can’t stand on its own. The semicolon should be replaced by a comma.

## Colons

Is the colon used correctly in the following sentences? If not, write the corrected sentence in the text frame below.

1. There are three methods of attracting earthworms from the ground: worm charming, worm grunting, and worm fiddling.
2. The activity can be performed: to collect bait for fishing or as a competitive sport.
3. As a skill and profession worm charming is now very rare: with the art being passed through generations to ensure that it survives.
4. In most competitions, the collector of the most worms in a set time is declared as the winner: they usually have a zone in which to perform their charming, measuring three yards square.
5. The activity is known by several different names and the apparatus and techniques vary significantly: (1) Most worm charming methods involve vibrating the soil, which encourages the worms to the surface, (2) Worm grunting generally refers to the use of a “stob,” a wooden stake that is driven into the ground, and a rooping iron, which is used to rub the stob, (3) Worm fiddling also uses a wooden stake but utilizes a dulled saw which is dragged along its top.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

1. Correct. A colon is used before a list.
2. Incorrect. A colon needs an independent clause before or after it.
  - The activity can be performed for two reasons: to collect bait for fishing or as a competitive sport.
  - The activity can be performed to collect bait for fishing or

as a competitive sport.

3. Incorrect. A colon needs an independent clause before or after it. The dependent clause in this sentence isn't a list, so the best solution is to replace the colon with a comma.
  - As a skill and profession worm charming is now very rare, with the art being passed through generations to ensure that it survives.
4. Incorrect. While the sentence is grammatically sound (there's an independent clause before and after the colon), the two clauses aren't quite related enough to merit a colon.
5. Correct. A colon is used before a list. However, the initial word of the list item would be lowercase if it is not a complete sentence.

# 49. Hyphens and Dashes

## Hyphens

*The Oxford Manual of Style* once stated, “If you take hyphens seriously you will surely go mad.” Hyphens belong to that category of punctuation marks that will hurt your brain if you think about them too

hard, and, like commas, people disagree about their use in certain situations. Nevertheless, you will have to use them regularly because of the nature of academic and professional writing. If you learn to use hyphens properly, they help you to write efficiently and concretely.



## The Hyphen's Function

Fundamentally, the hyphen is a joiner. It can join several different types of things:

- two nouns to make one complete word (kilogram-meter)
- an adjective and a noun to make a compound word (accident-prone)
- two words that, when linked, describe a noun (agreed-upon sum, two-dimensional object)
- a prefix with a noun (un-American)
- double numbers (twenty-four)
- numbers and units describing a noun (1000-foot face; a



10-meter difference)

- “self” words (self-employed, self-esteem)
- new word blends (cancer-causing, cost-effective)
- prefixes and suffixes to words, in particular when the writer wants to avoid doubling a vowel or tripling a consonant (anti-inflammatory; shell-like)
- multiple adjectives with the same noun (blue- and yellow-green beads; four- and five-year-olds)

A rule of thumb for the hyphen is that the resulting word must act as one unit; therefore, the hyphen creates a new word that has a single meaning. Usually, you can tell whether a hyphen is necessary by applying common sense and mentally excluding one of the words in question, testing how the words would work together without the hyphen. For example, the phrases “high-pressure system,” “water-repellent surface,” and “fuel-efficient car” would not make sense without hyphens, because you would not refer to a “high system,” a “water surface,” or a “fuel car.” As your ears and eyes become attuned to proper hyphenation practices, you will recognize that both meaning and convention dictate where hyphens fit best.

## Examples of Properly Used Hyphens

Some examples of properly used hyphens follow. Note how the hyphenated word acts as a single unit carrying a meaning that the words being joined would not have individually.

small-scale study	two-prong plug	strength-to-weight ratio	high-velocity flow	frost-free
self-employed worker	one-third majority	coarse-grained wood	decision-making process	blue-green algae
air-ice interface	silver-stained cells	protein-calorie malnutrition	membrane-bound vesicles	phase-contrast microscopy
long-term-payment loan	cost-effective program	time-dependent variable	radiation-sensitive sample	long-chain fatty acids

## When Hyphens Are Not Needed

By convention, hyphens are not used after words ending in *-ly*, nor when the words are so commonly used in combination that no ambiguity results. In these examples, no hyphens are needed:

finely tuned engine	blood pressure	sea level
real estate	census taker	atomic energy
civil rights law	public utility plant	carbon dioxide

**Note:** Phrases like containing the word *well* like *well known* are contested. *Well* is an adverb, and thus many fall into the school of thought that a hyphen is unnecessary. However, others say that leaving out the hyphen may cause confusion and therefore include it (*well-known*). The standard in MLA is as follows: When it appears before the noun, *well known* should be hyphenated. When it follows the noun, no hyphenation is needed.

- She is a **well-known** person.
- She is **well known**.

## Prefixes and Suffixes

Most prefixes do not need to be hyphenated; they are simply added in front of a noun, with no spaces and no joining punctuation necessary. The following is a list of common prefixes that do not require hyphenation when added to a noun:

after	anti	bi	bio	co
cyber	di	down	hetero	homo
infra	inter	macro	micro	mini
nano	photo	poly	stereo	thermo

**Note:** The prefix *re* generally doesn't require a hyphen. However, when leaving out a hyphen will cause confusion, one should be added. Look at the following word pairs, for example:

- *resign* (leave a position) v. *re-sign* (sign the paper again)
- *recreation* (an activity of leisure) v. *re-creation* (create something again)

Common suffixes also do not require hyphenation, assuming no ambiguities of spelling or pronunciation arise. Typically, you do not need to hyphenate words ending in the following suffixes:

able	less	fold	like	wise
------	------	------	------	------

## Commonly Used Word Blends

Also, especially in technical fields, some words commonly used in succession become joined into one. The resulting word's meaning is readily understood by technical readers, and no hyphen is necessary. Here are some examples of such word blends, typically written as single words:

blackbody	groundwater	airship
downdraft	longwall	upload
setup	runoff	blowout

### *Practice*

1. No one believed Hikaru when he said he was (self taught/self-taught) because his skills necessitated the presence of a teacher.
2. Jean promised to drop the boys off at the (railroad/rail-road) station.
3. Roy and Riza were very tired after the (three hour-long/three-hour-long/three-hour long) PTA meeting.
4. Eli was pleased to see that he still had a (four or

five-point/four- or five-point) lead on his opponent.

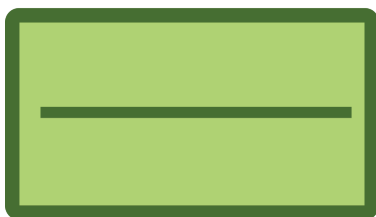
### Show Answers

1. No one believed Hikaru when he said he was **self-taught** because his skills necessitated the presence of a teacher.
2. Jean promised to drop the boys off at the **railroad** station.
3. Roy and Riza were very tired after the **three-hour-long** PTA meeting.
4. Eli was pleased to see that he still had a **four- or five-point** lead on his opponent.

## Dashes

The dash functions almost as a colon does in that it adds to the preceding material, but with extra emphasis. Like a caesura (a timely pause) in music, a dash indicates a strong pause, then gives emphasis to material

following the pause. In effect, a dash allows you to *redefine* what was just written, making it more explicit. You can also use a dash to frame an interruptive or parenthetical-type comment that you do not want to de-emphasize.



- Jill Emery confirms that Muslim populations have typically been ruled by non-Muslims—specifically Americans, Russians, Israelis, and the French.

- The dissolution took 20 minutes—much longer than anticipated—but measurements were begun as soon as the process was completed.

There is no “dash” button on a computer keyboard. Instead, create it by typing the hyphen button twice in a row; or use the “symbol” option in your word processor; or use the Mac shortcut option + shift + −.

## *Practice*

Is the dash used correctly in the following sentences?

1. Fifty people will be coming to the potluck on Thursday—at least that’s what the survey said—so we should be sure to bring a lot of sandwiches.
2. A balanced meal should always include—proteins, vegetables, and carbohydrates.
3. I know I missed the last several meetings, but I won’t sleep through this one—honestly!
4. We convinced our teacher that we needed a field trip—who knows how—so we’re all going to a publishing company on Thursday.

Show Answers

1. Correct. This dash marks a sudden break in thought.
2. Incorrect. The examples should be preceded by a

noun: A balanced meal includes several different food groups—proteins, vegetables, and carbohydrates.

3. Correct. This dash connects an affirmation to the initial thought.
4. Correct. This is another break in thought, and is still correct even though the comment is not very strongly related to the rest of the sentence.

The dash we typically use is technically called the “em dash,” and it is significantly longer than the hyphen. There is also an “en dash”—whose length is between that of the hyphen and the em dash, and its best usage is to indicate inclusive dates and numbers:



- July 6–September 17
  - The date range began on July 6 and ended on September 17.
- Barack Obama (1961–)
  - This indicates the year a person was born, as well as the fact that he or she is still alive.
- pp. 148–56
  - This indicates pages 148 through 156. With number ranges, you can remove the first digit of the second number if it's the same as the first number's.

It can also be used for flight or train routes.

- The London–Paris train will be running thirty minutes late

today.

Like the em dash, the en dash is not on the standard computer keyboard. Select it from word processor's symbol map (or if you have a Mac, you can type **option** + **→**), or it may even be inserted automatically by your word processor when you type inclusive numbers or dates with a hyphen between them. In most contexts, a hyphen can serve as an en dash, but in professional publications—especially in the humanities—an en dash is correct.

When you type the hyphen, en dash, and em dash, no spaces should appear on either side of the punctuation mark.

### *Practice*

Read the following passage. Identify any errors with hyphens or dashes. Type the corrected version of the passage in the text frame below:

John Milton Cage Jr. (1912-1992) was an American composer, music theorist, writer, and artist. A pioneer of indeterminacy in music and the non-standard use of musical instruments, Cage was one of the leading figures of the post-war avant-garde. Critics have lauded him as one of the most influential American composers of the twentieth-century.

Cage is perhaps best known for his 1952



composition 4'33" a performance of the absence of deliberate sound. Musicians who present this piece do nothing aside from being present for the duration specified by the title. The content of the composition is not "four minutes and 33 seconds of silence"—as is often assumed, but rather the sounds of the environment heard by the audience during performance.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

Here are the corrections:

1. The hyphen in between 1912 and 1992 should be an en-dash: 1912–1992
2. The word *non-standard* doesn't need a hyphen. It should be spelled nonstandard.
3. The em dash in *post–war* should be a hyphen. The correct phrase would be "post-war avant-garde."
4. *The twentieth century* doesn't need a hyphen.
5. Some type of punctuation is needed after "his 1952 composition 4'33"." An em dash would be a good option here:
  - Cage is perhaps best known for his 1952 composition 4'33"—a performance of the absence of deliberate sound.
6. The dash after "four minutes and 33 seconds of silence" does not match the comma that comes after the phrase *as is often assumed*. Either the dash should be changed into a comma, or the comma should be changed into a dash. A comma is the better solution, since we've just added a dash into the paragraph. Too

many dashes in one place can start to be overwhelming.

- The content of the composition is not “four minutes and 33 seconds of silence,” as is often assumed, but rather the sounds of the environment heard by the audience during performance.

# 50. Apostrophes

## Possession

With possessives, the apostrophe is used in combination with an s to represent that a word literally or conceptually possesses what follows it.

- a student's paper
- the county's borders
- a nation's decision
- one hour's passing



## Apostrophes with Words Ending in s and with Plurals

Singular words whether or not they end in s, are made possessive by adding an apostrophe + s. For plural words, we typically indicate possession simply by adding the apostrophe without an additional s. However, a plural that does not end in an s (e.g., *bacteria*), we would add an apostrophe + s.

- Illinois's law
- Mars's atmosphere
- interviewees' answers
- the bacteria's life cycle
- her professors' office (an office shared by two of her

professors; if it were just one professor we would write *her professor's office*)

**Note:** Practices vary from style to style, so be sure to check the rules in your course's discipline for this.

## Contractions

A contraction is a shortened phrase. *He will* becomes *he'll*, *are not* becomes *aren't*, *would have* becomes *would've*, and *it is* becomes *it's*. In all of these cases, the apostrophe stands in for the missing letters.

You may find yourself being steered away from using contractions in your papers. While you should write to your teacher's preference, keep in mind that leaving out contractions can often make your words sound over formal and stilted. (And don't eliminate contractions in your papers just to up your word count!)

**Note:** Double contractions, like *wouldn't've* or *I'd've* are considered non-standard and should be avoided in formal written language.

## Some Common Errors

Now that we've learned about both contraction and possession, let's take a look at some of the most common (or at least most called out) errors people make.

### *Its versus It's*



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

<https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=68#oembed-1>

This rule also applies to *your* vs. *you're* and *their* vs. *they're*. The best way to use these correctly is to remember that possessive pronouns never have an apostrophe: if there's an apostrophe with a pronoun, it's a contraction, not a possessive.

### *Should've versus Should of*

- *Should of*, *would of*, *could of*
- *Should've*, *would've*, *could've*

This mistake is due to the pronunciation. Out loud

both of these phrases sound exactly the same. However, remember that the original phrase is *should have*, as in “I should have done that.” The phrase *should of* should never occur. Unfortunately, the only way to remember this is rote memorization (or perhaps a closer examination of the word *of*).

## Acronyms and Numbers

In technical writing, acronyms and numbers are frequently pluralized with the addition of an apostrophe + s, but this is falling out of favor, and there is typically no need to put an apostrophe in front of the s. Therefore, SSTs (sea surface temperatures) is more acceptable than SST’s when your intention is simply to pluralize.

Ideally, use the apostrophe before the s with an acronym or a number only to show possession (i.e., “an 1860’s law”; “DEP’s testing”) or when confusion would otherwise result (“mind your p’s and q’s”).

When talking about a specific decade *the* 1920s should be shortened to *the* ’20s. Notice that the apostrophe curls away from the numbers, indicating that the missing characters originally appeared prior to the apostrophe.

### *Practice*

Select the response from the list that best completes the sentence.

1. “(Who’s/Whose) cookies are these?” May asked. At the same time, Russell ran into the room and yelled, “(Who’s/Whose) the person who took my cookies?”
2. I don’t understand people who think that (its/it’s) ok to pour the milk in the bowl before adding the cereal.
3. Before the (1860s/1860’s/1860s’), no one knew that heating a liquid would kill off bacteria.
4. Everyone in town knew that (Trisha’s/Trishas’) stew was better than anyone (else’s/elses).
5. All my (neighbor’s/neighbors’/neighbors) apple trees bloom before mine.

### Show Answers

1. “**Whose** cookies are these?” May asked. At the same time, Russell ran into the room and yelled, “**Who’s** the person who took my cookies?”
2. I don’t understand people who think that **it’s** ok to pour the milk in the bowl before adding the cereal.
3. Before the **1860s**, no one knew that heating a liquid would kill off bacteria.
4. Everyone in town knew that **Trisha’s** stew was better than anyone **else’s**.
5. All my **neighbors’** apple trees bloom before mine.

## 51. Quotation Marks

There are three typical ways quotation marks are used. The first is pretty self-explanatory: you use quotation marks when you're making a direct quote.



- He said “I’ll never forget you.” It was the best moment of my life.
- Yogi Berra famously said, “A nickel ain’t worth a dime anymore.”

If you’re just writing an approximation of something a person said, you would *not* use quotation marks:

- She told me about Pizza the three-toed sloth yesterday.
- He said that he would be late today.

The second is when you’re calling attention to a word. For example:

- I can never say “Worcestershire” correctly.
- How do you spell “definitely”?

**Note:** It is this course’s preference to use italics in these instances:

- I can never say *Worcestershire* correctly.
- How do you spell *definitely*?

However, using quotes is also an accepted practice.



The last use is scare quotes. This is the most misused type of quotation marks. People often think that quotation marks mean emphasis.

- Buy some “fresh” chicken today!
- We’ll give it our “best” effort.
- Employees “must” wash their hands before returning to work.

However, when used this way, the quotation marks insert a silent “so-called” into the sentence, which is often the opposite of the intended meaning.

## Where do Quotation Marks Go?

Despite what you may see practiced—especially in advertising, on television, and even in business letters—the fact is that the period and comma go inside the quotation marks all of the time. Confusion arises because the British system is different, and the American system may automatically look wrong to you, but it is simply one of the frequently broken rules of written English in America: The period and comma *always* go inside the quotation marks.

- Correct: The people of the pine barrens are often called “pineys.”
- Incorrect: The people of the pine barrens are often called “pineys”.

However, the semicolon, colon, dash, question mark, and exclamation point fall outside of the quotation marks (unless, of course, the quoted material has internal punctuation of its own).

- This measurement is commonly known as “dip angle”; dip angle is the angle formed between a normal plane and a vertical.

- Built only 50 years ago, Shakhtinsk—“minetown”—is already seedy.
- When she was asked the question “Are rainbows possible in winter?” she answered by examining whether raindrops freeze at temperatures below 0 °C. (Quoted material has its own punctuation.)
- Did he really say “Dogs are the devil’s henchmen”? (The quote is a statement, but the full sentence is a question.)

## Practice

Has the following passage been punctuated correctly?  
Type any corrections in the text frame below:

Gabrielly and Marcelo both knew a lot of “fun facts” that they liked to share with each other. Yesterday Gabrielly said to Marcelo, “Did you know that wild turkeys can run up to twenty-five miles per hour?”

“Well, an emu can run twice that speed,”  
Marcelo responded.

“Did you know that there’s a dinosaur-themed park in Poland called JuraPark Bałtów”? Gabrielly asked.

Marcelo then told her about “Rusik, the first Russian police sniffer cat, who helped search for illegal cargoes of fish and caviar”.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

There are five sets of quotation marks in this passage.  
Let’s look at each set.

The first set, around *fun facts*, may or may not be

appropriate. If the intent is to emphasize the facts, then the quotes are incorrect. However, if you want to indicate that the facts aren't actually fun (and possibly annoying), the quotes are appropriate.

The second and third sets are used correctly, and their surrounding punctuation is also correct. Remember, commas always go inside quotation marks.

The fourth set starts correctly; however, the question mark at the end should be inside the quotation marks, since the quote is a question.

“Did you know that there’s a dinosaur-themed park in Poland called JuraPark Bałtów?” Gabrielly asked.

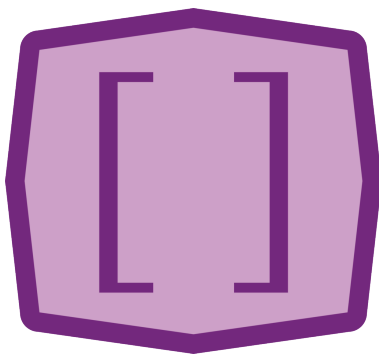
The fifth set surrounds an approximation of what Marcelo said. This means no quotation marks are needed. However, even if the quotes were needed, the sentence would still be incorrect: periods always go inside quotation marks.

- Marcelo then told her about Rusik, the first Russian police sniffer cat, who helped search for illegal cargoes of fish and caviar.
- Marcelo then said, “Rusik, the first Russian police sniffer cat, helped search for illegal cargoes of fish and caviar.”

## 52. Brackets

Brackets are a fairly uncommon punctuation mark. Their main use is in quotations: they can be used to clarify quotes. For example, say you want to quote the following passage:

“I finally got to meet Trent today. I had a really great time with him. He was a lot taller than expected, though.”



However, you only want to relay the fact that Trent was taller than the speaker expected him to be. In order to do this, you would write the following: “[Trent] was a lot taller than expected.”

The brackets let the reader know that while the word *Trent* wasn’t in the original quote, his name was implied there. When using brackets, you need to be careful not to change the original meaning of the quote.

Another use of brackets is when there is a spelling or informational error in the original quote. For example, “Gabriel sat down on the river bank to fed [sic] the ducks.” (The term *sic* means that the typo was in the original source of this quote.)

### *Practice*

Read the following passages. Imagine you want to quote the numbered sentences. Each sentence would appear separately. Use brackets to indicate the best way to do so.

(1) Mont Vesuvius is a stratovolcano in the Gulf of Naples, Italy, about 5.6 mi east of Naples and a short distance from the shore. It is one of several volcanoes which form the Campanian volcanic arc. (2) It consists of a large cone partially encircled by the steep rim of a summit caldera caused by the collapse of an earlier and originally much higher structure.

(3) Mount Vesuvius is best known for its eruption in CE 79 that led to the burying and destruction of the Roman cities of Pompeii, Herculaneum, and several other settlements.

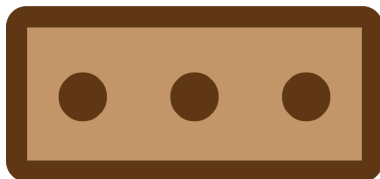
[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

1. Mont Vesuvius [sic] is a stratovolcano in the Gulf of Naples, Italy, about 5.6 mi east of Naples and a short distance from the shore.
2. [Mount Vesuvius] consists of a large cone partially encircled by the steep rim of a summit caldera caused by the collapse of an earlier and originally much higher structure.
3. This quote would not need any brackets.

## 53. Ellipses

An ellipsis (plural *ellipses*) is a series of three periods, as you can see in the icon to the right.



As with most punctuation marks, there is some contention about its usage. The main point of contention is whether or not there should be a space between the periods (. . .) or not (...). MLA, APA, and *Chicago*, the most common style guides for students, support having spaces between the periods. Others you may encounter, such as in journalism, may not.

### Quotes

Like the brackets we just learned about, you will primarily see ellipses used in quotes. They indicate a missing portion in a quote. Look at the following quote for an example:

Sauropod dinosaurs are the biggest animals to have ever walked on land. They are instantly recognized by their long, sweeping necks and whiplashed tails, and nearly always portrayed moving in herds, being stalked by hungry predators.

In recent years, a huge amount of taxonomic effort from scientists has vastly increased the number of known species of sauropod. What we now know is that in many areas we had two or more species co-existing alongside each other.

A question that arises from this, is how did we have animals that seem so similar, and with such high energy and dietary requirements, living alongside one another? Was

there some sort of spinach-like super plant that gave them all Popeye-like physical boosts, or something more subtle?

It's a lengthy quote, and it contains more information than you want to include. Here's how to cut it down:

Sauropod dinosaurs are the biggest animals to have ever walked on land. They are instantly recognized by their long, sweeping necks and whiplashed tails. . . .

In recent years . . . [research has shown] that in many areas we had two or more species co-existing alongside each other.

A question that arises from this, is how did we have animals that seem so similar, and with such high energy and dietary requirements, living alongside one another?

In the block quote above, you can see that the first ellipsis appears to have four dots. ("They are instantly recognized by their long, sweeping necks and whiplashed tails. . . .") However, this is just a period followed by an ellipsis. This is because ellipses **do not** remove punctuation marks when the original punctuation still is in use; they are instead used in conjunction with original punctuation. This is true for all punctuation marks, including periods, commas, semicolons, question marks, and exclamation points.

By looking at two sympatric species (those that lived together) from the fossil graveyards of the Late Jurassic of North America . . . , [David Button] tried to work out what the major dietary differences were between sauropod dinosaurs, based on their anatomy.

One of the best ways to check yourself is to take out the ellipsis. If the sentence or paragraph is still correctly punctuated, you've used the ellipsis correctly. (Just remember to put it back in!)

## Practice

Read the paragraphs below:

*Camarasaurus*, with its more mechanically efficient skull, was capable of generating much stronger bite forces than *Diplodocus*. This suggests that *Camarasaurus* was capable of chomping through tougher plant material than *Diplodocus*, and was perhaps even capable of a greater degree of oral processing before digestion. This actually ties in nicely with previous hypotheses of different diets for each, which were based on apparent feeding heights and inferences made from wear marks on their fossilized teeth.

*Diplodocus* seems to have been well-adapted, despite its weaker skull, to a form of feeding known as branch stripping, where leaves are plucked from branches as the teeth are dragged along them. The increased flexibility of the neck of *Diplodocus* compared to other sauropods seems to support this too.

In terms of their morphological disparity (differences in mechanically-significant aspects of their anatomy), *Camarasaurus* and *Diplodocus* appear to vary more than almost any other sauropod taxa, representing extremes within a spectrum of biomechanical variation related to feeding style.

Do the following quotes use ellipses (and surrounding punctuation) correctly?



1. This suggests that *Camarasaurus* was capable of chomping through tougher plant material than *Diplodocus*. . . This actually ties in nicely with previous hypotheses of different diets foreach.
2. *Diplodocus* seems to have been well-adapted, . . . to a form of feeding known as branch stripping, where leaves are plucked from branches as the teeth are dragged along them

Show Answer

1. **No.** There should be for periods; the ending punctuation of the sentence and then the ellipsis. Even though we've cut off the end of the sentence, the next part is the beginning of a new sentence, and we need ending punctuation.
2. **No.** Since we took out the entire parenthetical phrase, the comma beforehand is unnecessary. It should be "*Diplodocus* seems to have been well-adapted . . . to a form of feeding known as branch stripping . . . "

## Pauses

The ellipsis can also indicate . . . a pause. This use is typically informal, and is only be used in casual correspondence (e.g., emails to friends, posts on social media, texting) or in literature. Because this use occurs in literature, you may find yourself quoting a passage that already has an ellipsis in it. For example, look at this passage spoken by Lady Bracknell, in *The Importance of Being Ernest*.

Well, I must say, Algernon, that I think it is high time that Mr. Bunbury made up his mind whether he was going to live or to die. This shilly-shallying with the question is absurd. Nor do I in any way approve of the modern sympathy with invalids. I consider it morbid. Illness of any kind is hardly a thing to be encouraged in others. Health is the primary duty of life. I am always telling that to your poor uncle, but he never seems to take much notice . . . as far as any improvement in his ailment goes. I should be much obliged if you would ask Mr. Bunbury, from me, to be kind enough not to have a relapse on Saturday, for I rely on you to arrange my music for me. It is my last reception, and one wants something that will encourage conversation, particularly at the end of the season when every one has practically said whatever they had to say, which, in most cases, was probably not much.

If you were to quote the passage, it may appear that something has been removed from the quote. So how can we indicate that this is not the case? If you think back to the bracket rules we just discussed, you may remember that [sic] can be used to show that an error was in the original. In a similar practice, we can enclose the ellipsis in brackets to show it appeared in the original work:

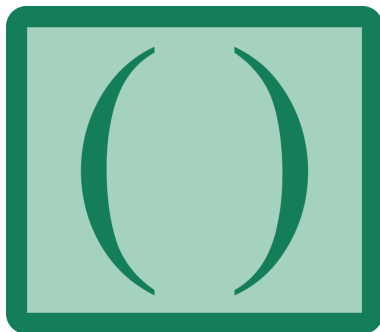
Well, I must say, Algernon, that I think it is high time that Mr. Bunbury made up his mind whether he was going to live or to die. This shilly-shallying with the question is absurd. Nor do I in any way approve of the modern sympathy with invalids. I consider it morbid. Illness of any kind is hardly a thing to be encouraged in others. Health is the primary duty of life. I am always telling that to your poor uncle, but he never seems to take much notice [. . .] as far as any improvement in his ailment goes. I should be much obliged if you would ask Mr. Bunbury, from me, to be kind enough not to have a relapse on Saturday, for I rely on you to arrange my music for me. It is my last reception, and one wants

something that will encourage conversation, particularly at the end of the season when every one has practically said whatever they had to say, which, in most cases, was probably not much.

## 54. Parentheses

Parentheses are most often used to identify material that acts as an aside (such as this brief comment) or to add incidental information.

Other punctuation marks used alongside parentheses need to take into account their context. If the parentheses enclose a full sentence



beginning with a capital letter, then the end punctuation for the sentence falls *inside* the parentheses. For example:

Typically, suppliers specify air to cloth ratios of 6:1 or higher.  
(However, ratios of 4:1 should be used for applications involving silica or feldspathic minerals.)

If the parentheses indicate a citation at the end of a sentence, then the sentence's end punctuation comes after the parentheses are closed:

In a study comparing three different building types, respirable dust concentrations were significantly lower in the open-structure building (Hugh et al., 2005).

Finally, if the parentheses appear in the midst of a sentence (as in this example), then any necessary punctuation (such as the comma that appeared just a few words ago) is delayed until the parentheses are closed.

You can also use parentheses to provide acronyms (or full names for acronyms). For example, “We use the MLA (Modern Language Association) style guide here” or “The Modern Language Association (MLA) style guide is my favorite to use.”

Remember, parentheses always appear in pairs. If you open a parenthesis, you need another to close it!

**Note:** In technical writing, there are additional rules for using parentheses, which can be more nuanced. While we won't discuss those rules here, it's important to bear their existence in mind, especially if you're considering going into a more technical field.

## *Practice*

Have the parentheses been used correctly in the following sentences? Correct any errors you find.

1. (Escobar et al., 2014) wrote about this phenomenon in their most recent paper.
2. NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) just announced three new initiatives.
3. Michael lost the wrestling competition. (He also lost his temper).
4. Helena took the chocolate bars (her favorites) and gave Davi the sour candies.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

1. No. Even parentheses are only used to cite information at the end of a sentence. A corrected version of the sentence would look something like these:
  - Escobar et al. wrote about this phenomenon

in their most recent paper (2014).

- A recent paper discussed this phenomenon (Escobar et al., 2014).

2. Yes. Parentheses can be used to enclose the full name of an acronym.
3. No. The second sentence is entirely in parentheses, so the period should be inside as well.
  - Michael lost the wrestling competition. (He also lost his temper.)
4. Yes. The phrase *her favorites* is a brief aside that can be enclosed by parentheses.

## 55. Practice Activities: Punctuating Quotes

The speech below is given by Gwendolen in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Act 1, Scene 1). Imagine you want to quote this speech in a paper, leaving out the bolded portions. How would you insert this quote into your paper? Be sure to correctly cite the quotation as well.

Jack? . . . No, there is very little music in the name Jack, if any at all, indeed. **It does not thrill. It produces absolutely no vibrations . . . I have known several Jacks, and they all, without**



**exception, were more than usually plain.** Besides, Jack is a notorious domesticity for John! And I pity any woman who is married to a man called John. **She would probably never be allowed to know the entrancing pleasure of a single moment's solitude.** The only really safe name is Ernest.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

Here is an example of how this might be appropriately quoted:

*The Importance of Being Earnest*, despite its title, is not actually about being honest or sincere. Instead, it is about the importance of having the name Earnest. The main character, Jack, has romanced a woman, all the while calling himself Earnest. Near the beginning of the play, he asks if she would mind if his name were Jack. She responds, "Jack? [. . .] No, there is very little music in the name Jack, if any at all,

indeed. . . . Besides, Jack is a notorious domesticity for John!  
And I pity any woman who is married to a man called John. . . .  
The only really safe name is Ernest” (Wilde 1.1).



## 56. Punctuation Clusters

Occasionally, you'll come across an instance that seems to require multiple punctuation marks right next to each other. Sometimes you need to keep all the marks, but other times, you should leave some out.

- You should never use more than one ending punctuation mark in a row (period, question mark, exclamation point).  
When quoting a question, you would end with a question mark, not a question mark and a period:
  - Carlos leaned forward and asked, “Did you get the answer to number six?”
- If an abbreviation, like *etc.*, ends a sentence, you should only use one period.
  - I think we'll have enough food. Mary bought the whole store: chips, soda, candy, cereal, *etc.*
- However, you can place a comma immediately after a period, as you can see above with *etc.*
- Periods and parentheses can also appear right next to each other. Sometimes the period comes after the closing parenthesis (as you can see in the first bullet), but sometimes it appears inside the parentheses. (This is an example of a sentence where the period falls within the parentheses.)  
We talked about this in [Parentheses](#).

## Practice

Identify punctuation errors in the following sentences.  
Type the corrected sentences in the text frame below:

1. Dana had a lot of skills: reading, writing, note-taking, listening, etc..
2. My sister looked over and asked, “Why do you have so many grapes in the shopping cart?”
3. Lucinda was the reigning Spring Queen (i.e. she had won the student vote at the last spring dance).

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

1. Dana had a lot of skills: reading, writing, note-taking, listening, etc.
  - There should only be one period at the end of a sentence.
2. My sister looked over and asked, “Why do you have so many grapes in the shopping cart?”
  - Since a question mark can mark the end of a sentence, there is no need for a period here.
  - If you wanted to change this sentence to an indirect question, you could re-write it like this:  
My sister looked over and asked why I had so many grapes in the shopping cart.
3. Lucinda was the reigning Spring Queen (i.e., she had won the student vote at the last spring dance).

- There should be a comma following the second period of the abbreviation *i.e.*

# 57. Practice Activities: Punctuation

## Ending Punctuation

Are ending punctuation marks used appropriately in these sentences? Explain why or why not. The sentences have been numbered to aid in your comments:

(1) One famous eighteenth-century Thoroughbred racehorse was named Potooooooooo, or Pot-8-Os! (2) He was a chestnut colt bred by Willoughby Bertie, 4th Earl of Abingdon, in 1773, and he was known for his defeat of some of the greatest racehorses of the time. (3) With a well-to-do background like this, where do you suppose his strange name came from.

(4) The horse once has a stable lad, who facetiously misspelled *Potatoes*. (5) Apparently, the owner thought the misspelling was funny enough to adopt it as the horse's real name!

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

The exclamation point at the end of sentence 1 isn't needed. While the name is strange, we haven't yet discussed the horse enough to warrant an exclamation point.

Sentence 3 should end with a question mark: it's a direct question.

Sentence 5 may or may not need an exclamation point. It depends on two different things: the context of the writing and the amount of emphasis you want to put on the sentence. How much emphasis you want is up to you: do you think the fact is amusing enough

to have an exclamation point? The context you're writing in will be a more objective criterion to help you make your decision. In a formal academic setting, such as an English paper, the exclamation point would likely feel out of place. However, if you were writing on your personal semi-professional blog, the exclamation point would probably fit in just fine.

## Hyphens

Identify the compounds in the following sentences. All compounds have been treated as open compounds. Correct any compounds that this is incorrect for:

1. Have you ever seen someone with such a stereo typical appearance?
2. This is all publicly available information.
3. I bought a new yellow orange skirt last week.
4. One half of participants failed to complete the study.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

1. The compound should be a closed compound: **stereotypical**. *Stereo* is a prefix in this word.
2. The compound should be open: **publicly available**. Even though the compound comes before the noun its modifying (*information*), we don't use hyphens with *-ly* adverbs.
3. The compound should be hyphenated **yellow-orange**. The compound adjective appears directly before the noun it modifies (*skirt*).
4. The compound should be open: **one half**. It comes before the noun (*participants*) so *one half* should be open.

## Apostrophes

Read the following passage. Identify any errors with apostrophes. Type the corrected words in the text frame below:

Thanks to **NASAs'** team of sniffers, led by George Aldrich, astronauts can breathe a little bit easier. Aldrich is the "chief sniffer" at the White Sands Test Facility in New Mexico. **His's** job is to smell items before they can be flown in the space shuttle.

Aldrich explained that smells change in space and that once astronauts are up there, **their** stuck with whatever smells are onboard with them. In space, astronauts aren't able to open the window for extra ventilation. He also said that **its** important not to introduce substances that will change the delicate balance of the climate of the International Space Station and the space shuttle.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

Here is the passage with the errors in bold:

Thanks to **NASAs'** team of sniffers, led by George Aldrich, astronauts can breathe a little bit easier. Aldrich is the "chief sniffer" at the White Sands Test Facility in New Mexico. **His's** job is to smell items before they can be flown in the space shuttle.

Aldrich explained that smells change in space and that once astronauts are up there, **their** stuck with whatever smells are onboard with them. In space, astronauts aren't able to open the window for extra ventilation. He also said that **its** important not to introduce substances that will change the delicate balance of the climate of the International Space Station and the space shuttle.

**NASAs'** should be **NASA's**. **His's** doesn't need the apostrophe-s. In fact, possessive pronouns don't require apostrophes at all. **His's** should be **His**. **Their** is a possessive pronoun; the correct word

is **they're**, which is a contraction of the words *they are*. **Its** is a possessive pronoun; the correct word is **it's**, which is a contraction of the words *it is*.

The contraction *aren't* is used correctly in the passage.





PART IV

# MODULE 3: USAGE



## 58. Introduction to Usage

Usage is similar to grammar: it helps determine how you should use a language and which words you should use in a specific context. However, usage focuses more on the meaning of words than on their mechanical function within the language. For example, if you're trying to decide if you should use the numeral 17 or spell out the word *seventeen*, that decision falls under usage. Usage also deals with commonly confused words, spelling, and capitalization.

Unfortunately, there aren't a lot of hard and fast rules when it comes to usage. Additionally, there aren't often reasons behind the correct answers either—especially when it comes to spelling. This section will provide you with resources to help guide your decisions as you write.

## 59. Commonly Misused Terms and Phrases

When I woke up this morning my girlfriend asked me, “Did you sleep good?” I said, “No, I made a few mistakes.”

—Steven Wright

Everyone struggles at one time or another with finding the right word to use. We’ve all sent out that email only to realize we typed *there* when we should have said *their*. How many times have you found yourself puzzling over the distinction between *affect* and *effect* or *lay* and *lie*? You can also find billboards, road signs, ads, and newspapers with usage errors such as these boldly printed for all to see:

- “Man Alright After Crocodile Attack” (*Alright* should be *All Right*)
- “This Line Ten Items or Less” (*Less* should be *Fewer*)
- “Auction at This Sight: One Week” (*Sight* should be *Site*)
- “Violent Storm Effects Thousands” (*Effects* should be *Affects*)

Perhaps there is little need here to preach about the value of understanding how to correctly use words. Quite simply, in formal writing, conventions have been established to aid us in choosing the best term for the circumstances, and you must make it your business to learn the rules regarding the trickiest and most misused terms.

[This PDF contains a list of several commonly confused words](#)—as well as how to tell which word you should use.

You can also dig up style handbooks with recommendations on using tricky terminology within your discipline. For instance, *Geowriting: A Guide to Writing, Editing, and Printing in Earth Science*, by Robert Bates explains terms commonly used in the field;

medical students can turn to *The Aspen Guide to Effective Health Care Correspondence or Writing, Speaking, and Communication Skills for Health Professionals*.

*The Chicago Manual of Style* answers almost every conceivable style question—it is essentially a bible for book publishers. Never hesitate to look up a term for its proper usage if you are uncertain—there is a lot to be said for being correct.

### *On the Web*

For a searchable and comprehensive list of commonly misused words and phrases and some practice quizzes, visit these sites:

- [Common errors in English usage page from Washington State University](#)
- [“Notorious Confusables” page from Capital Community College](#)

## 60. Abbreviations and Acronyms

Abbreviations (the shortened form of a word or phrase) and acronyms (words formed from the initial letters of a phrase) are commonly used in technical writing. In some fields, including chemistry, medicine, computer science, and geographic information systems, acronyms are used so frequently that the reader can feel lost in an alphabet soup. However, the proper use of these devices enhances the reading process, fostering fluid readability and efficient comprehension.

Some style manuals devote entire chapters to the subject of abbreviations and acronyms, and your college library no doubt contains volumes that you can consult when needed. Here, we provide just a few principles you can apply in using abbreviations and acronyms.

### Abbreviations

- Typically, we abbreviate social titles (like Ms. and Mr.) and professional titles (like Dr., Rev.).
- Titles of degrees should be abbreviated when following someone's name. However, in resumes and cover letters, you should avoid abbreviations
  - Gloria Morales-Myers, PhD
  - I received a *Bachelor of Arts* in 2014.
- Most abbreviations should be followed with a period (*Mar.* for March), except those representing units of measure (*mm* for millimeter).
- Typically, do not abbreviate geographic names and countries in

text (i.e., write *Saint Cloud* rather than *St. Cloud*). However, these names are usually abbreviated when presented in “tight text” where space can be at a premium, as in tables and figures.

- Use the ampersand symbol (&) in company names if the companies themselves do so in their literature, but avoid using the symbol as a narrative substitute for the word *and* in your text.
- In text, spell out addresses (Third Avenue; the Chrysler Building) but abbreviate city addresses that are part of street names (Central Street SW).
- Try to avoid opening a sentence with an abbreviation; instead, write the word out.

## Acronyms

- With few exceptions, present acronyms in full capital letters (FORTRAN; NIOSH). Some acronyms, such as *scuba* and *radar*, are so commonly used that they are not capitalized.
- Unless they appear at the end of a sentence, do not follow acronyms with a period.
  - NOAA is a really great organization.
  - I want to work for the USGS.
- Acronyms can be pluralized with the addition of a lowercase s
  - Please choose between these three URLs.
- Acronyms can be made possessive with an apostrophe followed by a lowercase s:
  - The DOD’s mandate will be published today.
- As subjects, acronyms should be treated as singulars, even when they stand for plurals; therefore, they require a singular verb
  - NASA is committed to . . .
- Always write out the first in-text reference to an acronym,

followed by the acronym itself written in capital letters and enclosed by parentheses. Subsequent references to the acronym can be made just by the capital letters alone. For example:

- Geographic Information Systems (GIS) is a rapidly expanding field. GIS technology . . .
- The acronym US can be used as an adjective (US citizen), but *United States* should be used when you are using it as a noun.

## Spelling, Capitalization, and Punctuation

Different abbreviations and acronyms are treated differently. You can review [this PDF to check the proper treatment of some commonly used abbreviations and acronyms](#). For a much more detailed listing of abbreviations and acronyms, you can check in the back pages of many dictionaries, or consult the free online version of the [United States Government Printing Office Style Manual](#).



# 6I. Writing with Numbers

## The General Rule

The rules for expressing numbers are relatively simple and straightforward. When you're writing in a nontechnical subject (like English or art), numbers ninety-nine and below should be written out with letters, not numerals:



- There were **sixty** dogs in the competition.
- I don't think it's possible to get **264** bracelets made in **one** week.

In technical fields (like math or science), you spell out numbers ten and below. Numbers above this should be written as numerals:

- This study is based on **three** different ideas
- In this treatment, the steel was heated **18** different times.

## Other Rules

If a sentence begins with a number, the number should be written out:

- **Fourteen** of the participants could not tell the difference between samples A and B.
- **Eighteen hundred and eighty-eight** was a very difficult year.

- You may want to revise sentences like this so the number does not come first: “The year **1888** was quite difficult.”

You should treat similar numbers in grammatically connected groups alike:

- **Two** dramatic changes followed: **four** samples exploded and **thirteen** lab technicians resigned.
- **Sixteen** people got **15** points on the test, **thirty** people got **10** points, and **three** people got **5** points.
  - In this sentence, there are two different “categories” of numbers: those that modify the noun *people* and those that modify the noun *points*. You can see that one category is spelled out (*people*) and the other is in numerals (*points*). This division helps the reader immediately spot which category the numbers belong to.

When you write a percentage the number should always be written numerically (even if its ten or under). If you’re writing in a technical field, you should use the percentage symbol (%):

- This procedure has a **7%** failure rate.

If you’re writing in a nontechnical field, you should spell out the word percent:

- The judges have to give prizes to at least **25 percent** of competitors.

All important measured quantities—particularly those involving decimal points, dimensions, degrees, distances, weights, measures, and sums of money—should be expressed in numeral form:

- The metal should then be submerged for precisely **1.3** seconds.
- On average, the procedure costs **\$25,000**.

- The depth to the water at the time of testing was **16.16** feet.

In technical settings, degree measures of temperature are normally expressed with the ° symbol rather than by the written word, with a space after the number but not between the symbol and the temperature scale:

- The sample was heated to **80 °C**.

Unlike the abbreviations for Fahrenheit and Celsius, the abbreviation for Kelvin (which refers to an absolute scale of temperature) is not preceded by the degree symbol (i.e., **12 K** is correct).

### *On the Web*

Check out these handy resources related to expressing numbers and numerals in text:

- [Technical writing tips for using numbers from a company president offering online technical writing courses](#)
- [“Using Numbers, Writing Lists” advice from Capital Community College website](#)

# 62. Capitalization

## Capitalization Rules

Writers often refer to geographic locations, company names, temperature scales, and processes or apparatuses named after people: you must learn how to capitalize these items. There are ten fundamental rules for capitalization:

1. Capitalize the names of major portions of your paper and all references to figures and tables. Note: Some journals and publications do not follow this rule, but most do.
  - Table 1
  - Appendix A
  - see Figure 4
2. Capitalize the names of established regions, localities, and political divisions.
  - the French Republic
  - Lancaster County
  - the Arctic Circle
3. Capitalize the names of highways, routes, bridges, buildings, monuments, parks, ships, automobiles, hotels, forts, dams, railroads, and major coal and mineral deposits.
  - the White House
  - Highway 13
  - Alton Railroad
4. Capitalize the proper names of persons, places and their

derivatives, and geographic names (continents, countries, states, cities, oceans, rivers, mountains, lakes, harbors, and valleys).

- British
  - Rocky Mountains
  - Chicago
  - Howard Pickering
5. Capitalize the names of historic events and documents, government units, political parties, business and fraternal organizations, clubs and societies, companies, and institutions.
- the Civil War
  - Congress
  - Ministry of Energy
6. Capitalize titles of rank when they are joined to a person's name, and the names of stars and planets. Note: The names earth, sun, and moon are not normally capitalized, although they may be capitalized when used in connection with other bodies of the solar system.
- Venus
  - Professor Walker
  - Milky Way
7. Capitalize words named after geographic locations, the names of major historical or geological time frames, and most words derived from proper names.
- Middle Jurassic Period
  - the Industrial Revolution
  - Petri dish
  - Coriolis force
  - Planck's constant

Note: The only way to be sure if a word derived from a person's name should be capitalized is to look it up in the dictionary. For example, "Bunsen burner" (after Robert Bunsen) is capitalized, while "diesel engine" (after Rudolph Diesel) is not. Also, referring to specific geologic time frames, the *Chicago Manual of Style* says not to capitalize the words "era," "period," and "epoch," but the American Association of Petroleum Geologists says that these words should be capitalized. I choose to capitalize them, as those who write in the geological sciences should by convention.

8. Capitalize references to temperature scales, whether written out or abbreviated.
  1. 10 °F
  2. Celsius degrees
9. Capitalize references to major sections of a country or the world.
  1. the Near East
  2. the South
10. Capitalize the names of specific courses, the names of languages, and the names of semesters.
  - Anatomy 200
  - Spring semester 2016
  - Russian

## Common Capitalization Errors

Just as important as knowing when to capitalize is knowing when not to. Below, I set forth a few instances where capital letters are commonly used when they should not be. Please review this advice carefully, in that we all have made such capitalization errors. When in doubt, simply consult a print dictionary.

1. Do not capitalize the names of the seasons, unless the seasons are personified, as in poetry ("Spring's breath"):
  - spring
  - winter
2. Do not capitalize the words north, south, east, and west when they refer to directions, in that their meaning becomes generalized rather than site-specific.
  - We traveled west.
  - The sun rises in the east.
3. In general, do not capitalize commonly used words that have come to have specialized meaning, even though their origins are in words that are capitalized.
  - india ink
  - pasteurization
  - biblical
4. Do not capitalize the names of elements. Note: This is a common capitalization error, and can often be found in published work. Confusion no doubt arises because the symbols for elements are capitalized.
  - oxygen
  - californium
  - nitrogen
5. Do not capitalize words that are used so frequently and informally that they have come to have highly generalized meaning.
  - north pole
  - midwesterner

- big bang theory
- arctic climate



## 63. Spelling

Far too many of us use spell checkers as proofreaders, and we ultimately use them to justify our own laziness. I once received a complaint from an outraged professor that a student had continually misspelled *miscellaneous* as *mescaline* (a hallucinogenic drug). The student's spell checker did not pick up the error, but the professor certainly did.

So proceed with caution when using spell checkers. They are not gods, and they do not substitute for meticulous proofreading and clear thinking. There is an instructive moment in a M\*A\*S\*H episode, when Father Mulcahy complains to Colonel Potter about a typo in a new set of Bibles—one of the commandments reads “thou shalt commit adultery.” Father sheepishly worries aloud that “These lads are taught to follow orders.” For want of a single word the intended meaning is lost. Always proofread a hard copy, with your own two eyes.

### Six Rules for Spelling

I have a crusty old copy of a book called *Instant Spelling Dictionary*, now in its third edition but first published in 1964, that I still use frequently. I adapted the six basic spelling rules that appear below from that dictionary. Even without memorizing the rules, you can improve your spelling simply by reviewing them and scanning the examples and exceptions until the fundamental concepts begin to sink in. When in doubt, always look up the word. And do not forget that desktop dictionaries work just as well as electronic ones.

## Rule 1

In words ending with a silent *e*, you usually drop the *e* when you add a suffix that begins with a vowel:

- *survive* + *al* = *survival*
- *divide* + *ing* = *dividing*
- *fortune* + *ate* = *fortunate*

Here are a few common exceptions:

manageable	singeing	mileage
advantageous	dyeing	acreage
peaceable	canoeing	lineage

## Rule 2

In words ending with a silent *e*, you usually retain the *e* before a suffix than begins with a consonant.

- *arrange* + *ment* = *arrangement*
- *forgive* + *ness* = *forgiveness*
- *safe* + *ty* = *safety*

Here are a few common exceptions:

- *ninth* (from *nine*)
- *argument* (from *argue*)
- *wisdom* (from *wise*)
- *wholly* (from *whole*)

## Rule 3

In words of two or more syllables that are accented on the final syllable and end in a single consonant preceded by a single vowel, you double the final consonant before a suffix beginning with a vowel.

- *refer + ing = referring*
- *regret + able = regrettable*

However, if the accent is not on the last syllable, the final consonant is not doubled.

- *benefit + ed = benefited*
- *audit + ed = audited*

## Rule 4

In words of one syllable ending in a single consonant that is preceded by a single vowel, you double the final consonant before a suffix that begins with a vowel. (It sounds more complex than it is; just look at the examples.)

- *big + est = biggest*
- *hot + er = hotter*
- *bag + age = baggage*

## Rule 5

In words ending in *y* preceded by a consonant, you usually change the *y* to *i* before any suffix that does not begin with an *i*.

- *beauty + ful = beautiful*
- *accompany + ment = accompaniment*
- *accompany + ing = accompanying* (suffix begins with i)

If the final y is preceded by a vowel, however, the rule does not apply.

- journeys
- obeying
- essays
- buys
- repaying
- attorneys

## Rule 6

Use *i* before *e* except when the two letters follow *c* and have an *e* sound, or when they have an *a* sound as in *neighbor* and *weigh*.

---

<b>i before e (e sound)</b>	<b>e before i (a sound)</b>
-----------------------------	-----------------------------

shield	vein
believe	weight
grieve	veil
mischievous	neighbor

---

Here are a few common exceptions:

- weird
- either
- seize
- foreign
- ancient
- forfeit

- height

## Everyday Words that are Commonly Misspelled

If you find yourself over-relying on spell checkers or misspelling the same word for the seventeenth time this year, it would be to your advantage to improve your spelling. One shortcut to doing this is to consult [this list of words that are frequently used and misspelled](#).

Many smart writers even put a mark next to a word whenever they have to look it up, thereby helping themselves identify those fiendish words that give them the most trouble. To improve your spelling, you must commit the words you frequently misspell to memory, and physically looking them up until you do so is an effective path to spelling perfection.



PART V

# MODULE 4: SENTENCE STRUCTURE





## 64. Introduction to Sentence Structure

Language is made up of words, which work together to form sentences, which work together to form paragraphs. In this section, we'll be focusing on sentences: how they're made and how they behave. Sentences help us to organize our ideas—to identify which items belong together and which should be separated.



So just what is a sentence? Sentences are simply collections of words. Each sentence has a subject, an action, and punctuation. These basic building blocks work together to create endless amounts and varieties of sentences.

It's important to have variety in your sentence length and structure. This quote from Gary Provost illustrates why:

This sentence has five words. Here are five more words. Five-word sentences are fine. But several together become monotonous. Listen to what is happening. The writing is getting boring. The sound of it drones. It's like a stuck record. The ear demands some variety. Now listen. I vary the sentence length, and I create music. Music. The writing sings. It has a pleasant rhythm, a lilt, a harmony. I use short sentences. And I use sentences of medium length. And sometimes when I am certain the reader is rested, I will engage him with a sentence of considerable length, a sentence that burns with energy and builds with all the

impetus of a crescendo, the roll of the drums, the crash of the cymbals—sounds that say listen to this, it is important.

So write with a combination of short, medium, and long sentences. Create a sound that pleases the reader's ear. Don't just write words. Write music.<sup>1</sup>

You can also listen to the difference in the video below:



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

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=84#oembed-1>

In order to create this variety, you need to know how sentences work and how to create them. In this section we will identify the parts of sentences and learn how they fit together to create music in writing.

1. Provost, Gary. 100 Ways to Improve Your Writing, Signet:1985, pp. 60–61.

# 65. Basic Parts of a Sentence

I like the construction of sentences and the juxtaposition of words—not just how they sound or what they mean, but even what they look like.

—author Don DeLillo

## Subject and Predicate

Every sentence has a subject and a predicate. The subject of a sentence is the noun, pronoun, or phrase or clause the sentence is about:

- Einstein’s general **theory** of relativity has been subjected to many tests of validity over the years.
- Although a majority of caffeine drinkers think of it as a stimulant, heavy **users** of caffeine say the substance relaxes them.
  - Notice that the introductory phrase, “Although a majority of caffeine drinkers think of it as a stimulant,” is not a part of the subject or the predicate.
- In a secure landfill, the **soil** on top and the **cover** block storm water intrusion into the landfill. (*compound subject*)
  - There are two subjects in this sentence: *soil* and *cover*.
- Surrounding the secure landfill on all sides are impermeable barrier **walls**. (*inverted sentence pattern*)
  - In an inverted sentence, the predicate comes before the subject. You won’t run into this sentence structure very often as it is pretty rare.

The predicate is the rest of the sentence after the subject:

- The pressure in a pressured water reactor **varies from system to system.**
- In contrast, a boiling water reactor **operates at constant pressure.**
- The pressure **is maintained at about 2250 pounds per square inch** then **lowered to form steam at about 600 pounds per square inch.** (*compound predicate*)
  - There are two predicates in this sentence: “is maintained at about 2250 pounds per square inch” and “lowered to form steam at about 600 pounds per square inch”

## Practice

Identify the subject and predicate of each sentence:

1. Daniel and I are going to go to Hawaii for three weeks.
2. Raquel will watch the dogs while we're on vacation.
3. She will feed the dogs and will make sure they get enough exercise.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

1. “Daniel and I” is the subject. The rest of the sentence, “are going to go to Hawaii for three weeks,” is the predicate.
2. “Raquel” is the subject. The rest of the sentence, “will watch the dogs while we're on vacation,” is the predicate.
3. “She” is the subject. The rest of the sentence, “will feed the dogs and will make sure they get enough

exercise,” is the predicate. This is a compound predicate: it has two different actions in it.

- will feed the dogs
- will make sure they get enough exercise

A predicate can include the verb, a direct object, and an indirect object.

## Direct Object

A direct object—a noun, pronoun, phrase, or clause acting as a noun—takes the action of the main verb. A direct object can be identified by putting *what?*, *which?*, or *whom?* in its place.

- The housing assembly of a mechanical pencil contains the mechanical **workings** of the pencil.
  - The action (*contains*) is directly happening to the object (*workings*).
- Lavoisier used curved glass **discs** fastened together at their rims, with wine filling the space between, to focus the sun’s rays to attain temperatures of 3000° F.
  - The action (*used*) is directly happening to the object (*discs*).
- A 20 percent fluctuation in average global temperature could reduce biological **activity**, shift weather **patterns**, and ruin **agriculture**. (*compound direct object*)
  - The actions are directly happening to multiple objects: *reduce activity*, *shift patterns*, and *ruin agriculture*.

- On Mariners 6 and 7, the two-axis scan platforms provided much more **capability** and **flexibility** for the scientific payload than those of Mariner 4. (*compound direct object*)
  - The action (*provided*) is directly happening to multiple objects (*capability* and *flexibility*).

## Indirect Object

An indirect object—a noun, pronoun, phrase, or clause acting as a noun—receives the action expressed in the sentence. It can be identified by inserting *to* or *for*.

- The company is designing senior **citizens** a new walkway to the park area.
  - The company is not designing new models of senior citizens; they are designing a new walkway *for* senior citizens. Thus, senior citizens is the indirect object of this sentence.
  - *Walkway* is the direct object of this sentence, since it is the thing being designed.
- Please send the personnel **office** a resume so we can further review your candidacy.
  - You are not being asked to send the office somewhere; you're being asked to send a resume *to* the office. Thus, the personnel office is the indirect object of this sentence.
  - *Resume* is the direct object of this sentence, since it is the thing you should send.

**Note:** Objects can belong to any verb in a sentence, even if the verbs aren't in the main clause. For example, let's look at the sentence "When you give your teacher your assignment, be sure to include your name and your class number."

- *Your teacher* is the indirect object of the verb *give*.
- *Your assignment* is the direct object of the verb *give*.
- *Your name* and *your class number* are the direct objects of the verb *include*.

## Practice

Identify the objects in the following sentences. Are they direct or indirect objects?

1. The cooler temperatures brought about by nuclear war might end all life on earth.
2. On Mariners 6 and 7, the two-axis scan platforms provided much more capability and flexibility for the scientific payload than those of Mariner 4.
3. In your application letter, tell the potential employer that a resume accompanies the letter.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

1. The cooler temperatures brought about by nuclear war might end **all life** on earth.
  - *All life* is the direct object of the verb *might end*.
2. On Mariners 6 and 7, the two-axis scan platforms provided much more **capability** and **flexibility** for **the scientific payload** than those of Mariner 4.
  - *Capability* and *flexibility* are the direct objects of the verb *provided*.
  - *The scientific payload* is the indirect object of the verb *provided*.
3. In your application letter, tell the **potential employer** that a resume accompanies **the letter**.
  - *Potential employer* is the indirect object of *tell*.
  - *The letter* is the direct object of the verb *accompanies*.

## Phrases and Clauses

Phrases and clauses are groups of words that act as a unit and perform a single function within a sentence. A phrase may have a partial subject or verb but not both; a dependent clause has both a subject and a verb (but is not a complete sentence). Here are a few examples (not all phrases are highlighted because some are embedded in others):



Phrases	Clauses
Electricity has to do <b>with those physical phenomena</b> involving electrical charges and their effects when <b>in motion</b> and when <b>at rest</b> . <i>(involving electrical charges and their effects is also a phrase.)</i>	Electricity manifests itself as a force of attraction, independent of gravitational and short-range nuclear attraction, <b>when two oppositely charged bodies are brought close to one another</b> .
<b>In 1833</b> , Faraday's experimentation <b>with electrolysis</b> indicated a natural unit <b>of electrical charge</b> , thus <b>pointing to a discrete rather than continuous charge</b> . <i>(to a discrete rather than continuous charge is also a phrase.)</i>	<b>Since the frequency is the speed of sound divided by the wavelength</b> , a shorter wavelength means a higher wavelength.
The symbol that denotes a connection <b>to the grounding conductor</b> is three parallel horizontal lines, each of the lower ones <b>being shorter than the one above it</b> .	Nuclear units planned or in construction have a total capacity of 186,998 KW, <b>which, if current plans hold, will bring nuclear capacity to about 22% of all electrical capacity by 1995</b> . <i>(if current plans hold is a clause within a clause)</i>

There are two types of clauses: dependent and independent. A dependent clause is dependent on something else: it cannot stand on its own. An independent clause, on the other hand, is free to stand by itself.

So how can you tell if a clause is dependent or independent? Let's take a look at the clauses from the table above:

- when two oppositely charged bodies are brought close to one another
- Since the frequency is the speed of sound divided by the wavelength

All of these clauses are dependent clauses. As we learned in [Conjunctions](#), any clause with a subordinating conjunction is a dependent clause. For example "I was a little girl in 1995" is an independent clause, but "Because I was a little girl in 1995" is a dependent clause. Subordinating conjunctions include the following:

after	although	as	as far as	as if	as long as	as soon as
as though	because	before	even if	even though	every time	if
in order that	since	so	so that	than	though	unless
until	when	whenever	where	whereas	wherever	while

Let's look at the other clause from our examples:

- which, if current plans hold, will bring nuclear capacity to about 22% of all electrical capacity by 1995

This clause starts with the relative pronoun *which* (see [Relative Pronouns](#) for more information on these). Any clause prefaced with a relative pronoun becomes a dependent clause.

## Practice

In each of the following sentences, identify their phrases, dependent clauses, and independent clauses:

1. Because Dante won the steamboat competition, he let Maxwell win the rowing race.
2. That truck with the missing tires looks really old.
3. Why can't I read *The Martian*?
4. Swimming across the English Channel in nearly twenty-three hours, Laís set a new personal record.
5. Whenever I see Alice and Armando's Instagram account, *The Two of Us*, I'm overwhelmed with feelings.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

### Show Answer

1. This sentence is made up of a dependent clause and an independent clause. There are two phrases within the sentence.
  - “Because Dante won the steamboat competition” is a dependent clause; the conjunction *because* turns an independent clause into a dependent.
  - “He let Maxwell win the rowing race” is an independent clause.
  - Here are the phrases:
    - “the steamboat competition”
    - “win the rowing race”
2. This sentence is made up of a single independent clause. “That truck with the missing tires” is a phrase.
3. This sentence is made up of a single independent clause.
4. This sentence is made up of a phrase and an independent clause:
  - “Swimming across the English Channel in nearly twenty-three hours” is a phrase; there is only a subject, not a verb. (Remember, *swimming* in this phrase is a gerund, which acts as a noun, not a verb!)
  - “Laís set a new personal record” is an independent clause.
5. This sentence is made up of a dependent clause and an independent clause. There are also three phrases within the sentence.

- “Whenever I see Alice and Armando’s Instagram account, *The Two of Us*” is a dependent clause; the conjunction *whenever* turns an independent clause into a dependent.
- “I’m overwhelmed with feelings” is an independent clause
- Here are the phrases:
  - “Alice and Armando’s Instagram account, *The Two of Us*”
  - “*The Two of Us*”
  - “overwhelmed with feelings”

# 66. Common Sentence Structures

## Basic Sentence Patterns

### Subject + verb

The simplest of sentence patterns is composed of a **subject** and **verb** without a direct object or subject complement. It uses an **intransitive verb**, that is, a verb requiring no direct object:

- Control **rods remain** inside the fuel assembly of the reactor.
- The **development** of wind power practically **ceased** until the early 1970s.
- The **cross-member** exposed to abnormal stress eventually **broke**.
- Only two **types** of charge **exist** in nature.

### Subject + verb + direct object

Another common sentence pattern uses the **direct object**:

- **Silicon conducts electricity** in an unusual way.
- The anti-reflective **coating** on the the silicon cell **reduces reflection** from 32 to 22 percent.

## Subject + verb + indirect object + direct object

The sentence pattern with the **indirect object** and **direct object** is similar to the preceding pattern:

- **I am writing** **her** about a number of **problems** that I have had with my computer.
- **Austin, Texas**, **has** recently **built** its **citizens** a **system** of bike lanes.

### *Practice*

Identify the basic sentence pattern of the sentences below:

1. All amplitude-modulation (AM) receivers work in the same way.
2. The supervisor mailed the applicant a description of the job.
3. We have mailed the balance of the payment in this letter.

Show Answer

1. This is a subject + verb sentence:
  - All amplitude-modulation (AM) **receivers** **work** in the same way.
2. This is a subject + verb + indirect object + direct object sentence:
  - The **supervisor** **mailed** the **applicant** a

**description** of the job.

3. This is a subject + verb + direct object sentence:

- **We have mailed** the **balance** of the payment in this letter.

## Sentence Types

### Simple Sentences

A simple sentence is one that contains a **subject** and a **verb** and no other independent or dependent clause.

- **One** of the tubes **is attached** to the manometer part of the instrument indicating the pressure of the air within the cuff.
- There **are** basically two **types** of stethoscopes.
  - In this sentence, the subject and verb are inverted; that is, the verb comes before the subject. However, it is still classified as a simple sentence.
- To measure blood pressure, a **sphygmomanometer** and a **stethoscope are needed**.
  - This sentence has a compound subject—that is, there are two subjects—but it is still classified as a simple sentence.

Command sentences are a subtype of simple sentences. These sentences are unique because they don't actually have a subject:

- **Clean** the dishes.

- **Make** sure to take good notes today.
- After completing the reading, **answer** the following questions.

In each of these sentences, there is an implied subject: *you*. These sentences are instructing the reader to complete a task. Command sentences are the only sentences in English that are complete without a subject.

## Compound Predicates

A **predicate** is everything in the verb part of the sentence after the subject (unless the sentence uses inverted word order). A *compound predicate* is two or more predicates joined by a coordinating conjunction. Traditionally, the conjunction in a sentence consisting of just two compound predicates is not punctuated.

- Another library media specialist **has been using Accelerated Reader for ten years** and **has seen great results**.
- This cell phone app lets users **share pictures instantly with followers** and **categorize photos with hashtags**.

## Compound Sentences

A compound sentence is made up of two or more *independent clauses* joined by a coordinating conjunction (and, or, nor, but, yet, for) and a comma, an adverbial conjunction and a semicolon, or just a semicolon.

- In sphygmomanometers, too narrow a cuff can result in erroneously high readings, and too wide a cuff can result in erroneously low readings.



- Some cuff hook together; others wrap or snap into place.

## *Practice*

Identify the type of each sentence below:

1. The sphygmomanometer is usually covered with cloth and has two rubber tubes attached to it.
2. There are several types of sentences; using different types can keep your writing lively.
3. Words, sentences, and paragraphs are all combined to create a book.
4. Before giving up, take a deep breath and look at things from a different perspective.

Show Answer

Put Answer Here

1. This sentence has a compound predicate—that is, there are two predicates, joined with the conjunction *and*:
  - is usually covered with cloth
  - has two rubber tubes attached to it
2. This is a compound sentence. There are two independent clauses joined together by a semicolon.
3. This is a simple sentence with a compound subject.
  - Subject: Words, sentences, and paragraphs
  - Predicate: are all combined to create a book
4. This is a command sentence with a compound predicate—that is, there are two predicates, joined

with the conjunction *and*:

- take a deep breath
- look at things from a different perspective.

## 67. Sentence Punctuation Patterns

While there are infinite possibilities for sentence construction, let's take a look at some of the most common punctuation patterns in sentences. In order to do this, let's first look at this passage about Queen Elizabeth I. You don't need to pay attention to the words: just look at the punctuation.

Elizabeth I was Queen of England and Ireland from 17 November 1558 until her death on March 24, 1603. Elizabeth was the daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, his second wife, who was executed two and a half years after Elizabeth's birth. Sometimes called The Virgin Queen, the childless Elizabeth was the fifth and last monarch of the Tudor dynasty.



*The "Darnley Portrait" of Elizabeth I of England*

Elizabeth's reign is known as the Elizabethan era. The period is famous for the flourishing of English drama, led by playwrights (such as William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe) and for the seafaring prowess of English adventurers (such as Francis Drake). Towards the end of her reign, a series of economic and military problems weakened her popularity. Elizabeth is acknowledged as a charismatic performer and a dogged survivor in an era when government was ramshackle and limited, and when monarchs in neighboring countries

faced internal problems that jeopardized their thrones. After the short reigns of Elizabeth's half-siblings, her 44 years on the throne provided welcome stability for the kingdom and helped forge a sense of national identity.

Now let's look at the passage with the words removed:

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As you can see, this passage has a fairly simple punctuation structure. It simply uses periods, commas, and parentheses. These three marks are the most common punctuation you will see. Some other common sentence patterns include the following:

- -----; -----.
  - Elizabeth was baptized on 10 September; Archbishop

Thomas Cranmer stood as one of her godparents.

- \_\_\_\_\_; however, \_\_\_\_\_.
  - The English took the defeat of the armada as a symbol of God's favor; however, this victory was not a turning point in the war.
- \_\_\_\_\_: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.
  - The period is famous for the flourishing of English drama, led by several well-known playwrights: William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, and Francis Beaumont.

While your sentence's punctuation will always depend on the content of your writing, there are a few common punctuation patterns you should be aware of.

- Simple sentences have these punctuation patterns:
  - \_\_\_\_\_.
  - \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.
- Compound predicate sentences have this punctuation pattern:
  - \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
- Compound Sentences have these punctuation patterns:
  - \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.
  - \_\_\_\_\_; \_\_\_\_\_.

As you can see from these common patterns, periods, commas, and semicolons are the punctuation marks you will use the most in your writing. As you write, it's best to use a variety of these patterns. If you use the same pattern repeatedly, your writing can easily become boring and drab.

## Practice

The sentences in this passage follow a single punctuation pattern: \_\_\_\_\_.

Revise the passage to create variety.

Johann Sebastian Bach wrote six Cello Suites. The Cello Suites are suites for unaccompanied cello. They are some of the most frequently performed and recognizable solo compositions ever written for cello. Each movement is based around a baroque dance type. This basis is standard for a Baroque musical suite. The cello suites are structured in six movements each. Each includes a prelude; an allemande; a courante; a sarabande; two minuets, two bourrées, or two gavottes; and a final gigue. The Bach cello suites are considered to be among the most profound of all classical music works.

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Show Answer

There are an infinite number of revisions for this passage. As you compare your work with ours, keep these things in mind:

1. When combining sentences into complex or compound sentence, make sure you use punctuation and conjunctions correctly.
2. When there is redundant information, you can easily remove it and combine the other parts of a sentence together.

Johann Sebastian Bach's six Cello Suites, written

for unaccompanied cello, are some of the most frequently performed and recognizable solo compositions ever written for cello. As is standard for a Baroque musical suite, each movement is based around a baroque dance type. The cello suites are structured in six movements each: a prelude; an allemande; a courante; a sarabande; two minuets, two bourrées, or two gavottes; and a final gigue. The Bach cello suites are considered to be among the most profound of all classical music works.

## 68. Run-on Sentences

A *run-on* sentence is a sentence that goes on and on and needs to be broken up. Run-on sentences occur when two or more independent clauses are improperly joined. (We talked about clauses in [Parts of a Sentence](#).) One type of run-on that you've probably heard of is the *comma splice*, in which two independent clauses are joined by a comma without a coordinating conjunction (*and*, *or*, *but*, etc.).

Let's look at a few examples of run-on sentences:

- Often, choosing a topic for a paper is the hardest part it's a lot easier after that.
- Sometimes, books do not have the most complete information, it is a good idea then to look for articles in specialized periodicals.
- She loves skiing but he doesn't.

All three of these have two independent clauses. Each clause should be separated from another with a period, a semicolon, or a comma and a coordinating conjunction:

- Often, choosing a topic for a paper is the hardest part. It's a lot easier after that.
- Sometimes, books do not have the most complete information; it is a good idea then to look for articles in specialized periodicals.
- She loves skiing, but he doesn't.

**Note:** Caution should be exercised when defining a



run-on sentence as a sentence that just goes on and on. A run-on sentence is a sentence that goes on and on **and** isn't correctly punctuated. Not every long sentence is a run-on sentence. For example, look at this quote from *The Great Gatsby*:

Its vanished trees, the trees that had made way for Gatsby's house, had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams; for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder.

If you look at the punctuation, you'll see that this quote is a single sentence. F. Scott Fitzgerald used commas and semicolons in such a way that, despite its great length, it's grammatically sound, as well. Length is no guarantee of a run-on sentence.

## Common Causes of Run-Ons

We often write run-on sentences because we sense that the sentences involved are closely related and dividing them with a period just doesn't seem right. We may also write them because the parts seem too short to need any division, like in "She loves skiing but he doesn't." However, "She loves skiing" and "he doesn't" are both independent clauses, so they need to be divided by a comma and

a coordinating conjunction—not just a coordinating conjunction by itself.

Another common cause of run-on sentences is mistaking adverbial conjunctions for coordinating conjunctions. For example if we were to write, “She loved skiing, however he didn’t,” we would have produced a comma splice. The correct sentence would be “She loved skiing; however, he didn’t.”

## Fixing Run-On Sentences

Before you can fix a run-on sentence, you’ll need to identify the problem. When you write, carefully look at each part of every sentence. Are the parts independent clauses, or are they dependent clauses or phrases? Remember, only independent clauses can stand on their own. This also means they have to stand on their own; they can’t run together without correct punctuation.

Let’s take a look at a few run-on sentences and their revisions:

1. Most of the hours I’ve earned toward my associate’s degree do not transfer, however, I do have at least some hours the University will accept.
2. The opposite is true of stronger types of stainless steel they tend to be more susceptible to rust.
3. Some people were highly educated professionals, others were from small villages in underdeveloped countries.

Let’s start with the first sentence. This is a comma-splice sentence. The adverbial conjunction *however* is being treated like a coordinating conjunction. There are two easy fixes to this problem. The first is to turn the comma before *however* into a period. If this feels like too hard of a stop between ideas, you can change the comma into a semicolon instead.

- Most of the hours I've earned toward my associate's degree do not transfer. However, I do have at least some hours the University will accept.
- Most of the hours I've earned toward my associate's degree do not transfer; however, I do have at least some hours the University will accept.

The second sentence is a run-on as well. "The opposite is true of stronger types of stainless steel" and "they tend to be more susceptible to rust." are both independent clauses. The two clauses are very closely related, and the second clarifies the information provided in the first. The best solution is to insert a colon between the two clauses:

The opposite is true of stronger types of stainless steel: they tend to be more susceptible to rust.

What about the last example? Once again we have two independent clauses. The two clauses provide contrasting information. Adding a conjunction could help the reader move from one kind of information to another. However, you may want that sharp contrast. Here are two revision options:

- Some people were highly educated professionals, while others were from small villages in underdeveloped countries.
- Some people were highly educated professionals. Others were from small villages in underdeveloped countries.

### *Practice*

Identify the run-on sentences in the following paragraph:

I had the craziest dream the other night. My cousin Jacob and I were on the run from the law. Apparently

we were wizards and the law was cracking down on magic. So, we obviously had to go into hiding but I lost track of Jacob and then I got picked up by a cop. But I was able to convince him that the government was corrupt and that he should take me to my escape boat.

#### Show Answer

The first two sentences are grammatically sound. The next sentence, however, is not.

Apparently we were wizards and the law was cracking down on magic.

This sentence just needs a comma inserted before the word *and*: Apparently we were wizards, and the law was cracking down on magic.

Let's look at the next sentence:

So, we obviously had to go into hiding but I lost track of Jacob and then I got picked up by a cop.

This is also a run-on sentence. While *So* at the beginning of the sentence is technically fine, it's unnecessary, and many teachers dislike it as a transition word. There are three clauses in this run-on sentence, so there are a few different ways you could rework it:

- We obviously had to go into hiding, but I lost track of Jacob. After that, I got picked up by a cop.
- We obviously had to go into hiding. Unfortunately, I had lost track of Jacob and had gotten picked up by a cop.

Let's look at the final sentence:

But I was able to convince him that the government

was corrupt and that he should take me to my escape boat.

This sentence is technically okay, but the *but* at the start of the sentence is unnecessary, and it could be removed without affecting the meaning of the sentence. Additionally, it may be helpful to clarify who *he* is:

I was able to convince the cop that the government was corrupt and that he should take me to my escape boat.

## 69. Sentence Fragments

Fragments are simply grammatically incomplete sentences—they are phrases and dependent clauses. We talked about phrases and clauses a bit in [Basic Parts of a Sentence](#). These are grammatical structures that cannot stand on their own: they need to be connected to an independent clause to work in writing. So how can we tell the difference between a sentence and a sentence fragment? And how can we fix fragments when they already exist?

### Common Causes of Fragments

Part of the reason we write in fragments is because we often speak that way. However, there is a difference between writing and speech, and it is important to write in full sentences. Additionally, fragments often come about in writing because a fragment may already seem too long.

Non-finite verbs (gerunds, participles, and infinitives) can often trip people up as well. Since non-finite verbs don't act like verbs, we don't count them as verbs when we're deciding if we have a phrase or a clause. Let's look at a few examples of these:

- Running away from my mother.
- To ensure your safety and security.
- Beaten down since day one.

Even though all of the above have non-finite verbs, they're phrases, not clauses. In order for these to be clauses, they would need an additional verb that acts as a verb in the sentence.

Words like *since*, *when*, and *because* turn an independent clause into a dependent clause. For example “I was a little girl in 1995” is

an independent clause, but “Because I was a little girl in 1995” is a dependent clause. This class of word includes the following:

after	although	as	as far as	as if	as long as	as soon as
as though	because	before	even if	even though	every time	if
in order that	since	so	so that	than	though	unless
until	when	whenever	where	whereas	wherever	while

Relative pronouns, like *that* and *which*, do the same type of thing as those listed above.

Coordinating conjunctions (our FANBOYS) can also cause problems. If you start a sentence with a coordinating conjunction, make sure that it is followed a complete clause, not just a phrase!

As you’re identifying fragments, keep in mind that command sentences are *not* fragments, despite not having a subject. Commands are the only grammatically correct sentences that lack a subject:

- Drop and give me fifty!
- Count how many times the word *fragrant* is used during commercial breaks.

## Fixing Sentence Fragments

Let’s take a look at a couple of examples:

1. Ivana appeared at the committee meeting last week. And made a convincing presentation of her ideas about the new product.
2. The committee considered her ideas for a new marketing strategy quite powerful. The best ideas that they had heard in years.

3. She spent a full month evaluating his computer-based instructional materials. Which she eventually sent to her supervisor with the strongest of recommendations.

Let's look at the phrase "And made a convincing presentation of her ideas about the new product" in example one. It's just that: a phrase. There is no subject in this phrase, so the easiest fix is to simply delete the period and combine the two statements:

Ivana appeared at the committee meeting last week and made a convincing presentation of her ideas about the new product.

Let's look at example two. The phrase "the best ideas they had heard in years" is simply a phrase—there is no verb contained in the phrase. By adding "they were" to the beginning of this phrase, we have turned the fragment into an independent clause, which can now stand on its own:

The committee considered her ideas for a new marketing strategy quite powerful; they were the best ideas that they had heard in years.

What about example three? Let's look at the clause "Which she eventually sent to her supervisor with the strongest of recommendations." This is a dependent clause; the word *which* signals this fact. If we change "which she eventually" to "eventually, she," we also turn the dependent clause into an independent clause.

She spent a full month evaluating his computer-based instructional materials. Eventually, she sent the evaluation to her supervisor with the strongest of recommendations.



## Practice

Identify the fragments in the sentences below. Why are they fragments? What are some possible solutions?

1. The corporation wants to begin a new marketing push in educational software. Although, the more conservative executives of the firm are skeptical.
2. Include several different sections in your proposal. For example, a discussion of your personnel and their qualifications, your expectations concerning the schedule of the project, and a cost breakdown.
3. The research team has completely reorganized the workload. Making sure that members work in areas of their own expertise and that no member is assigned proportionately too much work.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

Here are some possible revisions for the sentences. Remember, there are multiple solutions. Pay attention to the principles used to create the revised sentence.

1. In the fragment “Although, the more conservative executives of the firm are skeptical,” the subordinating conjunction *although* is being used as an adverbial conjunction in this sentence. There are two simple revision to resolve the fragment.
  - Change *although* to be an adverbial conjunction: “The corporation wants to begin a new marketing push in educational software.

However, the more conservative executives of the firm are skeptical.”

- Move the fragment to the beginning of the sentence and link it to the independent clause with a comma after it: “Although the more conservative executives of the firm are skeptical, the corporation wants to begin a new marketing push in educational software.”
2. The first sentence is a command; it is a correct sentence. The second sentence is a fragment, however. The simplest change is to switch the period before “for example” out for a colon. Colons can be followed by a phrase or dependent clause.
- Include several different sections in your proposal: for example, a discussion of your personnel and their qualifications, your expectations concerning the schedule of the project, and a cost breakdown.
3. The second sentence is a fragment. You can either change *making* to “they made” and have two sentences, or you can change *making* to “in order to make sure.” *In order to* is a subordinating conjunction, so it does not require a comma beforehand:
- The research team has completely reorganized the workload. They made sure that members work in areas of their own expertise and that no member is assigned proportionately too much work.
  - The research team has completely

reorganized the workload in order to make sure that members work in areas of their own expertise and that no member is assigned proportionately too much work.

## 70. Parallel Structure

What exactly is parallel structure? It's simply the practice of using the same structures or forms multiple times: making sure the parts are parallel to each other. Parallel structure can be applied to a single sentence, a paragraph, or even multiple paragraphs. Compare the two following sentences:

- Yara loves running, to swim, and biking.
- Yara loves running, swimming, and biking.

Was the second sentence easier to comprehend than the first? The second sentence uses parallelism—all three verbs are gerunds, whereas in the first sentence two are gerunds and one is an infinitive. While the first sentence is technically correct, it's easy to trip up over the mismatching items. The application of parallelism improves writing style and readability, and it makes sentences easier to process.

Compare the following examples:

- Lacking parallelism: “She likes cooking, jogging, and *to read*.”
  - Parallel: “She likes cooking, jogging, and reading.”
  - Parallel: “She likes to cook, jog, and read.”
- Lacking parallelism: “He likes to swim and *running*.”
  - Parallel: “He likes to swim and to run.”
  - Parallel: “He likes swimming and running.”

Once again, the examples above combine gerunds and infinitives. To make them parallel, the sentences should be rewritten with just gerunds or just infinitives. Note that the first nonparallel example, while inelegantly worded, is grammatically correct: “cooking,” “jogging,” and “to read” are all grammatically valid conclusions to “She likes.”

- Lacking parallelism: “The dog ran across the yard, jumped over the fence, and **down the alley sprinted.**”
- Grammatical but not employing parallelism: “The dog ran across the yard and jumped over the fence, and **down the alley he sprinted.**”
- Parallel: “The dog ran across the yard, jumped over the fence, and **sprinted down the alley.**”

The nonparallel example above is *not* grammatically correct: “down the alley sprinted” is not a grammatically valid conclusion to “The dog.” The second example, which does not attempt to employ parallelism in its conclusion, is grammatically valid; “down the alley he sprinted” is an entirely separate clause.

Parallelism can also apply to names. If you’re writing a research paper that includes references to several different authors, you should be consistent in your references. For example, if you talk about Jane Goodall and Henry Harlow, you should say “Goodall and Harlow,” not “Jane and Harlow” or “Goodall and Henry.” This is something that would carry on through your entire paper: you should use the same mode of address for every person you mention.

You can also apply parallelism across a passage:

Manuel painted eight paintings in the last week. Jennifer sculpted five statues in the last month. Zama wrote fifteen songs in the last two months.

Each of the sentences in the preceding paragraph has the same structure: Name + *-ed* verb + number of things + *in the* past time period. When using parallelism across multiple sentences, be sure that you’re using it well. If you aren’t careful, you can stray into being repetitive. Unfortunately, really the only way to test this is by re-reading the passage and seeing if it “feels right.” While this test doesn’t have any rules to it, it can often help.

## Practice

Do any of the following sentences correctly employ parallelism? If not, revise the sentences in the text frame below.

1. Kya is really good at writing poems and making pottery. Atswei is a good singer and a good dancer.
2. Don't forget to let the dog out or to feed the cats.
3. In this paper, we will reference the works of Walton and Sir John Cockcroft.
4. Whenever he drives, Reza pays attention to what he's doing and is watching the drivers around him.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

1. No. While the both sentences are internally parallel, they are not parallel with each other. Here are two possible revisions to improve parallelism:
  - Kya is really good at writing poems and making sculptures. Atswei is really good at singing and dancing.
  - Kya is a good poet and sculptor. Atswei is a good singer and a good dancer.
2. Yes. This sentence is parallel. The two phrases “to let the dog out” and “to feed the cats” are both infinitives.
3. No. While the sentence is grammatically correct, it is not parallel. The two following revisions are parallel

versions of this sentence:

- In this paper, we will reference the works of Dr. Ernest Walton and Sir John Cockcroft.
  - In this paper, we will reference the works of Walton and Cockcroft.
4. No. While the sentence is grammatically correct, it is not parallel. The two following revisions are parallel versions of this sentence:
- Whenever he drives, Reza pays attention to what he's doing and watches the drivers around him.
  - Whenever he drives, Reza is paying attention to what he's doing and watching the drivers around him.

## Rhetoric and Parallelism

Parallelism can also involve repeated words or repeated phrases. These uses are part of “rhetoric” (a field that focuses on persuading readers) Here are a few examples of repetition:

- “**The inherent vice** of capitalism is the unequal sharing of blessings; **the inherent virtue** of socialism is the equal sharing of miseries.” —Winston Churchill
- “Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall **pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe** to assure the survival and the success of liberty.” —John F. Kennedy

- “And that government **of the people, by the people, for the people**, shall not perish from the earth.” —Abraham Lincoln, *Gettysburg Address*

When used this way, parallelism makes your writing or speaking much stronger. These repeated phrases seem to bind the work together and make it more powerful—and more inspiring. This use of parallelism can be especially useful in writing conclusions of academic papers or in persuasive writing.



# 7I. Practice Activities: Parallel Structure

## Parallelism

Read the following passage. Correct any errors in parallelism that you find. Remember, non-parallel things are typically grammatically correct, but making things parallel will improve your writing style. Type your correct answer in the text frame below:

“The Bone Wars” refers to a period of intense fossil speculation and discovery in American history (1872–1892). The wars were marked by a heated rivalry between Edward Drinker Cope and Othniel Charles Marsh. At one time, Edward and Marsh were amicable: they even named species after each other. Over time, however, their relationship soured, likely due in part to their strong personalities. Cope was known to be pugnacious and possessed a quick temper. Marsh was slower, more methodical, and introverted. Eventually, each of the two paleontologists would resort to underhanded methods to try to out-compete the other in the field, resorting to bribery, theft, and destroying bones.

By the end of the Bone Wars, both Cope and Marsh were financially and socially ruined by their attempts to disgrace each other, but their contributions to science and the field of paleontology were massive. Several of Cope’s and Marsh’s discoveries are the most well-known of dinosaurs: Triceratops, Allosaurus, Diplodocus, and Stegosaurus. Their cumulative discoveries defined the then-emerging field of paleontology. Before Cope’s and Marsh’s discoveries, there were only nine named species of dinosaur in North America. Judging by pure numbers, Marsh “won” the Bone

Wars: Cope discovered a total of 56 new dinosaur species, but Marsh had found 80.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

Here are the sentences that have issues with parallelism, as well as suggestions for their revision.

1. At one time, **Edward** and **Marsh** were amicable: they even named species after each other.
  - In this sentence, there is both a first name and a last name used to identify different people. Unless one person commonly goes by their last name while the other goes by their first, you should use first or last names; not a mix of the two: “Cope and Marsh were. . . “
2. Cope was known **to be pugnacious** and **possessed** a quick temper.
  - “Was known to be” and “possessed” are both past-tense verbs, but one is a perfect tense (known) while the other isn’t. To make the sentence more parallel, you would change it to something like “Cope was known to be pugnacious and to possess a quick temper” or “Cope was pugnacious and possessed a quick temper.”
3. Marsh was **slower**, **more methodical**, and **introverted**.
  - The first two adjectives are comparatives, while *introverted* is not. A more parallel version of the sentence would read: “Marsh was slower, more methodical, and more introverted.”
4. Eventually, each of the two paleontologists would resort to underhanded methods to try to out-compete the other in

the field, resorting to **bribery**, **theft**, and **destroying** bones.

- *Bribery* and *theft* are both nouns, while *destroying* is a gerund. Changing *destroying* to a noun will make the sentence more parallel: “bribery, theft, and the destruction of bones.”
5. Judging by pure numbers, Marsh “won” the Bone Wars: Cope **discovered** a total of 56 new dinosaur species, but Marsh **had found** 80.
- Saying “Marsh discovered 80” instead of using *had found* is a better fit for parallel structure.

## Academic Sentences

Look at the following items. Identify and address any issues with parallelism.

1. Low self-esteem can manifest itself in various behaviors. Some individuals may become paralyzed at the prospect of making a decision. Other individuals may bend their wills to others’ in order to keep the peace. Yet another symptom is the retreat from society as a whole—to become isolated.
2. The influence of genetics on human behavior has been shown through studies of twins who were separated at birth. Not only do these sets of individuals share many physical characteristics, but they also tend to have the same sort of interests and biases and utilize similar mental processes.
3. *Nocturne in Black and Gold (The Falling Rocket)* by James Abbott McNeil Whistler is very emblematic of the impressionist movement: its dark colors, contrast, and lack of definite form reflect the attitudes of the day.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

1. The first two sentences that identify behaviors of low self-esteem both start with the construction adjective + *individuals* + *may* verb. Changing the third sentence to match this construction will create a stronger introduction to the paper:
  - Low self-esteem can manifest itself in various behaviors. Some individuals may become paralyzed at the prospect of making a decision. Other individuals may bend their wills to others' in order to keep the peace. Yet other individuals may retreat from society as a whole and become isolated.
2. The ending clause "they also tend to have the same sort of interests and biases and utilize similar mental processes" could be more parallel (and more succinct) than it currently is. You could revise it to something like these:
  - they also tend to have the same sort of interests, biases, and mental processes
  - they also tend to have similar interests, biases, and mental processes

If you wanted to make the whole sentence more parallel, you may want to adjust the sentence to match the structure of the phrase "Not only do these sets of individuals share many physical characteristics":

- Not only do these sets of individuals share many physical characteristics, but they also share similar interests, biases, and mental processes.
3. The items in "its dark colors, contrast, and lack of definite form" don't quite match up. While they are all nouns, each item has a different structure (adjective noun, noun, noun + *of* +

adjective noun). Here are a couple suggestions for more parallel items:

- Its depth of color, intensity of contrast, and lack of form reflect the attitudes of the day.
- Its dark colors, intense contrast, and lax forms reflect the attitudes of the day.

## 72. Active and Passive Voice

Voice is a nebulous term in writing. It can refer to the general “feel” of the writing, or it can be used in a more technical sense. In this section, we will focus on the latter sense as we discuss active and passive voice.

You’ve probably heard of the passive voice—perhaps in a comment from an English teacher or in the grammar checker of a word processor. In both of these instances, you were (likely) guided away from the passive voice. Why is this the case? Why is the passive voice so hated? After all, it’s been used twice on this page already (three times now). When the passive voice is used too frequently, it can make your writing seem flat and drab. However, there are some instances where the passive voice is a better choice than the active.

So just what is the difference between these two voices? In the simplest terms, an active voice sentence is written in the form of “A does B.” (For example, “Carmen sings the song.”) A passive voice sentence is written in the form of “B is done by A.” (For example, “The song is sung by Carmen.”) Both constructions are grammatically sound and correct.

Let’s look at a couple more examples of the passive voice:

- I’ve been hit! (or, I have been hit!)
- Jasper was thrown from the car when it was struck from behind.

You may have noticed something unique about the previous two sentences: the subject of the sentence is not the person (or thing) performing the action. The passive voice “hides” who does the action. Despite these sentences being completely grammatically sound, we don’t know who hit “me” or what struck the car.

The passive is created using the verb *to be* (e.g., the song **is** sung; it **was** struck from behind). Remember that *to be* conjugates

irregularly. Its forms include *am*, *are*, *is*, *was*, *were*, and *will be*, which we learned about earlier in the course.

Remember, *to be* also has more complex forms like *had been*, *is being*, and *was being*.

- Mirella **is being** pulled away from everything she loves.
- Pietro **had been** pushed; I knew it.
- Unfortunately, my car **was being** towed away by the time I got to it.

Because *to be* has other uses than just creating the passive voice, we need to be careful when we identify passive sentences. It's easy to mistake a sentence like "She was falling," or "He is short," for a passive sentence. However, in "She was falling," *was* simply indicates that the sentence takes place in the past. In "He is short," *is* is a linking verb. If there is no "real" action taking place, *is* is simply acting as a linking verb.

There are two key features that will help you identify a passive sentence:

1. Something is happening (the sentence has a verb that is not a linking verb).
2. The subject of the sentence is not doing that thing.

## Usage

As you read at the two sentences below, think about the how the

different voice may affect the meaning or implications of the sentence:

- **Passive voice:** The rate of evaporation is controlled by the size of an opening.
- **Active voice:** The size of an opening controls the rate of evaporation.

The passive choice slightly emphasizes “the rate of evaporation,” while the active choice emphasizes “the size of an opening.” Simple. So why all the fuss? Because passive constructions can produce grammatically tangled sentences such as this:

Groundwater flow is influenced by zones of fracture concentration, as can be recognized by the two model simulations (see Figures 1 and 2), by which one can see . . .

The sentence is becoming a burden for the reader, and probably for the writer too. As often happens, the passive voice here has smothered potential verbs and kicked off a runaway train of prepositions. But the reader’s task gets much easier in the revised version below:

Two model simulations (Figures 1 and 2) illustrate how zones of fracture concentration influence groundwater flow. These simulations show . . .

To revise the above, all I did was look for the two buried things (simulations and zones) in the original version that could actually *do* something, and I made the sentence clearly about these two nouns by placing them in front of active verbs. This is the general principle to follow as you compose in the active voice: Place concrete nouns that can perform work in front of active verbs.



## Practice

Are the following sentences in the active or passive voice?

1. Jayden drank more sodas than anyone else at the party.
2. The samples were prepared in a clean room before being sent out for further examination.
3. Karen was dancing with Joshua when she suddenly realized she needed to leave.
4. Carlos was a very serious scientist with unique interests.
5. When I returned to my room, my luggage had been stolen.

Show Answer

1. This sentence uses the active voice. **Jayden** does the action (**drank**) to the object (**more sodas**). If this sentence were written in the passive it would read “More sodas were drunk by Jayden than by anyone else at the party.”
2. This sentence uses the passive voice. The action (**prepared**) was done to the subject of the sentence (**samples**). If this sentence were written in the active it would be something like this: “[Actor] prepared the samples in a clean room before sending them out for further examination.” Since we do not know who prepared the samples, the active sentence is incomplete.
3. This sentence uses the active voice. In this case *was*

indicates that the sentence happened in the past; it does not indicate the passive voice in this instance.

4. This sentence uses the active voice. In this case *was* is acting as a linking verb. It links **Carlos** with the phrase *very serious scientist*.
5. The introductory phrase to the sentence (When I returned to my room) is in the active voice. The second phrase (my luggage had been stolen) uses the passive voice.

## 73. Revising Weak Passive-Voice Sentences

As we've mentioned, the passive voice can be a shifty operator—it can cover up its source, that is, who's doing the acting, as this example shows:

- **Passive:** The papers **will be graded** according to the criteria stated in the syllabus.
  - *Graded by whom though?*
- **Active:** **The teacher** will grade the papers according to the criteria stated in the syllabus.

It's this ability to cover the actor or agent of the sentence that makes the passive voice a favorite of people in authority—policemen, city officials, and, yes, teachers. At any rate, you can see how the passive voice can cause wordiness, indirectness, and comprehension problems.

Passive	Question	Active
Your figures <b>have been reanalyzed</b> in order to determine the coefficient of error. The results <b>will be announced</b> when the situation is judged appropriate.	Who analyzes, and who will announce?	<b>We</b> have reanalyzed your figures in order to determine the range of error. <b>We</b> will announce the results when the time is right.
With the price of housing at such inflated levels, those loans <b>cannot be paid off</b> in any shorter period of time.	Who can't pay the loans off?	With the price of housing at such inflated levels, <b>homeowners</b> cannot pay off those loans in any shorter period of time.
After the arm of the hand-held stapler <b>is pushed</b> down, the blade from the magazine <b>is raised by</b> the top-leaf spring, and the magazine and base.	Who pushes it down, and who or what raises it?	After <b>you</b> push down on the arm of the hand-held stapler, <b>the top-leaf spring</b> raises the blade from the magazine, and the magazine and base move apart.
However, market share <b>is being lost by</b> 5.25-inch diskettes as is shown in the graph in Figure 2.	Who or what is losing market share, who or what shows it?	However, <b>5.25-inch diskettes</b> are losing market share as the graph in <b>Figure 2</b> shows.
For many years, federal regulations concerning the use of wire-tapping <b>have been ignored</b> . Only recently <b>have</b> tighter restrictions <b>been imposed</b> on the circumstances that warrant it.	Who has ignored the regulations, and who is now imposing them?	For many years, <b>government officials</b> have ignored federal regulations concerning the use of wire-tapping. Only recently has <b>the federal government</b> imposed tighter restrictions on the circumstances that warrant it.

## Practice

Convert these passive voice sentences into the active

voice. Why is the active voice a better choice for each of these sentences?

1. The process, which was essential for the experiment's success, was completed by Enzo.
2. The cake that I worked on all day long is being eaten by Justin.
3. After the pattern has been applied to the fabric, work on the embroidery can be started.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

1. Enzo completed the process, which was essential for the experiment's success.
  - In the passive sentence, the *which*-clause makes the subject of the sentence excessively long. By converting the sentence to the active voice, the clause is moved to the predicate, which makes the sentence easier to understand.
2. Justin is eating the cake that I worked on all day long.
  - The active voice works better in this sentence for the same reasons as sentence one. It is also likely that you would want to put emphasis on Justin in this sentence. After all, he's doing something that is (most likely) inconsiderate.
3. After you apply the pattern to the fabric, you can start working on the embroidery.

- This sentence is likely found in a set of instructions, which are usually written directly to the reader. Addressing “you” and avoiding the passive voice will make the instructions feel more natural and accessible.

Don't get the idea that the passive voice is always wrong and should never be used. It is a good writing technique when we don't want to be bothered with an obvious or too-often-repeated subject and when we need to rearrange words in a sentence for emphasis. The next page will focus more on how and why to use the passive voice.

## 74. Using the Passive Voice

There are several different situations where the passive voice is more useful than the active voice.

- When you don't know who did the action: *The paper had been moved.*
  - The active voice would be something like this: "Someone had moved the paper." While this sentence is technically fine, the passive voice sentence has a more subtle element of mystery, which can be especially helpful in creating a mood in fiction.
- When you want to hide who did the action: *The window had been broken.*
  - The sentence is either hiding who broke the window or they do not know. Again, the sentence can be reformed to say "Someone had broken the window," but using the word *someone* clearly indicates that someone (though we may not know who) is at fault here. Using the passive puts the focus on the window rather than on the person who broke it, as he or she is completely left out of the sentence.
- When you want to emphasize the person or thing the action was done to: *Caroline was hurt when Kent broke up with her.*
  - We automatically focus on the subject of the sentence. If the sentence were to say "Kent hurt Caroline when he broke up with her," then our focus would be drawn to Kent rather than Caroline.
- A subject that can't actually *do* anything: *Caroline was hurt when she fell into the trees.*
  - While the trees hurt Caroline, they didn't actually do anything. Thus, it makes more sense to have Caroline as the subject rather than saying "The trees hurt Caroline

when she fell into them.”

**Note:** It’s often against convention in scholarly writing to use I. While this may seem like a forced rule, it also stems from the fact that scholars want to emphasize the science or research as opposed to the author of the paper. This often results in the passive voice being the best choice. This is not the case in other formal settings, such as in resumes and in cover letters.

## *Practice*

Consider the following instances. In each case, determine why the writers might want to use active or passive voice. Write an example sentence based on their circumstances.

1. Antonella made an error in her calculations that ruined an experiment. This error ended up costing both time and materials. She has to write a report to her boss. What might she say about the experiment?
2. Isabel is writing a supernatural thriller. Her main character, Liam, notices that his keys aren’t where he left them. How might Isabel word this realization?
3. Thiago is writing a cover letter to apply for a new job. He is listing out tasks that he does at his current job. How would he want to word these items?

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer



1. Antonella would likely want to write in the passive voice. Even if her boss knows she made the error, writing in the passive will draw attention away from that fact. She might say something like this:

- An error was made that ended up costing time and resources. The experiment will have to be repeated with new materials.

2. Isabel could use either the passive or the active. It depends on the emphasis she wants. The passive voice subtly hints at a mysterious actor. The active voice blatantly states it:

- Liam's keys had been moved when he wasn't looking.
- Something—or someone—had moved Liam's keys when he wasn't looking.

3. Thiago would want to use the active voice. Since he's apply for a job, he would want to emphasize the fact that he is accomplishing the tasks: the fact that he's doing them is more important than the simple fact that the things were done. He might write something like the following:

- I currently work as a teaching assistant for a linguistics professor. I organize her mail, flagging important items so she knows what needs immediate attention; I aid her in her research, finding interesting articles and studies; and I often help her students when her attention is needed elsewhere.

## Using the Passive

Now that we know there are some instances where passive voice is the best choice, how do we use the passive voice to it fullest? The answer lies in writing direct sentences—in passive voice—that have simple subjects and verbs. Compare the two sentences below:

- Photomicrographs were taken to facilitate easy comparison of the samples.
- Easy comparison of the samples was facilitated by the taking of photomicrographs.

Both sentences are written in the passive voice, but for most ears the first sentence is more direct and understandable, and therefore preferable. Depending on the context, it does a clearer job of telling us what was done and why it was done. Especially if this sentence appears in the “Experimental” section of a report (and thus readers already know that the authors of the report took the photomicrographs), the first sentence neatly represents what the authors actually did—took photomicrographs—and why they did it—to facilitate easy comparison.

### *Practice*

Read the following sentences. Are they using the passive effectively? If there are any errors, rewrite the sentences accordingly.

1. The machine needs to be reset at 10:23, 11:12, and 11:56 every night.
2. The final steps, which need to be finished before

the sun sets over the mountains, are going to be completed by Kajuana.

3. The difficult task of measuring minute fluctuations in weight was made easier by the use of a new digital scale.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

1. Yes. In this case, it doesn't matter who accomplishes the action; it simply needs to be done. If this sentence appears in an academic article, the passive may be even more appropriate, as that style often demands the actor be left out of the sentence.
2. No. This would be better in the active voice. There are a lot of different parts to the sentence, and by converting the sentence to the active voice, they come in a more logical order that is easier to understand:
  - Kajuana is going to complete the final steps, which need to be finished before the sun sets over the mountains.
3. No. This passive construction is very convoluted. An active sentence would serve well here:
  - A new digital scale made it easier to measure minute fluctuations in weight.

As we mentioned in [Participles](#), the passive voice can also be used following relative pronouns like *that* and *which*.

- I moved into the house **that was built** for me.
- Adrián's dog loves the treats **that are given** to him.
- Brihanna has an album **that was signed** by the Beastie Boys.

In each of these sentences, it is grammatically sound to omit (or *elide*) the pronoun and to *be*. Elision is used with a lot of different constructions in English; we use it shorten sentences when things are understood. However, we can only use elision in certain situations, so be careful when removing words! You may find these elided sentences more natural:

- I moved into the house **built** for me.
- Adrián's dog loves the treats **given** to him.
- Brihanna has an album **signed** by the Beastie Boys

# 75. Practice Activities: Active and Passive Voice

## Passive to Active

Convert these passive voice sentences into the active voice:

1. Alana's toes were crushed by the garage door.
2. The passive voice has likely been heard of by you.
3. Rebeca's favorite spot in the lecture hall had been taken by the time she got to class.
4. When the passive voice is overused, you often end up with flat writing.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

1. The garage door crushed Alana's toes.
2. You've likely heard of the passive voice.
3. Because there's a descriptive phrase, there are a few options when revising this sentence:
  - Someone had taken Rebeca's favorite spot in the lecture hall by the time she got to class.
  - By the time Rebeca got to class, someone had taken her favorite spot in the lecture hall.
4. When you overuse the passive voice, you often end up with flat writing.

## Active or Passive

Read the following sentences. Are they using the passive effectively?  
Or should they be rewritten as active sentences?

1. Maren was hit by several branches as she slid down the hill.
2. A lot of discussion about whether technology is hurting or helping our ability to communicate has been inspired by this increase in technology.
3. Listeners are encouraged by the lyrics to cast aside their fear and be themselves.

[practice-area rows="4"][/practice-area]

Show Answer

1. Yes, this sentence uses the passive effectively. Since the subject of this sentence—*several branches*—can't actually do anything, it's best to put the emphasis on *Maren*, the person the actions were done to.
2. This sentence does not use the passive well. The passive voice has made the sentence a lot more complicated than it needs to be. The active would read something like this:
  - This increase of technology has inspired a lot of discussion about whether technology is hurting or helping our ability to communicate.
3. Either voice could be appropriate here. If you want to focus on the listeners, the passive voice is correct. If you want to focus on the lyrics, the sentence should be changed to the active voice.
  - **Passive:** Listeners are encouraged by the lyrics to cast aside their fear and be themselves.
  - **Active:** The lyrics encourage listeners to cast aside their

fear and be themselves.





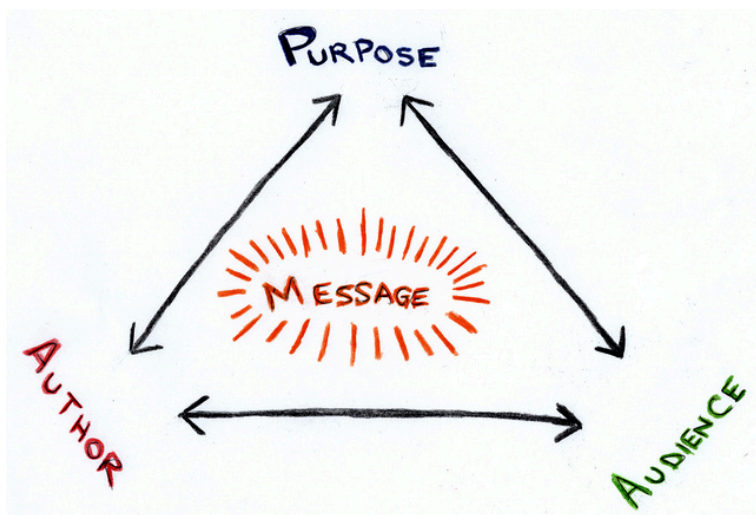
PART VI

# MODULE 5: WRITING PROCESS



## 76. Rhetorical Context

Any piece of writing is shaped by external factors before the first word is ever set down on the page. These factors are referred to as the **rhetorical situation**, or **rhetorical context**, and are often presented in the form of a pyramid.



The three key factors—purpose, author, and audience—all work together to influence what the text itself says, and how it says it. Let's examine each of the three in more detail.

### Purpose

Any time you are preparing to write, you should first ask yourself, “Why am I writing?” All writing, no matter the type, has a purpose. Purpose will sometimes be given to you (by a teacher, for example),

while other times, you will decide for yourself. As the author, it's up to you to make sure that purpose is clear not only for yourself, but also—especially—for your audience. If your purpose is not clear, your audience is not likely to receive your intended message.

There are, of course, many different reasons to write (e.g., to inform, to entertain, to persuade, to ask questions), and you may find that some writing has more than one purpose. When this happens, be sure to consider any conflict between purposes, and remember that you will usually focus on one main purpose as primary.

Bottom line: Thinking about your purpose before you begin to write can help you create a more effective piece of writing.

## Why Purpose Matters

- If you've ever listened to a lecture or read an essay and wondered "so what" or "what is this person talking about," then you know how frustrating it can be when an author's purpose is not clear. By clearly defining your purpose before you begin writing, it's less likely you'll be that author who leaves the audience wondering.
- If readers can't identify the purpose in a text, they usually quit reading. You can't deliver a message to an audience who quits reading.
- If a teacher can't identify the purpose in your text, they will likely assume you didn't understand the assignment and, chances are, you won't receive a good grade.

## Useful Questions

Consider how the answers to the following questions may affect your writing:

- What is my primary purpose for writing? How do I want my audience to think, feel, or respond after they read my writing?
- Do my audience's expectations affect my purpose? Should they?
- How can I best get my point across (e.g., tell a story, argue, cite other sources)?
- Do I have any secondary or tertiary purposes? Do any of these purposes conflict with one another or with my primary purpose?

## Audience

In order for your writing to be maximally effective, you have to think about the audience you're writing for and adapt your writing approach to their needs, expectations, backgrounds, and interests. Being aware of your audience helps you make better decisions about what to say and how to say it. For example, you have a better idea if you will need to define or explain any terms, and you can make a more conscious effort not to say or do anything that would offend your audience.

Sometimes you know who will read your writing – for example, if you are writing an email to your boss. Other times you will have to guess who is likely to read your writing – for example, if you are writing a newspaper editorial. You will often write with a primary audience in mind, but there may be secondary and tertiary audiences to consider as well.

## What to Think About

When analyzing your audience, consider these points. Doing this should make it easier to create a profile of your audience, which can help guide your writing choices.

**Background-knowledge or Experience** — In general, you don't want to merely repeat what your audience already knows about the topic you're writing about; you want to build on it. On the other hand, you don't want to talk over their heads. Anticipate their amount of previous knowledge or experience based on elements like their age, profession, or level of education.

**Expectations and Interests** — Your audience may expect to find specific points or writing approaches, especially if you are writing for a teacher or a boss. Consider not only what they *do* want to read about, but also what they *do not* want to read about.

**Attitudes and Biases** — Your audience may have predetermined feelings about you or your topic, which can affect how hard you have to work to win them over or appeal to them. The audience's attitudes and biases also affect their expectations – for example, if they expect to disagree with you, they will likely look for evidence that you have considered their side as well as your own.

**Demographics** — Consider what else you know about your audience, such as their age, gender, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, political preferences, religious affiliations, job or professional background, and area of residence. Think about how these demographics may affect how much background your audience has about your topic, what types of expectations or interests they have, and what attitudes or biases they may have.

## Applying Your Analysis to Your Writing

Here are some general rules about writing, each followed by an explanation of how audience might affect it. Consider how you might adapt these guidelines to your specific situation and audience. (Note: This is not an exhaustive list. Furthermore, you need not follow the order set up here, and you likely will not address all of these approaches.)<sup>1</sup>

**Add information readers need to understand your document / omit information readers don't need.** Part of your audience may know a lot about your topic, while others don't know much at all. When this happens, you have to decide if you should provide explanation or not. If you don't offer explanation, you risk alienating or confusing those who lack the information. If you offer explanation, you create more work for yourself and you risk boring those who already know the information, which may negatively affect the larger view those readers have of you and your work. In the end, you may want to consider how many people need an explanation, whether those people are in your primary audience (rather than a secondary audience), how much time you have to complete your writing, and any length limitations placed on you.

**Change the level of the information you currently have.** Even if you have the right information, you might be explaining it in a way that doesn't make sense to your audience. For example, you wouldn't want to use highly advanced or technical vocabulary in a document for first-grade students or even in a document for a general audience, such as the

1. (Rules adapted from David McMurrey's online text, *Power Tools for Technical Communication*)

audience of a daily newspaper, because most likely some (or even all) of the audience wouldn't understand you.

**Add examples to help readers understand.** Sometimes just changing the level of information you have isn't enough to get your point across, so you might try adding an example. If you are trying to explain a complex or abstract issue to an audience with a low education level, you might offer a metaphor or an analogy to something they are more familiar with to help them understand. Or, if you are writing for an audience that disagrees with your stance, you might offer examples that create common ground and/or help them see your perspective.

**Change the level of your examples.** Once you've decided to include examples, you should make sure you aren't offering examples your audience finds unacceptable or confusing. For example, some teachers find personal stories unacceptable in academic writing, so you might use a metaphor instead.

**Change the organization of your information.** Again, you might have the correct information, but you might be presenting it in a confusing or illogical order. If you are writing a paper about physics for a physics professor who has his or her PhD, chances are you won't need to begin your paper with a lot of background. However, you probably would want to include background information in the beginning of your paper if you were writing for a fellow student in an introductory physics class.

**Strengthen transitions.** You might make decisions about transitions based on your audience's expectations. For example, most teachers expect to find topic sentences, which serve as transitions between paragraphs. In a shorter piece of writing such as a memo to co-workers, however, you would probably be less concerned with topic sentences and more concerned with transition words. In general, if you feel your readers may have a hard time making connections, providing



transition words (e.g., “therefore” or “on the other hand”) can help lead them.

**Write stronger introductions – both for the whole document and for major sections.** In general, readers like to get the big picture up front. You can offer this in your introduction and thesis statement, or in smaller introductions to major sections within your document. However, you should also consider how much time your audience will have to read your document. If you are writing for a boss who already works long hours and has little or no free time, you wouldn’t want to write an introduction that rambles on for two and a half pages before getting into the information your boss is looking for.

**Create topic sentences for paragraphs and paragraph groups.** A topic sentence (the first sentence of a paragraph) functions much the same way an introduction does – it offers readers a preview of what’s coming and how that information relates to the overall document or your overall purpose. As mentioned earlier, some readers will expect topic sentences. However, even if your audience isn’t expecting them, topic sentences can make it easier for readers to skim your document while still getting the main idea and the connections between smaller ideas.

**Change sentence style and length.** Using the same types and lengths of sentences can become boring after awhile. If you already worry that your audience may lose interest in your issue, you might want to work on varying the types of sentences you use.

**Use graphics, or use different graphics.** Graphics can be another way to help your audience visualize an abstract or complex topic. Sometimes a graphic might be more effective than a metaphor or step-by-step explanation. Graphics may also be an effective choice if you know your audience is going to skim your writing quickly; a graphic can be used to draw the reader’s eye to information you want to highlight. However,

keep in mind that some audiences may see graphics as inappropriate.

## Author

The final unique aspect of anything written down is who it is, exactly, that does the writing. In some sense, this is the part you have the most control over—it's you who's writing, after all! You can harness the aspects of yourself that will make the text most effective to its audience, for its purpose.

Analyzing yourself as an author allows you to make explicit why your audience should pay attention to what you have to say, and why they should listen to you on the particular subject at hand.

## Questions for Consideration

- What personal motivations do you have for writing about this topic?
- What background knowledge do you have on this subject matter?
- What personal experiences directly relate to this subject? How do those personal experiences influence your perspectives on the issue?
- What formal training or professional experience do you have related to this subject?
- What skills do you have as a communicator? How can you harness those in this project?
- What should audience members know about you, in order to trust what you have to tell them? How will you convey that in your writing?

# 77. 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.

## 78. The Perfect Paragraph

As Michael Harvey writes, paragraphs are “in essence—a form of punctuation, and like other forms of punctuation they are meant to make written material easy to read.”<sup>1</sup> Effective paragraphs are the fundamental units of academic writing; consequently, the thoughtful, multifaceted arguments that your professors expect depend on them. Without good paragraphs, you simply cannot clearly convey sequential points and their relationships to one another.

Many novice writers tend to make a sharp distinction between content and style, thinking that a paper can be strong in one and weak in the other, but focusing on organization shows how content and style converge in deliberative academic writing. Your professors will view even the most elegant prose as rambling and tedious if there isn't a careful, coherent argument to give the text meaning. Paragraphs are the “stuff” of academic writing and, thus, worth our attention here.

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



## Key Sentences (a.k.a. Topic Sentences)

In academic writing, readers expect each paragraph to have a sentence or two that captures its main point. They're often called "topic sentences," though many writing instructors prefer to call them "key sentences."



There are at least two downsides of the phrase "topic sentence." First, it makes it seem like the paramount job of that sentence is simply to announce the topic of the paragraph. Second, it makes it seem like the topic sentence must always be a single grammatical sentence. Calling it a "key sentence" reminds us that it expresses the central *idea* of the paragraph. And sometimes a question or a two-sentence construction functions as the key.

Key sentences in academic writing do two things. First, they establish the main point that the rest of the paragraph supports. Second, they situate each paragraph within the sequence of the argument, a task that requires transitioning from the prior paragraph. Consider these two examples:<sup>2</sup>

### **Version A:**

Now we turn to the epidemiological evidence.

### **Version B:**

The epidemiological evidence provides compelling

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

support for the hypothesis emerging from etiological studies.

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

A last thing to note about key sentences is that academic readers expect them to be at the beginning of the paragraph. (The first sentence this paragraph is a good example of this in action!) This placement helps readers comprehend your argument. To see how, try this: find an academic piece (such as a textbook or scholarly article) that strikes you as well written and go through part of it reading just the first sentence of each paragraph. You should be able to easily follow the sequence of logic. When you're writing for professors, it is especially effective to put your key sentences first because they usually convey your own original thinking. It's a very good sign when your paragraphs are typically composed of a telling key sentence followed by evidence and explanation.

Knowing this convention of academic writing can help you both read and write more effectively. When you're reading a complicated academic piece for the first time, you might want to go through reading only the first sentence or two of each paragraph to get the overall outline of the argument. Then you can go back and read all of it with a clearer picture of how each of the details fit in. And when you're writing, you may also find it useful to write the first sentence of each paragraph (instead of a topic-based outline) to map out

a thorough argument before getting immersed in sentence-level wordsmithing.

## Cohesion and Coherence

With a key sentence established, the next task is to shape the body of your paragraph to be both cohesive and coherent. As Williams and Bizup<sup>3</sup> explain, cohesion is about the “sense of flow” (how each sentence fits with the next), while coherence is about the “sense of the whole.”<sup>4</sup>

For the most part, a text reads smoothly when it conveys a thoughtful and well organized argument or analysis. Focus first and most on your ideas, on crafting an ambitious analysis. The most useful guides advise you to first focus on getting your ideas on paper and then revising for organization and word choice later, refining the analysis as you go. Thus, consider the advice here as if you already have some rough text written and are in the process of smoothing out your prose to clarify your argument for both your reader and yourself.

3. Joseph M. Williams and Joseph Bizup. *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace* 11th edition (New York: Longman, 2014), 68.
4. Joseph M. Williams and Joseph Bizup. *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace* 11th edition (New York: Longman, 2014), 68.

4. *Ibid.*, 71.

## Cohesion

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

**Version A:**

Granovetter begins by looking at balance theory. If an actor, A, is strongly tied to both B and C, it is extremely likely that B and C are, sooner or later, going to be tied to each other, according to balance theory (1973:1363).<sup>5</sup> Bridge ties between cliques are always weak ties, Granovetter argues (1973:1364). Weak ties may not necessarily be bridges, but Granovetter argues that bridges will be weak. If two actors share a strong tie, they will draw in their other strong relations and will eventually form a clique. Only weak ties that do not have the strength to draw together all the “friends of friends” can connect people in different cliques.

**Version B:**

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

5. The quote uses a version of an ASA-style in-text citation for Mark S. Granovetter, “The Strength of Weak Ties,” *American Journal of Sociology* 78 (1973): 1360–80.

people in different cliques can be connected is through weak ties that do not have the strength to draw together all the “friends of friends.”<sup>6</sup>

Version A has the exact same information as version B, but it is harder to read because it is less cohesive. Each sentence in version B begins with old information and bridges to new information.

The first sentence establishes the key idea of balance theory. The next sentence begins with balance theory and ends with social ties, which is the focus of the third sentence. The concept of weak ties connects the third and fourth sentences



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

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

## Coherence

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

Your social networks and your location within them shape the kinds and amount of information that you have access to. Information is distinct from data, in that makes some kind of generalization about a person, thing, or population. Defensible generalizations about society can be either probabilities (i.e., statistics) or patterns (often from qualitative analysis). Such probabilities and patterns can be temporal, spatial, or simultaneous.

Each sentence in the above passage starts with a familiar idea and progresses to a new one, but it lacks coherence—a sense of being about one thing. Good writers often write passages like that when they're free-writing or using the drafting stage to cast a wide net



for ideas. A writer weighing the power and limits of social network analysis may free-write something like that example and, from there, develop a more specific plan for summarizing key insights about social networks and then discussing them with reference to the core tenets of social science. As a draft, an incoherent paragraph often points to a productive line of reasoning; one just has to continue thinking it through in order to identify a clear argumentative purpose for each paragraph. With its purpose defined, each paragraph, then, becomes a lot easier to write. Coherent paragraphs aren't just about style; they are a sign of a thoughtful, well developed analysis.

## The Wind-Up

Some guides advise you to end each paragraph with a specific concluding sentence, in a sense, to treat each paragraph as a kind of mini-essay. But that's not a widely held convention. Most well written academic pieces don't adhere to that structure. The last sentence of the paragraph should certainly be in your own words (as in, not a quote), but as long as the paragraph succeeds in carrying out the task that it has been assigned by its key sentence, you don't need to worry about whether that last sentence has an air of conclusiveness. For example, consider these paragraphs about the cold fusion controversy of the 1980s that appeared in a best-selling textbook:<sup>7</sup>

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

In that example, the first and last sentences in the paragraph are somewhat symmetrical: the authors introduce the idea of accessible science, contrast it with big science, and bring it back to the phrase

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

“little science.” Here’s an example from the same chapter of the same book that does not have any particular symmetry:<sup>8</sup>

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

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

## **Conclusion: Paragraphs as Punctuation**

To reiterate the initial point, it is useful to think of paragraphs as punctuation that organize your ideas in a readable way. Each paragraph should be an irreplaceable node within a coherent sequence of logic. Thinking of paragraphs as “building blocks” evokes the “five-paragraph theme” structure explained earlier: if you have identical stone blocks, it hardly matters what order they’re in. In the successful organically structured college paper, the structure and tone of each paragraph reflects its indispensable role

8. Ibid., 74.



within the overall piece. Make every bit count and have each part situated within the whole.

# 79. Introductions and Conclusions

A key piece of advice many writers either do not ever get or don't believe is that **it's not necessary to write introductions first or to write conclusions last**. Just because the introduction appears first and the conclusion appears last doesn't mean they have to be written that way. Here's a really tired metaphor to help explain: just because you walk into a building through the door doesn't mean the door was built first. The foundation went in first, even though you rarely if ever see that part. And lots of imperfections in the foundation and the walls were covered up before you even moved in, so you can't see those either unless you look closely.

## Introductions

Even though a nearly infinite number of topics and arrangements is possible in English prose, introductions generally follow one of several patterns. If you're writing a children's story, you'd probably start with "once upon a time" or something similar. If you're writing a research article in biomechanical engineering, you'd probably start with a statement about how previous research has examined the problem of loading soldiers with daypacks on various surfaces, including sand, concrete, and railroad ballast. These examples are poles apart, but their introductions share very similar purposes: they orient their imagined readers to the topic, time, and place.

In working toward the overall goal of orienting readers, introductions may

- Provide background about a topic.
- Locate readers in a specific time and/or place.

- Start with a compelling quotation or statistic—something concrete.
- Include an ethical appeal, with which you (explicitly or implicitly) show that you’ve done your homework and are credible.
- Articulate a main claim/thesis.
- Lay out the stakes for the piece of writing—that is, why the reader should bother reading on.

The following video addresses how to do several of these things, starting with the very first sentence of your introduction.



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here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=100#oembed-1>

## Conclusions

Conclusions usually

- Summarize the argument (especially in longer pieces of writing)
- “Bookend” a story that started in the introduction
- Include an emotional appeal, with which you (explicitly or implicitly) connect the “logic” of the argument to a more passionate reason intended to sway the reader
- Issue a call to action

Ideally, a conclusion will work in tandem with an introduction,

having some kind of “call back” element to remind your reader of the powerful opening you provided. Additional advice for conclusions is found in the following video.



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# 80. Higher Order Concerns for Editing

## Introduction

Regardless of writers' levels of experience or areas of expertise, many struggle with revision, a component of the writing process that encompasses everything from transformative changes in content and argumentation to minor corrections in grammar and punctuation. Perhaps because revision involves so many forms of modification, it is the focus of most scientific writing guides and handbooks. Revision can be daunting; how does one progress from initial drafts (called "rough drafts" for good reason) to a polished piece of scholarly writing?

Developing a process for revision can help writers produce thoughtful, polished texts and grow their written communication skills. Consider, then, a systematic approach to revision, including strategies to employ at every step of the process.

## A System for Approaching Revision

Generally, revision should be approached in a top-down manner by addressing **higher-order concerns (HOCs)** before moving on to **lower-order concerns (LOCs)**. In writing studies, the term “higher order” is used to denote major or global issues such as thesis, argumentation, and organization, whereas “lower order” is used to denote minor or local issues such as grammar and mechanics.<sup>1</sup> The more analytical work of revising HOCs often has ramifications for the entire piece. Perhaps in refining the argument, a writer will realize that the discussion section does not fully consider the study’s implications. Or, a writer will try a new organizational scheme and find that a paragraph no longer fits and should be cut. Such revisions may have far-reaching implications for the text.



Dedicating time to tweaking wording or correcting grammatical errors is unproductive if the sentence will be changed or deleted. Focusing on HOCs before LOCs allows writers to revise more effectively and efficiently.

1. McAndrew DA, Registad TJ. *Tutoring writing: a practical guide for conferences*. Portsmouth (NH): Boynton/Cook; 2001.

## Revision Strategies

Bearing in mind the general system of revising from HOCs to LOCs, you can employ several revision strategies.

- **Begin by evaluating how your argument addresses your rhetorical situation**—that is, the specific context surrounding your writing, including the audience, exigence, and constraints.<sup>2</sup>
  - For example, you may write an article describing a new treatment. If the target journal's audience comes from a variety of disciplines, you may need to include substantial background explanation, consider the implications for practitioners and scholars in multiple fields, and define technical terms. By contrast, if you are addressing a highly specialized audience, you may be able to dispense with many of the background explanations and definitions because of your shared knowledge base. You may consider the implications only for specialists, as they are your primary audience. Because this sort of revision affects the entire text, beginning by analyzing your rhetorical situation is effective.
- **Analyze your thesis or main argument for clarity.**
- **Evaluate the global organization of your text by writing a reverse outline.** Unlike traditional outlines, which are written before drafting, reverse outlines reflect the content of written drafts.
  - In a separate document or in your text's margins, record

2. Bitzer L. "The rhetorical situation." *Philos Rhetoric* 1968; 1 (1): 1-14.

the main idea of each paragraph. Then, consider whether the order of your ideas is logical. This method also will help you identify ideas that are out of place or digressive. You may also evaluate organization by printing the text and cutting it up so that each paragraph appears on a separate piece of paper. You may then easily reorder the paragraphs to test different organizational schemes.

## Completing a Post-Draft Outline

The reverse outline mentioned above is also known as a **post-draft outline**. Guidance for how to complete one for an entire essay draft, as well as for an individual problematic paragraph, are found in this presentation.



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# 8I. Lower Order Concerns for Proofreading

Previously we examined higher order concerns (HOCs) as part of the revision stage of the writing process. Once we move to the proofreading stage, it's time to consider the lower order concerns (LOCs). The difference is simple: HOCs are global issues, or issues that affect how a reader understands the entire paper; LOCs are issues that don't *necessarily* interrupt understanding of the writing by themselves.

---

HOCs	LOCs
Audience	Grammar
Thesis statement	Punctuation
Organization	Citation
Focus	Spelling
Development of ideas	Sentence structure

---

You may find yourself thinking, “Well, it depends,” or, “But what if...?” You’re absolutely right to think so. These lists are just guidelines; every writer will have a different hierarchy of concerns. Always try to think in terms of, “Does this affect my understanding of the writing?”

## Are HOCs More Important than LOCs?

No, not necessarily. HOCs tend to interrupt a reader's understanding of the writing, and that's why they need to be addressed first. However, if a LOC becomes a major obstacle, then it naturally becomes a higher priority.

Think of an example of how a Lower Order Concern could become a Higher Order Concern.

Here are some other issues you might face. These may be more difficult to categorize, and they may largely depend on the writing. If you think, "It depends," make notes about the circumstances under which these issues could be a HOC or a LOC.

- Evaluating sources
- citation method
- style
- paragraph structure
- active vs. passive voice
- format

## How to Address LOCs

### **Analyze your use of source material.**

Check any paraphrases and quotations against the original texts. Quotations should replicate the original author's words, while paraphrases should maintain the original author's meaning

but have altered language and sentence structures. For each source, confirm that you have adhered to the preferred style guide for the target journal or other venue.



**Consider individual sentences in terms of grammar, mechanics, and punctuation.** Many LOCs can be revised by isolating and examining different elements of the text. Read the text sentence by sentence, considering the grammar and sentence structure. Remember, a sentence may be grammatically correct and still confuse readers. If you notice a pattern—say, a tendency to misplace modifiers or add unnecessary commas—read the paper looking only for that error. Read the document backwards, word for word, looking for spelling errors. Throughout the writing process and especially at this stage of revision, keep a dictionary, a thesaurus, and a writing handbook nearby.

**Strategies such as reading aloud and seeking feedback are useful at all points in the revision process.** Reading aloud will give you distance from the text and prevent you from skimming over what is actually written on the page. This strategy will help you to identify both HOCs, such as missing concepts, and LOCs, such as typos. Additionally, seeking feedback will allow you to test your ideas and writing on real readers. Seek feedback from readers both inside and outside of your target audience in order to gain different perspectives.

## Proofreading Advice

The following video features two student tutors from the Writing and Reading Center at Fresno City College. In addition to great guidance about proofreading strategies, they also offer insights about what to expect when working with Writing Center tutors.



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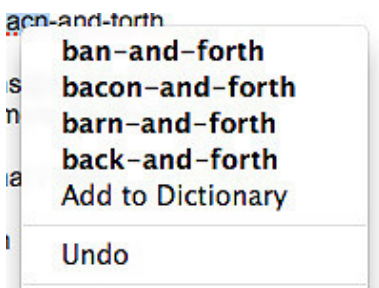
here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=102#oembed-1>

## 82. The Importance of Spelling

Word-processing programs usually have a spell-checker, but you should still carefully check for correct changes in your words. This is because automatic spell-checkers may not always understand the **context** of a word.

Misspelling a word might seem like a minor mistake, but it can reflect very poorly on a writer. It suggests one of two things: either the writer does not care enough about his work to proofread it, or he does not know his topic well enough to properly spell words related to it. Either way, spelling errors will make a reader less likely to trust a writer's authority.

The best way to ensure that a paper has no spelling errors is to look for them during the proofreading stage of the writing process. Being familiar with the most common errors will help you find (and fix) them during the writing and proofreading stage.



Sometimes, a writer just doesn't know how to spell the word she wants to use. This may be because the word is technical jargon or comes from a language other than her own. Other times, it may be a proper name that she has not encountered before. Anytime you want to use a word but are unsure of how to spell it, do not guess. Instead, check a dictionary or other reference work to find its proper spelling.

# Common Spelling Errors

## Phonetic Errors

Phonetics is a field that studies the sounds of a language. However, English phonetics can be tricky: In English, the pronunciation of a word does not always relate to the way it is spelled. This can make spelling a challenge. Here are some common phonetic irregularities:

- A word can sound like it could be spelled multiple ways. For example: “concede” and “conceed” are the same phonetically, but only “concede” is the proper spelling.
- A word has silent letters that the writer may forget to include. You cannot hear the “a” in “realize,” but you need it to spell the word correctly.
- A word has double letters that the writer may forget to include. “Accommodate,” for example, is frequently misspelled as “acommodate” or “accomodate.”
- The writer may use double letters when they are not needed. The word “amend” has only one “m,” but it is commonly misspelled with two.

Sometimes, words just aren’t spelled the way they sound. “Right,” for example, does not resemble its phonetic spelling whatsoever. Try to become familiar with words that have unusual or non-phonetic spellings so you can be on the lookout for them in your writing. But again, the best way to avoid these misspellings is to consult a dictionary whenever you’re unsure of the correct spelling.

# Homophones

“Bread” and “bred” sound the same, but they are spelled differently, and they mean completely different things. Two words with different meanings but the same pronunciation are homophones. If you don’t know which homophone is the right one to use, look both up in the dictionary to see which meaning (and spelling) you want. Common homophones include:

- right, rite, wright, and write
- read (most tenses of the verb) and reed
- read (past, past participle) and red
- rose (flower) and rose (past tense of rise)
- carat, caret, and carrot
- to, two, and too
- there, their, and they’re
- its and it’s

# Typographical Errors

Some spelling errors are caused by the writer accidentally typing the wrong thing. Common typos include:

- Omitting letters from a word (typing “brthday” instead of “birthday,” for example)
- Adding extra letters (typing “birthdayy”)
- Transposing two letters in a word (typing “brithday”)
- Spacing words improperly (such as “myb irthday” instead of “my birthday”)

Being aware of these common mistakes when writing will help you avoid spelling errors.

## 83. Revising With Style In Mind



A writer's style is what sets his or her writing apart. Style is the way writing is dressed up (or down) to fit the specific context, purpose, or audience. Word choice, sentence fluency, and the writer's voice — all contribute to the style of a piece of writing. How a writer chooses words and structures sentences to achieve a certain effect is also an element of style. When Thomas Paine wrote "These are the times that try men's souls," he arranged his

words to convey a sense of urgency and desperation. Had he written "These are bad times," it's likely he wouldn't have made such an impact!

Style is usually considered to be the province of literary writers. Novelists such as Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner and poets such as Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman are well known for their distinctive literary styles. But journalists, scientists, historians, and mathematicians also have distinctive styles, and they need to know how to vary their styles to fit different audiences. For example, the first-person narrative style of a popular magazine like *National Geographic* is quite different from the objective, third-person expository style of a research journal like *Scientific American*, even though both are written for informational purposes.



## Not just right and wrong

Style is not a matter of right and wrong but of what is appropriate for a particular setting and audience. Consider the following two passages, which were written by the same author on the same topic with the same main idea, yet have very different styles:

“Experiments show that *Heliconius* butterflies are less likely to oviposit on host plants that possess eggs or egg-like structures. These egg mimics are an unambiguous example of a plant trait evolved in response to a host-restricted group of insect herbivores.”

“*Heliconius* butterflies lay their eggs on *Passiflora* vines. In defense the vines seem to have evolved fake eggs that make it look to the butterflies as if eggs have already been laid on them.” (Example from Myers, G. (1992). *Writing biology: Texts in the social construction of scientific knowledge*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. p. 150.)

What changed was the audience. The first passage was written for a professional journal read by other biologists, so the style is authoritative and impersonal, using technical terminology suited to a professional audience. The second passage, written for a popular science magazine, uses a more dramatic style, setting up a conflict between the butterflies and the vines, and using familiar words to help readers from non-scientific backgrounds visualize the scientific concept being described. Each style is appropriate for the particular audience.

## Elements of style

Many elements of writing contribute to an author's style, but three of the most important are word choice, sentence fluency, and voice.

## Word Choice

relationship failure having failed me  
in the past but it won't stop  
my things I description and I  
alking **Inspiration** into  
her strategies, but it can also  
ed to be the most exciting part  
world but an individual has  
attention to this things and sh

Good writers are concise and precise, weeding out unnecessary words and choosing the exact word to convey meaning. Precise words—active verbs, concrete nouns, specific adjectives—help the reader visualize the sentence. Good writers use

adjectives sparingly and adverbs rarely, letting their nouns and verbs do the work.

Good writers also choose words that contribute to the flow of a sentence. Polysyllabic words, alliteration, and consonance can be used to create sentences that roll off the tongue. Onomatopoeia and short, staccato words can be used to break up the rhythm of a sentence.

## Sentence Fluency

Sentence fluency is the flow and rhythm of phrases and sentences. Good writers use a variety of sentences with different lengths and rhythms to achieve different effects. They use parallel structures within sentences and paragraphs to reflect parallel ideas, but also know how to avoid monotony by varying their sentence structures.

Good writers also arrange their ideas within a sentence for greatest effect. They avoid loose sentences, deleting extraneous words and rearranging their ideas for effect. Many students initially write with a looser oral style, adding words on to the end of a sentence in the order they come to mind. This rambling style is often described as a “word dump” where everything in a student’s

mind is dumped onto the paper in no particular order. There is nothing wrong with a word dump as a starting point: the advantage of writing over speaking is that writers can return to their words, rethink them, and revise them for effect. Tighter, more readable style results when writers choose their words carefully, delete redundancies, make vague words more specific, and use subordinate clauses and phrases to rearrange their ideas for the greatest effect.

## Voice

Because voice is difficult to measure reliably, it is often left out of scoring formulas for writing tests. Yet voice is an essential element of style that reveals the writer's personality. A writer's voice can be impersonal or chatty, authoritative or reflective, objective or passionate, serious or funny.

## Strategies to Revise for Style

**Read an essay draft out loud, preferably to another person.** Better yet, have another person read your draft to you. Note how that person interprets your words. Does it come across as you had meant it originally? If not, revise.

**Adopt a persona that's related to your topic.** Write from the perspective of this person you create: what language would a young woman who'd just spent two years in the peace corps use, for instance, if the essay were about the value of volunteer work? How would the words on the page of a project about gun control look coming from the perspective of a very conservative gun owner?

**Combine (some) short sentences, or break apart (some) long sentences.** Sentence length variety is an asset to your readers, as

noted above. If you find a stretch of your essay that uses many sentences of approximately the same length close together, focus on combining or breaking apart there.

**Punch up the word choice.** Not every word in an essay can be a “special” word, nor should they be. But if your writing in an area feels a little flat, the injection of a livelier word can have strong rhetorical and emotional impact on your reader. Think of these words as jewels in the right setting. Often swapping out “to be” verbs (is, was, were, etc.) with more action-packed verbs has immediate, positive impact. Adjectives are also good candidates for updating—look for “things” and “stuff,” or “very” and “many,” to replace with more precise terminology.

PART VII

# MODULE 6: RESEARCH



## 84. Why Is Research Important?

### 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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here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=106#oembed-1>

## 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.

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.”<sup>1</sup>

While this is a relatively harmless example of a joke website, it 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.

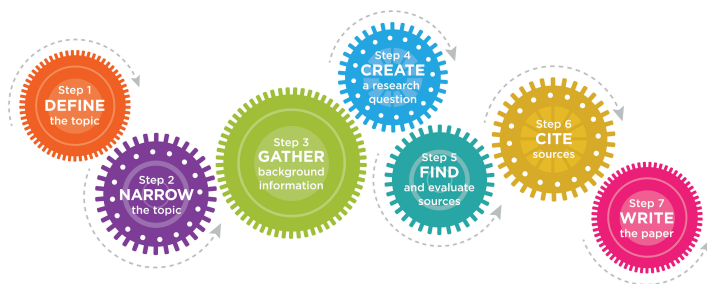
#### USING SOURCES IN RESEARCH



1. <http://www.nbcconnecticut.com/news/local/An-Octopus-in-a-Tree-Seems-Real-115497484.html>

# 85. 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.

## Preliminary Research Strategies



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*

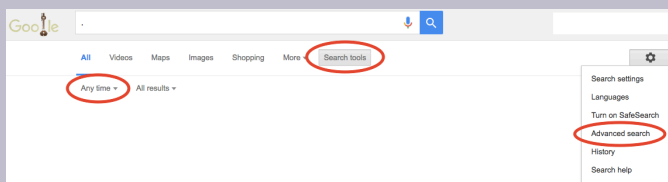
1. It is okay to start with [Wikipedia](#) as a reference, but do not use it as an official source. Look at the links and references at the bottom of the page for more ideas.
2. Use “Ctrl+F” to find certain words within a webpage

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!

# 86. 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.

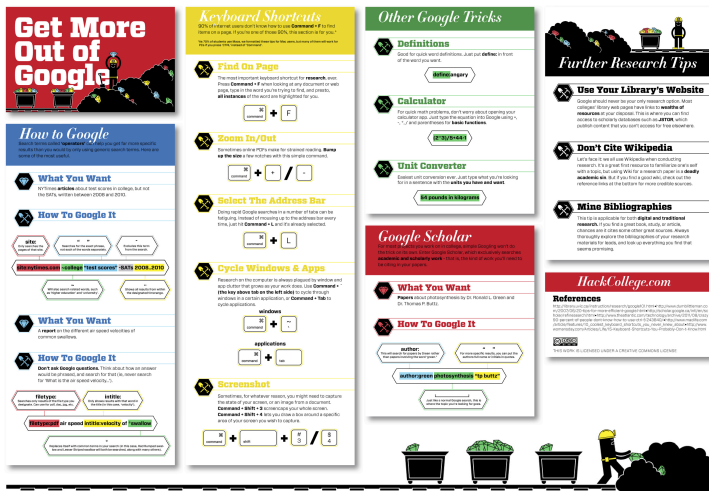


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<https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=108#oembed-1>

## 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.

# 87. Intermediate Research 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

### FIND

- Begin with background research
- Narrow the search terms
- Look for scholarly information
- Search libraries and databases

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!

## 88. 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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view them online here:

<https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=110#oembed-1>

## 89. 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.

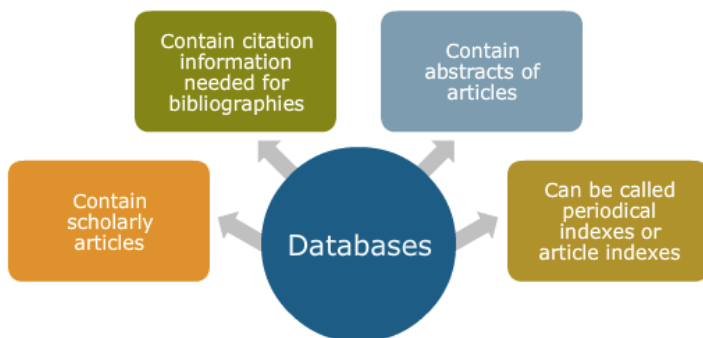
For this kind of research, you'll want to utilize library databases, as this video explains.



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here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=111#oembed-1>

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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## 90. How to Search in a Library 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.





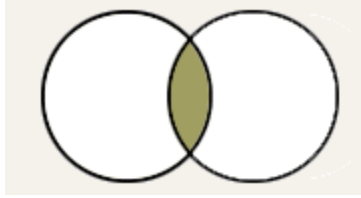
CC-BY-NC-SA image from [UCI Libraries Begin Research Online Workshop Tutorial](#).

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

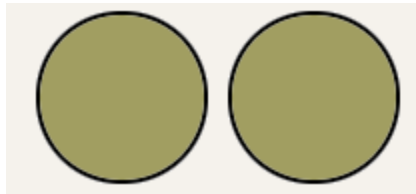
Boolean searching allows you to use AND, OR, and NOT to combine your search terms. Here are some examples:

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.

# 91. Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Sources

When searching for information on a topic, it is important to understand the value of primary, secondary, and tertiary sources.

**Primary sources** allow researchers to get as close as possible to original ideas, events, and empirical research as possible. Such sources may include creative works, first hand or contemporary accounts of events, and the publication of the results of empirical observations or research.

**Secondary sources** analyze, review, or summarize information in primary resources or other secondary resources. Even sources presenting facts or descriptions about events are secondary unless they are based on direct participation or observation. Moreover, secondary sources often rely on other secondary sources and standard disciplinary methods to reach results, and they provide the principle sources of analysis about primary sources.

**Tertiary sources** provide overviews of topics by synthesizing information gathered from other resources. Tertiary resources often provide data in a convenient form or provide information with context by which to interpret it.

The distinctions between primary, secondary, and tertiary sources can be ambiguous. An individual document may be a primary source in one context and a secondary source in another. Encyclopedias are typically considered tertiary sources, but a study of how encyclopedias have changed on the Internet would use them as primary sources. Time is a defining element.

While these definitions are clear, the lines begin to blur in the different discipline areas.

## In the Humanities & Social Sciences

In the humanities and social sciences, primary sources are the direct evidence or first-hand accounts of events without secondary analysis or interpretation. A primary source is a work that was created or written contemporary with the period or subject being studied. Secondary sources analyze or interpret historical events or creative works.

### **Primary sources**

- Diaries
- Interviews
- Letters
- Original works of art
- Photographs
- Speeches
- Works of literature

A **primary source** is an *original* document containing firsthand information about a topic. Different fields of study may use different types of primary sources.

### **Secondary sources**

- Biographies
- Dissertations
- Indexes, abstracts, bibliographies (used to locate a secondary source)
- Journal articles
- Monographs

A **secondary source** contains commentary on or discussion about a primary source. The most important feature of secondary sources is that they offer an *interpretation* of information gathered from primary sources.

### **Tertiary sources**

- Dictionaries
- Encyclopedias
- Handbooks

A **tertiary source** presents summaries or condensed versions of materials, usually with references back to the primary and/or secondary sources. They can be a good place to look up facts or get a general overview of a subject, but they rarely contain original material.

**Examples**

Subject	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Art	Painting	Critical review of the painting	Encyclopedia article on the artist
History	Civil War diary	Book on a Civil War Battle	List of battle sites
Literature	Novel or poem	Essay about themes in the work	Biography of the author
Political science	Geneva Convention	Article about prisoners of war	Chronology of treaties

**In the Sciences**

In the sciences, primary sources are documents that provide full description of the original research. For example, a primary source would be a journal article where scientists describe their research on the genetics of tobacco plants. A secondary source would be an article commenting or analyzing the scientists' research on tobacco.

**Primary sources**

- Conference proceedings

- Interviews
- Journals
- Lab notebooks
- Patents
- Preprints
- Technical reports
- Theses and dissertations

These are where the results of original research are usually first published in the sciences. This makes them the best source of information on cutting edge topics. However the new ideas presented may not be fully refined or validated yet.

### **Secondary sources**

- Monographs
- Reviews
- Textbooks
- Treatises

These tend to summarize the existing state of knowledge in a field at the time of publication. Secondary sources are good to find comparisons of different ideas and theories and to see how they may have changed over time.

### **Tertiary sources**

- Compilations
- Dictionaries
- Encyclopedias
- Handbooks
- Tables

These types of sources present condensed material, generally with references back to the primary and/or secondary literature. They can be a good place to look up data or to get an overview of a subject, but they rarely contain original material.

### **Examples**

---

Subjects	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Agriculture	Conference paper on tobacco genetics	Review article on the current state of tobacco research	Encyclopedia article on tobacco
Chemistry	Chemical patent	Book on chemical reactions	Table of related reactions
Physics	Einstein's diary	Biography on Einstein	Dictionary of relativity

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## 92. 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.



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here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=114>

## 93. 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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# 94. 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

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



*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 by providing context and explanations about how each source supports your argument.<sup>1</sup>

1. [Smith, Matt. "Putting It All Together: Thesis Synthesis." Web log post. Walden University Writing Center, 12 Apr. 2013. Web. 04 Apr. 2016.](#)

## 95. 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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here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=117#oembed-1>

## 96. 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>

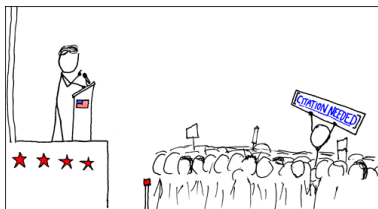


## 97. Defining Plagiarism

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



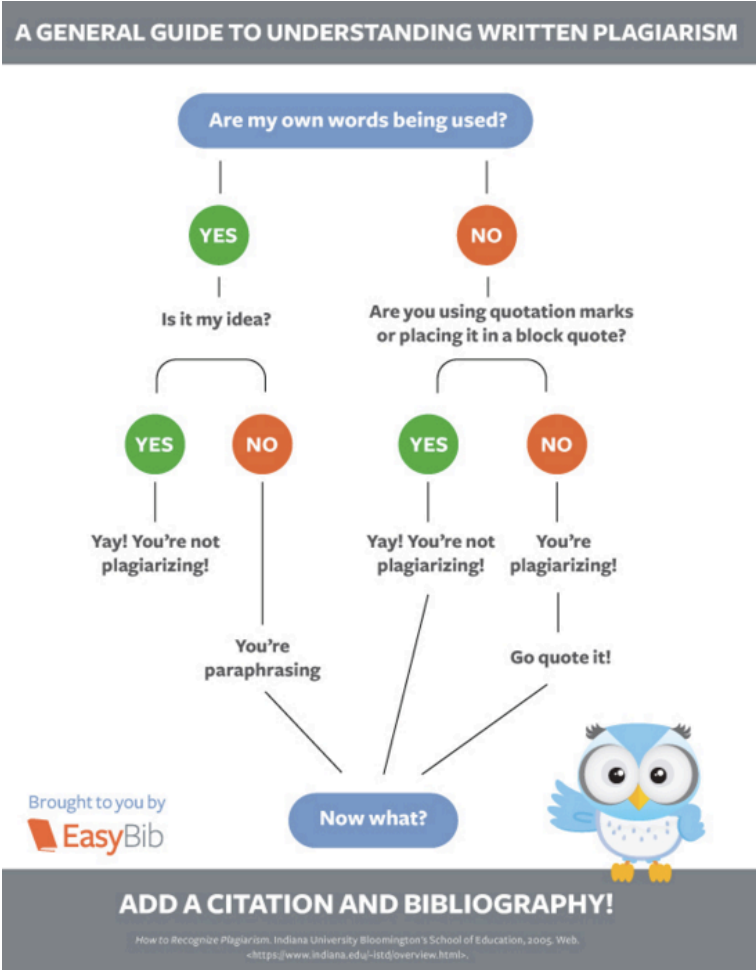
In the academic world, plagiarism is a serious matter because ideas in the forms of research, creative work, and original thought are highly valued. Chances are, your school has strict rules about what happens when someone is caught plagiarizing. The penalty for plagiarism is severe, everything from 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.



# 98. Avoiding Plagiarism

## How to Avoid Plagiarizing

### Tip #1: Make Sure You Are Very Certain about What Is and is Not Plagiarism



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here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=120#oembed-1>

### 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.





PART VIII

# MODULE 7: MLA CITATIONS



# 99. Why Is MLA Documentation Important?



“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.

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, it's helpful to remember that they were created to serve a common need, with your interests in mind.



# 100. Introduction to 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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here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=123#oembed-1>

## 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.).

# 101. MLA Document Formatting

## Overall Structure of an MLA Paper

Your MLA paper should include the following basic elements:

1. Body
2. 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:



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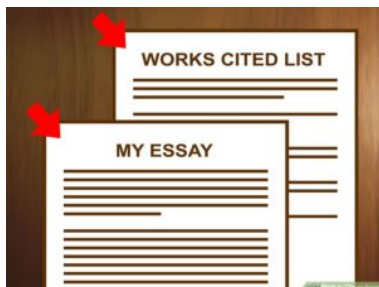
<https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=124#oembed-1>

# 102. MLA Works Cited Page Formatting

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.

## 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.



*When citing an essay, you include information in two places: in the body of your paper and in the Works Cited that comes after it. The Works Cited is just a bibliography: you list all the sources you used to write the paper. The citation information you include in the body of the paper itself is called the “in-text citation.”*

- **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.)

Freeman 8

#### Works Cited

- Buchanan, Wyatt. "More Same-Sex Couples Want Kids: Survey Looks at Trends among Homosexuals." *SF Gate*, Hearst Communications, 25 Apr. 2006, [www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/NATION-More-same-sex-couples-want-kids-Survey-2499131.php](http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/NATION-More-same-sex-couples-want-kids-Survey-2499131.php).
- Coontz, Stephanie. "Not Much Sense in Those Census Numbers." *Uncommon Threads: Reading and Writing about Contemporary America*, edited by Robert D. Newman et al., Longman, 2003, pp. 146-48.
- "Developments in the Law: The Law of Marriage and Family." *Harvard Law Review*, vol. 116, no. 7, 2003, pp. 1996-2122. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/1342754](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1342754).
- Hymowitz, Kay S. "The Incredible Shrinking Father." *City Journal*, Spring 2007, [www.city-journal.org/html/17\\_2\\_artificial\\_insemination.html](http://www.city-journal.org/html/17_2_artificial_insemination.html).
- Marcotty, Josephine, and Chen May Yee. "New World of Fertility Medicine Is a Big-Money Marketplace." *Seacoastonline.com*, Local Media Group, 30 Oct. 2007, [www.seacoastonline.com/article/20071030/PARENTS/71029007](http://www.seacoastonline.com/article/20071030/PARENTS/71029007).

*A correctly formatted Works Cited page, according to the MLA handbook.*

## 103. Creating MLA Works Cited Entries

Because of the wide variety of source formats, MLA 8 now requires that researchers follow a simple set of guidelines to create appropriate citations (instead of looking up one of the fifty-nine types of sources inside the previous handbook and following the instructions). Although there are still distinct rules you need to follow to create a citation, the rules are less rigid 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, the [MLA Style Center](#), or to other 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.



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

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=126>

You can also [download the presentation here](#).

Watch this video to see examples of how to identify the core elements needed in a citation:



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

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=126#oembed-1>

## *Practice*

Practice your mastery of MLA documentation by correctly ordering the following citations from the [Santa Fe College library](#):

- Book – [Desktop Version](#) | [Touchscreen Version](#)
- Chapter in an Edited Book – [Desktop Version](#) | [Touchscreen Version](#)
- Article from a Print Journal – [Desktop Version](#) | [Touchscreen Version](#)
- Journal Article from a Library Database – [Desktop Version](#) | [Touchscreen Version](#)
- Web Page – [Desktop Version](#) | [Touchscreen Version](#)
- Video – [Desktop Version](#) | [Touchscreen Version](#)

## 104. MLA In-Text Citations

Because the use of in-text citations will be so integral to your writing processes, being able to instantly craft correct citations and identify incorrect citations will save you time during writing and will help you avoid having unnecessary points taken off for citation errors.

Here is the standard correct in-text citation style according to MLA guidelines:

“Quotation” (Author’s Last Name Page Number).

Take a moment to carefully consider the placement of the parts and punctuation of this in-text citation. Note that there is no punctuation indicating the end of a sentence inside of the quotation marks—closing punctuation should instead follow the parentheses. There is also no punctuation between the author’s last name and the page number inside of the parentheses. The misplacement of these simple punctuation marks is one of the most common errors students make when crafting in-text citations.

## EXAMPLE

It is reported that.....(Smith 123).

AUTHOR

PAGE

Include the right information in the in-text citation. Every time you reference material in your paper, you must tell the reader the name of the author whose information you are citing. You must include a page number that tells the reader where, in the source, they can find this information. The most basic structure for an in-text citation looks like this: (Smith 123).

So, let's say we have the following quote, which comes from page 100 of Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South*: "Margaret had never spoken of Helstone since she left it."<sup>1</sup>

The following examples show **incorrect** MLA formatting:

1. Gaskell, Elizabeth. *North and South*. Oxford UP, 1973.



---

"Margaret had never spoken of Helstone since she left it." (Gaskell 100)	<i>Incorrect because the period falls within the quotation marks</i>
"Margaret had never spoken of Helstone since she left it" (Gaskell, 100).	<i>Incorrect because of the comma separating the author's last name and the page number</i>
"Margaret had never spoken of Helstone since she left it" (Elizabeth Gaskell 100).	<i>Incorrect because the author's full name is used instead of just her last name</i>
"Margaret had never spoken of Helstone since she left it" (North and South 100).	<i>Incorrect because the title of the work appears, rather than the author's last name; the title should only be used if no author name is provided</i>

---

The following example shows **correct** MLA formatting:

"Margaret had never spoken of Helstone since she left it" (Gaskell 100).

However, there are exceptions to the above citation guideline. Consider the following format of an in-text citation, which is also formed correctly.

Elizabeth Gaskell's narrator makes it clear that  
 "Margaret had never spoken of Helstone since she left it" (100).

Do you notice the difference between this citation format and the format of the first example? Unlike the first example, this citation does not list the author's last name inside the parentheses. This is because the last name is included in quotation's introduction, which

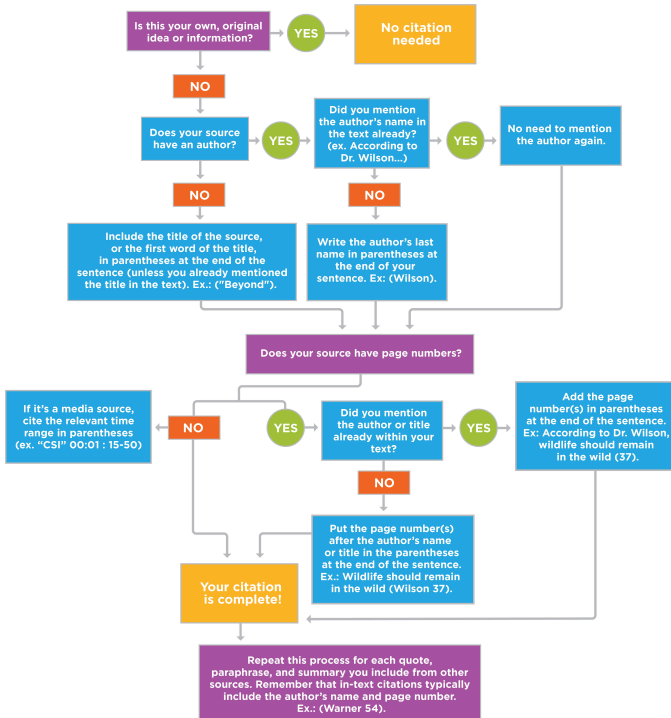
makes the identity of the author clear to the reader. Including the author's last name again inside of the parenthesis would be thus redundant and is not required for MLA citation.

The same rule about inclusion of the author's last name applies for paraphrased information, as well, as shown in the following example:

Elizabeth Gaskell's narrator makes it clear that her protagonist does not speak of her home once she is in Milton (100).

In this paraphrase, the author's last name precedes the paraphrased material, but as in the case of quotation integration, if the author's last name is not described in the paraphrase then it is required inside of the parentheses before the page number.

## When and How to Create MLA In-Text Citations



Being more compliant with MLA in-text citation guidelines will become easier if you review these examples and the citation rules on which they rely.

## EXAMPLE

A recent study determined that Himalayan brown bears eat both plants and animals (Rathore and Chauhan 6652).



Rathore and Chauhan determined that Himalayan brown bears eat both plants and animals (6652).



Rathore and Chauhan determined that Himalayan brown bears eat both plants and animals (Rathore and Chauhan 6652).



A recent study determined that Himalayan brown bears eat both plants and animals.



Wild How to Cite an Essay

*In-text citations are often parenthetical, meaning you add information to the end of a sentence in parentheses. But if you include that necessary information in the language of the sentence itself, you should not include the parenthetical citation. This example shows you proper uses of in-text citations.*

# 105. MLA Block Quotations

## 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.

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.

## Formatting Block Quotations

The entire block quotation should be indented one inch from the left margin. The first line of the excerpt should not be further indented, unless you are quoting multiple paragraphs—in which case the first line of each quoted paragraph should be further indented 0.25 inches. As should the rest of your paper, a block quotation in MLA style should be double-spaced.

### *Block Quotations*

Watch [this video](#) from Imagine Easy Solutions for more information on formatting block quotations.

PART IX

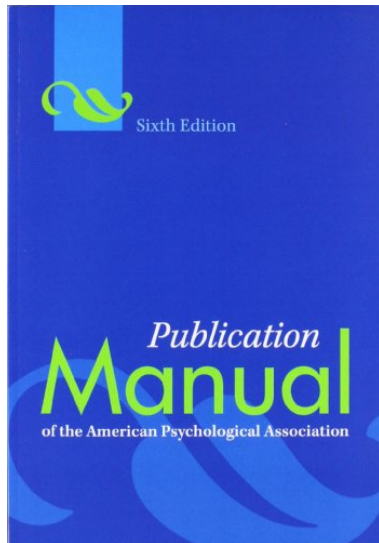
## MODULE 8: APA CITATIONS





## 106. Why Is APA Documentation Important?

American Psychological Association (APA) Style is a method of formatting and referencing works in research papers and manuscripts. This style is most commonly practiced by academics within the social sciences, including the fields of nursing, psychology, and political science, and economics. APA style provides writers with a consistent formula for acknowledging the works of others using parenthetical in-text citations and a page listing all references. Additionally, APA style makes use of specific guidelines concerning the structure, content, and order of each page



of a research paper or manuscript. Adhering to the uniform standards of APA style will enhance your paper's organization and allow readers to review your work with greater clarity.

The APA articles and templates on this website were developed in accordance with the 6th edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. Consult the *Publication Manual* (6th ed.) for more details about formatting and organizing your document.

# 107. APA Order of Major Sections

Careful adherence to these conventions is likely to make a good initial impression on the reader, while carelessness may have the opposite effect. When the major sections of a paper are carefully arranged in the appropriate order, the reader may be more inclined to show an interest in the paper's ideas.

How should the major sections of an APA-style paper be arranged?

- **Title Page:** acts as the first major section of the document
  - Presents a running head and begins the document's pagination
  - Includes the paper's full title centered in the upper half of the page
  - Contains the name(s) of the writer(s) and their institutional affiliation
- **Abstract:** acts as the second major section of the document
  - Presents a single-paragraph summary of the paper's contents
  - Contains approximately 150 to 250 words
  - Includes select keywords for easy access by researchers
- **Main Body:** acts as the third major section of the document
  - Presents a report of the writer(s)' research and findings
  - Includes four sections (typically): the introduction, method, results, and discussion
  - Provides the reader with pertinent information about the paper's topic
- **References page:** acts as the fourth major section of the document

- Presents a compilation of the sources cited in the paper
- Provides a comprehensive list of works that appear as in-text citations in the paper
- Details the full source information for each entry

# 108. APA Title Page Formatting

## Placement

As the first major section of the document, the title page appears at the top of the first page.

## Components

The title page is comprised of a few key elements:

- Running head (or shortened title) and label
- Page number
- Full title of the paper
- Author byline: first name(s), middle initial(s), and last name(s)
- Affiliated Institution(s) or Organization(s)
- Author note (optional)

Follow your instructor's directives regarding additional lines on the title page. Some professors require further information, including the date of submission, course number or title, or name of the professor.

## General Format

Like the rest of the paper, the title page should be double-spaced

and typed in Times New Roman, 12 pt. The margins are set at 1" on all sides.

## How should the running head be formatted on the title page?

The running head and label is flush with the upper left-hand corner of the title page, while the page number is flush with the upper right-hand corner of the page. The label "Running head" should only appear on the title page; on all other pages, simply include the shortened title of the paper. All letters of the running head should be capitalized and should not exceed 50 characters, including punctuation, letters, and spaces.

Example of a correctly formatted running head on the title page:

Running head: EFFECTS OF NUTRITION ON MEMORY

*Note: The title page is distinct in that the shortened title of this page is preceded by the label "Running head" followed by a colon; **no other page** of the document features this label.*

## How should the full title of the paper be formatted?

The full title of the paper is centered in the upper half of the page, and the first letter of each major word is capitalized. The paper's title should be a maximum of 12 words and fill one or two lines; avoid using abbreviations and unnecessary words. Do not format the title with bold, italics, underlining, or quotation marks.

## How should the author byline be formatted?

The author byline is comprised of the author(s)' first name(s), middle initial(s), and last name(s); this line follows after the full title of the research paper. Note that two authors are separated by the word *and*, but more than two authors' names are separated by commas.

## What should the institutional affiliation include?

Following the author byline is the institutional affiliation of the author(s) involved with the research paper. Include the name of the college or university you attend, or the name of the organization(s) that provided support for your research.

Any additional lines of information requested by your professor may be situated after the institutional affiliation. If your instructor requires you to include an author's note, position it in the lower half of the title page.

# 109. APA Abstract Page

## Placement

The abstract acts as the second major section of the document and typically begins on the second page of the paper. It follows directly after the title page and precedes the main body of the paper.

The abstract is a succinct, single-paragraph summary of your paper's purpose, main points, method, findings, and conclusions, and is often recommended to be written after the rest of your paper has been completed.

## General Format

### How should the abstract page be formatted?

The abstract's length should be a minimum of 150 words and a maximum of 250 words; it should be confined within a single paragraph. Unlike in other paragraphs in the paper, the first line of the abstract should not be indented five spaces from the left margin.

Like the rest of the paper, the pages of the abstract should be double-spaced and typed in Times New Roman, 12 pt. The margins are set at 1" on all sides. While the running head is flush with the upper left-hand corner of every page, the page number is flush with the upper right-hand corner of every page. Note that all letters of the running head should be capitalized and should not exceed 50 characters, including punctuation, letters, and spaces.

The title of the abstract is centered at the top of the page; there is no extra space between the title and the paragraph. Avoid

formatting the title with bold, italics, underlining, or quotation marks, or mislabeling the abstract with the title of the research paper.

When writing the abstract, note that the APA recommends using two spaces after sentences that end in a period; however, sentences that end in other punctuation marks may be followed by a single space. Additionally, the APA recommends using the active voice and past tense in the abstract, but the present tense may be used to describe conclusions and implications. Acronyms or abbreviated words should be defined in the abstract.

## How should the list of keywords be formatted?

According to your professor's directives, you may be required to include a short list of keywords to enable researchers and databases to locate your paper more effectively. The list of keywords should follow after the abstract paragraph, and the word *Keywords* should be italicized, indented five spaces from the left margin, and followed by a colon. There is no period at the end of the list of keywords.



# 110. APA First Main Body Page Formatting

Beginning at the top of a new page, the main body of the research paper follows the abstract and precedes the References page. Comprised of the introduction, method, results, and discussion subsections, the main body acts as the third major section of the document and typically begins on the third page of the paper.

## General Format

Like the rest of the paper, the pages of the main body should be double-spaced and typed in Times New Roman, 12 pt. The margins are set at 1" on all sides. While the running head is flush with the upper left-hand corner of every page, the page number is flush with the upper right-hand corner of every page. Note that all letters of the running head should be capitalized and should not exceed 50 characters, including punctuation, letters, and spaces.



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here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=134#oembed-1>

The full title of the paper is centered directly above the introduction with no extra space between the title and the first paragraph. Avoid formatting the title with bold, italics, underlining, or quotation marks. The first letter of each major word in the title should be

capitalized. Unlike other sections of the main body, the introduction does not require a heading or label.

When writing each paragraph, note that the APA recommends using two spaces after sentences that end in a period; however, sentences that end in other punctuation marks may be followed by a single space.

# III. APA Headings and Subheadings

## How should section and subsection headings be formatted in APA style?

A research paper written in APA style should be organized into sections and subsections using the five levels of APA headings. APA recommends using subheadings **only when the paper has at least two subsections within a larger section**. Notice how sections contain at least two smaller subsections in the example below:

### Method

#### Design

#### Participants

*Demographic.*

*Characteristics.*

Starting with the first level of heading, the subsections of the paper

should progressively use the next level(s) of heading without skipping any levels. Major sections of the paper's main body, including the Method, Results, and Discussion sections, should always be formatted with the first level of heading. However, keep in mind that the Introduction section, which is preceded by the full title of the paper, should be presented in plain type. Any subsections that fall under the major sections are formatted with the next level of heading.

Note that all paragraphs of the main body, including those that fall under subsections of a larger section, still maintain the pattern of indentation, use Times New Roman font, 12 pt., and are double-spaced. There are no extra lines or spaces between paragraphs and headings.

How are the five levels of APA-style headings formatted?

Format each of the five levels of APA-style headings as demonstrated in the example below. Note that while the example features headings titled "First Level," "Second Level," and so on, each heading in your paper should be named according to the section it describes.

### **First Level**

The first level of heading is bolded and centered, and the first letter of each word in the heading is capitalized. The paragraph text should be typed on the following line and indented five spaces from the left.

### **Second Level**

The second level of heading is bolded and situated flush left, and the first letter of each word in the heading is capitalized. The paragraph text should be typed on the following line and indented five spaces from the left.

### **Third level**

The third level of heading is bolded, indented five spaces from the left, and followed by a period. Capitalize only the first letter of the first word in the heading and of proper nouns. The first paragraph following this heading should be typed on the same line as the heading.

#### **Fourth level**

The fourth level of heading is bolded, italicized, indented five spaces from the left, and followed by a period. Capitalize only the first letter of the first word in the heading and of proper nouns. The first paragraph following this heading should be typed on the same line as the heading.

#### **Fifth level**

The fifth level of heading is italicized, indented five spaces from the left, and followed by a period. Capitalize only the first letter of the first word in the heading and of proper nouns. The first paragraph following this heading should be typed on the same line as the heading.

## 11.2. APA In-Text Citations

An essential component of a research paper, in-text citations are a way of acknowledging the ideas of the author(s) of a particular work.

Each source that appears as an in-text citation should have a corresponding detailed entry in the References list at the end of the paper. Including the required elements in every citation allows other researchers to easily track the references used in a paper and locate those resources themselves.

There are three pieces of information that should be included in a citation after quoting another writer's work: the author's last name, the year of publication, and the page number(s) of the quoted material, all of which are separated by commas. The page number should follow a lower-case letter 'p' and a period.

- Basic structure: (Author, Year of Publication, p. 142)
  - **Example:** (Kutner, 2003, p. 451) [1]

If the quoted material was taken from more than one page, use two lower-case letter 'p' s.

- Basic structure: (Author, Year, of Publication, pp. 194-196)
  - **Example:** (Kutner, 2003, pp. 451-452) [1]

### How should multiple authors of a single source be cited?

There are a few guidelines to follow when citing multiple authors for a single source. Separate the names of the source's authors by using commas. Depending on the location and instance of the citation, an

ampersand(&), the word *and*, or the term *et al.* may also need to be used.

## When should an ampersand be used?

Ampersands (&) should only be used in parenthetical in-text citations. An ampersand separates the last and second to last author of a cited work.

- **Example:** Research has demonstrated that “synesthesia appears quite stable over time, and synesthetes are typically surprised to discover that other people do not share their experiences” (Niccolai, Jennes, Stoerig, & Van Leeuwen, 2012, p. 81). [1]

## When should the word *and* be used?

The word *and* should only be used in a sentence or paragraph; do not use it in a parenthetical in-text citation. The last and second to last author of a cited work are separated by the word *and*.

- **Example:** Niccolai, Jennes, Stoerig, and Van Leeuwen (2012) observed that “synesthesia appears quite stable over time, and synesthetes are typically surprised to discover that other people do not share their experiences” (p. 81). [1]

## When should the term *et al.* be used?

When citing a single work with many authors, you may need to substitute some of the authors’ names with the term *et al.* The

term *et al.* should not be italicized in your paper, and a period should be placed after the word *al* as it is an abbreviated term. Follow these guidelines regarding the usage of *et al.*:

## Use *et al.*:

- The first time and every time you cite a source with at least six authors.
  - **Example:** The in-text citation of *Zoonoses: Infectious diseases transmissible from animals to humans*, a book authored by Krauss, Weber, Appel, Enders, Isenberg, Schiefer, Slenczka, von Graevenitz, and Zahner, would appear as follows: [2]
    - (Krauss et al., 2003, p. 91)
    - As Krauss et al. (2003) observed, ...
- Every following time (after the first instance) that you cite a source with at least three authors.
  - **Example:** Citing the article “Modality and variability of synesthetic experience” by Niccolai, Jennes, Stoerig, & Van Leeuwen would appear as follows: [1]
    - The first instance: (Niccolai, Jennes, Stoerig, & Van Leeuwen, 2012, p. 81)
    - Every following instance: (Niccolai et al., 2012)

## Avoid using *et al.*:

- The first time you cite a source with up to five authors.
  - Instead, list all of the authors at their first mentioning.
- To cite a work that only has two authors.



- Instead, always list the two authors' names in every citation (separated by either an ampersand or the word and, depending on the location)

# 113. APA References Page Formatting

## Placement

The References page is located at the end of the main body of the paper and begins at the top of a new page. Appendices, footnotes, and additional materials should follow after the References page.

## General Format

Like the rest of the paper, the References page should be double-spaced and typed in Times New Roman, 12 pt. The running head should appear flush with the upper left-hand corner of the page, and the page number should appear at the upper right-hand corner of the page.

The title of the References page is capitalized and centered at the top of the page without any formatting, including bold, italics, underlining, or quotation marks. Avoid mislabeling the References page as “Works Cited,” “Sources,” or “Bibliography.”

## Entries

Each entry should be formatted as a hanging indentation: the first line of each citation should be flush with the left margin while each subsequent line of the citation is indented five spaces from the left margin. Alphabetize the entries in the References page based on the

authors' last names (or the first word of a work's title, if a work does not name any authors). Though it will vary from source to source, the general structure of a print book citation is as follows:

Author Last Name, Initials. (Year of publication). *Title of the work*.  
Publication city: Publishing Company.

Electronic sources generally require more information than print sources, such as a uniform resource locator (URL), a digital object identifier (DOI), or the date the source material was accessed.

## 114. Creating APA References Entries



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

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=138#oembed-1>

Following is a list of sample citations for commonly used sources. Consult the current edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.) for a complete list of guidelines for formatting entries on the references page.

### Print Examples

#### Single-Authored Book

Hoppensteadt, F. C. (1997). *An introduction to the mathematics of neurons: Modeling in the frequency domain*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

## Book with Multiple Authors

### *Two or more authors*

Pandi-Perumal, S. R., Cardinali, D. P., & Chrousos, G. (2007). *Neuroimmunology of sleep*. New York, NY: Springer.

### *Seven or more authors*

Krauss, H., Weber, A., Appel, M., Enders, B., Isenberg, H. D., Schiefer, H. G., . . . Zahner, H. (2003). *Zoonoses: Infectious diseases transmissible from animals to humans*. Washington, DC: ASM Press.

## Book by an Association or Organization

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

## Article or Chapter in an Edited Collection

Riding, R. (2001). The nature and effects of cognitive style. In Sternberg, R. J., & Zhang, L.-F. (Eds.), *Perspectives on thinking, learning, and cognitive styles* (pp. 47-72). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

## Collected Content in an Edited Book

### *Single editor*

Gray, W. D. (Ed.). (2007). *Integrated models of cognition systems*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

### *Multiple editors*

Reynolds, W. M., & Johnston, H. F. (Eds.). (1994). *Handbook of depression in children and adolescents*. New York, NY: Plenum Press.

## Article in Print Periodical

### *With DOI*

Marsh, J. K., & Ahn, W. (2012). Memory for patient information as a function of experience in mental health. *Journal of Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 26(3), 462-474. doi:10.1002/acp.2832

### *Without DOI*

Murphy, V. M. (1960). Anxiety: Common ground for psychology and sociology. *The American Catholic Sociological Review*, 21(3), 213-220.

## Electronic Examples

### Book in Electronic Form

Levitin, D. J. (2002). *Foundations of cognitive psychology: Core readings*. Retrieved from <http://ehis.ebscohost.com>

### Article in Online Periodical

#### *With DOI*

Oruç, I., Krigolson, O., Dalrymple, K., Nagamatsu, L. S., Handy, T. C., & Barton, J. S. (2011). Bootstrap analysis of the single subject with event related potentials. *Journal of Cognitive Neuropsychology*, 28(5), 322-337. doi:10.1080/02643294.2011.648176

#### *Without DOI*

Niccolai, V., Jennes, J., Stoerig, P., & Van Leeuwen, T. M. (2012). Modality and variability of synesthetic experience. *The American Journal of Psychology*, 125(1), 81-94. Retrieved from JSTOR database at <http://www.jstor.org/>

## Article from a Webpage

### *By Multiple Authors*

Vorvick, L. J., Longstreth, G. F., & Zieve, D. (2011, January 10). E. coli enteritis. Retrieved from <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000296.htm>

### *By an Organization/Group*

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2012). Lead. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/lead/>

### *Unknown Author, Unknown Date*

Water, carbon and nitrogen cycle. (n.d.) Retrieved from [http://www.etap.org/demo/biology\\_files/lesson6/instruction4tutor.html](http://www.etap.org/demo/biology_files/lesson6/instruction4tutor.html)



## 115. APA Block Quotations

### When should a block quotation be used?

A block quotation is an extract consisting of more than 40 words from another author's work. Block quotations should be used in moderation, typically when using another writer's words is a more effective way of illustrating an idea. Avoid using block quotations excessively as this practice gives the reader the impression that you are inexperienced in the subject or are simply filling pages to meet a word count requirement.

### How should a block quotation be formatted?

While a short quotation is enclosed in quotation marks and integrated into the surrounding paragraph, a block quotation is an independent paragraph that is indented five spaces from the left margin. This type of quotation should be double-spaced like the rest of the paper, but it should not be enclosed in quotation marks. In a block quotation, the parenthetical in-text citation should follow directly after the end punctuation of the final sentence. Note the placement order of the quotation marks, parentheses, and period.

Let's look at two examples:

One researcher outlines the viewpoints of both parties:

Freedom of research is undoubtedly a cherished ideal in our society. In that respect research has an interest in being free, independent and unrestricted. Such interests weigh against regulations. On the other hand, research should also be valid, verifiable, and unbiased, to attain the overarching goal of gaining obtaining [sic] generalisable knowledge. (Simonsen, 2012, p. 46)

Note that although the block quotation is formatted as a separate block of text, it is preceded by an introductory phrase or sentence(s) followed by a colon. If the author's name and the year of publication appear in the introductory sentence, the parenthetical in-text citation at the end of the paragraph should simply include the page number(s) of the original text, as shown in this example:

Simonsen (2012) outlines the two opposing viewpoints:

Freedom of research is undoubtedly a cherished ideal in our society. In that respect research has an interest in being free, independent and unrestricted. Such interests weigh against regulations. On the other hand, research should also be valid, verifiable, and unbiased, to attain the overarching goal of gaining obtaining [sic] generalisable knowledge. (p. 46)

PART X

# INSTRUCTOR RESOURCES (MATERIALS AVAILABLE WITH LOGIN)



## II.6. Overview of Instructor Resources

This course comes with a collection of the best available OER instructor resources. All instructor resources for this course are tightly aligned with learning outcomes and content. Since they are openly licensed, you may use them as is or adapt them to your needs.

The collection is continuously updated with new materials from designated subject matter experts, faculty teaching the course, and Achieving the Dream staff.

### **Now Available**

- Weekly outcomes
- Essay Materials
- Rubrics
- Annotated Bibliography Materials
- Post-Draft Outline Prezi
- Research Project Materials
- Rhetorical Analysis Materials
- Final Exam Materials

### Share Your Favorite Resources

If you have sample resources you would like to share with other faculty teaching this course, please send them with an explanatory message to [oyer@achievingthedream.org](mailto:oyer@achievingthedream.org). Be sure to mention which learning outcome(s) they align with.

# 117. Weekly Outcomes

(the layout below was for an 8-week summer course)

## Week 1

Once again, welcome to English 102 online. I hope you had the chance last week to go through the Week 0 module, and play around in the course a little bit. If you didn't, it might be a good idea to spend some time in that area now, to help you get started.

This class is scheduled into Modules, corresponding to each week of the quarter. **Each week we'll have three due dates: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at midnight.** (This week, though, we won't have work due on Monday, since we're just getting started.) Just because those are the due dates, doesn't mean you have to wait until then to finish and submit the work. The reason for multi-day interval is so that you can use the full time between due dates to complete tasks. You're always encouraged to turn in work early to avoid any last-minute glitches.

In Week 1's module, we're laying the conceptual groundwork for the course. We're investigating exactly what research is, and particularly scholarly research. We all do research in our personal lives

already—we'll tap into those skills to build our academic prowess now.

## Learning Outcomes

At the end of this week, you should be able to:

1. Create and share a completed Google Doc, using Google Drive, with editing enabled
2. Use the discussion forum to make an original post and submit replies to other students
3. Identify research types
4. Demonstrate the difference between a “homework” question and a “research” question
5. Identify the thesis of an assigned reading for summary purposes
6. Demonstrate “reading to write effectively” skills

## For Further Practice

These sources are just suggestions for further exploration. Use them at your discretion.

- Writing Commons Open Text, “Research Primer”  
<http://writingcommons.org/open-text/research-methods-methodologies/research-primer>

- Steven D. Krause, “Academic Research Writing: What Is It?”  
<http://www.saylor.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/ENGL002-1.1.1-AcademicResearchWriting.pdf>

Finally, just for fun, a humorous overview of what an argument is (and is not!):

<http://youtu.be/kQFKtI6gn9Y>

## Week 2

Now that we’ve got the fundamental ideas of what research is, broadly speaking, now it’s time to apply those ideas to a project of our very own. As noted in the Research Essay Project Overview, you will be writing an extensive, persuasive, research-based essay of your own this quarter. This week, we’ll play with ideas for possible topics, and settle on one to pursue.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of this week, you should be able to:

1. Brainstorm potential topics appropriate for this course’s assignment.
2. Use initial research to answer preliminary questions (“homework questions”) you have about a topic.
3. Draft a working thesis statement on a topic of your choice.
4. Analyze a source pertaining to your chosen topic.



## FOR FURTHER PRACTICE

*These resources are not (usually) mandatory, but will often prove valuable in helping you complete other assignments within the unit. Use them at your discretion.*

- Cornell Library, “How to Find and Develop a Viable Research Topic”: <http://www.saylor.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/How-to-find-and-develop-a-viable-research-topic.pdf>
- Saylor Open Course, “Mapping a Concept: Sites to Get you Started”: <http://www.saylor.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/ENGL002-1-3-4-Mapping-a-Concept.pdf>
- Saylor Open Course, “Webbing”:



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

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=142#oembed-1>

## Week 3

This week introduces one big hurdle in getting the rest of the quarter’s work moving: deciding on a topic to pursue. Hopefully you’ve had some time to weigh your options, and you’ve found the perfect match that will keep you motivated and interested.

After you’ve found your topic, the rest of the week is entirely about

preparing your Source Evaluation Essay. Because of this, the module is a little more full than previous ones, containing weblinks and sample documents.

Three former students' essays are included in this module. These samples are offered NOT as examples of perfect writing—you'll probably spot small errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and citation as you look over them. They ARE, however, good illustrations of the options of conclusions that are available to you as you make your determinations about your own particular source.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of this week, you should be able to:

1. Formulate initial thesis statement for your own persuasive essay
2. Punctuate material that appears inside quotation marks in a source correctly, when using it in your own writing
3. Identify potential bias within a source
4. Compare a source's thesis to your own working research project thesis

## FOR FURTHER PRACTICE

*These resources are not (usually) mandatory, but will often prove valuable in helping you complete other assignments within the unit. Use them at your discretion.*

- Reading for Thinking – Online Practice: [Detecting Bias](#)

- [FAIR: How to Detect Bias in News Media](#)
- Purdue's Online Writing Lab, "[Paraphrase: Write it in your own Words](#)"
- [Quotation Mark Practice Quiz](#)

## Week 4

The source evaluation is Priority 1 this week; the final draft will be due Monday night. Once that's done, we'll take what we did in extended form for that essay, and shrink it down to apply to many more sources.

The Annotated Bibliography will be our next big step towards completing the Research Essay Project, and it will ask you to find, evaluate, and cite a number of sources. You can incorporate the sources you've found so far and turned in for earlier assignments, so you won't be starting from scratch. It will be due in Week 6.

The other new element this week will be the "Discovery Draft" as a way to get the ball rolling on the research essay text. This is a very free-wheeling assignment. All I ask is that you dedicate **one solid hour** this week to work on your research project, in the form of this discovery draft. Make sure to build time into your schedule to do this.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of this week, you should be able to:

1. Provide an in-depth evaluation of a potential source for your

- research project
2. Recognize differences between APA & MLA citation styles
  3. Brainstorm content, sources, and organizational ideas for your research project

## FOR FURTHER PRACTICE

*These resources are not (usually) mandatory, but will often prove valuable in helping you complete other assignments within the unit. Use them at your discretion.*

- Writing Spaces, “Strategies for Reading Scholarly Sources”: [Reading Games Strategies for Reading Scholarly Sources.pdf](#)
- Saylor Open Course, “Research and Critical Reading”: <http://www.saylor.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Research-and-Critical-Reading.pdf>

## Week 5

Time always accelerates towards the end of the quarter, and pressure from all courses you’re taking is rising. Keep your balance as best you can, because some significant projects will be due in this time. Let me highlight the good news, though: the big projects you’ll be turning in are cumulative, building on what’s come before.

The first version of a rough draft is due this week, to reach at least 1000 words. This can come directly from work you’ve done in the Discovery Draft and other assignments, to get you rolling.

What this looks like doesn't matter; it's all about getting words on the page.

The rest of the week will be devoted to preparing the Annotated Bibliography. The "annotation" paragraphs that follow each source's citations are like mini versions of the Source Evaluation essay, with a little summary thrown in. You should be well-versed in these skills by now, and can quickly assess the relative value of each source on this list. Remember, they don't all have to be keepers. This list is to value the whole research process, and we expect you to find a lot of junk along with the good stuff.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of this week, you should be able to:

1. Analyze potential audiences for a project and select an appropriate one
2. Write a rough draft of your research essay

## FOR FURTHER PRACTICE

*These resources are not (usually) mandatory, but will often prove valuable in helping you complete other assignments within the unit. Use them at your discretion.*

- Earlham College Libraries: ["How to Write Annotations"](#)
- PBWorks: ["Writing Evaluative Annotations"](#)

## Week 6

The Annotated Bibliography is due at the beginning of the week. This is just a “snapshot” of your research at this point in time. You can continue to find new and different sources, and the ones you use in your final essay won’t necessarily have to come exclusively from this list.

Outlining is extremely important, especially with longer projects. It’s hard to remember what you wrote on page 2, by the time you get to page 8, after all! So the remainder of the week will be used to develop an outline, and begin applying our sources gathered into quotes and paraphrases to incorporate into drafts.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of this week, you should be able to:

1. Cite a variety of sources in polished MLA format
2. Annotate your citations with brief paragraphs defining the relative value of a source to your own research goals
3. Articulate a list of arguments supporting your side of a thesis, and anticipate opposition coming from opponents
4. Draft a detailed outline of a research project

## FOR FURTHER PRACTICE

*These resources are not (usually) mandatory, but will often prove valuable in helping you complete other assignments within the unit. Use them at your discretion.*

- eHow: [“How to Outline a Research Paper”](#)
- Paradigm Online Writing Lab: [“Form: Tradition and Innovation”](#)
- Writing Commons, [“Logical Plans”](#)

## Week 7

All right—we’ve gathered sources, we’ve got an outline, we’ve been trucking along with our drafting process. Now it’s time to expand and polish that draft a bit, and get it in front of other people’s eyes for the first time. The draft you submit this week will be used for Peer Review.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of this week, you should be able to:

1. Complete a draft of your essay that’s ready to share with peers for their input
2. Complete a Post Draft outline of your Research project, and use it to assess what structural changes should be made to your draft

3. Provide peer review evaluation for members of your peer group
4. Use peer review feedback on your own work to help guide revision

## FOR FURTHER PRACTICE

*These resources are not (usually) mandatory, but will often prove valuable in helping you complete other assignments within the unit. Use them at your discretion.*

- DocStoc.com: [“Writing Effective Introductions and Conclusions”](#)
- Grammar-Quizzes.com: [“Introductions: Writing four types”](#)

## Week 8

Almost there! The **final draft of the research essay** will be due by **Monday** at midnight, and the Cover Letter assignment will be due **Wednesday** at midnight. That cover letter is just describing your writing experience, so it won't ask you anything challenging...hopefully it will be the easiest thing you do this week. It's our version of a final exam.

I know I've pushed you hard all quarter long, but you've successfully met every challenge I've thrown at you, and then some. You'll be asked to write a lot of essays in future classes, and won't always be given such detailed prewriting tasks to make sure they get done.



From here on out, it's up to you to determine what the best steps are for you to take, in order to get a complete, comprehensive, well-written final essay turned in. I hope you've found a few of the methods in this class particularly useful, that you can continue to draw on throughout your college career (and beyond!).

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of this week, you should be able to:

1. Detect and evaluate non-argumentative persuasive techniques – rhetorical devices such as irony, satire, anecdotal evidence, flattery and analogies, and logical fallacies – used to sway readers' emotions.
2. Use library research skills in electronic, print, and other sources to gather support for arguments.
3. Recognize that different academic disciplines may rely on different kinds of arguments and assess what types of argument and evidence are appropriate for different fields of knowledge.
4. Write arguments appropriate to audience, occasion and discipline.

## II.8. Source Evaluation Essay Materials

Links will not work in Edit mode. To access materials, either

- click “Preview Changes” option on right side of page, and links will work on that page
- OR, highlight the link you want to access and click on the “chain” icon in the toolbar. Copy and paste the link in a new browser window.

### Prompt

Source Evaluation Essay

100 points    500-750 words (2-3 pages)

This stand-alone essay is designed to help you prepare for the Research Project, and is one of the steps towards completing that at the end of the quarter.

For this Source Evaluation Essay, you will select **one of the sources** you have found through your preliminary research **about your Research Essay topic**. Which source you choose is up to you; however, it should be substantial enough that you'll be able to talk

about it at length, and intricate enough that it will keep you (and me) interested.

The introduction of this paper will be introducing the source: give the author, the title, and the context (where you found it, where it was originally published, who sponsored it, etc.) You will then go on to evaluate it on 2 levels:

1. **Trustworthiness.** Using the information in [“Evaluating Internet Research Sources”](#) from the VirtualSalt website as a guide, as well as the methods we’ve discussed in our weekly conversations, evaluate the source’s authenticity and reliability. Look at all information that you can find about the source to establish the author’s (or sponsor’s) credibility.
  - You do not have to choose a web-based source, by any means. The details of assessing credibility of online sources in this Virtual Salt article can be easily adapted to fit non-online sources.
2. **Usefulness.** Using a combination of summary and analysis, examine the source on a critical level. Determine what the source’s purpose (thesis) is, and how it arrives at that goal. Examine its value to you and the project you’re working on. How will it help you prove your own points? How might it come in handy to show a claim (or counter-claim)?

Include a conclusion which shows your final assessments on both counts. This project will be created inductively: first you’ll give your evidence and observations about the source, and only in the conclusion will your final evaluation be presented as your thesis.

**Utilize APA in-text citations and include an APA References page** (which isn’t included in the final word/page count). This will be formatted as an APA essay, so it will need a title page as well.

You will need to do additional research to help you prove your claims about the source’s trustworthiness, so be sure to fully cite

all sources used in helping you reach your conclusions. **At least 2 sources will need to be present on your References page:** the source you're evaluating plus at least one other source you've consulted to prove its reliability (or lack thereof).

## Outline Presentation

[http://prezi.com/7-rnpj1pclc/?utm\\_campaign=share&utm\\_medium=copy&rc=ex0share](http://prezi.com/7-rnpj1pclc/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy&rc=ex0share)  
are

[A PDF of this presentation is available to download here.](#)

## Student Samples

[Sample Essay #1 \(Google Doc link\)](#)

[Sample Essay #2 \(Google Doc link\)](#)

[Sample Essay #3 \(Google Doc link\)](#)

# 119. Rubrics

## General Task Rubric

This rubric is one that I generally use for all low-stakes course assignments. Feel free to adapt as desired.

Criteria	Ratings				Pts
Description of criterion	Submission meets or exceeds assignment tasks.	Submission answers all or most questions/tasks fully, but could use further elaboration for clarity.	Submission meets basic assignment tasks, though attempts a response to the prompt. May not be well edited. May only answer a portion of the questions or be significantly short of length requirements.	Submission doesn't meet basic assignment tasks, though attempts a response to the prompt. May not be well edited. May only answer a portion of the questions or be significantly short of length requirements.	Submission meets no assignment tasks. May be plagiarized.
	Generally well edited. Answers all questions fully and completely.	May not be well edited.			5 pts
	5 pts	3.75 pts	2.5 pts	0 pts	
Total Points: 5					

## Discussion Forum Rubric

## Discussion Rubric

# Discussion Rubric

Criteria	Ratings					Pts
Posting Requirements view longer description	Full Marks	High Partial Credit	Partial Credit	Low Partial Credit	No Marks	5 pts
	5 pts	4 pts	3 pts	2 pts	0 pts	
Content Requirements view longer description	Full Marks	High Partial Credit	Partial Credit	Low Partial Credit	No Marks	5 pts
	5 pts	4 pts	3 pts	2 pts	0 pts	
Total Points: 10						

Posting Requirements longer description: Original post meets word length requirements. Number of required replies met, each meeting word length requirements.

Content Requirements longer description: Posting addresses all questions asked fully, and includes material from supplemental reading if required. Response(s) to classmates expand, question, or build upon the original ideas contained in the post.

## Source Evaluation Essay Rubric

# Source Evaluation Essay Rubric

# Source Evaluation Essay Rubric

Criteria	Ratings				
Thesis & Evidence	Original, clear, focused, debatable well-supported thesis. Specific examples included for support. Claims for credibility and usefulness are fully developed.	Original, debatable, sufficiently supported thesis. Examples included for support. Claims for credibility and usefulness are developed.	Identifiable main idea that is generally supported. Some examples included, though potentially vague or abstract. Claims for credibility and usefulness are established but need further development.	Identifiable main idea that is not well supported or does not match most of essay content. Some examples provided, but of a vague, abstract nature. Missing claims for either credibility or usefulness.	Minimal main idea that is not well supported or does not match most of essay content. Some examples provided, but of a vague, abstract nature. Missing claims for either credibility or usefulness.
	16 pts	12 pts	8 pts	4 pts	0 pts
Organization	logical, coherent, unified organization with paragraphs used effectively and clear transitions.	coherent organization that might need some rearrangement or further paragraph division; effective transitions	generally organized essay flow but not all paragraphs centered around topic idea; some evidence of transitions	essay structure impedes effective communication of ideas; little evidence of transitions	little evidence of organization; development of ideas is unclear. No transitions used.
	16 pts	12 pts	8 pts	4 pts	0 pts

Criteria	Ratings				
Research Skills	Balanced, authoritative sources; effectively integrated outside sources. High-quality research is used to provide more insight into primary source being evaluated.	Effective, authoritative sources, sufficiently integrated into rest of essay. Research is used to provide more insight into primary source being evaluated.	Some sources appropriately used for assignment; source content not well integrated into essay text. Minimal research is used to provide context to primary source being evaluated.	Insufficient sources used for assignment and/or sources are of poor quality for academic purposes. Not well integrated into surrounding text. Does not provide any additional research to provide context for source being evaluated.	no sou or sou inappr unethi (This v in a 0 paper. 0 pts
	16 pts	12 pts	8 pts	4 pts	
Style, Editing, & Proofreading	Strategically varied sentence structure. Vocabulary is tailored to writing context. No appreciable errors in spelling, punctuation or grammar.	Varied sentence structure. Vocabulary is appropriate to writing context. Minor mechanical errors that do not interfere with reader's understanding.	Some sentence variety. Basic vocabulary. Generally well-edited, with one or two consistent patterns of error.	Little variety in sentence structure. Basic or inappropriate vocabulary. Grammatical errors may interfere with readers' understanding.	Little sente varie Frequ inapp voca Little of proo error mean
	16 pts	12 pts	8 pts	4 pts	0 pts
Audience Appropriateness	Arguments are tailored to meet the needs of the target audience. Counterarguments are anticipated and adequately responded to. Effective level of formality.	Arguments are well-founded, but may not fully consider the interests of the target audience. Counterarguments are anticipated. Appropriate level of formality.	Arguments don't consider the needs of the target audience. Counterarguments are not fully anticipated. Appropriate formality for writing context, though not always targeted to specific audience.	Arguments are not fully developed or fail to meet the needs of the target audience. Lack of appropriate formality.	T a n c a n a c p h ir fo
	16 pts	12 pts	8 pts	4 pts	0



Criteria	Ratings				
Citations & Formatting	In-text citations and References page follow APA specifications. Pages are formatted using APA standards.	In-text citations and References page follow APA specifications, with some small but consistent errors. Pages are formatted using APA standards.	In-text citations and References page generally follow APA specifications, with some consistent errors. Pages are formatted using APA standards, possibly with some error.	Is missing either in-text citation or References page, or citations do not follow APA guidelines. Page formatting does not follow APA guidelines.	No documentation of sources included. Will receive 0 on paper.
	10 pts	7 pts	5 pts	2 pts	0 pts
Length	Essay meets or exceeds 500 minimum words.	Essay close to meeting 500 word requirement.		Essay significantly s	500 word requirement
	10 pts	5 pts		0 pts	

Outline Rubric

Outline Rubric

# Outline Rubric

Criteria	Ratings		Pts
The outline has a strong controlling idea/thesis statement that guides the development of the entire piece of writing	Full Marks	No Marks	5 pts
	5 pts	0 pts	
The outline has three or more main points that connect to the controlling idea.	Full Marks	No Marks	5 pts
	5 pts	0 pts	
The outline uses college-level research sources to support the claims made in the outline.	Full Marks	No Marks	5 pts
	5 pts	0 pts	
The outline has a considered order (chronological order, spatial order, or order of importance) that aids to the development of the argument.	Full Marks	No Marks	5 pts
	5 pts	0 pts	
In the body of the outline, the research used is documented using correct APA or MLA parenthetical citation.	Full Marks	No Marks	10 pts
	10 pts	0 pts	
On a separate page at the end of the outline, the research used is cited in an accurately formatted Works Cited/Reference Page	Full Marks	No Marks	10 pts
	10 pts	0 pts	
Total Points: 40			

Annotated Bibliography Rubric

# Annotated Bibliography Rubric

# Annotated Bibliography Rubric

Criteria	Ratings				Pts	
Citations	Citations exactly follow MLA guidelines for bibliographic entries. They will need few to no changes in order to be ready for use in the final research essay.	Citations closely follow MLA guidelines. They will need some changes before they are ready for the final research essay.	Citations follow MLA guidelines, but are missing key elements and/or have elements out of order. They will need editing before they are ready for the final research essay.	Citations do not follow MLA guidelines at all, though they do have some sense of formatting. They will need to be heavily edited before they are ready for the final research essay.	Citations are incomplete or entirely missing.  0 pts	40 pts
	40 pts	33 pts	26 pts	19 pts		
Annotation Contents	Paragraphs following citations are richly detailed, giving a clear summary of the source along with brief but thorough explanations regarding the source's validity and usefulness to your research goals. Expertly edited and proofread content.	Paragraphs following citations are detailed, giving a summary of the source along with some explanations regarding the source's validity and usefulness to your research goals. Edited and proofread content, perhaps with some minor errors.	Paragraphs following citations are detailed but may be missing one of the following: summary/validity/usefulness. Edited content, though containing multiple errors.	Paragraphs following citations are extremely brief and don't convey how the sources fit in with your research project. No sense of editing or proofreading before submission; errors may lead to misunderstanding or confusion.	Paragraphs are extremely short or nonexistent.  0 pts	40 pts
	40 pts	33 pts	26 pts	19 pts		

Criteria	Ratings					Pts
Required Number & Kinds of Sources	Bibliography contains at least 12 sources; of these at least 5 are from the library, at least 2 are book-length; at least 1 is an online media source; at least 2 contain opinions that disagree with your own.	Bibliography contains at least 12 sources; of these at least 5 are from the library, at least 2 are book-length; at least 1 is an online media source. If there are two that contain opinions contradictory to your own, they are not clearly marked in the bibliography and so not immediately obvious to your reader.	Bibliography contains at least 12 sources; may be missing 1 or 2 of the required kinds of sources from the assignment.	Bibliography contains at least 8 sources and/or may be missing 2-3 specific kinds of sources from the assignment.	Bibliography contains fewer than 8 sources.	10 pts
	0 pts		5 pts	2 pts		
	10 pts	7 pts				
Formatting	Document is formatted exactly by MLA guidelines. Citations are alphabetized and use hanging indent.	Document is formatted by MLA guidelines, perhaps with one or two minor errors. Citations are alphabetized and use hanging indent.	Document is formatted by MLA guidelines, though with errors. Citations may not be alphabetized, and/or do use hanging indent.	Document is not formatted using MLA guidelines. Citations are not alphabetized, and do use hanging indent.	No specific page formatting is used at all.	10 pts
	0 pts					
	10 pts	7 pts	5 pts	2 pts		
Total Points: 100						

2000 Word Draft & Peer Review

2000 Word Draft & Peer Review

2000 Word Draft & Peer Review					
Criteria	Ratings				Pts
Draft submitted is 2000+ words long	Full Marks		No Marks		20 pts
	20 pts	0 pts			
Peer Review is thorough and complete for all group members who posted on time	Full Marks	Rating Description	Rating Description	No Marks	30 pts
	30 pts	20 pts	10 pts	0 pts	
Total Points: 50					

Final Draft Research Essay Rubric

Final Research Essay Rubric

# Final Research Essay Rubric

Criteria	Ratings				
Thesis & Evidence	Original, clear, focused, debatable well-supported thesis. Specific examples included for support. Uses targeted appeals to logic, emotion, and/or ethics as appropriate to be persuasive.	Original, debatable, sufficiently supported thesis. Examples included for support. Uses appeals to logic, emotion, and/or ethics as appropriate to be persuasive.	Identifiable main idea that is generally supported. Some examples included, though potentially vague or abstract. Uses some appeals to logic, emotion, and/or ethics to be persuasive, though perhaps not most appropriate for circumstances.	Identifiable main idea that is not well supported or does not match most of essay content. Some examples provided, but of a vague, abstract nature. Uses few to no appeals to logic, emotion, and/or ethics as appropriate to be persuasive.	Minimal support to evidence. Thesis is not clear or focused. Examples are not relevant or not persuasive.
	40 pts	30 pts	20 pts	10 pts	0 pts
Organization	logical, coherent, unified organization with paragraphs used effectively and clear transitions.	coherent organization that might need some rearrangement or further paragraph division; effective transitions	generally organized essay flow but not all paragraphs centered around topic idea; some evidence of transitions	essay structure impedes effective communication of ideas; little evidence of transitions	little evidence of organization or development. No transitions used.
	35 pts	27 pts	17 pts	9 pts	0 pts

Criteria	Ratings				
Research Skills	Balanced, authoritative sources; effectively integrated outside sources. It's evident that multiple sources were consulted in order to provide the highest-quality information to support thesis.	Effective, authoritative sources, sufficiently integrated into rest of essay. Evident that multiple sources were consulted in order to provide information to support thesis.	Some sources appropriately used for assignment; source content not well integrated into essay text. Not evident that multiple sources were consulted in addition to those which actually appear in the text.	Insufficient sources used for assignment and/or sources are of poor quality for academic purposes. Not well integrated into surrounding text. No evidence of research done beyond the quotes/paraphrases used in the body of the essay.	no sou or sou inappr unethi (This v in a 0 paper: 0 pts
	35 pts	27 pts	17 pts	9 pts	
Style, Editing & Proofreading	Strategically varied sentence structure. Vocabulary is tailored to writing context. No appreciable errors in spelling, punctuation or grammar.	Varied sentence structure. Vocabulary is appropriate to writing context. Minimal mechanical errors that do not interfere with reader's understanding.	Some sentence variety. Basic vocabulary. Generally well-edited, with one or two consistent patterns of error.	Little variety in sentence structure. Basic or inappropriate vocabulary. Grammatical errors may interfere with readers' understanding.	Little sent varie Frequ inap voca Little of proof error mean
	35 pts	27 pts	18 pts	9 pts	0 pts



Criteria	Ratings				
Audience Appropriateness	Arguments are tailored to meet the needs of the target audience. Counterarguments are anticipated and adequately responded to. Effective level of formality.	Arguments are well-founded, but may not fully consider the interests of the target audience. Counterarguments are anticipated. Appropriate level of formality.	Arguments don't consider the needs of the target audience. Counterarguments are not fully anticipated. Appropriate formality for writing context, though not always targeted to specific audience.	Arguments are not fully developed or fail to meet the needs of the target audience. Lack of appropriate formality.	Arguments are not fully developed or fail to meet the needs of the target audience. Lack of appropriate formality.
	35 pts	27 pts	17 pts	9 pts	0 pts
Citations & Formatting	In-text citations and Works Cited page follow MLA specifications consistently. Pages are formatted precisely using MLA standards.	In-text citations and Works Cited page follow MLA specifications, with some small but consistent errors. Pages are formatted using MLA standards.	In-text citations and Works Cited page generally follow MLA specifications, with some consistent errors. Pages are formatted using MLA standards, possibly with some error.	Is missing either in-text citation or Works Cited page, or citations do not follow MLA guidelines consistently. Page formatting does not follow MLA guidelines.	No documentation of sources included. Will result in 0 on paper.
	25 pts	19 pts	12 pts	6 pts	0 pts
Length	Essay meets or exceeds 2500 minimum words.	Essay close to meeting 2500 word requirement.	Essay significantly short of 2500 word requirement.	Essay significantly short of 2500 word requirement.	Essay significantly short of 2500 word requirement.
	20 pts	10 pts	0 pts	0 pts	0 pts

Criteria	Ratings			
Source Requirements	Uses 7 or more high-quality sources to build essay content. Includes at least one chart/table/graph and at least one picture/drawing/cartoon.	Uses 7 sources, but does not include either a chart/table/graph or picture/drawing/cartoon.	Uses 5-6 sources to build essay content. Is missing one or more visual component.	Uses fewer than 5 sources to build essay content. Is missing both visual and quantitative component.
	25 pts	13 pts	7 pts	0 pts
Total Score				

# 120. Annotated Bibliography Materials

Links will not work in Edit mode. To access materials, either

- click “Preview Changes” option on right side of page, and links will work on that page
- OR, highlight the link you want to access and click on the “chain” icon in the toolbar. Copy and paste the link in a new browser window.

## Student Samples (MLA format)

[Sample A.B. #1](#) (Google Doc link)

[Sample A.B. #2](#) (Google Doc link)

# 121. Post-Draft Outline Prezi

Links will not work in Edit mode. To access materials, either

- click “Preview Changes” option on right side of page, and links will work on that page
- OR, highlight the link you want to access and click on the “chain” icon in the toolbar. Copy and paste the link in a new browser window.

<http://prezi.com/ilic1tcomvne/post-draft-outline/?kw=view-ilic1tcomvne&rc=ref-304690>

# 122. Course-long Research Project Materials

Instructor note: I have students work on one extended research project through the entire course, building in various related essays (like the Source Evaluation Essay), projects (like the Annotated Bibliography), and staged drafts along the way. Below are all the assessment instructions for each stage of the actual research essay. Depending on the length of the term, I sometimes split up the initial drafts into three stages: 750 words/ 1500 words/ 2250 words.

## Discovery Draft

A discovery draft is a great opportunity to figure out what you know, and what you still need to find out, in order to build a real research essay. This is a very informal assignment, and what you submit will not be judged in terms of length, grammar, presentation, or even content. I simply want to see that you have spent **one solid hour** working on your research project. This quiz will record your time.

Everyone's submissions will look very different, and that's fine. Remember, this is primarily to serve your own needs, so decide for yourself what your top priority is right now.

## 1000-word Draft

Word count is the name of the game, here. ***If the document you submit reaches 1000 or more words, then you'll get full credit for the assignment.*** If it doesn't, you won't get any credit.

This assignment is intended to build directly off of the other work you've already done in preparing to write the Research Essay. You're welcome to incorporate any text you've already written during the Discovery Draft, any of the discussion forums we've done so far, or any other assignment for this class.

I will encourage you to be keeping some kind of notes to yourself as you work, in terms of citation. You don't have to have complete in-text citation yet, but you'll thank yourself later if you include which source you're using when you use it. Putting notes like (Source 1) or (McMillan source) is fine. Or you can go ahead and do the whole MLA in-text citation, if you prefer.

Since this is a working draft, feel free to stop at certain points and make notes to yourself. Skipping around in the order of things is perfectly fine, too. Just put something like "insert more research about population changes here" and keep rolling. It helps if these notes are a different color, font, or size than the rest of the draft, just so you don't get confused.

I won't be reading these for content, only to check that they reach the assigned word count. If you have questions about anything you've written, please note them at the top of the draft or message me about them separately.

## 2000-word Draft for Peer Review (as a Discussion Forum)

Instead of submitting your draft to a dropbox, we'll be sharing it in

a discussion forum. You'll be getting comments from your group members on your draft this time.

This discussion assignment has 2 graded components, and 2 due dates.

The 2000 word draft will be due Monday.

Your replies to ALL other members of your group will be due the following Friday.

Word count is the name of the game, here. **If the document you submit reaches 2000 or more words, then you'll get full credit for that component of the assignment.** If it doesn't, you won't.

Drafts are supposed to be a mess, so don't worry too much if yours isn't perfect yet. Yes, you'll be sharing them with several other people next week, but theirs will be messy, too. You'll have a very sympathetic audience, believe me. Don't worry about the formalities of editing or formatting yet. In-text citation isn't necessary, either, but I would like to see SOME indication of sources as they are used in the draft. Putting notes like (Source 1) or (McMillan source) is fine. Or you can go ahead and do the whole MLA in-text citation, if you prefer.

Since this is a working draft, feel free to stop at certain points and make notes to yourself, or ask questions of the people who will be reading it. Skipping around in the order of things is perfectly fine, too. Just put something like "insert more research about population changes here" and keep rolling. It helps if these notes are a different color, font, or size than the rest of the draft, just so we don't get confused.

Unlike earlier drafts, we will be sharing this version with others for Peer Review in the next module. While this is still considered a rough draft, it should have a little more polish to it, since you've had time to comb through the versions you've already done for a bit of refinement.

**No late work will be accepted for the rough draft posting.** If you don't have a draft that reaches the minimum word count before the deadline, I encourage you to go ahead and submit what you have.

You won't get credit for this assignment, but you will be eligible to get feedback from others next week, and earn points for reviewing theirs.

You've been assigned to a group based on the Peer Review Sign-up Sheet you all completed recently. Click the link to remember who's in your group. The peer review responses for ALL group members will need to be submitted before midnight, FRIDAY.

You are **not required** to comment directly on your group members' drafts, though you are welcome to. ***Please use the "Comment" feature rather than changing their text in the essay body, so that it's clear where your comments appear.*** To comment using Google Docs, highlight the passage you'd like to comment on, and right-click your mouse. You will see the option for "comment" to appear. (This is what I do when I grade your essays.)

You **ARE required** to complete the following questionnaire for all of your group members who submitted a draft on time. Reply to their post with the answers to the following questions.

Reviews can be completed, even if you didn't submit your own draft. Reviews are half of the point value for this assignment.

## PEER REVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

1. After reading your partner's draft, do you feel that the introduction was effective? What specifically made it effective? What could be changed to make it more effective?
2. Overall, what is your general impression of this draft? Did you find this essay interesting and engaging? Please explain. Also, how could the writer improve the draft, generally speaking? How could it be expanded to meet the final page requirement? Please offer at least two specific suggestions.
3. Do you consider this draft to be persuasive (meaning that it



makes a clear, logical argument)? Please explain. If you don't feel this draft is persuasive, what specific suggestions do you have for the writer to make it more so?

4. Looking carefully, find at least two confusing sections of the draft. This may be at the word, sentence, or paragraph level. For example, perhaps you found an incorrect word or odd punctuation, or maybe a few sentences are awkward or too long. Describe why you found each of these particular sections confusing and offer concrete suggestions to help clarify the writing.
5. What is your favorite aspect of this draft and why? What was the most interesting thing you learned by reading this draft?
6. What aspect of this draft do you feel needs the most attention and development before it is finished? Why do you feel this way?
7. Comment on the use of sources in this draft. Does the draft have clear in-text citations in every place it seems to need them? If not, point out a couple of spots that will need them before the final draft. Did you feel convinced by the authority of the sources used? Point to one or two areas of the paper where more explanation about the sources, or context of the material quoted/paraphrased, could be used.
8. Any other comments? Please include them as well.

## Final Draft

By now, you should have a pretty good idea of what the research essay needs. But here's a recap of the most important requirements:

- Present a persuasive thesis, which takes a stand on a particular issue and attempts to bring readers into agreement with that thesis.
- Be in the range of 2500-3000 words. A little more is fine, but

must meet that minimum threshold to be considered successful.

- Utilize at least 7 outside sources, of any type. Those sources should be high-quality and present the best information or opinions available on the matter at hand. At least one of those sources should adopt a viewpoint which is different from your thesis.
- Include at least 2 visual elements: 1 chart/table/graph & 1 photo/image/drawing. Those visual elements should include captions as well as explanations in the essay of the text, and be properly cited.
- Follow a clear structure designed to have the most positive impact on your thesis.
- Follow MLA page formatting and citation guidelines (in-text and Works Cited).

You have a lot of leeway for tailoring these essays to your individual subject matter's needs. The primary goal is to be persuasive, and whatever supports that goal is up to you.

# 123. Rhetorical Analysis Materials

## RA #1: Speech

What makes an argument?

We will analyze a speech to determine whether the speech is, in fact, an argument. Alternately, it could be a rant or a collection of claims that do not build an enthymeme. The artifact will be chosen in class.

In this 1.5 page group rhetorical analysis, I would like for you to construct an argument that examines two major questions about the speech:

- 1.) Is this an argument? Why or why not? Use examples from the “text” (video) to support your claim. Perhaps slow down to explain how you define argument.
- 2.) What assumptions is the speaker making in this speech? What effect does this have on readers?

## RA #2: Commercial/PSA

RA #2 will be the second installment of four rhetorical analyses conducted this semester in your sustained groups.

In this analysis, I would like for your group to find a commercial or public service announcement (any REAL commercial or PSA) and analyze it for the rhetorical appeals (ethos, logos, pathos). You’ll want to make a clear connection to **audience** (and possibly context and purpose), and you don’t want to spread yourself too thin by analyzing ALL appeals but only those that are most significant in

the artifact you choose to examine.

This analysis will be 1.5 pages long, double spaced, and your argument should clearly state the “why.” What does your analysis tell us about the commercial/PSA? Why does the commercial/PSA rely on a certain appeal heavily? What impact does this have on readers?

## RA #3: Speech

RA #3 is the third rhetorical analyses this semester. In this assignment, you are looking for a speech (entertainment, political, movie, historical, etc) and analyzing it for structure.

Two major types of structure that we could look for are Toulmin’s model (claim, grounds, warrant, backing, qualifier, rebuttal) and Rogerian model (understanding, bridging, seeing the value of claims in an opposing view).

Try to find a speech that uses one model **or** the other. Not every speech may be a perfect example for analysis. Once you find a speech that works, chart out how that structure is used and then assess how well it is used. Does the author of that speech use all parts of the Toulmin model or all aspects of Toulmin argumentation? What effect does this have on how effective it is? This analysis will be 1.5 pages long, double spaced, and your analysis should try to state the “why.”

## RA #4: Web site

### **Rhetorical Analysis #4: Web site**

**Length:** 1.5 to 2 pages, double spaced

**Sources:** None required. Only cite in MLA style the Web site you choose to analyze.

Again? Another rhetorical analysis?

Don't fret. You've entered the home stretch. This is our last of the Rhetorical Analysis assignments this semester (except for a Final Exam question), and you can take your time developing in-depth analyses since it is due several weeks after the other rhetorical analyses.

RA #4 takes us into a new realm of analysis, but not one that will be too daunting for you. Building on previous rhetorical analyses of Kanye West, commercials, and speeches for enthymematic reasoning, rhetorical appeals, and Toulmin or Rogerian arrangement, respectively, you will add visual and multimodal analysis to your skills. In this rhetorical analysis, you might choose to analyze the key assumptions in the enthymematic reasoning or intrinsic ethos or logical fallacies, for example, but you will view images, colors, and potentially sound or video in addition to text.

In class, we will view [Chipotle.com](http://Chipotle.com) and [Subway.com](http://Subway.com), both Web site arguments for fast food restaurants. These Web pages are unique, however, in how they develop ethos, make implications about what a fast food restaurant should be, and reach different target audiences.

Your rhetorical analysis will follow two steps:

1.) You should find ONE Web site that you feel makes an interesting argument. Perhaps it is a site like [Chipotle.com](http://Chipotle.com) where the argument doesn't seem to match the initial purpose. Or maybe it is like [Subway.com](http://Subway.com) in its over-the-top ad partnerships. Please choose an appropriate Web site for analysis.

2.) Analyze what's interesting about the argument constructed by the company's Web site. Is it something basic like how the company/person creates credibility? Is there a unique logical structure of the argument (NOTE: Web sites often avoid linear narrative!)? Does the Web site appeal to the audience's emotions? You could also expand your analysis to visuals and look at the design. Does the Web site's design (consider layout, use of white space, accessibility to information, use of graphics vs text, colors,

fonts, etc.) contribute to the argument? As always, develop a central thesis and use key evidence from the artifact (Web site).

Slow down and explain the “why” with your analysis. For example, don’t just identify ethos but point out what is interesting or worth observing about the site. For example, it is easy to note that Chipotle cares about its credibility as a “green” company, but what is unique about how they go about it? Do they achieve their intended effect?

This 1.5 – 2-page analysis should be double spaced and turned in on Blackboard.

## Sample Student Essays

[Group RA](#) (.doc file)

[Sample 1 RA](#) (.docx file)

[Sample 2 RA](#) (.docx file)

[Sample 3 RA](#) (.docx file)

[Sample 4 RA Toulmin](#) (.docx file)

# 124. Summary Essay Materials

## Summary Assignment #1

Read the article “Zombies vs. Animals? The Living Dead Wouldn’t Stand a Chance” or “The Zombie as Barometer of Capitalist Anxiety” and summarize in 75-100 words.

Remember that your summary should remain objective, not subjective. This means that your opinion should not be present; focus on the author’s main points.

## Summary Assignment #2

Please summarize in 100 words this Herman Daly speech on “sustaining our commonwealth.”

Remember to review the class notes on summary and avoid inserting your subjective opinion.

# 125. Considering Another Side Essay Materials

## Essay Prompt

### **Essay #1: Considering Another Side**

**Length:** 4-5 pages, double-spaced

**Sources:** 8-10 sources (Cited and Consulted combined)

#### **Overview**

A fully developed argument in academic writing includes many voices and ideas: those of the author, of the researchers consulted, and of those who disagree with the author. In writing such an argument, it is an intelligent rhetorical decision to fully understand the ideas even of those with whom you disagree. There is a tactical reason: understanding the arguments and evidence of the opposition allows you to refute them with assurance or find a compromise. But there is also a different kind of ethical reason: giving consideration to your opponent enriches your own ideas, helps you to fully understand an issue, and shows you to be a thoughtful rhetor. In fact, Rogerian argumentation does exactly this: You fully appreciate and even integrate another point of view. In this paper, you will take up the ideas and arguments of your opposition in order to develop facility in argument for both of these reasons.

#### **How to proceed**

At this point in your research process, you have researched a topic and narrowed down your focus to a single academic issue within the larger topic. In your final paper, you will articulate an argument about that specific issue. This paper is a step toward that final paper. You will take up the argument, evidence, and support of a position that you do not necessarily support; it may be the opposite of what



you argue, or it may be an argument you think has less value than the one you wish to make. (Consider other stases.)

Once you select your argument and then the oppositional argument you will pursue, your research should investigate the ideas of the opposition. You need to fully understand the ideas of this opposition, to “walk a mile in the shoes” of their ideas, as it were. Understand the values that underlie the argument as well as the research and evidence.

### **Writing the paper**

Not only will you consider the other side in this paper, but you will inhabit it and write it. You might consider this a kind of ventriloquism or just another kind of persona. You may choose to create an actual person to be the “author” of the paper, or you may just write it “as yourself.” In either case, it will be a fully developed argument. That means you will create exigence, have strong support, use an organization that has rhetorical effect, and come to a strong conclusion. You may choose to refute here, and in that case you would be refuting the ideas you actually agree with. But be sure that you have a great deal of positive support for this position — that is the way to fully engage and understand this perspective.

### **Audience analysis**

Your audience for this paper is the academic community of other inquirers; to be more specific, it should be academics in a particular field or other academic situation, others who are also trying to determine what an engaging argument might be. As you write, you should think about this audience, how to engage them, how to create exigence for your ideas. You should also remember to write with readers in mind rather than just writing for yourself; this is an idea we will explore with the draft workshop for this paper.

## Sample Topics

Here are some topics that students in past classes have used for this type of assignment. Some students later narrowed down a particular topic to use it as their research topic for the rest of the semester:

- Stereotypes about Africa perpetuated by US educational system
- School uniforms and bullying
- Student-faculty relationships
- Funding fine arts programs
- Evolving definition of feminism as seen in pop culture
- Stricter penalties for domestic violence and sex-based crimes
- The differences in the ecological mindset of Germans and Americans as represented by their cars
- Same-sex vs. mixed-gender education
- Genetic modification of food
- Multiculturalism in the American educational system
- Stereotypes of Asian students as geniuses
- Sexism in the workplace in Latin America (later narrowed down to relationship of sexism to underdevelopment)
- Opportunities for amateur sports in Europe and America
- School tracking
- Sunday hunting laws
- Offering Anime as a course at TCC
- McDonaldization
- Images of beauty in the media and African American women (later narrowed down to the issue of skin bleaching)
- SAT tests
- Stereotypes due to accents
- Defining and punishing cyberbullying
- Drug testing of low-wage workers or high school students
- Net neutrality
- Overhauling food stamp programs

- Lowering textbook prices and OERs
- Offensive sports team names (Redskins, Indians)
- Teaching evolution versus creation science or intelligent design
- The effects of advertising on childhood obesity
- Hiring practices based on appearance (such as Abercrombie and Fitch's policy)
- Racial self-segregation in high school lunchrooms
- Effects of pornography on sex standards
- Improving the efficiency of recycling programs
- Culture of "whiteness"
- Corporal punishment and cultural practices
- The benefits of computer games
- Legality of immigrants and college admissions
- Parental spying and mobile phones
- Texting and driving
- The challenges faced by first-generation college students
- Metal detectors and other security measures in high schools
- The deterioration of the coastal environment
- Improving parking at TCC

This list is not meant to provide you with a list of topics to choose from; rather, use this list to *think about* the kinds of topics that students write about that relate to larger issues. The most successful papers tend to come out of topics that are more original to the student writing the paper.

## Sample Audience Analyses

[Sample Audience Analyses](#) (.docx file)

# Sample Essay

[Massage Sample Essay](#) (.docx file)

## Interview Component

### **Making your own source**

One way to help join the academic conversation about your issue and insert your oar into the debate is to show how informed you are of the topic by interviewing or surveying others who you feel are credible sources. Creating a source is a great way to build your own ethos and become a qualified speaker on the issue. You will incorporate one source in Essays #1 and #2 that is based on an interview with an academic or professional in the field whose voice will help shape the context of the debate.

I would like for you to contact one or more qualified academics or professionals on your subject and briefly interview him or her to add to your essay research.

The questions you ask should be open-ended rather than closed to allow for more in-depth answers. However, you can ask closed questions if you feel it will add to the context.

Contact your source early so that you have time to set up the interview/survey and transcribe it. Limit yourself to 5-10 minutes of interview so that you do not have too much material.

# 126. Problem/Solution Essay Materials

## Essay Prompt

### **Essay #2: Final Research Paper (Problem/Solution)**

**Length:** 7-8 pages, double-spaced

**Sources:** 15-20 sources (between Cited and Consulted)

For the Considering the Other Side essay, you wrote from an alternate position as though you were walking a “mile in their shoes.” That exercise gave you the chance to feel the force of an argument that perhaps you did not and still do not agree with. Now you can take an opposing position, or another you have discovered or constructed on your topic, and make it the main position of your final paper. This essay will be one sustained argument in which you argue forcefully for your position, but also take other positions into account. To maintain a thoughtful, substantiated position on the issue, you must consider other positions that have been taken on that issue. Once you recognize alternate or competing views, you will absorb or concede or refute those arguments.

Consider this final paper to be your opportunity to demonstrate your ability to use the rhetorical skills you have learned this semester. How can you best establish your own ethos as the author of this essay? What kinds of pathetic appeals will be most persuasive for your audience? What is the most effective order for making your logical arguments? What kinds of exigence can you provide to convince your audience to recognize the seriousness of the issue? You will also want to utilize the language skills you have learned throughout the semester in order to present your arguments with coherence and clarity.

### **Research**

To complete this paper, continue your research so that your bibliography contains a minimum of 15-20 sources (4-5 scholarly), including books, articles, editorials, non-print media, government sources, and interviews as appropriate. Make sure that your materials are up-to-date and that you select the most persuasive arguments. As you have learned more, your views may have been modified, may have grown more complex, or may even have changed entirely. Your final paper must demonstrate the competence in using and citing sources properly and in ways that support your position and purposes.

At this point you will likely find that some sources from your earlier Works Cited pages are no longer useful for your current task. For example, articles that helped you to create an overview for your topic may not assist you in writing your own sharply focused argument. Having become much more familiar with the current debate, you may discover alternative key terms that will present new avenues for research.

### **Audience and Purpose**

Your hypothetical readers for this paper have never seen your *Considering Another Side* argument. You are starting fresh. Conceptualize your readers as a group that requires convincing, either because they are neutral or because they are opposed to your position (hostile). Arguing with people who disagree with you is the most challenging rhetorical situation, the one requiring the greatest skill from an arguer in selecting, arranging, and phrasing arguments. Though arguments addressed to those who are opposed rarely overturn their convictions, a well-argued case can nevertheless demonstrate to them that a reasonable and moral person can hold a different view. Arguments for a neutral audience have a good chance of influencing and even winning over readers.

Because your choice of arguments, your arrangement of those arguments, and even your wording depends so much on your audience, you will need to describe your intended audience (are they hostile or neutral?) and explain your assumptions about that audience in the audience analysis. Further, specify the publication

in which you imagine your argument might be published. You might think about the variety of publications that you used for your research. Your paper might be appropriate as a companion piece to one of the articles you read. Alternatively, it could also be aimed at a specific scholarly audience and therefore appear in a specialized journal.

### **Arrangement Advice**

This paper must be longer than the others you have written this semester in order to give you a chance to develop your own arguments in detail, to back them up with the appropriate support, and to respond to other positions. A full argument on a genuine issue where something is at stake deserves care and preparation.

The parts of a full argument will help you develop and organize your argument. You will need to contextualize the debate and let the readers know how you will discuss the issues. The most important decision you have to make is how to distribute the confirmation (arguments for) and refutation (arguments against). Should you refute the opposition first? This is the usual advice when an audience believes the opposing arguments. Or should your positive arguments come first? It is sometimes suggested that, even with hostile audiences, strong arguments boldly framed are more likely to persuade. Or perhaps characterizations of other positions should be mixed with refutation, concession, or bridging. The possibilities are extensive, so planning is necessary.

### **Problem/Solution**

Though not required, the assignment could include a problem/solution component to help strengthen your argument, make it more specific, and focus your attention to a detailed proposal. Think of your essay as trying to solve a problem with a specific solution. Are you arguing about childhood obesity? Arguing that the problem exists may not seem as exigent as offering a possible solution – a specific proposal such as changing the content of school lunches.

### **Presentation**

The last weeks of classes will consist of individual presentations on your essays. This formal presentation should be 10 minutes long,

contain visual aids, and attempt to convince classmates of your argument and action proposal. The presentation will count as 5% of the final grade.

## Sample Essays

[Co-Ed vs. Single Sex Education](#) (.doc file)

[Drugs Made in India and China](#) (.docx file)

[Reforming Islam is a Must](#) (.doc file)

[Closing the Achievement Gap](#) (.doc file)

[Antipsychotic Medications](#) (.doc file)

## Interview Component

### **Making your own source**

One way to help join the academic conversation about your issue and insert your oar into the debate is to show how informed you are of the topic by interviewing or surveying others who you feel are credible sources. Creating a source is a great way to build your own ethos and become a qualified speaker on the issue. You will incorporate one source in Essays #1 and #2 that is based on an interview with an academic or professional in the field whose voice will help shape the context of the debate.

I would like for you to contact one or more qualified academics or professionals on your subject and briefly interview him or her to add to your essay research.

The questions you ask should be open-ended rather than closed to allow for more in-depth answers. However, you can ask closed questions if you feel it will add to the context.



Contact your source early so that you have time to set up the interview/survey and transcribe it. Limit yourself to 5-10 minutes of interview so that you do not have too much material.

# 127. Final Exam Materials

## Final Exam Prompt

### Final Exam: Take Home

Please read through the following six prompts and answer *three*. Each answer should be a response paper length, or approximately one to one and a half pages; some answers may require more justification than others. You should not consult outside sources for an answer unless otherwise directed; however, any use of sources, notes, or the textbook should incorporate citations in proper MLA style. You are allowed to use your notes and the textbook to help guide your answers.

1. What is your definition of rhetoric for our 21<sup>st</sup> century digital world? Is your definition unique? Why? Is rhetoric more persuasion or argument? What is the most important part of rhetoric and why? (You might use different models like Toulmin, Rogerian, civic literacy, and so on to help answer this question.) How is it different in digital spaces like the Internet?
2. Read a CC essay on “Civic Engagement” handed out in class. Who is the target audience? Write a full, in-depth audience analysis for this essay retroactively. If the author were going to deliver his speech for a 21<sup>st</sup> century Tidewater Community College symposium, in what ways might he/she change the essay? Try to demonstrate you’ve read the essay with examples to back up your audience analysis.
3. Develop a *dissoi logoi* response to the “Civic Engagement” argument. Use the Toulmin model to structure your response. You may use one or two outside sources as evidence for your

dissoi logoi argument, but try to rely mostly on the essay. Use a They Say, I Say approach.

4. Conduct a rhetorical analysis of Mitt Romney's presidential concession speech on Nov. 6, 2012. Demonstrate your understanding of key rhetorical concepts in class but focus your attention on one or two concepts (i.e. diction) rather than spreading yourself too thin. Is this a "good speech"? (I've read the online comments and other analyses, so develop an *original* perspective.)
5. Conduct a visual rhetorical analysis of either slide 1 or slide 2 posted as a PowerPoint under Blackboard Assignments. What argument is slide 1 making? How do these four images speak to one another or give an overall impression about an issue? What argument is slide 2 making about UVA logos/branding? Remember to analyze for traditional rhetorical terminology (ethos, logos, pathos, stasis theory, audience, context, fallacies) in addition to a deeper analysis of intentionality and visual contrast, balance, color, and juxtaposition.
6. Read three newspaper editorials and identify three logical fallacies in them (NOTE: Do not generally find fallacies used in newspapers but specific examples/instances). Why are these fallacies? Are they harmful to the argument?



PART XI  
SUMMARY



# 128. How to Write a Summary

Summarizing consists of two important skills:

1. identifying the important material in the text, and
2. restating the text in your own words.

Since writing a summary consists of omitting minor information, it will always be shorter than the original text.

[Photograph of two hands writing next to each other, holding black pens and wearing white gloves](#)

## How to Write a Summary

- A summary begins with an *introductory sentence* that states the text's title, author and main thesis or subject.
- A summary contains the main *thesis* (or main point of the text), restated in your own words.
- A summary is *written in your own words*. It contains few or no quotes.
- A summary is *always shorter than the original text*, often about 1/3 as long as the original. It is the ultimate “fat-free” writing. An article or paper may be summarized in a few sentences or a couple of paragraphs. A book may be summarized in an article or a short paper. A very large book may be summarized in a smaller book.
- A summary should *contain all the major points* of the original text, but should *ignore most of the fine details*, examples,

illustrations or explanations.

- The backbone of any summary is formed by *critical information* (key names, dates, places, ideas, events, words and numbers). A summary must never rely on vague generalities.
- If you quote anything from the original text, even an unusual word or a catchy phrase, you need to put whatever you quote in quotation marks (“”).
- A summary must contain only the ideas of the original text. Do not insert any of your own *opinions, interpretations, deductions or comments* into a summary.
- A summary, like any other writing, has to have a specific audience and purpose, and you must carefully write it to serve that audience and fulfill that specific purpose.



# 129. Research and Critical Reading

## Introduction

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. It means not to sit back and let your sources control you, but to engage in active conversation with them and their authors. In order to be a good researcher and writer, one needs to be a critical and active reader.



This chapter is about the importance of critical and active reading. It is also about the connection between critical reading and active, strong writing. Much of the discussion you will find in this chapter is fundamental to research and

writing, no matter what writing genre, medium, or academic discipline you read and write in. Every other approach to research writing, every other research method and assignment offered elsewhere in this book is, in some way, based upon the principles discussed in this chapter.

Reading is at the heart of the research process. No matter what kinds of research sources and, methods you use, you are always

reading and interpreting text. Most of us are used to hearing the word “reading” in relation to secondary sources, such as books, journals, magazines, websites, and so on. But even if you are using other research methods and sources, such as interviewing someone or surveying a group of people, you are reading. You are reading their subjects’ ideas and views on the topic you are investigating. Even if you are studying photographs, cultural artifacts, and other non-verbal research sources, you are reading them, too by trying to connect them to their cultural and social contexts and to understand their meaning. Principles of critical reading which we are about to discuss in this chapter apply to those research situations as well.

I like to think about reading and writing as not two separate activities but as two tightly connected parts of the same whole. That whole is the process of learning and making of new meaning. It may seem that reading and writing are complete opposite of one another. According to the popular view, when we read, we “consume” texts, and when we write, we “produce” texts. But this view of reading and writing is true only if you see reading as a passive process of taking in information from the text and not as an active and energetic process of making new meaning and new knowledge. Similarly, good writing does not come from nowhere but is usually based upon, or at least influenced by ideas, theories, and stories that come from reading. So, if, as a college student, you have ever wondered why your writing teachers have asked you to read books and articles and write responses to them, it is because writers who do not read and do not actively engage with their reading, have little to say to others.

We will begin this chapter with the definition of the term “critical reading.” We will consider its main characteristics and briefly touch upon ways to become an active and critical reader. Next, we will discuss the importance of critical reading for research and how reading critically can help you become a better researcher and make the research process more enjoyable. Also in this chapter, a student-writer offers us an insight into his critical reading and

writing processes. This chapter also shows how critical reading can and should be used for critical and strong writing. And, as all other chapters, this one offers you activities and projects designed to help you implement the advice presented here into practice.

## What Kind of Reader Are You?

You read a lot, probably more than you think. You read school textbooks, lecture notes, your classmates' papers, and class websites. When school ends, you probably read some fiction, magazines. But you also read other texts. These may include CD liner notes, product

reviews, grocery lists, maps, driving directions, road signs, and the list can go on and on. And you don't read all these texts in the same way. You read them with different purposes and using different reading strategies and techniques. The first step towards becoming a critical and active reader is examining your reading process and your reading preferences. Therefore, you are invited to complete the following exploration activity.



## Writing Activity: Analyzing your Reading Habits

List all the reading you have done in the last week. Include both “school” and “out-of school” reading. Try to list as many texts as you can think of, no matter how short and unimportant they might seem. Now, answer the following questions.

- What was your purpose in reading each of those texts? Did you read for information, to pass a test, for enjoyment, to decide on a product you wanted to buy, and so on? Or, did you read to figure out some complex problem that keeps you awake at night?
- You have probably come up with a list of different purposes. How did each of those purposes influence your reading strategies? Did you take notes or try to memorize what you read? How long did it take you to read different texts? Did you begin at the beginning and read till you reached the end, or did you browse some texts? Consider the time of day you were reading. Consider even whether some texts tired you out or whether you thought they were “boring.” Why?
- What did you do with the results of your reading? Did you use them for some practical purpose, such as buying a new product or finding directions, or did you use them for a less practical

purpose, such as understanding some topic better  
or learning something about yourself and others?

When you finish, share your results with the rest of  
the class and with your instructor.

Having answered the questions above, you have probably noticed that your reading strategies differed depending on the reading task you were facing and on what you planned to do with the results of the reading. If, for example, you read lecture notes in order to pass a test, chances are you “read for information,” or “for the main” point, trying to remember as much material as possible and anticipating possible test questions. If, on the other hand, you read a good novel, you probably just focused on following the story. Finally, if you were reading something that you hoped would help you answer some personal question or solve some personal problem, it is likely that you kept comparing and contrasting the information that you read your own life and your own experiences.

You may have spent more time on some reading tasks than others. For example, when we are interested in one particular piece of information or fact from a text, we usually put that text aside once we have located the information we were looking for. In other cases, you may have been reading for hours on end taking careful notes and asking questions.

If you share the results of your investigation into your reading habits with your classmates, you may also notice that some of their reading habits and strategies were different from yours. Like writing strategies, approaches to reading may vary from person to person depending on our previous experiences with different topics and types of reading materials, expectations we have of different texts, and, of course, the purpose with which we are reading.

Life presents us with a variety of reading situations which demand

different reading strategies and techniques. Sometimes, it is important to be as efficient as possible and read purely for information or “the main point.” At other times, it is important to just “let go” and turn the pages following a good story, although this means not thinking about the story you are reading. At the heart of writing and research, however, lies the kind of reading known as critical reading. Critical examination of sources is what makes their use in research possible and what allows writers to create rhetorically effective and engaging texts.

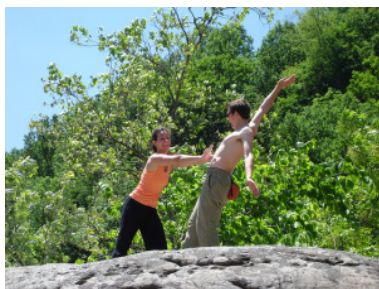
## Key Features of Critical Reading

Critical readers are able to interact with the texts they read through carefully listening, writing, conversation, and questioning. They do not sit back and wait for the meaning of a text to come to them, but work hard in order to create such meaning. Critical readers are not made overnight. Becoming a critical reader will take a lot of practice and patience. Depending on your current reading philosophy and experiences with reading, becoming a critical reader may require a significant change in your whole understanding of the reading process. The trade-off is worth it, however. By becoming a more critical and active reader, you will also become a better researcher and a better writer. Last but not least, you will enjoy reading and writing a whole lot more because you will become actively engaged in both.

One of my favorite passages describing the substance of critical and active reading comes from the introduction to their book *Ways*

of *Reading* whose authors David Bartholomae and Anthony Petrosky write:

Reading involves a fair measure of push and shove. You make your mark on the book and it makes its mark on you. Reading is not simply a matter of hanging back and waiting for a piece, or its author, to tell you what the writing has to say. In fact, one of the difficult things about reading is that the pages before you will begin to speak only when the authors are silent and you begin to speak in their place, sometimes for them—doing their work, continuing their projects—and sometimes for yourself, following your own agenda (1).



Notice that Bartholomae and Petrosky describe reading process in pro-active terms. Meaning of every text is “made,” not received. Readers need to “push and shove” in order to create their own, unique content of every text they read. It is up to you as a reader to make the pages in front of you “speak” by talking with and against the text, by questioning and expanding it.

Critical reading, then, is a two-way process. As reader, you are not a consumer of words, waiting patiently for ideas from the printed page or a web-site to fill your head and make you smarter. Instead, as a critical reader, you need to interact with what you read, asking questions of the author, testing every assertion, fact, or idea, and extending the text by adding your own understanding of the subject and your own personal experiences to your reading.

The following are key features of the critical approach to reading:

- No text, however well written and authoritative, contains its own, pre-determined meaning.
- Readers must work hard to create meaning from every text.

- Critical readers interact with the texts they read by questioning them, responding to them, and expanding them, usually in writing.
- To create meaning, critical readers use a variety of approaches, strategies, and techniques which include applying their personal experiences and existing knowledge to the reading process.
- Critical readers seek actively out other texts, related to the topic of their investigation.

The following section is an examination of these claims about critical reading in more detail.

## Texts Present Ideas, Not Absolute Truths

In order to understand the mechanisms and intellectual challenges of critical reading, we need to examine some of our deepest and long-lasting assumptions about reading. Perhaps the two most significant challenges facing anyone who wants to become a more active and analytical reader is understanding that printed texts do not contain inarguable truths and learning to question and talk back to those texts. Students in my writing classes often tell me that the biggest challenge they face in trying to become critical readers is getting away from the idea that they have to believe everything they read on a printed page. Years of schooling have taught many of us to believe that published texts present inarguable, almost absolute truths. The printed page has authority because, before publishing his or her work, every writer goes through a lengthy process of approval, review, revision, fact-checking, and so on. Consequently, this theory goes, what gets published must be true. And if it is true, it must be taken at face value, not questioned, challenged, or extended in any way.



Perhaps, the ultimate authority among the readings materials encountered by college belongs to the textbook. As students, we all have had to read and almost memorize textbook chapters in order to pass an exam. We read textbooks “for information,” summarizing their chapters, trying to find “the main points” and then reproducing these main points during exams. I have nothing against textbook as such, in fact, I am writing one right now. And it is certainly possible to read textbooks critically and actively. But, as I think about the challenges which many college students face trying to become active and critical readers, I come to the conclusion that the habit to read every text as if they were preparing for an exam on it, as if it was a source of unquestionable truth and knowledge prevents many from becoming active readers.

Treating texts as if they were sources of ultimate and unquestionable knowledge and truth represents the view of reading as consumption. According to this view, writers produce ideas and knowledge, and we, readers, consume them. Of course, sometimes we have to assume this stance and read for information or the “main point” of a text. But it is critical reading that allows us to create new ideas from what we read and to become independent and creative learners.

Critical reading is a collaboration between the reader and the writer. It offers readers the ability to be active participants in the construction of meaning of every text they read and to use that meaning for their own learning and self-fulfillment. Not even the best researched and written text is absolutely complete and finished. Granted, most fields of knowledge have texts which are called “definitive.” Such texts usually represent our best current knowledge on their subjects. However, even the definitive works get revised over time and they are always open to questioning and different interpretations.

## Reading is a Rhetorical Tool

To understand how the claim that every reader makes his or her meaning from texts works, it is necessary to examine what is known as the rhetorical theory of reading. The work that best describes and justifies the rhetorical reading theory is Douglas Brent's 1992 book *Reading as Rhetorical Invention: Knowledge, Persuasion, and the Teaching of Research-Based Writing*. I like to apply Brent's ideas to my discussions of critical reading because I think that they do a good job demystifying critical reading's main claims. Brent's theory of reading is a rhetorical device that puts significant substance behind the somewhat abstract ideas of active and critical reading, explaining how the mechanisms of active interaction between readers and texts actually work.



Briefly explained, Brent treats reading not only as a vehicle for transmitting information and knowledge, but also as a means of persuasion. In fact, according to Brent, knowledge equals persuasion because, in his words, "Knowledge is not simply what one has been told.

Knowledge is what one believes, what one accepts as being at least provisionally true." (xi). This short passage contains two assertions which are key to the understanding of mechanisms of critical reading. Firstly, notice that simply reading "for the main point" will not necessarily make you "believe" what you read. Surely, such reading can fill our heads with information, but will that information become our knowledge in a true sense, will we be persuaded by it, or will we simply memorize it to pass the test and forget it as soon as we pass it? Of course not! All of us can probably recall many instances in which we read a lot to pass a test only to forget, with relief, what we read as soon as we left the classroom where that test

was held. The purpose of reading and research, then, is not to get as much as information out of a text as possible but to change and update one "s system of beliefs on a given subject (Brent 55-57).

Brent further states: "The way we believe or disbelieve certain texts clearly varies from one individual to the next. If you present a text that is remotely controversial to a group of people, some will be convinced by it and some not, and those who are convinced will be convinced in different degrees. The task of a rhetoric of reading is to explain systematically how these differences arise— how people are persuaded differently by texts" (18).

Critical and active readers not only accept the possibility that the same texts will have different meanings for different people, but welcome this possibility as an inherent and indispensable feature of strong, engaged, and enjoyable reading process. To answer his own questions about what factors contribute to different readers " different interpretations of the same texts, Brent offers us the following principles that I have summarized from his book:

- Readers are guided by personal beliefs, assumptions, and pre-existing knowledge when interpreting texts. You can read more on the role of the reader "s pre-existing knowledge in the construction of meaning later on in this chapter.
- Readers react differently to the logical proofs presented by the writers of texts.
- Readers react differently to emotional and ethical proofs presented by writers. For example, an emotional story told by a writer may resonate with one person more than with another because the first person lived through a similar experience and the second one did not, and so on.

The idea behind the rhetorical theory of reading is that when we read, we not only take in ideas, information, and facts, but instead we "update our view of the world." You cannot force someone to update their worldview, and therefore, the purpose of writing is persuasion and the purpose of reading is being persuaded.

Persuasion is possible only when the reader is actively engaged with the text and understands that much more than simple retrieval of information is at stake when reading.

One of the primary factors that influence our decision to accept or not to accept an argument is what Douglas Brent calls our “repertoire of experience, much of [which] is gained through prior interaction with texts” (56). What this means is that when we read a new text, we do not begin with a clean slate, an empty mind. However unfamiliar the topic of this new reading may seem to us, we approach it with a large baggage of previous knowledge, experiences, points of view, and so on. When an argument “comes in” into our minds from a text, this text, by itself, cannot change our view on the subject. Our prior opinions and knowledge about the topic of the text we are reading will necessarily “filter out” what is incompatible with those views (Brent 56-57). This, of course, does not mean that, as readers, we should persist in keeping our old ideas about everything and actively resist learning new things. Rather, it suggests that the reading process is an interaction between the ideas in the text in front of us and our own ideas and pre-conceptions about the subject of our reading. We do not always consciously measure what we read according to our existing systems of knowledge and beliefs, but we measure it nevertheless. Reading, according to Brent, is judgment, and, like in life where we do not always consciously examine and analyze the reasons for which we make various decisions, evaluating a text often happens automatically or subconsciously (59).

Applied to research writing, Brent “s theory or reading means the following:

- The purpose of research is not simply to retrieve data, but to participate in a conversation about it. Simple summaries of sources is not research, and writers should be aiming for active interpretation of sources instead
- There is no such thing as an unbiased source. Writers make claims for personal reasons that critical readers need to learn

to understand and evaluate.

- Feelings can be a source of shareable good reason for belief. Readers and writers need to use, judiciously, ethical and pathetic proofs in interpreting texts and in creating their own.
- Research is recursive. Critical readers and researchers never stop asking questions about their topic and never consider their research finished.

## Active Readers Look for Connections Between Texts

Earlier on, I mentioned that one of the traits of active readers is their willingness to seek out other texts and people who may be able to help them in their research and learning. I find that for many beginning researchers and writers, the inability to seek out such connections often turns into a roadblock on their research route. Here is what I am talking about.

Recently, I asked my writing students to investigate some problem on campus and to propose a solution to it. I asked them to use both



primary (interviews, surveys, etc.) and secondary (library, Internet, etc.) research. Conducting secondary research allows a writer to connect a local problem he or she is investigating and a local solution he or she is proposing

with a national and even global context, and to see whether the local situation is typical or a-typical.

One group of students decided to investigate the issue of racial and ethnic diversity on our campus. The lack of diversity is a “hot”

issue on our campus, and recently an institutional task force was created to investigate possible ways of making our university more diverse.

The students had no trouble designing research questions and finding people to interview and survey. Their subjects included students and faculty as well as the university vice-president who was charged with overseeing the work of the diversity task force. Overall, these authors have little trouble conducting and interpreting primary research that led them to conclude that, indeed, our campus is not diverse enough and that most students would like to see the situation change.

The next step these writers took was to look at the websites of some other schools similar in size and nature to ours, to see how our university compared on the issue of campus diversity with others. They were able to find some statistics on the numbers of minorities at other colleges and universities that allowed them to create a certain backdrop for their primary research that they had conducted earlier.

But good writing goes beyond the local situation. Good writing tries to connect the local and the national and the global. It tries to look beyond the surface of the problem, beyond simply comparing numbers and other statistics. It seeks to understand the roots of a problem and propose a solution based on a local and well as a global situation and research. The primary and secondary research conducted by these students was not allowing them to make that step from analyzing local data to understanding their problem in context. They needed some other type of research sources.

At that point, however, those writers hit an obstacle. How and where, they reasoned, would we find other secondary sources, such as books, journals, and websites, about the lack of diversity on our campus? The answer to that question was that, at this stage in their research and writing, they did not need to look for more sources about our local problem with the lack of diversity. They needed to look at diversity and ways to increase it as a national and global issue. They needed to generalize the problem and, instead of looking

at a local example, to consider its implications for the issue they were studying overall. Such research would not only have allowed these writers to examine the problem as a whole but also to see how it was being solved in other places. This, in turn, might have helped them to propose a local solution.

Critical readers and researchers understand that it is not enough to look at the research question locally or narrowly. After conducting research and understanding their problem locally, or as it applies specifically to them, active researchers contextualize their investigation by seeking out texts and other sources which would allow them to see the big picture.

Sometimes, it is hard to understand how external texts which do not seem to talk directly about you can help you research and write about questions, problems, and issues in your own life. In her 2004 essay, "Developing 'Interesting Thoughts': Reading for Research," writing teacher my former colleague Janette Martin tells a story of a student who was writing a paper about what it is like to be a collegiate athlete. The emerging theme in that paper was that of discipline and sacrifice required of student athletes. Simultaneously, that student was reading a chapter from the book by the French philosopher Michel Foucault called *Discipline and Punish*. Foucault's work is a study of the western penitentiary system, which, of course cannot be directly compared to experiences of a student athlete. At the same time, one of the leading themes in Foucault's work is discipline. Martin states that the student was able to see some connection between Foucault and her own life and use the reading for her research and writing (6). In addition to showing how related texts can be used to explore various aspects of the writer's own life, this example highlights the need to read texts critically and interpret them creatively. Such reading and research goes beyond simply comparing of facts and numbers and towards relating ideas and concepts with one another.

## From Reading to Writing

Reading and writing are the two essential tools of learning. Critical reading is not a process of passive consumption, but one of interaction and engagement between the reader and the text. Therefore, when reading critically and actively, it is important not only to take in the words on the page, but also to interpret and to reflect upon what you read through writing and discussing it with others.

### Critical Readers Understand the Difference Between Reacting and Responding to A Text

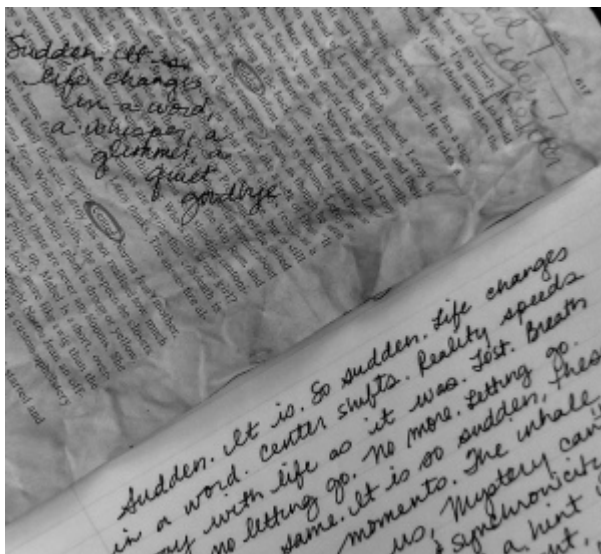
As stated earlier in this chapter, actively responding to difficult texts, posing questions, and analyzing ideas presented in them is the key to successful reading. The goal of an active reader is to engage in a conversation with the text he or she is reading. In order to fulfill this goal, it is important to understand the difference between reacting to the text and responding to it.

Reacting to a text is often done on an emotional, rather than on an intellectual level. It is quick and shallow. For example, if we encounter a text that advances arguments with which we strongly disagree, it is natural to dismiss those ideas out of hand as not wrong and not worthy of our attention. Doing so would be reacting to the text based only on emotions and on our pre-set opinions about its arguments. It is easy to see that reacting in this way does not take the reader any closer to understanding the text. A wall of disagreement that existed between the reader and the text before the reading continues to exist after the reading.

Responding to a text, on the other hand, requires a careful study of the ideas presented and arguments advanced in it. Critical



readers who possess this skill are not willing to simply reject or accept the arguments presented in the text after the first reading right away. To continue with our example from the preceding paragraph, a reader who responds to a controversial text rather than reacting to it might apply several of the following strategies before forming and expressing an opinion about that text.



- Read the text several times, taking notes, asking questions, and underlining key places.
- Study why the author of the text advances ideas, arguments, and convictions, so different from the reader's own. For example, is the text's author advancing an agenda of some social, political, religious, or economic group of which he or she is a member?
- Study the purpose and the intended audience of the text.
- Study the history of the argument presented in the text as much as possible. For example, modern texts on highly controversial issues such as the death penalty, abortion, or euthanasia often use past events, court cases, and other evidence to advance their claims. Knowing the history of the

problem will help you to construct meaning of a difficult text.

- Study the social, political, and intellectual context in which the text was written. Good writers use social conditions to advance controversial ideas. Compare the context in which the text was written to the one in which it is read. For example, have social conditions changed, thus invalidating the argument or making it stronger?
- Consider the author's (and your own) previous knowledge of the issue at the center of the text and your experiences with it. How might such knowledge or experience have influenced your reception of the argument?

Taking all these steps will help you to move away from simply reacting to a text and towards constructing informed and critical response to it.

To better understand the key differences between reacting and responding and between binary and nuanced reading, consider the table below.

Reacting to Texts	Responding to Texts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Works on an emotional level rather than an intellectual level</li> <li>• Prevents readers from studying purposes, intended audiences, and contexts of texts they are working with</li> <li>• Fails to establish dialog between the reader and the text by locking the reader in his or her pre-existing opinion about the argument</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Works on an intellectual and emotional level by asking the readers to use all three rhetorical appeals in reading and writing about the text</li> <li>• Allows for careful study of the text's rhetorical aspects</li> <li>• Establishes dialog among the reader, text, and other readers by allowing all sides to reconsider existing positions and opinions</li> </ul>
Binary Reading	Nuanced Reading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides only “agree or disagree” answers</li> <li>• Does not allow for an understanding of complex arguments</li> <li>• Prevents the reader from a true rhetorical engagement with the text</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows for a deep and detailed understanding of complex texts</li> <li>• Takes into account “gray areas” of complex arguments</li> <li>• Establishes rhetorical engagement between the reader and the text</li> </ul>

## Critical Readers Resist Oversimplified Binary Responses

Critical readers learn to avoid simple “agree-disagree” responses to complex texts. Such way of thinking and arguing is often called “binary” because it allows only two answers to every statement and every question. But the world of ideas is complex and, a much more nuanced approach is needed when dealing with complex arguments.

When you are asked to “critique” a text, which readers are often asked to do, it does not mean that you have to “criticize” it and

reject its argument out of hand. What you are being asked to do instead is to carefully evaluate and analyze the text’s ideas, to understand how and why they are constructed and presented, and only then develop a response to that text. Not every text asks for an outright agreement or disagreement. Sometimes, we as readers are not in a position to either simply support an argument or reject it. What we can do in such cases, though, is to learn more about the text’s arguments by carefully considering all of their aspects and to construct a nuanced, sophisticated response to them. After you have done all that, it will still be possible to disagree with the arguments presented in the reading, but your opinion about the text will be much more informed and nuanced than if you have taken the binary approach from the start.

### *Two Sample Student Responses*

To illustrate the principles laid out in this section, consider the following two reading responses. Both texts respond to a very well known piece, “A Letter from Birmingham Jail,” by Martin Luther King, Jr. In the letter, King responds to criticism from other clergymen who had called his methods of civil rights struggle “unwise and untimely.” Both student writers were given the same response prompt:

“After reading King’s piece several times and with a pen or pencil in hand, consider what shapes King’s letter. Specifically, what rhetorical strategies is he using to achieve a persuasive effect on his readers? In making your decisions, consider such factors as background information that he gives, ways in which he addresses his immediate audience, and others. Remember that your goal is to explore King’s text, thus enabling you to understand his rhetorical strategies better.”

### Student “A”

Martin Luther King Jr’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail” is a very powerful text. At the time when minorities in America were silenced and persecuted, King had the courage to lead his people in the struggle for equality. After being jailed in Birmingham, Alabama, King wrote a letter to his “fellow clergymen” describing his struggle for civil rights. In the letter, King recounts a brief history of that struggle and rejects the accusation that it is “unwise and untimely.” Overall, I think that King’s letter is a very rhetorically effective text, one that greatly helped Americans to understand the civil rights movement.

### Student “B”

King begins his “Letter from Birmingham Jail” by addressing it to his “fellow clergymen.” Thus, he immediately sets the tone of inclusion rather than exclusion. By using the word “fellow” in the address, I think he is trying to do two things. First of all, he presents himself as a colleague and a spiritual brother of his audience. That, in effect, says “you can trust me,” “I am one of your kind.” Secondly, by addressing his readers in that way, King suggests that everyone, even those Americans who are not directly involved in the struggle for civil rights, should be concerned with it. Hence the word “fellow.” King’s opening almost invokes the phrase “My fellow Americans” or “My fellow citizens” used so often by American Presidents when they address the nation.

King then proceeds to give a brief background of his actions as a civil rights leader. As I read this part of the letter, I was wondering whether his readers would really have not known what he had accomplished as a civil rights leader. Then I realized that perhaps he gives all that background information as a rhetorical move. His immediate goal is to keep reminding his readers about his activities. His ultimate goal is to show to his audience that his actions were non-violent but peaceful. In reading this passage by King, I remembered once again that it is important not to assume that your

audience knows anything about the subject of the writing. I will try to use this strategy more in my own papers.

In the middle of the letter, King states: “The purpose of our direct-action program is to create a situation so crisis-packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation.” This sentence looks like a thesis statement and I wonder why he did not place it towards the beginning of the text, to get his point across right away. After thinking about this for a few minutes and rereading several pages from our class textbook, I think he leaves his “thesis” till later in his piece because he is facing a notso-friendly (if not hostile) audience. Delaying the thesis and laying out some background information and evidence first helps a writer to prepare his or her audience for the coming argument. That is another strategy I should probably use more often in my own writing, depending on the audience I am facing.

### *Reflecting on the Responses*

To be sure, much more can be said about King ’s letter than either of these writers have said. However, these two responses allow us to see two dramatically different approaches to reading. After studying both responses, consider the questions below.

- Which response fulfills the goals set in the prompt better and why?
- Which responses shows a deeper understanding of the texts by the reader and why?
- Which writer does a better job at avoiding binary thinking and creating a sophisticated reading of King ’s text and why?
- Which writer is more likely to use the results of the reading in his or her own writing in the future and why?
- Which writer leaves room for response to his text by others and why?

## Critical Readers Do not Read Alone and in Silence

One of the key principles of critical reading is that active readers do not read silently and by themselves. By this I mean that they take notes and write about what they read. They also discuss the texts they are working with, with others and compare their own interpretations of those texts with the interpretations constructed by their colleagues.

As a college student, you are probably used to taking notes of what you read. When I was in college, my favorite way of preparing for a test was reading a chapter or two from my textbook, then closing the book, then trying to summarize what I have read on a piece of



paper. I tried to get the main points of the chapters down and the explanations and proofs that the textbooks' authors used. Sometimes, I wrote a summary of every chapter in the textbook and then studied for the test from those summaries rather than from the textbook itself. I am sure you have favorite methods of note taking and studying from your notes, too.

But now it strikes me that what I did with those notes was not critical reading. I simply summarized my textbooks in a more concise, manageable form and then tried to memorize those summaries before the test. I did not take my reading of the textbooks any further than what was already on their pages. Reading for information and trying to extract the main points, I did not talk back to the texts, did not question them, and did not try to extend

the knowledge which they offered in any way. I also did not try to connect my reading with my personal experiences or pre-existing knowledge in any way. I also read in silence, without exchanging ideas with other readers of the same texts. Of course, my reading strategies and techniques were dictated by my goal, which was to pass the test.

Critical reading has other goals, one of which is entering an on-going intellectual exchange. Therefore it demands different reading strategies, approaches, and techniques. One of these new approaches is not reading in silence and alone. Instead, critical readers read with a pen or pencil in hand. They also discuss what they read with others.

## Strategies for Connecting Reading and Writing

If you want to become a critical reader, you need to get into a habit of writing as you read. You also need to understand that complex texts cannot be read just once. Instead, they require multiple readings, the first of which may be a more general one during which you get acquainted with the ideas presented in the text, its structure and style. During the second and any subsequent readings, however, you will need to write, and write a lot. The following are some critical reading and writing techniques which active readers employ as they work to create meanings from texts they read.

### *Underline Interesting and Important Places in the Text*

Underline words, sentences, and passages that stand out, for whatever reason. Underline the key arguments that you believe the author of the text is making as well as any evidence, examples, and



stories that seem interesting or important. Don't be afraid to "get it wrong." There is no right or wrong here. The places in the text that you underline may be the same or different from those noticed by your classmates, and this difference of interpretation is the essence of critical reading.

### *Take Notes*

Take notes on the margins. If you do not want to write on your book or journal, attach post-it notes with your comments to the text. Do not be afraid to write too much. This is the stage of the reading process during which you are actively making meaning. Writing about what you read is the best way to make sense of it, especially, if the text is difficult.

Do not be afraid to write too much. This is the stage of the reading process during which you are actively making meaning. Writing about what you read will help you not only to remember the argument which the author of the text is trying to advance (less important for critical reading), but to create your own interpretations of the text you are reading (more important).

Here are some things you can do in your comments

- Ask questions.
- Agree or disagree with the author.
- Question the evidence presented in the text
- Offer counter-evidence
- Offer additional evidence, examples, stories, and so on that support the author's argument
- Mention other texts which advance the same or similar arguments
- Mention personal experiences that enhance your reading of the text

## *Write Exploratory Responses*

Write extended responses to readings. Writing students are often asked to write one or two page exploratory responses to readings, but they are not always clear on the purpose of these responses and on how to approach writing them. By writing reading responses, you are continuing the important work of critical reading which you began when you underlined interesting passages and took notes on the margins. You are extending the meaning of the text by creating your own commentary to it and perhaps even branching off into creating your own argument inspired by your reading. Your teacher may give you a writing prompt, or ask you to come up with your own topic for a response. In either case, realize that reading responses are supposed to be exploratory, designed to help you delve deeper into the text you are reading than note-taking or underlining will allow.

When writing extended responses to the readings, it is important to keep one thing in mind, and that is their purpose. The purpose of these exploratory responses, which are often rather informal, is not to produce a complete argument, with an introduction, thesis, body, and conclusion. It is not to impress your classmates and your teacher with “big” words and complex sentences. On the contrary, it is to help you understand the text you are working with at a deeper level. The verb “explore” means to investigate something by looking at it more closely. Investigators get leads, some of which are fruitful and useful and some of which are dead-ends. As you investigate and create the meaning of the text you are working with, do not be afraid to take different directions with your reading response. In fact, it is important resist the urge to make conclusions or think that you have found out everything about your reading. When it comes to exploratory reading responses, lack of closure and presence of more leads at the end of the piece is usually a good thing. Of course, you should always check with your teacher for standards and format of reading responses.

Try the following guidelines to write a successful response to a reading:

Remember your goal—exploration. The purpose of writing a response is to construct the meaning of a difficult text. It is not to get the job done as quickly as possible and in as few words as possible.

As you write, “talk back to the text.” Make comments, ask questions, and elaborate on complex thoughts. This part of the writing becomes much easier if, prior to writing your response, you had read the assignment with a pen in hand and marked important places in the reading.

If your teacher provides a response prompt, make sure you understand it. Then try to answer the questions in the prompt to the best of your ability. While you are doing that, do not be afraid of bringing in related texts, examples, or experiences. Active reading is about making connections, and your readers will appreciate your work because it will help them understand the text better.

While your primary goal is exploration and questioning, make sure that others can understand your response. While it is OK to be informal in your response, make every effort to write in a clear, error-free language.

Involve your audience in the discussion of the reading by asking questions, expressing opinions, and connecting to responses made by others.

### *Use Reading for Invention*

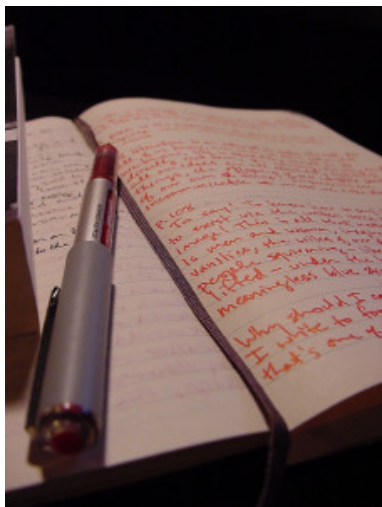
Use reading and your responses to start your own formal writing projects. Reading is a powerful invention tool. While preparing to start a new writing project, go back to the readings you have completed and your responses to those readings in search for possible topics and ideas. Also look through responses your classmates gave to your ideas about the text. Another excellent way to start your own writing projects and to begin research for them

is to look through the list of references and sources at the end of the reading that you are working with. They can provide excellent topic-generating and research leads.

### *Keep a Double-Entry Journal*

Many writers like double-entry journals because they allow us to make that leap from summary of a source to interpretation and persuasion. To start a double-entry journal, divide a page into two columns. As you read, in the left column write down interesting and important words, sentences, quotations, and passages from the text. In the right column, write your reaction and responses to them. Be as formal or informal as you want. Record words, passages, and ideas from the text that you find useful for your paper, interesting, or, in any, way striking or unusual. Quote or summarize in full, accurately, and fairly. In the right-hand side column, ask the kinds of questions and provide the kinds of responses that will later enable you to create an original reading of the text you are working with and use that reading to create your own paper.

## Don't Give Up



If the text you are reading seems too complicated or “boring,” that might mean that you have not attacked it aggressively and critically enough. Complex texts are the ones worth pursuing and investigating because they present the most interesting ideas. Critical reading is a liberating practice because you do not have to worry about “getting it right.” As long as you make an effort to engage with the text and as long as you are

willing to work hard on creating a meaning out of what you read, the interpretation of the text you are working with will be valid.

IMPORTANT: So far, we have established that no pre-existing meaning is possible in written texts and that critical and active readers work hard to create such meaning. We have also established that interpretations differ from reader to reader and that there is no “right” or “wrong” during the critical reading process. So, you may ask, does this mean that any reading of a text that I create will be a valid and persuasive one? With the exception of the most outlandish and purposely-irrelevant readings that have nothing to do with the sources text, the answer is “yes.” However, remember that reading and interpreting texts, as well as sharing your interpretations with others are rhetorical acts. First of all, in order to learn something from your critical reading experience, you, the reader, need to be persuaded by your own reading of the text. Secondly, for your reading to be accepted by others, they need to be persuaded by it, too. It does not mean, however, that in order to make your reading of a text persuasive, you simply have to find “proof” in

the text for your point of view. Doing that would mean reverting to reading “for the main point,” reading as consumption. Critical reading, on the other hand, requires a different approach. One of the components of this approach is the use of personal experiences, examples, stories, and knowledge for interpretive and persuasive purposes. This is the subject of the next section of this chapter.

## One Critical Reader’s Path to Creating a Meaning: A Case Study

Earlier on in this chapter, we discussed the importance of using your existing knowledge and prior experience to create new meaning out of unfamiliar and difficult texts. In this section, I’d like to offer you one student writer’s account of his meaningmaking process. Before I do that, however, it is important for me to tell you a little about the class and the kinds of reading and writing assignments that its members worked on.

All the writing projects offered to the members of the class were promoted by readings, and students were expected to actively develop their own ideas and provide their own readings of assigned texts in their essays. The main text for the class was the anthology *Ways of Reading* edited by David Bartholomae and Anthony Petrosky that contains challenging and complex texts. Like for most of his classmates, this approach to reading and writing was new to Alex who had told me earlier that he was used to reading “for information” or “for the main point.”

In preparation for the first writing project, the class read Adrienne Rich’s essay “When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Revision.” In her essay, Rich offers a moving account of her journey to becoming a writer. She makes the case for constantly “revising” one’s life in the light of all new events and experiences. Rich blends voices and genres throughout the essay, using personal narrative, academic

argument, and even poetry. As a result, Rich creates the kind of personal-public argument which, on the one hand, highlights her own life, and on the other, illustrates that her Rich's life is typical for her time and her environment and that her readers can also learn from her experiences.

To many beginning readers and writers, who are used to a neat separation of “personal” and “academic” argument, such a blend of genres and styles may seem odd. In fact, one of the challenges that many of the students in the class faced was understanding why Rich chooses to blend personal writing with academic and what rhetorical effects she achieves by doing so. To After writing informal responses to the essay and discussing it in class, the students were offered the following writing assignment:

Although Rich tells a story of her own, she does so to provide an illustration of an even larger story—one about what it means to be a woman and a writer. Tell a story of your own about the ways you might be said to have been named or shaped or positioned by an established or powerful culture. Like Rich (and perhaps with similar hesitation), use your own experience as an illustration of both your own situation and the situation of people like you. You should imagine that the assignment is a way for you to use (and put to the test) some of Rich's terms, words like “re-vision,” “renaming,” and “structure.” (Bartholomae and Petrosky 648).

Notice that this assignment does not ask students to simply analyze Rich's essay, to dissect its argument or “main points.” Instead, writers are asked to work with their own experiences and events of their own lives in order to provide a reading of Rich which is affected and informed by the writers' own lives and own knowledge of life. This is critical reading in action when a reader creates his or her one's own meaning of a complex text by reflecting on the relationship between the content of that text and one's own life.

In response to the assignment, one of the class members, Alex Cimino-Hurt, wrote a paper that re-examined and reevaluated his

upbringing and how those factors have influenced his political and social views. In particular, Alex was trying to reconcile his own and his parents' anti-war views with the fact that a close relative of his was fighting in the war in Iraq as he worked on the paper. Alex used such terms as "revision" and "hesitation" to develop his piece.

Like most other writers in the class, initially Alex seemed a little puzzled, even confused by the requirement to read someone else's text through the prism of his own life and his own experiences. However, as he drafted, revised, and discussed his writing with his classmates and his instructor, the new approach to reading and writing became clearer to him. After finishing the paper, Alex commented on his reading strategies and techniques and on what he learned about critical reading during the project:

## On Previous Reading Habits and Techniques

Previously when working on any project whether it be for a History, English, or any other class that involved reading and research, there was a certain amount of minimalism. As a student I tried to balance the least amount of effort with the best grade. I distinctly remember that before, being taught to skim over writing and reading so that I found "main" points and highlighted them. The value of thoroughly reading a piece was not taught because all that was needed was a shallow interpretation of whatever information that was provided followed by a regurgitation. [Critical reading] provided a dramatic difference in perspective and helped me learn to not only dissect the meaning of a piece, but also to see why the writer is using certain techniques or how the reading applies to my life.



## On Developing Critical Reading Strategies

When reading critically I found that the most important thing for me was to set aside a block of time in which I wouldn't have to hurry my reading or skip parts to "Get the gist of it". Developing an eye for...detail came in two ways. The first method is to read the text several times, and the second is to discuss it with my classmates and my teacher. It quickly became clear to me that the more I read a certain piece, the more I got from it as I became more comfortable with the prose and writing style. With respect to the second way, there is always something that you can miss and there is always a different perspective that can be brought to the table by either the teacher or a classmate.

## On Reading Rich's Essay

In reading Adrienne Rich's essay, the problem for me wasn't necessarily relating to her work but instead just finding the right perspective from which to read it. I was raised in a very open family so being able to relate to others was learned early in my life. Once I was able to parallel my perspective to hers, it was just a matter of composing my own story. Mine was my liberalism in conservative environments—the fact that frustrates me sometimes. I felt that her struggle frustrated her, too. By using quotations from her work, I was able to show my own situation to my readers.

## On Writing the Paper

The process that I went through to write an essay consisted of three stages. During the first stage, I wrote down every coherent idea I had for the essay as well as a few incoherent ones. This helped

me create a lot of material to work with. While this initial material doesn't always have direction it provides a foundation for writing. The second stage involved rereading Rich's essay and deciding which parts of it might be relevant to my own story. Looking at my own life and at Rich's work together helped me consolidate my paper. The third and final stage involved taking what is left and refining the style of the paper and taking care of the mechanics.

## Advice for Critical Readers

The first key to being a critical and active reader is to find something in the piece that interests, bothers, encourages, or just confuses you. Use this to drive your analysis. Remember there is no such thing as a boring essay, only a boring reader.

- Reading something once is never enough so reading it quickly before class just won't cut it. Read it once to get your brain comfortable with the work, then read it again and actually try to understand what's going on in it. You can't read it too many times.
- Ask questions. It seems like a simple suggestion but if you never ask questions you'll never get any answers. So, while you're reading, think of questions and just write them down on a piece of paper lest you forget them after about a line and a half of reading.

## Conclusion

Reading and writing are rhetorical processes, and one does not exist without the other. The goal of a good writer is to engage his or her readers into a dialog presented in the piece of writing. Similarly, the

goal of a critical and active reader is to participate in that dialog and to have something to say back to the writer and to others. Writing leads to reading and reading leads to writing. We write because we have something to say and we read because we are interested in ideas of others.

Reading what others have to say and responding to them help us make that all-important transition from simply having opinions about something to having ideas. Opinions are often over-simplified and fixed. They are not very useful because, if different people have different opinions that they are not willing to change or adjust, such people cannot work or think together. Ideas, on the other hand, are ever evolving, fluid, and flexible. Our ideas are informed and shaped by our interactions with others, both in person and through written texts. In a world where thought and action count, it is not enough to simply “agree to disagree.” Reading and writing, used together, allow us to discuss complex and difficult issues with others, to persuade and be persuaded, and, most importantly, to act.

Reading and writing are inextricably connected, and I hope that this chapter has shown you ways to use reading to inform and enrich you writing and your learning in general. The key to becoming an active, critical, and interested reader is the development of varied and effective reading techniques and strategies. I’d like to close this chapter with the words from the writer Alex Cimino-Hurt: “Being able to read critically is important no matter what you plan on doing with your career or life because it allows you to understand the world around you.”

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# 130. Primary Source: Sustaining Our Commonwealth of Nature and Knowledge

Let's start with this phrase: "sustaining our commonwealth." By sustaining, I don't mean preserving inviolate; I mean using, without using up. Using with maintenance and replenishment is an important idea in economics. It's the very basis of the concept of income, because income is the maximum that you can consume today



and still be able to produce and consume the same amount tomorrow – that is, maximum consumption without depleting capital in the broad sense of future productive capacity. By commonwealth, I mean the wealth that no one has made, or the wealth that practically everyone has made. So it's either nature – nobody made it, we all inherited it – or knowledge – everybody contributed to making it, but everyone's contribution is small in relation to the total and depends on the contributions of others. In managing the commonwealth of nature, our big problem is that we tend to treat the truly scarce as if it were non-scarce. The opposite problem arises with the commonwealth of knowledge, in which we tend to treat what is truly not scarce as if it were.

## Clarifying Scarcity

There are two sets of important distinctions about goods, and they make four cross-classifications (see figure below). Goods can be either rival or non-rival, and they can be either excludable or non-excludable. My shirt, for example, is a rival good because if I'm wearing it, you can't wear it at the same time. The warmth of the sun is non-rival because I can enjoy the warmth of the sun, and everyone else can enjoy it at the same time. Rivalness is a physical property that precludes the simultaneous use of goods by more than one person. Goods are also excludable or non-excludable. That's not a physical concept, that's a legal concept, a question of property. For example, you could wear my shirt tomorrow if I let you, but that's up to me because it's my property. My shirt is both rival and excludable, and that's the case with most market goods. Meanwhile, the warmth of the sun is both non-rival and also non-excludable. We cannot buy and sell solar warmth; we cannot bottle it and charge for it. Goods that are rival and excludable are market goods. Goods that are non-rival and non-excludable are public goods. That leaves two other categories. Fish in the ocean are an example of goods that are rival and non-excludable. They are rival, because if I catch the fish, you can't catch it. But they are also non-excludable, because I can't stop you from fishing in the open seas. The management of goods that are rival and non-excludable gives rise to the famous tragedy of the commons – or the tragedy of open-access resources, as it's more accurately called. Now, the other problematic category consists of goods that are non-rival and excludable. If I use the Pythagorean Theorem, I don't prevent you from using it at the same time. Knowledge is non-rival, but it often is made excludable through intellectual property and patent rights. So those are two difficult categories that create problems. One is the tragedy of the commons, and the other we could call the tragedy of artificial scarcity.

# The Commonwealth of Nature

Fish in the ocean are an example of the commonwealth of nature. I'll argue that natural goods and services that are rival and have so far remained non-excludable should be enclosed in the market in order to avoid unsustainable use. Excludability can take the form of individual property rights or social property rights – what needs to be avoided is open access. For dealing with the broad class of rival but, up to now, non-excludable goods, the so-called cap-auction-trade system is a market-based institution that merits consideration.

In addition to its practical value, the cap-auction-trade system also sheds light on a fundamental issue of economic theory: the logically separate issues of scale, distribution, and allocation. Neoclassical economics deals mainly with the question of allocation. Allocation is the apportionment of resources among competing uses: how many resources go to produce beans, how many to cars, how many to haircuts. Properly functioning markets allocate resources efficiently, more or less. Yet the concept of efficient allocation presupposes a given distribution. Distribution is the apportionment of goods and resources among different people: how many resources go to you, how many to somebody else. A good distribution is one that is fair or just – not efficient, but fair. The third issue is scale: the physical size of the economy relative to the ecosystem that sustains it. How many of us are there and how large are the associated matter-energy flows from producing all our stuff, relative to natural cycles and the maintenance of the biosphere. In neoclassical economics, the issue of scale is completely off the radar screen.

The cap-auction-trade system works like this. Some environmental assets, say fishing rights or the rights to emit sulfur dioxide, have been treated as non-excludable free goods. As economic growth increases the scale of the economy relative to that of the biosphere, it becomes recognized that these goods are

in fact physically rival. The first step is to put a cap – a maximum – on the scale of use of that resource, at a level which is deemed to be environmentally sustainable. Setting that cap – deciding what it should be – is not a market decision, but a social and ecological decision. Then, the right to extract that resource or emit that waste, up to the cap, becomes a scarce asset. It was a free good. Now it has a price. We've created a new valuable asset, so the question is: Who owns it? This also has to be decided politically, outside the market. Ownership of this new asset should be auctioned to the highest bidder, with the proceeds entering the public treasury. Sometimes rights are simply given to the historical private users – a bad idea, I think, but frequently done under the misleading label of “grandfathering.” The cap-auction-trade system is not, as often called, “free-market environmentalism.” It is really socially constrained, market environmentalism. Someone must own the assets before they can be traded in the market, and that is an issue of distribution. Only after the scale question is answered, and then the distribution question, can we have market exchange to answer the question of allocation.

Another good policy for managing the commonwealth of nature is ecological tax reform. This means shifting the tax base away from income earned by labor and capital and onto the resource flow from nature. Taxing what we want less of, depletion and pollution, seems to be a better idea than taxing what we want more of, namely income. Unlike the cap-auction-trade system, ecological tax reform would exert only a very indirect and uncertain limit on the scale of the economy relative to the biosphere. Yet, it would go a long way toward improving allocation and distribution.

## The Commonwealth of Knowledge

If you stand in front of the McKeldin Library at the University of Maryland, you'll see a quotation from Thomas Jefferson carved on



one of the stones: “Knowledge is the common property of mankind.” Well, I think Mr. Jefferson was right. Once knowledge exists, it is non-rival, which means it has a zero opportunity cost. As we know from studying price theory, price is supposed to measure opportunity cost, and if opportunity cost is zero, then price should be zero. Certainly, new knowledge, even though it should be allocated freely, does have a cost of production. Sometimes that cost of production is substantial, as with the space program’s discovery that there’s no life on Mars. On the other hand, a new insight could occur to you while you’re lying in bed staring at the ceiling and cost absolutely nothing, as was the case with Renee Descartes’ invention of analytic geometry. Many new discoveries are accidental. Others are motivated by the joy and excitement of research, independent of any material motivation. Yet the dominant view is that unless knowledge is kept scarce enough to have a significant price, nobody in the market will have an incentive to produce it. Patent monopolies and intellectual property rights are urged as the way to provide an extrinsic reward for knowledge production. Even within that restricted vision, keeping knowledge scarce still makes very little sense, because the main input to the production of new knowledge is existing knowledge. If you keep existing knowledge expensive, that’s surely going to slow down the production of new knowledge.

## In Summary

Managing the commonwealth of nature and knowledge presents us two rather opposite problems and solutions. I’ve argued that the commonwealth of nature should be enclosed as property, as much as possible as public property, and administered so as to capture scarcity rents for public revenue. Examples of natural commons include: mining, logging, grazing rights, the electromagnetic spectrum, the absorptive capacity of the atmosphere, and the

orbital locations of satellites. The commonwealth of knowledge, on the other hand, should be freed from enclosure as property and treated as the non-rival good that it is. Abolishing all intellectual property rights tomorrow is draconian, but I do think we could grant patent monopolies for fewer “inventions” and for shorter time periods.

Does use by one person physically preclude use by others?

	Yes rival	No non-rival
Do laws prohibit access to these goods?	Yes excludable  <b>Market Goods</b> (e.g., automobiles and fishing reels) <i>Let the market allocate these goods.</i>	<b>Tragedy of Artificial Scarcity</b> (e.g., patented meds and knowledge in heads) <i>Reduce patent monopolies and intellectual property rights—share these goods.</i>
	No non-excludable  <b>Tragedy of the Commons</b> (e.g., old growth trees and fish in the seas) <i>Designate property rights and use cap-auction-trade to allocate these goods.</i>	<b>Public Goods</b> (e.g., national security and roads that are free) <i>Collect depletion and pollution taxes so that government can provide these goods.</i>
	Different types of goods and policies to achieve a sustainable, fair, and efficient economy.	

# 131. Primary Source: The Zombie as Barometer of Capitalist Anxiety

The modern incarnation of the zombie, as seen strewn across pop culture horror novels and films in ever-increasing numbers, is easily recognized and radically different from its historical roots; any member of our modern Western culture can spot the gray, often rotting flesh, the black eyes, the dishevelled appearance, the shuffling gait, the wretched moaning, and, of course, the bloody mouths flecked with fresh flesh and detritus. However, the zombie goes beyond cheap thrills; zombies, as well as other variations of horror monsters, represent a fear that pervades society as a whole, a collective nervousness of destruction at the hands of a seemingly invulnerable foe.

According to Peter Dendle, in his essay, “The Zombie as Barometer of Cultural Anxiety,” the zombie has “...tapped into a deep-seated anxiety about society, government, individual protection, and our increasing disconnectedness from



subsistence skills.”<sup>1</sup> Dendle states that the prevalence of the zombie in pop culture correlates to society’s fear that any sudden jolt of the status quo, undead or otherwise, would result in mass chaos, that people would be unable to protect themselves or to survive on their own.

Yet one may take the thought of this collective anxiety a step further to discern one of the underlying causes and major contributions to

the general nervousness of the public and the widespread appearances of zombies in films and literature: capitalism.

## Past to Present

According to Dendle, “the zombie, a soul-less hulk mindlessly working at the bidding of another, thus records a residual communal memory of slavery: of living a life without dignity or meaning, of going through the motions.”<sup>1</sup> Here we see the zombie’s origins, as corpses reanimated by bourgeois landowners or factory foremen through some rites of magick for the sake of performing menial labour without demanding fair wages, hours, and treatment, never tiring or making mistakes.

This is one of the earliest iterations of the zombie, and the origin of the capitalist metaphor. The proto-capitalist economy of nineteenth century America was dependent on slave labour, and pro-slavery politicians of the time argued that the economy of the South would have collapsed entirely should slavery be outlawed. Here it is evident how a fear and disdain of capitalism would have been imprinted on the minds of the enslaved Africans and Haitians, from whose culture the zombie originated. They were slaves because slavery was profitable, vital to economy and thus not morally bankrupt to the slave owners, and an implicit resistance to this system would have been planted.

From here the zombie transformed from a worker drone to a bloodthirsty monster, personality vanished, flesh rotting off of bone, an insatiable hunger for long pig, and most importantly a horde—one capable of the annihilation of human society. Zombies went from a cheap work force to a full-blown apocalypse, and they had never been more popular as capitalism conquered the world. The capitalist metaphor came to a head with George Romero’s 1978 film *Dawn of the Dead*, in which the main characters attempt to escape the zombie apocalypse by finding sanctuary in a shopping

mall. When the survivors find temporary safety, they return to their consumer roots and ransack the mall for products, and, after observing his comrades and the encroaching zombies, one character remarks, "They're us."<sup>2</sup>

Later, much more subtle hints at the metaphor of consumer capitalism occur in the Resident Evil cycle and many other films and books, where the zombie outbreak is, directly or otherwise, the result of illicit business practices of faceless corporations. This possibly stems from a mistrust of large conglomerates whose GDPs began to exceed entire nations'; Wal-Mart currently has more purchasing power than Saudi Arabia does.

In Max Brooks' *World War Z*, a critique of capitalism is offered in the form of Phalanx, a vaccine manufactured to prevent "rabies" and sold as a solution to the developing zombie crisis; Phalanx was pushed through the FDA by the government (and the corporations that control it) despite a lack of testing and evidence regarding the zombie virus, for the sake of keeping the populace calm while earning unprecedented profits at the expense of the victimized masses. According to Breckenridge Scott, the character responsible for Phalanx:

"It protected them from their fears. That's all I was selling. Hell, because of Phalanx, the biomed sector started to recover, which, in turn, jump-started the stock market, which then gave the impression of a recovery, which then restored consumer confidence to stimulate an actual recovery!"<sup>3</sup>

This passage shows how the bourgeois businessman Scott justified selling his snake oil to the masses, in that the mass production of Phalanx and its widespread sales led to an economic recovery, and the reader is presented with the conflicting viewpoints between economic recovery and the deaths of millions of misled humans. The reader is presented with the question of whether the economy should take precedent over the well-being of the people, and while the choice is obvious, it shows the reader that corporations will sacrifice lives for their bottom lines.

And so, as zombies enter the world of prime-time television dramas, so too does our anxiety grow.

## Anxiety Disorder

The zombie as we know it today, by its very nature, is a mindless creature which was once a human being, a sentient individual with a name and free will, but has been warped to become a ravenous consumer without thought or emotion. It meanders through city streets, around small towns, and along highways with no thought or desire but to consume anything and everything it can—namely, human flesh.

If one listens to the cries of anti-capitalist dissenters, an eerie similarity between zombies and members of capitalist economies appears, at least in terms of behavior; the masses go out from their



homes and flock to shopping centers and department stores, willingly giving away the fruits of their labour in exchange for luxury items, and often really don't know why.

A defining feature of the zombie is the loss of the individual's sentience once transformed into the undead, just as a loss of sentience occurs in the individual within a consumer capitalist culture, at the hands of mass marketing and advertising. On the subject of the loss of free will, author Chuck Palahniuk wittily writes: "Experts in ancient Greek culture say that people back then didn't see their thoughts as belonging to them. When ancient Greeks had a thought, it occurred to them as a god or goddess giving an order... Now people hear a commercial for sour cream potato chips and rush out to buy, but now they call this free will. At least the ancient Greeks were being honest."<sup>4</sup>

Here Palahniuk's anti-capitalist sentiments can be translated to the parallel between zombies and consumers, as both experiences a loss of sentience, and of the individual. The zombie is a monster of majority, unlike its vampiric and lupine counterparts, as those in our society who are given to the consumer instinct are a majority and the few individuals who criticize capitalism from within it are persecuted and defamed in the way that zombies will swarm and attack an uninfected human. In addition, the zombie is a mechanism of annihilation; while vampires are a small minority living in the underground of a human world, feeding to survive, the zombie horde exists only for the purpose of consuming or converting all humans until the species is extinct and the paradigm shifts to a world inhabited only by zombies.

This is similar to the cries of the left wing, who accuse the right—the upholders of *laissez-faire* capitalism and unwavering nationalism—of demanding conformity of all to their belief systems and ways of living (if you don't like America, well you can just get out).

However, Dendle postulates that while zombie apocalypse films and novels capitalize on the anxiety of the masses, the underlying purpose of zombie culture is not to display the end of the world but to illustrate how the world may be profoundly changed for the better by means of the old world's destruction. Dendle states: "Post-apocalyptic zombie worlds are fantasies of liberation: the intrepid pioneers of a new world trek through the shattered remnants of the old, trudging through the shells of buildings and the husks of people."<sup>1</sup>

In *World War Z*, the sundering of the zeitgeist in the United States shatters the pre-existing capitalistic and highly individualized philosophy of the masses and opens up the populace, through their vulnerability, to survival only through communal life and cooperation. However, even Brooks' profound statements regarding cooperation are contradicted within his novel, in the example of socialist Cuba becoming a booming post-war capitalist force. One can infer from the critiques of both capitalism and communism that

Brooks supports neither in his writing, adding another layer to the zombie-capitalist.

I believe that the impact of Brooks' novel regarding our economic anxiety can be summarized by this statement of a Japanese character late in the novel: "His generation wanted to rule the world, and mine was content to let the world, and by the world I mean [the United States], rule us. There has to be a better way, a middle path where we take responsibility..."<sup>2</sup> This is a powerful line, as it transforms the novel from a simple metaphor for capitalism to a statement that the world must take a path between capitalism and communism in order to survive and prosper, and that this path is now available as the world has an opportunity to rebuild. This is the ultimate function of the zombie, beyond cheap thrills of a horror film and beyond a criticism of the right-wing and consumer capitalism; the zombie functions to clean the slate and enable the world to rebuild anew.

1. Dendle, Peter. "The Zombie as Barometer of Cultural Anxiety." 45-55. Print.
2. Brooks, Max. *World War Z*. Print.
3. Ramero, George A. *Dawn of the Dead*. Film.
4. Palahniuk, Chuck. *Lullaby*. Print.



## 132. Primary source: Zombies vs. animals? The living dead wouldn't stand a chance

National Wildlife Federation naturalist David Mizejewski explains how nature would deal with a zombie outbreak: brutally, and without quarter.

With *The Walking Dead*'s fourth season premiere and Halloween upon us, the living dead are back in full-force.

Zombies are scary. We humans are evolutionarily pre-programmed to abhor the dead bodies of our own species. It's a natural reaction, helping healthy individuals avoid fatal pathogens.

The thought of being eaten alive is a natural fear, and when it's your own species doing the eating, it's even more terrifying.

Relax. Next time you're lying in bed, unable to fall asleep thanks to the vague anxiety of half-rotten corpses munching on you in the dark, remember this: if there was ever a zombie uprising, [wildlife](#) would kick its ass.

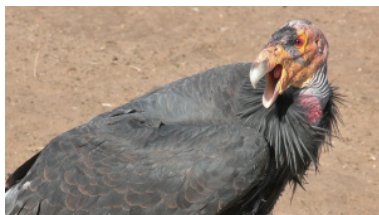
To enjoy zombie horror, you suspend disbelief and put aside some of science's rules. That said, if we assume zombies can't spread whatever is causing them to reanimate to other species, and that they are relatively slow moving—both true (*so far!* — Ed.) of Walking Dead zombies—there are more than enough [wild animals](#) out there to dispatch the undead.

That's because zombies are essentially walking carrion, and Mother Nature doesn't let *anything* go to waste.

Carrion is on the menu for a vast number of species, from tiny micro-organisms to the largest carnivores.

Here's just some of the North American wildlife that would make short work of a zombie horde.

## BIRDS: WINGED ZOMBIE ANNIHILATORS



Many birds feed themselves by scavenging on dead things. The two vulture species native to North America, the [turkey vulture](#) and the black vulture, flock up to make short work of any corpses they find. Both vulture species are dwarfed by the massive California condor, whose wingspan can reach 10 feet and which relish carrion. A sluggish zombie wouldn't stand a chance against one of these giants or a flock of vultures. [California condors are endangered](#), so a zombie apocalypse could really give a boost to their population by providing them with an abundance of food.

This video shows a juvenile California condor ripping the heart out of a dead carcass, surrounding by ravens picking up scraps. Ravens are not small birds—just look at the size of this baby condor in comparison.

<https://youtu.be/TuGpuxlb0dw>

[Ravens](#), crows, and magpies are expert scavengers as well, in addition to being bold and extremely intelligent. Many species of [gulls](#), known for their brash behavior when it comes to scoring a meal, would also gladly feed off slow-moving zombies in coastal areas. These birds usually require other animals to break through or break down the tough skin and hide of their carrion meals. So they'd have to wait until the zombies decomposed a bit, or were dismembered by other animals, before they tucked in. But once started, nothing would stop them from devouring the undead with gusto.

Despite being expert hunters, eagles are not above scavenging. [Bald eagles](#) make carrion a regular part of their diet, and with their huge talons, they're not afraid to dispatch animals that are near-death—or undead. The slightly larger golden eagle is no stranger to scavenging, either, and has also been documented [attacking and killing animals as large as deer](#). A torpid zombie wouldn't pose much of a challenge.



Raven Symmetry by ingridtaylor

Watch these bald eagles and crows strip a deer carcass down to nothing in 48 hours.



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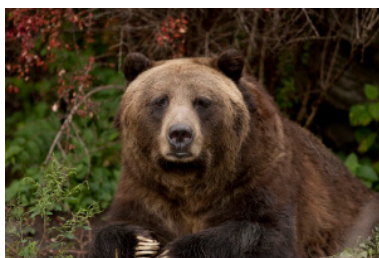
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## MAMMALS: ZOMBIE DISMEMBERMENT CREW

North America's large mammal predators would be more than a match for zombies. We have two bear species, brown (or [grizzly](#)) and [black bears](#). Male brown bears can weigh in at 1,000 pounds. They are not afraid of humans. They can deliver a bite of 1200 pounds per square inch and have long, sharp claws designed to rip open logs and flip boulders in search of insects and other small critters to eat. They would easily tear apart rotting zombie flesh. Black bears are

much smaller and typically run from humans, but even a black bear, when approached or cornered, would make short work of a zombie. Both bear species have an incredible sense of smell and both love to eat carrion, so even if zombies didn't approach them, the bears eventually would learn that these walking bags of flesh make good eating.

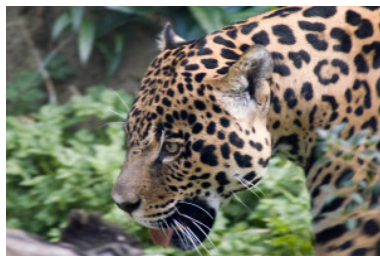
Like black bears, [gray wolves](#) are very shy of humans and typically run away at the first sight of us. Nor are they strangers to scavenging. They'd soon take advantage of the easy pickings presented by lumbering zombies. Coyotes



are far less shy than wolves and can happily live alongside humans, including in the [heart of our cities](#). These intelligent canids would quickly learn that they could take down zombies one by one, especially the eastern populations of coyote, which are [larger and bolder](#) due to past interbreeding with wolves and domestic dogs.

Unlike bears, wolves and coyotes, mountain lions prefer fresh meat and don't typically feed on carrion, other than what they kill themselves. Like all cats, they hunt by stealth and are irresistibly attracted to signs of weakness in potential prey. Unlike most other North American predators, mountain lions can put humans on the menu. Any zombie shuffling through mountain lion territory (which can be [surprisingly close](#) to our cities) would trigger those feline predatory instincts, and would likely end up with one of these big cats sneak-attacking from behind and delivering a spine severing bite to the back of the neck.

Even bigger and more powerful than mountain lions are jaguars, which range through Mexico and are [still sometimes found](#) in the desert southwest of the United States. Jaguars also hunt by stealth, and have a special technique to quickly dispatch their prey: a skull crushing bite to the head, delivered with their huge canine teeth. A jaguar bite delivers 2,000 pounds of pressure per inch, the most powerful mammalian bite on the continent. That, combined with a killing technique perfect for dispatching zombies, makes the jaguar its natural predator.



*Jaguar Woodland Park Zoo by symonty*

Watch this video of a jaguar making short work of a caiman. A zombie wouldn't stand a chance against these big cats.



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here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=158#oembed-2>

It's not just mammalian carnivores that would take apart zombies. On *The Walking Dead*, Rick's horse fell victim to a horde of zombies in season one, but I can only chalk that up to the fact that it was a domestic beast that didn't view humans (even undead ones) as a threat. Wild hooved mammals would not be so passive as to let zombies to get close enough to swarm and overwhelm them.

In fact, hooved mammals are more dangerous to humans than carnivores. Moose [attack and kill more people](#) than bears do every year. They consider humans a threat, but as the largest living deer species, they are not afraid of human-sized creatures. If a zombie

got too close, a [moose](#) would stomp it into an immobile pile of gore without a second's hesitation.

This video shows moose fighting technique, which involves delivering powerful blows with their sharp hooves.

[https://youtu.be/gu\\_zMTQkM1s](https://youtu.be/gu_zMTQkM1s)

And moose are nothing compared to bison. [Bison](#) are a ton of muscle, horn, and hide. They do not tolerate being approached, and would effortlessly gore and trample as many zombies as dared approached them. Watch this video of what a bison can do to a car with a flick of its head, and think about what a zombified human body would look like on the receiving end of its wrath.

<https://youtu.be/ULBuLedK2Nw>

Speaking of hoofed mammals ramming cars, this video of [bull elk](#) will give you some perspective on the size of this large deer species and their aggression during the breeding season. Bull elk are armed with giant antlers with spear-like tips—perfect to impale and dismember a pack of zombies.

<https://youtu.be/tEv-hwjhEiE>

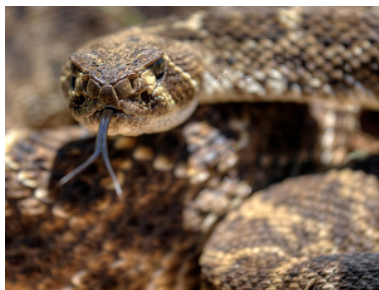
[Mountain goats](#) would probably not encounter too many zombies, simply due to the inaccessibility of the steep mountain slopes they call home. Every so often, however, they do head down to more manageable terrain. Even though they are not large, they can be fierce and are armed with dagger-like horns, just as [this unfortunate hiker learned](#).



## REPTILES: SCALY ZOMBIE CLEAN-UP COMMITTEE

Most North American reptiles—small lizards, turtles and snakes—wouldn't pose much threat to zombies. Ironically, it would probably be [venomous rattlesnakes](#) that would be at most risk from zombie attack. When camouflage fails them, their survival tactic is to draw attention to themselves with a loud rattle, and then hold their ground, striking out at anything that approaches them. With no circulatory system or living tissue, snake venom wouldn't have any effect on zombies, and they'd easily be able to pick up the snake and eat it.

That said, we do have a few reptiles particularly suited for zombie clean-up. Two crocodilian species call North America home: the American alligator and the [American crocodile](#). American crocodiles are extremely endangered and found only in limited areas of Florida, but like California condors, they could benefit from an influx of slow-moving, half-rotten, staggering prey to their wetland habitat.

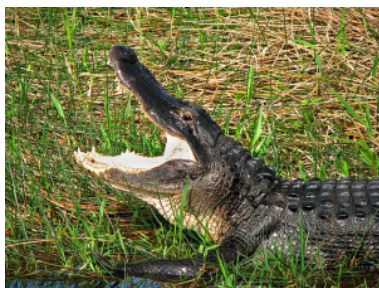


Western Diamondback Rattlesnake (*Crotalus atrox*) by rarvesen, on Flickr

[Alligators](#) are far more numerous and are found throughout Florida, west to Texas, and along the coastal plain wetlands as far north as the Carolinas. Once almost totally wiped out, alligators are now numerous due to protections under the [Endangered Species Act](#), and they sometimes even show up in people's backyards. 'Gators can grow to be 13 feet long and deliver an extremely powerful bite, with over 2,000 pounds of pressure per inch.

Both species are stealth hunters, and can burst from the water at surprising speeds to pluck large prey from the shoreline. They are quite capable of tearing a human-sized meal into bite sized chunks of meat with their toothy, vice-like mouths. Soft zombie flesh would melt in their mouths like butter.

Any zombie that lumbered into fresh water ponds, lakes streams or swamps would likely fall prey to aquatic turtles too, who, with their beak-like jaws, would feast on zombie flesh. Painted turtles, river cooters and sliders of all sorts make carrion a part of their normal diet. To the undead, it would be



Alligator 1, by Bogeskov



a second “death by a thousand bites.” The ubiquitous common snapping turtle specializes in carrion-eating. As the name suggests, it can tear off substantial chunks and swallow them whole. Snapping turtles are even [used by police to find corpses underwater](#) due to their relish for dead flesh.

Common snapping turtles are dwarfed by the [alligator snapping turtle](#), which is the world’s largest freshwater turtle. They can weigh in at more than 200 pounds. Disguised to look like rotten leaves, resting in the murky depths which they live, they are the perfect foil for any zombie that ends up in the water. Check out the massive head on this one.



*alligator snapping turtle by me and the sysop*

## DECOMPOSERS: MASTERS OF THE ZOMBIE BUFFET

Ultimately, it's not the North America's mega-fauna that pose the most threat to zombies. In nature, there are a whole host of tiny creatures whose main purpose is to feed upon and break down the flesh of the dead: the decomposers. Zombies, with their rotting flesh, are obviously not immune to these decomposers (what do

you think causes the rotting effect?), many of which are too small to see with the bare eye. Bacteria, fungi, molds, insects such as fly maggots or flesh-eating beetles, and other invertebrates, all make up nature's [diminutive clean-up crew](#). And it can obliterate a dead body in surprisingly little time. The clumsy undead wouldn't have the dexterity to pick off these decomposers, even if they could see or feel them. It would just be a matter of time. Stripped off all soft tissue, including brains, the zombies would be reduced to hollowed-out skeletons.

Not convinced? Check out this video of a rabbit being consumed down to the bone, by wildlife decomposers, in just a week.



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here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=158#oembed-3>

Here is a time-lapse video showing [Dermestid flesh-eating beetles](#) consuming the flesh off a series of birds for the Natural History Museum of London. These beetle are easy to raise in captivity and only feed on (un)dead flesh, so they pose no harm to the living. Survivors of a zombie apocalypse could raise these beetles by the millions, and drop them onto zombies to do their work. It might take a few weeks per zombie, but they'd get the job done.



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here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=158#oembed-4>

Here are some maggots going to town on a carcass. Flies produce millions of grotesque larvae in no time at all. There would be no way for zombies to escape these flying insects—or avoid being engulfed utterly by writhing, insatiable maggots.



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## ZOMBIES NO MATCH FOR WILDLIFE, WILDLIFE NO MATCH FOR HUMANS

There you have it. Even if zombies managed to feed on smaller, slow-moving animals, or mob and overtake a few individuals of the larger species, it's pretty clear that they're no match for much of North America's wildlife...at least not on a one-on-one basis. In reality, however, the battle between wildlife and *living* humans is not going so well for the wildlife.

Sadly, much of our continent's wildlife has disappeared, and many species continue to decline. [Habitat loss, invasive species and climate change](#) are just some of the human-induced challenges our wildlife are facing. You can [get involved protecting wildlife with the National Wildlife Federation](#) and help make sure that we have a future filled with these amazing species.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

[David Mizejewski](#) is a naturalist and media personality with the National Wildlife Federation.

PART XII

# RHETORICAL ANALYSIS



# 133. Basic Questions for Rhetorical Analysis

## **What is the rhetorical situation?**

- What occasion gives rise to the need or opportunity for persuasion?
- What is the historical occasion that would give rise to the composition of this text?

## **Who is the author/speaker?**

- How does he or she establish ethos (personal credibility)?
- Does he/she come across as knowledgeable? fair?
- Does the speaker's reputation convey a certain authority?

## **What is his/her intention in speaking?**

- To attack or defend?
- To exhort or dissuade from certain action?
- To praise or blame?
- To teach, to delight, or to persuade?

## **Who make up the audience?**

- Who is the intended audience?
- What values does the audience hold that the author or speaker appeals to?
- Who have been or might be secondary audiences?
- If this is a work of fiction, what is the nature of the audience within the fiction?

## **What is the content of the message?**

- Can you summarize the main idea?
- What are the principal lines of reasoning or kinds of arguments used?
- What topics of invention are employed?
- How does the author or speaker appeal to reason? to emotion?

## **What is the form in which it is conveyed?**

- What is the structure of the communication; how is it arranged?
- What oral or literary genre is it following?
- What figures of speech (schemes and tropes) are used?
- What kind of style and tone is used and for what purpose?

## **How do form and content correspond?**

- Does the form complement the content?
- What effect could the form have, and does this aid or hinder



the author's intention?

## **Does the message/speech/text succeed in fulfilling the author's or speaker's intentions?**

- For whom?
- Does the author/speaker effectively fit his/her message to the circumstances, times, and audience?
- Can you identify the responses of historical or contemporary audiences?

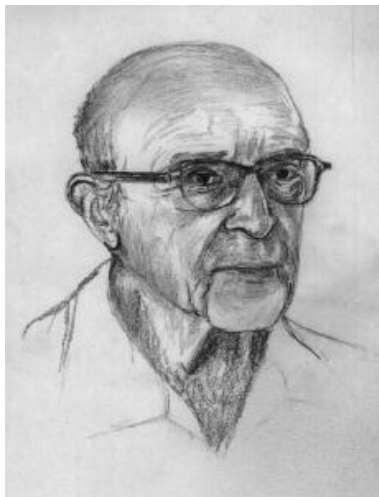
## **What does the nature of the communication reveal about the culture that produced it?**

- What kinds of values or customs would the people have that would produce this?
- How do the allusions, historical references, or kinds of words used place this in a certain time and location?

# 134. Rogerian Argument

The Rogerian argument, inspired by the influential psychologist Carl Rogers, aims to find compromise on a controversial issue.

If you are using the Rogerian approach your introduction to the argument should accomplish three objectives:



Carl Rogers

1. **Introduce the author and work**

Usually, you will introduce the author and work in the first sentence, as in this example: In Dwight Okita's

*"In Response to Executive Order 9066,"* the narrator addresses an inevitable by-product of war – racism. The first time you refer to the author, refer to him or her by his or her full name. After that, refer to the author by last name only. Never refer to an author by his or her first name only.

2. **Provide the audience a short but concise summary of the work to which you are responding**

Remember, your audience has already read the work you are responding to. Therefore, you do not need to provide a lengthy summary. Focus on the main points of the work to which you are responding and use direct quotations sparingly. Direct quotations work best when they are powerful and compelling.

3. **State the main issue addressed in the work** Your thesis, or claim, will come after you summarize the two sides of the issue.

## The Introduction

The following is an example of how the introduction of a Rogerian argument can be written. The topic is racial profiling.

In Dwight Okita's "In Response to Executive Order 9066," the narrator — a young Japanese-American — writes a letter to the government, who has ordered her family into a relocation camp after Pearl Harbor. In the letter, the narrator details the people in her life, from her father to her best friend at school. Since the narrator is of Japanese descent, her best friend accuses her of "trying to start a war" (18). The narrator is seemingly too naïve to realize the ignorance of this statement, and tells the government that she asked this friend to plant tomato seeds in her honor. Though Okita's poem deals specifically with World War II, the issue of race relations during wartime is still relevant. Recently, with the outbreaks of terrorism in the United States, Spain, and England, many are calling for racial profiling to stifle terrorism. The issue has sparked debate, with one side calling it racism and the other calling it common sense.

Once you have written your introduction, you must now show the two sides to the debate you are addressing. Though there are always more than two sides to a debate, Rogerian arguments put two in stark opposition to one another. Summarize each side, then provide a middle path. Your summary of the two sides will be your first two body paragraphs. Use quotations from outside sources to effectively illustrate the position of each side.

An outline for a Rogerian argument might look like this:

- Introduction
- Side A
- Side B
- Claim
- Conclusion

*The Claim* Since the goal of Rogerian argument is to find a common ground between two opposing positions, you must identify the shared beliefs or assumptions of each side. In the example above, both sides of the racial profiling issue want the U.S. A solid Rogerian argument acknowledges the desires of each side, and tries to accommodate both. Again, using the racial profiling example above, both sides desire a safer society, perhaps a better solution would focus on more objective measures than race; an effective start would be to use more screening technology on public transportation. Once you have a claim that disarms the central dispute, you should support the claim with evidence, and quotations when appropriate.

*Quoting Effectively* Remember, you should quote to illustrate a point you are making. You should not, however, quote to simply take up space. Make sure all quotations are compelling and intriguing: Consider the following example. In “The Danger of Political Correctness,” author Richard Stein asserts that, “the desire to not offend has now become more important than protecting national security” (52). This statement sums up the beliefs of those in favor of profiling in public places.

*The Conclusion* Your conclusion should: Bring the essay back to what is discussed in the introduction Tie up loose ends End on a thought-provoking note **The following is a sample conclusion:** Though the debate over racial profiling is sure to continue, each side desires to make the United States a safer place. With that goal in mind, our society deserves better

*security measures than merely searching a person who appears a bit dark. We cannot waste time with such subjective matters, especially when we have technology that could more effectively locate potential terrorists. Sure, installing metal detectors and cameras on public transportation is costly, but feeling safe in public is priceless.*

# 135. Toulmin's Argument Model

Stephen Toulmin, an English philosopher and logician, identified elements of a persuasive argument. These give useful categories by which an argument may be analyzed.

## Claim

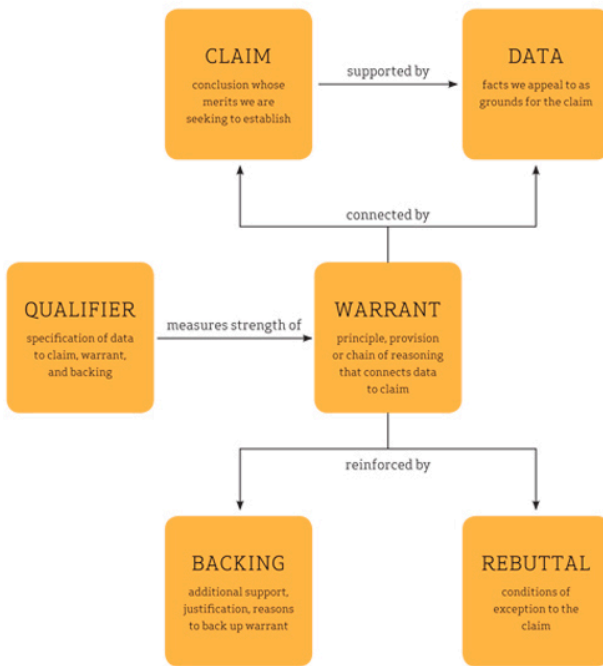
A claim is a statement that you are asking the other person to accept. This includes information you are asking them to accept as true or actions you want them to accept and enact.

**For example:**

You should use a hearing aid.

Many people start with a claim, but then find that it is challenged. If you just ask me to do something, I will not simply agree with what you want. I will ask why I should agree with you. I will ask you to prove your claim. This is where grounds become important.

**Grounds** The grounds (or data) is the basis of real persuasion and is made up of data and hard facts, plus the reasoning behind the claim. It is the 'truth' on which the claim is based. Grounds may also include proof of expertise and the basic premises on which the rest of the argument is built.



The actual truth of the data may be less than 100%, as much data are ultimately based on perception. We assume what we measure is true, but there may be problems in this measurement, ranging from a faulty measurement instrument to biased sampling. It is critical to the argument that the grounds are not challenged because, if they are, they may become a claim, which you will need to prove with even deeper information and further argument. **For example:** Over 70% of all people over 65 years have a hearing difficulty. Information is usually a very powerful element of

persuasion, although it does affect people differently. Those who are dogmatic, logical or rational will more likely to be persuaded by factual data. Those who argue emotionally and who are highly invested in their own position will challenge it or otherwise try to ignore it. It is often a useful test to give something factual to the other person that disproves their argument, and watch how they handle it. Some will accept it without question. Some will dismiss it out of hand. Others will dig deeper, requiring more explanation. This is where the warrant comes into its own. A warrant links data and other grounds to a claim, legitimizing the claim by showing the grounds to be relevant. The warrant may be explicit or unspoken and implicit. It answers the question ‘Why does that data mean your claim is true?’ **For example:** A hearing aid helps most people to hear better. The warrant may be simple and it may also be a longer argument, with additional subelements including those described below. Warrants may be based on *logos*, *ethos* or *pathos*, or values that are assumed to be shared with the listener. In many arguments, warrants are often implicit and hence unstated. This gives space for the other person to question and expose the warrant, perhaps to show it is weak or unfounded. Backing The backing (or



support) for an argument gives additional support to the warrant by answering different questions.

**For example:** Hearing aids are available locally.

**Qualifier** The qualifier (or modal qualifier) indicates the strength of the leap from the data to the warrant and may limit how universally the claim applies. They include words such as ‘most’, ‘usually’, ‘always’ or ‘sometimes’. Arguments may hence range from strong assertions to generally quite floppy with vague and often rather uncertain kinds of statement. **For example:**

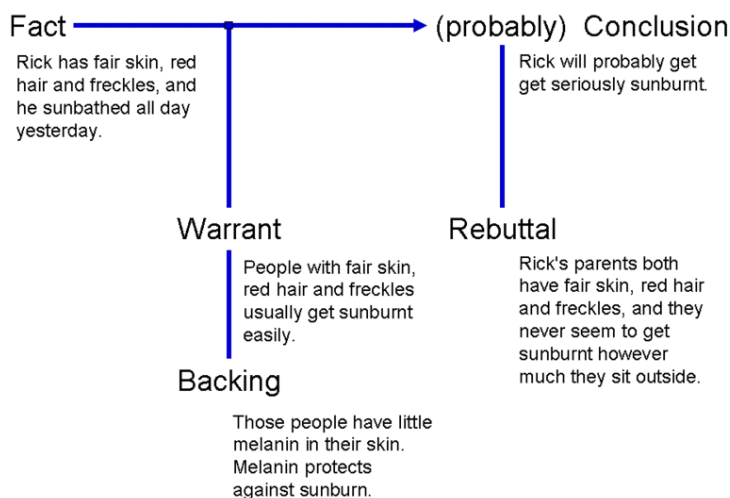
Hearing aids help most people. Another variant is the reservation, which may give the possibility of the claim being incorrect. Unless there is evidence to the contrary, hearing aids do no harm to ears.

**Qualifiers and reservations** are much used by advertisers who are constrained not to lie. Thus they slip ‘usually’, ‘virtually’, ‘unless’ and so on into their claims. **Rebuttal** Despite the careful construction of the argument, there may still be counter-arguments that can be used. These may be rebutted either through a continued dialogue, or by pre-empting the counter-argument by giving the rebuttal during the initial presentation of the argument. **For example:** There is a support desk that deals with technical problems. Any rebuttal is an argument in itself, and thus may include a claim, warrant, backing and so on. It

also, of course can have a rebuttal. Thus if you are presenting an argument, you can seek to understand both possible rebuttals and also rebuttals to the rebuttals. **See also:** Arrangement, Use of Language Toulmin, S. (1969). *The Uses of Argument*, Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press <[http://changingminds.org/disciplines/argument/making\\_argument/toulmin.htm](http://changingminds.org/disciplines/argument/making_argument/toulmin.htm) > [accessed April 2011] See more at: <http://www.designmethodsandprocesses.co.uk/2011/03/toulmins-argument-model/#sthash.dwkAUTvh.dpuf>

# 136. Toulmin's Schema

Stephen Edelston Toulmin (born March 25, 1922) is a British philosopher, author, and educator. Influenced by the Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, Toulmin devoted his works to the analysis of moral reasoning. Throughout his writings, he seeks to develop practical arguments which can be used effectively in evaluating the ethics behind moral issues. The Toulmin Model of Argumentation, a diagram containing six interrelated components used for analyzing arguments, was considered his most influential work, particularly in the field of rhetoric and communication, and in computer science.



Stephen Toulmin is a British philosopher and educator who devoted to analyzing moral reasoning. Throughout his writings, he seeks to develop practical arguments which can be used effectively

in evaluating the ethics behind moral issues. His most famous work was his Model of Argumentation(sometimes called “Toulmin’s Schema,” which is a method of analyzing an argument by breaking it down into six parts. Once an argument is broken down and examined, weaknesses in the argument can be found and addressed.

Toulmin’s Schema:

1. Claim: conclusions whose merit must be established. For example, if a person tries to convince a listener that he is a British citizen, the claim would be “I am a British citizen.”
2. Data: the facts appealed to as a foundation for the claim. For example, the person introduced in 1 can support his claim with the supporting data “I was born in Bermuda.”
3. Warrant: the statement authorizing the movement from the data to the claim. In order to move from the data established in 2, “I was born in Bermuda,” to the claim in 1, “I am a British citizen,” the person must supply a warrant to bridge the gap between 1 & 2 with the statement “A man born in Bermuda will legally be a British Citizen.” Toulmin stated that an argument is only as strong as its weakest warrant and if a warrant isn’t valid, then the whole argument collapses. Therefore, it is important to have strong, valid warrants.
4. Backing: facts that give credibility to the statement expressed in the warrant; backing must be introduced when the warrant itself is not convincing enough to the readers or the listeners. For example, if the listener does not deem the warrant as credible, the speaker would supply legal documents as backing statement to show that it is true that “A man born in Bermuda will legally be a British Citizen.”
5. Rebuttal: statements recognizing the restrictions to which the claim may legitimately be applied. The rebuttal is exemplified as follows, “A man born in Bermuda will legally be a British citizen, unless he has betrayed Britain and become a spy of another country.”
6. Qualifier: words or phrases expressing how certain the

author/speaker is concerning the claim. Such words or phrases include “possible,” “probably,” “impossible,” “certainly,” “presumably,” “as far as the evidence goes,” or “necessarily.” The claim “I am definitely a British citizen” has a greater degree of force than the claim “I am a British citizen, presumably.”

7. The first three elements “claim,” “data,” and “warrant” are considered as the essential components of practical arguments, while the 4-6 “Qualifier,” “Backing,” and “Rebuttal” may not be needed in some arguments. When first proposed, this layout of argumentation is based on legal arguments and intended to be used to analyze arguments typically found in the courtroom; in fact, Toulmin did not realize that this layout would be applicable to the field of rhetoric and communication until later. 1

***Here are a few more examples of Toulmin’s Schema:***

Suppose you see a one of those commercials for a product that promises to give you whiter teeth. Here are the basic parts of the argument behind the commercial:



1. **Claim:**  
You should buy our tooth-whitening product.
2. **Data:** Studies show that teeth are 50% whiter after using the product for a specified time.
3. **Warrant:** People want whiter teeth.

4. Backing: Celebrities want whiter teeth.
5. Rebuttal: Commercial says “unless you don’t want to attract guys.”
6. Qualifier: Fine print says “product must be used six weeks for results.”

Notice that those commercials don’t usually bother trying to convince you that you want whiter teeth; instead, they assume that you have bought into the value our culture places on whiter teeth. When an assumption—a warrant in Toulmin’s terms—is unstated, it’s called an implicit warrant. Sometimes, however, the warrant may need to be stated because it is a powerful part of the argument. When the warrant is stated, it’s called an explicit warrant. 2

**Another example:**

1. Claim: People should probably own a gun.
2. Data: Studies show that people who own a gun are less likely to be mugged.
3. Warrant: People want to be safe.
4. Backing: May not be necessary. In this case, it is common sense that people want to be safe.
5. Rebuttal: Not everyone should own a gun. Children and those with mental disorders/problems should not own a gun.
6. Qualifier: The word “probably” in the claim.

1. Claim: Flag burning should be unconstitutional in most cases.
2. Data: A national poll says that 60% of Americans want flag burning unconstitutional
3. Warrant: People want to respect the flag.
4. Backing: Official government procedures for the disposal of flags.
5. Rebuttal: Not everyone in the U.S. respects the flag.
6. Qualifier: The phrase “in most cases”

Toulmin says that the weakest part of any argument is its weakest warrant. Remember that the warrant is the link between the data and the claim. If the warrant isn't valid, the argument collapses. 2

#### Sources

1. [Stephen Toulmin](#)
2. [Toulmin's Analysis](#)

# 137. Persuasion

## *LEARNING OBJECTIVES*

- Determine the purpose and structure of persuasion in writing.
- Identify bias in writing.
- Assess various rhetorical devices.
- Distinguish between fact and opinion.
- Understand the importance of visuals to strengthen arguments.
- Write a persuasive essay.

## The Purpose of Persuasive Writing

The purpose of persuasion in writing is to convince, motivate, or move readers toward a certain point of view, or opinion. The act of trying to persuade automatically implies more than one opinion on the subject can be argued.

The idea of an argument often conjures up images of two people yelling and screaming in anger. In writing, however, an argument is very different. An argument is a reasoned opinion supported and explained by evidence. To argue in writing is to advance knowledge and ideas in a positive way. Written arguments often fail when they employ ranting rather than reasoning.



## Tip

Most of us feel inclined to try to win the arguments we engage in. On some level, we all want to be right, and we want others to see the error of their ways. More times than not, however, arguments in which both sides try to win end up producing losers all around. The more productive approach is to persuade your audience to consider your opinion as a valid one, not simply the right one.

## The Structure of a Persuasive Essay

The following five features make up the structure of a persuasive essay:

1. Introduction and thesis
2. Opposing and qualifying ideas
3. Strong evidence in support of claim
4. Style and tone of language
5. A compelling conclusion

## Creating an Introduction and Thesis

The persuasive essay begins with an engaging introduction that

presents the general topic. The thesis typically appears somewhere in the introduction and states the writer's point of view.

## Tip

Avoid forming a thesis based on a negative claim. For example, "The hourly minimum wage is not high enough for the average worker to live on." This is probably a true statement, but persuasive arguments should make a positive case. That is, the thesis statement should focus on how the hourly minimum wage is low or insufficient.

## Acknowledging Opposing Ideas and Limits to Your Argument

Because an argument implies differing points of view on the subject, you must be sure to acknowledge those opposing ideas. Avoiding ideas that conflict with your own gives the reader the impression that you may be uncertain, fearful, or unaware of opposing ideas. Thus it is essential that you not only address counterarguments but also do so respectfully.

Try to address opposing arguments earlier rather than later in your essay. Rhetorically speaking, ordering your positive arguments last allows you to better address ideas that conflict with your own, so you can spend the rest of the essay countering those arguments. This way, you leave your reader thinking about your argument rather than someone else's. You have the last word.

Acknowledging points of view different from your own also has the effect of fostering more credibility between you and the audience. They know from the outset that you are aware of opposing ideas and that you are not afraid to give them space.

It is also helpful to establish the limits of your argument and what you are trying to accomplish. In effect, you are conceding early on that your argument is not the ultimate authority on a given topic. Such humility can go a long way toward earning credibility and trust with an audience. Audience members will know from the beginning that you are a reasonable writer, and audience members will trust your argument as a result. For example, in the following concessionary statement, the writer advocates for stricter gun control laws, but she admits it will not solve all of our problems with crime:

Although tougher gun control laws are a powerful first step in decreasing violence in our streets, such legislation alone cannot end these problems since guns are not the only problem we face.

Such a concession will be welcome by those who might disagree with this writer’s argument in the first place. To effectively persuade their readers, writers need to be modest in their goals and humble in their approach to get readers to listen to the ideas. See Table 10.5 “Phrases of Concession” for some useful phrases of concession.

Table 10.5 Phrases of Concession

although	granted that
of course	still
though	yet

## *Exercise 1*

Try to form a thesis for each of the following topics. Remember the more specific your thesis, the better.

1. Foreign policy
2. Television and advertising
3. Stereotypes and prejudice
4. Gender roles and the workplace
5. Driving and cell phones

### Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers. Choose the thesis statement that most interests you and discuss why.

## Bias in Writing

Everyone has various biases on any number of topics. For example, you might have a bias toward wearing black instead of brightly colored clothes or wearing jeans rather than formal wear. You might have a bias toward working at night rather than in the morning, or working by deadlines rather than getting tasks done in advance. These examples identify minor biases, of course, but they still indicate preferences and opinions.

Handling bias in writing and in daily life can be a useful skill. It will allow you to articulate your own points of view while also defending yourself against unreasonable points of view. The ideal in persuasive writing is to let your reader know your bias, but do not let that bias blind you to the primary components of good argumentation:

sound, thoughtful evidence and a respectful and reasonable address of opposing sides.

The strength of a personal bias is that it can motivate you to construct a strong argument. If you are invested in the topic, you are more likely to care about the piece of writing. Similarly, the more you care, the more time and effort you are apt to put forth and the better the final product will be.

The weakness of bias is when the bias begins to take over the essay—when, for example, you neglect opposing ideas, exaggerate your points, or repeatedly insert yourself ahead of the subject by using *I* too often. Being aware of all three of these pitfalls will help you avoid them.

## The Use of *I* in Writing

The use of *I* in writing is often a topic of debate, and the acceptance of its usage varies from instructor to instructor. It is difficult to predict the preferences for all your present and future instructors, but consider the effects it can potentially have on your writing.

Be mindful of the use of *I* in your writing because it can make your argument sound overly biased. There are two primary reasons:

1. Excessive repetition of any word will eventually catch the reader's attention—and usually not in a good way. The use of *I* is no different.
2. The insertion of *I* into a sentence alters not only the way a sentence might sound but also the composition of the sentence itself. *I* is often the subject of a sentence. If the subject of the essay is supposed to be, say, smoking, then by inserting yourself into the sentence, you are effectively displacing the subject of the essay into a secondary position. In the following example, the subject of the sentence is underlined:

Smoking is bad.

I think smoking is bad.

In the first sentence, the rightful subject, *smoking*, is in the subject position in the sentence. In the second sentence, the insertion of *I* and *think* replaces *smoking* as the subject, which draws attention to *I* and away from the topic that is supposed to be discussed. Remember to keep the message (the subject) and the messenger (the writer) separate.

## Checklist

### Developing Sound Arguments

Does my essay contain the following elements?

- An engaging introduction
- A reasonable, specific thesis that is able to be supported by evidence
- A varied range of evidence from credible sources
- Respectful acknowledgement and explanation of opposing ideas
- A style and tone of language that is appropriate for the subject and audience
- Acknowledgement of the argument's limits
- A conclusion that will adequately summarize the essay and reinforce the thesis

## Fact and Opinion

Facts are statements that can be definitely proven using objective data. The statement that is a fact is absolutely valid. In other words, the statement can be pronounced as true or false. For example, 2 +

2 = 4. This expression identifies a true statement, or a fact, because it can be proved with objective data.

Opinions are personal views, or judgments. An opinion is what an individual believes about a particular subject. However, an opinion in argumentation must have legitimate backing; adequate evidence and credibility should support the opinion. Consider the credibility of expert opinions. Experts in a given field have the knowledge and credentials to make their opinion meaningful to a larger audience.

For example, you seek the opinion of your dentist when it comes to the health of your gums, and you seek the opinion of your mechanic when it comes to the maintenance of your car. Both have knowledge and credentials in those respective fields, which is why their opinions matter to you. But the authority of your dentist may be greatly diminished should he or she offer an opinion about your car, and vice versa.

In writing, you want to strike a balance between credible facts and authoritative opinions. Relying on one or the other will likely lose more of your audience than it gains.

## Tip

The word *prove* is frequently used in the discussion of persuasive writing. Writers may claim that one piece of evidence or another proves the argument, but proving an argument is often not possible. No evidence proves a debatable topic one way or the other; that is why the topic is debatable. Facts can be proved, but opinions can only be supported, explained, and persuaded.

## *Exercise 2*

On a separate sheet of paper, take three of the theses you formed in Note 10.94 “Exercise 1”, and list the types of evidence you might use in support of that thesis.

## Exercise 3

Using the evidence you provided in support of the three theses in Note 10.100 “Exercise 2”, come up with at least one counterargument to each. Then write a concession statement, expressing the limits to each of your three arguments.

## Using Visual Elements to Strengthen Arguments

Adding visual elements to a persuasive argument can often strengthen its persuasive effect. There are two main types of visual elements: quantitative visuals and qualitative visuals.

Quantitative visuals present data graphically. They allow the audience to see statistics spatially. The purpose of using quantitative visuals is to make logical appeals to the audience. For example, sometimes it is easier to understand the disparity in certain statistics if you can see how the disparity looks graphically. Bar graphs, pie charts, Venn diagrams, histograms, and line graphs are all ways of presenting quantitative data in spatial dimensions.

Qualitative visuals present images that appeal to the audience's emotions. Photographs and pictorial images are examples of



qualitative visuals. Such images often try to convey a story, and seeing an actual example can carry more power than hearing or reading about the example. For example, one image of a child suffering from malnutrition will likely have more of an emotional impact than pages dedicated to describing that same condition in writing.

### *Writing at Work*

When making a business presentation, you typically have limited time to get across your idea. Providing visual elements for your audience can be an effective timesaving tool. Quantitative visuals in business presentations serve the same purpose as they do in persuasive writing. They should make logical appeals by showing numerical data in a spatial design. Quantitative visuals should be pictures that might appeal to your audience's emotions. You will find that many of the rhetorical devices used in writing are the same ones used in the workplace. For more information about visuals in presentations, see Chapter 14 "Creating Presentations: Sharing Your Ideas."

## **Writing a Persuasive Essay**

Choose a topic that you feel passionate about. If your instructor requires you to write about a specific topic, approach the subject from an angle that interests you. Begin your essay with an engaging introduction. Your thesis should typically appear somewhere in your introduction.

Start by acknowledging and explaining points of view that may

conflict with your own to build credibility and trust with your audience. Also state the limits of your argument. This too helps you sound more reasonable and honest to those who may naturally be inclined to disagree with your view. By respectfully acknowledging opposing arguments and conceding limitations to your own view, you set a measured and responsible tone for the essay.

Make your appeals in support of your thesis by using sound, credible evidence. Use a balance of facts and opinions from a wide range of sources, such as scientific studies, expert testimony, statistics, and personal anecdotes. Each piece of evidence should be fully explained and clearly stated.

Make sure that your style and tone are appropriate for your subject and audience. Tailor your language and word choice to these two factors, while still being true to your own voice.

Finally, write a conclusion that effectively summarizes the main argument and reinforces your thesis. See Chapter 15 “Readings: Examples of Essays” to read a sample persuasive essay.

### *Exercise 4*

Choose one of the topics you have been working on throughout this section. Use the thesis, evidence, opposing argument, and concessionary statement as the basis for writing a full persuasive essay. Be sure to include an engaging introduction, clear explanations of all the evidence you present, and a strong conclusion.

## Key Takeaways

- The purpose of persuasion in writing is to convince or move

readers toward a certain point of view, or opinion.

- An argument is a reasoned opinion supported and explained by evidence. To argue, in writing, is to advance knowledge and ideas in a positive way.
- A thesis that expresses the opinion of the writer in more specific terms is better than one that is vague.
- It is essential that you not only address counterarguments but also do so respectfully.
- It is also helpful to establish the limits of your argument and what you are trying to accomplish through a concession statement.
- To persuade a skeptical audience, you will need to use a wide range of evidence. Scientific studies, opinions from experts, historical precedent, statistics, personal anecdotes, and current events are all types of evidence that you might use in explaining your point.
- Make sure that your word choice and writing style is appropriate for both your subject and your audience.
- You should let your reader know your bias, but do not let that bias blind you to the primary components of good argumentation: sound, thoughtful evidence and respectfully and reasonably addressing opposing ideas.
- You should be mindful of the use of *I* in your writing because it can make your argument sound more biased than it needs to.
- Facts are statements that can be proven using objective data.
- Opinions are personal views, or judgments, that cannot be proven.
- In writing, you want to strike a balance between credible facts and authoritative opinions.
- Quantitative visuals present data graphically. The purpose of using quantitative visuals is to make logical appeals to the audience.
- Qualitative visuals present images that appeal to the audience's emotions.



PART XIII

# WHAT IS RESEARCH?



# 138. Research Essay Project Overview

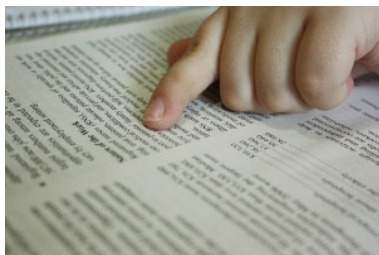
In the remainder of the course ahead, you will select a topic of personal interest to you, define a controversy within that topic, and examine that controversy at length. The final result will be a **2500-3000 word (approx. 10-12 page) persuasive research paper** that argues convincingly for one side of that controversy.

You will utilize **at least 7 sources** that will help you portray your argument. These sources must be incorporated correctly, used appropriately, and cited thoroughly using MLA standards. Sources should represent both the side that agrees with you and those that disagree with your own thesis. Your final draft will need to incorporate **at least one chart, table, or graph**, as well as **at least one pictorial component** (photo, drawing, etc).

You will be given more detailed assignments for each portion of the project as we move through the quarter. You're welcome to peek ahead at upcoming modules to get a sense of what the steps leading up to the final will be. The idea is that we do small chunks here and there, so that the last steps feel more like assembly than writing a huge paper all in one or two days.

# 139. What Is Research?

At its most basic level, research is anything you have to do to find out something you didn't already know. That definition might seem simple and obvious, but it contains some key assumptions that might not be as obvious. Understanding these assumptions is going to be essential to your success in this course (and in your life after college), so I'm going to spell them out here.



First, research is about acquiring new information or new knowledge, which means that it always begins from a gap in your knowledge—that is, something you don't know. More importantly, research is always goal-directed: that is, it always begins from a specific question you need to answer (a specific gap in your body of information that you need to fill) in order to accomplish some particular goal. If you are a very focused, driven person, this will seem obvious to you because you are probably already quite aware of yourself as someone who goes after the information you need in order to accomplish your goals. If you tend to be more laid-back and open to whatever experiences life brings you, you may not be as conscious of yourself as a goal-directed finder of information, but I hope to help you recognize the ways in which research is already embedded in your life.

Research (definition 1) = Anything you have to do to find out something you didn't already know.

Research Question = Your one-sentence statement of the thing-you-don't-know that motivates your research.



Sometimes the answer to your question or the information needed to fill your knowledge gap already exists in exactly the form you need. For example,

1. Does Columbus, Ohio, have a commercial airport?

The answer to this turns out to be yes, and the time to find the answer is about ten seconds. A Google search of “airports in Ohio” produces as its first hit a Wikipedia entry titled “List of airports in Ohio.” A quick glance at the this document shows that Columbus does indeed have a commercial airport, and that it is one of the three largest airports in Ohio.

2. Do any airlines offer direct flights from Kansas City to Columbus?

The answer to this appears to be no, and the time to find the answer is about two minutes. Using Travelocity.com and searching for flights from MCI (Kansas City International Airport) to CMH (Port Columbus International Airport) gets the message “We’ve searched more than 400 airlines we sell and couldn’t find any flights from Kansas City (MCI) ... [to] Columbus (CMH).” Doing the same search on Expedia.com and Orbitz.com yields the same answer. There appear to be no direct flights from Kansas City to Columbus, Ohio.

Often, however, the questions we need to have answered are more complicated than this, which means that answer comes with some assembly required.

3. What’s the best way to get from Kansas City to Columbus, Ohio?



To answer this question requires a two stage process of gathering information about travel options and then evaluating the results based on parameters not stated in the question. We already know that it is possible to fly to Columbus,

although no direct flights are available. A quick look at a map shows

that is also a relatively straightforward drive of about 650 miles. That's the information gathering stage. Now we have to evaluate the results based on things like cost, time and effort required, practicality given the purpose of the trip, and the personal preferences of the traveler. For a business traveler for whom shortest possible travel time is more important than lowest cost, the final decision may be very different than for a college student with a large dog.

Although all three questions require information gathering, for the purposes of this course we are going to call questions like #1 and #2 “homework questions” (because you can find the answer just by going to a single reference source and looking it up) and save the designation “research question” for questions like #3 for which developing a fully functional answer requires both gathering relevant information and then assembling it in a meaningful way.

So for the purposes of this course, **research** (definition 2) **is the process of finding the information needed to answer your research question and then deriving or building the answer from the information you found.**

Research (definition 2) = *The physical process of **gathering information** + the mental process of **deriving the answer to your research question** from the information you gathered.*

Homework question = A question for which a definite answer exists and can easily be found by consulting the appropriate reference source.

Research question = A question that can be answered through a process of collecting relevant information and

then building the answer from the relevant information.

## 140. Discussion: What Research Have You Done Lately?

In your life outside of school, think about some investigation you've done to satisfy your own curiosity. (Keep in mind the difference between "homework questions" and "research questions" as noted in [What Is Research?](#))

- What was your research question?
- What kind of information did you have to gather in order to answer it?
- What sources did you use to gather the information?
- Were you successful in answering the question?
- And, if you're willing to share, what was your answer?

**Post 1:** For your first post, answer the first 4 bullet points (and the last, if you're willing).

Your post should be at least 150-200 words. It doesn't have to be grammatically perfect, but should use standard English (no text-speak, please) and normal capitalization rules.

Posts 2 and 3: Respond to at least two of your classmates' posts.

Responses are weighed as heavily as your initial posting, and should be roughly as long (150-200 words) when combined. Responses should indicate you've read your classmates' posts carefully. Include specific details from the post you're responding to in your reply.

# 141. Research and Other Types of Source-based Writing

**CAUTION:** The fact that we don't have quite enough different words to express all possible variations of information-gathering tasks has created an area of potential confusion for students writing research papers for English classes. The following paragraph is designed to clear that up, so please read it carefully.

Some high school and first-year college writing courses use the term “research paper” or “research writing” to apply to any situation in which students use information from an outside source in writing a paper. The logic behind this is that if the writer has to go find information from a source, that action of going and finding information is similar to research, so it is convenient to call that kind of writing task a “research paper.” However, it is only true research if it starts from a QUESTION to which the writer genuinely doesn't know the answer and if the writer then develops or builds the answer to the question through gathering and processing information.

To help keep that difference in mind, this module will use



**“research”** to refer to the goal-directed process of gathering information and building the answer to a research question, and **“source-based writing”** to refer to the many other types of information gathering and source-based writing one might do.

One important indicator of the difference between research and other source-based writing tasks is when in the process you develop the thesis (main point) of your paper. In a research project,



you begin with a question, gather the data from which you will derive or build the answer to the question, build the answer, and then state your answer in a single sentence. This one-sentence statement of your answer to your research question then becomes your thesis statement and serves as the main point of your paper.

In the research writing process, therefore, stating your thesis happens at the pivot point between research and writing (so roughly half or two thirds of the way through the project, depending on the amount of time spent gathering and processing information).

Any assignment for which you begin by developing your thesis and then go out and gather information to support it is indeed be a source-based writing assignment, but it is not technically research because it begins from the answer instead of the question.

Being aware of this distinction is essential to your successful completion of both research projects and other source-based writing tasks. The work processes that lead to efficiency and success with research projects are very different from the work processes you may have used successfully for other types of source-based papers. Both offer valuable learning experiences, but it is important to understand which type of assignment you are being asked to do so that you can adjust your expectations accordingly.

Think of the most recent writing project you have done that

required sources. Based on this definition, was it a research project or a source-based writing project?



# 142. What Is Research Writing?

Research = the physical process of **gathering information** + the mental process of **deriving the answer to your question** from the information you gathered.

Research writing = the process of **sharing the answer** to your research question along with the **evidence** on which your answer is based, the **sources** you used, and your own **reasoning** and **explanation**.

The essential components or building blocks of research writing are the same no matter what kind of question you are answering or what kind of reader you are assuming as you share your answer.

## The Essential Building Blocks of Research Writing

### 1. Do real research

1. Begin from a question to which you don't know the answer and that can't be answered just by going to the appropriate reference source. That is, begin from a research question, not a homework question.
2. Decide what kind of information or data will be needed in order to build the answer to the question.
3. Gather information and/or collect data.
4. Work with the information/data to derive or construct

your answer.

This is the *research process*, and it happens before you begin to write your paper. No research, no research writing, so don't shortchange this part of the process.

2. **Create a one-sentence answer to your research question.**

1. This will be the thesis statement/main point/controlling idea of your research paper.

3. **Share your answer to research questions in a way that make it believable, understandable, and usable for your readers.** To do this

1. Include plentiful and well-chosen examples from the data/information you gathered
2. Indicate the validity of your data by accurately reporting your research method (field or lab research)
3. Indicate the quality of your information by accurately citing your sources (source-based research)
4. Provide the reasoning and explanation that will let your readers completely understand how the evidence adds up to your answer.





## 143. Discussion: Was Your Recent Writing Project Research Writing or Source-Based Writing?

Think of the most recent writing project you have done that required sources. Based on the definitions found in [Research And Other Types Of Source Based Writing](#), was it a research project or a source-based writing project?

If it's been a while, or you can't remember, you can use writing you did for non-academic purposes for this discussion.

For the project you used to answer this question,

- explain the assignment
- answer the question: Research or source-based writing?
- give evidence to support your answer. Refer to the text in [Research And Other Types Of Source Based Writing](#) to help you find evidence.

**Post 1: For your first post, answer the bullet points.**

Your post should be at least 150-200

words. It doesn't have to be grammatically perfect, but should use standard English (no text-speak, please) and normal capitalization rules.

**Posts 2 and 3: Respond to at least two of your classmates' posts.**

Responses are weighed as heavily as your initial posting, and should be roughly as long (150-200 words) when combined. Responses should indicate you've read your classmates' posts carefully. Include specific details from the post you're responding to in your reply.

# 144. Reading to Write Effectively

## Reading to Write Effectively: Why you need a reading strategy before writing anything

Given all of the reading and writing that we are expected to accomplish as college/university students, it's important to be as efficient as possible when committing our time to these responsibilities. Three of the most important suggestions for approaching reading and, therefore, writing, efficiently are as follows:

**read with a pen in hand; don't expect yourself to remember key concepts/ideas**

- *most of us can't remember everything that we've read and then call it to memory when we're writing. Therefore, reading with a pen in hand prepares you to circle/underline key concepts/ideas in the text you're reading. This creates a way of "tracing" key concepts/ideas throughout the text so that when it's time to recall what you've read and use it to guide your writing, it will be much easier to condense the entire text into a unique, organized, written response. If you don't want to write in the text that you're reading, open a blank Word document for keeping track of key concepts/ideas (and page numbers).*

**write while reading because it's an informal way of "conversing with" the author of the text (i.e. learning about how your writing can contribute something useful to "the conversation" of your resources)**

- in addition to circling/underlining key concepts/ideas throughout your reading process, it may also be helpful to keep a list of questions, connections with other texts/assignments/disciplines, etc. because this list can easily translate into “official” writing. For instance, even if your teacher isn’t requiring a written assignment in response to the reading assignment, if you keep a working document with questions, connections, etc. regarding the reading assignment, you will likely be much better prepared to discuss the reading, not to mention that your notations can easily serve in the short-term as a Twitter/Facebook post (which is helpful for providing others’ responses to your ideas) or in the long-term as an idea for a final paper. For most of us, it’s much easier to have somewhere to start when, eventually, we need to complete a writing assignment based on the reading assignments of the course.

**develop research questions/research key words while reading; most of the time, it’s fairly easy to identify research key words/ create unique research questions while reading actively**

- the notations you keep in the texts you’re reading can help to prevent the frustration of figuring out “what to write about” when it comes time to interpret the reading assignments into unique written work. They give you something to start with – either in the sense that you can extend the ideas you have already written down, or challenge them by researching what’s missing ... either way, you have something to work with, which helps to alleviate some of the anxiety of staring at a blank page.

# 145. How to Read Like a Writer

by Mike Bunn

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

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



There was a Red Coat stationed on each of the theater's four floors, and we all passed the time by sitting quietly in the back, reading books with tiny flashlights. It's not easy trying to read in the dim light of a theatre—flashlight or no flashlight—and it's even tougher with shrieks and shouts and gunshots coming from the stage. I had to focus intently on each and every word, often



rereading a single sentence several times. Sometimes I got distracted and had to re-read entire paragraphs. As I struggled to read in this environment, I began to realize that the way I was reading—one word at a time—was exactly the same way that the author had written the text. I realized writing is a word-by-word, sentence-by-sentence process. The intense concentration required to read in the theater helped me recognize some of the interesting ways that authors string words into phrases into paragraphs into entire books.

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

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

## **What Does It Mean to Read Like a Writer?**

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

You are reading to learn about writing.

Instead of reading for content or to better understand the ideas in the writing (which you will automatically do to some degree anyway), you are trying to understand how the piece of writing was put together by the author and what you can learn about writing by reading a particular text. As you read in this way, you think about how the choices the author made and the techniques that he/she

used are influencing your own responses as a reader. What is it about the way this text is written that makes you feel and respond the way you do?

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



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

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

Would you want to start your own essay with a quote? Do you think it would be effective to begin your essay with a quote from President Obama? What about a quote from someone else? You could make yourself a list. What are the advantages and disadvantages of starting with a quote? What about the advantages and disadvantages of starting with a quote from the President? How would other readers respond to this technique? Would certain

readers (say Democrats or liberals) appreciate an essay that started with a quote from President Obama better than other readers (say Republicans or conservatives)? What would be the advantages and disadvantages of starting with a quote from a *less* divisive person? What about starting with a quote from someone *more* divisive?

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

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

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

## How Is RLW Different from “Normal” Reading?

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

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

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

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

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

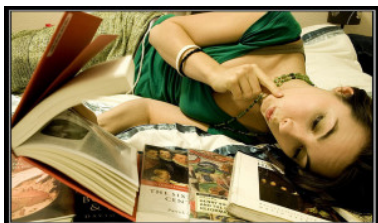
## Why Learn to Read Like a Writer?

For most college students RLW is a new way to read, and it can be difficult to learn at first. Making things even *more* difficult is that your college writing instructor may expect you to read this way for

class but never actually teach you how to do it. He or she may not even tell you that you're supposed to read this way. This is because most writing instructors are so focused on teaching writing that they forget to show students how they want them to read.

That's what this essay is for.

In addition to the fact that your college writing instructor may expect you to read like a writer, this kind of reading is also one of the very best ways to learn how to write well. Reading like a writer can help



you understand how the process of writing is a series of making choices, and in doing so, can help you recognize important decisions you might face and techniques you might want to use when working on your own writing. Reading this way becomes an opportunity to think and learn about writing.

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

When we read like writers we understand and participate in the writing. We see the choices the writer has made, and we see how the writer has coped with the consequences of those choices . . . We “see” what the writer is doing because we read as writers; we see because we have written ourselves and know the territory, know the feel of it, know some of the moves ourselves. (61)

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

## What Are Some Questions to Ask Before You Start Reading?

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

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

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

- Do you know the author's purpose for this piece of writing?

- Do you know who the intended audience is for this piece of writing?

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

## In What Genre Is This Written?



Another important thing to consider before reading is the genre of the text. Genre means a few different things in college English classes, but it's most often used to indicate the *type* of writing: a poem, a newspaper article, an essay, a short story, a novel, a legal brief, an instruction manual, etc. Because the conventions for

each genre can be very different (who ever heard of a 900-page

newspaper article?), techniques that are effective for one genre may not work well in another. Many readers expect poems and pop songs to rhyme, for example, but might react negatively to a legal brief or instruction manual that did so. Another former student, Mike, comments on how important the genre of the text can be for reading:

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

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

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

As you read both kinds of texts you can locate the choices the author made and imagine the different decisions that he/she might have made. While it might seem a little weird at first to imagine how published texts could be written differently—after all, they were good enough to be published—remember that all writing can be improved. Scholar Nancy Walker believes that it's important for students to read published work using RLW because “the work ceases to be a mere artifact, a stone tablet, and becomes instead



a living utterance with immediacy and texture. It could have been better or worse than it is had the author made different choices” (36). As Walker suggests, it’s worth thinking about how the published text would be different—maybe even *better*—if the author had made different choices in the writing because you may be faced with similar choices in your own work.

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

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

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

to include them in your writing—what would the impact be on your potential readers?

## What Are Questions to Ask As You Are Reading?

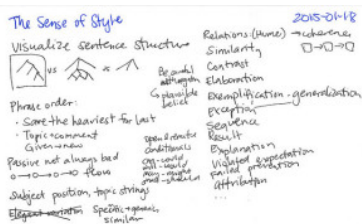
It is helpful to continue to ask yourself questions as you read like a writer. As you're first learning to read in this new way, you may want to have a set of questions written or typed out in front of you that you can refer to while reading. Eventually—after plenty of practice—you will start to ask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

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

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

Think about these two questions again as you read. It may be that you couldn't really answer them before, or that your ideas will change while reading. Knowing *why* the piece was written and *who* it's for can

help explain why the author might have made certain choices or used particular techniques in the writing, and you can assess those



choices and techniques based in part on how effective they are in fulfilling that purpose and/or reaching the intended audience.

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

When reading I tend to be asking myself a million questions.

If I were writing this, where would I go with the story? If the author goes in a different direction (as they so often do) from what I am thinking, I will ask myself, why did they do this? What are they telling me?

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

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

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

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

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

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

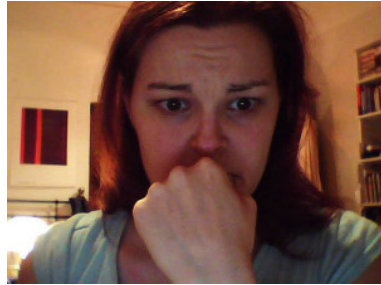
- Are there places in the writing that you find confusing? What about the writing in those places makes it unclear or confusing?

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

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

Notice that in these questions I am encouraging you to question whether aspects of the writing are *appropriate* and *effective* in addition to deciding whether you liked or disliked them. You want

to imagine how other readers might respond to the writing and the techniques you've identified. Deciding whether you liked or disliked something is only about you; considering whether a technique is appropriate or effective lets you contemplate what the



author might have been trying to do and to decide whether a majority of readers would find the move successful. This is important because it's the same thing you should be thinking about while you are writing: how will readers respond to this technique I am using, to this sentence, to this word? As you read, ask yourself what the author is doing at each step of the way, and then consider whether the same choice or technique might work in your own writing.

## What Should You Be Writing As You Are Reading?

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

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

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

## What Does RLW Look Like in Action?

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

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

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

- Do you know the author's purpose for this piece of writing? I hope the purpose is clear by now; if it isn't, I'm doing a pretty

lousy job of explaining how and why you might read like a writer.

- Do you know who the intended audience is? Again, I hope that you know this one by now.
- What about the genre? Is this an essay? An article? What would you call it?
- You know that it's published and not student writing. How does this influence your expectations for what you will read?
- Are you going to be asked to write something like this yourself? Probably not in your college writing class, but you can still use RLW to learn about writerly techniques that you might want to use in whatever you do end up writing.

Now ask yourself questions as you read.

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



Since this paragraph is the very first one, it makes sense to think about how it introduces readers to the essay. What technique(s) does the author use to begin the text? This is a personal story about his time working in London. What else

do you notice as you read over this passage? Is the passage vague or specific about where he worked? You know that the author worked in a famous part of London in a beautiful theater owned by a well-

known composer. Are these details important? How different would this opening be if instead I had written:

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

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

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

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

Think about what effect presenting this personal information might have on readers. Does it make it feel like a real person, some



“ordinary guy,” is talking to you? Does it draw you into the essay and make you want to keep reading?

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

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

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

I use the word “performance” when I just as easily could have written “show.” For that matter, I could have written “old” instead of “antiquated.” You can proceed like this throughout the sentence, thinking about alternative choices I could have made and what the effect would be. Instead of “staff members” I could have written “employees” or just “workers.” Notice the difference if the sentence had been written:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Are you ready to start reading?

## Discussion

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

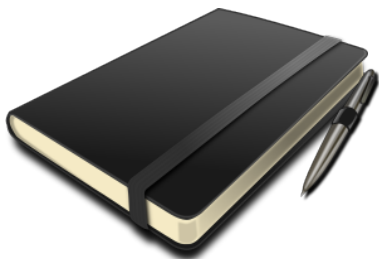
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# 146. Assessment: Reading Notebook #1

This will be the first of several Reading Notebook entries you'll be asked to create this quarter. Each will follow a similar format.

Typically, you'll be finding your own sources for Reading Notebook entries, but for this first one, we'll all be looking at the same source.



- **Please review the article [“How to Read Like a Writer” by Mike Bunn](#) for this exercise.**

In this article, you learned several tools to get more out of your reading activities for schoolwork. We'll amend the first bullet point's advice slightly to “read with a *computer keyboard* in hand” for our purposes.

While reading the “How to Read Like a Writer” source, put this first strategy of “reading with a keyboard in hand” to work. Create a document that includes any or all of the following:

- questions you had while reading
- emotional reactions to the text
- key terms that seem important to you
- what you think the thesis or main idea of this source is
- what you think the intended audience for this source is
- how effective you think this source is
- anything else that comes to mind

This is an informal assignment. Your writing can be in complete sentences, or bullet points or fragments, as you see appropriate. Editing isn't vital for this work, though it should be proofread to the point that obvious typos or misspellings are addressed and corrected. Target word count is 150-300 words for this entry.



PART XIV

# RESEARCH QUESTIONS





# 147. The Qualities of a Good Research Question

Research = the physical process of **gathering information** + the mental process of **deriving the answer to your question** from the information you gathered.

Research writing = the process of **sharing the answer** to your research question along with the **evidence** on which your answer is based, the **sources** you used, and your own **reasoning** and **explanation**.

Developing a good research question is the foundation of a successful research project, so it is worth spending time and effort understanding what makes a good question.



**1. A research question is a question that CAN be answered in an objective way, at least partially and at least for now.**

- Questions that are purely values-based (such as “Should assisted suicide be legal?”) cannot be answered objectively because the answer varies depending on one’s values. Be wary of questions that include “should” or “ought” because those words often (although not always) indicate a values-based question. However, note that most values-based questions can be turned into research questions by judicious reframing. For instance, you could reframe “Should assisted suicide be legal?” as “What are the ethical implications of legalizing assisted suicide?” Using a “what are” frame turns a values-based question into a legitimate research question by moving it out of the world of debate and into the world of investigation.

**2. A good research question is one that can be answered using information that already exists or that can be collected.**

- The question, “Does carbon-based life exist outside of Earth’s solar system?” is a perfectly good research question in the sense that it is not values-based and therefore could be answered in an objective way, IF it were possible to collect data about the presence of life outside of Earth’s solar system. That is not yet possible with current technology; therefore, this is not (yet) a research question because it’s not (now) possible to obtain the data that would be needed to answer it.

**3. A good research question is a question that hasn’t already been answered, or hasn’t been answered completely, or hasn’t been answered for your specific context.**

- If the answer to the question is readily available in a good encyclopedia, textbook, or reference book, then it is a

homework question, not a research question. It was probably a research question in the past, but if the answer is so thoroughly known that you can easily look it up and find it, then it is no longer an open question. However, it is important to remember that as new information becomes available, homework questions can sometimes be reopened as research questions. Equally important, a question may have been answered for one population or circumstance, but not for all populations or all circumstances.

# 148. Assessment: Research Question Task

First, review the 3 resources noted below.

1. This infographic about fantasy cover art illustrates one way of reporting data. From the accompanying notes, you will get a good idea of the research method used, and you should be able to infer (that is, make an informed guess based on relevant evidence) the research question.

- [The Chart of Fantasy Art, 2009](#)

2. This research uses the same pool of sources (cover art from fantasy titles published by Orbit in 2008 and 2009) but collects different data (details of the visual representations of heroines) to answer a different research question. Again, you should be able to infer the question from the answer as represented in the infographic.

- [Changing Fashion in Urban Fantasy](#)

3. Meta-Analysis and Review of the Literature

A meta-analysis is a form of research in which the researcher examines all of a certain type of artifact, in this case all the scientific articles on climate change published between November 2012 and December 2013 in peer-reviewed journals. The purpose of meta-analysis is to identify trends in the available data that would not be visible from any one article alone. A meta-analysis is similar to another type of research

that begins by examining all the artifacts in a certain category: the review of the literature (aka literature review).

- [Scientific Consensus on Anthropogenic Global Warming: A Pie Chart](#)

## **Then, complete this writing task.**

Pick ONE of the above examples of research (“Fantasy Book Covers,” “Heroines,” or “Scientific Consensus on Anthropogenic Global Warming: A Pie Chart”).

For the one you choose, state what you feel the research question was of the author in a single sentence. Then briefly explain what the research method used was. You may need to infer (that is, use evidence and logical reasoning to draw a conclusion about) the research method.

# 149. Choosing A Manageable Research Topic

This is a link to a YouTube video called “Choosing a Manageable Research Topic” by PfauLibrary. The end contains a few “test yourself” questions. Consider WHY the answers are the way they are as you watch.



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

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=178#oembed-1>

## 150. Discussion: Potential Topics

This discussion is going to be in small groups, with 3–4 other people, in order to facilitate more direct interaction.

After finishing this unit's readings, as well as looking through the research essay prompt we'll use to guide us the rest of the quarter, what are your initial thoughts about possible topic ideas? Come up with at least 5 potential ideas. At least one of those should be something "light-hearted"—something you would normally never consider as a possible topic, but still think it'd be fun to play with for a while. Don't tell us which one the light-hearted topic is, though!

For each of the 5 ideas (or more!), tell us the following:

- 1-2 sentences about what it is and why it interests you
- 1-2 questions you have about the topic that **you don't already know the answers to**. These can be small questions or large ones—whatever you would like to find out.

Your post should be about 100–150 words. It doesn't have to be grammatically perfect, but should use standard English (no text-speak, please) and normal capitalization rules.

**Respond to EVERYONE else in your group who has made a post before you.** (That means that the first person to post doesn't have to reply to anyone. The earlier you post, the less work you have to do!)

Of the list of 5 your classmate has suggested, which do you like best as a paper topic? Why? What do you think the potential value of researching this idea further would be? Do you have any initial suggestions for research sources, or ways of narrowing down this idea further? Basically—we're helping one another brainstorm.

Replies should be at least 50 words long each. They should contain serious, thoughtful replies that directly correspond to what your classmate has written.



PART XV

# RESEARCH PROPOSAL



# 151. Managing Your Research Project

## *LEARNING OBJECTIVES*

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

1. Identify reasons for outlining the scope and sequence of a research project.
2. Recognize the steps of the research writing process.
3. Develop a plan for managing time and resources to complete the research project on time.
4. Identify organizational tools and strategies to use in managing the project.

The prewriting you have completed so far has helped you begin to plan the content of your research paper—your topic, research questions, and preliminary thesis. It is equally important to plan out the process of researching and writing the paper. Although some types of writing assignments can be completed relatively quickly, developing a good research paper is a complex process that takes time. Breaking it into manageable steps is crucial. Review the steps outlined at the beginning of this chapter.

Steps to Writing a Research Paper

1. Choose a topic.
2. Schedule and plan time for research and writing.
3. Conduct research.
4. Organize research
5. Draft your paper.
6. Revise and edit your paper.

You have already completed step 1. In this section, you will complete step 2. The remaining steps fall under two broad categories—the research phase of the project (steps 3 and 4) and the writing phase (steps 5 and 6). Both phases present challenges. Understanding the tasks involved and allowing enough time to complete each task will help you complete your research paper on time with a minimal amount of stress.

## Planning Your Project

Each step of a research project requires time and attention. Careful planning helps ensure that you will keep your project running smoothly and produce your best work. Set up a project schedule that shows when you will complete each step. Think about *how* you will complete each step and what project resources you will use. Resources may include anything from library databases and word-processing software to interview subjects and writing tutors.

To develop your schedule, use a calendar and work backward from the date your final draft is due. Generally, it is wise to divide half of the available time on the research phase of the project and half on the writing phase. For example, if you have a month to work, plan for two weeks for each phase. If you have a full semester, plan to begin research early and to start writing by the middle of the term. You might think that no one really works that far ahead, but try it. You will probably be pleased with the quality of your work and with the reduction in your stress level.

As you plan, break down major steps into smaller tasks if necessary. For example, step 3, conducting research, involves locating potential sources, evaluating their usefulness and reliability, reading, and taking notes. Defining these smaller tasks makes the project more manageable by giving you concrete goals to achieve.

Jorge had six weeks to complete his research project. Working backward from a due date of May 2, he mapped out a schedule for completing his research by early April so that he would have ample time to write. Jorge chose to write his schedule in his weekly planner to help keep himself on track.

Review Jorge's schedule. Key target dates are shaded. Note that Jorge planned times to use available resources by visiting the library and writing center and by meeting with his instructor.

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
March 20	21	22 Choose Topic	23 Preliminary research	24 Write research questions and working thesis	25 Write research proposal	26
27	28 Research proposal due	29 Look for sources online	30 Library	31 Evaluate sources; make source cards	April 1 Take notes	2
3	4	5 Finish note cards	6 Organize notes	7	8 Write outline	9
10	11 Outline due	12 Write draft	13	14	15 <i>Off - Trip to NYC</i>	16 <i>Off - Trip to NYC</i>
17	18 Conference with Prof. Habib 2:00	19 Finish writing draft	20	21 Revise draft	22	23 Library?
24	25	26 Finish revising draft	27 Edit draft	28 Writing Center 4:30	29 Finish editing draft	30 Create Works Cited page
May 1	2 Final draft due	3	4	5	6	7

## Exercise 1

1. Working backward from the date your final draft is due, create a project schedule. You may choose to write a sequential list of tasks or record tasks on a calendar.
2. Check your schedule to be sure that you have broken each step into smaller tasks and assigned a target completion date to each key task.
3. Review your target dates to make sure they are realistic. Always allow a little more time than you think you will actually need.

## Tip

Plan your schedule realistically, and consider other commitments that may sometimes take precedence. A business trip or family visit may mean that you are unable to work on the research project for a few days. Make the most of the time you have available. Plan for unexpected interruptions, but keep in mind that a short time away from the project may help you come back to it with renewed enthusiasm. Another strategy many writers find helpful is to finish each day's work at a point when the next task is an easy one. That makes it easier to start again.

## Writing at Work

When you create a project schedule at work, you set target dates for completing certain tasks and identify the resources you plan to use on the project. It is important to build in some flexibility. Materials may not be received on time because of a shipping delay. An employee on your team may be called away to work on a higher-

priority project. Essential equipment may malfunction. You should always plan for the unexpected.

## Staying Organized

Although setting up a schedule is easy, sticking to one is challenging. Even if you are the rare person who never procrastinates, unforeseen events may interfere with your ability to complete tasks on time. A self-imposed deadline may slip your mind despite your best intentions. Organizational tools—calendars, checklists, note cards, software, and so forth—can help you stay on track.

Throughout your project, organize both your time and your resources systematically. Review your schedule frequently and check your progress. It helps to post your schedule in a place where you will see it every day. Both personal and workplace e-mail systems usually include a calendar feature where you can record tasks, arrange to receive daily reminders, and check off completed tasks. Electronic devices such as smartphones have similar features.

Organize project documents in a binder or electronic folder, and label project documents and folders clearly. Use note cards or an electronic document to record bibliographical information for each source you plan to use in your paper. Tracking this information throughout the research process can save you hours of time when you create your references page.

### *EXERCISE 2*

1. Revisit the schedule you created in Note 11.42

“Exercise 1.” Transfer it into a format that will help you stay on track from day to day. You may wish to input it into your smartphone, write it in a weekly planner, post it by your desk, or have your e-mail account send you daily reminders. Consider setting up a buddy system with a classmate that will help you both stay on track.

### *TIP*

Some people enjoy using the most up-to-date technology to help them stay organized. Other people prefer simple methods, such as crossing off items on a checklist. The key to staying organized is finding a system you like enough to use daily. The particulars of the method are not important as long as you are consistent.

## Anticipating Challenges

Do any of these scenarios sound familiar? You have identified a book that would be a great resource for your project, but it is currently checked out of the library. You planned to interview a subject matter expert on your topic, but she calls to reschedule your meeting. You have begun writing your draft, but now you realize that you will need to modify your thesis and conduct additional research. Or you



have finally completed your draft when your computer crashes, and days of hard work disappear in an instant.

These troubling situations are all too common. No matter how carefully you plan your schedule, you may encounter a glitch or setback. Managing your project effectively means anticipating potential problems, taking steps to minimize them where possible, and allowing time in your schedule to handle any setbacks.

Many times a situation becomes a problem due only to lack of planning. For example, if a book is checked out of your local library, it might be available through interlibrary loan, which usually takes a few days for the library staff to process. Alternatively, you might locate another, equally useful source. If you have allowed enough time for research, a brief delay will not become a major setback.

You can manage other potential problems by staying organized and maintaining a take-charge attitude. Take a minute each day to save a backup copy of your work on a portable hard drive. Maintain detailed note cards and source cards as you conduct research—doing so will make citing sources in your draft infinitely easier. If you run into difficulties with your research or your writing, ask your instructor for help, or make an appointment with a writing tutor.

### *EXERCISE 3*

1. Identify five potential problems you might encounter in the process of researching and writing your paper. Write them on a separate sheet of paper. For each problem, write at least one strategy for solving the problem or minimizing its effect on your project.

## Writing at Work

In the workplace, documents prepared at the beginning of a project often include a detailed plan for risk management. When you manage a project, it makes sense to anticipate and prepare for potential setbacks. For example, to roll out a new product line, a software development company must strive to complete tasks on a schedule in order to meet the new product release date. The project manager may need to adjust the project plan if one or more tasks fall behind schedule.

### *Key Takeaways*

- To complete a research project successfully, a writer must carefully manage each phase of the process and break major steps into smaller tasks.
- Writers can plan a research project by setting up a schedule based on the deadline and by identifying useful project resources.
- Writers stay focused by using organizational tools that suit their needs.
- Anticipating and planning for potential setbacks can help writers avoid those setbacks or minimize their effect on the project schedule.

# 152. Steps in Developing a Research Proposal

## *LEARNING OBJECTIVES*

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

1. Identify the steps in developing a research proposal.
2. Choose a topic and formulate a research question and working thesis.
3. Develop a research proposal.

Writing a good research paper takes time, thought, and effort. Although this assignment is challenging, it is manageable. Focusing on one step at a time will help you develop a thoughtful, informative, well-supported research paper.

Your first step is to choose a topic and then to develop research questions, a working thesis, and a written research proposal. Set aside adequate time for this part of the process. Fully exploring ideas will help you build a solid foundation for your paper.

## Choosing a Topic

When you choose a topic for a research paper, you are making a major commitment. Your choice will help determine whether you enjoy the lengthy process of research and writing—and whether your final paper fulfills the assignment requirements. If you choose your topic hastily, you may later find it difficult to work with your topic. By taking your time and choosing carefully, you can ensure that this assignment is not only challenging but also rewarding.

Writers understand the importance of choosing a topic that fulfills the assignment requirements and fits the assignment's purpose and audience. (For more information about purpose and audience, see Chapter 6 “Writing Paragraphs: Separating Ideas and Shaping Content”.) Choosing a topic that interests you is also crucial. Your instructor may provide a list of suggested topics or ask that you develop a topic on your own. In either case, try to identify topics that genuinely interest you.

After identifying potential topic ideas, you will need to evaluate your ideas and choose one topic to pursue. Will you be able to find enough information about the topic? Can you develop a paper about this topic that presents and supports your original ideas? Is the topic too broad or too narrow for the scope of the assignment? If so, can you modify it so it is more manageable? You will ask these questions during this preliminary phase of the research process.

## Identifying Potential Topics

Sometimes, your instructor may provide a list of suggested topics. If so, you may benefit from identifying several possibilities before committing to one idea. It is important to know how to narrow down your ideas into a concise, manageable thesis. You may also use the list as a starting point to help you identify additional, related

topics. Discussing your ideas with your instructor will help ensure that you choose a manageable topic that fits the requirements of the assignment.

In this chapter, you will follow a writer named Jorge, who is studying health care administration, as he prepares a research paper. You will also plan, research, and draft your own research paper.

Jorge was assigned to write a research paper on health and the media for an introductory course in health care. Although a general topic was selected for the students, Jorge had to decide which specific issues interested him. He brainstormed a list of possibilities.

### *Tip*

If you are writing a research paper for a specialized course, look back through your notes and course activities. Identify reading assignments and class discussions that especially engaged you. Doing so can help you identify topics to pursue.

### Possible topics Health Maintenance

Organizations (HMOs) in the news Sexual  
education programs Hollywood and eating  
disorders Americans' access to public health  
information Media portrayal of the health care  
reform bill Depictions of drugs on television The  
effect of the Internet on mental health  
Popularized diets (such as low-carbohydrate diets)

Fear of pandemics (bird flu, H1N1, SARS)  
Electronic entertainment and obesity  
Advertisements for prescription drugs  
Public education and disease prevention

### *Exercise 1*

Set a timer for five minutes. Use brainstorming or idea mapping to create a list of topics you would be interested in researching for a paper about the influence of the Internet on social networking. Do you closely follow the media coverage of a particular website, such as Twitter? Would you like to learn more about a certain industry, such as online dating? Which social networking sites do you and your friends use? List as many ideas related to this topic as you can.

## **Narrowing Your Topic**

Once you have a list of potential topics, you will need to choose one as the focus of your essay. You will also need to narrow your topic. Most writers find that the topics they listed during brainstorming or idea mapping are broad—too broad for the scope of the assignment. Working with an overly broad topic, such as sexual education programs or popularized diets, can be frustrating and overwhelming. Each topic has so many facets that it would be

impossible to cover them all in a college research paper. However, more specific choices, such as the pros and cons of sexual education in kids' television programs or the physical effects of the South Beach diet, are specific enough to write about without being too narrow to sustain an entire research paper.

A good research paper provides focused, in-depth information and analysis. If your topic is too broad, you will find it difficult to do more than skim the surface when you research it and write about it. Narrowing your focus is essential to making your topic manageable. To narrow your focus, explore your topic in writing, conduct preliminary research, and discuss both the topic and the research with others.

## Exploring Your Topic in Writing

“How am I supposed to narrow my topic when I haven’t even begun researching yet?” In fact, you may already know more than you realize. Review your list and identify your top two or three topics. Set aside some time to explore each one through freewriting. (For more information about freewriting, see Chapter 8 “The Writing Process: How Do I Begin?”) Simply taking the time to focus on your topic may yield fresh angles.

Jorge knew that he was especially interested in the topic of diet fads, but he also knew that it was much too broad for his assignment. He used freewriting to explore his thoughts so he could narrow his topic. Read Jorge’s ideas.

Our instructors are always saying that accurate, up-to-date information is crucial in encouraging people to

make better choices about their health. I don't think the media does a very good job of providing that, though.

Every time I go on the Internet, I see tons of ads for the latest "miracle food." One week it's acai berries, the next week it's green tea, and then six months later I see a news story saying all the fabulous claims about acai berries and green tea are overblown! Advice about weight loss is even worse. Think about all the diet books that are out there! Some say that a low-fat diet is best; some say you should cut down on carbs; and some make bizarre recommendations like eating half a grapefruit with every meal. I don't know how anyone is supposed to make an informed decision about what to eat when there's so much confusing, contradictory information. I bet even doctors, nurses, and dieticians have trouble figuring out what information is reliable and what is just the latest hype.

## Conducting Preliminary Research

Another way writers may focus a topic is to conduct preliminary research. Like freewriting, exploratory reading can help you identify interesting angles. Surfing the web and browsing through newspaper and magazine articles are good ways to start. Find out what people are saying about your topic on blogs and online discussion groups. Discussing your topic with others can also



inspire you. Talk about your ideas with your classmates, your friends, or your instructor.

Jorge's freewriting exercise helped him realize that the assigned topic of health and the media intersected with a few of his interests—diet, nutrition, and obesity. Preliminary online research and discussions with his classmates strengthened his impression that many people are confused or misled by media coverage of these subjects.

Jorge decided to focus his paper on a topic that had garnered a great deal of media attention—low-carbohydrate diets. He wanted to find out whether low-carbohydrate diets were as effective as their proponents claimed.

## Writing at Work

At work, you may need to research a topic quickly to find general information. This information can be useful in understanding trends in a given industry or generating competition. For example, a company may research a competitor's prices and use the information when pricing their own product. You may find it useful to skim a variety of reliable sources and take notes on your findings.

### *TIP*

The reliability of online sources varies greatly. In this exploratory phase of your research, you do not need to evaluate sources as closely as you will later. However, use common sense as you refine your paper topic. If you read a fascinating blog comment that gives you a new idea for

your paper, be sure to check out other, more reliable sources as well to make sure the idea is worth pursuing.

## *EXERCISE 2*

Review the list of topics you created in Note 11.18 “Exercise 1” and identify two or three topics you would like to explore further. For each of these topics, spend five to ten minutes writing about the topic without stopping. Then review your writing to identify possible areas of focus.

Set aside time to conduct preliminary research about your potential topics. Then choose a topic to pursue for your research paper.

### Collaboration

Please share your topic list with a classmate. Select one or two topics on his or her list that you would like to learn more about and return it to him or her. Discuss why you found the topics interesting, and learn which of your topics your classmate selected and why.

## A Plan for Research

Your freewriting and preliminary research have helped you choose a focused, manageable topic for your research paper. To work with your topic successfully, you will need to determine what exactly you want to learn about it—and later, what you want to say about

it. Before you begin conducting in-depth research, you will further define your focus by developing a research question, a working thesis, and a research proposal.

## Formulating a Research Question

In forming a research question, you are setting a goal for your research. Your main research question should be substantial enough to form the guiding principle of your paper—but focused enough to guide your research. A strong research question requires you not only to find information but also to put together different pieces of information, interpret and analyze them, and figure out what you think. As you consider potential research questions, ask yourself whether they would be too hard or too easy to answer.

To determine your research question, review the freewriting you completed earlier. Skim through books, articles, and websites and list the questions you have. (You may wish to use the 5WH strategy to help you formulate questions. See Chapter 8 “The Writing Process: How Do I Begin?” for more information about 5WH questions.) Include simple, factual questions and more complex questions that would require analysis and interpretation. Determine your main question—the primary focus of your paper—and several subquestions that you will need to research to answer your main question.

Here are the research questions Jorge will use to focus his research. Notice that his main research question has no obvious, straightforward answer. Jorge will need to research his subquestions, which address narrower topics, to answer his main question.

**Topic:** Low-carbohydrate diets

**Main question:** Are low-carbohydrate diets as effective as they have been portrayed to be by media sources?

**Subquestions:**

Who can benefit from following a low-carbohydrate diet?

What are the supposed advantages of following a low-carbohydrate diet?

When did low-carb diets become a “hot” topic in the media?

Where do average consumers get information about diet and nutrition?

Why has the low-carb approach received so much media attention?

How do low-carb diets work?

## *EXERCISE 3*

Using the topic you selected in Note 11.24 “Exercise 2”, write your main research question and at least four to five subquestions. Check that your main research question is appropriately complex for your assignment.

## Constructing a Working Thesis

A working thesis concisely states a writer's initial answer to the main research question. It does not merely state a fact or present a subjective opinion. Instead, it expresses a debatable idea or claim that you hope to prove through additional research. Your working thesis is called a working thesis for a reason—it is subject to change. As you learn more about your topic, you may change your thinking in light of your research findings. Let your working thesis serve as a guide to your research, but do not be afraid to modify it based on what you learn.

Jorge began his research with a strong point of view based on his preliminary writing and research. Read his working thesis statement, which presents the point he will argue. Notice how it states Jorge's tentative answer to his research question.

**Main research question:** Are low-carb diets as effective as they have sometimes been portrayed to be by the mass media?

**Working thesis statement:** Low-carb diets do not live up to the media hype surrounding them.

### *TIP*

One way to determine your working thesis is to consider how you would complete sentences such as *I believe* or *My*

*opinion* is. However, keep in mind that academic writing generally does not use first-person pronouns. These statements are useful starting points, but formal research papers use an objective voice.

## EXERCISE 4

Write a working thesis statement that presents your preliminary answer to the research question you wrote in Note 11.27 “Exercise 3”. Check that your working thesis statement presents an idea or claim that could be supported or refuted by evidence from research.

## Creating a Research Proposal

A research proposal is a brief document—no more than one typed page—that summarizes the preliminary work you have completed. Your purpose in writing it is to formalize your plan for research and present it to your instructor for feedback. In your research proposal, you will present your main research question, related subquestions, and working thesis. You will also briefly discuss the value of researching this topic and indicate how you plan to gather information.

When Jorge began drafting his research proposal, he realized that

he had already created most of the pieces he needed. However, he knew he also had to explain how his research would be relevant to other future health care professionals. In addition, he wanted to form a general plan for doing the research and identifying potentially useful sources. Read Jorge's research proposal.

Jorge Ramirez

March 28, 2011

Health Care 101

Professor Habib

Research Proposal

In recent years, topics related to diet, nutrition, and weight loss have been covered extensively in the popular media. Different experts recommend various, often conflicting strategies for maintaining a healthy weight. One highly recommended approach, which forms the basis of many popular diet plans, is to limit consumption of carbohydrates. Yet experts disagree on the effectiveness and health benefits of this approach. What information should consumers consider when evaluating diet plans?

In my research, I will explore the claims made by proponents of the "low-carbohydrate lifestyle." My primary research question is: Are low-carbohydrate diets as effective for maintaining a healthy weight as they are portrayed to be? My secondary research questions are:

- Who can benefit from following a low-

carbohydrate diet?

- What are the supposed advantages to following a low-carb diet?
- When did low-carb diets become a “hot” topic in the media?
- Where do average consumers get information about diet and nutrition?
- Why has the low-carb approach received so much media attention?
- How do low-carb diets work?

My working thesis is that low-carbohydrate diets do not live up to the media hype surrounding them. For this assignment, I will review general-interest and scholarly articles that discuss the relationship between low-carbohydrate diets, weight loss, and long-term health outcomes.

## Writing at Work

Before you begin a new project at work, you may have to develop a project summary document that states the purpose of the project, explains why it would be a wise use of company resources, and briefly outlines the steps involved in completing the project. This type of document is similar to a research proposal. Both documents define and limit a project, explain its value, discuss how to proceed, and identify what resources you will use.



# Writing Your Own Research Proposal

Now you may write your own research proposal, if you have not done so already. Follow the guidelines provided in this lesson.

## *Key Takeaways*

- Developing a research proposal involves the following preliminary steps: identifying potential ideas, choosing ideas to explore further, choosing and narrowing a topic, formulating a research question, and developing a working thesis.
- A good topic for a research paper interests the writer and fulfills the requirements of the assignment.
- Defining and narrowing a topic helps writers conduct focused, in-depth research.
- Writers conduct preliminary research to identify possible topics and research questions and to develop a working thesis.
- A good research question interests readers, is neither too broad nor too narrow, and has no obvious answer.
- A good working thesis expresses a debatable idea or claim that can be supported with evidence from research.
- Writers create a research proposal to present their topic, main research question, subquestions, and working thesis to an instructor for approval or feedback.



PART XVI

# PREWRITING



# 153. 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.

Some resources for additional prewriting activities are listed here.

## FREEWRITING

Setting a goal for a short amount of time (5 minutes or 10 minutes are good options), just write anything that comes to mind related to your topic. The goal is to not worry about what comes out of your pen, if handwriting, or keyboard, if typing. 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.

Additional information: [About.com’s “How to FreeWrite”](#)

## LIST-MAKING

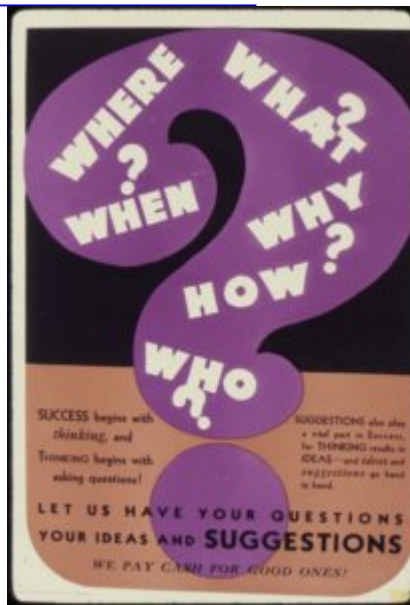


If you're a list-maker by nature, there's no reason not to harness that for academic writing purposes. Jot notes about major ideas related to the subject you're working with. This also works well with a time limit, like 10 minutes. Bonus points—after you've had time to reflect on your list, you can rearrange it in hierarchical order, and create a basic outline quite simply. Additional Information: [Higher Awareness's "List Making – Journaling Tool"](#) CLUSTERING



Click to

enlarge 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. Additional Information: [Edudemic’s 5 Innovative Mind-Mapping Tools for Education](#)



## 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.

Additional Information: [Paradigm's The Journalists' Questions \(7 pages\)](#) Other prewriting strategies exist. Do you have a favorite method?



## 154. Assessment: 3 Research Topic Ideas

In the group discussions recently you've been chatting about initial topic ideas. You've probably gotten a better idea of what you'd actually like to pursue, and perhaps even had new ideas in the meantime.

For this assignment, I'd like you to narrow your options down to 3. For **each** of these 3 potential research topics, draft a paragraph of exploration including the following:

- what the topic is, and why it appeals to you
- questions you have about the topic you didn't already know the answers to
- an overview of some initial quick research you've done on the topic (Google & Wikipedia are fine for our purposes here), including at least one new discovery for you about the issue
- what you'd hope to be able to prove to your reader about this issue in a research essay about it

This is an informal assignment, though matters of proofreading and grammar are always helpful to check over before submitting.

These 3 topics can come straight from your list of 5 that you submitted to the weekly discussion, OR you can come up with 3 new ideas, or any combination of the two.

If you know **for sure** what topic you'd like to pursue for your essay, I'd still like to see three different potential sub-topics explored here. For instance, if you know you want to write about scuba diving, divide that into three directions you might then take: how scuba diving affects tourism, how scuba divers help or hurt natural underwater environments, what safety training scuba divers should have to complete for certification.

**A sample paragraph:** I'd like to consider writing my essay about Cheezits, because I'm always snacking on them while I work on my online classwork. I didn't really know who made them or how popular a snack food they were, beyond the fact that they are readily available in grocery stores. A Google search led me to the brand's website, where I learned they were made by Sunshine, and had a variety called "Scrabble Junior" that I'd never seen before, with letters printed on each cracker. In an essay about Cheezits, I'd like to be able to prove to myself and my readers that these are a better cheese-flavored snack than other options available right now.

PART XVII

# THESIS STATEMENTS



# 155. 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?



A GOOD SIGN...

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.

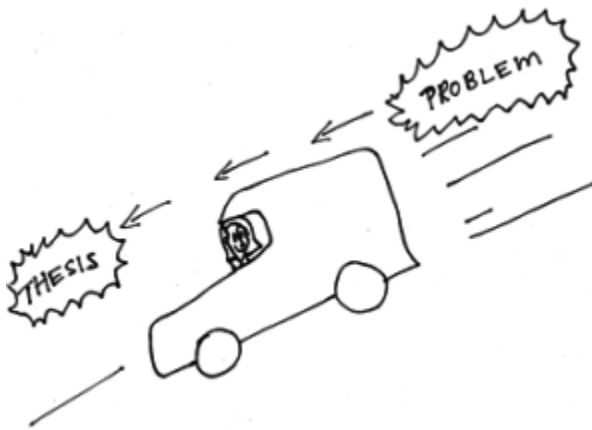


Although \_\_\_\_\_ readers \_\_\_\_\_ might \_\_\_\_\_ assume \_\_\_\_\_ [the commonplace idea you're challenging], I argue that \_\_\_\_\_ [your surprising claim].

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.

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

### Acknowledgements

I'd like to thank my current and former colleagues in the Princeton



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

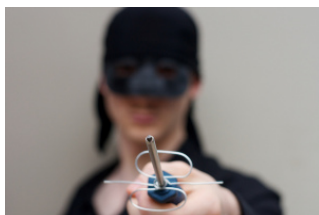
# 156. 5 Ways of Looking at a Thesis

## 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.

# 157. 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.

## 158. Assessment: Topic and Working Thesis

Time to commit! By now you've explored several ideas, and probably ruled out a few easily. Now, though, I'm asking you to pick one particular topic to use for the final research essay project. You can change your mind later, if you'd like—but will have to get permission from me to do so.

For this assignment, I'd like you to do the following:

- Identify which particular topic you've decided on
- Describe a specific controversy that exists within this topic. Identify what the sides are (and there may be more than just 2 sides), and why each believes what it does.
- Define what side you agree with, and why.
- State the overall claim that you want your essay to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt. (This will be your working thesis, and it's welcome to change as you progress in later weeks. It's okay to start simple, for now, and build in more complexity later. I suggest looking at the Thesis statement websites in this module to get started).

### A (Silly) Sample:

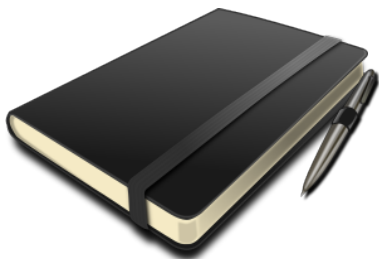
I have decided to focus on Cheezits for my research project. There are a number of serious controversies when the matter of cheese-flavored snack crackers is

discussed, but I'd like to focus specifically on how they compare with their primary rival, Cheese Nips. Supporters of Cheese Nips believe their product to be superior because of the flavor, nutritional value, and cost; supporters of Cheezits use the same criteria to claim the better product. I personally find Cheezits to be preferable in every way, but primarily when it comes to taste. Cheese Nips taste oily to me, and leave a bad taste on my tongue, while the taste and texture of Cheezits is a perfect consistency.

Cheezits are a better food product than Cheese Nips.

# 159. Assessment: Reading Notebook Entry #2

Now that you've got an initial topic and viewpoint in mind, find ONE source that gives you helpful information about this topic. This source can come from anywhere, be any length, and can be the same source you consulted for the [3 Research Topic Ideas](#) task earlier, if you'd like.



Create an entry for your Reading Notebook that includes any or all of the following:

- questions you had while reading
- emotional reactions to the text
- key terms that seem important to you
- what you think the thesis or main idea of this source is
- what you think the intended audience for this source is
- how effective you think this source is
- anything else that comes to mind

This is an informal assignment. Your writing can be in complete sentences, or bullet points or fragments, as you see appropriate. Editing isn't vital for this work, though it should be proofread to the point that obvious typos or misspellings are addressed and corrected. Target word count is 150-300 words for this entry.

Please do include the web link URL to the source you've chosen. You do not have to cite it with MLA or APA citation, though you are welcome to if you want the practice.

Though it isn't mandatory that this reading notebook entry be

about the same source you choose for the Source Evaluation Essay, you may find it very useful later on if it is.

PART XVIII

# EVALUATING SOURCES





# 160. The Seven Steps of the Research Process

The following seven steps outline a simple and effective strategy for finding information for a research paper and documenting the sources you find. Depending on your topic and your familiarity with the library, you may need to rearrange or recycle these steps. Adapt this outline to your needs. We are ready to help you at every step in your research.

## **STEP 1: IDENTIFY AND DEVELOP YOUR TOPIC**

**SUMMARY:** State your topic as a question. For example, if you are interested in finding out about use of alcoholic beverages by college students, you might pose the question, “What effect does use of alcoholic beverages have on the health of college students?” Identify the main concepts or keywords in your question.

[More details on how to identify and develop your topic.](#)

## **STEP 2: FIND BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

**SUMMARY:** Look up your keywords in the indexes to subject encyclopedias. Read articles in these encyclopedias to set the context for your research. Note any relevant items in the

bibliographies at the end of the encyclopedia articles. Additional background information may be found in your lecture notes, textbooks, and reserve readings.

[More suggestions on how to find background information.](#)

## STEP 3: USE CATALOGS TO FIND BOOKS AND MEDIA

SUMMARY: Use guided keyword searching to find materials by topic or subject. Print or write down the citation (author, title, etc.) and the location information (call number and library). Note the circulation status. When you pull the book from the shelf, scan the bibliography for additional sources. Watch for book-length bibliographies and annual reviews on your subject; they list citations to hundreds of books and articles in one subject area. Check the standard subject subheading “—BIBLIOGRAPHIES,” or titles beginning with Annual Review of... in the Cornell Library Classic Catalog.

[More detailed instructions for using catalogs to find books.](#)

[Finding media \(audio and video\) titles.](#)



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here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=193#oembed-1>

## STEP 4: USE INDEXES TO FIND PERIODICAL ARTICLES

SUMMARY: Use periodical indexes and abstracts to find citations to articles. The indexes and abstracts may be in print or computer-based formats or both. Choose the indexes and format best suited to your particular topic; ask at the reference desk if you need help figuring out which index and format will be best. You can find periodical articles by the article author, title, or keyword by using the periodical indexes in theLibrary home page. If the full text is not linked in the index you are using, write down the citation from the index and search for the title of the periodical in the Cornell Library Classic Catalog. The catalog lists the print, microform, and electronic versions of periodicals at Cornell.

[How to find and use periodical indexes at Cornell.](#)

## STEP 5: FIND INTERNET RESOURCES

SUMMARY: Use search engines. Check to see if your class has a bibliography or research guide created by librarians.

[Finding Information on the Internet:](#) A thorough tutorial from UC Berkeley.

## STEP 6: EVALUATE WHAT YOU FIND

SUMMARY: See How to Critically Analyze Information Sources and Distinguishing Scholarly from Non-Scholarly Periodicals: A

Checklist of Criteria for suggestions on evaluating the authority and quality of the books and articles you located.



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here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=193#oembed-2>



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here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=193#oembed-3>

If you have found too many or too few sources, you may need to narrow or broaden your topic. Check with a reference librarian or your instructor. When you're ready to write, here is an annotated list of books to help you organize, format, and write your paper.

## STEP 7: CITE WHAT YOU FIND USING A STANDARD FORMAT

Give credit where credit is due; cite your sources.

Citing or documenting the sources used in your research serves two purposes, it gives proper credit to the authors of the materials used, and it allows those who are reading your work to duplicate

your research and locate the sources that you have listed as references.

Knowingly representing the work of others as your own is plagiarism. (See [Cornell's Code of Academic Integrity](#)). Use one of the styles listed below or another style approved by your instructor. Handouts summarizing the APA and MLA styles are available at Uris and Olin Reference.

**Available online:**

[RefWorks](#) is a web-based program that allows you to easily collect, manage, and organize bibliographic references by interfacing with databases. RefWorks also interfaces directly with Word, making it easy to import references and incorporate them into your writing, properly formatted according to the style of your choice.

[See our guide to citation tools and styles.](#)

Format the citations in your bibliography using examples from the following Library help pages: [Modern Language Association \(MLA\) examples](#) and [American Psychological Association \(APA\) examples](#).

- Style guides in print (book) format:
- **MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers.** 7th ed. New York: MLA, 2009. This handbook is based on the MLA Style Manual and is intended as an aid for college students writing research papers. Included here is information on selecting a topic, researching the topic, note taking, the writing of footnotes and bibliographies, as well as sample pages of a research paper. Useful for the beginning researcher.
- **Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association.** 6th ed. Washington: APA, 2010. The authoritative style manual for anyone writing in the field of psychology. Useful for the social sciences generally. Chapters discuss the content and organization of a manuscript, writing style, the American Psychological Association citation style, and typing, mailing and proofreading.

If you are writing an annotated bibliography, see [How to Prepare an Annotated Bibliography](#).

## RESEARCH TIPS:

- WORK FROM THE GENERAL TO THE SPECIFIC. Find background information first, then use more specific and recent sources.
- RECORD WHAT YOU FIND AND WHERE YOU FOUND IT. Record the complete citation for each source you find; you may need it again later.
- TRANSLATE YOUR TOPIC INTO THE SUBJECT LANGUAGE OF THE INDEXES AND CATALOGS YOU USE. Check your topic words against a thesaurus or subject heading list.

# 161. Understanding Bias



**Bias**

Bias means presenting facts and arguments in a way that consciously favours one side or other in an argument. Is bias bad or wrong?

No! Everyone who argues strongly for something is biased. So it's not enough, when you are doing a language analysis, to merely spot some bias and say..."This writer is biased" or "This speaker is biased."

Let's begin by reading a biased text.

Hypocrites gather to feed off Daniel's tragic death

The death of two-year-old Daniel Valerio at the hands of his step-father brought outrage from the media.

Daniel suffered repeated beatings before the final

attack by Paul Alton, who was sentenced in Melbourne in February to 22 years jail.

Rupert Murdoch's Herald-Sun launched a campaign which included a public meeting of hundreds of readers. Time magazine put Daniel on its front cover. The Herald-Sun summed up their message:

*The community has a duty to protect our children from abuse – if necessary by laws that some people regard as possibly harsh or unnecessary.*

But laws – like making it compulsory for doctors and others to report suspected abuse – cannot stop the violence.

Last year, 30 children were murdered across Australia. Babies under one are more likely to be killed than any other social group.

Daniel's murder was not a horrific exception but the product of a society that sends some of its members over the edge into despairing violence.

The origin of these tragedies lies in the enormous pressures on families, especially working class families.

The media and politicians wring their hands over a million unemployed. But they ignore the impact that having no job, or a stressful poorly paid job, can have.

Child abuse can happen in wealthy families. But generally it is linked to poverty.

A survey in 1980 of "maltreating families" showed that 56.5 per cent were living in poverty and debt. A further 20 per cent expressed extreme anxiety about finances.



A study in Queensland found that all the children who died from abuse came from working class families.

Police records show that school holidays – especially Xmas – are peak times for family violence. “The sad fact is that when families are together for longer than usual, there tends to be more violence”, said one Victorian police officer.

Most people get by. Family life may get tense, but not violent.

But a minority cannot cope and lash out at the nearest vulnerable person to hand – an elderly person, a woman, or a child.

Compulsory reporting of child abuse puts the blame on the individual parents rather than the system that drives them to this kind of despair.

Neither is it a solution. Daniel was seen by 21 professionals before he was killed. Nonetheless, the Victorian Liberal government has agreed to bring it in.

Their hypocrisy is breathtaking.

This is the same government that is sacking 250 fire-fighters, a move that will lead to more deaths.

A real challenge to the basis of domestic violence means a challenge to poverty.

Yet which side were the media on when Labor cut the under-18 dole, or when Jeff Kennett[1] added \$30 a week to the cost of sending a child to kindergarten?

To really minimise family violence, we need a fight for every job and against every cutback.

– by David Glanz, *The Socialist*, April 1993

There are good and bad aspects of bias.

1. It is good to be open about one's bias. For example, the article about Daniel Valerio's tragic death is written for *The Socialist* newspaper. Clearly socialists will have a bias against arguments that blame only the individual for a crime when it could be argued that many other factors in society contributed to the crime and need to be changed. Focusing on the individual, from the socialist's point of view, gets "the system" off the hook when crimes happen. The socialist's main reason for writing is to criticise the capitalist system. So David Glanz is not pretending to not be biased, because he has published his article in a partisan[2] newspaper.
  - Here are some ways to be open about your bias, but still be naughty.
    - (a) Deliberately avoid mentioning any of the opposing arguments.
    - (b) Deliberately avoid mentioning relevant facts or information that would undermine your own case.
    - (c) Get into hyperbole.
    - (d) Make too much use of emotive

language.

- (e) Misuse or distort statistics.
- (f) Use negative adjectives when talking about people you disagree with, but use positive adjectives when talking about people you agree with.
- Can you find examples of any of these “naughty” ways to be biased in Glaz’s article?

2. You mustn’t assume that because a person writes with a particular bias he/she is not being sincere, or that he/she has not really thought the issue through. The person is not just stating what he/she thinks, he/she is trying to persuade you about something.

Bias can result from the way you have organised your experiences in your own mind. You have lumped some experiences into the ‘good’ box and some experiences into the ‘bad’ box. Just about everybody does this[3]. The way you have assembled and valued experiences in your mind is called your *Weltanschauung* (Velt-arn-shao-oong). If through your own experience, plus good thinking about those experiences, you have a better understanding of something, your bias is indeed a good thing.

For example, if you have been a traffic policeman, and have seen lots of disasters due to speed and alcohol, it is not ‘wrong’ for you to be biased against fast cars and drinking at parties and pubs. Your bias is due to your

better understanding of the issue, *but you still have to argue logically.*

## Really naughty bias

4. If you pretend to be objective, to not take sides, but actually use techniques that tend to support one side of an argument, in that case you are being naughty. There are subtle ways to do this.

(a) If the support for one side of the argument is mainly at the top of the article, and the reasons to support the opposite side of the issue are mainly at the bottom end of the article; that might be subtle bias – especially if it was written by a journalist. Journalists are taught that many readers only read the first few paragraphs of an article before moving on to reading another article, so whatever is in the first few paragraphs will be what sticks in the reader's mind.

(b) Quotes from real people are stronger emotionally than just statements by the writer. This is especially true if the person being quoted is an 'authority' on the subject, or a 'celebrity'. So if one side of the issue is being supported by lots of quotes, and the other side isn't, that is a subtle form of bias.

(c) If when one person is quoted as saying X, but

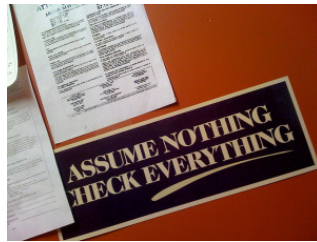
the very next sentence makes that quote sound silly or irrational, that is a subtle form of bias too.

Common sense tells us that if someone is making money out of something, he/she will be biased in favour of it.

For example, a person who makes money out of building nuclear reactors in Europe or China could be expected to support a change in policy in Australia towards developing nuclear energy.

A manufacturer of cigarettes is unlikely to be in favour of health warnings on cigarette packets or bans on smoking in pubs.

Nonetheless, logically speaking, **we cannot just assume** a person who is making money out of something will always take sides with whomever or whatever will make him/her more money.



We have to listen to the arguments as they come up. **Assuming** someone is biased is not logically okay. You have to **show** that someone is biased and use **evidence** to support your assertion that he/she is biased.

[1] Jeff Kennett was the leader of the Liberal party in Victoria at that time.

[2] When you are a **partisan** you have **taken sides** in an argument, or a battle, or a war.

[3] Learning critical thinking (which is what you are learning in Year 11 and 12 English) is aimed at getting you to do more, and better, thinking than that.

# 162. Examples for Reading Notebook #4

Example #1 Research project's topic is "Whistleblowing & the NSA Security Leaks"

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1jlrXKk-9FJJXo0ZC4mql\\_pslhQymtzrIAKhIVL6D0o/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1jlrXKk-9FJJXo0ZC4mql_pslhQymtzrIAKhIVL6D0o/edit?usp=sharing)

Example #2 Research project's topic is "China's One-Child Policy"

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Bb9OebRI-LGyzMFdAOdEE0x5wAb3LNTrBxsa6xE9qNY/edit?usp=sharing>

# 163. Assessment: Investigating Your Source

For the source you've chosen—and it can be **anything** that relates to your final research essay topic—complete the following questionnaire. *It's important to note that not all of these answers may prove helpful to actually drafting the Evaluation Essay.* Instead, you're brainstorming possible content for that essay, and then picking what seems to be the most important features about your source from this initial exploration.

## Source Evaluation Questionnaire

Title of Source:

How you found it:

1. Who wrote/presented this information? (If not an individual, who is responsible for publishing it?) Do a websearch on this individual or group. What do you learn?
2. Where was this source published or made available? What other types of articles, etc., does this publication have on offer?
3. Note one particular fact or bit of data that is included, here. Try to verify this fact by checking other sources. What do you learn?
4. Does the author seem to have any bias? In what way? Why do you suspect this? (Review [the Understanding Bias page](#) to help.)
5. Does the source publication have any bias? In what way? Why do you suspect this?
6. What is this source's thesis or prevailing idea?



7. How does this source promote this main idea? In other words, how does it support its argument?
8. What does this source's primary audience seem to be? How do you know?
9. What is its primary rhetorical mode (logic, emotion, ethics)?
10. Does this source support, oppose, or remain neutral on your own paper's thesis?



PART XIX

# INTEGRATING SOURCES



# 164. Quotation Marks

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- Identify the uses of quotes.
- Correctly use quotes in sentences.

Quotation marks (“ ”) set off a group of words from the rest of the text. Use quotation marks to indicate direct quotations of another person’s words or to indicate a title. Quotation marks always appear in pairs.

## Direct Quotations

A direct quotation is an exact account of what someone said or wrote. To include a direct quotation in your writing, enclose the words in quotation marks. An indirect quotation is a restatement of what someone said or wrote. An indirect quotation does not use the person’s exact words. You do not need to use quotation marks for indirect quotations.

**Direct quotation:** Carly said, “I’m not ever going back there again.”

**Indirect quotation:** Carly said that she would never go back there.

## Writing at Work

Most word processing software is designed to catch errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. While this can be a useful tool, it is better to be well acquainted with the rules of punctuation than to leave the thinking to the computer. Properly punctuated writing will convey your meaning clearly. Consider the subtle shifts in meaning in the following sentences:

- The client said he thought our manuscript was garbage.
- The client said, “He thought our manuscript was garbage.”

The first sentence reads as an indirect quote in which the client does not like the manuscript. But did he actually use the word “garbage”? (This would be alarming!) Or has the speaker paraphrased (and exaggerated) the client’s words?

The second sentence reads as a direct quote from the client. But who is “he” in this sentence? Is it a third party?

Word processing software would not catch this because the sentences are not grammatically incorrect. However, the meanings of the sentences are not the same. Understanding punctuation will help you write what you mean, and in this case, could save a lot of confusion around the office!

## Punctuating Direct Quotations

Quotation marks show readers another person’s exact words. Often, you will want to identify who is speaking. You can do this at the beginning, middle, or end of the quote. Notice the use of commas and capitalized words.

**Beginning:** Madison said, “Let’s stop at the farmers market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner.”

**Middle:** “Let’s stop at the farmers market,” Madison said, “to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner.”

**End:** “Let’s stop at the farmers market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner,” Madison said.

**Speaker not identified:** “Let’s stop at the farmers market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner.”

Always capitalize the first letter of a quote even if it is not the beginning of the sentence. When using identifying words in the middle of the quote, the beginning of the second part of the quote does not need to be capitalized.

Use commas between identifying words and quotes. Quotation marks must be placed *after* commas and periods. Place quotation marks after question marks and exclamation points only if the question or exclamation is part of the quoted text.

**Question is part of quoted text:** The new employee asked, “When is lunch?”

**Question is not part of quoted text:** Did you hear her say you were “the next Picasso”?

**Exclamation is part of quoted text:** My supervisor beamed, “Thanks for all of your hard work!”

**Exclamation is not part of quoted text:** He said I “single-handedly saved the company thousands of dollars”!

## Quotations within Quotations

Use single quotation marks ( ‘ ’ ) to show a quotation within in a quotation.

Theresa said, “I wanted to take my dog to the festival, but the man at the gate said, ‘No dogs allowed.’”

“When you say, ‘I can’t help it,’ what exactly does that mean?”

“The instructions say, ‘Tighten the screws one at a time.’”

## Titles

Use quotation marks around titles of short works of writing, such as essays, songs, poems, short stories, and chapters in books. Usually, titles of longer works, such as books, magazines, albums, newspapers, and novels, are italicized.

“Annabelle Lee” is one of my favorite romantic poems.

The *New York Times* has been in publication since 1851.

## Writing at Work

In many businesses, the difference between exact wording and a paraphrase is extremely important. For legal purposes, or for the purposes of doing a job correctly, it can be important to know exactly what the client, customer, or supervisor said. Sometimes, important details can be lost when instructions are paraphrased. Use quotes to indicate exact words where needed, and let your coworkers know the source of the quotation (client, customer, peer, etc.).



## *Key Takeaways*

- Use quotation marks to enclose direct quotes and titles of short works.
- Use single quotation marks to enclose a quote within a quote.
- Do not use any quotation marks for indirect quotations.

## *Exercises*

1. Copy the following sentences onto your own sheet of paper, and correct them by adding quotation marks where necessary. If the sentence does not need any quotation marks, write OK.

- Yasmin said, I don't feel like cooking. Let's go out to eat.
- Where should we go? said Russell.
- Yasmin said it didn't matter to her.
- I know, said Russell, let's go to the Two Roads Juice Bar.
- Perfect! said Yasmin.
- Did you know that the name of the Juice Bar is a reference to a poem? asked Russell.
- I didn't! exclaimed Yasmin. Which poem?
- The Road Not Taken, by Robert Frost Russell

explained.

- Oh! said Yasmin, Is that the one that starts with the line, Two roads diverged in a yellow wood?
- That's the one said Russell.

# 165. Quotations

## What this handout is about

Used effectively, quotations can provide important pieces of evidence and lend fresh voices and perspectives to your narrative. Used ineffectively, however, quotations clutter your text and interrupt the flow of your argument. This handout will help you decide when and how to quote like a pro.

## When should I quote?

Use quotations at strategically selected moments. You have probably been told by teachers to provide as much evidence as possible in support of your thesis. But packing your paper with quotations will not necessarily strengthen your



argument. The majority of your paper should still be your original ideas in your own words (after all, it's your paper). And quotations are only one type of evidence: well-balanced papers may also make use of paraphrases, data, and statistics. The types of evidence you use will depend in part on the conventions of the discipline or audience for which you are writing. For example, papers analyzing literature may rely heavily on direct quotations of the text, while papers in the social sciences may have more paraphrasing, data, and statistics than quotations.

## 1. Discussing specific arguments or ideas.

Sometimes, in order to have a clear, accurate discussion of the ideas of others, you need to quote those ideas word for word. Suppose you want to challenge the following statement made by John Doe, a well-known historian:

“At the beginning of World War Two, almost all Americans assumed the war would end quickly.”

If it is especially important that you formulate a counterargument to this claim, then you might wish to quote the part of the statement that you find questionable and establish a dialogue between yourself and John Doe:

Historian John Doe has argued that in 1941 “almost all Americans assumed the war would end quickly” (Doe 223). Yet during the first six months of U.S. involvement, the wives and mothers of soldiers often noted in their diaries their fear that the war would drag on for years.

## 2. Giving added emphasis to a particularly authoritative source on your topic.

There will be times when you want to highlight the words of a particularly important and authoritative source on your topic. For example, suppose you were writing an essay about the differences between the lives of male and female slaves in the U.S. South. One of your most provocative sources is a narrative written by a former slave, Harriet Jacobs. It would then be appropriate to quote some of Jacobs’s words:

Harriet Jacobs, a former slave from North Carolina, published an autobiographical slave narrative in 1861. She exposed the hardships of both male and female slaves but ultimately concluded that “slavery is terrible for men; but it is far more terrible for women.”

In this particular example, Jacobs is providing a crucial first-hand perspective on slavery. Thus, her words deserve more exposure than a paraphrase could provide. Jacobs is quoted in Harriet A. Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, ed. Jean Fagan Yellin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987).

### 3. Analyzing how others use language.

This scenario is probably most common in literature and linguistics courses, but you might also find yourself writing about the use of language in history and social science classes. If the use of language is your primary topic, then you will obviously need to quote users of that language.

Examples of topics that might require the frequent use of quotations include:

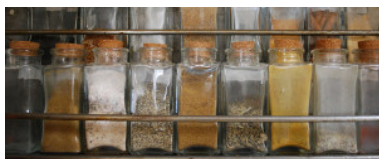
Southern colloquial expressions in William Faulkner's Light in August

Ms. and the creation of a language of female empowerment

A comparison of three British poets and their use of rhyme

### 4. Spicing up your prose.

In order to lend variety to your prose, you may wish to quote a source with particularly vivid language. All quotations, however, must closely relate to your topic and arguments. Do not insert a quotation solely for its literary merits.



One example of a quotation that adds flair:

Calvin Coolidge's tendency to fall asleep became legendary. As H. L. Mencken commented in the *American Mercury* in 1933, "Nero fiddled, but Coolidge only snored."

## How do I set up and follow up a quotation?

Once you've carefully selected the quotations that you want to use, your next job is to weave those quotations into your text. The words that precede and follow a quotation are just as important as the quotation itself. You can think of each quote as the filling in a sandwich: it may be tasty on its own, but it's messy to eat without some bread on either side of it. Your words can serve as the "bread" that helps readers digest each quote easily. Below are four guidelines for setting up and following up quotations.

In illustrating these four steps, we'll use as our example, Franklin Roosevelt's famous quotation, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself."

### 1. Provide a context for each quotation.

Do not rely on quotations to tell your story for you. It is your responsibility to provide your reader with a context for the quotation. The context should set the basic scene for when, possibly where, and under what circumstances the quotation was spoken or written. So, in providing a context for our above example, you might write:

When Franklin Roosevelt gave his inaugural speech on March

4, 1933, he addressed a nation weakened and demoralized by economic depression.

2. Attribute each quotation to its source.

Tell your reader who is speaking. Here is a good test: try reading your text aloud. Could your reader determine without looking at your paper where your quotations begin? If not, you need to attribute the quote more noticeably.

Avoid getting into the “he/she said” attribution rut! There are many other ways to attribute quotes besides this construction. Here are a few alternative verbs, usually followed by “that”:

---

add	remark	exclaim
announce	reply	state
comment	respond	estimate
write	point out	predict
argue	suggest	propose
declare	criticize	proclaim
note	complain	opine
observe	think	note

---

Different reporting verbs are preferred by different disciplines, so pay special attention to these in your disciplinary reading. If you’re unfamiliar with the meanings of any of these words or others you find in your reading, consult a dictionary before using them.

### 3. Explain the significance of the quotation.

Once you've inserted your quotation, along with its context and attribution, don't stop! Your reader still needs your assessment of why the quotation holds significance for your paper. Using our Roosevelt example, if you were writing a paper on the first one-hundred days of FDR's administration, you might follow the quotation by linking it to that topic:

With that message of hope and confidence, the new president set the stage for his next one-hundred days in office and helped restore the faith of the American people in their government.

### 4. Provide a citation for the quotation.

All quotations, just like all paraphrases, require a formal citation. For more details about particular citation formats, see the [UNC Library's citation tutorial](#). In general, you should remember one rule of thumb: Place the parenthetical reference or footnote/endnote number after—not within—the closed quotation mark.

Roosevelt declared, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself" (Roosevelt, Public Papers 11).

Roosevelt declared, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself."<sup>1</sup>

## How much should I quote?

As few words as possible. Remember, your paper should primarily contain your own words, so quote only the most pithy and memorable parts of sources. Here are three guidelines for selecting quoted material judiciously.



## 1. Excerpt fragments.

Sometimes, you should quote short fragments, rather than whole sentences. Suppose you interviewed Jane Doe about her reaction to John F. Kennedy's assassination. She commented:

"I couldn't believe it. It was just unreal and so sad. It was just unbelievable. I had never experienced such denial. I don't know why I felt so strongly. Perhaps it was because JFK was more to me than a president. He represented the hopes of young people everywhere."

You could quote all of Jane's comments, but her first three sentences are fairly redundant. You might instead want to quote Jane when she arrives at the ultimate reason for her strong emotions:

Jane Doe grappled with grief and disbelief. She had viewed JFK, not just as a national figurehead, but as someone who "represented the hopes of young people everywhere."

## 2. Excerpt those fragments carefully!

Quoting the words of others carries a big responsibility. Misquoting misrepresents the ideas of others. Here's a classic example of a misquote:

John Adams has often been quoted as having said: "This would be the best of all possible worlds if there were no religion in it."

John Adams did, in fact, write the above words. But if you see those words in context, the meaning changes entirely. Here's the rest of the quotation:

Twenty times, in the course of my late reading, have I been on the

point of breaking out, ‘this would be the best of all possible worlds, if there were no religion in it!!!!’ But in this exclamation, I should have been as fanatical as Bryant or Cleverly. Without religion, this world would be something not fit to be mentioned in public company—I mean hell.

As you can see from this example, context matters!

This example is from Paul F. Boller, Jr. and John George, *They Never Said It: A Book of Fake Quotes, Misquotes, and Misleading Attributions* (Oxford University Press, 1989).

### 3. Use block quotations sparingly.

There may be times when you need to quote long passages. However, you should use block quotations only when you fear that omitting any words will destroy the integrity of the passage. If that passage exceeds four lines (some sources say five), then set it off as a block quotation.

Here are a few general tips for setting off your block quotation—to be sure you are handling block quotes correctly in papers for different academic disciplines, check the index of the citation style guide you are using:

1. Set up a block quotation with your own words followed by a colon.
2. Indent. You normally indent 4-5 spaces for the start of a paragraph. When setting up a block quotation, indent the entire paragraph once from the left-hand margin.
3. Single space or double space within the block quotation, depending on the style guidelines of your discipline (MLA, CSE, APA, Chicago, etc.).
4. Do not use quotation marks at the beginning or end of the block quote—the indentation is what indicates that it’s a quote.

5. Place parenthetical citation according to your style guide (usually after the period following the last sentence of the quote).
6. Follow up a block quotation with your own words.

So, using the above example from John Adams, here's how you might include a block quotation:

After reading several doctrinally rigid tracts, John Adams recalled the zealous ranting of his former teacher, Joseph Cleverly, and minister, Lemuel Bryant. He expressed his ambivalence toward religion in an 1817 letter to Thomas Jefferson:

Twenty times, in the course of my late reading, have I been on the point of breaking out, 'this would be the best of all possible worlds, if there were no religion in it!!!!' But in this exclamation, I should have been as fanatical as Bryant or Cleverly. Without religion, this world would be something not fit to be mentioned in public company—I mean hell.

Adams clearly appreciated religion, even if he often questioned its promotion.

## How do I combine quotation marks with other punctuation marks?

It can be confusing when you start combining quotation marks with other punctuation marks. You should consult a style manual for complicated situations, but the following two rules apply to most cases:

- 1) Keep periods and commas within quotation

marks.

So, for example:

According to Professor Jones, Lincoln “feared the spread of slavery,” but many of his aides advised him to “watch and wait.”

In the above example, both the comma and period were enclosed in the quotation marks. The main exception to this rule involves the use of internal citations, which always precede the last period of the sentence. For example:

According to Professor Jones, Lincoln “feared the spread of slavery,” but many of his aides advised him to “watch and wait” (Jones 143).

Note, however, that the period remains inside the quotation marks when your citation style involved superscript footnotes or endnotes. For example:

According to Professor Jones, Lincoln “feared the spread of slavery,” but many of his aides advised him to “watch and wait.”<sup>2</sup>

2) Place all other punctuation marks (colons, semicolons, exclamation marks, question marks) outside the quotation marks, except when they were part of the original quotation.

Take a look at the following examples:

The student wrote that the U. S. Civil War “finally ended around 1900”!

The coach yelled, “Run!”

In the first example, the author placed the exclamation point outside the quotation mark because she added it herself to emphasize the absurdity of the student’s comment. The student’s original comment had not included an exclamation mark. In the

second example, the exclamation mark remains within the quotation mark because it is indicating the excited tone in which the coach yelled the command. Thus, the exclamation mark is considered to be part of the original quotation.

## How do I indicate quotations within quotations?

If you are quoting a passage that contains a quotation, then you use single quotation marks for the internal quotation. Quite rarely, you quote a passage that has a quotation within a quotation. In that rare instance, you would use double quotation marks for the second internal quotation.

Here's an example of a quotation within a quotation:

In "The Emperor's New Clothes," Hans Christian Andersen wrote, "But the Emperor has nothing on at all!" cried a little child."

Remember to consult your style guide to determine how to properly cite a quote within a quote.

## When do I use those three dots ( . . . )?

Whenever you want to leave out material from within a quotation, you need to use an ellipsis, which is a series of three periods, each of which should be preceded and followed by a space. So, an ellipsis in this sentence would look like . . . this. There are a few rules to follow when using ellipses:

1. Be sure that you don't fundamentally change the

meaning of the quotation by omitting material.

Take a look at the following example: “The Writing Center is located on the UNC campus and serves the entire UNC community.”

“The Writing Center . . . serves the entire UNC community.”

The reader’s understanding of the Writing Center’s mission to serve the UNC community is not affected by omitting the information about its location.

## **2. Do not use ellipses at the beginning or ending of quotations, unless it’s important for the reader to know that the quotation was truncated.**

For example, using the above example, you would NOT need an ellipsis in either of these situations:

“The Writing Center is located on the UNC campus . . .”

The Writing Center ” . . . serves the entire UNC community.”

## **3. Use punctuation marks in combination with ellipses when removing material from the end of sentences or clauses.**

For example, if you take material from the end of a sentence, keep the period in as usual.

“The boys ran to school, forgetting their lunches and books. Even though they were out of breath, they made it on time.”

“The boys ran to school. . . . Even though they were out of breath, they made it on time.”

Likewise, if you excerpt material at the end of clause that ends in a comma, retain the comma.

“The red car came to a screeching halt that was heard by nearby pedestrians, but no one was hurt.”

“The red car came to a screeching halt . . . , but no one was hurt.”



**Is it ever  
okay to insert my own words or change words in  
a quotation?**

Sometimes it is necessary for clarity and flow to alter a word or words within a quotation. You should make such changes rarely. In order to alert your reader to the changes you've made, you should always bracket the altered words. Here are a few examples of situations when you might need brackets.

## 1. Changing verb tense or pronouns in order to be consistent with the rest of the sentence.

Suppose you were quoting a woman who, when asked about her experiences immigrating to the United States, commented “nobody understood me.” You might write:

Esther Hansen felt that when she came to the United States “nobody understood [her].”

In the above example, you’ve changed “me” to “her” in order to keep the entire passage in third person. However, you could avoid the need for this change by simply rephrasing:

“Nobody understood me,” recalled Danish immigrant Esther Hansen.

## 2. Including supplemental information that your reader needs in order to understand the quotation.

For example, if you were quoting someone’s nickname, you might want to let your reader know the full name of that person in brackets.

“The principal of the school told Billy [William Smith] that his contract would be terminated.”

Similarly, if a quotation referenced an event with which the reader might be unfamiliar, you could identify that event in brackets.

“We completely revised our political strategies after the strike [of 1934].”



### 3. Indicating the use of nonstandard grammar or spelling.

In rare situations, you may quote from a text that has nonstandard grammar, spelling, or word choice. In such cases, you may want to insert [sic], which means “thus” or “so” in Latin. Using [sic] alerts your reader to the fact that this nonstandard language is not the result of a typo on your part. Always italicize “sic” and enclose it in brackets. There is no need to put a period at the end. Here’s an example of when you might use [sic]:

Twelve-year-old Betsy Smith wrote in her diary, “Father is afraid that he will be guilty of beach [sic] of contract.”

Here [sic] indicates that the original author wrote “beach of contract,” not breach of contract, which is the accepted terminology.

### 4. Do not overuse brackets!

For example, it is not necessary to bracket capitalization changes that you make at the beginning of sentences. For example, suppose you were going to use part of this quotation:

“We never looked back, but the memory of our army days remained with us the rest of our lives.”

If you wanted to begin a sentence with an excerpt from the middle of this quotation, there would be no need to bracket your capitalization changes.

“The memory of our army days remained with us the rest of our lives,” commented Joe Brown, a World War II veteran.

Not

“[T]he memory of our army days remained with us the rest of our lives,” commented Joe Brown, a World War II veteran.

## 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 Library's citation tutorial](#).

Barzun, Jacques and Henry F. Graff. *The Modern Researcher*. 6th Edition. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 2004.

Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *The Craft of Research*, 2nd Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Gibaldi, Joseph. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 6th Edition. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2003.

Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 6th Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

# 166. Using Sources Blending Source Material with Your Own Work

When working with sources, many students worry they are simply regurgitating ideas that others formulated. That is why it is important for you to develop your own assertions, organize your findings so that your own ideas are still the thrust of the paper, and take care not to rely too much on any one source, or your paper's content might be controlled too heavily by that source.

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

*Blend sources with your assertions.* Organize your sources before and as you write so that they blend, even within paragraphs. Your paper—both globally and at the paragraph level—should reveal relationships among your sources, and should also reveal the relationships between your own ideas and those of your sources.

*Write an original introduction and conclusion.* As much as is practical, make the paper's introduction and conclusion your own ideas or your own synthesis of the ideas inherent in your research. Use sources minimally in your introduction and conclusion.

*Open and close paragraphs with originality.* In general, use the openings and closing of your paragraphs to reveal your work—"enclose" your sources among your assertions. At a minimum, create your own topic sentences and wrap-up sentences for paragraphs.

*Use transparent rhetorical strategies.* When appropriate, outwardly practice such rhetorical strategies as analysis, synthesis, comparison, contrast, summary, description, definition, hierarchical structure, evaluation, hypothesis, generalization,

classification, and even narration. Prove to your reader that you are thinking as you write.

Also, you must clarify where your own ideas end and the cited information begins. Part of your job is to help your reader draw the line between these two things, often by the way you create context for the cited information. A phrase such as “A 1979 study revealed that . . .” is an obvious announcement of citation to come. Another recommended technique is the insertion of the author’s name into the text to announce the beginning of your cited information. You may worry that you are not allowed to give the actual names of sources you have studied in the paper’s text, but just the opposite is true. In fact, the more respectable a source you cite, the more impressed your reader is likely to be with your material while reading. If you note that the source is the NASA Science website or an article by Stephen Jay Gould or a recent edition of *The Wall Street Journal* right in your text, you offer your readers immediate context without their having to guess or flip to the references page to look up the source.

What follows is an excerpt from a political science paper that clearly and admirably draws the line between writer and cited information:

The above political upheaval illuminates the reasons behind the growing Iranian hatred of foreign interference; as a result of this hatred, three enduring geopolitical patterns have evolved in Iran, as noted by John Limbert. First . . .

Note how the writer begins by redefining her previous paragraph’s topic (political upheaval), then connects this to Iran’s hatred of foreign interference, then suggests a causal relationship and ties her ideas into John Limbert’s analysis—thereby announcing that a synthesis of Limbert’s work is coming. This writer’s work also becomes more credible and meaningful because, right in the text, she announces the name of a person who is a recognized authority in the field. Even in this short excerpt, it is obvious that this writer is using proper citation and backing up her own assertions with confidence and style.

# 167. Using Sources Creatively

## Using Sources Creatively

Heather Logan

([printable version here](#))



When writing papers that require the use of outside source material, it is often tempting to cite only direct quotations from your sources. If, however, this is the only method of citation you choose, your paper will become nothing more than a series of quotations linked together by a few connecting words. Your paper will seem to be a collection of others' thoughts and will contain little thinking on your part.

To avoid falling into this trap, follow a few simple pointers:

- **Avoid using long quotations merely as space-fillers.** While this is an attractive option when faced with a ten-page paper, the overuse of long quotations gives the reader the impression you cannot think for yourself.
- **Don't use only direct quotations.** Try using paraphrases in addition to your direct quotations. To the reader, the effective use of paraphrases indicates that you took the time to think about the meaning behind the quote's words. (For further assistance see our materials on "[Using Paraphrases](#).")
- When introducing direct quotations, try to **use a variety of verbs in your signal phrases**. Don't always rely on stock verbs such as "states" or "says." Think for a little while about the purpose of your quotation and then choose a context-appropriate verb.

Also, when using direct quotations try qualifying them in a novel or interesting manner. Depending on the system of documentation you're using, the signal phrases don't always have to introduce the quotation.

For example, instead of saying:

“None of them knew the color of the sky” is the opening line of Stephen Crane’s short story, “The Open Boat” (339). This implies the idea that “all sense of certainty” in the lives of these men is gone (Wolford 18).

Try saying:

“None of them knew the color of the sky,” the opening line of Stephen Crane’s, “The Open Boat,” implies that “all sense of certainty” in the lives of these men is gone (Crane 339; Wolford 18).

The combination of these two sentences into one is something different. It shows thought on the writer’s part in how to combine direct quotations in an interesting manner.

# 168. Assessment: Practice Quoting

Responsible academic writing involves a good deal of direct quotation from sources. Let's practice that now, to make sure that we've got the finer points figured out by the time the essay is due.

Find a quote from the original article that you think will serve you well in your Source Evaluation Essay.

- Include an introductory “signal” phrase that cues us in on the context for the quote, and then the quote itself. Follow this quote with a phrase or sentence in your own words that summarizes, interprets, or explains the quote in your own words.

This 3-step process is sometimes referred to as a “**quote sandwich**” and is useful for every time you'd like to incorporate a quote into an academic essay you're writing.

If you have any questions at all about using quotations in your writing, please include them in your submission.

This work is just a draft—you may choose to use it or not in the final version of your essay at your discretion.



# 169. When to Quote & When to Paraphrase

“When to Quote and When to Paraphrase” was written by Brianna Jerman

Academic writing requires authors to connect information from outside sources to their own ideas in order to establish credibility and produce an effective argument.

Sometimes, the rules surrounding source integration and plagiarism may seem confusing, so many new writers err on the side of caution by using the simplest form of integration: direct quotation. However, using direct quotes is not always the best way to use a source. Paraphrasing or summarizing a text is sometimes a more effective means of supporting a writer’s argument than directly quoting. Taking into consideration the purpose of their own writing and the purpose of utilizing the outside source, authors should seek to vary the ways in which they work sources into their own writing.

Paraphrasing and quoting are two of the three ways an author can integrate sources. The two methods are closely related, and therefore, can sometimes be confused with one another. Quoting borrows the exact wording used in a source and is indicated by placing quotes around the borrowed material. Paraphrasing, on the other hand, borrows an idea found in a shorter passage but communicates this idea using different words and word order. While it is acceptable to loosely follow a similar structure, paraphrasing requires more than simply changing a few of the original words to synonyms. Both paraphrasing and directly quoting have their merit, but they should be used at different times for different purposes. An author chooses to use one of these strategies depending on why the source is being used and what information the source provides.



## When to Paraphrase

Paraphrasing provides an author the opportunity to tailor the passage for the purpose of his or her own essay, which cannot always be done when using a direct quote. Paraphrasing should be used to

- Further explain or simplify a passage that may be difficult to understand. It could be that the topic, such as the process of extracting stem cells, is particularly difficult to follow, or that the author has used language that further complicates the topic. In such situations, paraphrasing allows an author to clarify or simplify a passage so the audience can better understand the idea.
- Establish the credibility of the author. In connection to the above point, paraphrasing a complicated passage can help the author establish trust with his or her audience. If an author directly quotes a difficult passage without analysis or further explanation, it may appear that he or she does not understand the idea. Paraphrasing not only clarifies the idea in the passage but also illustrates that the writer, since he or she can articulate this difficult message to the reader, is knowledgeable about the topic and should be trusted.
- Maintain the flow of the writing. Each author has a unique voice, and using direct quotes can interrupt this voice. Too many quotes can make an essay sound choppy and difficult to follow. Paraphrasing can help communicate an important idea in a passage or source without interrupting the flow of the essay.
- Eliminate less relevant information. Since paraphrasing is written using the author's own words, he or she can be more selective in what information from a passage should be included or omitted. While an author should not manipulate a passage unnecessarily, paraphrasing allows an author to leave

out unrelated details that would have been part of a direct quote.

- Communicate relevant statistics and numerical data. A lot of times, sources offer statistical information about a topic that an author may find necessary to developing his or her own argument. For example, statistics about the percentage of mothers who work more than one job may be useful to explaining how the economy has affected children rearing practices. Directly quoting statistics such as this should be avoided.

## When to Quote

Direct quotes should be used sparingly, but when they are used, they can be a powerful rhetorical tool. As a rule, avoid using long quotes when possible, especially those longer than three lines. When quotes are employed, they should be used to

- Provide indisputable evidence of an incredible claim. Directly quoting a source can show the audience exactly what the source says so there is not suspicion of misinterpretation on the author's part.
- Communicate an idea that is stated in a particularly striking or unique way. A passage should be quoted if the source explains an idea in the best way possible or in a way that cannot be reworded. Additionally, quoting should be used when the original passage is particularly moving or striking.
- Serve as a passage for analysis. If an author is going to analyze the quote or passage, the exact words should be included in the essay either before or following the author's analysis.
- Provide direct evidence for or proof of an author's own claim. An author can use a direct quote as evidence for a claim he or she makes. The direct quote should follow the author's claim

and a colon, which indicates that the following passage is evidence of the statement that precedes it.

- Support or clarify information you've already reported from a source. Similar to the above principle, an author can use a direct quote as further evidence or to emphasize a claim found in the source. This strategy should be used when an idea from a source is particularly important to an author's own work.
- Provide a definition of a new or unfamiliar term or phrase. When using a term that is used or coined by the source's author or that is unfamiliar to most people, use direct quotes to show the exact meaning of the phrase or word according to the original source.

# 170. Discussion: Practice

## Paraphrasing

Academic writing also involves heavy use of paraphrasing sources. Paraphrasing is actually much more common than quoting, particularly in APA-style writing.

Paraphrasing has several advantages:

- it lets you keep a consistent tone and voice throughout the essay
- it demonstrates your mastery of the concepts coming from outside sources
- it lets you be flexible in wording and vocabulary to best meet the needs of your readers

Paraphrasing seems simple on the surface: it's just putting another author's ideas into your own original words. In practice, though, this is one of the most challenging aspects of writing academic work.

To help us all feel more comfortable and confident with our paraphrasing skills, let's practice it here.

In your post, copy and paste the original wording (a direct quote) from the source you're using for the Source Evaluation Essay. Be sure to include the title of the source and a link to it, if possible, and put the quote inside of quotation marks.

Beneath this quote, draft a paraphrase that states

the idea of the quotation in unique language. The paraphrase should include a “signal” phrase, so that we have some context for where it’s coming from. Guidance about how to draft a paraphrase can be found in earlier module contents.

Your post should be about 100-200 words. It doesn’t have to be grammatically perfect, but should use standard English (no text-speak, please) and normal capitalization rules.

You will also need to return to this Discussion to **reply to at least two** of your classmates’ posts. Content could include, but is not limited to, any of the following: Commenting on the style or quality of your classmate’s paraphrase. Be sure to point out if the paraphrase contains too much borrowed language from the original article that your classmate may not have noticed.

Responses are weighed as heavily as your initial posting, and should be roughly as long (100-200 words) when combined. Responses should indicate you’ve read your classmate’s post carefully. Include specific details from the post you’re responding to in your reply.

# 171. Assessment: Signalling/ Paraphrasing/Quoting

Directions:

1. Find any 4 pieces of information that you have found from your research. This information should come from at least four different sources that you have found to be credible and useful to your research. Once you have identified these sources, do the following:
2. Copy one paragraph from the source that includes information that you might want to use in your research paper. Type the section out EXACTLY as it is written in the original. **(1 point)**
3. Take **one piece** of specific information from the original information and write a direct quote using those exact words. The direct quote needs to contain a **signal phrases and use MLA in-text citations. (2 points)**
4. Take the **same** information that you've just quoted and write it again, **paraphrasing** it into your own words. **Remember to use MLA in-text citations. (2 points)**

Example (Using MLA In-text citation rules):

Original

About half of the rise in sea level is due to thermal expansion. In addition oceans are rising because ice is melting. So far, most of that water has come from mountain glaciers and ice caps. If the Greenland ice sheet were to melt completely, it would release enough water to raise the sea level by 7 meters. West Antarctica's melting would raise sea level by over 5 meters and East Antarctica by 50 meters. If the Earth were to lose just 8% of its ice, the consequences would be horrific. New York, London, Shanghai, and other low-lying cities would be submerged.

### Direct Quote

According to Lonnie G. Thompson and Gioietta Kuo in the article, “Climate Change” “If the Earth were to lose just 8% of its ice, the consequences would be horrific. New York, London, Shanghai, and other low-lying cities would be submerged.”

### Paraphrase

According to Lonnie G. Thompson and Gioietta Kuo in the article, “Climate Change” even if the earth lost only 8% of its frozen waters, many cities below sea level would be engulfed under water.

You will **repeat this process 4 times**, for a total of 4 sets of quotes & paraphrases.





PART XX

# CITING SOURCES



# 172. Citing and Referencing Techniques

## *LEARNING OBJECTIVE*

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

- Apply American Psychological Association (APA) style formatting guidelines for citations.

This section covers the nitty-gritty details of in-text citations. You will learn how to format citations for different types of source materials, whether you are citing brief quotations, paraphrasing ideas, or quoting longer passages. You will also learn techniques you can use to introduce quoted and paraphrased material effectively. Keep this section handy as a reference to consult while writing the body of your paper.

## **Formatting Cited Material: The Basics**

As noted in previous sections of this book, in-text citations usually provide the name of the author(s) and the year the source was published. For direct quotations, the page number must also be included. Use past-tense verbs when introducing a quote—“Smith found...” and not “Smith finds....”

## Formatting Brief Quotations

For brief quotations—fewer than forty words—use quotation marks to indicate where the quoted material begins and ends, and cite the name of the author(s), the year of publication, and the page number where the quotation appears in your source. Remember to include commas to separate elements within the parenthetical citation. Also, avoid redundancy. If you name the author(s) in your sentence, do not repeat the name(s) in your parenthetical citation. Review following the examples of different ways to cite direct quotations.

Chang (2008) emphasized that “engaging in weight-bearing exercise consistently is one of the single best things women can do to maintain good health” (p. 49).

The author’s name can be included in the body of the sentence or in the parenthetical citation. Note that when a parenthetical citation appears at the end of the sentence, it comes **after** the closing quotation marks and **before** the period. The elements within parentheses are separated by commas.

*Weight Training for Women* (Chang, 2008) claimed that “engaging in weight-bearing exercise consistently is one of the single best things women can do to maintain good health” (p. 49).

*Weight Training for Women* claimed that “engaging in weight-bearing exercise consistently is one of the single best things women can do to maintain good health” (Chang, 2008, p. 49).

Including the title of a source is optional.

In Chang’s 2008 text *Weight Training for Women*, she asserts, “Engaging in weight-bearing exercise is one of the single best things women can do to maintain good health” (p. 49).

The author's name, the date, and the title may appear in the body of the text. Include the page number in the parenthetical citation. Also, notice the use of the verb *asserts* to introduce the direct quotation.

"Engaging in weight-bearing exercise," Chang asserts, "is one of the single best things women can do to maintain good health" (2008, p. 49).

You may begin a sentence with the direct quotation and add the author's name and a strong verb before continuing the quotation.

## Formatting Paraphrased and Summarized Material

When you paraphrase or summarize ideas from a source, you follow the same guidelines previously provided, except that you are not required to provide the page number where the ideas are located. If you are summing up the main findings of a research article, simply providing the author's name and publication year may suffice, but if you are paraphrasing a more specific idea, consider including the page number.

Read the following examples.

Chang (2008) pointed out that weight-bearing exercise has many potential benefits for women.

Here, the writer is summarizing a major idea that recurs throughout the source material. No page reference is needed.

Chang (2008) found that weight-bearing exercise could help women maintain or even increase bone density through middle age and beyond, reducing the likelihood that they will develop osteoporosis in later life (p. 86).

Although the writer is not directly quoting the source, this passage

paraphrases a specific detail, so the writer chose to include the page number where the information is located.

### *Tip*

Although APA style guidelines do not require writers to provide page numbers for material that is not directly quoted, your instructor may wish you to do so when possible.

Check with your instructor about his or her preferences.

## Formatting Longer Quotations

When you quote a longer passage from a source—forty words or more—use a different format to set off the quoted material. Instead of using quotation marks, create a block quotation by starting the quotation on a new line and indented five spaces from the margin. Note that in this case, the parenthetical citation comes **after** the period that ends the sentence. Here is an example:

In recent years, many writers within the fitness industry have emphasized the ways in which women can benefit from weight-bearing exercise, such as weightlifting, karate, dancing, stair climbing, hiking, and jogging. Chang (2008) found that engaging in weight-bearing exercise regularly significantly reduces women's risk of developing osteoporosis. Additionally, these exercises help women maintain muscle mass and overall strength, and many common forms of weight-bearing exercise,

such as brisk walking or stair climbing, also provide noticeable cardiovascular benefits. (p. 93)

If you are quoting a passage that continues into a second paragraph, indent five spaces again in the first line of the second paragraph. Here is an example:

In recent years, many writers within the fitness industry have emphasized the ways in which women can benefit from weight-bearing exercise, such as weightlifting, karate, dancing, stair climbing, hiking, and jogging. Chang (2008) found that engaging in weight-bearing exercise regularly significantly reduces women's risk of developing osteoporosis. Additionally, these exercises help women maintain muscle mass and overall strength, and many common forms of weight-bearing exercise, such as brisk walking or stair climbing, also provide noticeable cardiovascular benefits.

It is important to note that swimming cannot be considered a weight-bearing exercise, since the water supports and cushions the swimmer. That doesn't mean swimming isn't great exercise, but it should be considered one part of an integrated fitness program. (p. 93)

### *Tip*

Be wary of quoting from sources at length. Remember, your ideas should drive the paper, and quotations should be used to support and enhance your points. Make sure any lengthy quotations that you include serve a clear purpose.

Generally, no more than 10–15 percent of a paper should consist of quoted material.

## Introducing Cited Material Effectively

Including an introductory phrase in your text, such as “Jackson wrote” or “Copeland found,” often helps you integrate source material smoothly. This citation technique also helps convey that you are actively engaged with your source material. Unfortunately, during the process of writing your research paper, it is easy to fall into a rut and use the same few dull verbs repeatedly, such as “Jones said,” “Smith stated,” and so on.

Punch up your writing by using strong verbs that help your reader understand how the source material presents ideas. There is a world of difference between an author who “suggests” and one who “claims,” one who “questions” and one who “criticizes.” You do not need to consult your thesaurus every time you cite a source, but do think about which verbs will accurately represent the ideas and make your writing more engaging. The following chart shows some possibilities.



---

**Strong Verbs for Introducing Cited Material**

ask	suggest	question
explain	assert	claim
recommend	compare	contrast
propose	hypothesize	believe
insist	argue	find
determine	measure	assess
evaluate	conclude	study
warn	point out	sum up

---

## Writing at Work

It is important to accurately represent a colleague's ideas or communications in the workplace. When writing professional or academic papers, be mindful of how the words you use to describe someone's tone or ideas carry certain connotations. Do not say a source *argues* a particular point unless an argument is, in fact, presented. Use lively language, but avoid language that is emotionally charged. Doing so will ensure you have represented your colleague's words in an authentic and accurate way.

## Formatting In-Text Citations for Other Source Types

These sections discuss the correct format for various types of in-text citations. Read them through quickly to get a sense of what is covered, and then refer to them again as needed.

## Print Sources

This section covers books, articles, and other print sources with one or more authors.

### A Work by One Author

For a print work with one author, follow the guidelines provided in [“Formatting a Research Paper.”](#) Always include the author’s name and year of publication. Include a page reference whenever you quote a source directly. (See also the guidelines presented earlier in this chapter about when to include a page reference for paraphrased material.)

Chang (2008) emphasized that “engaging in weight-bearing exercise consistently is one of the single best things women can do to maintain good health” (p. 49).

Chang (2008) pointed out that weight-bearing exercise has many potential benefits for women.

### Two or More Works by the Same Author

At times, your research may include multiple works by the same author. If the works were published in different years, a standard in-text citation will serve to distinguish them. If you are citing multiple works by the same author published in the same year, include a lowercase letter immediately after the year. Rank the sources in the order they appear in your references section. The source listed first includes an *a* after the year, the source listed second includes a *b*, and so on.

Rodriguez (2009a) criticized the nutrition-supplement industry for making unsubstantiated and sometimes misleading claims about the benefits of taking supplements. Additionally, he warned that consumers frequently do not realize the potential harmful effects of some popular supplements (Rodriguez, 2009b).

### *Tip*

If you have not yet created your references section, you may not be sure which source will appear first. See [“Creating a References Section”](#) for guidelines—or assign each source a temporary code and highlight the in-text citations so you remember to double-check them later on.

## Works by Authors with the Same Last Name

If you are citing works by different authors with the same last name, include each author’s initials in your citation, whether you mention them in the text or in parentheses. Do so even if the publication years are different.

J. S. Williams (2007) believes nutritional supplements can be a useful part of some diet and fitness regimens. C. D. Williams (2008), however, believes these supplements are overrated.

According to two leading researchers, the rate of childhood obesity exceeds the rate of adult obesity (K. Connelley, 2010; O. Connelley, 2010).

Studies from both A. Wright (2007) and C. A. Wright (2008) confirm the benefits of diet and exercise on weight loss.

## A Work by Two Authors

When two authors are listed for a given work, include both authors' names each time you cite the work. If you are citing their names in parentheses, use an ampersand (&) between them. (Use the word *and*, however, if the names appear in your sentence.)

As Garrison and Gould (2010) pointed out, "It is never too late to quit smoking. The health risks associated with this habit begin to decrease soon after a smoker quits" (p. 101).

As doctors continue to point out, "It is never too late to quit smoking. The health risks associated with this habit begin to decrease soon after a smoker quits" (Garrison & Gould, 2010, p. 101).

## A Work by Three to Five Authors

If the work you are citing has three to five authors, list all the authors' names the first time you cite the source. In subsequent citations, use the first author's name followed by the abbreviation *et al.* (*Et al.* is short for *et alia*, the Latin phrase for "and others.")

Henderson, Davidian, and Degler (2010) surveyed 350 smokers aged 18 to 30.

One survey, conducted among 350 smokers aged 18 to 30, included a detailed questionnaire about participants' motivations for smoking (Henderson, Davidian, & Degler, 2010).

Note that these examples follow the same ampersand conventions

as sources with two authors. Again, use the ampersand only when listing authors' names in parentheses.

As Henderson et al. (2010) found, some young people, particularly young women, use smoking as a means of appetite suppression.

Disturbingly, some young women use smoking as a means of appetite suppression (Henderson et al., 2010).

Note how the phrase *et al.* is punctuated. No period comes after *et*, but *al.* gets a period because it is an abbreviation for a longer Latin word. In parenthetical references, include a comma after *et al.* but not before. Remember this rule by mentally translating the citation to English: "Henderson and others, 2010."

## A Work by Six or More Authors

If the work you are citing has six or more authors, list only the first author's name, followed by *et al.*, in your in-text citations. The other authors' names will be listed in your references section.

Researchers have found that outreach work with young people has helped reduce tobacco use in some communities (Costello et al., 2007).

## A Work Authored by an Organization

When citing a work that has no individual author(s) but is published by an organization, use the organization's name in place of the author's name. Lengthy organization names with well-known abbreviations can be abbreviated. In your first citation, use the full

name, followed by the abbreviation in square brackets. Subsequent citations may use the abbreviation only.

It is possible for a patient to have a small stroke without even realizing it (American Heart Association [AHA], 2010).

Another cause for concern is that even if patients realize that they have had a stroke and need medical attention, they may not know which nearby facilities are best equipped to treat them (AHA, 2010).

## A Work with No Listed Author

If no author is listed and the source cannot be attributed to an organization, use the title in place of the author's name. You may use the full title in your sentence or use the first few words—enough to convey the key ideas—in a parenthetical reference. Follow standard conventions for using italics or quotation marks with titles:

- Use italics for titles of books or reports.
- Use quotation marks for titles of articles or chapters.

“Living With Diabetes: Managing Your Health” (2009) recommends regular exercise for patients with diabetes.

Regular exercise can benefit patients with diabetes (“Living with Diabetes,” 2009).

Rosenhan (1973) had mentally healthy study participants claim to be experiencing hallucinations so they would be admitted to psychiatric hospitals.

## A Work Cited within Another Work

To cite a source that is referred to within another secondary source, name the first source in your sentence. Then, in parentheses, use the phrase *as cited in* and the name of the second source author.

Rosenhan's study "On Being Sane in Insane Places" (as cited in Spitzer, 1975) found that psychiatrists diagnosed schizophrenia in people who claimed to be experiencing hallucinations and sought treatment—even though these patients were, in fact, imposters.

## Two or More Works Cited in One Reference

At times, you may provide more than one citation in a parenthetical reference, such as when you are discussing related works or studies with similar results. List the citations in the same order they appear in your references section, and separate the citations with a semicolon.

Some researchers have found serious flaws in the way Rosenhan's study was conducted (Dawes, 2001; Spitzer, 1975).

Both of these researchers authored works that support the point being made in this sentence, so it makes sense to include both in the same citation.

## A Famous Text Published in Multiple Editions

In some cases, you may need to cite an extremely well-known work that has been repeatedly republished or translated. Many works of literature and sacred texts, as well as some classic nonfiction

texts, fall into this category. For these works, the original date of publication may be unavailable. If so, include the year of publication or translation for your edition. Refer to specific parts or chapters if you need to cite a specific section. Discuss with your instructor whether he or she would like you to cite page numbers in this particular instance.

In *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, Freud explains that the “manifest content” of a dream—what literally takes place—is separate from its “latent content,” or hidden meaning (trans. 1965, lecture XXIX).

Here, the student is citing a classic work of psychology, originally written in German and later translated to English. Since the book is a collection of Freud’s lectures, the student cites the lecture number rather than a page number.

## **An Introduction, Foreword, Preface, or Afterword**

To cite an introduction, foreword, preface, or afterword, cite the author of the material and the year, following the same format used for other print materials.

## **Electronic Sources**

Whenever possible, cite electronic sources as you would print sources, using the author, the date, and where appropriate, a page number. For some types of electronic sources—for instance, many online articles—this information is easily available. Other times, however, you will need to vary the format to reflect the differences in online media.



## Online Sources without Page Numbers

If an online source has no page numbers but you want to refer to a specific portion of the source, try to locate other information you can use to direct your reader to the information cited. Some websites number paragraphs within published articles; if so, include the paragraph number in your citation. Precede the paragraph number with the abbreviation for the word *paragraph* and the number of the paragraph (e.g., para. 4).

As researchers have explained, “Incorporating fresh fruits and vegetables into one’s diet can be a challenge for residents of areas where there are few or no easily accessible supermarkets” (Smith & Jones, 2006, para. 4).

Even if a source does not have numbered paragraphs, it is likely to have headings that organize the content. In your citation, name the section where your cited information appears, followed by a paragraph number.

The American Lung Association (2010) noted, “After smoking, radon exposure is the second most common cause of lung cancer” (What Causes Lung Cancer? section, para. 2).

This student cited the appropriate section heading within the website and then counted to find the specific paragraph where the cited information was located.

If an online source has no listed author and no date, use the source title and the abbreviation *n.d.* in your parenthetical reference.

It has been suggested that electromagnetic radiation from cellular telephones may pose a risk for developing certain cancers (“Cell Phones and Cancer,” n.d.).

## Personal Communication

For personal communications, such as interviews, letters, and e-mails, cite the name of the person involved, clarify that the material is from a personal communication, and provide the specific date the communication took place. Note that while in-text citations correspond to entries in the references section, personal communications are an exception to this rule. They are cited only in the body text of your paper.

J. H. Yardley, M.D., believes that available information on the relationship between cell phone use and cancer is inconclusive (personal communication, May 1, 2009).

## Writing at Work

At work, you may sometimes share information resources with your colleagues by photocopying an interesting article or forwarding the URL of a useful website. Your goal in these situations and in formal research citations is the same. The goal is to provide enough information to help your professional peers locate and follow up on potentially useful information. Provide as much specific information as possible to achieve that goal, and consult with your professor as to what specific style he or she may prefer.

### *Key Takeaway*

- In APA papers, in-text citations include the name of the author(s) and the year of publication whenever

possible.

- Page numbers are always included when citing quotations. It is optional to include page numbers when citing paraphrased material; however, this should be done when citing a specific portion of a work.
- When citing online sources, provide the same information used for print sources if it is available.
- When a source does not provide information that usually appears in a citation, in-text citations should provide readers with alternative information that would help them locate the source material. This may include the title of the source, section headings and paragraph numbers for websites, and so forth.
- When writing a paper, discuss with your professor what particular standards he or she would like you to follow.

## Exercises

1. Review the places in your paper where you cited, quoted, and paraphrased material from a source with a single author. Edit your citations to ensure that

- each citation includes the author's name, the date of publication, and, where appropriate, a page reference;
- parenthetical citations are correctly formatted;
- longer quotations use the block-quotation format.

2. Review the citations in your paper once again. This time, look for

places where you introduced source material using a signal phrase in your sentence.

- Highlight the verbs used in your signal phrases, and make note of any that seem to be overused throughout the paper.
- Identify at least three places where a stronger verb could be used.
- Make the edits to your draft.

3. Review the places in your paper where you cited material from a source with multiple authors or with an organization as the author. Edit your citations to ensure that each citation follows APA guidelines for the inclusion of the authors' names, the use of ampersands and *et al.*, the date of publication, and, where appropriate, a page reference.

# 173. Read: Acknowledging Sources and Avoiding Plagiarism

## Acknowledgment of Sources is a Rhetorical Act

To an inexperienced writer, citing and documenting sources may seem like busywork. Yet, when you cite your external sources in the text of your paper and when you document them at the end of your piece in a list of works cited or a bibliography, you are performing a rhetorical act. Complete and accurate citing and documenting of all external sources help writers achieve three very important goals:

1. It enhances your credibility as a writer. By carefully and accurately citing your external sources in the text and by documenting them at the end of your paper you show your readers that you are serious about your subject, your research, and the argument which you are making in your paper. You demonstrate that you have studied your subject in sufficient depth, and by reading credible and authoritative sources.
2. It helps you to avoid plagiarism. Plagiarism is trying to pass someone else's ideas or writing as your own. It is a serious offense that can damage the reputation of a writer forever and lead to very serious consequences if committed in an academic or professional setting. Later on in the chapter, we will discuss plagiarism and ways to avoid it in detail.
3. The presence of complete citations of sources in your paper will help you demonstrate to your readers that you are an active participant in the community of readers, writers, researchers, and learners. It shows that you are aware of the

conversations that are going on among writers and researchers in your field and that you are willing to enter those conversations by researching and writing about the subjects that interest you. By providing enough information about the sources which you used in your own research and writing, you give other interested readers the opportunity to find out more about your subject and, thus, to enter in a conversation with you.

## The Logic and Structure of a Source Citation

Every time writers cite and document their sources, they do it in two places in the paper—in the text itself and at the end of the paper, in a list of works cited or bibliography. A citation is incomplete and, by and large, useless to the readers, if either of the parts is missing. Consider the following example, in which I cite an academic journal article using the Modern Language Association citation system. Please note that I give this example at this point in the chapter only to demonstrate the two parts of a citation. Later on, we will discuss how to cite and document different kinds of sources using different documentation systems, in full detail.

### In-text citations

In-text citations are also known as parenthetical citations or parenthetical references because, at the end of the citation, parentheses are used. In her essay “If Winston Weather Would Just Write to Me on E-mail,” published in the journal *College*

Composition and Communication, writer and teacher Wendy Bishop shares her thoughts on the nature of writing: “[I see...writing as a mixture of mess and self-discipline, of self-history [and] cultural history.” (101).

## The Citation in the List of Works Cited

Bishop, Wendy. “If Winston Weather Would Just Write to Me on E-mail.” *College Composition and Communication*. 46.1 (1995): 97-103.

The reason why each citation, regardless of the type of source and the documentation system being used, has two parts is simple. Writers acknowledge and document external sources for several reasons. One of these reasons is to give their readers enough information and enable them, if necessary, to find the same source which the paper mentions. Therefore, if we look at the kinds of information provided in the citation (page numbers, titles, authors, publishers, and publication dates), it becomes clear that this information is sufficient to locate the source in the library, bookstore, or online.

## When to Cite and Document Sources

The brief answer to this question is “always.” Every time you use someone else’s ideas, arguments, opinions, or data, you need to carefully acknowledge their author and source. Keep in mind that you are not just borrowing others’ words when you use sources in your writing. You are borrowing ideas. Therefore, even if you are not directly citing the source, but paraphrase or summarize it, you still

need to cite it both in the text and at the end of the paper in a list of works cited or in a list of references.

The only exception is when you are dealing with what is known as “common knowledge.” Common knowledge consists of facts that are so widely known that they do not require a source reference. For instance, if you say in your writing that the Earth rotates around the Sun or that Ronald Reagan was a US President, you do not need to cite the sources of this common knowledge formally.

## Avoiding Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a problem that exists not only on college, university, and high school campuses. In recent years, several high profile cases, some involving famous writers and journalists have surfaced, in which these writers were accused of either presenting someone else's work as their own or fabricating works based on fictitious or unreliable research. With the advent of the Internet, it has become relatively easy to download complete papers. Various people and organizations, sometimes masquerading as “writing consultants” promise students that they would write a paper on any subject and of any level of complexity for a hefty fee. Clearly, the use of such services by student writers is dishonest and dishonorable. If your college or university is like mine, it probably has adopted strict policies for dealing with plagiarizing writers. Punishments for intentional plagiarism are severe and may include not only a failing grade for the class but even an expulsion from the university.

In addition to intentional plagiarism, there is also the unintentional kind. Experience shows that beginning writers' work sometimes include passages which could be called plagiarized because such writers often do not know how to cite and document external sources properly or do not understand that importance of following proper citation practices.



Observing the following practices will help you avoid plagiarism:

As you research, keep careful notes of your sources. As you take notes for your research project, keep track of what materials in those notes comes from external sources and what material is yours. Keep track of all your sources, including interviews and surveys, photographs and drawings, personal e-mails and conversations. Be sure to record the following information:

- Author
- Title
- Date of publication
- Publisher

Remember that when you use external sources, you are borrowing not the words of another writer, but his or her ideas, theories, and opinions. Therefore, even if you summarize or paraphrase a source, be sure to give it full credit. Writers used to have to record this information on separate note cards. However, with the proliferation of online and other electronic tools which allow us to keep track of our research, the task of recording and reflecting on source-related information has become easier.

## Anti-Plagiarism Activity

Read the following four paragraphs. They are from a research source, an article in *The New Yorker* magazine. The other three are from student papers which attempt to use the article as an external source. As you read consider the following questions:

- Would you call the student's passage or its parts plagiarized from the original? Why or why not?
- If any parts of the student's passages are plagiarized what

needs to be changed in order to avoid plagiarism? Keep in mind that you may need to rewrite the whole Paragraph and not just make changes in separate sentences.

- Which of the student passages will require more significant rewriting than others and why?

Source Paragraph (from the article “Personality Plus,” by Malcolm Gladwell. *New Yorker*, Sept 20, 2004). One of the most popular personality tests in the world is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), a psychological assessment system based on Carl Jung’s notion that people make sense of the world through a series of psychological frames. Some people are extraverts, some are introverts. Some process information through logical thought. Some are directed by their feelings. Some make sense of the world through intuitive leaps. Others collect data through their senses.

#### **Student Paragraph 1**

The Myers-Briggs Test is a very popular way to assess someone’s personality type. Philosopher Carl Jung believed that people make sense of the world in different ways. Some are extraverts and some are introverts. According to this idea, people process information either by logical reasoning or through intuition or feelings.

#### **Student Paragraph 2**

According to writer Malcolm Gladwell, One of the most popular personality tests in the world is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), a psychological-assessment system based on Carl Jung’s notion that people make sense of the world through a series of psychological frames. Gladwell states that the test is based on the idea by Carl Jung that people make sense of the world through a series of psychological frames. According to Jung, some people are extroverts and some are introverts. Some process information through logical input, and some through feelings. Some make sense of the world through intuitive leaps. Others collect data through their senses.

#### **Student Paragraph 3**

One of the most popular personality tests in the world is the

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), a psychological assessment system based on Carl Jung's notion that people make sense of the world through a series of psychological frames (Gladwell 43). The test is based on Jung's theory that people understand the world differently. This is why we have extroverts and introverts and people who act either based on reasoning or feelings (Gladwell).

## Major Citation Systems

In this part of the chapter, I will explain the major citation and documentation systems which you are likely to encounter in your writing for college classes and beyond. The information in this section is not meant to be memorized. Instead, I encourage you to use this material as a reference source, when you are writing a paper and need to cite and document sources correctly, using one of the systems described below, refer to this chapter.

Please note that the following sections include only the basic information about each of the citation styles. There are plenty of excellent sources explaining and illustrating the differences between citation systems. I recommend the cite of the [Online Writing Center at Purdue University](#).

## Conclusion

Avoiding plagiarism and acknowledging your external sources completely and accurately are vital parts of the writing process. Your credibility as a writer and the reception that you work will receive from readers may depend on how well you acknowledge your sources. By following the guidelines presented in this chapter

and by seeking out more knowledge about the rules of citing and documenting from the publications listed in this chapter, you will become a more competent, more professional, and more credible writer. This chapter covers only the basics of source citing and documenting. For more resources this topic and the various styles of documentation, see the Appendix to this book.

# 174. Assessment: MLA & APA Game Response

APA (American Psychological Association) and MLA (Modern Language Association) are two very common types of citation formatting used in higher education. There are others, as well, but we'll be talking specifically about APA and MLA this quarter.

APA is typically used for science courses, including nursing. MLA, on the other hand, is the usual style for humanities and social science courses. You'll probably be asked to use both of them during your time in college, so I want you to be prepared to handle each of them when need be.

First, visit the [APA and MLA Citation Game Home Page](#) by the University of Washington's TRIO Training program.

Then, complete the writing task below.

For this assignment, I'd like you to write a 2-paragraph (3+ sentences per paragraph) commentary on your familiarity with APA and MLA right now.

- In the first paragraph, describe your reaction to the citation work you've done so far in your academic life. Which style have you used more often so far? Which style seems more natural to you? Which style is more likely to be the one used in your degree program?
- In the second paragraph, discuss the mechanics of APA and MLA citation as you understand them right now. Did the questions in this game make sense to you? Do you have questions about why things are formatted in citations the way they are? Do you have comments about what information needs to be included in a citation, and why that information is

necessary?

**Extra Credit Opportunity:** While the overall quiz is pretty accurate, it does contain a few minor mistakes in the way it lists authors and dates. You can earn 1 extra credit point for each inaccuracy you find, up to 5 points maximum.

For each extra point, you must tell me

- which page of the quiz the error is on
- what specifically is wrong
- what the correct format should be instead

# 175. When & How To Use MLA In-Text Citation

[Download this PDF file to see a Decision Tree for When & How to use MLA in-text citation.](#)

# 176. Assessment: Five Potential Sources

**Locate 5 potential research sources** for the topic you submitted as your final choice for the Research Essay. At least one of these needs to come from the school's library (electronic databases are fine).

These are just to get you started. You won't have to use them in the final draft of the essay if they turn out to be duds.

These should be 5 NEW sources. Don't include ones you've used for previous assignments, even if they relate to your chosen topic.

You don't have to tell me anything about the contents of these sources. Instead, I want you to **create BOTH Works Cited (MLA) citations and References (APA) citations for each of the 5 sources you've found.**

You're welcome to use the pre-formatted citations available in the library databases, if you find your sources there. Other good helpful tools for building citations are [Son of Citation Machine](#) and [EasyBib](#).

All of the automated citation generators have their unique, problematic quirks. Be sure to compare what they give you with what the handbooks say your citation should look like, so you can learn to spot the problems with machine-generated citations.



# 177. How to Cite YouTube

For information on how to cite YouTube using APA style, [view the “Quick Answers” article directly from the APA.](#)

## How to Cite a YouTube Video in MLA

As more information is introduced via the Web, students and instructors must come to expect an increase in the number of online citations included in research papers. YouTube videos are among the content one should learn to handle. Continue reading for specific instructions and examples concerning how to cite a YouTube video in MLA format.

### Method 1 of 4: In-Text Citation

1. **Type a portion of the title in parentheses.**<sup>[1]</sup> Follow quoted, paraphrased, or summarized information included in the text with the video’s full title or a shortened version of the title. Enclose the title in parentheses, and place any punctuation marks on the outside of the parentheses.
  - Maru is a famous cat known for a variety of antics (“Maru Greatest Hits”).
2. **Introduce the title in the sentence.** Instead of including the

title inside parentheses, you can also introduce the video's full title or a shortened form directly in the sentence when you write out the borrowed information. Surround the title in quotation marks.

- As seen in "Maru Greatest Hits," Maru is a famous cat known for a variety of antics.

3. **Include the creator's name when applicable.** If you know the name of the director or the person otherwise responsible for creating the content of the video, state the last name of that individual. A YouTube username can be used if no real name is provided. The name can either be included in the parentheses or introduced directly within the sentence containing the cited information.

- The man responsible for holding the three Cleveland women captive has been arrested along with two other suspects (Associated Press, "3 Women").
- As stated in "3 Women," the man responsible for holding the three Cleveland women captive has been arrested along with two other suspects (Associated Press).
- According to the Associated Press, the man responsible for holding the three Cleveland women captive has been arrested along with two other suspects ("3 Women").
- In "3 Women," the Associated Press explains that the man responsible for holding the three Cleveland women captive has been arrested along with two other suspects.

## Method 2 of 4: Works Cited Page with Creator Name

**Mention the name or username of the creator.**<sup>[2]</sup> Use the real name of the director, editor, or compiler when available. Write it out in *LastName, FirstName* format. If citing a video from an organization or if the creator's real name is not available, cite the name of the organization or the username associated with that YouTube account. Regardless of the name you use, follow it with a period.

- Associated Press.
- Tofield, Simon.

**State the full title of the video.** Write the title exactly as it is typed online. Never abbreviate it; write the full title out since multiple videos may be abbreviated in similar ways. Type a period after the final word and enclose it all in double quotation marks.

- Associated Press. "3 Women, Missing for Years, Found Alive in Ohio."
- Tofield, Simon. "Screen Grab – Simon's Cat."

**Name the website.** In this case, the name of the website is simply "YouTube." Italicize the website name and follow it with a period.

- Associated Press. "3 Women, Missing for Years, Found Alive in Ohio." *YouTube*.
- Tofield, Simon. "Screen Grab – Simon's Cat." *Youtube*.

**Name the sponsor/publisher.**<sup>[3]</sup> The sponsor refers to the official legal name of the corporation or entity responsible for the website. In this case, it would be "YouTube." Do not enclose it in quotation marks or italicize it. Instead of following it with a period, use a comma.

- Associated Press. “3 Women, Missing for Years, Found Alive in Ohio.” *YouTube*. YouTube,
- Tofield, Simon. “Screen Grab – Simon’s Cat.” *Youtube*. YouTube,

**State when the video was created.** The date that the video was posted should be written in *Day Month Year* format. Follow it with a period.

- Associated Press. “3 Women, Missing for Years, Found Alive in Ohio.” *YouTube*. YouTube, 6 May 2013.
- Tofield, Simon. “Screen Grab – Simon’s Cat.” *Youtube*. YouTube, 12 April 2013.

**Mention the publishing medium.** For all YouTube videos, the medium should be listed as “Web.” This, too, should be followed with a period.

- Associated Press. “3 Women, Missing for Years, Found Alive in Ohio.” *YouTube*. YouTube, 6 May 2013. Web.
- Tofield, Simon. “Screen Grab – Simon’s Cat.” *Youtube*. YouTube, 12 April 2013. Web.

**Include the date of access.** The date of access refers to the first date that you went to that video for the sake of using it as a citation source. List the date in *Day Month Year* format. Conclude with a period.

- Associated Press. “3 Women, Missing for Years, Found Alive in Ohio.” *YouTube*. YouTube, 6 May 2013. Web. 7 May 2013.
- Tofield, Simon. “Screen Grab – Simon’s Cat.” *Youtube*. YouTube, 12 April 2013. Web. 7 May 2013.

**Type the URL, when requested.** The URL is not a standard part of MLA citation style for online videos. Nonetheless, many instructors still request it. If your instructor does request the URL, enclose it in carrot brackets and follow the ending bracket with a period.

- Associated Press. “3 Women, Missing for Years, Found Alive in Ohio.” *YouTube*. YouTube, 6 May 2013. Web. 7 May 2013. <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W9ZXoHnzbcA>>.
- Tofield, Simon. “Screen Grab – Simon’s Cat.” *Youtube*. YouTube, 12 April 2013. Web. 7 May 2013. <[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LpHpm\\_b0vRY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LpHpm_b0vRY)>.

## Method 3 of 4: Works Cited Page with No Creator Name

**Write out the full title of the video.** If video footage is reposted by a YouTube user who is not the original creator of the footage, and if the name of the original creator is not listed, the first piece of information is the title of the video. Do not list the name or username of the YouTube channel responsible for reposting the video. Enclose the full title in double quotation marks, and follow the final word of the title with a period.

- “Maru Greatest Hits V1.”

**Indicate the name of the website.** For all YouTube videos, the name of the website should simply be “YouTube.” Italicize the word and follow it with another period.

- “Maru Greatest Hits V1.” *YouTube*.

**State the name of the sponsor.** The official, legal name of the corporation that owns YouTube should also be indicated. Type “YouTube,” and follow the name with a comma.

- “Maru Greatest Hits V1.” *YouTube*. YouTube,

**Include a posting date.** Specify the original date that the video was posted on the YouTube channel you used to access it. Arrange the date in *Day Month Year* format and place another period after the year.

- “Maru Greatest Hits V1.” *YouTube*. YouTube, 29 April 2009.

**State the publishing medium.** For a YouTube video, the publishing medium will always be “Web.” Follow it with yet another period.

- “Maru Greatest Hits V1.” *YouTube*. YouTube, 29 April 2009. Web.

**Type an access date.** The access date is the day, month, and year on which you first accessed the video with the intention of citing it among your research. Write the date in *Day Month Year* format and conclude with a period.

- “Maru Greatest Hits V1.” *YouTube*. YouTube, 29 April 2009. Web.  
7 May 2013.

**Include the URL only when requested.** The video URL is not a standard part of MLA format and may be marked as wrong if you include it. Oftentimes, however, an instructor will specifically ask for the URL of any online source to be included, in which case, you should enclose the URL in carrot brackets and conclude the entire thing with a final period.

- “Maru Greatest Hits V1.” *YouTube*. YouTube, 29 April 2009. Web.  
7 May 2013. <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8uDuls5TyNE>>.

## Method 4 of 4: Works Cited Page when Citing

## YouTube Directly

**State the creator as “YouTube.”** This applies to any video that was uploaded to the official YouTube channel. Write the name out and follow it with a period.

- YouTube.

**Include the full title of the video.** Make sure to include the full title to minimize the odds of citing a duplicate or similar title. Follow the title with a period and enclose it in parentheses.

- YouTube. “Rewind YouTube Style 2012.”

**Specify the name of the website.** Even though “YouTube” is already listed once as the creator of the video, you must also list it a second time as the publisher. Note, however, that you do not need to list it a third time as an official corporation. Only italicize the name of the website here, and follow it with another period.

- YouTube. “Rewind YouTube Style 2012.” *YouTube*.

**Indicate the date of publication.** Specify the date that the video was originally updated in *Day Month Year* format. Follow the year with a period.

- YouTube. “Rewind YouTube Style 2012.” *YouTube*. 17 Dec. 2012.

**State the publishing medium.** The publishing medium for any YouTube video will be “Web.” Type a period after this information.

- YouTube. “Rewind YouTube Style 2012.” *YouTube*. 17 Dec. 2012.  
Web.

**Include a date of access.** Write the day on which you first accessed

or viewed the video with the intention of using it as a resource. Type it out in *Day Month Year* format.

- YouTube. "Rewind YouTube Style 2012." *YouTube*. 17 Dec. 2012. Web. 7 May 2013.

**Write the URL if directly requested.** Official MLA guidelines do not list the URL as vital information, but if your instructor asks for it, include the URL in carrot brackets and follow the end bracket with a concluding period.

- YouTube. "Rewind YouTube Style 2012." *YouTube*. 17 Dec. 2012. Web. 7 May 2013. <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iCkYw3cRwLo>><sup>[4]</sup>

## Tips

- Ask your instructor if he or she has a preference regarding the way that YouTube videos are cited. Some instructors prefer students to include the URL of online sources, while many do not. Moreover, since there is no official set of guidelines governing the citation of YouTube videos in MLA format, these details can be considered somewhat subjective.
- Check the MLA citation guidelines to verify that the above information is accurate and complete. These guidelines change periodically.

## Sources and Citations

1. [http://citesource.trincoll.edu/mla/mlavideoweb\\_002.pdf](http://citesource.trincoll.edu/mla/mlavideoweb_002.pdf)



2. <http://valenciacollege.edu/library/documents/youtube.pdf>
3. <http://www.bibme.org/citation-guide/MLA/website>
4. [http://elmo.academyart.edu/reference-help/  
mla\\_citation\\_guide.html](http://elmo.academyart.edu/reference-help/mla_citation_guide.html)

# 178. APA in-text citations

## How should a parenthetical in-text citation be formatted?

An essential component of a research paper, in-text citations are a way of acknowledging the ideas of the author(s) of a particular work.

Each source that appears as an in-text citation should have a corresponding detailed entry in the References list at the end of the paper. Including the required elements in every citation allows other researchers to easily track the references used in a paper and locate those resources themselves.

There are three pieces of information that should be included in a citation after quoting another writer's work: the author's last name, the year of publication, and the page number(s) of the quoted material, all of which are separated by commas. The page number should follow a lower-case letter 'p' and a period.

- Basic structure: (Author, Year of Publication, p. 142)
  - **Example:** (Kutner, 2003, p. 451) [1]

If the quoted material was taken from more than one page, use two lower-case letter 'p' s.

- Basic structure: (Author, Year, of Publication, pp. 194-196)
  - **Example:** (Kutner, 2003, pp. 451-452) [1]

*How should multiple authors of a single source be cited?*

There are a few guidelines to follow when citing multiple authors for

a single source. Separate the names of the source's authors by using commas. Depending on the location and instance of the citation, an ampersand(&), the word *and*, or the term *et al.* may also need to be used.

### *When should an ampersand be used?*

Ampersands (&) should only be used in parenthetical in-text citations. An ampersand separates the last and second to last author of a cited work.

- **Example:** Research has demonstrated that “synesthesia appears quite stable over time, and synesthetes are typically surprised to discover that other people do not share their experiences” (Niccolai, Jennes, Stoerig, & Van Leeuwen, 2012, p. 81). [1]

### *When should the word and be used?*

The word *and* should only be used in a sentence or paragraph; do not use it in a parenthetical in-text citation. The last and second to last author of a cited work are separated by the word *and*.

- **Example:** Niccolai, Jennes, Stoerig, and Van Leeuwen (2012) observed that “synesthesia appears quite stable over time, and synesthetes are typically surprised to discover that other people do not share their experiences” (p. 81). [1]

### *When should the term et al. be used?*

When citing a single work with many authors, you may need to

substitute some of the authors' names with the term *et al.* The term *et al.* should not be italicized in your paper, and a period should be placed after the word *al* as it is an abbreviated term. Follow these guidelines regarding the usage of *et al.*:

### *Use et al.:*

- The first time and every time you cite a source with at least six authors.
  - **Example:** The in-text citation of *Zoonoses: Infectious diseases transmissible from animals to humans*, a book authored by Krauss, Weber, Appel, Enders, Isenberg, Schiefer, Slenczka, von Graevenitz, and Zahner, would appear as follows: [2]
    - (Krauss et al., 2003, p. 91)
    - As Krauss et al. (2003) observed, ...
- Every following time (after the first instance) that you cite a source with at least three authors.
  - **Example:** Citing the article “Modality and variability of synesthetic experience” by Niccolai, Jennes, Stoerig, & Van Leeuwen would appear as follows: [1]
    - The first instance: (Niccolai, Jennes, Stoerig, & Van Leeuwen, 2012, p. 81)
    - Every following instance: (Niccolai et al., 2012)

### *Avoid using et al.:*

- The first time you cite a source with up to five authors.
  - Instead, list all of the authors at their first mentioning.
- To cite a work that only has two authors.

- Instead, always list the two authors' names in every citation (separated by either an ampersand or the word and, depending on the location)

*For more information about referencing sources in APA, see also:*

- [Formatting the References Page \(APA\)](#)
- [References Page Template \(APA\)](#)

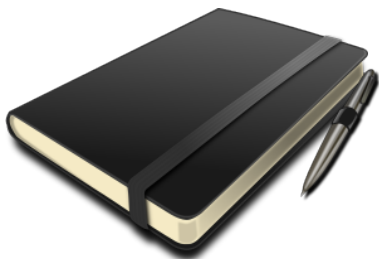
---

[1] Niccolai, V., Jennes, J., Stoerig, P., & Van Leeuwen, T. M. (2012). Modality and variability of synesthetic experience. *The American Journal of Psychology*, 125(1), 81-94. Retrieved from JSTOR database at <http://www.jstor.org/>

[2] Krauss, H., Weber, A., Appel, M., Enders, B., Isenberg, H. D., Schiefer, H. G., . . . Zahner, H. (2003). *Zoonoses: Infectious diseases transmissible from animals to humans*. Washington, DC: ASM Press

# 179. Assessment: Reading Notebook Entry #3

So far, the research you've done has been primarily text-based: written work on the page or the computer screen. One of the requirements for the Annotated Bibliography, however, is to find at least one video or audio source that relates to your research topic. Let's prepare for that by locating an interesting-looking one, now.



Sources to consider for good audio/ video sources are iTunes, iTunesU, YouTube, and TED Talks. This is just a starting point, of course. The school library has a great collection of DVDs and audio recordings that's worth exploring, as well.

After you've found an audio or video source and watched/listened to it, complete your next Notebook Entry. It should include any or all of the following:

- Title, speaker, link to file, and other relevant information so I can find it
- questions you had while listening/watching
- emotional reactions to the source
- key terms that seem important to you
- what you think the thesis or main idea of this source is
- what you think the intended audience for this source is
- how effective you think this source is
- how watching or listening differs from reading, in terms of effectiveness of presentation

This is an informal assignment. Your writing can be in complete sentences, or bullet points or fragments, as you see appropriate. Editing isn't vital for this work, though it should be proofread to the point that obvious typos or misspellings are addressed and corrected. Target word count is 150-300 words for this entry.





PART XXI

ANNOTATED  
BIBLIOGRAPHIES



# 180. Assessment: Annotated Bibliography

## The Annotated Bibliography 100 points

“An annotated bibliography provides specific information about each source you have used. As a researcher, you have become an expert on your topic and have the ability both to explain the content and to assess the usefulness of your sources for those not in the know. Think of your paper as part of a conversation with others interested in the same things you are; the annotated bibliography allows you to tell readers what to check out, what might be worth checking out in some situations, and what might not be worth spending the time on. It’s kind of like providing a list of good movies for your classmates to watch and then going over the list with them, telling them why this movie is better than that one or why one student in your class might like a particular movie better than another student would. You want to give your audience enough information to understand basically what the movies are about and to make an informed decision about where to spend their money based on their interests” (“Annotated Bibliography”).

Essentially, this assignment consists of two elements that will be blended together:

- A Works Cited page in MLA format that lists all of the research sources you have found and

evaluated thus far for your final paper

- A 3-4 sentence-long mini-evaluation immediately following each of these source's citation that shows how and why this source will be useful to your final project (or not). This evaluation should include your interpretation of the source's thesis or overall focus.

An MLA example, using the source for the above quote:

"Annotated Bibliography." *Handouts and Links*. The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2007. Web. 12 Feb. 2010. This source is a handout made available by a reputable university's writing center, and describes with great detail and examples what an annotated bibliography is and what purpose it serves. It contains an extensive list of works consulted that could lead me towards additional sources as needed.

### ***The Nuts and Bolts***

Your final Annotated Bibliography will have **12 sources** listed. Of those,

- at least 5 will be academic journal article sources, retrieved from the school or a public library
- at least 2 will be book-length, either physical books or ebooks from the Library or online
- at least 1 will be an online media source, such as a YouTube video, podcast, or interactive presentation
- The remaining 4 sources will be "wild card" slots—anything you want to include.

- at least 2 sources (of any of the above formats) must contain elements that DISAGREE with your own position on the matter

The remaining sources may fall into whichever category you choose. You may single-space both the citations and evaluations to make it more reader-friendly. Entries should be organized in alphabetical order. **We are using MLA formatting,** for the Bibliography as well as the final Research Essay.

Remember, this is just an assignment to demonstrate the range of research you'll be doing for your final essay. You won't be expected to use all of these sources in your final paper, and if you find more after you've turned this in, you can use those instead. The Annotated Bibliography is a snapshot of where you are in the research process at this particular point in time.

You're also more than welcome to recycle sources you've used in earlier assignments.

# 181. Video: Annotated Bibliographies An Illustrated Guide

A quick tour of the what, why, and how of an annotated bibliography.  
Created to support information literacy instruction at Lincoln  
Memorial University.

<https://youtu.be/-LpgXJvQnEc>

## 182. Discussion: Annotated Bibliography Practice

This discussion is voluntary, and won't be graded. It is a great way to get some feedback on Annotated Bibliography work you've done, before it's submitted for a grade. I'll be checking this regularly before the due date, and welcome input from you to answer other questions posted here, as well.

I realize citations can get intricate, and there's always one source that just absolutely stumps you, it seems. Post your questions here, preferably with a draft of the citation & summary paragraph you've done so far for that source. We'll do our best to get it perfect, together.





PART XXII

# STRUCTURE & OUTLINING



# 183. 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.](#)



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

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=220#oembed-1>



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

here: <https://library.achievingthedream.org/odessaenglishcomp2/?p=220#oembed-2>

## 184. Discussion: Argument/ Counterargument

This will be a small group discussion—you'll only see posts from a smaller group of people.

Previously you did some great work identifying your target audience for your research project. The whole fun of writing a persuasive paper is to pick an audience who disagrees with you, or at least is undecided about the matter. Then you use charm, wit, and raw intelligence to prove that they're absolutely silly for thinking what they do, and that they better come over to your side or else the world will end.

In being persuasive and winning the fight, it helps a lot to remember that your target audience has reasons for their position on the issue. Those reasons may not be GOOD ones, of course, but they have some motivation for thinking or feeling the way they do. (I still don't like eating at Jack in the Box because a friend of mine had a really bad experience there years ago, in another state. Not a very rational reason, I admit, but it does shape my behavior when it comes to fast food.)

In order to be truly persuasive, you have to understand what people's motivations are, and acknowledge those in your essay. If you don't, then readers will think one of two things: 1) you don't know what the other side thinks, and are therefore ignorant, or 2) you know what they think, but you

just don't have any good response for it and are avoiding it.

I'd like you to visit [POWA's "Anticipating Opposition" article](#) and read the content there. Then, return to this discussion and build your own pro/con chart, using your thesis as the "proposition." It'll be easier to create a list, rather than a chart, given our constraints in the discussion forum platform.

Then look at one or two of your "con" statements in more detail. How will you acknowledge these arguments in your own essay, and what will you say to your reader to counter them? For instance, if I were trying to talk myself into eating at Jack in the Box again, I'd acknowledge that finding a bug in your food is yes, a traumatic event. But it was an isolated incident, and in no way reflects the standards of the chain overall. I'd go into food safety data and possibly relate the health scores of the local franchises recently. Maybe I'd even embark on a smear campaign and talk about similar events that have occurred at other fast food chains, to show it's not particular to one brand.

Your post should be at least 150-200 words. It doesn't have to be grammatically perfect, but should use standard English (no text-speak, please) and normal capitalization rules.

You will also need to return to this Discussion to reply to at least one of your group members' posts. Content could include, but is not limited to, any of the following: [Suggest further elements that could be added either to the Pro or Con side of their chart.](#) Indicate what it would take for you to

be convinced, if you were on the con side of the argument.

Responses are weighed as heavily as your initial posting, and should be roughly as long (150-200 words). Responses should indicate you've read your classmate's post carefully. Include specific details from the post you're responding to in your reply.

# 185. Writing for Success: Outlining

## *LEARNING OBJECTIVES*

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

- Identify the steps in constructing an outline.
- Construct a topic outline and a sentence outline.

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

### *Tip*

Longer papers require more reading and planning than shorter papers do. Most writers discover that the more they know about a topic, the more they can write about it with intelligence and interest.

## Organizing Ideas

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

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



convince readers that your point of view on an issue is well reasoned and worthy of belief.

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

## Methods of Organizing Writing

The three common methods of organizing writing are chronological order, spatial order, and order of importance. You will learn more about these in Chapter 8 “Writing Essays: From Start to Finish”; however, you need to keep these methods of organization in mind as you plan how to arrange the information you have gathered in an outline. An outline is a written plan that serves as a skeleton for the paragraphs you write. Later, when you draft paragraphs in the next stage of the writing process, you will add support to create “flesh” and “muscle” for your assignment.

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

Table 7.1 “Order versus Purpose” shows the connection between order and purpose.

Table 7.1 Order versus Purpose

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

## Writing a Thesis Statement

One legitimate question readers always ask about a piece of writing is “What is the big idea?” (You may even ask this question when you are the reader, critically reading an assignment or another document.) Every nonfiction writing task—from the short essay to the ten-page term paper to the lengthy senior thesis—needs a big idea, or a controlling idea, as the spine for the work. The controlling idea is the main idea that you want to present and develop.

### *Tip*

For a longer piece of writing, the main idea should be broader than the main idea for a shorter piece of writing. Be sure to frame a main idea that is appropriate for the length of the assignment. Ask yourself, “How many pages

will it take for me to explain and explore this main idea in detail?” Be reasonable with your estimate. Then expand or trim it to fit the required length.

The big idea, or controlling idea, you want to present in an essay is expressed in a thesis statement. A thesis statement is often one sentence long, and it states your point of view. The thesis statement is not the topic of the piece of writing but rather what you have to say about that topic and what is important to tell readers.

Table 7.2 “Topics and Thesis Statements” compares topics and thesis statements.

Table 7.2 Topics and Thesis Statements

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

The first thesis statement you write will be a preliminary thesis statement, or a working thesis statement. You will need it when you begin to outline your assignment as a way to organize it. As you continue to develop the arrangement, you can limit your working thesis statement if it is too broad or expand it if it proves too narrow for what you want to say.

## *Tip*

You will make several attempts before you devise a working thesis statement that you think is effective. Each draft of the thesis statement will bring you closer to the wording that expresses your meaning exactly.

## Writing an Outline

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

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

## Tip

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

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

- Place your introduction and thesis statement at the beginning, under roman numeral I.
- Use roman numerals (II, III, IV, V, etc.) to identify main points that develop the thesis statement.
- Use capital letters (A, B, C, D, etc.) to divide your main points into parts.
- Use arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, etc.) if you need to subdivide any As, Bs, or Cs into smaller parts.
- End with the final roman numeral expressing your idea for your conclusion.

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

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

1. Supporting detail → *becomes a support sentence of body paragraph 1*
  1. Subpoint
  2. Subpoint
2. Supporting detail
  1. Subpoint
  2. Subpoint
3. Supporting detail
  1. Subpoint
  2. Subpoint
3. Main point 2 → *becomes the topic sentence of body paragraph 2*
  1. Supporting detail
  2. Supporting detail
  3. Supporting detail
4. Main point 3 → *becomes the topic sentence of body paragraph 3*
  1. Supporting detail
  2. Supporting detail
  3. Supporting detail
5. Conclusion

### *Tip*

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

## Tip

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

## Constructing Topic Outlines

A topic outline is the same as a sentence outline except you use words or phrases instead of complete sentences. Words and phrases keep the outline short and easier to comprehend. All the headings, however, must be written in parallel structure. (For more information on parallel structure, see [“Refining Your Writing: How Do I Improve My Writing Technique?”](#).)

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

*I. Introduction*

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

*II. E-book readers and the way that people read*

*A. Books easy to access and carry around*

1. *Electronic downloads*
2. *Storage in memory for hundreds of books*

*B. An expanding market*

1. *E-book readers from booksellers*
2. *E-book readers from electronics and computer companies*

*C. Limitations of current e-book readers*

1. *Incompatible features from one brand to the next*
2. *Borrowing and sharing e-books*

*III. Film cameras replaced by digital cameras*

*A. Three types of digital cameras*

1. *Compact digital cameras*
2. *Single lens reflex cameras, or SLRs*
3. *Cameras that combine the best features of both*

*B. The confusing "megapixel wars"*

*C. The zoom lens battle*

*IV. The confusing choice among televisions*

*A. 1080p vs. 768p*

*B. Plasma screens vs. LCDs*

*C. Home media centers*

*V. Conclusion*

- *How to be a wise consumer*

## Checklist

### Writing an Effective Topic Outline

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

- Do I have a controlling idea that guides the development of the entire piece of writing?



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

## Writing at Work

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

## Constructing Sentence Outlines

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

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

*I. Introduction*

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

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

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

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

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

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

*C. Current e-book readers have significant limitations.*

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

*III. Digital cameras have almost totally replaced film cameras.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*C. Does every home really need a media center?*

*V. Conclusion*

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

## Tip

The information compiled under each roman numeral

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

## Writing at Work

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

### *Key Takeaways*

- Writers must put their ideas in order so the assignment makes sense. The most common orders are chronological order, spatial order, and order of importance.
- After gathering and evaluating the information you found for your essay, the next step is to write a working, or preliminary, thesis statement.
- The working thesis statement expresses the main

idea that you want to develop in the entire piece of writing. It can be modified as you continue the writing process.

- Effective writers prepare a formal outline to organize their main ideas and supporting details in the order they will be presented.
- A topic outline uses words and phrases to express the ideas.
- A sentence outline uses complete sentences to express the ideas.
- The writer's thesis statement begins the outline, and the outline ends with suggestions for the concluding paragraph.

## Exercises

1. Using the topic you selected in [“Apply Prewriting Models.”](#) develop a working thesis statement that states your controlling idea for the piece of writing you are doing. On a sheet of paper, write your working thesis statement.

2. Using the working thesis statement you wrote in #1 and the reading you did in [“Apply Prewriting Models.”](#) construct a topic outline for your essay. Be sure to observe correct outline form, including correct indentions and the use of Roman and arabic numerals and capital letters. Please share with a classmate and compare your outline. Point out areas of interest from their outline and what you would like to learn more about.

3. Expand the topic outline you prepared #2 to make it a sentence outline. In this outline, be sure to include multiple supporting points for your main topic even if your topic outline does not contain

them. Be sure to observe correct outline form, including correct indentions and the use of Roman and arabic numerals and capital letters.

# 186. Introductions

## WHAT THIS HANDOUT IS ABOUT

This handout will explain the functions of introductions, offer strategies for writing effective ones, help you check your drafted introductions, and provide you with examples of introductions to be avoided.

## THE ROLE OF INTRODUCTIONS

Introductions and conclusions can be the most difficult parts of papers to write. Usually when you sit down to respond to an assignment, you have at least some sense of what you want to say in the body of your paper. You might have chosen a few examples you want to use or have an idea that will help you answer the main question of your assignment: these sections, therefore, are not as hard to write. But these middle parts of the paper can't just come out of thin air; they need to be introduced and concluded in a way that makes sense to your reader.

Your introduction and conclusion act as bridges that transport your readers from their own lives into the “place” of your analysis. If your readers pick up your paper about education in the autobiography of Frederick Douglass, for example, they need a transition to help them leave behind the world of Chapel Hill, television, e-mail, and the *The Daily Tar Heel* and to help them temporarily enter the world of nineteenth-century American slavery. By providing an introduction that helps your readers make a transition between their own world and the issues you will be writing about, you give your readers the tools they need to get into

your topic and care about what you are saying. Similarly, once you've hooked your reader with the introduction and offered evidence to prove your thesis, your conclusion can provide a bridge to help your readers make the transition back to their daily lives. (See our handout on [conclusions](#).)

## WHY BOTHER WRITING A GOOD INTRODUCTION?

**You never get a second chance to make a first impression.** The opening paragraph of your paper will provide your readers with their initial impressions of your argument, your writing style, and the overall quality of your work. A vague, disorganized, error-filled, off-the-wall, or boring introduction will probably create a negative impression. On the other hand, a concise, engaging, and well-written introduction will start your readers off thinking highly of you, your analytical skills, your writing, and your paper. This impression is especially important when the audience you are trying to reach (your instructor) will be grading your work.

**Your introduction is an important road map for the rest of your paper.** Your introduction conveys a lot of information to your readers. You can let them know what your topic is, why it is important, and how you plan to proceed with your discussion. In most academic disciplines, your introduction should contain a thesis that will assert your main argument. It should also, ideally, give the reader a sense of the kinds of information you will use to make that argument and the general organization of the paragraphs and pages that will follow. After reading your introduction, your readers should not have any major surprises in store when they read the main body of your paper.

**Ideally, your introduction will make your readers want to read your paper.** The introduction should capture your readers' interest, making them want to read the rest of your paper. Opening with a

compelling story, a fascinating quotation, an interesting question, or a stirring example can get your readers to see why this topic matters and serve as an invitation for them to join you for an interesting intellectual conversation.

## STRATEGIES FOR WRITING AN EFFECTIVE INTRODUCTION

**Start by thinking about the question (or questions) you are trying to answer.** Your entire essay will be a response to this question, and your introduction is the first step toward that end. Your direct answer to the assigned question will be your thesis, and your thesis will be included in your introduction, so it is a good idea to use the question as a jumping off point. Imagine that you are assigned the following question:

*Education has long been considered a major force for American social change, righting the wrongs of our society. Drawing on the Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, discuss the relationship between education and slavery in 19th-century America. Consider the following: How did white control of education reinforce slavery? How did Douglass and other enslaved African Americans view education while they endured slavery? And what role did education play in the acquisition of freedom? Most importantly, consider the degree to which education was or was not a major force for social change with regard to slavery.*

You will probably refer back to your assignment extensively as you prepare your complete essay, and the prompt itself can also give you some clues about how to approach the introduction. Notice that it starts with a broad statement, that education has been considered a major force for social change, and then narrows to focus on specific questions from the book. One strategy might be to use a similar model in your own introduction —start off with a big picture sentence or two about the power of education as a force for change



as a way of getting your reader interested and then focus in on the details of your argument about Douglass. Of course, a different approach could also be very successful, but looking at the way the professor set up the question can sometimes give you some ideas for how you might answer it.

**Decide how general or broad your opening should be.** Keep in mind that even a “big picture” opening needs to be clearly related to your topic; an opening sentence that said “Human beings, more than any other creatures on earth, are capable of learning” would be too broad for our sample assignment about slavery and education. If you have ever used Google Maps or similar programs, that experience can provide a helpful way of thinking about how broad your opening should be. Imagine that you’re researching Chapel Hill. If what you want to find out is whether Chapel Hill is at roughly the same latitude as Rome, it might make sense to hit that little “minus” sign on the online map until it has zoomed all the way out and you can see the whole globe. If you’re trying to figure out how to get from Chapel Hill to Wrightsville Beach, it might make more sense to zoom in to the level where you can see most of North Carolina (but not the rest of the world, or even the rest of the United States). And if you are looking for the intersection of Ridge Road and Manning Drive so that you can find the Writing Center’s main office, you may need to zoom all the way in. The question you are asking determines how “broad” your view should be. In the sample assignment above, the questions are probably at the “state” or “city” level of generality. But the introductory sentence about human beings is mismatched—it’s definitely at the “global” level. When writing, you need to place your ideas in context—but that context doesn’t generally have to be as big as the whole galaxy! (See our handout on [understanding assignments](#) for additional information on the hidden clues in assignments.)

**Try writing your introduction last.** You may think that you have to write your introduction first, but that isn’t necessarily true, and it isn’t always the most effective way to craft a good introduction. You may find that you don’t know what you are going to argue at the

beginning of the writing process, and only through the experience of writing your paper do you discover your main argument. It is perfectly fine to start out thinking that you want to argue a particular point, but wind up arguing something slightly or even dramatically different by the time you've written most of the paper. The writing process can be an important way to organize your ideas, think through complicated issues, refine your thoughts, and develop a sophisticated argument. However, an introduction written at the beginning of that discovery process will not necessarily reflect what you wind up with at the end. You will need to revise your paper to make sure that the introduction, all of the evidence, and the conclusion reflect the argument you intend. Sometimes it's easiest to just write up all of your evidence first and then write the introduction last—that way you can be sure that the introduction will match the body of the paper.

**Don't be afraid to write a tentative introduction first and then change it later.** Some people find that they need to write some kind of introduction in order to get the writing process started. That's fine, but if you are one of those people, be sure to return to your initial introduction later and rewrite if necessary.

**Open with an attention grabber.** Sometimes, especially if the topic of your paper is somewhat dry or technical, opening with something catchy can help. Consider these options:

1. an intriguing example (for example, the mistress who initially teaches Douglass but then ceases her instruction as she learns more about slavery)
2. a provocative quotation (Douglass writes that “education and slavery were incompatible with each other”)
3. a puzzling scenario (Frederick Douglass says of slaves that “[N]othing has been left undone to cripple their intellects, darken their minds, debase their moral nature, obliterate all traces of their relationship to mankind; and yet how wonderfully they have sustained the mighty load of a most frightful bondage, under which they have been groaning for

centuries!” Douglass clearly asserts that slave owners went to great lengths to destroy the mental capacities of slaves, yet his own life story proves that these efforts could be unsuccessful.)

4. a vivid and perhaps unexpected anecdote (for example, “Learning about slavery in the American history course at Frederick Douglass High School, students studied the work slaves did, the impact of slavery on their families, and the rules that governed their lives. We didn’t discuss education, however, until one student, Mary, raised her hand and asked, ‘But when did they go to school?’ That modern high school students could not conceive of an American childhood devoid of formal education speaks volumes about the centrality of education to American youth today and also suggests the significance of the deprivation of education in past generations.”)
5. a thought-provoking question (given all of the freedoms that were denied enslaved individuals in the American South, why does Frederick Douglass focus his attentions so squarely on education and literacy?)

**Pay special attention to your first sentence.** Start off on the right foot with your readers by making sure that the first sentence actually says something useful and that it does so in an interesting and error-free way.

**Be straightforward and confident.** Avoid statements like “In this paper, I will argue that Frederick Douglass valued education.” While this sentence points toward your main argument, it isn’t especially interesting. It might be more effective to say what you mean in a declarative sentence. It is much more convincing to tell us that “Frederick Douglass valued education” than to tell us that you are going to say that he did. Assert your main argument confidently. After all, you can’t expect your reader to believe it if it doesn’t sound like you believe it!

## HOW TO EVALUATE YOUR INTRODUCTION DRAFT

Ask a friend to read it and then tell you what he or she expects the paper will discuss, what kinds of evidence the paper will use, and what the tone of the paper will be. If your friend is able to predict the rest of your paper accurately, you probably have a good introduction.

## FIVE KINDS OF LESS EFFECTIVE INTRODUCTIONS

**1. The place holder introduction.** When you don't have much to say on a given topic, it is easy to create this kind of introduction. Essentially, this kind of weaker introduction contains several sentences that are vague and don't really say much. They exist just to take up the "introduction space" in your paper. If you had something more effective to say, you would probably say it, but in the meantime this paragraph is just a place holder.

*Example: Slavery was one of the greatest tragedies in American history. There were many different aspects of slavery. Each created different kinds of problems for enslaved people.*

**2. The restated question introduction.** Restating the question can sometimes be an effective strategy, but it can be easy to stop at JUST restating the question instead of offering a more specific, interesting introduction to your paper. The professor or teaching assistant wrote your questions and will be reading ten to seventy essays in response to them—he or she does not need to read a whole paragraph that simply restates the question. Try to do something more interesting.

*Example: Indeed, education has long been considered a major force for American social change, righting the wrongs of our society. The*

*Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass discusses the relationship between education and slavery in 19th century America, showing how white control of education reinforced slavery and how Douglass and other enslaved African Americans viewed education while they endured. Moreover, the book discusses the role that education played in the acquisition of freedom. Education was a major force for social change with regard to slavery.*

**3. The Webster's Dictionary introduction.** This introduction begins by giving the dictionary definition of one or more of the words in the assigned question. This introduction strategy is on the right track—if you write one of these, you may be trying to establish the important terms of the discussion, and this move builds a bridge to the reader by offering a common, agreed-upon definition for a key idea. You may also be looking for an authority that will lend credibility to your paper. However, anyone can look a word up in the dictionary and copy down what Webster says—it may be far more interesting for you (and your reader) if you develop your own definition of the term in the specific context of your class and assignment, or if you use a definition from one of the sources you've been reading for class. Also recognize that the dictionary is also not a particularly authoritative work—it doesn't take into account the context of your course and doesn't offer particularly detailed information. If you feel that you must seek out an authority, try to find one that is very relevant and specific. Perhaps a quotation from a source reading might prove better? Dictionary introductions are also ineffective simply because they are so overused. Many graders will see twenty or more papers that begin in this way, greatly decreasing the dramatic impact that any one of those papers will have.

*Example: Webster's dictionary defines slavery as "the state of being a slave," as "the practice of owning slaves," and as "a condition of hard work and subjection."*

**4. The "dawn of man" introduction.** This kind of introduction generally makes broad, sweeping statements about the relevance of this topic since the beginning of time. It is usually very general

(similar to the place holder introduction) and fails to connect to the thesis. You may write this kind of introduction when you don't have much to say—which is precisely why it is ineffective.

*Example: Since the dawn of man, slavery has been a problem in human history.*

**5. The book report introduction.** This introduction is what you had to do for your elementary school book reports. It gives the name and author of the book you are writing about, tells what the book is about, and offers other basic facts about the book. You might resort to this sort of introduction when you are trying to fill space because it's a familiar, comfortable format. It is ineffective because it offers details that your reader already knows and that are irrelevant to the thesis.

*Example: Frederick Douglass wrote his autobiography, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, in the 1840s. It was published in 1986 by Penguin Books. In it, he tells the story of his life.*

## WORKS CONSULTED

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

All quotations are from Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*, edited and with introduction by Houston A. Baker, Jr., New York: Penguin Books, 1986.

# 187. 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 synthesize your thoughts, to demonstrate the importance of your ideas, and to propel your reader to a new view of the subject. It is also your opportunity to make a good final impression and to end on a positive note.

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

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

## STRATEGIES FOR WRITING AN EFFECTIVE CONCLUSION

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

- Play the “So What” Game. If you'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>>.

## 188. Discussion: Post-Draft Outline

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

Now it's time to turn away from the raw content creation of writing a draft, and towards the fine-tuning that does into polishing and shaping an effective essay. To start with, I'd like you to review this [Post Draft Outline presentation](#).

Create a post-draft outline (PDO) for your own essay **in its most current form**. Share that PDO with us here.

After you've laid out the summary sentences for us to see, follow this with a short paragraph of personal response and analysis of what this activity told you. Make at least two observations of how you'll change, add, subtract, or divide content as you move forward in the writing process.

Your posts will vary in length this week. Just make sure a full PDO is included and followed by at least a 3-sentence paragraph of observation. It doesn't have to be grammatically perfect, but should use standard English (no text-speak, please) and normal capitalization rules.

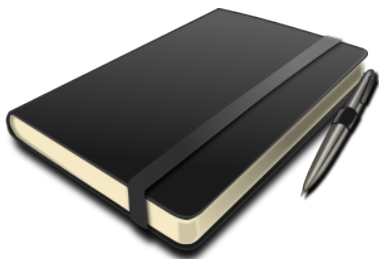
You will also need to return to this Discussion to reply to at least two of your classmates' posts. Content could include, but is not limited to, any

of the following: Do you get a full sense of what that paper will be about? Does anything strike you as repetitive, or do you feel there is content that needs to be covered in more depth? Offer at least 2 suggestions that come out of your reflections on their post-draft outline content.

Responses are weighed as heavily as your initial posting, and should be roughly as long (150-200 words) in combination. Responses should indicate you've read your classmate's post carefully. Include specific details from the post you're responding to in your reply.

# 189. Assessment: Reading Notebook Entry #5

Review these articles about writing introductions and conclusions:



- [Introductions: Four Types by Grammar-Quizzes](#)
- [Guide to Writing Introductions and Conclusions by Gallaudet University](#)

After looking over those suggestions, and considering what you've planned for your own draft, assess your progress on opening and closing your essay so far.

Create an entry that includes any or all of the following:

- questions you had while reading these articles
- how effective you think these articles are
- how you feel about your intro/conclusion as they stand at the moment
- what relationship you see between your introduction and conclusion sections
- what strategy you plan to pursue to get your intro & conclusion in shape for the final

This is an informal assignment. Your writing can be in complete sentences, or bullet points or fragments, as you see appropriate. Editing isn't vital for this work, though it should be proofread to

the point that obvious typos or misspellings are addressed and corrected. Target word count is 150-300 words for this entry.



PART XXIII

# DETERMINING AUDIENCE



# 190. Audience

## What this handout is about

This handout will help you understand and write for the appropriate audience when you write an academic essay.

## Audience matters

When you're in the process of writing a paper, it's easy to forget that you are actually writing to someone. Whether you've thought about it consciously or not, you always write to an audience: sometimes your audience is a very generalized group of readers, sometimes you know the individuals who compose the audience, and sometimes you write for yourself. Keeping your audience in mind while you write can help you make good decisions about what material to include, how to organize your ideas, and how best to support your argument.

To illustrate the impact of audience, imagine you're writing a letter to your grandmother to tell her about your first month of college. What details and stories might you include? What might you leave out? Now imagine that you're writing on the same topic but your audience is your best friend. Unless you have an extremely cool grandma to whom you're very close, it's likely that your two letters would look quite different in terms of content, structure, and even tone.

## Isn't my instructor my audience?

Yes, your instructor or TA is probably the actual audience for your paper. Your instructors read and grade your essays, and you want to keep their needs and perspectives in mind when you write. However, when you write an essay with only your instructor in mind, you might not say as much as you should or say it as clearly as you should, because you assume that the person grading it knows more than you do and will fill in the gaps. This leaves it up to the instructor to decide what you are really saying, and she might decide differently than you expect. For example, she might decide that those gaps show that you don't know and understand the material. Remember that time when you said to yourself, "I don't have to explain communism; my instructor knows more about that than I do" and got back a paper that said something like "Shows no understanding of communism"? That's an example of what can go awry when you think of your instructor as your only audience.

Thinking about your audience differently can improve your writing, especially in terms of how clearly you express your argument. The clearer your points are, the more likely you are to have a strong essay. Your instructor will say, "He really understands communism—he's able to explain it simply and clearly!" By treating your instructor as an intelligent but uninformed audience, you end up addressing her more effectively.

## How do I identify my audience and what they want from me?

Before you even begin the process of writing, take some time to consider who your audience is and what they want from you. Use

the following questions to help you identify your audience and what you can do to address their wants and needs.

- Who is your audience?
- Might you have more than one audience? If so, how many audiences do you have? List them.
- Does your assignment itself give any clues about your audience? What does your audience need? What do they want? What do they value?
- What is most important to them?
- What are they least likely to care about?
- What kind of organization would best help your audience understand and appreciate your arguments?
- What do you have to say (or what are you doing in your research) that might surprise your audience?
- What do you want your audience to think, learn, or assume about you? What impression do you want your writing or your research to convey?

## How much should I explain?

This is the hard part. As we said earlier, you want to show your instructor that you know the material. But different assignments call for varying degrees of information. Different fields also have different expectations. For more about what each field tends to expect from an essay, see the [Writing Center handouts](#) on writing in specific fields of study. The best place to start figuring out how much you should say about each part of your paper is in a careful reading of the assignment. We give you some tips for reading assignments and figuring them out in [our handout on how to read an assignment](#). The assignment may specify an audience for your

paper; sometimes the instructor will ask you to imagine that you are writing to your congressperson, for a professional journal, to a group of specialists in a particular field, or for a group of your peers. If the assignment doesn't specify an audience, you may find it most useful to imagine your classmates reading the paper, rather than your instructor.

Now, knowing your imaginary audience, what other clues can you get from the assignment? If the assignment asks you to summarize something that you have read, then your reader wants you to include more examples from the text than if the assignment asks you to interpret the passage. Most assignments in college focus on argument rather than the repetition of learned information, so your reader probably doesn't want a lengthy, detailed, point-by-point summary of your reading (book reports in some classes and argument reconstructions in philosophy classes are big exceptions to this rule). If your assignment asks you to interpret or analyze the text (or an event or idea), then you want to make sure that your explanation of the material is focused and not so detailed that you end up spending more time on examples than on your analysis. If you are not sure about the difference between explaining something and analyzing it, see our handouts on [reading the assignment](#) and [argument](#).

Once you have a draft, try your level of explanation out on a friend, a classmate, or a Writing Center tutor. Get the person to read your rough draft, and then ask her to talk to you about what she did and didn't understand. (Now is not the time to talk about proofreading stuff, so make sure she ignores those issues for the time being). You will likely get one of the following responses or a combination of them:

- If your listener/reader has **tons of questions** about what you are saying, then you probably need to explain more. Let's say you are writing a paper on piranhas, and your reader says, "What's a piranha? Why do I need to know about them? How would I identify one?" Those are vital questions that you clearly

need to answer in your paper. You need more detail and elaboration.

- If your reader seems **confused**, you probably need to explain more clearly. So if he says, “Are there piranhas in the lakes around here?” you may not need to give more examples, but rather focus on making sure your examples and points are clear.
- If your reader **looks bored and can repeat back to you more details than she needs to know** to get your point, you probably explained too much. Excessive detail can also be confusing, because it can bog the reader down and keep her from focusing on your main points. You want your reader to say, “So it seems like your paper is saying that piranhas are misunderstood creatures that are essential to South American ecosystems,” not, “Uh... piranhas are important?” or, “Well, I know you said piranhas don’t usually attack people, and they’re usually around 10 inches long, and some people keep them in aquariums as pets, and dolphins are one of their predators, and...a bunch of other stuff, I guess?”

Sometimes it’s not the amount of explanation that matters, but the word choice and tone you adopt. Your word choice and tone need to match your audience’s expectations. For example, imagine you are researching piranhas; you find an article in *National Geographic* and another one in an academic journal for scientists. How would you expect the two articles to sound? *National Geographic* is written for a popular audience; you might expect it to have sentences like “The piranha generally lives in shallow rivers and streams in South America.” The scientific journal, on the other hand, might use much more technical language, because it’s written for an audience of specialists. A sentence like “*Serrasalmus piraya* lives in fresh and brackish intercoastal and proto-arboreal sub-tropical regions between the 45th and 38th parallels” might not be out of place in the journal.

Generally, you want your reader to know enough material to

understand the points you are making. It's like the old forest/trees metaphor. If you give the reader nothing but trees, she won't see the forest (your thesis, the reason for your paper). If you give her a big forest and no trees, she won't know how you got to the forest (she might say, "Your point is fine, but you haven't proven it to me"). You want the reader to say, "Nice forest, and those trees really help me to see it." Our [handout on paragraph development](#) can help you find a good balance of examples and explanation.

## Reading your own drafts

Writers tend to read over their own papers pretty quickly, with the knowledge of what they are trying to argue already in their minds. Reading in this way can cause you to skip over gaps in your written argument because the gap-filler is in your head. A problem occurs when your reader falls into these gaps. Your reader wants you to make the necessary connections from one thought or sentence to the next. When you don't, the reader can become confused or frustrated. Think about when you read something and you struggle to find the most important points or what the writer is trying to say. Isn't that annoying? Doesn't it make you want to quit reading and surf the web or call a friend?

## Putting yourself in the reader's position

Instead of reading your draft as if you wrote it and know what you meant, try reading it as if you have no previous knowledge of the material. Have you explained enough? Are the connections clear?



This can be hard to do at first. Consider using one of the following strategies:

- Take a break from your work—go work out, take a nap, take a day off. This is why the Writing Center and your instructors encourage you to start writing more than a day before the paper is due. If you write the paper the night before it's due, you make it almost impossible to read the paper with a fresh eye.
- Try outlining after writing—after you have a draft, look at each paragraph separately. Write down the main point for each paragraph on a separate sheet of paper, in the order you have put them. Then look at your “outline”—does it reflect what you meant to say, in a logical order? Are some paragraphs hard to reduce to one point? Why? This technique will help you find places where you may have confused your reader by straying from your original plan for the paper.
- Read the paper aloud—we do this all the time at the Writing Center, and once you get used to it, you'll see that it helps you slow down and really consider how your reader experiences your text. It will also help you catch a lot of sentence-level errors, such as misspellings and missing words, which can make it difficult for your reader to focus on your argument.

These techniques can help you read your paper in the same way your reader will and make revisions that help your reader understand your argument. Then, when your instructor finally reads your finished draft, he or she won't have to fill in any gaps. The more work you do, the less work your audience will have to do—and the more likely it is that your instructor will follow and understand your argument.

# 191. Discussion: Establishing Intended Audience

Material in this web article, [“Determining Audience/Readership”](#) from Study Guides and Strategies, will prove helpful in completing this assignment, as will other readings in this module.

In the discussion below, identify at least 3 potential groups of people who would be concerned about the topic you’ve chosen. For each of the three, tell us a bit about who they are, and what motivations they have. (It’s always helpful to include a reminder about what your topic/thesis is, too).

For instance, in my CheezIts argument, there are a variety of potential groups affected. One is consumers, who care about getting good values, low costs, and high quality products. They want to be sure the money they spend is worthwhile. Another group is retail outlets. They, too, are motivated by money, and making sure they keep the customer coming back to purchase the products they offer. A third potential group are health-food advocates, who would see snack foods like CheezIts as a bad alternative to other options because of their fat and salt contents.

End your post by telling us which of the potential audience groups you’re going to focus your own essay on, and why. What can you do to target your

supporting claims to address the concerns of this particular group?

Your post should be at least 150-200 words. It doesn't have to be grammatically perfect, but should use standard English (no text-speak, please) and normal capitalization rules.

You will also need to return to this Discussion to reply to at least two of your classmates' posts. Content could include, but is not limited to, any of the following: **Comment on the audience groups they've identified. If you can think of others, suggest who they would be and what their motivations are. Try to put yourself in the place of the group your colleague has chosen, and advance potential counter-arguments a person in that group would make.**

Responses are weighed as heavily as your initial posting, and should be roughly as long (150-200 words) when combined. Responses should indicate you've read your classmate's post carefully. Include specific details from the post you're responding to in your reply.



PART XXIV

# REVISING & EDITING



# 192. 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 here the salespeople may finally give you decent info.~~ Plasma flat-panel television screens can be much larger in diameter than their LCD rivals. Plasma screens show 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. There's good reason for this confusion: 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 buyers face is 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. However, 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 <sup>^</sup> is more confusing to me than choosing among televisions. It confuses a lot of people who want a new high-definition digital television (HDTV), with a large and with screen to watch sports and DVDs on. <sup>^</sup> 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<sup>^</sup> the screen resolution, you want. <sup>^</sup>Screen resolution means the number of horizontal scan lines the screen can show. This resolution is often expressed as 1080p, as or full HD, or <sup>^</sup>768p, which is half that. The trouble is that<sup>^</sup> if you have a smaller screen, viewers will not between them screen, 32-inch or 37-inch diagonal <sup>^</sup>you won't be able to tell the difference<sup>^</sup> 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 ~~some~~ 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. <sup>^</sup>Don't buy more television than you need!!

## 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.

# 193. 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.

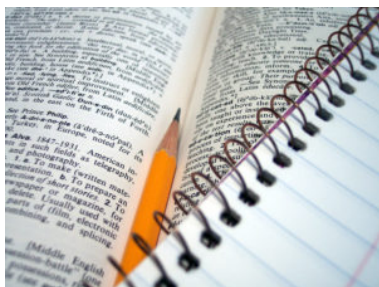


## Evaluate Organization

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.

# 194. 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

	<b>Symbol</b>	<b>Example</b>
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.



PART XXV

# VISUAL ARGUMENTS



# 195. Photos and Illustrations

Photos are used in professional documents as tools for communicating a message that a writer feels can be strengthened through the use of proper imagery. Photographs can do many things to enhance a message, some examples can be seen here:

## Illustration Checklist

### Planning

- What kinds of illustrations are your audience familiar with?
- Do you have information that could be more easily or quickly communicated to your audience visually or in a combination of words and graphics?
- Do you have definitions that could be displayed visually in whole or in part?
- Do you have any processes or procedures that could be depicted in a flowchart?
- Do you have information on trends or relationships that could be displayed in tables and graphics?
- Do you have masses of statistics that could be summarized in tables?
- Do you need to depict objects? If so, what do you need to display about the objects? Do you need to focus attention on specific aspects of the objects? Do you require the realism of photographs?
- What are the design conventions of your illustrations?
- Are there suitable illustrations you could borrow or adapt? Or will you need to create them yourself?

### Revising

- Are your illustrations suited to your purpose and audience?
- Do your illustrations communicate information ethically?
- Are your illustrations effectively located and easy to find?
- Are your illustrations numbered and labeled?
- Do your verbal and visual elements reinforce each other?
- Are your illustrations genuinely informative instead of simply decorative?
- When necessary, have you helped your readers to interpret your illustrations with commentary or annotations?
- Have you acknowledged the sources for borrowed or adapted tables and figures?

## How To Perform an Action

Pictures are an effective tool for giving visual representation of how to do something. They can stand alone or work in conjunction with the given text, and they can enhance a message if used properly.

*If you are using pictures in conjunction with text:* As in a set of instructions, the imagery increases understanding of the task, in addition to decreasing confusion that may arise from text that stands alone. When using a picture to help portray how to perform a task, it is your



responsibility to make sure the picture matches up with the text. You must explain the picture using text, and vice versa, explain the text using a picture. Also, the viewer will accomplish the task more often when the picture looks how it would if they were watching the task, not necessarily if they were experiencing it.

An example would be: if your task was doing a cartwheel, you

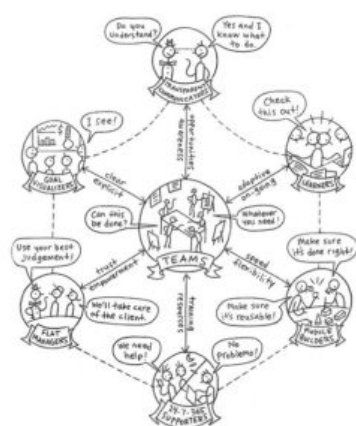
wouldn't want the pictures at an angle where the person is looking through the eyes of the one doing the cartwheel. You would want the pictures to be from someone watching the event, so that the viewer isn't confused by what they can't see (such as where their feet are when they're looking at their hands). It's the simple things that make or break a document when using pictures. Think and re-think the pictures you are using and how someone seeing them for the first time will react to them.

## How a Finished Product Should Look

When textual information does not capture the essence of what your trying to describe, try putting an actual photo of what your trying to describe in the document. This type of picture enables you to come as close to reality as possible. Make sure your pictures are in color and of high quality. Black and white photos tend to blur easily on paper and lack the detail needed to fully understand a photo. Images cut down on excessive use of describing words. "A picture is worth a thousand words" relates to this situation.

Be sure to use the text wrap abilities of most word processors. A well placed picture with clean text wrapping can make an otherwise overwhelming block of text seem reasonably approachable. Looking at 25 pages of block, justified alignment, plain black text is one of the most boring ways to see a report. A picture can liven up a report, make it more memorable, and help clarify the report all in one motion.

## Map Out an Object, Place, or Process



[Click to enlarge](#)

An example of these types of pictures can be found in an automotive manual or a science textbook. This can be anything from a picture of a machine to an example of how photosynthesis works. Arrows and labels can be used in order to show where everything is and how the process takes place. The picture should include a big enough background so that the reader can locate the area in relation

to things around it.

Photographs can also play a major role in connecting with the audience. They are useful in multi-cultural situations when a shared written language may not exist. Pictures can speak louder than words, and usually portray the message quicker. It is very important to keep the first initial reaction in mind when choosing the image you will place within your document. Be sure to avoid photos that may have several meanings, or the true meaning may be unclear. In order to avoid this type of situation, put yourself in the audience that you are writing for and try to be unbiased when you view the image. Better yet, test the image on someone who does not know much about your photo's topic and ask them what message the photo sends to them. Clarity is essential in conveying your message.

Do not rely too heavily on pictures though. Pictures and text should be used simultaneously in order to give the audience the most accurate direction. Pictures can make a great break in words, but are not always as useful to get a point across as words are.



## Software Can Tremendously Increase Photograph Effectiveness

There are a great deal of photo editing programs for computers that can be utilized to bring out the right angle, zoom, view, and color of a photo. Some of the most popular photo editing software includes Photoshop, Corel, and Image Smart. Many computers now come with basic image editing software, which allows one to adjust color, brightness, crop, and other basic edits.

**Cropping** is an essential key feature that allows you to enlarge the area of the photo you want the reader to see, while omitting the background and obsolete area of the background. Cropping is equivalent to looking at an image under a microscope where you can focus on the areas you want the readers to see the clearest. However, this can decrease image quality and make the image hard to see. When possible, it is best to use images that need little to no editing.

When using imagery make sure it is of high image resolution (300 dpi for print, 72 dpi for screen) and the proper format to be inserting into your document. Typically, sticking with images from original sources, such as a camera or other .jpg or .tif file are best.

If you find your photograph is not using the right coloring, computer programs such as Photoshop, Corel, etc. will allow you to adjust the color balance and light in many different variations. This is an important feature, especially when the photograph was not professionally taken or lacks the appropriate lighting for the setting. Be careful not to over or under expose the photography.

**Labeling** is also another feature you can do in a computer program. You can insert boxes with text and arrows into a photograph in order to label key details. Labeling your photographs keeps the information you are trying to convey to the reader clear.

These computer programs may take some time to become familiar with how they work. It might be necessary to take a course or tutorial on how to use them to their full advantages, but it's worth

it for all the features these programs have. There are some free tutorials available on the internet or through the actual program.

## Using Graphics From the Artists, Internet, and Other Misc. Sources

Graphics can be found for just about any topic relatively easily if you know how to search for them and cite the artist properly. Like any written material, pictures are also property of the original artist in many cases. It is important to use good ethics and cite artists when necessary. The internet and your computer's clip art file have countless pictures and graphics as well. Knowing how to use these techniques and tools will make finding and using images easier.

### *Citing Images*

In order to use or manipulate an image or graphic not your own, from either the Internet or any other source, you must obtain permission from whoever created or has rights to that image. Usually some type of arrangement between you and this person or organization will have to be negotiated. This could be anything from paying for the rights to use the image, or citing the image in the way that is expressed by the owner. Sometimes graphics will be considered public domain. Studying the copyright information of an image is one way to determine whether or not it is public domain. Images belonging to a government agency or even to your employer would typically be considered public domain. Even so, these images should still be cited. A quick guide to citing images from books and internet can be found at, [\[1\]](#)

## *Finding Images on the Internet*

If you are looking for a high resolution image from the internet, you can select in the Google header bar that you want it only to search for “large images, or extra large images”. If you are not finding what you are looking for, there are many stock photography sites out there that allow you to have the image, royalty free for very little of your own money. Some sites to consider would be: Stock.XCHNG (this is a free site, with some restrictions), Stock Xpert, Corbis, Getty, or others, just type in stock photography in the search bar.

## Clip Art/Illustrations

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An example of Clip Art

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Illustrations are a great way to convey information easily and

effectively to an audience of all ages. However, when using illustrations be sure that there is relevance from the illustration to the topic you're discussing. Illustrations can serve as tangents if they have no relevance to the topic being discussed. Illustrations must be chosen to highlight the topic you are discussing and not to distract readers from it.

Graphics can portray ideas more easily than a picture. They give a different type of quality than text in the document. However, when presenting the ideas to well-educated and technologically savvy professionals, clip art may not present the information efficiently. Illustrations that have a low image resolution can take away from the details you are trying to portray to your audience. If this is the case then photos may be a better choice because they are more clear and may get your point across better.

## Headline text

Headline text is used to introduce or even explain graphics. It is expected that you label all of your graphics in one way or another so that when you reference them in your document the reader knows which graphic you are talking about. Headline text can be as simple as a title for a graph or as complex as a short paragraph below a photo explaining the origin and context of the image. Your images and text may seem to go together logically without headlines to you, but your readers will not have your same familiarity.

## 196. Video: Visualizing Data

Below you'll see a link to a TED Talk by David McCandless titled "The Beauty of Data Visualization." TED is a wonderful resource for intelligent, entertaining talks by experts on all kinds of subjects. You can probably find a video relevant to your own research project, if you look: <http://www.ted.com/>

Please watch this 18-minute video, and when finished, respond to this question:

McCandless thinks that information design is really important because "we're all visualizers now; we're all demanding a visual aspect to our information." If we assume it's true, then how has this changed our educational system? Are there particularly good examples of how teachers and schools have responded? Extreme deficits?

Responses should be 1-2 paragraphs long, and reference your own experience with visual learning, either from your personal education or what you've witnessed from a friend or family member's experience.

<http://youtu.be/yYUOnvqm0II>

# 197. Visual Elements: Play, Use, and Design

So far you have examined how primarily written arguments work rhetorically. But visuals (symbols, paintings, photographs, advertisements, cartoons, etc.) also work rhetorically, and their meaning changes from context to context. Here's an example:

Imagine two straight lines intersecting each other at right angles. One line runs from north to south. The other from east to west. Now think about the meanings that this sign evokes.

+

What came to mind as you pondered this sign? Crossroads? A first aid sign? The Swiss flag? Your little brother making a cross sign with his forefingers that signals “step away from the hallowed ground that is my bedroom”?

Now think of a circle around those lines so that the ends of the lines hit, or cross over, the circumference of the circle. What is the image's purpose now?

⊕

What did you come up with? The Celtic cross? A surveyor's target? A pizza cut into really generous sizes?

Did you know that this symbol is also the symbol for our planet Earth? And it's the symbol for the Norse god, Odin. Furthermore, a quick web search will also tell you that John Dalton, a British chemist who led the way in atomic theory and died in 1844, used this exact same symbol to indicate the element sulfur.<sup>17</sup>

Recently, however, the symbol became the subject of a fiery political controversy. Former Alaska governor (and former vice-presidential candidate) Sarah Palin's marketing team placed several of these symbols—the lines crossed over the circumference of the circle in this case—on a map of the United States. The symbols indicated where the Republican Party had to concentrate their

campaign because these two seemingly innocuous lines encompassed by a circle evoked, in this context, the symbol for crosshairs—which itself invokes a myriad of meanings that range from “focus” to “target.”

However, after the shooting of Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords in Arizona in January 2011, the symbol, and the image it was mapped onto, sparked a vehement nationwide debate about its connotative meaning. Clearly, the image’s rhetorical effectiveness had transformed into something that some considered offensive. Palin’s team withdrew the image from her website.<sup>18</sup>

How we understand symbols rhetorically, and indeed all images, depends on how the symbols work with the words they accompany, and on how we understand and read the image’s context, or the social “landscape” within which the image is situated. As you have learned from earlier chapters, much of this contextual knowledge in persuasive situations is tacit, or unspoken.

Like writing, how we use images has real implications in the world. So when we examine visuals in rhetorical circumstances, we need to uncover this tacit knowledge. Even a seemingly innocuous symbol, like the one above, can denote a huge variety of meanings, and these meanings can become culturally loaded. The same is true for more complex images—something we will examine at length below.

In this chapter, then, we will explore how context—as well as purpose, audience, and design—render symbols and images rhetorically effective. The political anecdote above may seem shocking but, nevertheless, it indicates how persuasively potent visuals are, especially when they enhance the meaning of a text’s words or vice versa. Our goal for this chapter, then, is to come to terms with the basics of visual analysis, which can encompass the analysis of words working with images or the analysis of images alone. When you compose your own arguments, you can put to use what you discover in this chapter when you select or consider creating visuals to accompany your own work.

## Visual Analysis

Let's start with by reviewing what we mean by analysis. Imagine that your old car has broken down and your Uncle Bob has announced that he will fix it for you. The next day, you go to Uncle Bob's garage and find the engine of your car in pieces all over the driveway; you are further greeted with a vision of your hapless uncle greasily jabbing at the radiator with a screwdriver. Uncle Bob (whom you may never speak to again) has broken the car engine down into its component parts to try and figure out how your poor old car works and what is wrong with it.

Happy days are ahead, however. Despite the shock and horror that the scene above inspires, there is a method to Uncle Bob's madness. Amid the wreckage, he finds out how your car works and what is wrong with it so he can fix it and put it back together.

Analyzing, then, entails breaking down a text or an image into component parts (like your engine). And while analyzing doesn't entail *fixing* per se, it does allow you to figure out how a text or image works to convey the message it is trying to communicate. What constitutes the component parts of an image? How might we analyze a visual? What should we be looking for? To a certain extent we can analyze visuals in the same way we analyze written language; we break down a written text into component parts to figure out just *what* the creator's agenda might be and what effect the text might have on its readers.

When we analyze visuals we do take into account the same sorts of things we do when we analyze written texts, with some added features. We thus analyze visuals in terms of the following concepts—concepts that count for our component parts. Some of them you may recognize.



## Genre

Genres that use visuals tell us a lot about what we can and can't do with them. Coming to terms with genre is rather like learning a new dance—certain moves, or conventions, are expected that dictate what kind of dance you have to learn. If you're asked to moonwalk, for instance, you know you have to glide backwards across the floor like Michael Jackson. It's sort of the same with visuals and texts; certain moves, or conventions, are expected that dictate what the genre allows and doesn't allow.

Below is a wonderful old bumper sticker from the 1960s. A bumper sticker, as we will discover, is a genre that involves specific conventions.



Bumper stickers today look quite a bit different, but the amount of space that a sticker's creator has to work with hasn't really changed. Bumper stickers demand that their creators come up with short phrases that are contextually understandable and accompanied by images that are easily readable—a photograph of an oil painting trying to squeeze itself on a bumper sticker would just be incomprehensible. In short, bumper stickers are an argument in a rush!

A bumper sticker calls for an analysis of images *and* words working together to create an argument. As for their rhetorical content, bumper stickers can demand that we vote a certain way, pay

attention to a problem, act as part of a solution, or even recognize the affiliations of the driver of the car the sticker is stuck to. But their very success, given that their content is minimal, depends wholly on our understanding of the words and the symbols that accompany them in context.

## Context/The Big Picture

Thinking about context is crucial when we are analyzing visuals, as it is with analyzing writing. We need to understand the political, social, economic, or historical situations from which the visual emerges. Moreover, we have to remember that the meaning of images change as time passes. For instance, what do we have to understand about the context from which the Kennedy sticker emerged in order to grasp its meaning? Furthermore, how has its meaning changed in the past 50 years?

First, to read the bumper sticker at face value, we have to know that a man named Kennedy is running for president. But president of what? Maybe that's obvious, but then again, how many know who the Australian prime minister was 50 years ago, or, for that matter, the leading official in China? Of course, we should know that the face on the bumper sticker belongs to John F. Kennedy, a US Democrat, who ran against the Republican nominee Richard Nixon, and who won the US presidential election in 1960. (We hope you know that anyway.)

Now think how someone seeing this bumper sticker, and the image of Kennedy on it, today would react differently than someone in 1960 would have. Since his election, JFK's status has transformed from American president into an icon of American history. We remember his historic debate with Nixon, the first televised presidential debate. (One wonders how much of a role this event played in his election given that the TV [a visual medium] turned a political underdog into a celebrity.<sup>20</sup>) We also remember Kennedy

for his part in the Cuban missile crisis, his integral role in the Civil Rights Movement and, tragically, we remember his assassination in 1963. In other words, after the passage of 50 years, we might read the face on the bumper sticker quite differently than we did in 1960.

While we examine this “text” from 50 years ago, it reminds us that the images we are surrounded by now change in meaning all the time. For instance, we are all familiar with the Apple logo. The image itself, on its own terms, is simply a silhouette of an apple with a bite taken out of it. But, the visual does not now evoke the nourishment of a Granny Smith or a Golden Delicious. Instead, the logo is globally recognized as an icon of computer technology.

## Purpose

Words and images can work together to present a point of view. But, in terms of visuals, that point of view often relies on what isn’t explicit—what, as we noted above, is tacit.

The words on the sticker say quite simply “Kennedy For President.” We know now that this simple statement reveals that John F. Kennedy ran for president in 1960. But what was its rhetorical value back then? What did the bumper sticker want us to do with its message? After all, taken literally, it doesn’t really tell us to do anything.

For now, let’s cheat and jump the gun and guess that the bumper sticker’s argument in 1960 was “Vote to Elect John F Kennedy for United States President.”

Okay. So knowing what we know from history, we can accept that the sticker is urging us to vote for Kennedy. It’s trying to persuade us to do something. And the reason we know what we know about it is because we know how to read its genre and we comprehend its social, political, and historical context. But in order to be persuaded

by its purpose, we need to know *why* voting for JFK is a good thing. We need to understand that its underlying message, “Vote for JFK,” is that to vote for JFK is a good thing for the future of the United States.

So, to be persuaded by the bumper sticker, we must agree with the reasons why voting for JFK is a good thing. But the bumper sticker doesn’t give us any. Instead, it relies on what we are supposed to know about why we should vote for Kennedy. (JFK campaigned on a platform of liberal reform as well as increased spending for the military and space travel technology.<sup>21</sup>) Moreover, we should be aware of the evidence for why we should vote that way.<sup>22</sup> Consequently, if we voted for JFK, we accepted the above claim, reasons, and evidence driving the bumper sticker’s purpose without being told any of it by the bumper sticker. The claim, reasons and evidence are all tacit.

What about the image itself? How does that further the bumper sticker’s purpose? We see that the image of JFK’s smiling face is projected on top of the words “Kennedy for President.” The image is not placed off to the side; it is right in the middle of the bumper sticker. So for this bumper sticker to be visually persuasive, we need to agree that JFK, here represented by his smiling face, located right in the middle of the bumper sticker, on a backdrop of red, white, and blue, signifies a person we can trust to run the country.

Nowadays, JFK’s face on the bumper sticker—or in any other genre for that matter —might underscore a different purpose. It might encompass nostalgia for an era gone by or it might be used as a resemblance argument, in order to compare President Kennedy with President Obama for example.<sup>23</sup>

Overall then, when we see a visual used for rhetorical purposes, we must first determine the argument (claim, reasons, evidence) from which the visual is situated and then try to grasp why the visual is being used to further its purpose.

## Audience and Medium

In their book *Picturing Texts*, Lester Faigley et al<sup>24</sup> claim that, when determining the audience for a visual, we must “think about how an author might expect the audience to receive the work” (104). Medium, then, dominates an audience’s reception of an image. (So does **modality**. See below.) For instance, Faigley states that readers will most likely accept a photograph in a newspaper as news—unless of course one thinks that pictures in the tabloids of alien babies impersonating Elvis constitute news. Alien babies aside, readers of the news would expect that the picture on the front page of the *New York Times*, for instance, is a “faithful representation of something that actually happened” (105). An audience for a political cartoon in the newspaper, on the other hand, would know that the pictures they see in cartoons are not faithful representations of the news but opinions about current events and their participants, caricatured by a cartoonist. The expectations of the audience in terms of medium, then, determine much about how the visual is received.

As for our bumper sticker then, we might argue that the image of JFK speeding down the highway on the bumper of a spiffy new Ford Falcon would be persuasive to those who put their faith in the efficacy of bumper stickers, as well as the image of the man on the bumper sticker. Moreover, given that the Falcon is speeding by, we might assume that the bumper sticker would mostly appeal to those folks who are already thinking of voting for JFK—otherwise there’s a chance that the Falcon’s driver would be the recipient of some 1960s-style road rage.

Today, the audience for our bumper sticker has changed considerably. We might find it in a library collection. Indeed, Kansas University has a considerable collection of bumper stickers.<sup>25</sup> Or we might find it collecting bids on eBay. Once again, the audience for this example of images and words working together rhetorically depends largely on its contextual landscape.

# Design

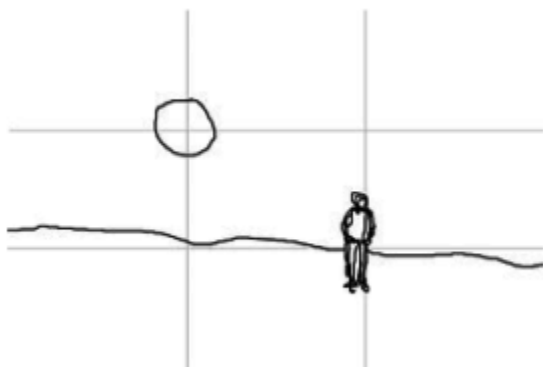
Design actually involves several factors.

## Arrangement

Designers are trained to emphasize certain features of a visual text. And they are also trained to compose images that are balanced and harmonized. Faigley et al suggest that we look at a text that uses images (with or without words) and think about where our eyes are drawn first (34).<sup>26</sup> Moreover, in Western cultures, we are trained to read from left to right and top to bottom—a pattern that often has an impact on what text or image is accentuated in a visual arrangement.

Other arrangements that Faigley et al discuss are **closed and open forms** (105).<sup>27</sup> A closed-form image means that, like our bumper sticker, everything we need to know about the image is enclosed within its frame. An open form, on the other hand, suggests that the visual's narrative continues outside the frame of the visual. Many sports ads employ open-frame visuals that suggest the dynamic of physical movement.

Another method of arrangement that is well known to designers is the **rule of thirds**. Here's an example of that rule in action<sup>28</sup>:



Note how the illustration above has been cordoned off into 9 sections. The drawings of the sun and the person, as well as the horizon, coincide with those lines. The rule of thirds dictates that this compositional method allows for an interesting and dynamic arrangement as opposed to one that is static. Now, unfortunately, our bumper sticker above doesn't really obey that rule. Nevertheless, our eye is still drawn to the image of JFK's head. Many modern bumper stickers do, however, obey the rule of thirds. Next time you see a bumper sticker on a parked car, check if the artist has paid attention to this rule. Or, seek out some landscape photography. The rule of thirds is the golden rule in landscape art and photography and is more or less a comprehensive way to analyze arrangement in design circles because of its focus on where one's eye is drawn.

Rhetorically speaking, what is accentuated in a visual is the most important thing to remember about arrangement. As far as professional design is concerned, it is never haphazard. Even a great photo, which might seem to be the result of serendipity, can be cropped to highlight what a newspaper editor, for instance, wants highlighted.

## Texts and Image in Play

Is the visual supported by words? How do the words support the visual? What is gained by the words and what would be lost if they weren't in accompaniment? What if we were to remove the words "Kennedy for President" from our bumper sticker? Would the sticker have the same rhetorical effect?

Moreover, when examining visual rhetoric, we should pinpoint how font emphasizes language. How does font render things more or less important, for instance? Is the font playful, like Comic Sans MS, or formal, like Arial? Is the font blocked, large, or small? What difference does the font make to the overall meaning of the visual? Imagine that our JFK bumper sticker was composed with a swirly-curly font. It probably wouldn't send the desired message. Why not, do you think?

Alternately, think about the default font in Microsoft Word. What does it look like and why? What happens to the font if it is bolded or enlarged? Does it maintain a sense of continuity with the rest of the text? If you scroll through the different fonts available to you on your computer, which do you think are most appropriate for essay writing, website design, or the poster you may have to compose?

Lastly, even the use of **white (or negative) space** in relation to text deserves attention in terms of arrangement. The mismanagement of the relation of space to text and/or visual can result in visual overload! For instance, in an essay, double spacing is often advised because it is easier on the reader's eye. In other words, the blank spaces between the lines of text render reading more manageable than would dense bricks of text. Similarly, one might arrange text and image against the blank space to create a balanced arrangement of both.

While in some situations the arrangement of text and visual (or white space) might not seem rhetorical (in an essay, for example), one could make the argument that cluttering one's work is not especially rhetorically effective. After all, if you are trying to



persuade your instructor to give you an ‘A’, making your essay effortlessly readable seems like a good place to start.

## Visual Figures

Faigley et al also ask us to consider the use of figures in a visual argument (32). Figurative language is highly rhetorical, as are figurative images. For instance, visual metaphors abound in visual rhetoric, especially advertising (32). A visual metaphor is at play when you encounter an image that signifies something other than its literal meaning. For instance, think of your favorite cereal: which cartoon character on the cereal box makes you salivate in anticipation of breakfast time? Next time, when you see a cartoon gnome and your tummy start to rumble in anticipation of chocolate-covered rice puffs, you’ll know that the design folks down at ACME cereals have done their job. Let’s hope, however, that you don’t want to chow down on the nearest short fat fellow in a red cap that comes your way.

Visual rhetoric also relies on synecdoche, a trope in which a *part* of something represents the *whole*. In England, for instance, a crown is used to represent the British monarchy. The image of JFK’s face on the bumper sticker, then, might suggest his competency to *head up* the country.

## Color

Colors are loaded with rhetorical meaning, both in terms of the values and emotions associated with them and their contextual background. Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen<sup>29</sup> show how

the use of color is as contextually bound as writing and images themselves. For instance, they write, “red is for danger, green for hope. In most parts of Europe, black is for mourning, though in northern parts of Portugal, and perhaps elsewhere in Europe as well, brides wear black gowns for their wedding day. In China, and other parts of East Asia, white is the color of mourning; in most of Europe it is the color of purity, worn by the bride at her wedding. Contrasts like these shake our confidence in the security of meaning of colour and colour terms” (343).

So what colors have seemingly unshakeable meaning in the US? How about red, white, and blue? Red and blue are two out of the three primary colors. They evoke a sense of sturdiness. After all, they are the base colors from which others are formed.

The combined colors of the American flag have come to signal patriotism and American values. But even American values, reflected in the appearance of the red, white, and blue, change in different contexts. To prompt further thought, Faigley shows us that the flag has been used to lend different meaning to a variety of magazine covers—from *American Vogue* (fashion) to *Fortune* magazine (money) (91). An image of the red, white and blue on the cover lends a particularly American flavor to each magazine. And this can change the theme of each magazine? For instance, with what would you acquaint a picture of the American flag on the cover of *Bon Appétit* or *Rolling Stone*? Hot dogs and Bruce Springsteen perhaps?

What then does the red, white, and blue lend our bumper sticker? A distinctly patriotic flavor, for sure. Politically patriotic. And that can mean different things for different people. Thus, given that meanings change in a variety of contexts, we can see that the meaning of color can actually be more fluid than we might have originally thought.

Alternately, if our JFK sticker colors were anything other than red, white, and blue, we might read it very differently; indeed, it might seem extremely odd to us.

## Modality

Kress and Van Leeuwen ask us to consider the modality in which an image is composed. Very simply, this means, how “real” does the image look? And what does this “realness” contribute to its persuasiveness? They write, “visuals can represent people, places, and things as though they are real, as though they actually exist in this way . . . or as though they do not” (161).<sup>30</sup> As noted above in the “Audience and Medium” section, photographs are thus considered a more naturalistic representation of the world than clip art, for instance. We expect photographs to give us a representation of reality. Thus, when a photograph is manipulated to signify something fantastic, like a unicorn or a dinosaur, we marvel at its ability to construct something that looks “real.” And when a visual shifts from one modality to another, it takes on additional meaning.

For instance, how might we read a cartoon version of JFK compared to the photograph that we see on our bumper sticker? Would the cartoon render the bumper sticker less formal? Less significant perhaps? Would a cartoon, given its associative meanings, somehow lessen the authenticity of the sticker’s purpose? Or the authority of its subject?

## Perspective/Point of View

Imagine standing beneath a wind turbine. Intimidating? Impressive Overwhelming? Now envision that you are flying over it in airplane. That very enormous thing seems rather insignificant now—a wind turbine in Toyland.

Now imagine the same proportions depicted in a photograph. One might get the same sense of power if the photo was taken from the bottom of the turbine, the lens pointed heavenward. Then again,

an aerial photograph might offer us a different perspective. If the landscape presents us with an endless array of turbines stretching into the distance, we might get a sense that they are infinite—as infinite as wind energy.

Our Kennedy sticker offers neither of the above-described senses of perspective. Coming face to face with Kennedy, we neither feel overwhelmed nor superior. In fact, it's as if Kennedy's gaze is meeting ours at our own level. The artist is still using his powers of perspective; it's just that our gaze meets Kennedy's face to face. Consequently, Kennedy is portrayed as friendly and approachable.

Differently, a photo that artist Shepherd Fairey manipulated into the now iconic “Hope” poster from a 2006 Associated Press photograph of our current president (and got into all sorts of copyright infringement trouble for), makes subtle use of perspective: the visual positions the viewer slightly beneath Obama's gaze. As a result of Fairey's use of perspective, and as Joshua Bearman puts it, Obama is portrayed with “the distant, upward gaze of a visionary leader.”<sup>31</sup>

## Social distance

Kress and Van Leeuwen include **social distance** in the components of design. Social distance accounts for the “psychology of people's use of space” (Van Leeuwen and Jewitt, 29).<sup>32</sup> In short, a visual artist can exploit social distance to create a certain psychological effect between a person in an image and the image's audience.

To illustrate, imagine a photograph of a handsome man, head and shoulders only, smiling straight at you with warm eyes. He advertises chocolate, cigars, expensive cologne. A beautiful woman tosses her hair, smiling seductively at the camera. She looks straight at you. “Look at me,” both seem to say, “buy this product; we invite you.” Likewise, Kennedy smiles into the camera. “Vote for me,” he

encourages. “I’m a nice guy.” Depicting head and shoulders only, we are given a sense of what Van Leeuwen and Carey Jewitt call “Close Personal Distance.”<sup>33</sup> The result is one of intimacy.

Alternately, a visual of several people, or a crowd, would suggest far less intimacy.

## Mood and Lighting

Have you ever put a flashlight under your chin and lit your face from underneath? Maybe we aren’t all budding scary movie makers, but jump out of the closet on a dark night with all the lights turned off and the flashlight propped under your chin and you’re sure to give at least the cat a fright. What you have experimented with is mood and lighting. In short, the lighting as described eerily captures facial features that aren’t usually accentuated. It can be quite offputting. Thus the position of the light has created a creepy face; it’s created a visual **mood**. And, the mood combines with other elements of the visual to create an effect, which of course is rhetorical.

The next time you watch a movie, note how the filmmaker has played with lighting to create a mood. In the illustration below, we can see how *Film Noir*, for instance, capitalizes on techniques of mood and lighting to create an uncanny effect.<sup>34</sup>



## Finally

In this chapter, we have introduced the basics of rhetoric and visual analysis. During the course of your semester, and throughout your academic career, you might be asked to use visuals in support of your own writing. For instance, you may be asked to construct a web page, a poster, or a pamphlet.

You may also be asked to represent data with graphs and charts. Lisa Ede offers a selection of visuals (as well as a description of their purpose) that you might need to include in some of your academic compositions. These do not include pictures, but arrange text visually to convey information specifically:

1. A **table** arranges text visually, in columns for example, to compare information.
2. A **pie chart** arranges text within a circle to show relationships of quantity, for instance.
3. A **bar graph** is typically used to show changes in data over a period of time.
4. A **map** calls attention to “spatial relationships and locations.”<sup>35</sup>

Whatever the type of visual you use, whether it is a pie chart or

a photograph, it is vital that you interrogate the *genre*, *purpose*, *audience* and *design conventions* suitable to the context within which you are working. Understanding these components will help you select the appropriate visual that works rhetorically in this context. In other words, and as an illustration, if you are working in the sciences and compiling visual data in a line graph, you need to be aware of all of the above in order to meet the expectations of your professor and your academic community. In short, even the most seemingly innocuous choices are rhetorical given the expectations of your audience. The components of the analysis listed above, then, offer a set of guidelines to think about when we are composing with visuals.

## To Do

1. Can you think of any bumper stickers you have seen lately that capitalize on your external knowledge of an issue? What do you have to know for instance to be able to read and understand a peace sign on a bumper sticker? Or a picture of a cell phone with the words “Hang Up and Drive” next to it? What cultural, unspoken or tacit knowledge do these symbols demand that you have?
2. Go to your favorite search engine and type in the words “political cartoons.” Choose a website and browse through the cartoons. You might notice that some of them you will laugh at, some of them you will grimace at, and for some of them, you may stop and think, “huh?” Pick a cartoon that makes you go “Huh?” In other words, pick a cartoon for which you don’t get the punch line. Research the political context to which the cartoon refers. After your research, think about the tacit knowledge the cartoon taps into. Now how do you react? Why?
3. Can you think of how audiences have changed with regards to

a particular image—like the Apple image? A further illustration might help: my students and I looked at an ad for a particular brand of jeans recently, and they told me that “no one wore those jeans anymore” and that they “were for old people.” I was shocked and amazed (and emptied my closet of those jeans). Recently, the brand has been targeting a teen demographic, which leads me to marvel at the company’s rhetorical astuteness—as well as to wonder exactly what jeans one should be wearing nowadays.

4. Find an image using your favorite search engine. Analyze it in terms of the elements of design listed above. How does a corroboration of these elements work in favor of the image’s overall effect?

17 “John Dalton.” *The Chemical Heritage Foundation*. 2010. Web. 20 Mar. 2012.

18 Warmowski, Jon. “Following Gifford’s Shooting, Sarah Palin’s Crosshairs Website Quickly Scrubbed From Internet.” *The Huffington Post*. 8 Jan. 2011. Web. 4 Mar. 2012.

19 [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1960\\_Kennedy\\_for\\_President\\_Campaign\\_Bumper\\_Sticker.gif](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1960_Kennedy_for_President_Campaign_Bumper_Sticker.gif)

20 Webly, Kayla. “How the Nixon-Kennedy Debate Changed the World.” *Time.com*. 23 Sept. 2010. Web. 12. Jul. 2012.

21 “Campaign of 1960.” *Jfklibrary.org* John F. Kennedy: Presidential Library and Museum. Web. 30 Mar. 2012.

22 In terms of Space travel, the Soviet Union beat the US to the space punch, by sending Sputnik into orbit in 1957. This caused the U.S government great embarrassment given the implications of the



Cold War. Evidence of the Sputnik launch fueled reasons why the US should send an American into space.

23 CBS News recently ran an article doing just that. Knoller, Mark. "JFK and Obama, their Similarities and Differences." *Cbsnews.com*. CBS NEWS. 20 Jan. 2011. Web. 20 Mar. 2012.

24 Faigley, Lester, Diana George, Anna Palchik and Cynthia Selfe. *Picturing Texts*. London: Norton, 2004. Print.

25 KU The University of Kansas. "Researcher Works to Preserve Bumper Stickers, A Kansas Invention." Youtube. Web. 30 Mar. 2012.

26 Faigley, Lester, Diana George, Anna Palchik and Cynthia Selfe. *Picturing Texts*. London: Norton, 2004. Print.

27 Faigley, Lester, Diana George, Anna Palchik and Cynthia Selfe. *Picturing Texts*. London: Norton, 2004. Print.

28 [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rule\\_of\\_thirds.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rule_of_thirds.jpg)

29 Kress, Gunther, and Theo Van Leeuwen: "Colour as a Semiotic Mode: Notes for a Grammar of Colour." *Visual Communication* 1.3 (2002): 343-68.

30 Kress, Gunther and Theo Van Leeuwen. *Reading Images*. London: Routledge, 1996. Print.

31 Bearman, Joshua. "Behind Obama's Iconic Hope Poster." *The Huffington Post*. 11 Nov. 2008. Web. 17 Jul. 2012.

32 Van Leeuwen, Theo and Carey Jewitt. *The Handbook of Visual Analysis*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2003. Print.

33 Van Leeuwen, Theo and Carey Jewitt. *The Handbook of Visual Analysis*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2003. Print.

34 <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:BigComboTrailer.jpg>

35 Ede, Lisa. *The Academic Writer*. 2nd ed. New York: Bedford, 2011. Print.



PART XXVI  
FINAL DRAFTS



# 198. Sample Final Research Essay Drafts

Some of these samples were written with slightly different assignment criteria, but all provide good examples of what possible successful completion of this essay can look like.

[Sample #1: Pro Organic Food](#) (Google Doc Link)

[Sample #2: Anti Wireless Access Availability for Teenagers](#) (Google Doc Link)

[Sample #3: Anti Use of Term “Psychopath” in Media](#) (Google Doc Link)

[Sample #4: Anti TV Show “Teen Mom”](#) (Google Doc Link)

# 199. Cohesion: What do People Mean When They Say My Writing Doesn't "Flow"

## Before You Read

Write 750 to 1,000 words in response to this prompt, keeping in mind that you're going to be working with this piece of writing extensively in the coming days—not only in this chapter but in other chapters related to style:

As a public university that receives substantial support from the state legislature, the U has an obligation to serve the people of the state of Utah. However, there can be disagreements on what that service means. On one hand, it can mean admitting as many Utah residents as possible in order to increase the state's population of college-educated citizens. On the other hand, it can mean increasing admission requirements to fulfill the U's position as the "flagship" university in the state. Where do you come down?

## Cohesion, or “Flow”—An Overview

Many (student) writers have turned in papers only to have their readers (more often than not, their teachers) hand the papers back with comments that the writing doesn’t “flow.”



Unfortunately, teachers may not always be explicit about what they mean—just that it doesn’t “read” or “sound” right or that the ideas don’t progress from one to another. This chapter is about what “flow” actually means and how to make sure your writing does it.

By “flow,” most readers mean what grammarians and linguists call **cohesion**—the property of a text to hold together at the level of sentences and paragraphs. Of course, cohesion is good in any communication medium, and each medium can present challenges for it. If you’re sending text messages back and forth to a friend and the network sends them out of order, the result can be confusing: you might have written “thank GOD” in response to some piece of news, but your friend might not have gotten your message until after she texted “gotta go.” Oops. If you’re speaking to someone on a train or bus and something outside the window catches your attention, you might say something about it, and the other person might say, “wait—what?”

But in both those cases, you can quickly and easily clear up the confusion. Speech and texting are more or less **synchronous** media: that is, they involve people communicating at the same time and often in the same (virtual) space. Writing, however—in the traditional sense, anyway—is different, because it’s **asynchronous**. It also requires an important trade-off. Writing has worked well for a long time as a communication technology because it’s relatively easy to distribute. Someone using writing to communicate doesn’t

have to move from place to place: she may simply write something down and send it. However, to use a metaphor from very current communication technologies, writing has low bandwidth compared to other media. If someone is speaking to you, you can infer meaning from words themselves but also from vocal inflections, facial expressions, hand gestures, posture, and even from how close the other person is to you. You can't do that when you write and read. So, writers and readers can send and receive on the cheap, but they carry a burden of making their words work extraordinarily hard.

This idea has a very clear implication for your own written arguments—an important enough implication that we'd say it pretty loudly if you were standing right in front of us. But, since this is writing, we'll use boldface: **just because an argument you're making is clear in your own head, that doesn't mean it's automatically clear to people who are reading the written version of your argument.** That's one of the reasons it's a good idea to circulate the writing you do to others before you turn it in for a grade or circulate it in high-stakes situations.

Fortunately, the to-do list for “flow” is relatively short. Throughout Englishlanguage writing, it turns out that there is a small number of strategies for achieving cohesion. These strategies help writers follow a key principle for communicating with readers as effectively as possible on the assumption that they're not looking over their readers' shoulders pointing out what they *really* need to know. That principle is called **the given-new contract**. This contract implies that you as a writer will start your projected readers with something relatively familiar and then lead them to less familiar material. It's an idea that is simple to state, but it's powerful, and it works at different levels of a document. At the level of overall document design, consistent visual items on each page (page number location, headings, “white” space, fonts) help create a familiar visual field that works like a container for whatever new information is coming next. As you read earlier in this book, a lot of a writer's job in an introduction, after all, is orienting readers so



that they're at least familiar with the broad topic before the writer gets specific—with an argument, for example. But the contract helps sentence-level cohesion, as well. It's very helpful to readers if you create a cycle in which you try to put “given” information at the start of sentences and shift “new” information to the ends, and then recycle the “new” information as “given” information in sentences that come up. The principle of **end emphasis** helps here: readers tend to latch more onto how sentences end than onto how they begin. Skilled writers know this is often the case, so they'll reserve end-of-sentence slots for new or challenging information, since they know they often have a little more of their readers' attention at those spots anyway.

The given-new contract and the concept of end emphasis are a little tough to explain in abstract terms, so here's an example followed by some analysis. We've numbered the sentences to help make the analysis clear.

1 This textbook is freely circulable under the terms of a Creative Commons (“CC”) license. 2 CC is a nonprofit organization that helps content creators, such as textbook authors, share their products in more diverse ways than traditional copyright allows. 3 While typical copyright restricts others from using an author's work unless they have the author's express consent, CC allows authors to pick and choose which restrictions to apply to their work by using one of several free licenses. 4 For example, this book is available via an “Attribution-NonCommercialShareAlike” agreement: adopters of the textbook may use it free of charge and may even modify it without permission, but they must agree not to try to sell it or share it with others under different licensing terms.

Each sentence in this passage shows our attempt to honor the given-new contract. Here's how:

1. The first sentence introduces the term “Creative Commons” near its end. We're assuming that you may not know (much)

about CC, so we're trying to exploit end emphasis to introduce it here very early in the paragraph.

2. This sentence immediately recycles CC and defines the term more fully. The sentence ends with the important (and “new”) idea that CC allows for a wider range of options than copyright.
3. Now, the passage explains in a little more detail the point it just made about copyright restrictions and goes on to clarify the contrast with CC, ending with the “new” information that CC allows authors to choose from several licenses.
4. Not surprisingly, the next sentence shows what the previous sentence introduced by giving an example of a relevant CC license.

In addition to using the principle of end emphasis, writers who honor the given-new contract frequently use several other strategies.

## Stock transition words and phrases

Many writers first learn to make their writing flow by using explicit, special-purpose transitional devices. You may hear these devices called “signposts,” because they work much like highway and street signs. When steel boxes weighing 2 tons and more are rolling around at high speeds, it's important that their operators are repeatedly and clearly told exactly where and when to go with as little ambiguity as possible.

Here's a list of stock, generic, all-purpose transition words and phrases, organized by their basic functions. Keep in mind that there are differences among these that can make a difference and that determining what those differences is is beyond the scope of this book. It's a matter of experience.



**To add or show sequence:** again, also, and, and then, besides, equally important, finally, first, further, furthermore, in addition, in the first place, last, moreover, next, second, still, too

**To compare:** also, in the same way, likewise, similarly

**To contrast:** although, and yet, but, but at the same time, despite, even so, even though, for all that, however, in contrast, in spite of, nevertheless, notwithstanding,

on the contrary, on the other hand, regardless, still, though, yet

**To give examples or intensify:** after all, an illustration of, even, for example, for instance, indeed, in fact, it is true, of course, specifically, that is, to illustrate, truly

**To indicate place:** above, adjacent to, below, elsewhere, farther on, here, near, nearby, on the other side, opposite to, there, to the east, to the left

**To indicate time:** after a while, afterward, as long as, as soon as, at last, at length, at that time, before, earlier, formerly, immediately, in the meantime, in the past, lately, later, meanwhile, now, presently, shortly, simultaneously, since, so far, soon, subsequently, then, thereafter, until, until now, when

**To repeat, summarize, or conclude:** all in all, altogether, in brief, in conclusion, in other words, in particular, in short, in simpler terms, in summary, on the whole, that is, to put it differently, to summarize

**To show cause and effect:** accordingly, as a result, because, consequently, for this purpose, hence, otherwise, since, then, therefore, thereupon, thus, to this end, with this object in mind

As we just told you, avoiding ambiguity in academic and

professional writing is important. But it's not as important as avoiding it on highways, in factories, or around high-voltage equipment or explosives. In those contexts, lots of signposts with lots of redundancy are vital. In many writing situations, you can expect your readers to pick up other useful clues for cohesion, so it's somewhat less important to use a lot of these "stock" or generic transition words. In fact, if you overuse them (for instance, in an essay in which your first paragraph starts with "first," your second paragraph starts with "second," and on and on), it can get annoying.

## Pronouns

If you're old enough vaguely to remember the Schoolhouse Rock series, you might remember the episode about pronouns ("he," "she," "her," "him," "you," "we," "they," "it," "one," "this," "that," and some others) and how they can stand for nouns, even if the nouns have long names. The idea is that pronouns make speaking and writing more efficient. But you may not have learned that pronouns are at least as powerful as cohesive devices. Since pronouns work by referring back to nouns that have previously been mentioned, they can help writers carry the ideas their nouns represent across sentences and paragraphs.

You may have been told to limit your use of pronouns or even avoid them altogether. This is bad advice, but it's understandable: pronouns work very well when they clearly refer to their antecedents, but they can create significant comprehension problems, misdirection, and vagueness when they don't.

# Repetition

Contrary to a lot of advice novice writers get, repetition is effective. For example, as you'll learn later in this book (or now if you want to read ahead, of course), many rhetorical strategies that are thousands of years old and that exist in several languages use repetition. It's a time-honored way to signal importance, create a sense of rhythm, and help audiences remember key ideas. But repetition gets a bad reputation because it can become redundant. (Yes, that sentence used repetition to get its point across. It's no accident that it had a lot of "r"s.)

Repetition can involve individual words, phrases, or grammatical structures. When you repeat similar structural elements but not necessarily the words themselves, you are using **parallelism**, a special variety of repetition that not



only helps cohesion but also helps you to communicate that similarly important ideas should be read together. When sentences are written using non-parallel parts, it's certainly possible for readers to understand them, but it creates work for the reader that usually isn't necessary. Compare these sentences:

Student writers should learn to start projects early, how to ask for advice from teachers and peers, and when to focus on correcting grammar.

Student writers should learn to start projects early, to ask for advice from teachers and peers, and to figure out when to focus on correcting their grammar.

See the difference? The first sentence is comprehensible: the commas, for example, let you know that you're reading a list. But the

extra adverbs (“how” and “when”) get in the way of the sentence’s clarity. And that problem, in turn, means that it’s hard to see clearly how each item in the list relates to the others. In the revised sentence, though, it’s a lot clearer that each of the three items is something student writers should “learn to” do. That relationship is made clear by the repeating grammatical pattern:

Student writers should learn

- to start projects early
- to ask for advice
- to figure out when to focus on grammar

## Example

Here’s an example of some writing that uses a variety of cohesion strategies. We know it well because one of us wrote it. It’s a short essay, written for a broad academic audience in a U publication, about the current state of the English language. To clarify the analysis that follows, we’ve underlined a few of the transition devices.

Teaching (and Learning) Englishes

Jay Jordan

University Writing Program

I teach English-language writing, and I’m a native speaker of the English language. Being a native speaker

might seem to be an excellent basic qualification for my job: at the very least, it should necessarily make me the model of English usage. However, it actually makes me very unusual.

According to The British Council, approximately 1.5 billion people around the world use English. Roughly 375 million of them are like me: they have learned English since birth, and most of them live in countries like the US, Canada, Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand that are traditional English-language centers.

That still leaves over a billion English users. 375 million of *those* people live in countries that were British colonies until the middle of the last century, such as Ghana, India, Kenya, and Nigeria.

But the largest number of English speakers—50% of the global total—are in countries that were not British colonies and that don't have much of a history with English. Count China, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, and South Korea among them. So, most English speakers aren't where we might expect them to be. In addition, they're not using English in ways we might expect, either, which helps explain why I'm referring to them as "users" and not "writers" or "speakers." Most people who use English around the world do so in specific circumstances in order to get very specific things done. Many Indians, for instance, might use English in publications and to transact business over the phone, Hindi in a government office, Gujarati at the store, and maybe one of several other languages at home.

What does this mean for my teaching and research?

People and information move around globally more so now than ever, and that movement makes diverse uses of English feed back into the US. As students at the U (and the U is not alone) become more culturally and linguistically diverse, I often have as much to learn from them as I have to teach them.

This short example uses each of the cohesion strategies described above:

- Overall, the example attempts to honor the given-new contract. It starts on familiar territory—or at least, with an attempt to orient the reader very quickly to the writer’s personal approach. And it also makes a statement about the writer that the reader likely intuitively agrees with: namely, he’s a native speaker of English, which makes him well qualified to be an English teacher. But the first paragraph ends with a surprising claim: being a native English speaker means being unusual. Here, then, the writer starts with what’s comfortable but then uses end emphasis to reinforce the “new” information at the end.
- The writer does use several stock transitions: in fact, one of them —“however”—helps introduce the surprising sentence at the end of the introduction by clearly signposting something different or unexpected. And, as another example, the fourth paragraph starts with “but,” which signposts another transition to information that contradicts what comes before. (You may have been told never to start sentences with conjunctions like “but” or “and.” It turns out that it’s generally fine to do that. Just be aware of your readers’ preferences.)



- Pronouns appear to be the most common cohesion device in the essay. At the start of the third paragraph, for example, “that” stands in for the statistic in the previous paragraph, which would be hard to write out all over again. But “that” also carries forward the sense of the statistic into the next paragraph. And “those people” carries the statistic forward to the next sentence. (Really, “those” is actually an adjective that modifies “people,” but it’s enough like a pronoun that we’re handling it like one here.)
- Repetition is also common in this essay. Words are repeated—or at least, put very close to other words that are very similar in meaning. “English” and “British colonies” clearly help tie together the third and fourth paragraphs. And sentences show parallelism. See, for instance, paragraph four: “So, most English speakers aren’t where we would expect them to be. In addition, they’re not using English in ways we might expect, either.”

## To Do

1. Identify at least three other specific cohesion devices used in the example essay. Be prepared to say what kind of device it is and what effect it has on your reading. Also be prepared to suggest what would happen if it weren’t there.
2. Re-read the 750-1,000 words you wrote before you read this chapter, paying particular attention to cohesion. Now, revise it to improve its flow.

# 200. Read: Developing Your Final Draft

## Learning Objectives

1. Revise your paper to improve organization and cohesion.
2. Determine an appropriate style and tone for your paper.
3. Revise to ensure that your tone is consistent.
4. Edit your paper to ensure that language, citations, and formatting are correct.

Given all the time and effort you have put into your research project, you will want to make sure that your final draft represents your best work. This requires taking the time to revise and edit your paper carefully.

You may feel like you need a break from your paper before you revise and edit it. That is understandable—but leave yourself with enough time to complete this important stage of the writing process. In this section, you will learn the following specific strategies that are useful for revising and editing a research paper:

- How to evaluate and improve the overall organization and cohesion
- How to maintain an appropriate style and tone
- How to use checklists to identify and correct any errors in language, citations, and formatting

## Revising Your Paper: Organization and Cohesion

When writing a research paper, it is easy to become overly focused on editorial details, such as the proper format for bibliographical entries. These details do matter. However, before you begin to address them, it is important to spend time reviewing and revising the content of the paper.

A good research paper is both organized and cohesive. Organization means that your argument flows logically from one point to the next. Cohesion means that the elements of your paper work together smoothly and naturally. In a cohesive research paper, information from research is seamlessly integrated with the writer's ideas.

### Revise to Improve Organization

When you revise to improve organization, you look at the flow of ideas throughout the essay as a whole and within individual paragraphs. You check to see that your essay moves logically from the introduction to the body paragraphs to the conclusion, and that each section reinforces your thesis. Use Checklist 12.1 to help you.

#### Checklist 12.1

Revision: Organization

##### **At the essay level**

- Does my introduction proceed clearly from the opening to the thesis?
- Does each body paragraph have a clear main idea that relates to the thesis?

- Do the main ideas in the body paragraphs flow in a logical order? Is each paragraph connected to the one before it?
- Do I need to add or revise topic sentences or transitions to make the overall flow of ideas clearer?
- Does my conclusion summarize my main ideas and revisit my thesis?

### **At the paragraph level**

- Does the topic sentence clearly state the main idea?
- Do the details in the paragraph relate to the main idea?
- Do I need to recast any sentences or add transitions to improve the flow of sentences?

Jorge reread his draft paragraph by paragraph. As he read, he highlighted the main idea of each paragraph so he could see whether his ideas proceeded in a logical order. For the most part, the flow of ideas was clear. However, he did notice that one paragraph did not have a clear main idea. It interrupted the flow of the writing. During revision, Jorge added a topic sentence that clearly connected the paragraph to the one that had preceded it. He also added transitions to improve the flow of ideas from sentence to sentence.

Read the following paragraphs twice, the first time without Jorge's changes, and the second time with them.

Picture this: You're standing in the aisle of your local grocery store when you see a chubby guy nearby staring at several brands of ketchup on display. After deliberating for a moment, he reaches for the bottle with the words "Low-Carb!" displayed prominently on the label. (You can't help but notice that the low-carb ketchup is higher priced.) Is he making a smart choice that will help him lose weight ~~Over the past decade, increasing numbers of Americans have jumped on the low-carbohydrate bandwagon~~ and enjoy better health—or is he just buying into the latest diet fad? <sup>\*</sup> Some researchers estimate that approximately 40 million Americans, or about one-fifth of the population, have attempted to restrict their intake of foods high in carbohydrates (Sanders & Katz, 2004; Hirsch, 2004). Proponents of low-carb diets say they are <sup>not only</sup> the most effective way to lose weight—~~They~~ <sup>but, also,</sup> yield health benefits such as lower blood pressure and improved cholesterol levels. <sup>Meanwhile,</sup> some doctors claim that low-carbohydrate diets are overrated and caution that their long-term effects are unknown. Although following a low-carbohydrate diet can have many benefits—especially for people who are obese or diabetic—these diets are not necessarily the best option for everyone who wants to lose weight or improve their health.

## Exercise 1

Follow these steps to begin revising your paper's overall organization.

1. Print out a hard copy of your paper.
2. Read your paper paragraph by paragraph. Highlight your thesis and the topic sentence of each paragraph.
3. Using the thesis and topic sentences as starting points, outline the ideas you presented—just as you would do if you were outlining a chapter in a textbook. Do not look at the outline you created during prewriting. You may write in the margins of your draft or create a formal outline on a separate sheet of paper.
4. Next, reread your paper more slowly, looking for how ideas flow from sentence to sentence. Identify places where adding a transition or recasting a sentence would make the ideas flow

more logically.

5. Review the topics on your outline. Is there a logical flow of ideas? Identify any places where you may need to reorganize ideas.
6. Begin to revise your paper to improve organization. Start with any major issues, such as needing to move an entire paragraph. Then proceed to minor revisions, such as adding a transitional phrase or tweaking a topic sentence so it connects ideas more clearly.

### Collaboration

Please share your paper with a classmate. Repeat the six steps and take notes on a separate piece of paper. Share and compare notes.

### Tip

Writers choose transitions carefully to show the relationships between ideas—for instance, to make a comparison or elaborate on a point with examples. Make sure your transitions suit your purpose and avoid overusing the same ones. For an extensive list of transitions, see Chapter 8 “The Writing Process: How Do I Begin?”, Section 8.4 “Revising and Editing”.

## Revise to Improve Cohesion

When you revise to improve cohesion, you analyze how the parts of your paper work together. You look for anything that seems awkward or out of place. Revision may involve deleting unnecessary material or rewriting parts of the paper so that the out-of-place material fits in smoothly.

In a research paper, problems with cohesion usually occur when a

writer has trouble integrating source material. If facts or quotations have been awkwardly dropped into a paragraph, they distract or confuse the reader instead of working to support the writer's point. Overusing paraphrased and quoted material has the same effect. Use Checklist 12.2 to review your essay for cohesion.

## Checklist 12.2

### Revision: Cohesion

- Does the opening of the paper clearly connect to the broader topic and thesis? Make sure entertaining quotes or anecdotes serve a purpose.
- Have I included support from research for each main point in the body of my paper?
- Have I included introductory material before any quotations? Quotations should never stand alone in a paragraph.
- Does paraphrased and quoted material clearly serve to develop my own points?
- Do I need to add to or revise parts of the paper to help the reader understand how certain information from a source is relevant?
- Are there any places where I have overused material from sources?
- Does my conclusion make sense based on the rest of the paper? Make sure any new questions or suggestions in the conclusion are clearly linked to earlier material.

As Jorge reread his draft, he looked to see how the different pieces fit together to prove his thesis. He realized that some of his supporting information needed to be integrated more carefully and decided to omit some details entirely. Read the following paragraph, first without Jorge's revisions and then with them.

One likely reason for these lackluster long-term results is that a low-carbohydrate diet—like any restrictive diet—is difficult to adhere to for any extended period. ~~Most people enjoy foods that are high in carbohydrates, and no one wants to be the person who always turns down that slice of pizza or birthday cake.~~ In commenting on the Gardner study, experts at the Harvard School of Public Health (2010) noted that women in all four diet groups had difficulty following the plan. Because it is hard for dieters to stick to a low-carbohydrate eating plan, the initial success of these diets is short-lived (Heinz, 2009). Medical professionals caution that low-carbohydrate diets are difficult for many people to follow consistently and that, to maintain a healthy weight, dieters should try to develop nutrition and exercise habits they can incorporate in their lives in the long term (Mayo Clinic, 2008). ~~Registered dietitians Rena Kwon (2010) comments,~~ [low-carbohydrate diets] are great, but for most, any sensible eating and exercise plan would work just as well” (Kwon, 2010).

Jorge decided that his comment about pizza and birthday cake came across as subjective and was not necessary to make his point, so he deleted it. He also realized that the quotation at the end of the paragraph was awkward and ineffective. How would his readers know who Kwon was or why her opinion should be taken seriously? Adding an introductory phrase helped Jorge integrate this quotation smoothly and establish the credibility of his source.

## Exercise 2

Follow these steps to begin revising your paper to improve cohesion.

1. Print out a hard copy of your paper, or work with your printout from Note 12.33 “Exercise 1”.
2. Read the body paragraphs of your paper first. Each time you come to a place that cites information from sources, ask



yourself what purpose this information serves. Check that it helps support a point and that it is clearly related to the other sentences in the paragraph.

3. Identify unnecessary information from sources that you can delete.
4. Identify places where you need to revise your writing so that readers understand the significance of the details cited from sources.
5. Skim the body paragraphs once more, looking for any paragraphs that seem packed with citations. Review these paragraphs carefully for cohesion.
6. Review your introduction and conclusion. Make sure the information presented works with ideas in the body of the paper.
7. Revise the places you identified in your paper to improve cohesion.

### Collaboration

Please exchange papers with a classmate. Complete step four. On a separate piece of paper, note any areas that would benefit from clarification. Return and compare notes.

## Writing at Work

Understanding cohesion can also benefit you in the workplace, especially when you have to write and deliver a presentation. Speakers sometimes rely on cute graphics or funny quotations to hold their audience's attention. If you choose to use these elements, make sure they work well with the substantive content of your presentation. For example, if you are asked to give a financial presentation, and the financial report shows that the company lost money, funny illustrations would not be relevant or appropriate for the presentation.

## Using a Consistent Style and Tone

Once you are certain that the content of your paper fulfills your purpose, you can begin revising to improve style and tone. Together, your style and tone create the voice of your paper, or how you come across to readers. Style refers to the way you use language as a writer—the sentence structures you use and the word choices you make. Tone is the attitude toward your subject and audience that you convey through your word choice.

## Determining an Appropriate Style and Tone

Although accepted writing styles will vary within different disciplines, the underlying goal is the same—to come across to your readers as a knowledgeable, authoritative guide. Writing about research is like being a tour guide who walks readers through a topic. A stuffy, overly formal tour guide can make readers feel put off or intimidated. Too much informality or humor can make readers wonder whether the tour guide really knows what he or she is talking about. Extreme or emotionally charged language comes across as unbalanced.

To help prevent being overly formal or informal, determine an appropriate style and tone at the beginning of the research process. Consider your topic and audience because these can help dictate style and tone. For example, a paper on new breakthroughs in cancer research should be more formal than a paper on ways to get a good night's sleep.

A strong research paper comes across as straightforward, appropriately academic, and serious. It is generally best to avoid writing in the first person, as this can make your paper seem overly subjective and opinion based. Use Checklist 12.3 on style to review your paper for other issues that affect style and tone. You can check

for consistency at the end of the writing process. Checking for consistency is discussed later in this section.

## Checklist 12.3

### Style

- My paper avoids excessive wordiness.
- My sentences are varied in length and structure.
- I have avoided using first-person pronouns such as *I* and *we*.
- I have used the active voice whenever possible.
- I have defined specialized terms that might be unfamiliar to readers.
- I have used clear, straightforward language whenever possible and avoided unnecessary jargon.
- My paper states my point of view using a balanced tone—neither too indecisive nor too forceful.

## Word Choice

Note that word choice is an especially important aspect of style. In addition to checking the points noted on Checklist 12.3, review your paper to make sure your language is precise, conveys no unintended connotations, and is free of biases. Here are some of the points to check for:

- Vague or imprecise terms
- Slang
- Repetition of the same phrases (“Smith states..., Jones states...”) to introduce quoted and paraphrased material (For a full list of strong verbs to use with in-text citations, see Chapter 13 “APA

and MLA Documentation and Formatting”.)

- Exclusive use of masculine pronouns or awkward use of *he* or *she*
- Use of language with negative connotations, such as *haughty* or *ridiculous*
- Use of outdated or offensive terms to refer to specific ethnic, racial, or religious groups

## Tip

Using plural nouns and pronouns or recasting a sentence can help you keep your language gender neutral while avoiding awkwardness. Consider the following examples.

- **Gender-biased:** When a writer cites a source in the body of his paper, he must list it on his references page.
- **Awkward:** When a writer cites a source in the body of his or her paper, he or she must list it on his or her references page.
- **Improved:** Writers must list any sources cited in the body of a paper on the references page.

## Keeping Your Style Consistent

As you revise your paper, make sure your style is consistent throughout. Look for instances where a word, phrase, or sentence just does not seem to fit with the rest of the writing. It is best to reread for style after you have completed the other revisions so that you are not distracted by any larger content issues. Revising strategies you can use include the following:

- **Read your paper aloud.** Sometimes your ears catch

inconsistencies that your eyes miss.

- **Share your paper with another reader whom you trust to give you honest feedback.** It is often difficult to evaluate one's own style objectively—especially in the final phase of a challenging writing project. Another reader may be more likely to notice instances of wordiness, confusing language, or other issues that affect style and tone.
- **Line-edit your paper slowly, sentence by sentence.** You may even wish to use a sheet of paper to cover everything on the page except the paragraph you are editing—that forces you to read slowly and carefully. Mark any areas where you notice problems in style or tone, and then take time to rework those sections.

On reviewing his paper, Jorge found that he had generally used an appropriately academic style and tone. However, he noticed one glaring exception—his first paragraph. He realized there were places where his overly informal writing could come across as unserious or, worse, disparaging. Revising his word choice and omitting a humorous aside helped Jorge maintain a consistent tone. Read his revisions.

#### Beyond the Hype: Evaluating Low-Carb Diets

##### I. Introduction

Picture this: You're standing in the aisle of your local grocery store when you see ~~an overweight man~~ <sup>a</sup> ~~a chubby guy~~ nearby staring at several brands of ketchup on display. After deliberating for a moment, he reaches for the bottle with the words "Low-Carb!" displayed prominently on the label. ~~(You can't help but notice that the low-carb ketchup is higher priced.)~~ Is he making a smart choice that will help him lose weight and enjoy better health—or is he just buying into the latest diet fad?

## Exercise 3

Using Checklist 12.3, line-edit your paper. You may use either of these techniques:

1. Print out a hard copy of your paper, or work with your printout from Note 12.33 “Exercise 1”. Read it line by line. Check for the issues noted on Checklist 12.3, as well as any other aspects of your writing style you have previously identified as areas for improvement. Mark any areas where you notice problems in style or tone, and then take time to rework those sections.
2. If you prefer to work with an electronic document, use the menu options in your word-processing program to enlarge the text to 150 or 200 percent of the original size. Make sure the type is large enough that you can focus on only one paragraph at a time. Read the paper line by line as described in step 1. Highlight any areas where you notice problems in style or tone, and then take time to rework those sections.

### Collaboration

Please exchange papers with a classmate. On a separate piece of paper, note places where the essay does not seem to flow or you have questions about what was written. Return the essay and compare notes.

## Editing Your Paper

After revising your paper to address problems in content or style, you will complete one final editorial review. Perhaps you already have caught and corrected minor mistakes during previous revisions. Nevertheless, give your draft a final edit to make sure it is error-free. Your final edit should focus on two broad areas:

1. Errors in grammar, mechanics, usage, and spelling
2. Errors in citing and formatting sources

For in-depth information on these two topics, see Chapter 2 “Writing Basics: What Makes a Good Sentence?” and Chapter 13 “APA and MLA Documentation and Formatting”.

## Correcting Errors

Given how much work you have put into your research paper, you will want to check for any errors that could distract or confuse your readers. Using the spell-checking feature in your word-processing program can be helpful—but this should not replace a full, careful review of your document. Be sure to check for any errors that may have come up frequently for you in the past. Use Checklist 12.4 to help you as you edit:

### Checklist 12.4

#### Grammar, Mechanics, Punctuation, Usage, and Spelling

- My paper is free of grammatical errors, such as errors in subject-verb agreement and sentence fragments. (For additional guidance on grammar, see Chapter 2 “Writing Basics: What Makes a Good Sentence?”.)
- My paper is free of errors in punctuation and mechanics, such as misplaced commas or incorrectly formatted source titles. (For additional guidance on punctuation and mechanics, see Chapter 3 “Punctuation”.)
- My paper is free of common usage errors, such as *alot* and *alright*. (For additional guidance on correct usage, see Chapter

4 “Working with Words: Which Word Is Right?”)

- My paper is free of spelling errors. I have proofread my paper for spelling in addition to using the spell-checking feature in my word-processing program.
- I have checked my paper for any editing errors that I know I tend to make frequently.

## Checking Citations and Formatting

When editing a research paper, it is also important to check that you have cited sources properly and formatted your document according to the specified guidelines. There are two reasons for this. First and foremost, citing sources correctly ensures that you have given proper credit to other people for ideas and information that helped you in your work. Second, using correct formatting establishes your paper as one student’s contribution to the work developed by and for a larger academic community. Increasingly, American Psychological Association (APA) style guidelines are the standard for many academic fields. Modern Language Association (MLA) is also a standard style in many fields. Use Checklist 12.5 to help you check citations and formatting.

### Checklist 12.5

#### Citations and Formatting

- Within the body of my paper, each fact or idea taken from a source is credited to the correct source.
- Each in-text citation includes the source author’s name (or, where applicable, the organization name or source title) and year of publication. I have used the correct format of in-text



and parenthetical citations.

- Each source cited in the body of my paper has a corresponding entry in the references section of my paper.
- My references section includes a heading and double-spaced, alphabetized entries.
- Each entry in my references section is indented on the second line and all subsequent lines.
- Each entry in my references section includes all the necessary information for that source type, in the correct sequence and format.
- My paper includes a title page.
- My paper includes a running head.
- The margins of my paper are set at one inch. Text is double spaced and set in a standard 12-point font.

For detailed guidelines on APA and MLA citation and formatting, see Chapter 13 “APA and MLA Documentation and Formatting”.

## Writing at Work

Following APA or MLA citation and formatting guidelines may require time and effort. However, it is good practice for learning how to follow accepted conventions in any professional field. Many large corporations create a style manual with guidelines for editing and formatting documents produced by that corporation. Employees follow the style manual when creating internal documents and documents for publication.

During the process of revising and editing, Jorge made changes in the content and style of his paper. He also gave the paper a final review to check for overall correctness and, particularly, correct APA or MLA citations and formatting. Read the final draft of his paper.

Beyond the Hype: Evaluating Low-Carb Diets  
Jorge Ramirez  
Anystate University

## Beyond the Hype: Evaluating Low-Carb Diets

Picture this: You're standing in the aisle of your local grocery store when you see an overweight man nearby staring at several brands of ketchup on display. After deliberating for a moment, he reaches for the bottle with the words "Low-Carb!" displayed prominently on the label. Is he making a smart choice that will help him lose weight and enjoy better health—or is he just buying into the latest diet fad?

Over the past decade, increasing numbers of Americans have jumped on the low-carb bandwagon. As of 2004, researchers estimated that approximately 40 million Americans, or about one-fifth of the population, were attempting to restrict their intake of food high in carbohydrates (Sanders & Katz, 2004). Proponents of low-carb diets say they not only are the most effective way to lose weight but also yield health benefits such as lower blood pressure and improved cholesterol levels. Meanwhile, some doctors claim that low-carb diets are overrated and caution that their long-term effects are unknown. Although following a low-carbohydrate diet

can benefit some people, these diets are not necessarily that best option for everyone who wants to lose weight or improve their health.

## Purported Benefits of Low-Carbohydrate Diets

To make sense of the popular enthusiasm for low-carbohydrate diets, it is important to understand proponents' claims about how they work. Any eating plan includes a balance of the three macronutrients—proteins, fats, and carbohydrates—each of which is essential for human health. Different foods provide these macronutrients in different proportions; a steak is primarily a source of protein, and a plate of pasta is primarily a source of carbohydrates. No one recommends eliminating any of these three macronutrient groups entirely.

However, experts disagree on what protein: fats: carbohydrate ratio is best for optimum health and for maintaining a healthy weight. Since the 1970s, the USDA has recommended that the greatest proportion of one's daily calories should come from carbohydrates—breads, pastas, and cereals—with moderate consumption of proteins and minimal consumption of fats. High-carbohydrate foods form the base of the “food pyramid” familiar to nutrition students.

Those who subscribe to the low-carb philosophy, however, argue that this approach is flawed. They argue

that excess weight stems from disordered metabolism, which in turn can be traced to overconsumption of foods high in carbohydrates—especially refined carbohydrates like white flour and sugar (Atkins, 2002; Sears, 1995; Agatson, 2003). The body quickly absorbs sugars from these foods, increasing the level of glucose in the blood. This triggers the release of insulin, delivering energy-providing glucose to cells and storing some of the excess as glycogen. Unfortunately, the liver turns the rest of this excess glucose into fat. Thus, adherents of the low-carb approach often classify foods according to their glycemic index (GI)—a measurement of how quickly a given food raises blood glucose levels when consumed. Foods high in refined carbohydrates—sugar, potatoes, white breads, and pasta, for instance—have a high glycemic index.<sup>1</sup>

Dieters who focus solely on reducing fat intake may fail to realize that consuming refined carbohydrates contributes to weight problems. Atkins (2002) notes that low-fat diets recommended to many who wish to lose weight are, by definition, usually high in carbohydrates, and thus unlikely to succeed.

Even worse, consuming high-carbohydrate foods regularly can, over time, wreak havoc with the body's systems for regulating blood sugar levels and insulin production. In some individuals, frequent spikes in blood sugar and insulin levels cause the body to become insulin-resistant—less able to use glucose for energy and more likely to convert it to fat (Atkins, 2002). This in turn helps to explain the link between obesity and Type 2 diabetes. In contrast, reducing carbohydrate intake

purportedly helps the body use food more efficiently for energy. Additional benefits associated with these diets include reduced risk of cardiovascular disease (Atkins, 2002), lowered blood pressure (Bell, 2006; Atkins, 2002), and reduced risk of developing certain cancers (Atkins, 2002).

Given the experts' conflicting recommendations, it is no wonder that patients are confused about how to eat for optimum health. Some may assume that even moderate carbohydrate consumption should be avoided (Harvard School of Public Health, 2010). Others may use the low-carb approach to justify consuming large amounts of foods high in saturated fats—eggs, steak, bacon, and so forth. Meanwhile, low-carb diet plans and products have become a multibillion-dollar industry (Hirsch, 2004). Does this approach live up to its adherents' promises?

## Research on Low-Carbohydrate Diets and Weight Loss

A number of clinical studies have found that low-carbohydrate diet plans are indeed highly effective for weight loss. Gardner et al. (2007) compared outcomes among overweight and obese women who followed one of four popular diet plans: Atkins, The Zone, LEARN, or Ornish. After 12 months, the group that had followed the low-carb Atkins plan had lost significantly more weight than those in the other three groups. McMillan-Price et

al. (2006) compared results among overweight and obese young adults who followed one of four plans, all of which were low in fat but had varying proportions of proteins and carbohydrates. They found that, over a 12-week period, the most significant body-fat loss occurred on plans that were high in protein and/or low in “high glycemic index” foods. More recently, the American Heart Association (2010) reported on an Israeli study that found that subjects who followed a low-carbohydrate, high-protein diet lost more weight than those who followed a low-fat plan or a Mediterranean plan based on vegetables, grains, and minimal consumption of meats and healthy fats.<sup>2</sup> Other researchers have also found that low-carbohydrate diets resulted in increased weight loss (Ebbeling, Leidig, Feldman, Lovesky, & Ludwig, 2007; Bell, 2006; HealthDay, 2010).

Although these results are promising, they may be short-lived. Dieters who succeed in losing weight often struggle to keep the weight off—and unfortunately, low-carb diets are no exception to the rule. HealthDay News (2010) cites a study recently published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* that compared obese subjects who followed a low-carbohydrate diet and a low-fat diet. The former group lost more weight steadily—and both groups had difficulty keeping weight off. Similarly, Swiss researchers found that, although low-carb dieters initially lost more weight than those who followed other plans, the differences tended to even out over time (Bell, 2006). This suggests that low-carb diets may be no more

effective than other diets for maintaining a healthy weight in the long term.

One likely reason is that a low-carbohydrate diet—like any restrictive diet—is difficult to adhere to for any extended period. In commenting on the Gardner study, experts at the Harvard School of Public Health (2010) noted that women in all four diet groups had difficulty following the plan. Because it is hard for dieters to stick to a low-carbohydrate eating plan, the initial success of these diets is short-lived (Heinz, 2009). Medical professionals caution that low-carbohydrate diets are difficult for many people to follow consistently and that, to maintain a healthy weight, dieters should try to develop nutrition and exercise habits they can incorporate in their lives in the long term (Mayo Clinic, 2008). Registered dietician Dana Kwon (2010) comments, “For some people, [low-carbohydrate diets] are great, but for most, any sensible eating and exercise plan would work just as well” (Kwon, 2010).

## Other Long-Term Health Outcomes

Regardless of whether low-carb diets are most effective for weight loss, their potential benefits for weight loss must be weighed against other long-term health outcomes such as hypertension, the risk of heart disease, and cholesterol levels. Research findings in these areas are mixed. For this reason, people considering following a low-carbohydrate diet to lose

weight should be advised of the potential risks in doing so.

Research on how low-carbohydrate diets affect cholesterol levels is inconclusive. Some researchers have found that low-carbohydrate diets raise levels of HDL, or “good” cholesterol (Ebbeling et al., 2007; Seppa, 2008). Unfortunately, they may also raise levels of LDL, or “bad” cholesterol, which is associated with heart disease (Ebbeling et al., 2007; Reuters, 2010). A particular concern is that as dieters on a low-carbohydrate plan increase their intake of meats and dairy products—foods that are high in protein and fat—they are also likely to consume increased amounts of saturated fats, resulting in clogged arteries and again increasing the risk of heart disease. Studies of humans (Bradley et al., 2009) and mice (Foo et al., 2009) have identified possible risks to cardiovascular health associated with low-carb diets. The American Heart Association (2010) and the Harvard School of Public Health (2010) caution that doctors cannot yet assess how following a low-carbohydrate diet affects patients’ health over a long-term period.

Some studies (Bell, 2006) have found that following a low-carb diet helped lower patients’ blood pressure. Again, however, excessive consumption of foods high in saturated fats may, over time, lead to the development of clogged arteries and increase risk of hypertension. Choosing lean meats over those high in fat and supplementing the diet with high-fiber, low-glycemic-index carbohydrates, such as leafy green vegetables, is a healthier plan for dieters to follow.

Perhaps most surprisingly, low-carbohydrate diets are



not necessarily advantageous for patients with Type 2 diabetes. Bradley et al. (2009) found that patients who followed a low-carb or a low-fat diet had comparable outcomes for both weight loss and insulin resistance. The National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse (2010) advises diabetics to monitor blood sugar levels carefully and to consult with their health care provider to develop a plan for healthy eating. Nevertheless, the nutritional guidelines it provides as a dietary starting point closely follow the USDA food pyramid.

## Conclusion

Low-carb diets have garnered a great deal of positive attention, and it isn't entirely undeserved. These diets do lead to rapid weight loss, and they often result in greater weight loss over a period of months than other diet plans. Significantly overweight or obese people may find low-carb eating plans the most effective for losing weight and reducing the risks associated with carrying excess body fat. However, because these diets are difficult for some people to adhere to and because their potential long-term health effects are still being debated, they are not necessarily the ideal choice for anyone who wants to lose weight. A moderately overweight person who wants to lose only a few pounds is best advised to choose whatever plan will help him stay active and consume fewer calories consistently—whether or not it involves eating low-carb ketchup.

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## Key Takeaways

- Organization in a research paper means that the argument proceeds logically from the introduction to the body to the conclusion. It flows logically from one point to the next. When revising a research paper, evaluate the organization of the paper as a whole and the organization of individual paragraphs.
- In a cohesive research paper, the elements of the paper work together smoothly and naturally. When revising a research paper, evaluate its cohesion. In particular, check that information from research is smoothly integrated with your ideas.
- An effective research paper uses a style and tone that are appropriately academic and serious. When revising a research paper, check that the style and tone are consistent throughout.
- Editing a research paper involves checking for errors in grammar, mechanics, punctuation, usage, spelling, citations, and formatting.



PART XXVII

# REFLECTIVE LEARNING





## 201. 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.

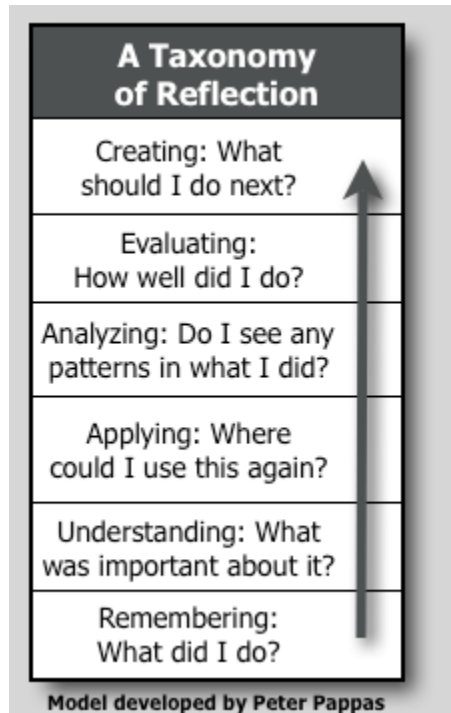
You have come to this course with your own writing goals. Now is a good time to think back on your writing practices with reflective writing, also called metacognitive writing. Reflective writing helps you think through and develop your intentions as writers. Leveraging reflective writing also creates 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.

## 202. Reflective Learning

Reflective thinking is a powerful learning tool. As we have seen throughout this course, proficient readers are reflective readers, constantly stepping back from the learning process to think about their reading. They understand that just as they need to activate prior knowledge at the beginning of a learning task and monitor their progress as they learn, they also need to make time during learning as well as at the end of learning to think about their learning process, to recognize what they have accomplished, how they have accomplished it, and set goals for future learning. This process of “thinking about thinking” is called metacognition. When we think about our thinking—articulating what we now know and how we came to know it—we close the loop in the learning process.

How do we engage in reflection? Educator Peter Pappas modified Bloom’s Taxonomy of Learning to focus on reflection:



This “taxonomy of reflection” provides a structure for metacognition. Educator Silvia Rosenthal Tolisano has modified Pappas’s taxonomy into a pyramid and expanded upon his reflection questions:



Use Pappas's and Tolisano's taxonomies of reflection to help you reflect on your learning, growth and development as a reader, writer, and thinker in this course.

## 203. Assessment: Personal Reflection

The previous page in this module, [Reflective Learning](#), suggests two alternate ways of viewing our own progression in comprehension and skill development. The last line in the document presents a task:

“Use Pappas’s and Tolisano’s taxonomies of reflection to help you reflect on your learning, growth and development as a reader, writer, and thinker in this course.”

Consider questions like these as you work: Do you feel that one or both of these models speaks to your progress in this course? Where would you have placed yourself on either scale at the beginning of the quarter? Here, at the end of the quarter? How might you use this same process to create writing in future courses or in your personal/professional life?

This reflection should consist of 2-3 paragraphs of developed, edited prose. Make clear reference to one or both of the taxonomies in your reflection.

Want to see a sample of what this submission might look like? [View 2 student samples available here](#) (Google Doc link).