

Advanced English

Advanced English

Allison Kilgannon

BCCAMPUS
VICTORIA, B.C.



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During the process of remixing this book, Allison Kilgannon made the following changes throughout:

- Reorganized, added, and edited chapters and text to meet ABE learning outcomes and context.
- Edited text to remove instances of informal voice.
- Replaced American content, terminology, and spelling with Canadian.

- Added textboxes where appropriate to break up text.
- Moved image attributions to the end of each chapter.

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- **HTML.** An HTML file can be opened in a browser. It has very little style so it doesn't look very nice, but some people might find it useful.

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PDF	No	Computer, print copy	Adobe Reader (for reading on a computer) or a printer	Ability to highlight and annotate the text. If reading on the computer, you can zoom in.	Unsure
EPUB	No	Computer, tablet, phone	eReader app	Option to enlarge text, change font style, size, and colour.	Unsure
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Advanced English by Allison Kilgannon was funded by BCcampus Open Education.

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Introduction

Welcome to the *Advanced English* textbook, designed to fulfill the requirements for the Adult Basic Education (ABE) Advanced English Course. This text is an adaptation by Allison Kilgannon, an assistant professor with seven years of post-secondary ABE English teaching experience. The adapted text was written by five college reading and writing instructors, who drew from decades of experience teaching students who are entering the college reading and writing environment for the very first time. Its original format included examples, exercises, and definitions for many reading- and writing-related topics encountered in your college courses.

This adaptation accomplish these further goals:

- Replaces almost all American material with Canadian.
- Adheres to Canadian spelling and conventions.
- Rigorously follows ABE Articulation Handbook Required Learning Outcomes for Advanced Level English as provided by the Province of British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training.

How the Text is Organized

While navigating through the textbook, you'll notice that the major part of the textbook you're working within is identified at the top of the page. We hope this helps you to navigate between sections and subsections and to understand the relationships between them.

How Should You Use This Text?

This text can be used by an instructor of an Advanced English class on its own to satisfy all the requirements of the course. Your instructor may want you to read through all parts of this text to make sure that all material is covered. Your instructor may, of course, choose to present material to you in other formats or through their own lessons to you in class.

Gendered and Gender-Neutral Language

As you read, you may notice that we use a variety of pronouns such as she/her, he/him, or they/them to refer to a person we're discussing. Our goal is to represent all people, regardless of gender, and to do so in a balanced way. Therefore, in some paragraphs, we may designate "she" as the pronoun, while in others "he" will stand in for the person being written about. However, you'll also come across "they" being used as a singular pronoun, which may be confusing at first. The pronoun "they" allows a single person to represent any gender, or no gender, including those genders that aren't accurately represented

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by “he” and “she.” It’s important to consider gender-neutral language in your own writing, so we wanted to make sure we modeled what that looks like in this text.

I

Reading

1.

What is a Text?

As a student, much of your time will be spent interacting with texts of all types, shapes, sizes, and delivery methods.

In academic terms, a **text** is anything that conveys a set of meanings to the person who examines it. You might have thought that texts were limited to written materials, such as books, magazines, newspapers, and ‘zines (an informal term for magazine that refers especially to fanzines and webzines). Those items are indeed texts—but so are movies, paintings, television shows, songs, political cartoons, online materials, advertisements, maps, works of art, and even rooms full of people. If we can look at something, explore it, find layers of meaning in it, and draw information and conclusions from it, we’re looking at a text.



Exercise

Which of these would be a kind of text?

- a. A graphic novel
- b. A television commercial
- c. A photograph
- d. A poem
- e. A song

Most of the texts you’re exposed to in your academic career will be print (on paper/hard copy) or online written texts like books, articles, and essays—these are still the most common types of learning material.

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2.

Reading Effectively

Now that we know what a text can be, we will move on to reading in the traditional sense: moving our eyes across printed words on a page. Good reading skills help us to analyze material better and to become stronger writers. Every time you read, you're exposed to someone else's ideas and to their way of writing: their word choice, vocabulary, knowledge base, use of language, and so forth.

Vote: Do you enjoy reading? I cast this vote to all my classes. I frequently hear the response that many students feel that they don't like reading, or that they are bad at it. By the end of the semester, I pose the vote again, and there is (usually) a marked decrease in negative feelings about reading. You can do it!



Reading: What NOT to Do

- DON'T treat all reading situations the same.
 - DO: first, understand what type of material you are reading, and for what purpose.
 - "Reading" a Science-based textbook to study the night before an exam is a completely different situation than reading the assigned chapter of the same textbook in preparation for the week's class on the material. And both of those reading situations are completely different from reading a novel for your English course.
- DON'T pick up the text, turn directly to page one, and begin reading, aiming to go straight from beginning to end.
 - Why it's not a good idea: consider that Science textbook above—there is no way you are going to get through the whole text the night before the exam AND understand the information AND retain it, nor do you need to read every single word in order to study.
 - How about a novel? Yes, you should read an entire novel that is assigned to you, but you don't have to go into it blind and try to figure out what is going on word by word, sentence by sentence, page by page. Prereading techniques will set you up to get the most out of the novel as you read.

- DON'T try to read for just a few minutes at a time.
 - When we change from one task to another, we have a few minutes of lag time, or change-over time while we close our minds off from what we were doing before AND while we transfer our focus to the new task. If you plan to read in 5-minute time intervals, you only have about 2-3 minutes of reading time. But, you might be looking forward to the interval ending soon, so you will likely be less focused on your reading even then.
 - DO set yourself a longer interval of reading time. I recommend to my students 20 minutes minimum and 40 minutes plus if you're really into it. Don't stop when you're on a roll even if your timer goes off!
 - Why it's a good idea: 1) you will spend so much more time actually reading once you've finished your lag time switching to this new task; 2) you will get into the rhythm of the material and will be able to read more quickly as each page passes; and 3) you will read enough to get a greater **context** and better understand what is going on.
 - A good idea is to divide the total pages assigned by the number of available days, figuring out how many pages you'll need to read each day to finish the assignment. Sometimes approaching the text in smaller pieces like this can make it feel more doable. Also, once you figure out how long it takes you to read, say, five pages, you can predict how much time it will take to read a larger section.
 - For the above tip, don't start reading so far in advance that you will forget what you read, or that you read in tiny tiny increments for many many days.
- DON'T look up words or do research as you are in the middle of a sentence or thought.
 - Why it's not a good idea: Think about the rhythm you got going by using the tip above—gone when you screech to a halt, pull out your phone and type into Google, or pull out a print dictionary to look something up.
 - Also, you undermine your confidence in being able to understand the material by using context clues or by your own previous knowledge or relatable experiences.
 - PLUS, do you think that one word holds the key to the entire thing you are reading? Probably not. There are hundreds and thousands and even hundreds of thousands of words in texts; you probably don't need to know what every single one of them means.
 - DO make quick notes alongside the text to go back and clarify the areas that you found unclear AFTER you have finished your 20-40+ minute reading session.
- DON'T be stressed and stop reading altogether if you don't understand what is going on (related to above).
 - Why it's not a good idea: You might fool yourself into thinking that if you don't understand what you're reading, what the point in continuing?
 - First of all, you might not be misunderstanding as much as you think you are. The

chances are very high that you are reading a text with the goal of using it for further learning. You can either check back on a lesson you had before this reading assignment, or wait for the follow-up lesson; then you can clarify what you still have concerns about.

- You definitely will *understand* nothing if you *read* nothing, so... keep reading!
- Make sure to talk with your teacher. Let them know you don't understand the reading, and they should be able to help.
- DON'T let strong opinions about the material make you stop reading.
 - DO keep an open mind. The philosopher Aristotle was known for saying, "It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it." As a college student, you must be ready to explore and examine a wide range of ideas, whether you agree with them or not. In approaching texts with an open and willing mind, you leave yourself ready to engage with a wide world of ideas—many of which you may not have encountered before. This is what college is all about.
- DON'T skip or brush off reading in subject areas that are not your chosen field of study.
 - Why it's not a good idea: all classes that you take in college will count towards your GPA, and that always matters; so don't cheat yourself out of the best possible overall transcript because a few of your classes are not "relevant" to your future goals.
 - It's good for you to read a wide variety of texts. You don't just increase our knowledge base—you also make your mind work. This kind of "mental exercise" teaches the brain and prepares it to deal with all kinds of critical and innovative thinking. It also helps train us to different reading and writing tasks, even when they're not familiar to us. And it builds healthy discipline.

How Do You Become an Effective Reader?

1. **First**, read every day. And vary the materials you read: a book, a magazine article, an online blog, even signs you see while taking transit or in shop windows. Try readings things that are a little challenging. In other words, don't just vary the subject matter—vary the difficulty, too. Stretch!
2. **Second**, learn and practice the skills of effective reading (which are explained below in this section and in their own chapters).
3. **Third**, learn and practice the skill of reading critically. To learn more, see [Reading Critically](#).
4. **Fourth**, keep reading. Yes, every day, putting your skills to work. (Practice makes perfect!)

Reading effectively means reading in a way that helps you understand, evaluate, and reflect on a written text. As you might guess, these skills are very important to college students; no matter what field you're going into, you'll be doing a lot of reading. The more effectively you read, the easier it'll be, the less time it will take, and the more you'll enjoy the experience.

Skills of Effective Reading

- Start by creating an optimal setting for reading: pick the best time, place, and conditions to create a reading environment that helps decrease distraction.
- Engage in pre-reading strategies before starting to read (see [pre-reading strategies](#) later in this section)
- Read material efficiently: pick up a piece of material, engage actively with it, and finish.
- Annotate written texts (in other words, they write directly *on* the texts) or take notes as they read. By doing this, you enter into a discussion with the text, interacting with it.
- Research or investigate content you don't fully understand, but not until AFTER you have finished reading the portion you have set for yourself.
- Work to discover the central meaning of the piece. Ask yourself:
 - What is the author's point?
 - What is the text trying to say?
 - How does the author create and build this meaning?
- Reflect on what the text means to you, internalizing the meaning:
 - How am I responding to this text?
 - Why am I responding that way?
 - What does the text make me think about?
 - What does this information mean to me?
 - What past experience can I anchor this text to in my brain to increase understanding and retention?

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3.

Creating an Optimal Setting for Reading

Stop for a moment and think about yourself and the act of reading. Whether you read headlines or social media posts on a smartphone or tablet, love to settle in with the Sunday paper, devour stacks of hand-held magazines and hard copy books, or read only when forced to, what does reading look like for you?

- Consider your ideal spot for reading. Is it a favourite chair in your living room? Your bed? A coffee shop? The cool green grass in a local park?
- What's your favourite time of day for reading?
- Do you read best in silence? Or do you like to have music playing, be around other people, or have some other sort of active distraction?
- Do you prefer print (hard copy) books, e-books, or audiobooks?

In each case, think about why you're making these choices.

For instance, many students read and study late into the night, perhaps because that's the time they have available after work and family responsibilities or maybe because they've heard from others that all students tend to study in the wee hours.

- Simple truth: not everyone reads most effectively at 2:00 am—or at 2:00 pm, for that matter. That's not to say some people don't do their best work late at night; the point is simply to really try and find when you study best—and then to make use of that.

Also, you may already know that the human body works via a series of diurnal cycles—cycles that move through peaks and valleys over each twenty-four hour period. During these cycles, levels of circulating hormones and chemicals rise and fall. Typically, this starts with a big chemical “push awake” in the morning, a peak of energy in the afternoon, and then a gradual lowering through the evening. Understanding these cycles can be helpful in finding effective times to read and study. This is important because as a student, you'll be doing lots of reading and studying, and if you can find the time at which these activities are most effective, you can cut your reading/study time in half while also finding it's more enjoyable.

Location is important, too. Some students work best in an absolutely silent setting, while others prefer the background noise of people, music, etc. You may find you read most effectively on your couch, in a library, or in a lawn chair in your backyard.

Experiment, trying out different settings for reading until you find the combination you know is best.

Once you've found that perfect setting, develop a routine of reading and studying at about the same time and in the same place as much as you can.



Doing this will help the activity become a habit, and once that happens, it will be even easier—and more effective.

Tip: For those students with children, family obligations, pets, and other responsibilities: you may find you'll need to remove yourself from your usual daily setting in order to get your reading done. We've heard many stories of people who can't work at home because their dog, child, or partner are constantly interrupting them. This can be well-meaning, but even so, being interrupted when trying to read or study more or less destroys the process. Don't hesitate to escape to a local coffee shop, a campus library (fact: most college libraries are open to the public), or another safe spot to get your work done. If you're in an optimal setting, you'll finish faster—and then you can get back to whatever else is on your list.

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4.

Pre-reading Strategies

When you're ready to settle in with a text, it's a good idea to begin with pre-reading. With pre-reading, you'll turn into a temporary sleuth, examining the text for visual clues as to its meaning. Here's how it's done:

- **Start by reading and considering the title.** A good title will inform you about the text's content. It's always nice if titles are also interesting, catchy, or even clever, but the most important job of a title is to let the reader know what's coming and what the text will be about.
 - For instance, imagine you're looking at a magazine article entitled "Three Hundred Sixty-five Properly Poofy Days." Do you have any idea what this article is going to be about?
 - It could be written by a meteorologist, reporting on a year of observing cloud formations.
 - It might be a biopic (a biographical story) about an eccentric salon that specializes in big hairdos, retro-style.
 - Or perhaps it's a set of guidelines for using poofy cotton balls to apply cosmetics.
 - What if it's a story about a dog groomer who does show grooms for poodles, the poofiest of dogs?



The title should, hopefully, give you clues to the article content. (Also keep in mind all the other text elements in a magazine that can help you gain meaning for this article.)

- **Look at the author's name.** Have you heard of the author? Do you know anything about them? Sometimes you'll find a short bio about the author at the beginning or end of a text. You can always Google them to look for more details. Ideally, the author should be an acknowledged expert on the subject or should have degrees, training, or credentials that make them an expert.

- Learn more about the [CRAP method](#) for evaluating sources in the information literacy section titled “Finding Quality Texts.”
- **Skim through the article, looking for headings or “pull-outs.”** (content that is pulled off to one side or highlighted in a box). Headings, if present, will often give you clues as to the text’s content as well as showing you how the subject has been divided into sections.
- **Look for any images: photographs, charts, graphs, maps, or other illustrations.** Images—and their captions—will often give you valuable information about the topic.
- **If working with an e-text, you may also find embedded web links.** Follow these: they’ll often lead you to resources that will help you better understand the article.
- **Here’s a seriously expert-level suggestion:** most academic texts and essays follow a fairly similar structure—including beginning every paragraph with a strong, focused topic sentence—you can often get a quick summary or understanding of a written text by simply reading the first sentence in every paragraph. Some authors may use the second sentence as their topic sentence, and if you notice this pattern, reading all of the second sentences in each paragraph will help you follow the text. You can also read the conclusion at the end of the entire text, the conclusion of each section, and the conclusion of each paragraph. I call this technique “bookending” when I teach it to my students.

After working through the above suggestions, see how much you can figure out about the text simply by pre-reading. In other words, look for the global or central idea or argument.

Now, you’re ready to dive in and actually read the text completely. Your pre-reading has given you an overall picture of what to expect and helped you build a schema of what the author wants you to know at the end of the reading. If the pre-reading has worked well, giving you clues to the text’s content, your actual in-depth reading will be easier and more effective. And, you’ll begin reading with your curiosity already aroused, which is a great way to start!

Exercise: Practice Your Pre-Reading Skills

Find the Chatelaine article, “[Harry, Meghan And Me: What This Royal Moment Could Mean For Indigenous People](#).”

Before reading the article, work through the above pre-reading skills.

- Based on what you found in your pre-reading, what do you think the text is about? How much do you know about the topic already? What did you already know (before you even looked at the article)?
- Now, switch to in-depth reading and read the article carefully, taking notes of any questions you have or words you don’t understand.
- If needed, do a bit of quick research on any questions or unknown words you identified.
- How did the pre-reading affect your ideas of what to expect from the text? How did your understanding of the piece compare between what you learned from pre-reading versus a

complete reading? What does this tell you about the relationship between pre-reading and in-depth reading?

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5.

Reading Critically

As you take on a broader range of writing assignments in your classes, it can be helpful to read as a writer, often called reading to write. “Reading to write” means approaching reading material with a variety of tools that help prepare you to write about that reading material. These tools can include things like previewing related assignments or lectures prior to reading, specific note-taking methods while reading, and ways of thinking about and organizing the information after completing the reading.



As we have learned in the previous chapters of this text, effective reading leads to critical reading. Instead of simply reading for your own purposes, you now will also read to understand the deeper, interwoven meanings layered within a text. Critical reading involves the reader in grappling with the text—interacting with it.

The critical reader digs in and explores a text. They do some or all of the following:

- **They analyze the structure of the piece.** What kind of organization does it follow? Where is the thesis? What types of sentences and language are used? How are the paragraphs structured?
- **They analyze the text itself**, either exploring its content or its use of **rhetoric**.
- **They capture the text’s main points** by summarizing its meaning.
- **They critique the text**, passing judgment on its effectiveness.
- **They reach conclusions** (make inferences) about the text.
- **They combine their own ideas with the textual analysis** to synthesize new ideas and insights.

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6.

Annotating and Taking Notes

As children, most of us were told never to write in books, but now that you're an adult student, your instructor will tell you just the opposite. Writing in your texts as you read—annotating them—is a powerful strategy for engaging with a text and entering a discussion with it.

You can jot down questions and ideas as they come to you.

You might underline important sections, circle words you don't understand, and use your own set of symbols to highlight portions that you feel are important.

Capturing these ideas as they occur to you is important, for they may play a role in not just understanding the text better but also in your college assignments. If you don't make notes as you go, today's great observation will likely become tomorrow's forgotten detail.

Important note: most academic institution bookstores approve of textual annotation and don't think it decreases a textbook's value. In other words, you can annotate a textbook and still sell it back to the bookstore later on if you choose to. Note that I say most—if you have questions about your own institution and plan to sell back any textbooks, be sure to ask at the bookstore before you annotate.

If you can't write on the text itself, you can accomplish almost the same thing by taking notes—either by hand (on paper) or e-notes. You might also choose to use sticky notes to capture your ideas—these can be stuck to specific pages for later recall. For a strategy that helps you take note of what you see as interesting or important points of a text while also responding to those points with your own ideas, see [“Dialectic Note-taking”](#) in this text.

Many students use brightly-coloured highlighting pens to mark up texts. These are better than nothing, but in truth, they're not much help. Using them creates big swaths of eye-popping colour in your text, but when you later go back to them, you may not remember why they were highlighted. Writing in the text with a simple pen or pencil is always preferable.



Tip: When annotating, choose pencil or ball-point ink rather than gel or permanent marker. Ball point ink is less likely to soak through the page. If using erasable pens, test in an inconspicuous area to make sure they actually erase on that paper.

What about e-books? Most of them have on-board tools for note-taking as well as providing dictionary and even encyclopedia access.

Many students also like to keep a [reading journal](#). A good way to use these is to write a quick summary of your reading immediately after you've finished. Capture the reading's main points and discuss any questions you had or any ideas that were raised. Include the author and title, and write out an MLA citation for the source (see the appendix, [Creating a Works Cited Page](#)).

Exercise: Check Your Understanding of Annotation

Print a hard copy of the CBC News article, "[New Westminster offers \\$4M worth of free land for affordable housing](#)." If you aren't able to print a hard copy, carry out the following instructions using a piece of paper and a pen or pencil.

1. Pre-read the article to gather some first impression ideas. Then read the article completely, annotating as you go.
2. Underline what you believe to be the topic or thesis statement in the article. (The thesis statement is one or two sentences that summarizes the article's main point and tells what it's about. The thesis statement can occur anywhere in the article—even near the end.)
3. As you read, underline points that you find especially interesting. Make notes in the margins as ideas occur to you.
4. Write question marks in the margin where questions occur to you, and make written margin notes about them, too.
5. Circle all words you don't understand. Then look them up! (Dictionary.com is a good online dictionary and even pronounces words so you'll know how they sound.)
6. When you're finished, write a quick summary—several sentences or a short paragraph—that captures the article's main points.

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7.

Dialectic Note-taking

A dialectical approach to taking notes sounds much more complicated than it is. A dialectic is a dialogue, a discussion between two (or more) voices trying to figure something out. Whenever we read new or challenging material, it can be helpful to take dialectic notes to create clear spaces for organizing these different sets of thoughts—put yourself in a conversation with the text through your notes.

Creating Dialectic Notes

Start by drawing a vertical line down the middle of a fresh sheet of paper to make two long columns.

The Left Column

This column will be a straightforward representation of the main ideas in the text you are reading (or viewing). In it, you will note things like:

- What are the author’s main points in this section?
- What kind of support is the author using in this section?
- Other points of significant interest
- Note the source and page number, if any, so that you can find and document this source later

You can directly **quote** these points, but if you do, you must use quotation marks immediately, so you don’t “forget” that you took the exact words from the text. If you **paraphrase**, do not use quotation marks. Be consistent so that you don’t make more work for yourself when you start writing your draft. For more guidance with writing [summaries](#), [paraphrasing](#), and [quoting](#), follow these links.

The Right Column

The right column is for your ideas—the questions and connections you make as you encounter the author’s ideas. This might include:

- Questions you want to ask in class
- Bigger-picture questions you might explore further in writing
- Connections to other texts you’ve read or viewed for this class
- Connections to your own personal experiences

- Connections to the world around you (issues in your community, stories on the news, or texts you’ve read or viewed outside of this class)

Bottom of the Page

It is often a good idea to leave space at the bottom of the page (or on the back) for

- additional notes about this piece
- what your instructor teaches about it
- comments and questions your peers make during class discussion

Example

Once you’ve finished the text and have taken your dialectic notes while reading it, you might have something that looks a bit like this (for the sake of the example, I read a story I’d never read before from an author I’m familiar with, so you could see genuine reactions to a first read):

Dialectical Notes for Bradbury’s “The Last Night of the World”

What it says	Questions/Connections
“What would you do if you knew this was the last night of the world?”	It feels so strange to start a story with a character asking a direct question in dialogue... can’t decide if it draws me in or not.
“You don’t mean it?” said his wife.	The slow reveal of who these characters are, their relationship to each other, even how many are talking is interesting. I wonder why Bradbury chose to reveal them this way.
Long paragraph about his dream and Stan.	Weird! And a little creepy... I wonder why the shared dreams, & how many others are hearing the same one.

Dialectical Notes for Bradbury’s “The Last Night of the World” – Page 2

What it says	Questions/Connections
This is logical.	What? Not a single thing about this is logical! Not even the further explanation makes logical sense.
February 20, 1951	Okay, so... alternate timeline? The world ending on a day that never has, never will exist?
The discussion about whether the children know.	Why wouldn’t the children have had the same dream?
Notes during the class	
...	

Once you have this set of dialectic notes, there are a number of ways you can use them. Here are a few:

- They can help you contribute to class discussion about this piece and the topics it addresses.
- Significant questions you encountered while reading are already written down and collected in one place so you don't have to sift back through the reading to re-discover those questions.
- These notes provide a place where many of your observations and thoughts about the piece are already organized, which can help you see patterns and connections within those observations. Finding these connections can be a strong starting point for written assignments.
- If you are asked to respond to this piece in writing, these notes can serve as a reference point as you develop a draft. They can give you new ideas if you get stuck and help keep the original connections you saw when reading fresh in your mind as you respond more formally to that reading.
- They can be part of your [Gathering Ideas](#) step in the Writing Process.

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8.

Exploring the Structure of a Text

Exploring a text's structure may sound a little complicated, but it really isn't. It means looking for how a text has been constructed and thinking about how the structure supports the work the text is trying to do. The fancy literary terms for this are “form” and “function.” Form refers to the way the text is structured, while function refers to what it communicates to the reader.

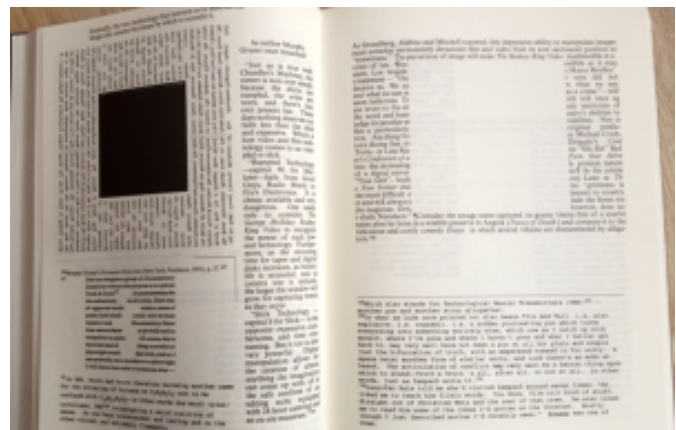
Consider these questions when thinking about structure:

- How is the text organized? (Does it seem logical? Is it in time-related, chronological order? Does it skip around in time with flashbacks or flash-forwards?)
- Is it divided into obvious sections? Do the sections have headings, or are they just visually separated?
- Does the author use comparison/contrast, explore cause and effect, or examine a process to present their ideas?
- Is there a lot of detail and description in the text?
- Does the author use dialogue?
- Does the author do anything unusual* or unexpected with the text?

*Speaking of unusual texts, sometimes the author will do something unexpected with the text's form in order to support its function. As an example, check out these examples from Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*, a novel that includes some extraordinary structures.

In the example shown to the right here, you can see some of the unusual ways Danielewski has arranged text on two of the pages. His book contains all sorts of different textual **anomalies**; if you want to see more of them, go to Google and search for 'House of Leaves' and then 'images.' Throughout the text, his creativity with the textual layout echoes and supports what is happening within the story.

It's ridiculously cool, and if you're curious about it, I recommend reading it. It's a weird but worthwhile reading experience, and it brings home the idea of textual structure like nothing else can.



Pages from Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*

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9.

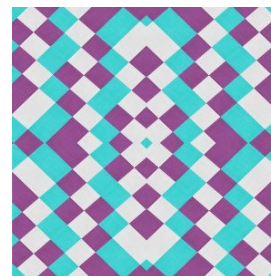
Patterns in Texts

Knowing the pattern of an article, essay, textbook chapter, or other text aids comprehension. For each kind of writing, certain clue words—also called linking and transition words—are used. They signal the direction the writer is taking.

For example, when writing an essay with a contrast pattern the clue words might include “in contrast,” “although,” “conversely,” and “however”.

For another example, writing to emphasize a point is often presented with clue words such as “again,” “as a matter of fact,” and “for this reason.”

Below is a list of common clue words used for various patterns in writing.



Tip: A passage could include more than one pattern (Exercise 3.1 includes examples of this).

List of Common Clue Words (Linking/Transition):

- **Clue words to show addition:** additionally, again, also, and, another, besides, finally, first, second (etc.), further, furthermore, incidentally, lastly, likewise, moreover, next, too, along with, as well as, equally important, in addition, what’s more.
- **Clue words to show time:** about, after, afterward, at, before, currently, during, eventually, finally, first (etc.), following formerly, immediately, later, meanwhile, next, next week, previously soon, subsequently, then, thereafter, till, today (etc.), until, when, after a few hours, as soon as, in the future, soon after.
- **Clue words to show location:** above, across, adjacent, against, along, among, around, behind below, beneath, beside, between, beyond, by, down, inside, into, here, near, nearby, off, onto, outside, over, there, throughout, under, away from, at the side, in the back, in back of, in the background, in the distance, in the front, in the foreground, on top of, to the right (etc.).

- **Clue words to show comparison:** also, as, like, likewise, meanwhile, similarly, simultaneously, after all, at the same time, by and large, in comparison, in the same way, in the same manner, in the same way.
- **Clue words to show contrast:** although, but, conversely, however, nevertheless, nonetheless, notwithstanding, otherwise, still, true, yet, or, and yet, even though, in contrast, on the contrary, on the other hand, while this is true.
- **Clue words to emphasize a point:** again, obviously, truly, undoubtedly, as a matter of fact, for this reason, in fact, to emphasize, to repeat.
- **Clue words to clarify:** for instance, in other words, put another way, that is.
- **Clue words to give examples:** namely, specifically, as an illustration, for example, for instance, to demonstrate, to illustrate.
- **Clue words to introduce as a result:** accordingly, consequently, so, therefore, thus, as a result, due to this.
- **Clue words to show cause and effect:** if...then, this led to, for this reason, caused, not only but also, which led to.
- **Clue words to introduce conclusions:** accordingly, consequently, finally hence, so, therefore, thus, as a result, in brief, in conclusion, in short, in summary, on the whole, to conclude.

NOTE: this is not an exhaustive list, of course, and as you have noticed, various words and expressions can work for more than one pattern of writing, so they illustrate just one strategy to help reading comprehension.

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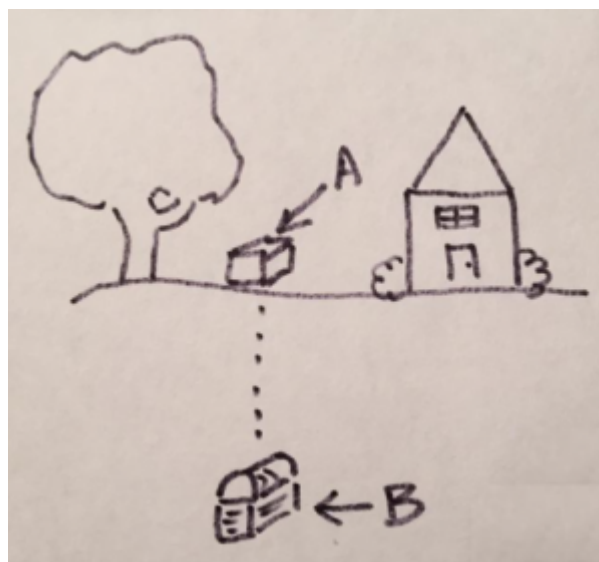
10.

Discovering What a Text is Saying

All texts—whether fiction or nonfiction—carry layers of information, built one on top of the other. As we read, we peel those back—like layers in an onion—and uncover deeper meanings.

Take a look at the image to the right. I use this in the classroom to explain the “deeper meaning” concept to students. All texts and stories have surface meaning. In the sketch, this surface meaning is represented by all the things we see above ground: the tree, the house, and the box (A), along with whatever is in it—even though the box may be closed, anyone who walks by can see it and explore it. These items are concrete and obvious.

But stories and essays also have deeper, hidden meanings. In the image, there’s a buried treasure chest (B) deep underground, waiting to be discovered and opened. Texts are much the same—they each contain obvious, surface level meanings, and they each contain a buried prize as well.



When working with a text, be aware of everything that is happening within it—almost as if you’re watching a juggler with several balls in the air at one time:

- Consider the characters or people featured in the text, their dialogue, and how they interact.
- Be aware of the plot’s movement (in a fictional story) or the topic development (in a nonfiction article or essay) and the moments of excitement or conflict as the action rises and falls.
- Look for changes in time—flashbacks, flash-forwards, and dream sequences.
- Watch for themes (ideas that occur, reappear, and carry meaning or a message throughout the piece) or symbols (objects or ideas that stand for or mean something else; these carry meaning that we often understand quickly without thinking about it too much).

Examples of themes: coming of age, redemption, the nature of honesty, conflict, sacrifice.

Examples of symbols: full moon (typically suggests mystery), dark forest (danger or the possibility of being lost), white flag (surrender), a path or road (journey).

As you read, always look for both surface meanings and those buried beneath the surface, like treasure. That’s the fun part of reading—finding those precious hidden bits, waiting to be uncovered and eager to make your reading experience richer and deeper. Even if you just scratch the surface, you’ll learn more.

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11.

Reflecting on What You Read

Whenever you finish a piece of reading, it's worth your time to stop and reflect on it. This not only helps you think about the content and what it means to you, but it also helps cement it within your memory, allowing you to recall the key ideas later and to apply them in other reading and writing situations. You can also use these later for [gathering ideas](#) for your assignments.

Here are two ideas for post-reading reflection:

- Write in a personal reading journal.
- Angelo and Cross suggest writing a “minute paper.” To do this, take one minute to jot down a few sentences about something you learned or discovered while reading. Or ask yourself a question about the reading and write an answer.



When you work with a text, you enter into a conversation with it, responding with your thoughts, ideas, and feelings. The way each of us responds to any text has a lot to do with who we are: our age, education, cultural background, religion, ethnicity, and so forth.

As you explore a text, be aware of how you're responding to it.

- Are you reading or exploring easily and fluidly, or are you finding it difficult to navigate the text? Why do you think this is happening?
- Do you find yourself responding with some sort of strong emotion? If so, why do you think that may be feeling this way?
- Do formatting or structural issues (examples: unusual use of punctuation, use of dialect or jargon) affect your navigation of the text?
- Can you identify with the text's central idea or the information it's sharing?
- Have you had any experiences like those being described? Can you identify with the story?
- Are you able to identify the surface meaning?
- Have you explored the text's deeper, hidden messages?
- Do you need to look up any words to do any quick research? If so, does this help you better understand the text?

- What questions do you have about the work?

Exercise

First, read the *Canadian Running* article “[Junk miles: Are “easy” runs sabotaging your training?](#)”

Next, write a minute paper (see description above) by jotting down a few sentences in response to one of these questions:

1. What do you think of the idea that you run “wrong”?
2. Do you have any emotional response to the idea of being a hard-core runner, or even of getting fit? Explain.
3. Do you have any experience with running? If no, does that affect your ability to pay attention to the more detailed parts of the text? If yes, do you find you absorb this material better?

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12.

Reading Review

Reading, like learning, involves a cycle of preparing, absorbing, recording, and reviewing. In your education, you will be expected to do much reading; it is not unusual to do two or more hours of reading for every hour you spend in class. You are also expected to think critically about what you read.

Effective reading involves several steps:

1. Prepare for reading by scanning the assignment and developing questions for which you want to discover answers through your reading.
2. Read the material and discover the answers to your questions.
3. Capture the information by highlighting and annotating the text as well as by taking effective notes.
4. Review the reading by studying your notes, by integrating them with your class notes, and by discussing the reading with classmates.

Before you read, learn as much as you can about the author and their reason for writing the text. What is their area of expertise? Why did the instructor select this text? When scanning a reading, look for clues to what might be important. Read the section titles, study illustrations, and look for keywords and boldface text. Do not highlight your text until you have read a section completely to be sure you understand the context. Then go back and highlight and annotate your text during a second read-through.

Think critically about what you are reading. Do you agree with what the author is saying? How does it relate to the rest of the material in the course? What does this new material mean to you in “real life”?

Special Texts and Situations

- Do all the exercises in math textbooks; apply the formulas to real-world situations.
- Practice “reading” the illustrations. Each type of graphic material has its own strength or purpose.
- Look for statements of hypotheses and experimental design when reading science texts.
- History, economics, and political science texts are heavily influenced by interpretation. Think critically about what you are reading.
- Working with foreign language texts requires more time and more frequent breaks. Don’t rely on word-for-word translations.

- If you need to read with children around, don't put off your reading until you have a large block of time; learn to read in short periods as available.
- When reading on the Internet, be extra diligent to evaluate the source of the material to decide how reliable that source may be.
- If English is your second language, seek out resources that may be offered on campus or at your institution. In any case, be patient with the process of mastering advanced-level English. And always remember this: what feels like a disadvantage in one situation can be a great gift in another situation.

Vocabulary

- Reading and vocabulary development are closely linked. A stronger vocabulary makes reading easier and more fun; the best way to build a vocabulary is to read.
- Look for new words everywhere, not just in class.
- When you encounter a new word, follow these steps:
 1. Write it down and write down the sentence in which it was used.
 2. Infer its meaning based on the context and word roots.
 3. Look it up in a dictionary.
 4. Write your own sentence using the word.
 5. Say the word, its definition, and your sentence out loud.
 6. Find an opportunity to use the word within two days.

Exercise: Make an Action List

Reading Action List

Things I will do to improve	Actions	By when I expect to take the action	How I will know I accomplished the action
My reading comprehension/ understanding	1. 2.		
My reading speed	1. 2.		
My vocabulary	1. 2.		

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II

Prewriting: Ground Zero

13.

What is the Assignment?

Before you do anything in your writing, you need to know what the assignment requires of you.

Tip: An assignment is never what the instructor “wants” from you; rather, it is based on a set of required learning outcomes and academic conventions that have developed over time by many educated, professional people. So, avoid asking your instructor, “What do you want?”

Start by reviewing the assignment.

Submission

- How will you deliver this assignment?
- Is it a presentation, a webpage design, a written essay submitted on paper?

Purpose

- What kind of writing is the assignment asking you to do? Is this a review? A summary? An argumentative piece?
- Will you need to do research and cite sources? If this is the case, you can probably set aside ideas that will be difficult to do research for, such as a story about a personal experience. These might be better suited to a different assignment.
- Is there a specific length requirement? You will want to look through your ideas to make sure you’re focusing on ones that you will be able to have an in-depth and well-supported conversation about in this amount of space. If the assignment length is short, you won’t have space to clarify a complex relationship between two ideas, and if the assignment is a longer one, you will need a topic that allows for that length of conversation without repeating yourself or focusing on just one support.
- How much time do you have? If the assignment is due soon, you may want to work with a topic you already know something about, rather than try to learn a new-to-you set of ideas from scratch in a hurry.
- Make sure any ideas you are considering focusing on for this work match the goals of the

assignment.

Audience

- Who is going to be “receiving” this assignment?
- Are you writing a blog to a general audience?
- Are you creating a personal piece for yourself to include in a portfolio?
- Is the audience your instructor or marker?

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14.

Audience

Each time you communicate, in writing or otherwise, you consider whom you're communicating with and why, whether you're conscious of this or not. Think about it: if you're asking your best friend for a favour, aren't you going to ask differently than if you were asking your boss for a raise? You already have a great instinct for knowing how to shape language around the people you are addressing and what your goal is. So how can you use this instinct when writing for your academic courses?



A roaring political rally, a studio audience, dancing concert goers—these are all examples of different types of audiences, but an audience for your writing is different. All audiences have a job to do: they are receivers of information or experiences. So when you set out to write, decide who your audience is as an important first step.

What is the Difference between an Audience and a Reader?

Your audience is the person or group whom you intend to reach with your writing. A reader is just someone who gets their hands on your beautiful words. The reader might be the person you have in mind as you write, the audience you're trying to reach, but they might be some random person you've never thought of a day in your life. You can't always know much about random readers, but you should have some understanding of who your audience is. It's the audience that you want to focus on as you shape your message.

Isn't My Instructor Always My Audience?

Sometimes your instructor will be your intended audience, and your purpose will be to demonstrate your learning about a particular topic to earn credit on an assignment. Other times, even in your classes, your intended audience will be a person or group outside of the instructor or your peers. This could be someone who has a personal interest in or need to read about your topic but who may never actually read your work unless it finds a place to be published like a blog or website. Understanding who your intended audience is will help you shape your writing.

Here are some questions you might think about as you're deciding what to write about and how to shape your message:

- What do I know about my audience? (age, gender, interests, biases, or concerns; Do they have an opinion already? Do they have a stake in the topic?)
- What do they know about my topic? (What does this audience *not* know about the topic? What do they need to know?)
- What details might affect the way this audience thinks about my topic? (How will facts, statistics, personal stories, examples, definitions, or other types of evidence affect this audience? What kind of effect are you going for?)

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15.

Imagining Your Audience's Needs

Yourself

One purpose for writing is to figure out what you think and believe before you share your ideas with other people. What do you want to say? What do you want to find out? What do you want to decide? Sometimes you will keep this type of writing private, but sometimes you may revise for another audience.

Your Instructor

It may seem obvious as a student that your instructor is part of your audience. Let's take a moment to consider what expectations your instructor may have. Your instructor may expect:

- You have read any assigned material before writing. What do you need to write to show your instructor you have read this material?
- You have understood the assignment given: [Ground Zero](#) of the Writing Process. To show this, pay particular attention to the verbs in the assignment. Are you doing the actions required? If the assignment says "analyze X," have you done so? Do you understand what it means to analyze?
- If assigned, you have done research for your topic. To show your research, you will want to use summaries, paraphrasing, and quotations from your sources, using appropriate citation.
 - For help see [summarizing](#), [paraphrasing](#), and [quoting](#), and see the "[Crediting and Citing Your Sources](#)."
- You will use the assigned academic format, such as MLA (see the appendix titled "[Resources for Working with MLA](#)"). You will follow the instructions. Re-read the assignment to make sure you are following each step.
- You will work hard on your assignment and spend time making it as good as possible, including spending considerable time proofreading and editing. Taking these steps shows that you are serious about your work, and that it is important enough for others to read.

Notice that fulfilling these expectations will also help you reach other possible readers of your work.



Other Students

In writing classes, students often read each other's work and give feedback. To meet the needs of this audience, consider what they know and don't know about your topic. When you are writing outside of a classroom situation, you might consider an audience of fellow writers or others who are involved in your project, if any.

The "General" Reader

When instructors use the term "general reader," what do they mean? If you are given an assignment that says your audience is "the general reader," that usually means that you are expected to write to an audience with at least some education who is aware of your topic, but not an expert on your topic. Newspapers, for example, write for a general reader, meaning that they expect a variety of people, from various backgrounds, to read the articles. That means you must consider viewpoints and experiences that do not mirror your own. When instructors talk about an academic audience, they usually mean that you must use evidence that is acceptable to a variety of educated people, using academic sources rather than popular sources, and that you will not state opinions without providing proof to support your view. Here are some questions to help you think about your topic:

- What would a general reader know about your topic? What wouldn't they know?
- What kinds of evidence and reasons are acceptable to an audience that does not share the same background and beliefs as you?
- What kinds of evidence and reason are acceptable in an academic community? Have you used academic sources? Are your sources credible?

(For guidance on finding credible sources see “[Finding Quality Texts](#).”)

A Target Audience

Sometimes you will have the opportunity to write for a specific group of people. For example, if you are writing about a problem in your community, such as the proposed location of a new composting facility, your audience would probably be the people in your community or perhaps local officials who have the power to make the decision about the location.

If you are writing an email to your supervisor requesting a change in your work responsibilities, your audience is your supervisor—a specific person.

When you know the audience, you can anticipate the kinds of reasoning and evidence that the audience will expect, and you will know what tone and level of formality is appropriate. If you don't know your audience well, you may need to do some research or at the very least imagine what they are like based on educated guesses.

The Opposing Viewpoint

When you make a specific type of assignment called an Argument, or use Argument rather than [Persuasion](#) in an assignment, one potential audience is the people who disagree with your opinion. To effectively present your position in face of (potential) opposition, you will need to understand their point of view and their objections to yours. Consider writing out what the opposing viewpoints are and what kinds of information would someone with the opposing view need from you in order to change their mind.

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16.

Purpose

Often, you'll know your purpose at the exact moment you know your audience because they're generally a package deal:

- I need to write a letter to my landlord explaining why my rent is late so she won't be upset. (Audience = landlord; Purpose = explaining/keeping her happy)
- I want to write a proposal for my work team to persuade them to change our schedule. (Audience = work team; Purpose = persuading/to get the schedule changed)
- I have to write a research paper for my environmental science instructor comparing solar to wind power. (Audience = instructor; Purpose = analyzing/showing that you understand these two power sources)



How Do I Know What My Purpose Is?

Sometimes your instructor will give you a purpose like in the third example above, but other times, especially out in the world, your purpose will depend on what effect you want your writing to have on your audience. What is the goal of your writing? What do you hope for your audience to think, feel, or do after reading it? Here are a few possibilities:

- Persuade/inspire them to act or think about an issue from your point of view.
- Challenge them/make them question their thinking or behaviour.
- Argue for or against something they believe or do; change their minds or behaviour.
- Inform/teach them about a topic they don't know much about.
- Connect with them emotionally/help them feel understood.

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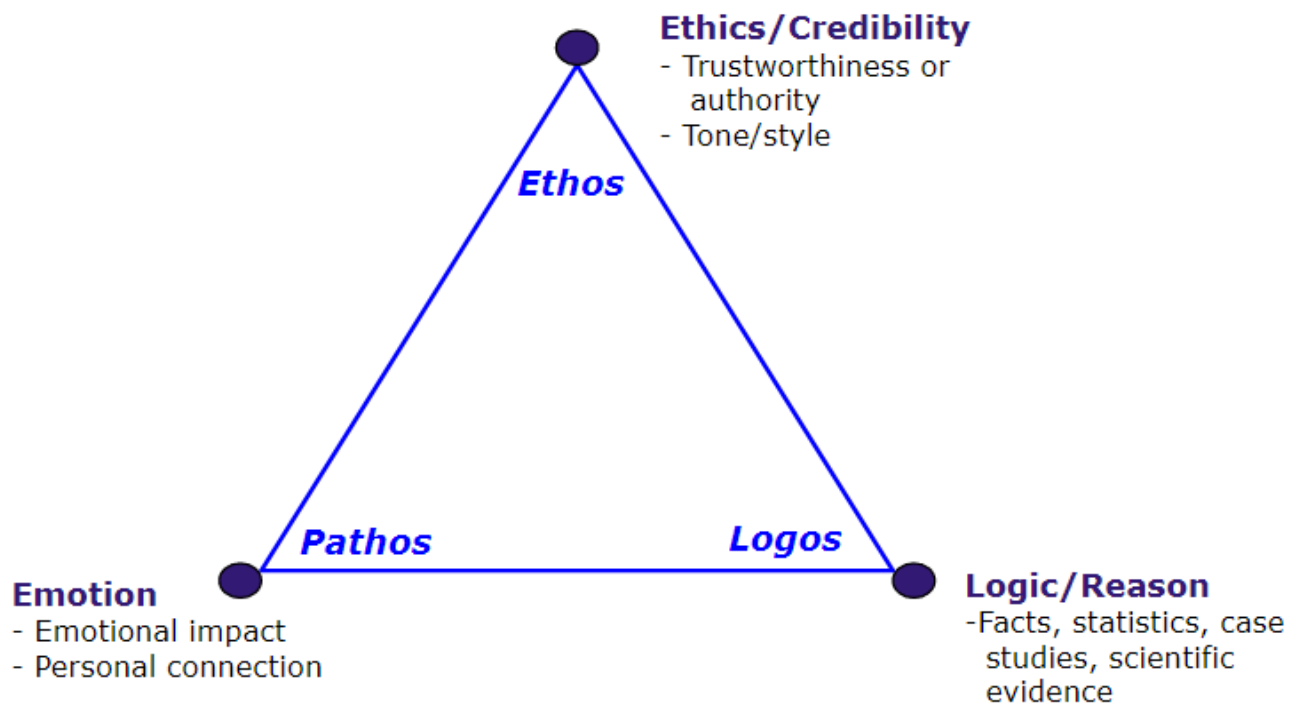
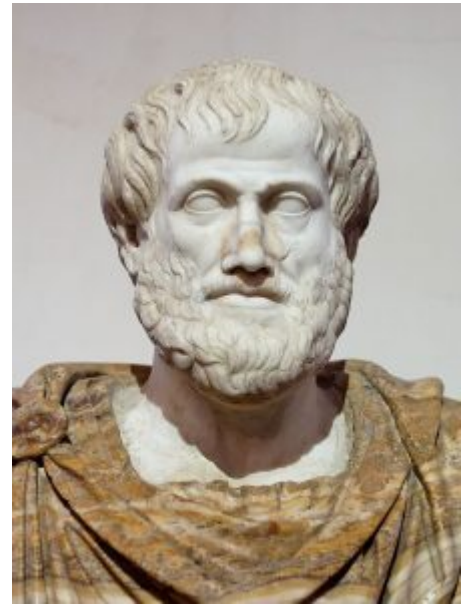
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17.

Appealing to Your Audience

Once you know who your intended audience is and what your purpose is for writing, you can make specific decisions about how to shape your message. No matter what, you want your audience to stick around long enough to read your whole piece; you appeal to them. You get to know what sparks their interest, what makes them curious, and what makes them feel understood.

The Greek Philosopher Aristotle provided us with three ways to appeal to an audience, and they're called *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos*. You'll learn more about each appeal in the discussion below, but the relationship between these three appeals is also often called *the rhetorical triangle*, and in diagram form, it looks like this:



The rhetorical triangle. [\[Image description\]](#)

Pathos

Latin for emotion, *pathos* is the fastest way to get your audience's attention. People tend to have emotional responses before their brains kick in and tell them to knock it off. Be careful though. Too much *pathos* can make your audience feel emotionally manipulated or angry because they're also looking for the facts to support whatever emotional claims you might be making so they know they can trust you.

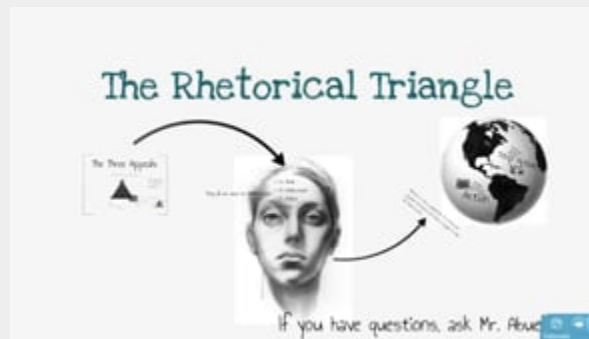
Logos

Latin for logic, *logos* is where those facts come in. Your audience will question the validity of your claims; the opinions you share in your writing need to be supported using science, statistics, expert perspective, and other types of logic. However, if you only rely on *logos*, your writing might become dry and boring, so even this should be balanced with other appeals.

Ethos

Latin for ethics, *ethos* is what you do to prove to your audience that you can be trusted, that you are a credible source of information. (See *logos*.) It's also what you do to assure them that they are good people who want to do the right thing. This is especially important when writing an argument to an audience who disagrees with you. It's much easier to encourage a disagreeable audience to listen to your point of view if you have convinced them that you respect their opinion and that you have established credibility through the use of *logos* and *pathos*, which show that you know the topic on an intellectual and personal level.

Here is a video titled "[Aristotle's Rhetorical Triangle](#)" (07:28) about rhetorical appeals that goes into more detail about the three appeals and how Aristotle used the rhetorical triangle to illustrate the relationship between the appeals and the audience.



A Vimeo element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
<https://opentextbc.ca/advancedenglish/?p=61>

Video Transcript

Narrator: Aristotle believed that rhetoric was the counterpart of dialectic, the means by which we arrive at the truth, and that the truth needed to be defended by those skilled in rhetoric. Aristotle divided every persuasive occasion into three broad categories, which he shaped into a triangle. Think of it as the tri-force of argumentation. The first element is the speaker, the second, the message, the third is the audience. Let's begin with the speaker.

What every **speaker** needs to strive for is **ethos**. It's what makes them worth listening to. It's their credibility based on the occasion. This element can be subdivided into five broad categories.

- One way to establish credibility is to appear **knowledgeable** to the audience. Now this isn't just a spouting of facts. You must seem to know the relevant information that is pertinent to the issue.
- Another way to gain credibility is to appear **virtuous**. Now this isn't always based on the traditional [inaudible] of virtues. What this really calls for is to have the qualities that are more important to the audience based on the occasion. For example, a thief who is persuading a den of thieves to follow his plans will be better off displaying his cunning and ruthlessness rather than honesty and purity.
- Yet another way to gain your audience's trust is to make them aware of your **experience**. Think of every teacher or professor you've ever had that spent the first day of school recounting their years of experience and academic feats.
- Another way to earn trust is to show **credentials**. Degrees and credentials are worthy of display in many offices. I particularly derive comfort from them when displayed in a doctor's office. Badges are wonderful on police offices, and uniforms are good on store employees.
- Last, but definitely not least is **good-willed**, or good intentions. If you appear to show that you only have the best interest of the audience at heart or at the very least that you are disinterested in personal gain, then the audience will be more likely to hear you out.

If you can show to the audience that you have all of these types of this credibility, then they will give you their attention, they will open up their ears to you and hear you out.

Of course, all of this will only work if it is appropriate to the occasion:

- Audience: It might not be useful to show off your knowledge by showing statistics to a five year old, especially if you are trying to convince them to eat their vegetables.
- Issue: And as much as I trust doctors to work on my body, I don't automatically assume an MD is indicative of a master chef.

Our next major element is the **message**. The message should be constructed around logos, or logic, in mind. At least, it must structurally have the veneer of logic to win over an audience worth winning over.

One way to structure a message is to begin with a specific example, fact, or what counts as evidence in the occasion and then draw a conclusion from this specific proof.

Example/Proof → Conclusion — y so x

Mr. Abuel killed a student, so he should go to jail.

Another way to structure a message is to begin with a major premise, some common assumption about life, and then draw a conclusion appropriate to the occasion. There are more complicated structures, but these should do for now.

Premise/Reason → Conclusion — z so x

Killing is wrong, so Mr. Abuel should go to jail.

With this, you should have gained entry in to the audience's brains, which is really helpful in changing the way they think.

Our final element is the **audience**, and what is the most important—according to Aristotle—is to move their hearts, which you should have access to by now if you have their eyes and ears (gained through ethos) and their brains (gained through logos). Now, we can travel to their hearts, which is the ultimate decision maker.

We can rouse either positive feelings or negative feelings, though bear in mind that what I am defining as positive are feelings that tend move the audience towards the target and negative feelings are what would repel the audience from a point.

Positive Feelings	Negative Feelings
Love, satisfaction, anticipation, useful, patriotism, humor, attraction, contentment, pride, safe, desire, wonder, joy, affection, important	Hate, sad, resentment, disappointment, anxiety, shock, envy, aversion, shame, disgust, fear, guilt.

These feelings are not good or bad to the rhetorician. They are merely tools to achieve a goal.

Examples:

- Patriotism: “It would be the American thing to do...”
- Desire: “Think about it. Money, fame, love, and power. It can all be yours if you simply...”
- Fear: “If you do it, you’ll end up getting killed or even worse!”
- Guilt: “And because you were too selfish to give money, they all ended up starving.”

One modern theory that is particularly useful for giving the rhetorician ideas for pathos is Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. Look this up for clarification.

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

Self-actualization	Morality, creativity, spontaneity, problem solving, lack of prejudice, acceptance of facts.
Esteem	Self-esteem, confidence, achievement, respect of others, respect by others.
Love/belonging	Friendship, family, sexual intimacy.
Safety	Security of body, employment, resources, morality, the family, health, property.
Physiological	Breathing, food, water, sex, sleep, homeostasis, excretion.

Of course, the idea would be to mix all of these ideas together for maximum efficiency: gain credibility through the virtue of your message while at the same time moving the passions of the audience.

My example clearly does not do this. *Sigh*

“When I lost my leg in the war, I learned who my friends really were.” (ethos and pathos)

So what is the function of all of the rhetorical appeals? The end goal is to use your words to change

how people think, understand, believe, and feel on a given set of issues. This is to prepare them for what is ultimately most important.

Words change very little, but what they can change are the little things that prepare a person for action or non-action.

[End of transcript]

For more on appealing to your audience, also see “[Imagining Your Audience’s Needs](#).”

Image Descriptions

Figure 1 image description: A 3-point equilateral triangle with Pathos, Logos, and Ethos labelling each point. Pathos refers to emotion, including emotional impact and personal connection. Logos refers to logic and reason, including facts, statistics, case studies, and scientific evidence. Ethos refers to ethics and credibility, including trustworthiness or authority, tone, and style. [\[Return to Figure 3.1\]](#)

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18.

Point of View

Your voice can't actually be heard when you write, but it can be conveyed through the words you choose, the order you place them in, and the point of view from which you write. When you decide to write something for a specific audience, you often know instinctively what tone of voice will be most appropriate for that audience: serious, professional, funny, friendly, neutral, etc.

For a discussion of analyzing an author's point of view when reading a text, see "[Point of View](#)."

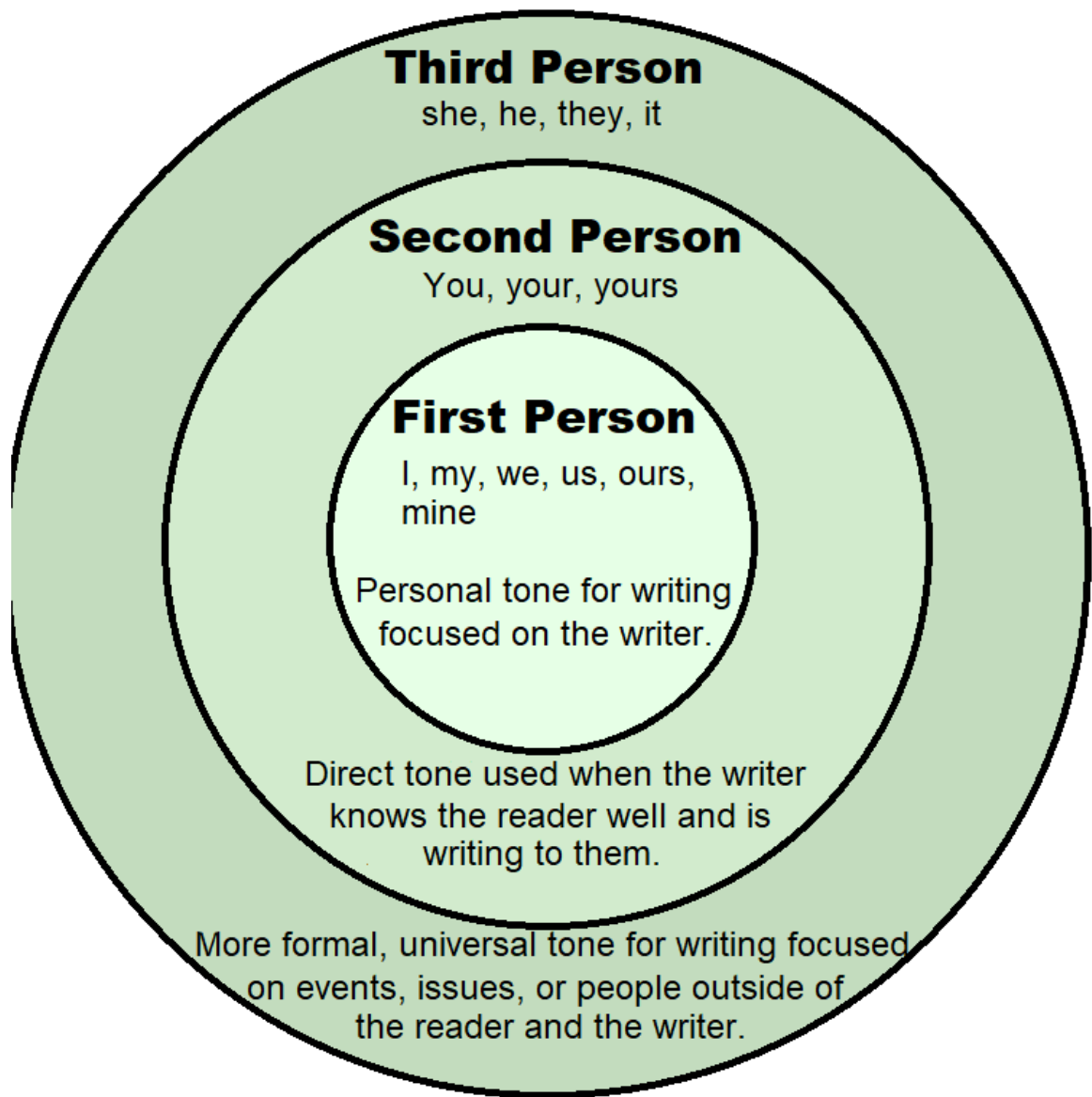
What is Point of View, and How Do I Know Which One to Use?

Point of view can be tricky, so this is a good question. Point of view is the perspective from which you're writing, and it dictates what your focus is. Consider the following examples:

- ***I*** love watching the leaves change in the fall. (First person point of view)
- ***You*** will love watching the leaves change colour. (Second person)
- ***The leaves*** in fall turn many vibrant colours. (Third person)

Which of the above sentences focuses most clearly on the leaves? Third person, right? The first person sentence focuses on what "I" love and the second person sentence focuses on what "you" will love.

- **First person** uses the following pronouns: I, me, my, us, we, myself, our, ours... any words that include the speaker/writer turn the sentence into first person.
- **Second person** uses any form of the word "you," which has the effect of addressing the reader.
- **Third person** uses pronouns like he, she, it, they, or nouns... any words that direct the reader to a person or thing that is not the writer or reader turn the sentence into third person.



[\[Image description\]](#)

When is it Okay to Use Each of These Points of View?

Most Common: Third Person

Many of your instructors will ask you to write in third person only and will want you to avoid first or second person. One important reason is that third person point of view focuses on a person or topic outside yourself or the reader, making it the most professional, academic, and objective way to write. The goal of third person point of view is to remove personal, subjective bias from your writing, at least in theory. Most of the writing you will do in academics will require you to focus on ideas, people, and issues outside yourself, so third person will be the most appropriate. This point of view also helps your readers stay focused on the topic instead of thinking about you or themselves.

Occasional: First Person

The point of view you choose to write in will depend on your audience and purpose. If your goal is to relate to your audience in a personal way about a topic that you have experience with, then it may be appropriate to use first person point of view to share your experience and connect with your audience. Otherwise, first person may not be appropriate—especially for the thesis statement. You want to eliminate the first person because it moves the focus to the writer rather than the main point. That weakens the point because it focuses on the least important aspect of the sentence and also because it sounds like a disclaimer. You might say “I think” because you’re not sure, or “I believe” because you want to stress the point that this is only your opinion. Of course, it’s okay to use a disclaimer if you really mean to do so, and it’s also fine to use first person to render personal experience or give an anecdote.

Least Common: Second Person

Second person is used least, especially in academic writing, because most of the time you will not know your audience well enough to write directly to them. The exception is if you’re writing a letter or directing your writing to a very specific group whom you know well.

Notice that this textbook uses second person in this paragraph because it directly addresses you. It is okay to do this because the textbook wants *you* to do specific things, and its audience is reading and writing students.

The danger of using second person is that this point of view can implicate readers in your topic when you don’t mean to do that. If you’re talking about crime rates in your city, and you write something like, “When you break into someone’s house, this affects their property value,” you are literally saying that the reader breaks into people’s houses. Of course, that’s not what you mean. You didn’t intend to implicate the readers this way, but that’s one possible consequence of using second person.

Tip: If you’re having a hard time getting started using third person in an academic essay, use your rough draft to write “I think that” or “I believe” and then delete these phrases in the final draft.

Does anything else affect the tone of your writing?

Many times writers are so focused on the ideas they want to convey that they forget the importance of something they may never think about: sentence variety. The length of your sentences matters. If you start every sentence with the same words, readers may get bored. If all of your sentences are short and choppy, your writing may sound unsophisticated or rushed. Some short sentences are nice though. They help readers' brains catch up. This is a lot to think about while you're writing your first draft though, so I recommend saving this concern for your second or third draft.

Visit the Purdue OWL page, "[Strategies for Variation](#)" for some examples of sentence variety and exercises that will improve your sentence variety superpowers.

Image Descriptions

Three circles labelled with the three points of view: third person, second person, and first person, and when to use them:

- First person uses the pronouns I, me, us, we, my, ours, and mine, and conveys a personal tone for writing focused on the writer.
- Second person includes you, your, and yours, and conveys a direct tone used when the writer knows the reader well and is writing to them.
- Third person includes she, he, it, they, them, their, and theirs and conveys a more formal and universal tone for writing focused on events, issues, or people outside the reader and writer.

[\[Return to Image\]](#)

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19.

Selecting and Narrowing a Topic

When you need to write something longer than a text or an email, whether it's a class assignment, a report for work, or a personal writing task, there's work to be done before you dive in and begin writing. This phase is called prewriting (even though some types of prewriting involve actual writing).

Note that even though instructors may describe a writing process as having steps that seem to go in order, writers usually skip back and forth between those steps as they work toward a final draft. While you're in the early stage of prewriting, you might use freewriting (a technique for generating text that you'll learn more about in the section titled "[Gathering Ideas](#)") and then use that technique again after revising your first draft. When instructors describe writing as "**recursive**," this process is what they are talking about. The techniques described for prewriting may come in handy later in your own writing process.



Narrowing/Choosing Your Topic

If you're working on a course assignment, you may get to select your own topic or a topic may be assigned to you.

If you get to choose your topic, be sure that you understand the kind of topic that will fit the assignment. For example, if your instructor asks you to write an argument about a local problem in your community, you wouldn't choose to write about the national debt—that's not a local problem, but a national one. You might try some of the techniques in this resource, like [freewriting](#), [listing](#), or [clustering](#), to discover topics you are interested in. You might use your library's online databases to search for interesting topics, especially databases that give pros and cons for current issues.

But even if the instructor assigns the topic, you can find ways to make it your own.

Some More Types of Assignments from Instructors

Most of the time, instructors give specific assignments that relate to the course and perhaps to assigned readings or discussions from class. When you are given a specific topic, be sure that you understand

what you have been asked to do. Look for the verbs used in the assignment. Here are some common verbs from writing assignments and what they usually mean:

- **Summarize:** If you are asked to write a summary of something you've read, you will be giving the main points and the supporting points from the text. A summary usually does not include your personal opinion.
- **Respond:** When you are asked to respond to a text, you can give your opinion in a variety of ways. You might talk about the quality of the text, connections you made with the text, or whether you agree or disagree with the author's ideas. You may need to incorporate a little bit of summary so that the reader has enough background to understand your response. The summary might be in the form of a single paragraph after your introduction, it might be a few sentences within your introduction, or it might be incorporated in multiple paragraphs in a sentence or two.
- **Analyze:** An analysis breaks something down into parts in order to understand the whole.
- **Synthesize:** A synthesis combines two or more ideas into a larger whole. For more on synthesis, see "[Synthesizing](#)" in this text.
- **Compare and contrast:** When you are asked to compare and contrast (or sometimes the instructor will just say compare, but mean both), you will be looking at two items and stating how they are alike and how they are different.
- **Reflect:** A reflection asks you to deeply consider something, often on a personal basis. For example, you might be asked to write a personal reflection about your own writing or about your progress during a course. Or you might be asked to reflect on how a particular issue affects you.
- **Other terms:** There are many possible verbs that you might find in an assignment. If you are unsure what the assignment calls for, be sure to ask your instructor.

Picking Your Own Topic When One Isn't Assigned

For some assignments, you may be able to write about a topic that is personally significant to you. Being able to write about a topic like this can improve your motivation. Be wary, though, of just writing opinion without backing up your ideas with reasons and evidence that your readers will find convincing. If you want to write about a deeply personal topic, be sure that you are willing to share that with others and also consider whether or not your readers want to know that information about you.

One way to narrow your topic is to decide what you DON'T want to write about. What ideas or subtopics could you eliminate?

Using Preliminary Research

Another way to narrow your topic is to do some preliminary research—not the kind of research you would include in an essay, but rather quick online research to inform yourself about the topic. This is one example of when it's okay to use a simple Google search or use Wikipedia. Once you see what

other people are writing about your topic, it can help you see areas that are interesting to you, and it can also help you understand what people, in general, agree on and what is still undecided and needs to be further explored.

CAUTION: Make sure that you don't let preliminary research sway your own ideas on a given topic. You are creating an assignment that is purely yours—no one has ever created this assignment before now. Proceed carefully when checking out what others have to say about your proposed topic—make your assignment yours.

Using Purpose to Determine Topic

You can also use your purpose for writing to define your topic:

- **Informative:** if your purpose in writing is to inform your readers, what are topics that you already know a lot about? What are some interesting topics that you could easily research?
- **Persuasive:** if your purpose is to persuade readers to think a certain way or to take an action, what are some topics that you feel strongly about? What are some topics that are currently under discussion that you could explore and form an opinion on?
- **Reflective:** if your purpose is to reflect on a personal experience or on your learning process, you can explore your knowledge and experience.
- **Analytical:** if your purpose is to analyze something (usually a text of some kind), is there an assigned list or a specific text? If you get to choose, what books, essays, poems, films, songs, etc. have you recently been exposed to that you could analyze?

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III

Academic Writing

20.

Why Write?

The answer to the question, “Why write?” may seem obvious to some. For others, maybe the first thought that comes to mind upon hearing that they have to register for an academic writing course is, “I know how to write, so why should I have to take a class about it?”

And that’s a fair question. You’ve probably been reading and writing most of your life. Why take yet another writing class just because you’re back in education now? And beyond daily emails and short communications, how much are you really going to need to write in your daily life?



These are all valid questions. It may surprise you to find out that the reasons I’m going to offer you aren’t just about academic and professional success although those are some important reasons too.

Often, when people think about writing, they think about the need to communicate a message to someone else. Common communication models present a sender (e.g., a writer) and a receiver (e.g., a reader) and different concepts of what happens as information is shared between them.

But sometimes the purpose for writing isn’t at all about sending information to some “other” receiver or reader. Sometimes, your purpose for writing might simply be to explore an idea or even just to figure out what you think. The famous author Flannery O’Connor summed up this need by saying, “I write because I don’t know what I think until I read what I say.” If you take some time to think about it, this probably doesn’t come as a big surprise. Many people write all kinds of things solely for themselves: lists, goals, notes, journals, and more.

Even without a purpose outside of yourself—and maybe especially because writing can happen completely free from such expectations—the act of writing has the power to help you make connections between yourself and the world. Writing can help you establish your own experiences or ideas in relation to the experiences or ideas of others. In short, it can help you figure out what you think about things and help you to situate those thoughts in relation the world and among the multitude of opinions and ideas that exist within it. That’s a powerful tool!

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21.

Professional Opportunities

Good writing and communication skills can help you to be more successful professionally. As a member of a professional or working community, you may also find that you are required to write. You will write for job applications, you will write resumes, and you might even write reports. You will also probably need to write informally on the job (e.g., in writing and answering email messages and perhaps informal reports). You may need to write a proposal some day or take part in an evaluation.

Writing can also help you with employability skills. The Conference Board of Canada lists many attributes desired by employers in the website's [Employability Skills](#) section. Writing is included in many different skill sets (as are many of the skills you will learn in this text).



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22.

The Writing Process



Ground Zero

- Know and understand the assignment

Prewriting

- Step one: Gather information
- Step two: Organize
- Step three: Outline

Drafting

- Step four: Draft

Revision

- Step five: Revise

Submission

- Step six: Submit

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23.

Types of Assignments

No matter what method of delivery or purpose for your assignment, you will only be asked to do something that you already **WOULD** know about (because of past experience or universal knowledge), **SHOULD** know about (because it has been expressly taught to you), or **COULD** know about (because part of the assignment is to gather that knowledge). So you will never be going blind into an assignment.

The type of assignment you might get can be divided up into how the assignment will be delivered (submission) and what the assignment is going to achieve (purpose).

English at this Advanced Level requires students to be able to deliver:

- An oral presentation
- Paragraphs
- Essays
- A review of a literature-based text
- On-demand paragraphs and essays
- A research assignment

Students are required to satisfy the following purposes:

- Summary
- Compare and contrast
- Classification
- Definition
- Persuasion
- Exposition
- Review
- Synthesis

You might be assigned an oral presentation to persuade; a research assignment to synthesize; a paragraph to summarize; an on-demand essay to define...

Ground Zero: You need to know what your assignment is asking of you. How will you deliver it? What is an effective way to execute that type of delivery? What content should be in it? How should your ideas be organized to suit the purpose?

See more in “[Patterns of Organization and Methods of Development](#)” later in this text.

24.

Overcoming Writing Anxiety and Writer's Block

You may be thinking, “All this advice is good, but sometimes I just get stuck! What I normally do just isn’t working!” That’s a familiar feeling for all writers. Sometimes the writing just seems to flow as if by magic, but then the flow stops cold. Your brain seems to have run out of things to say. If you just wait for the magic to come back, you might wait a long time.

What professional writers know is that writing takes consistent effort. Writing comes out of a regular practice—a habit.

Professional writers also know that not everything they write ends up in the final draft. Sometimes we have to write what Anne Lamott calls a “shitty rough draft.” One of my favorite writing professors, Duncan Carter, used to say that he was a terrible writer but a great reviser, and that’s what helped him write when inspiration wasn’t available. So how do writers get going when they feel stuck or uninspired? They develop a set of habits and have more than one way to write to get the words flowing again.



You might associate the idea of writing anxiety or writer’s block with procrastination, and procrastination certainly can be either a cause or an effect of writing anxiety. You can learn more about [procrastination](#) later in this section of the text. But writing anxiety or writer’s block is more of a condition. We might even venture to call it an ailment. To aid you in self-diagnosis here, let’s take some time to figure out what it is. Then, if you find that you’re afflicted, we’ll help you to determine the best course of treatment.

What is Writing Anxiety and How Do You Know if You Have It?

Do you worry excessively about writing assignments? Do they make you feel uneasy or agitated? Do you have negative feelings about certain types of writing? If you answered yes to any of these questions, you might suffer from writing anxiety. Writing anxiety simply means that a writer is experiencing negative feelings about a given writing task. The last of the questions above points out something important about this condition that has been afflicting writers everywhere for centuries: writing anxiety is often more about the audience and/or purpose for a given writing task than it is about the mere act of writing itself.

Let's consider this situational nature of writing anxiety for a moment. Say you just bought a new pair of headphones. You brought them home, removed all the packaging, plugged them into your MP3 player, and they're amazing! So you decide to visit the company website, and you write a stellar review of the product, giving it a five-star rating and including descriptive details about the headphones' comfortable fit, excellent sound quality, ability to cancel outside noise, and reasonable price.

Now, let's say that the next day in biology class your instructor covers the topic of biomes, and you learn about animal habitats and biodiversity and the interrelation and interdependence of species within biomes. You find it fascinating and can't wait to learn more. But then something terrible happens. Your instructor assigns a term project on the subject. As your instructor begins to describe the length and other specifications for the report, complete with formatting guidelines, citation requirements, and a bibliography at the end, your palms start to sweat, your stomach feels uneasy, and you begin to have trouble focusing on anything else your instructor has to say. You're experiencing writing anxiety.

Writing anxiety is the condition of feeling uneasy about writing. Writer's block is what you experience when you can't manage to put words on the page. But your condition isn't about the act of writing. Just yesterday you wrote a great review for those cool new headphones. So why do you suddenly feel paralyzed by the thought of writing the biology essay? Let's consider some possible causes.

What Causes Writing Anxiety?

The causes of writing anxiety are many. Here are just a few:

- Inexperience with the type of writing task
- Previous negative experiences with writing (e.g., someone, maybe a teacher, has given you negative feedback or said negative things about your writing)
- Negative feelings about writing (e.g., "I'm not a good writer"; "I hate writing.")
- Immediate deadline
- Distant deadline
- Lack of interest in the topic
- Personal problems or life events

Level of experience may explain why you felt comfortable writing the headphone review while you break out in a sweat at the thought of the biology paper. If you've never written anything similar to a specific assignment, maybe you're unsure about whether or not you can meet the assignment requirements or the teacher's expectations. Or maybe the last time you turned in a written report for school you received negative feedback or a bad grade from the teacher. Maybe you procrastinated most of the term and now the paper is due next week and you feel overwhelmed. Or maybe it's the second week of the term and the finals week deadline seems so far away that you're not motivated to write.

Knowing the cause of your writing anxiety can help you move beyond it and get writing, even if you can't completely eliminate the problem. If the topic doesn't interest you or if you're having problems at home, those probably aren't issues that will just disappear, but if you try some of the following

strategies, I think you'll find that you can at least move forward with even the most anxiety-inducing of writing assignments.

Strategies for Overcoming or Managing Writing Anxiety

There are a number of strategies upon which you can draw to help you move past the feeling of being lost or stuck. Consider if some of the following tactics can help you to get writing again.

Just Start Writing

It might sound like it's oversimplifying the matter, but it's true. Half the battle is to just start writing. Try some strategies like freewriting or dialectic notetaking. (For more on freewriting, see "[Strategies for Getting Started](#)" in the "Prewriting" section of this text, and for more on [dialectic notetaking](#), refer to the section on "Writing about Texts"). You should also believe in the importance of writing badly. Bruce Ballenger, a well-known writer and professor of English at Boise State explains why writing badly is an important part of the writing process:

Giving myself permission to write badly makes it much more likely that I will write what I don't expect to write, and from those surprises will come some of my best writing. Writing badly is also a convenient alternative to staring off into space and waiting for inspiration.

Sometimes the biggest problem writers have with getting started is that they feel like the writing needs to be good, or well organized, or they feel like they need to start at the beginning. None of that is true. All you need to do is start.

Have you ever seen a potter make a clay pot? Before a potter can start shaping or throwing a pot, they have to bring the big wet blob of clay and slap it down on the table. It's heavy and wet and messy, but it's the essential raw material. No clay? No pot. "Bad writing" is a lot like that. You have to dump all the words and ideas onto the table. Just get them out. Only then do you have the raw material you need to start shaping the words into something beautiful and lasting. You can wait until the revision stages to worry about shaping your writing to be its best. For now, just get the ideas on the table.



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Create Smaller Tasks and Short-Term Goals

One of the biggest barriers to writing can be that the task just seems too large, and perhaps the due date is weeks away. Each of these conditions can contribute to feelings of being overwhelmed or to the tendency to procrastinate. But the remedy is simple and will help you keep writing something each

week toward your deadline and toward the finished product: divide larger writing tasks into smaller, more manageable tasks and set intermediate deadlines.

The process that the authors used for writing this text provides a good example. As authors, we had to divide the text into sections, but we also had to plan the process for a first draft, peer reviews, and revisions, along with adding images, links, and other resources, not to mention the final publication of the text online. Had we not divided up the larger tasks into smaller ones and set short-term goals and deadlines, the process of writing the text would have been overwhelming. We didn't meet every single intermediate deadline right on time, but they helped move us along and helped us to meet the most important deadline—the final one—with a complete text that was ready to publish on schedule.

Imagine that you have a term paper that's assigned during Week 1 of a eleven-week term, and it's due during finals week. Make a list of all the tasks you can think of that need to be completed, from beginning to end, to accomplish all that the assignment requires. List the tasks, and assign yourself due dates for each task. Consider taking it a step further and create a task table that allows you to include a column for additional notes. Here's an example:

Task	Complete by	Notes
Brainstorm topics and select a topic	Wed., Week 2	
Do some preliminary research on the Web to learn about the topic	Wed., Week 3	
Develop list of search terms for some more focused research	Fri., Week 3	Ask instructor to look over my search terms
Spend some time at the library searching library holdings and databases, and do some more focused research on the web	Mon., Week 4	Plan ahead to make sure I have time and transportation
Read sources and take notes	Mon., Week 5	Consult notetaking examples in my textbook
Create an outline for the term paper	Fri., Week 5	
Begin drafting	Mon., Week 6	Remember to try some freewriting
Complete first rough draft	Wed., Week 7	
Ask a couple of classmates to read draft and comment; meet with instructor and ask questions	Fri., Week 7	Ask classmates week before if they want to meet and exchange papers
Do some additional research if needed	Mon., Week 8	
Revise first draft and complete second draft with conclusion	Mon., Week 9	Try revision strategies we learned about in class
Meet with tutor in the Writing Center to go over my essay	Fri., Week 9	Call the Writing Center the week before for appt.
Make final revisions, proofread, make sure formatting is right, citations are in place, and works cited entries are correct	Fri., Week 10	Have someone new give it a final read-through.
Print, staple, and turn in (or save and upload) essay	Mon., Finals Week	Celebrate!

Collaborate

Get support from a friend, family member, or classmate. Talk to your friends or family, or to a tutor in your college writing centre, about your ideas for your essay. Sometimes talking about your ideas is the best way to flesh them out and get more ideas flowing. Write down notes during or just after your conversation. Classmates are a great resource because they're studying the same subjects as you, and they're working on the same assignments. Talk to them often, and form study groups. Ask people to

look at your ideas or writing and to give you feedback. Set goals and hold each other accountable for meeting deadlines (a little friendly competition can be motivating!).

Talk to other potential readers. Ask them what they would expect from this type of writing. Meet with a tutor in your campus writing centre. Be sure to come to the appointment prepared with a printed copy of the assignment and a short list of what you want to work on, along with a printed copy of your essay.

For more about getting help from a tutor see “Why Meet with a Writing Tutor?” and “Preparing to Meet with a Tutor” in the “[Giving and Receiving Feedback](#)” section of this text.

Embrace Reality

Don’t imagine the situation of your writing assignment to be any better or worse than it really is. There are some important truths for you to recognize:

- Focus on what you do best rather than fretting about your perceived weaknesses.
- Acknowledge that writing can be difficult and that all you need to do is do your best.
- Recognize what might be new or unfamiliar about the type of writing that you’re doing.
- Understand that confusion and frustration is a natural part of experiencing new things, and it’s okay; it’s part of the learning process.
- Remember that you’re a student and that you’re supposed to be experiencing things that are new and unfamiliar (new formats, new audiences, new subject matter, new processes, new approaches, etc.).
- Repeat the mantra, “It doesn’t have to be perfect; it just has to be DONE.”

Seek Out Experts

If you can, find more experienced writers (especially related to the type of writing that you’re doing) and ask them questions. Sometimes, this might just mean a friend or family member who’s already taken a couple years of college courses. Maybe it’s a fellow student who has already taken the class you’re taking now. Also, the tutors in your college writing centre can be a big help at any stage in the writing process. Give them a call and make an appointment. And don’t forget the expert you see all the time throughout any class that you take: your instructor. Ask your instructor for suggestions. That’s what she’s there for.

Another way to learn from the experience of others is to look at examples of other pieces of writing of the type that you’re working on. How is this piece organized? Does it make use of source material? What sort of tone does it use? If you don’t know where to find examples, ask your instructor. If he doesn’t have them at the ready, he’ll likely be able to give you some suggestions about where to find some.

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25.

Good Writing Habits

Many of the tips for overcoming writing anxiety discussed in the previous section are also just plain good tips for getting the job done. Here are a few more good writing habits.

Practice Recursive Writing

Use a variety of writing strategies (many of which you can gather from this text) and avoid the tendency to view writing as a linear process. If you acknowledge that the process of writing is recursive—meaning that you will come back to different parts of the process again and again—you are most likely to keep moving forward toward your final writing goal, and your writing is also likely to reveal your full potential as a writer.

When you return to a previously written section of a draft to generate new material, collaborate with others, or take a break from your writing and come back to it again, you're practicing recursive writing. Most successful writers will tell you that they practice recursive writing in some way. Good writing doesn't happen in a single late night cram session the day before the deadline. Good writing takes time. This includes time away from the writing itself to allow for distance and reflection, and good writing requires multiple drafts. That said, everyone finds themselves in a time crunch sometimes. If that's where you're at, check out "How to Fix Procrastination," found under the topic of "[Procrastination](#)," later in this section of the text.

Revise, Revise, Revise

As we've just explained, one linear trip through the writing process is not enough to achieve your best writing. In addition to strategies for generating material, you will also find revision strategies in this text. Try some different approaches to revision, and see which ones work best for you. Understand the difference between revision and proofreading, and make sure you allow ample time for each. Revision is the act of seeing something anew. This means considering higher level concerns in your essay, for example, the overall organization or how well you're addressing the audience or purpose for the piece. Proofreading is what you do at the end to make sure that your final draft is free from errors. For specific revision strategies, see the "[Revising](#)" section of this text.

Take Risks

If you play it too safe, there's probably not going to be anything original or imaginative about your essay. Good writing involves risk. Too often, inexperienced writers will begin writing from a position

of considering only what they think their readers expect to read on the subject. What a boring world it would be if we only ever read or experienced what we expected! Begin by exploring your own thoughts and what most interests you about the topic. Open yourself to all the possibilities. Of course, this does not mean that you can forget about the parameters of the assignment or about the audience or purpose for your writing. But allow yourself to be creative first, and then think about how you can best tailor your own ideas to the audience and purpose dictated by your writing assignment.

Be Patient and Be Willing to Learn

Good writing takes patience. As with all good things, it takes time to create something good. And good writers also understand that a big part of writing is learning. You're selling yourself—and your readers—short if you begin the writing process with the idea that you already know everything you have to tell your readers about the subject. Even experts in a subject area continue to learn new things and expand the boundaries of their chosen fields (that's how they become experts!).

Neil deGrasse Tyson, a prominent American astrophysicist, writes about the importance of the quest for knowledge in his 2005 article for *Natural History Magazine*, "[The Perimeter of Ignorance](#)." He explains that great scientific thinkers like Newton and Galileo were successful in expanding the boundaries of human understanding (the perimeters of ignorance, as Tyson calls them), precisely because they did not conform the reports of their findings to what society—and especially some of the most powerful institutions in society—expected them to report. I hope that you will also allow the creative and inquisitive potential of your mind to search beyond what you expect to say and what your readers might expect to hear about this topic.

Consider Environmental Factors

Finally, not all aspects of writing are about process or about the inner workings of your mind as a writer. Some factors are external or environmental. Consider what time of day is best for you to write. Write every day, or as often as you can, and establish a schedule (as suggested in the section on [overcoming writing anxiety](#), earlier in this text).

Don't multitask. Recent studies have proven that the human brain does not operate at its best while multitasking. Switching between tasks has been shown to cause each of the tasks to take longer to complete than if they were handled independently ("Multitasking"). So put away your phone and turn off other distractions (like social media or the television). Find a quiet place to work where you are less likely to be disturbed. And don't try to work on more than one subject or project at the same time. Make sure you have everything you need as you get started: pens, pencils, notebooks, textbooks, computer, snacks, or whatever you need to be productive and feel comfortable. Allot a set period of time to each task, and attend to each one separately.

Hopefully, these tips will help you to get started, help you gain some momentum, and help you to make the best use of that one precious resource that is limited for us all: time. As with any strategies, try different ones, and if something doesn't work for you, move on and try something else. Select the strategies that work best for you, and modify them to suit your needs.

Exercise

Take two or three minutes to list some examples of a time when writing was difficult for you and you found it hard to get started. Note that that your list does not need to be constrained to times when you were writing for school, although you should consider those times too. But also consider other writing situations, such as applications, letters, or requests. Then, choose one of those times and take a couple more minutes to consider what barriers or obstacles may have made it difficult for you to write in that situation:

- Inexperience with the type of writing
- A previous negative experience with writing
- An immediate deadline
- A distant deadline
- A lack of interest in the topic
- Personal problems or challenges

Collaboration:

Discuss your list of writing obstacles with some classmates in a small group. Then, as a group, try to identify some strategies or good writing practices discussed in this chapter that might have helped you overcome those obstacles. If class time allows for it, your small group might share some conclusions with the whole class about which strategies and practices would best suit the difficult writing situations that you discussed.

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26.

Procrastination

Is procrastination always bad? Or is it a necessary part of your writing process?

What is it? What does it look like for you? For some people, having a writing assignment suddenly stirs a desire to clean, go for a walk, catch up on chores—do anything other than write. That's procrastination. Vacuuming CAN be the same as taking time to think about your topic or assignment, unless you never get to the actual writing.



How to Use Procrastination

If you know that you have a tendency to procrastinate, you can analyze your habits to find a way to get back to productive work. If you just have difficulty getting the words onto the page, you might try some techniques that don't feel like writing but produce results. Try some of these:

- **Bribe friends to listen and/or scribe.** If you have more trouble with getting the words on the page, but like to talk over your ideas, invite a friend out for coffee or lunch in exchange for helping you out by writing down what you say about your assignment.
- **Use dictation software.** Dictation software allows you to speak your ideas while the software captures your words onto the page. You may have dictation software already available on your own computer; it may be provided by your school; or you may find a free mobile application.
- **Use downtime to freewrite.** If your problem is that you don't have enough big chunks of time, use the time you do have for some freewriting. That means keeping a notebook or electronic device handy so that you can fit in a quick bit of writing while you are riding the bus, stuck waiting at an appointment, or in between classes. Some authors write entire articles and even books by writing in small chunks throughout the day. Try using your phone or other device to leave yourself a voice message, or use an app that records and makes a written transcript of your voice.
- **Set a limit to procrastination.** Limiting procrastination may be necessary if you find that you just waste time, or you may need to ask someone else for help.
- **Use a time limit/timer.** If you find yourself procrastinating with social media or some other distraction, set a time limit on that activity and use an alarm to let you know when that time is

up. There are even apps that will do this for you! You may also find that setting a time limit on your writing makes the writing feel less burdensome. After a certain amount of time, you might even give yourself a reward.

- **Set aside writing time.** If you find time to do everything but work on your assignment, then you may need to set appointments with yourself to ensure that you have enough time set aside to write your paper.
- **Get an accountability partner.** Some people find that they accomplish more by working with another person or a group that they feel accountable to. Having a regular meeting or a scheduled check-in where you have to show your work can ensure that you get it done. Here are some potential resources for finding an accountability partner:
 - Join a writing group—even a group of classmates.
 - Ask a friend to check in with you.
 - Make use of your instructor’s office hour or visit your school’s Writing Center.
- **Ask your instructor for an extension.** If you are writing a class assignment, your instructor may be willing to give you an extension. Be aware that the instructor may say no to your request. You have the best chance of receiving an extension if you have been participating and turning in assignments on time before the request, make your request before the actual deadline, are able to explain how you will use the additional time, and can show the instructor a draft or an outline so that she or he can see that an extension would result in completion of your assignment.

How to Fix Procrastination

Sometimes, despite your best efforts, you will find yourself having to complete a writing task just before the deadline, without adequate time. Use the time you have to make the best effort possible. Peter Elbow, a prominent writing expert, calls this “the dangerous method” because there is a strong chance that your work will not be good enough to meet the expectations of your instructor (or your audience, editor, etc.) But if this is your only option, it’s better to use the dangerous method than do nothing at all. (Note: If your assignment is to write a research paper, this method will not work if you start the night before the assignment is due. You may be able to write a draft or an outline, but you will not be able to complete the necessary research and write a long research paper in less than 24 hours.)

The first step is to figure out how much time you can realistically spend on the assignment. Then you can make a timeline that includes the tasks you need to complete. Here’s an example:

If you have an assignment due at 10 am on Friday, and you can start at 4 pm on Thursday, and you do not have class or work or major interruptions until 10 am on Friday:

- **4-5 pm:** Review assignment and materials you need to refer to in your writing; make an outline or a list of the topics you need to include.
- **5-6 pm:** Freewrite in 10 minute timed bursts, starting with an item on your list or outline. Whenever the timer goes off, review what you’ve written and decide to either continue on the same topic or move to another topic.

- **6-7 pm:** Eat dinner and take a walk (or whatever you do to recharge that also allows your brain to continue working in the background. For some people, this means solitude; for others, this involves other people.) You may be tempted to skip steps like this due to your worry about completing the assignment. Don't skip steps! If you want to work until midnight or later, you will need to take care of your body and brain to keep going. You will often find that when you return to your work, you have fresh ideas and perspectives.
- **7-10 pm:** Continue timed free writing until you have written about as many of the topics as you can in this time period. Take a short break every hour, and make sure that you move, drink water, and perhaps have a healthy snack. Set an alarm or timer to ensure that you get back to your work as planned. Save one chunk of time to make a Works Cited page; use one chunk of time to insert any missing quotations and/or citations. Resist the urge to constantly reread the first part to revise it to perfection. That will keep you from finishing your draft. Remember the goal is to FINISH, not to write a perfect introduction.
- **10-11 pm:** Complete the draft, making it into complete sentences and paragraphs. Write an introduction and conclusion if you don't yet have these pieces.
- **11 pm-12 am:** Review your work. (Suggestion: use the [reverse outline](#) method, discussed in the "Revising" section of this text.) Make sure, as best you can, that all required parts of your outline are included. Review the assignment and compare it to your draft.
- **12-7 or 8 am:** Sleep. NOT KIDDING. Your body and brain need this time away from your work. When you get up, you will be better prepared to finish your paper by the deadline.
- **8-9 am:** Proofread and edit your paper. Do the best you can, knowing that you will not have time to catch everything or make the paper perfect.

Travel to class, turn your work in online, or do whatever you need to do to get your piece turned in. Remind yourself that while this is not your best work, you got it done. Expect to receive feedback about what could be improved.

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IV

Prewriting: Organizing and Outlining

27.

Prewriting Step One: Gathering Ideas

How do you start on a writing project? There isn't just one right way to begin. Some people dive right in, writing in complete sentences and paragraphs, while others start with some form of brainstorming or freewriting. Others choose a strategy based on the writing task and how familiar they are with the topic. A writing instructor may want you to try out different methods so that you can figure out what works best for you. You may want to have more than one method in case you get stuck and need to break out of a writing block.

Here are some common strategies for getting started (sometimes called invention strategies). They all have some common tips:

- Write down all of your ideas; don't eliminate anything until you are done brainstorming.
- Don't bother with editing at this stage—it can be messy.
- Work as quickly as you can.
- If you get stuck, stop and review your work or get someone else's input.
- Each method can work as a solo technique or with others.

Brainstorming

A brainstorm is usually done in a group setting, and you may do this in your class as part of the pre-writing lesson. The idea is that all the brains in the class “storm” together with ideas. Someone will be responsible for capturing these ideas—on the whiteboard, on a piece of paper, or another method.

You can brainstorm on your own by throwing your ideas out of your mind and onto paper as quickly as you can.

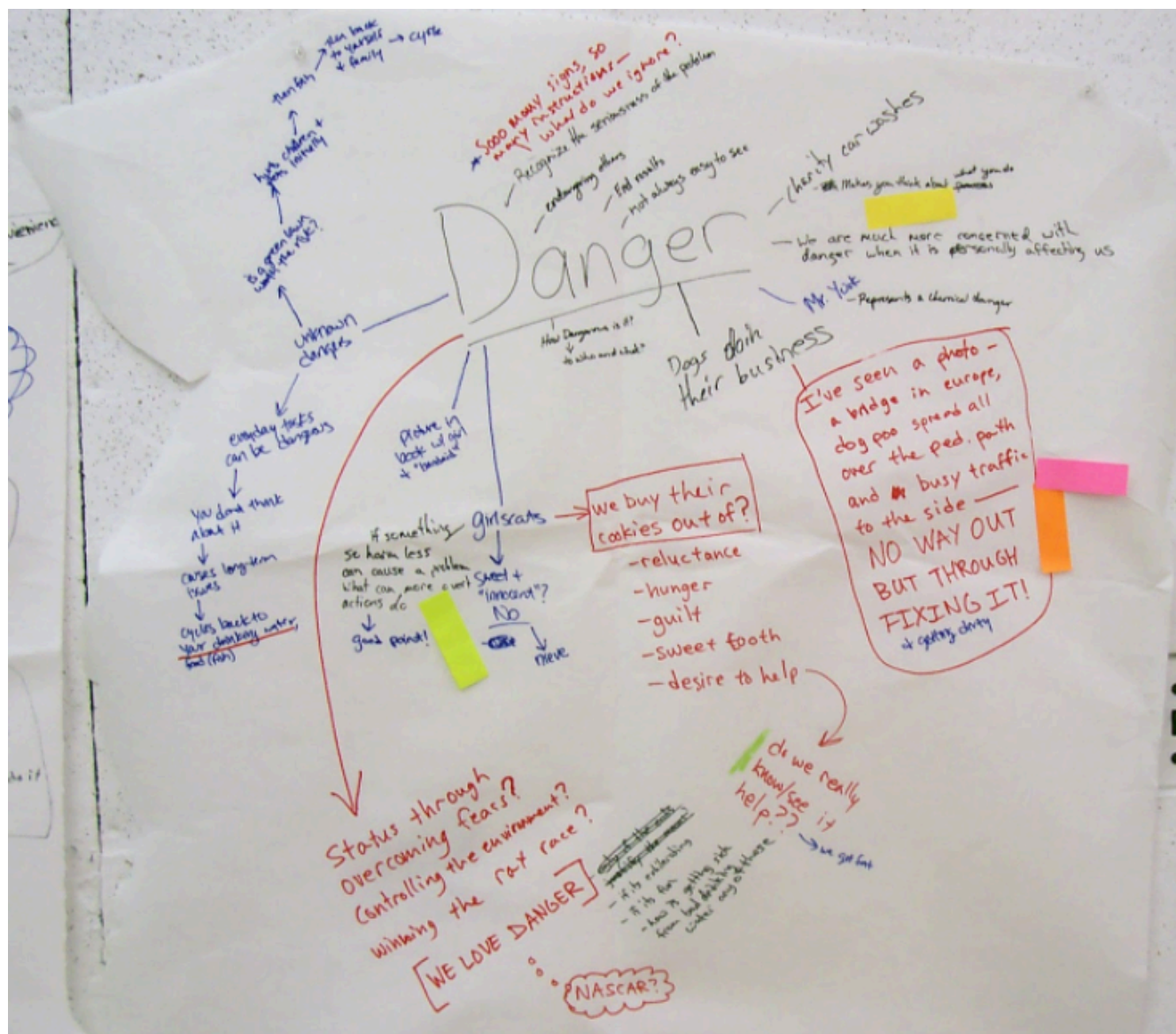
Clustering

A cluster is a method of brainstorming that allows you to draw connections between ideas. This technique is also called a tree diagram, a map, a spider diagram, and probably many other terms.

1. To make a cluster, start with a big concept. Write this in the centre of a page or screen and circle it.
2. Think of ideas that connect to the big concept. Write these around the big concept and draw connecting lines to the big concept.

3. As you think of ideas that relate to any of the others, create more connections by writing those ideas around the one idea that connects them and draw connecting lines.

Here's an example:



Notice that you can use colour, larger type, etc., to create organization and emphasis. Remember that your cluster doesn't need to look like anyone else's. Create the cluster in the way that makes the most sense to you. Once you have finished the cluster, you can use another technique to generate actual text.

Listing

Listing is making a list of ideas. Here are two kinds of lists you might use.

Brainstorm list: Simply make a list of all the ideas related to your topic. Do not censor your ideas; write everything down, knowing you can cross some off later.

Here's an example:

Making walks better

2015-05-15e



I like the quiet,
but it might be
good to have the
option.

philosophy?
audiobooks?
language?

Regular purpose:

- Drop off donations
- Visit libraries
- Explore neighbourhoods
- Enjoy the changes

It's nice to walk for 1:30 → I can cover
a lot of ground...



Backpack is a little
more comfy than
shoulder bag, but
not as breathable.
Messenger bag?



Vest is a little
warm, too.



→ essentials?



Hmm, maybe
revisit list
of questions
to concentrate
on...

What I know/don't know lists: If you know that your topic will require research, you can make two lists. The first will be a list of what you already know about your topic; the second will be a list of what you don't know and will have to research.

Freewriting

Freewriting is a technique that actually generates text, some of which you may eventually use in your final draft. The tips are similar to brainstorming and clustering:

- Write as much as you can, as quickly as you can.
- Don't edit or cross anything out. (Note: if you must edit as you go, just write the correction and keep moving along. Don't go for the perfect word, just get the idea on the page.)
- Keep your pen, pencil, or fingers on the keyboard moving.
- You don't need to stay on topic or write in any order. Feel free to follow tangents.
- If you get stuck, write a repeating phrase until your brain gets tired and gives you something else to write. (Variation: I like to complain at this point, so I write about the fact that I'm stuck, I really hate having to do this, why isn't it lunch-time already, etc.)
- Freewriting can be used just to get your mind working so that you can write an actual draft. In this case, you can write about whatever you want. Freewriting to generate ideas usually works best when you start with a prompt—an idea or question that gets you started. An example of a writing prompt might be “What do I already know about this topic?” Or “What

is the first idea I have about my topic?” If you started with a list or an outline, you can freewrite about each item.

Looping

Looping is a technique built on freewriting. It can help you move within a topic to get all related ideas into writing.

1. To begin, start with a freewrite on a topic. Set a timer and write for 5-15 minutes (whatever you think will be enough time to get going but not so much that you will want to stop).
2. When the time period ends, read over what you’ve written and circle anything that needs to be expanded on or that branches into new ideas. Select one of these for your next loop.
3. Freewrite again for another time period, using the idea you selected from the first freewrite.
4. Repeat until you feel you have covered the topic or you are out of time.

Asking Questions

To stimulate ideas, you can ask questions that help you generate content. Use some of the examples below or come up with your own.

- **Problem/solution:** What is the problem that your writing is trying to solve? Who or what is part of the problem? What solutions can you think of? How would each solution be accomplished?
- **Cause/effect:** What is the reason behind your topic? Why is it an issue? Conversely, what is the effect of your topic? Who will be affected by it?
- **The set of journalist’s questions** is probably the most familiar for writers. Using the journalist’s questions, sometimes called the five W’s (plus How), is an effective way to write about the basic information about your topic. Here are the questions:
 - Who: Who is doing this? Who is affected?
 - What: What is happening? What will happen? What should happen?
 - Where: Where is it happening?
 - When: When is it happening?
 - Why: Why is this happening?
 - How: How is it happening?

Discussing

Discussion can be a great way to get your ideas flowing. In a group setting, I tell my students to turn to

each other and tell whatever they know about the given topic. Even if they think they know nothing, they can generate ideas by discussion.

Journals or “Minute Papers”

Many people keep journals in their daily lives, and you might find that you have already put thought into a topic you can choose from for your assignment.

Or, you may have already made a reading journal or a “minute paper” from the tips in the Reading chapter, “[Reflecting on What You Read](#).” Have a look at one of them now and see if you have generated any ideas that could be used in your assignment.

Dialectic Note-taking

These notes are a great place to gather ideas for your assignment. If you were following the instructions carefully, you already have quotes or paraphrases ready to go into your assignment. See the instructions here: “[Dialectic Note-taking](#).”

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28.

Organizing Your Ideas and Looking for Connections

Once you've gotten familiar with your [assignment](#), considered your audience, and completed some pre-writing work, it's time to start connecting ideas and seeing how they fit together to create a coherent and unified assignment.

Once you have generated a good range of ideas, your next step will be to look through the ideas you've come up with. Which ones are most interesting to you to research and write about? You will, ideally, find several topics in your idea generation process that are interesting to you and robust enough that you will be able to clearly support them (and potentially also locate strong sources to help you do that).

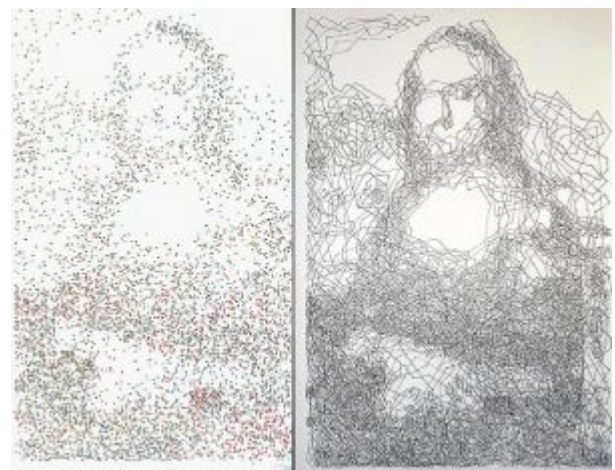
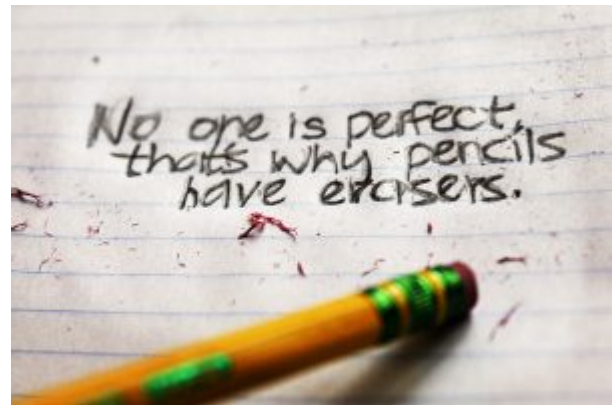
So, how do you figure out which, out of all these good ideas you've come up with, is THE idea you want to work with?

Looking for Connections

Once you have narrowed your ideas to ones that fit the assignment parameters, look for connections between the remaining ideas. Does one support another? Are a few of them different ways of looking at the same thing? Can two combine to make a stronger, more complete topic? Does one spark your interest in a way the others don't?

If you complete these steps and find you have no topics left that have passed these tests, you will want to generate new ideas, maybe with a different generation method.

If you are still looking at several potential topics after this process, pick just one of them, or one tightly-connected group of them, to work with for your assignment.



Rough Outline

A rough outline is less formal than a [traditional outline](#). Working from a list, a brainstorm, or a freewrite, organize the ideas into the order that makes sense to you. You might try colour-coding like items and then grouping the items with the same colour together. Another method is to print your prewriting, then cut it up into smaller pieces, and finally put the pieces into piles of related items. Tape the like items together, then put the pieces together into a whole list/outline.

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29.

Outlining

Outlining is a useful pre-writing tool when you know your topic well or at least know the areas you want to explore.

An outline can be written before you begin to write, and it can range from formal to informal. Many writers work best from a list of ideas or from freewriting, but you may have an assignment that is purely to create an outline.

(Note: A reverse outline can be useful once you have written a draft, during the revision process. For more on [reverse outlining](#), see the “Revising” section.)

Traditional Outline

A traditional outline uses a numbering and indentation scheme to help organize your thoughts. Generally, you begin with your main point, stated as a topic sentence or thesis (see “Finding the Thesis” in the “Drafting Section”), and place the subtopics—the main supports for your topic sentence/thesis—and finally fill out the details underneath each subtopic. Each subtopic is numbered and has the same level of indentation. Details under each subtopic are given a different style of number or letter and are indented further to the right. It’s expected that each subtopic will merit at least two details.

Most word-processing applications include outlining capabilities. Try to create an outline with yours.

Here’s an example:

- I. Main Point
 - a. Subtopic
 - i. Detail/Evidence/Support
 - ii. Support/Example/Detail
 - b. Supporting Idea
 - i. Evidence/Support/Example
 - ii. Detail/Evidence/Support
 - iii. Example/Support/Evidence

Outlining an Essay

Step 1: Create a thesis statement

If you are writing an essay or research paper, you will begin by writing a draft [thesis statement](#). A thesis statement is a concise presentation of the main argument you will develop in your paper. Write the thesis statement at the top of your paper. You can revise this later if needed.

The rest of your outline will include the main point and sub-points you will develop in each paragraph.

Step 2: Identify the main ideas that relate to your thesis statement

Based on the reading and research you have already done, list the main points that you plan to discuss in your essay. Consider carefully the most logical order, and how each point supports your thesis. These main ideas will become the topic sentences for each body paragraph.

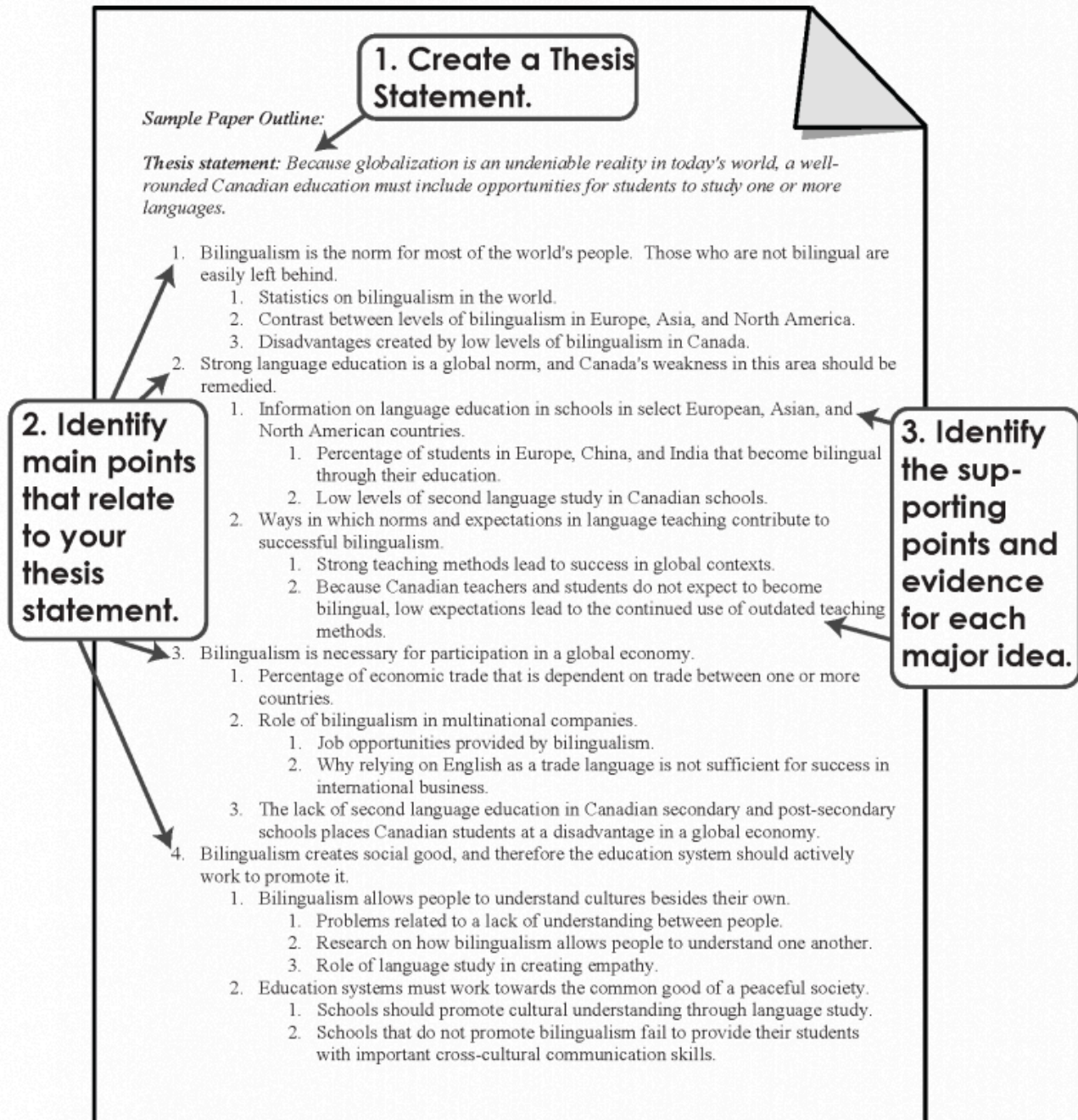
Step 3: Identify the supporting points and evidence for each major idea

Each main point will be supported by supporting points and evidence that you have compiled from other sources. Each piece of information from another source must be cited, whether you have quoted directly, paraphrased, or summarized the information.

Step 4: Create your outline

Outlines are usually created using a structure that clearly indicates main ideas and supporting points. In the example below, main ideas are numbered, while the supporting ideas are indented one level and labelled with letters. Each level of supporting detail is indented further.

Anatomy of an Outline



Exercise

Create an outline for a paper or report for one of your courses.

1. Write a thesis statement that clearly presents the argument that you will make.
2. Use a multi-level outline, similar to the one in the example above, to create an outline before you begin writing.

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V

Drafting

30.

Patterns of Organization and Methods of Development

Patterns of organization can help your readers follow the ideas within your essay and your paragraphs, but they can also work as methods of development to help you recognize and further develop ideas and relationships in your writing. Here are some strategies that can help you with both organization and development in your essays.

Major Patterns of Organization

Read the following sentences:

1. Now take the pie out of the oven and let it cool on the stovetop.
2. Mix the dry ingredients with the liquid ingredients.
3. Set the pie crust aside while you make the filling.

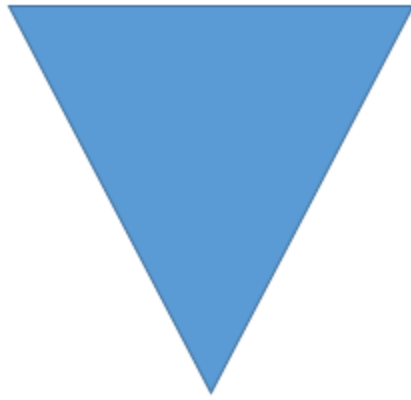


How did it feel to read the above list? A bit confusing, I would guess. That's because the steps for making a pie were not well organized, and the steps don't include enough detail for us to know exactly what we should do. (Like what are the dry and liquid ingredients?) We all know that starting instructions from the beginning and giving each detailed step in the order it should happen is vital to having a good outcome, in this case a yummy pie! But it's not always so simple to know how to organize or develop ideas, and sometimes there's more than one way, which complicates things even further.

First, let's take a look at a couple of ways to think about organization.

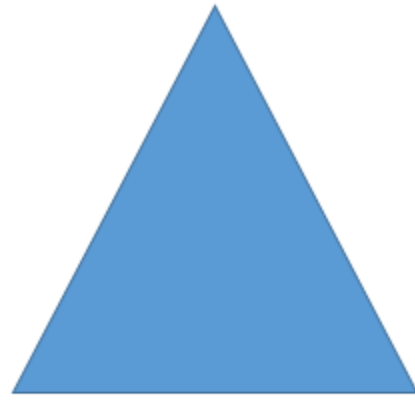
General to Specific or Specific to General

It might be useful to think about organizing your topic like a triangle:



General to Specific

VS.



Specific to General

The first triangle represents starting with the most general, big picture information first, moving then to more detailed and often more personal information later in the paper. The second triangle represents an organizational structure that starts with the specific, small scale information first and then moves to the more global, big picture stuff.

For example, if your topic is traffic in Vancouver, British Columbia, an essay that uses the general-to-specific organizational structure might begin this way:

Many people consider Vancouver, British Columbia, to be a relaxed place to live. They would be shocked to know how bad the traffic is traveling major arteries into the city and even driving around the city itself.

An essay that uses the specific-to-general structure might start like this:

Transit is crowded, parking is expensive, and vehicles stop and go through the main streets of the city of Vancouver, British Columbia, and that is just once travelers brave the crowded arteries to enter the city; Vancouver's traffic problem does not lend itself to the relaxed atmosphere many believe the city to have.

What's the difference between these two introductions? And how might they appeal to the intended audience for this essay in different ways? The first introduction is looking at the big picture of the problem and mentions pollution's impact on all citizens in Portland, while the second introduction focuses on one specific family. The first helps readers see how vast the problem really is, and the second helps connect readers to a real family, making an emotional appeal from the very beginning. Neither introduction is necessarily better. You'll choose one over the other based on the kind of tone you'd like to create and how you'd like to affect your audience. It's completely up to you to make this decision.

Does the Triangle Mean the Essay Keeps Getting More Specific or More Broad until the Very End?

The triangle is kind of a general guide, meaning you're allowed to move around within it all you want. For example, it's possible that each of your paragraphs will be its own triangle, starting with the general or specific and moving out or in. However, if you begin very broadly, it might be effective to end your essay in a more specific, personal way. And if you begin with a personal story, consider ending your essay by touching on the global impact and importance of your topic.

Are There Other Ways to Think about Organizing My Ideas?

Yes! Rather than thinking about which of your ideas are most specific or personal or which are more broad or universal, you might consider one of the following ways of organizing your ideas:

- Most important information first (consider what you want readers to focus on first)
- Chronological order (the order in time that events take place)
- Compare and contrast (ideas are organized together because of their relationship to each other)

The section on Methods of Development, below, offers more detail about some of these organizational patterns, along with some others.

Exercise

Choose one of the following topics, and practice writing a few opening sentences like we did above, once using the general-to-specific format and once using the specific-to-general. Which do you like better? What audience would be attracted to which one? Share with peers to see how others tackled this challenge. How would you rewrite their sentences? Why? Discuss your changes and listen to how your peers have revised your sentences. Taking in other people's ideas will help you see new ways to approach your own writing and thinking.

Topics:

1. Facing fears
2. Safety in sports
3. Community policing
4. Educating prisoners
5. Sex education

Methods of Development

The methods of development covered here are best used as ways to look at what's already happening in your draft and to consider how you might emphasize or expand on any existing patterns. You might already be familiar with some of these patterns because teachers will sometimes assign them as the purpose for writing an essay. For example, you might have been asked to write a cause-and-effect essay or a comparison-and-contrast essay.

It's important to emphasize here that patterns of organization or methods of developing content usually happen naturally as a consequence of the way the writer engages with and organizes information while writing. That is to say, most writers don't sit down and say, "I think I'll write a cause-and-effect essay today." Instead, a writer might be more likely to be interested in a topic, say, the state of drinking water in the local community, and as the writer begins to explore the topic, certain cause-and-effect relationships between environmental pollutants and the community water supply may begin to emerge.

So if these patterns just occur naturally in writing, what's the use in knowing about them? Well, sometimes you might be revising a draft and notice that some of your paragraphs are a bit underdeveloped. Maybe they lack a clear topic, or maybe they lack support. In either case, you can look to these common methods of development to find ways to sharpen those vague topics or to add support where needed. Do you have a clear cause statement somewhere but you haven't explored the effects? Are you lacking detail somewhere where a narrative story or historical chronology can help build reader interest and add support? Are you struggling to define an idea that might benefit from some comparison or contrast? Read on to consider some of the ways that these strategies can help you in revision.

Cause and Effect (or Effect and Cause)

Do you see a potential cause-and-effect relationship developing in your draft? The cause-and-effect pattern may be used to identify one or more causes followed by one or more effects or results. Or you may reverse this sequence and describe effects first and then the cause or causes. For example, the causes of water pollution might be followed by its effects on both humans and animals. You may use obvious transitions to clarify cause and effect, such as "What are the results? Here are some of them..." or you might simply use the words *cause*, *effect*, and *result*, to cue the reader about your about the relationships that you're establishing.

Problem-Solution

At some point does your essay explore a problem or suggest a solution? The problem-solution pattern is commonly used in identifying something that's wrong and in contemplating what might be done to remedy the situation. There are probably more ways to organize a problem-solution approach, but but here are three possibilities:

- Describe the problem, followed by the solution.
- Propose the solution first and then describe the problems that motivated it.
- Or a problem may be followed by several solutions, one of which is selected as the best.

When the solution is stated at the end of the paper, the pattern is sometimes called the delayed proposal. For a hostile audience, it may be effective to describe the problem, show why other solutions do not work, and finally suggest the favored solution. You can emphasize the words *problem* and *solution* to signal these sections of your paper for your reader.

Chronology or Narrative

Do you need to develop support for a topic where telling a story can illustrate some important concept for your readers? Material arranged chronologically is explained as it occurs in time. A chronological or narrative method of development might help you find a way to add both interest and content to your essay. Material arranged chronologically is explained as it occurs in time. This pattern may be used to establish what has happened. Chronology or narrative can be a great way to introduce your essay by providing a background or history behind your topic. Or you may want to tell a story to develop one or more points in the body of your essay. You can use transitional words like *then*, *next*, and *finally* to make the parts of the chronology clear.

Comparison and Contrast

Are you trying to define something? Do you need your readers to understand what something is and what it is not? The comparison-and-contrast method of development is particularly useful in extending a definition, or anywhere you need to show how a subject is like or unlike another subject. For example, the statement is often made that drug abuse is a medical problem instead of a criminal justice issue. An author might attempt to prove this point by comparing drug addiction to AIDS, cancer, or heart disease to redefine the term “addiction” as a medical problem. A statement in opposition to this idea could just as easily establish contrast by explaining all the ways that addiction is different from what we traditionally understand as an illness. In seeking to establish comparison or contrast in your writing, some words or terms that might be useful are *by contrast*, *in comparison*, *while*, *some*, and *others*.

These four methods of development—cause and effect, problem-solution, chronology or narrative, and comparison and contrast—are just a few ways to organize and develop ideas and content in your essays. It’s important to note that they should not be a starting point for writers who want to write something authentic—something that they care deeply about. Instead, they can be a great way to help you look for what’s already happening with your topic or in a draft, to help you to write more, or to help you reorganize some parts of an essay that seem to lack connection or feel disjointed. Look for organizational patterns when you’re reading work by professional writers. Notice where they combine strategies (e.g., a problem-solution pattern that uses cause-and-effect organization, or a comparison-contrast pattern that uses narrative or chronology to develop similarities or differences). Pay attention to how different writers emphasize and develop their main ideas, and use what you find to inspire you in your own writing. Better yet, work on developing completely new patterns of your own.

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31.

Creating Your Thesis

In the Prewriting stage, you chose one idea (or closely related group of ideas) out of all of your possible ideas to focus on.

You may have already created a topic sentence/thesis statement in the [outlining](#) section of this text. If not, now is the time to develop a working thesis to guide your drafting process.

What Is a Working Thesis?

A thesis is the controlling idea of a text (often an arguable idea—you will learn more about this in a bit). Depending on the type of text you are creating, all of the discussion in that text will serve to develop, explore multiple angles of, and/or support that thesis.

But how can we know, before getting any of the paper written, exactly what thesis the sources we find and the conversations we have will support? Often, we can't. The closest we can get in these cases is a working thesis, which is a best guess at what the thesis is likely to be based on the information we are working with at this time. The main idea of it may not change, but the specifics are probably going to be tweaked a bit as you complete a draft and do research.

So, let's look at one of the examples from "[Gathering Ideas](#)" from the "Prewriting—Gathering Ideas" section of this book: the cluster about the broad central idea of danger. If the main idea is "danger," maybe the conversation you decide you want to have about it after clustering is that sometimes people step into danger intentionally in order to prove ourselves in some way. Next, you might make a list of possible thesis statements. For the sake of example, let's say this is for an assignment in response to the film *The Hunger Games*. Some thesis statements that fit this situation might look like this:

- Ultimately, *The Hunger Games* is a film about facing fears.
- In the 2012 film *The Hunger Games*, the main character's fear of losing her sister drives her to face a different set of dangers.
- Katniss Everdeen, the heroine of *The Hunger Games*, creates as much danger for herself as she faces from others over the course of the film.

If you were writing a [summary](#), the first example in that list might be a good thesis to work with.

If you were writing a [review](#), the second one might be the better option.

Let's say, though, that you've been assigned to write a more traditional academic essay on Literature, something a little more focused on analysis. In that case, the final example in this list looks like a good

working thesis. It might not be quite the same as the thesis you end up with in later drafts, but it looks like a strong idea to focus your ideas around while you're first getting them on the page.

Tip: Don't expect your thesis statement to be strong when you first write it. Remember that perfection is a component of procrastination? Instead of coming up with the perfect words and only writing those, throw down whatever comes to mind. Then, try to write all of or any parts of that rough sentence in a stronger way; put that on the next line. Keep on rewriting different versions until the end of your list is a thesis statement you are satisfied with.

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32.

Writing a First Draft

Now that you have a topic and/or a working thesis, you have several options for how to begin writing a more complete draft.

1. **Begin with just writing.** I like to call this “writing hot.” Just go! It doesn’t matter how messy it is. You already have at least one focusing idea. Start there. What do you want to say about it? What connections can you make with it? If you have a working thesis, what points might you make that support that thesis?
2. **Fill in your outline.** Your outline has your topic or thesis at the beginning and then what points you might make that will expand on that topic or support that thesis. These didn’t have to be detailed when you first wrote them, but now is the time to turn them in to complete sentences.
3. **Insert your research.** If this is an assignment that asks you to do research to support your points or to learn more about your topic, doing that research is an important early step (see the section on [Finding Quality Texts](#) in the “Information Literacy” section). This might include a range of things, such as conducting an interview, creating and administering a survey, or locating articles on the Internet and in library databases.
 - Research is a great early step because learning what information is available from credible sources about your topic can sometimes lead to shifting your thesis. Saving the research for a later step in the drafting process can mean making this change after already committing sometimes significant amounts of work to a thesis that existing credible research doesn’t support. Research is also useful because learning what information is available about your topic can help you flesh out what you might want to say about it.
 - If you begin with research, remember that you **MUST** immediately note down where you take any material from. If you take it directly from the source, put quotation marks around the quote instantly.
 - If you start with research, you will fill in the rest of your paragraphs with all of your own ideas. Don’t fill the paper up with other source material and leave no room for your own words.



Essay Structure

You might already be familiar with the five-paragraph essay structure, in which you spend the first paragraph introducing your topic, culminating in a thesis that has three distinct parts. That introduction paragraph is followed by three body paragraphs, each one of those going into some detail about one of the parts of the thesis. Finally, the conclusion paragraph summarizes the main ideas discussed in the essay and states the thesis (or a slightly re-worded version of the thesis) again.

This structure has some pros and some cons.

Pros

- It helps get your thoughts organized.
- It is a good introduction to a simple way of structuring an essay that lets students focus on content rather than wrestling with a more complex structure.
- It familiarizes students with the general shape and components of many essays—a broader introductory conversation giving readers context for this discussion, followed by a more detailed supporting discussion in the body of the essay, and ending with a sense of wrapping up the discussion and refocusing on the main idea.
- It is an effective structure for in-class essays or timed written exams.

Cons

- It can be formulaic—essays structured this way sound a lot alike.
- It isn't very flexible—often, topics don't lend themselves easily to this structure.
- It doesn't encourage research and discussion at the depth college-level work tends to ask for. Quite often, a paragraph is simply not enough space to have a conversation on paper that is thorough enough to support a stance presented in your thesis.

Things to Keep in Mind about Structure in Academic Writing

Using the Three-Point Structure

You might aim for a thesis that addresses a single issue, or you can use the three-point structure:

“Katniss Everdeen, the heroine of *The Hunger Games*, creates as much danger for herself as she faces from others over the course of the film.”

This thesis allows you to cover your single, narrow topic in greater depth, so you can examine multiple sides of a single angle of the topic rather than having to quickly and briefly address a broader main idea.

“Katniss embodies the human emotions of fear—fear for the safety of our loved ones, fear of failure, and fear of the unknown—making *The Hunger Games* a profoundly moving film for any audience.”

This three-point thesis statement keeps you organized so you can prove your points effectively, and it includes strong statements that will appeal to your reader.

There’s No “Right” Number of Supporting Points

There is no prescribed number of supporting points. You don’t have to have three! Maybe you have two in great depth, or maybe four that explore that one element from the most salient angles. Depending on the length of your paper, you may even have more than that.

There’s More than One Good Spot for a Thesis

Depending on the goals of the assignment, your thesis may no longer sit at the end of the first paragraph, so let’s discuss a few places it can commonly be found in academic writing.

It may end up at the end of your introductory information—once you’ve introduced your topic, given readers some reasonable context around it, and narrowed your focus to one area of that topic. This might put your thesis in the predictable end-of-the-first-paragraph spot, but it might also put that thesis several paragraphs into the paper.

Some academic work, particularly work that asks you to consider multiple sides of an issue fully, lends itself well to an end-of-paper thesis (sometimes called a “delayed thesis”). This thesis often appears a paragraph or so before the conclusion, which allows you to have a thorough discussion about multiple sides of a question and let that discussion guide you to your stance rather than having to spend the paper defending a stance you’ve already stated.

These are some common places you may find your thesis landing in your paper, but a thesis truly can be anywhere in a text.

If you are putting your thesis statement in a place other than at the end of your introduction, make sure that 1) this is acceptable for the type of assignment; 2) this is okay with your instructor; and 3) your thesis statement is strong enough that it will be recognized when your reader comes across it in a different place.

Writing Beginnings

Beginnings have a few jobs. These will depend somewhat on the purpose of the writing, but here are some of the things the first couple of paragraphs do for your text:

- They establish the tone and primary audience of your text—is it casual? Academic? Geared

toward a professional audience already versed in the topic? An interested audience that doesn't know much about this topic yet?

- They introduce your audience to your topic.
- They give you an opportunity to provide context around that topic—what current conversations are happening around it? Why is it important? If it's a topic your audience isn't likely to know much about, you may find you need to define what the topic itself is.
- They let you show your audience what piece of that bigger topic you are going to be working with in this text and how you will be working with it.
- They might introduce a narrative, if appropriate, or a related story that provides an example of the topic being discussed.

Take a look at the thesis about Katniss once more. There are a number of discussions that you could have about this film, and almost as many that you could have about this film and its intersections with the concept of danger (such as corruption in government, the hazards of power, risks of love or other personal attachments, etc.). Your introduction moving toward this thesis will shift our attention to the prevalence of self-imposed danger in this film, which will narrow your reader's focus in a way that prepares us for your thesis.

The most important thing at this point in the drafting process is to just get started, but when you're ready, if you want to learn more about formulas and methods for writing introductions, see "[Writing Essay Introductions](#)" presented later in this section of the text.

Writing Middles

Middles tend to have a clearer job—they provide the meat of the discussion! Here are some ways that might happen:

- If you state a thesis early in the paper, the middle of the paper will likely provide support for that thesis.
- The middle might explore multiple sides of an issue.
- It might look at opposing views—ones other than the one you are supporting—and discuss why those don't address the issue as well as the view you are supporting does.

Let's think about the "multiple sides of the issue" approach to building support with our *Hunger Games* example. Perhaps Katniss may not see a particular dangerous situation she ends up in as being one she's created, but another character or the viewers may disagree. It might be worth exploring both versions of this specific danger to give the most complete, balanced discussion to support your thesis. Take a look at "[Writing the Essay Body](#)" in this text.

Writing Endings

Endings, like beginnings, tend to have more than one job. Here are some things they often need to do for a text to feel complete:

- Reconnect to the main idea/thesis. However, note that this is different than a simple copy/paste of the thesis from earlier in the text. We’ve likely had a whole conversation in the text since we first encountered that thesis. Simply repeating it, or even replacing a few key words with synonyms, doesn’t acknowledge that bigger conversation. Instead, try pointing us back to the main idea in a new way.
- Tie up loose ends. If you opened the text with the beginning of a story to demonstrate how the topic applies to average daily life, the end of your text is a good time to share the end of that story with readers. If several ideas in the text tie together in a relevant way that didn’t fit neatly into the original discussion of those ideas, the end may be the place to do that.
- Keep the focus clear—this is your last chance to leave an impression on the reader. What do you want them to leave this text thinking about? What action do you want them to take? It’s often a good idea to be direct about this in the ending paragraph(s).

How might we reconnect with the main idea in our *Hunger Games* example? We might say something like, “In many ways, Katniss Everdeen is her own greatest obstacle to the safe and peaceful life she seems to wish for.” It echoes, strongly, the original thesis, but also takes into account the more robust exploration that has happened in the middle parts of the paper.

As mentioned about writing introductions above, the most important thing at this point in the drafting process is to just get started (or in this case, to get started concluding), but when you’re ready, if you want to learn more about formulas and methods for writing conclusions, see “[Writing Essay Conclusions](#),” presented later in this section of the text.

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33.

Transitions

As you begin to draft your essay, you have a main idea, and you have supporting ideas; but how can you be sure that your readers will understand the relationships between them? How are the ideas tied to each other?

One way to emphasize these relationships is through the use of clear transitions between ideas. Like every other part of your essay, transitions have a job to do. They form logical connections between the ideas presented in an essay or paragraph, and they give readers clues that reveal how you want them to think about (process, organize, or use) the topics presented.



Why are Transitions Important?

Transitions signal the order of ideas, highlight relationships, unify concepts, and let readers know what's coming next or remind them about what's already been covered. When instructors or peers comment that your writing is choppy, abrupt, or needs to “flow better,” those are some signals that you might need to work on building some better transitions into your writing. If a reader comments that she's not sure how something relates to your thesis or main idea, a transition is probably the right tool for the job.

When Is the Right Time to Build in Transitions?

There's no right answer to this question. Sometimes transitions occur spontaneously, but just as often (or maybe even more often) good transitions are developed in revision. While drafting, we often write what we think, sometimes without much reflection about how the ideas fit together or relate to one another. If your thought process jumps around a lot (and that's okay), it's more likely that you will need to pay careful attention to reorganization and to providing solid transitions as you revise.

When you're working on building transitions into an essay, consider the essay's overall organization. Consider using reverse outlining and other organizational strategies presented in this text to identify key ideas in your essay and to get a clearer look at how the ideas can be best organized. See the [“Reverse Outlining”](#) section in the “Revision” portion of this text, for a great strategy to help you

assess what's going on in your essay and to help you see what topics and organization are developing. This can help you determine where transitions are needed.

Let's take some time to consider the importance of transitions at the sentence level and transitions between paragraphs.

Sentence-Level Transitions

Transitions between sentences often use “connecting words” to emphasize relationships between one sentence and another. A friend and coworker suggests the “something old something new” approach, meaning that the idea behind a transition is to introduce *something new* while connecting it to *something old* from an earlier point in the essay or paragraph. Here are some examples of ways that writers use connecting words (highlighted with red text and italicized) to show connections between ideas in adjacent sentences:

To Show Similarity

When I was growing up, my mother taught me to say “please” and “thank you” as one small way that I could show appreciation and respect for others. *In the same way*, I have tried to impress the importance of manners on my own children.

Other connecting words that show similarity include *also*, *similarly*, and *likewise*.

To Show Contrast

Some scientists take the existence of black holes for granted; *however*, in 2014, a physicist at the University of North Carolina claimed to have mathematically proven that they do not exist.

Other connecting words that show contrast include *in spite of*, *on the other hand*, *in contrast*, and *yet*.

To Exemplify

The cost of college tuition is higher than ever, so students are becoming increasingly motivated to keep costs as low as possible. *For example*, a rising number of students are signing up to spend their first two years at a less costly community college before transferring to a more expensive four-year school to finish their degrees.

Other connecting words that show example include *for instance*, *specifically*, and *to illustrate*.

To Show Cause and Effect

Where previously painters had to grind and mix their own dry pigments with linseed oil inside their studios, in the 1840s, new innovations in pigments allowed paints to be premixed in tubes.

Consequently, this new technology facilitated the practice of painting outdoors and was a crucial tool for impressionist painters, such as Monet, Cezanne, Renoir, and Cassatt.

Other connecting words that show cause and effect include *therefore*, *so*, and *thus*.

To Show Additional Support

When choosing a good trail bike, experts recommend 120–140 millimeters of suspension travel; that's the amount that the frame or fork is able to flex or compress. *Additionally*, they recommend a 67–69 degree head-tube angle, as a steeper head-tube angle allows for faster turning and climbing.

Other connecting words that show additional support include *also*, *besides*, *equally important*, and *in addition*.

A Word of Caution

Single-word or short-phrase transitions can be helpful to signal a shift in ideas within a paragraph, rather than between paragraphs (see the discussion below about transitions between paragraphs). But it's also important to understand that these types of transitions shouldn't be frequent within a paragraph. As with anything else that happens in your writing, they should be used when they feel natural and feel like the right choice. Here are some examples to help you see the difference between transitions that feel like they occur naturally and transitions that seem forced and make the paragraph awkward to read:

WEAK Too Many Transitions: The Impressionist painters of the late 19th century are well known for their visible brush strokes, for their ability to convey a realistic sense of light, and for their everyday subjects portrayed in outdoor settings. *In spite of this fact*, many casual admirers of their work are unaware of the scientific innovations that made it possible this movement in art to take place. *Then*, In 1841, an American painter named John Rand invented the collapsible paint tube. *To illustrate the importance of this invention*, pigments previously had to be ground and mixed in a fairly complex process that made it difficult for artists to travel with them. *For example*, the mixtures were commonly stored in pieces of pig bladder to keep the paint from drying out. *In addition*, when working with their palettes, painters had to puncture the bladder, squeeze out some paint, and then mend the bladder again to keep the rest of the paint mixture from drying out. *Thus*, Rand's collapsible tube freed the painters from these cumbersome and messy processes, allowing artists to be more mobile and to paint in the open air.

STRONG Subtle Transitions that Aid Reader Understanding: The Impressionist painters of the late 19th century are well known for their visible brush strokes, for their ability to convey a realistic sense of light, for their everyday subjects portrayed in outdoor settings. *However*, many casual admirers of their work are unaware of the scientific innovations that made it possible for this movement in art to take place. In 1841, an American painter named John Rand invented the collapsible paint tube. *Before this invention*, pigments had to be ground and mixed in a fairly complex process that made it difficult for artists to travel with them. The mixtures were commonly stored in pieces of pig bladder to keep the paint from drying out. When working with their palettes, painters had to puncture the bladder, squeeze out some paint, and then mend the bladder

again to keep the rest of the paint mixture from drying out. Rand's collapsible tube freed the painters from these cumbersome and messy processes, allowing artists to be more mobile and to paint in the open air.

Transitions between Paragraphs and Sections

It's important to consider how to emphasize the relationships not just between sentences but also between paragraphs in your essay. Here are a few strategies to help you show your readers how the main ideas of your paragraphs relate to each other and also to your thesis.

Use Signposts

Signposts are words or phrases that indicate where you are in the process of organizing an idea; for example, signposts might indicate that you are introducing a new concept, that you are summarizing an idea, or that you are concluding your thoughts. Some of the most common signposts include words and phrases like *first*, *then*, *next*, *finally*, *in sum*, and *in conclusion*. Be careful not to overuse these types of transitions in your writing. Your readers will quickly find them tiring or too obvious. Instead, think of more creative ways to let your readers know where they are situated within the ideas presented in your essay. You might say, "The first problem with this practice is..." Or you might say, "The next thing to consider is..." Or you might say, "Some final thoughts about this topic are...."

Use Forward-Looking Sentences at the End of Paragraphs

Sometimes, as you conclude a paragraph, you might want to give your readers a hint about what's coming next. For example, imagine that you're writing an essay about the benefits of trees to the environment and you've just wrapped up a paragraph about how trees absorb pollutants and provide oxygen. You might conclude with a forward-looking sentence like this: "Trees benefits to local air quality are important, but surely they have more to offer our communities than clean air." This might conclude a paragraph (or series of paragraphs) and then prepare your readers for additional paragraphs to come that cover the topics of trees' shade value and ability to slow water evaporation on hot summer days. This transitional strategy can be tricky to employ smoothly. Make sure that the conclusion of your paragraph doesn't sound like you're leaving your readers hanging with the introduction of a completely new or unrelated topic.

Use Backward-Looking Sentences at the Beginning of Paragraphs

Rather than concluding a paragraph by looking forward, you might instead begin a paragraph by looking back. Continuing with the example above of an essay about the value of trees, let's think about how we might begin a new paragraph or section by first taking a moment to look back. Maybe you just concluded a paragraph on the topic of trees' ability to decrease soil erosion and you're getting ready to talk about how they provide habitats for urban wildlife. Beginning the opening of a new paragraph or section of the essay with a backward-looking transition might look something like this: "While their benefits to soil and water conservation are great, the value that trees provide to our urban wildlife also cannot be overlooked."

Evaluate Transitions for Predictability or Conspicuousness

Finally, the most important thing about transitions is that you don't want them to become repetitive or too obvious. Reading your draft aloud is a great revision strategy for so many reasons, and revising your essay for transitions is no exception to this rule. If you read your essay aloud, you're likely to hear the areas that sound choppy or abrupt. This can help you make note of areas where transitions need to be added. Repetition is another problem that can be easier to spot if you read your essay aloud. If you notice yourself using the same transitions over and over again, take time to find some alternatives. And if the transitions frequently stand out as you read aloud, you may want to see if you can find some subtler strategies.

Exercise: Try Out Some New Transition Strategies

Choose an essay or piece of writing, either that you're currently working on, or that you've written in the past. Identify your major topics or main ideas. Then, using this chapter, develop at least three examples of sentence-level transitions and at least two examples of paragraph-level transitions. Share and discuss with your classmates in small groups, and choose one example of each type from your group to share with the whole class. If you like the results, you might use them to revise your writing. If not, try some other strategies.

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34.

Writing Paragraphs

How to develop and organize paragraphs is a problem that plagues many beginning academic writers. How do you start a paragraph? How can you help your reader understand the main idea? How do you know when you've included enough details? How do you conclude? You might also wonder when you need to break a paragraph and start a new one or how help your reader transition from one idea to the next.

For more on methods of development, see "[Patterns of Organization and Methods of Development](#)" in this text.

What Is a Paragraph?

Let's begin by defining this concept of the paragraph. A paragraph is a group of sentences that present, develop, and support a single idea in a continual block of sentences with no line breaks. There may be a prescribed length or number of sentences according to the assignment you've been given.

Paragraphs rarely stand alone, so most often the main topic of the paragraph serves the main concept or purpose of a larger whole; for example, the main idea of a paragraph in an essay should serve to develop and support the thesis of the essay.

For more on thesis statements, see "[Creating Your Thesis](#)" in this text.

Similarly, the main idea of a paragraph in a letter serves the overall purpose of the letter, whether that purpose is to thank your Aunt Martha for the thoughtful birthday sweater, or whether the purpose is to inform a local business that you're dissatisfied with the quality of a product or service that you purchased.

Topic Sentences

The job of the topic sentence is to control the development and flow of the information contained in the paragraph. The topic sentence takes control of the more general topic of the paragraph and shapes it in the way that you choose to present it to your readers. It provides a way through a topic that is likely much broader than what you could ever cover in a paragraph, or even in an essay. This more focused idea, your topic sentence, helps you determine the parts of the topic that you want to illuminate for your readers—whether that's a college essay or a thank you letter to your Aunt Martha. The following diagram illustrates how a topic sentence can provide more focus to the general topic at hand.

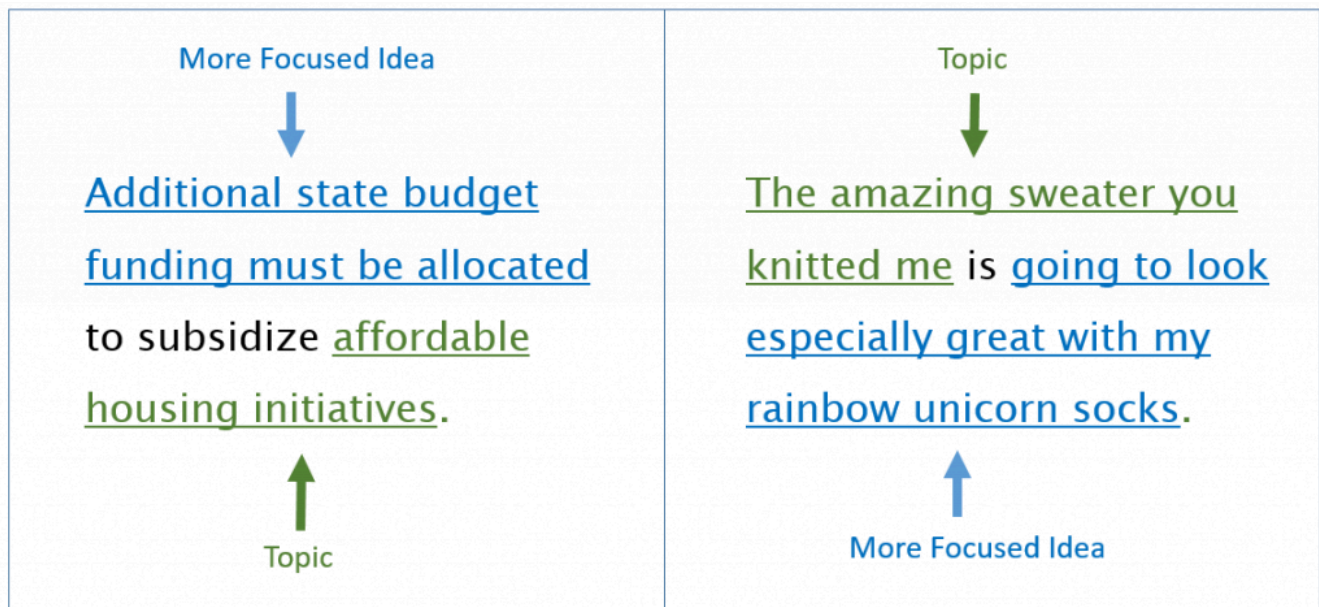


Figure 6.1: Examples of focusing an idea. [\[Image description\]](#)

Think about some places where you might commonly find general topics presented with more focus, perhaps in news stories, textbooks, or speeches. The topic of a news story might be a deadly forest fire that’s burning out of control, while the focus of the topic might be about careless humans. The topic of a chapter from a medical text might be phlebotomy (the practice of drawing blood from a patient), while the focus of a section of that chapter might be about safe disposal of used needles. Maybe the topic of a persuasive speech is organic produce, while the focus of the speech is about the importance of supporting local organic farms.

Most topics are expansive, so they require more focus—whether in a thesis statement or a topic sentence—to provide a narrower view of the broader subject. This narrower and more focused view also often seeks to persuade the reader to see things from the writer’s perspective.

Side note. While we’re on the subject of speech class, let’s talk about how the presentation of topics in an academic essay differs from the presentation of topics in a speech. Beginning speech writers often use obvious verbal signposts to announce main ideas, transitional moments, or concluding thoughts.

For example, it would not be uncommon for a student in a college speech class, while delivering a speech, to say, “First, I will explain . . .” or “The first topic I will cover . . .” or “Next, I will tell you about . . .” or “In conclusion, as I have demonstrated . . .” And while these methods for announcing a topic may be common and accepted practices in some college speech classes, they do not suit the expectations of your audience for an academic essay. With an oral presentation, the audience can’t see how the speech will unfold, but with written text, readers can see the size and shape of the document that they’re reading, so they don’t need as much help navigating.

So how can you correct this common problem? It’s quite simple actually. Just remove the verbal

signpost that announces your position, remove the first person “I,” point of view and simply state the position or topic. See the “[Point of View](#)” section in this text.

Here’s an example:

Speech-like announcement of a topic: First, I will explain that while it’s a common belief that use of cell phones causes lower levels of concentration and focus, cell phone use does have a place in the classroom and smart phones should be considered a valuable educational tool.

Improved presentation of a topic: While it’s a common belief that the use of cell phones causes lower levels of concentration and focus, cell phone use does have a place in the classroom, and smart phones should be considered a valuable educational tool.

Placement of Topic Sentences

What if I told you that the topic sentence doesn’t necessarily need to be at the beginning? This might be contrary to what you’ve learned in previous English or writing classes, and that’s okay. Certainly, placing topic sentences at or near the beginning of paragraphs is a fine strategy, especially for beginning writers. If you announce a topic clearly and early on in a paragraph, your readers are likely to grasp your idea and to make the connections that you want them to make.

Now that you’re writing for a more sophisticated academic audience though—that is an audience of college-educated readers—you can use more sophisticated organizational strategies to build and reveal ideas in your writing. One way to think about a topic sentence, is that it presents the broadest view of what you want your readers to understand. This is to say that you’re providing a broad statement that either announces or brings into focus the purpose or the meaning for the details of the paragraph. And if you think of the topic sentence as the broadest view, then you can think about how every supporting detail brings a narrower—or more specific—view of the same topic.

With this in mind, take some time to contemplate the diagrams in the figure below. The widest point of each diagram (the bases of the triangles) represents the topic sentence of the paragraph. As details are presented, the topic becomes narrower and more focused. The topic can precede the details, it can follow them, it can both precede and follow them, or the details can surround the topic. There are surely more alternatives than those that are presented here, but this gives you an idea of some of the possible paragraph structures and possible placements for the topic sentence of a paragraph.

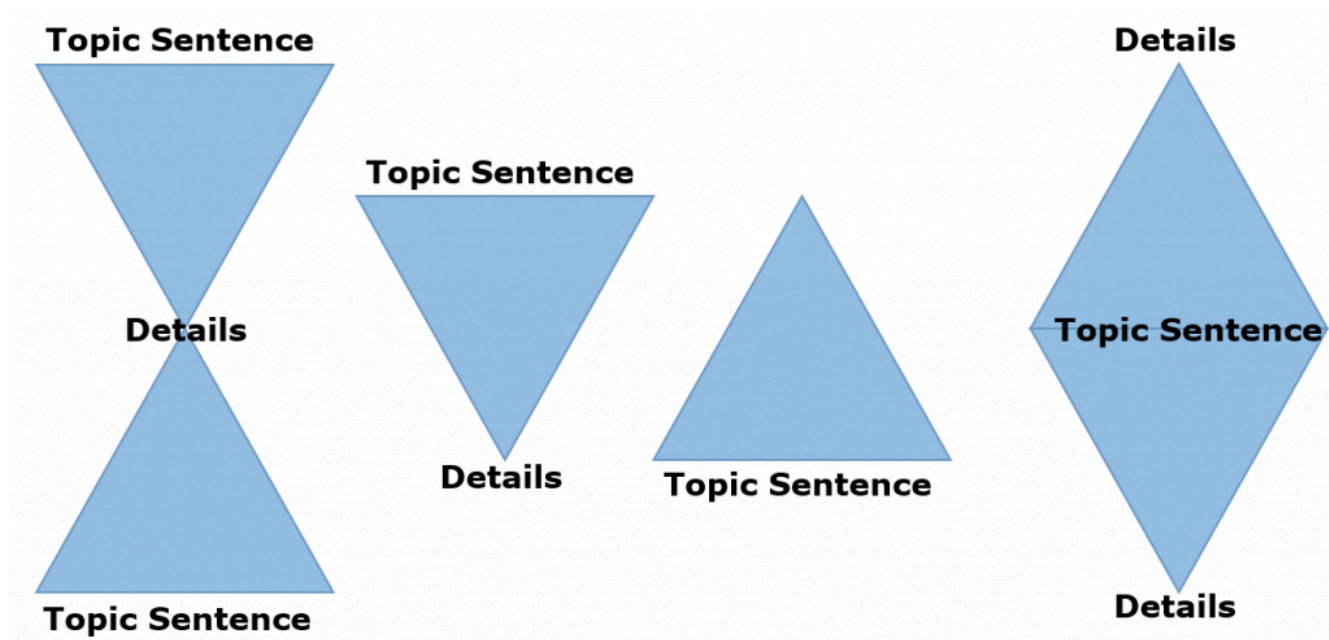


Figure 6.2: Examples of possible paragraph structures. [\[Image description\]](#)

Consider some of the following examples of different topic sentence placements in a paragraph from a review essay of the beloved children's book, *The Cat in the Hat*, by Dr. Seuss. Paragraph structures are labeled according to the diagrams presented above, and topic sentences are identified by red text.

Topic Sentence-Details-Topic Sentence

A good children's book requires an exciting plot and a problem with which children can sympathize. In *The Cat in the Hat* there is plenty of action, depicted in the wild antics of the cat, and later in the amazing but dangerous and messy tricks of Thing 1 and Thing 2. All this excitement and action naturally draws children into the story and keeps the plot moving forward at a pace that maintains their interest. There is also tension to be resolved. The fish senses danger and constantly warns the children not to participate in the cat's perilous stunts. And later, as the mother's return becomes more imminent, the children begin to heed the fish's warning and finally wish to contain the chaos and clean up the mess, but how? While this plot is fantastic enough to fuel any child's imagination, it also contains a problem with which any child can relate: a mess and the threat of a parent's disapproval. The careful balance of action, tension, and relatability is what makes this book an enduring childhood favorite.

Topic Sentence-Details

The careful balance of action, tension, and relatability is what makes Dr. Seuss's *The Cat in the Hat* an enduring childhood favorite. In *The Cat in the Hat* there is plenty of action, depicted in the wild antics of the cat, and later in the amazing but dangerous and messy tricks of Thing 1 and Thing 2. All this excitement and action naturally draws children into the story and keeps the plot moving forward at a pace that maintains their interest. There is also tension to be resolved. The fish senses danger and constantly warns the children not to participate in the cat's perilous stunts. And later, as the mother's return becomes more imminent, the children begin to heed the fish's warning and finally wish to contain the chaos and clean up the mess, but how? While this plot is fantastic enough to fuel any child's

imagination, it also contains a problem with which any child can relate: a mess and the threat of a parent's disapproval.

Note: You can relocate the topic sentence to the end here, and you'll have an example of the Details-Topic Sentence method of organizing the paragraph.

Details-Topic Sentence-Details

In *The Cat in the Hat* there is plenty of action, depicted in the wild antics of the cat, and later in the amazing but dangerous and messy tricks of Thing 1 and Thing 2. All this excitement and action naturally draws children into the story and keeps the plot moving forward at a pace that maintains their interest. The careful balance of action, tension, and relatability is what makes Dr. Seuss's *The Cat in the Hat* an enduring childhood favorite. There is definitely tension to be resolved here. The fish senses danger and constantly warns the children not to participate in the cat's perilous stunts. And later, as the mother's return becomes more imminent, the children begin to heed the fish's warning and finally wish to contain the chaos and clean up the mess, but how? While this plot is fantastic enough to fuel any child's imagination, it also contains a problem with which any child can relate: a mess and the threat of a parent's disapproval.

Implied Topic Sentences

Now that you're getting used to the idea that the topic sentence doesn't necessarily need to be placed at the beginning of the paragraph, what if I told you that, sometimes, the topic sentence doesn't need to be stated at all? It's true! Eliminating the topic sentence isn't always the best strategy for beginning writers, but it can be effective, and it's a pretty common strategy among professional writers. It's also worthwhile to note that many instructors will prefer an explicit topic sentence over an implied one, just as many will prefer an explicit thesis over an implied one. When in doubt, ask your instructors about their preferences in areas such as these.

One area where you're likely to find implied topic sentences is in narrative essays. In narratives, as in novels or other works of creative writing, readers often prefer to glean the meaning from the text rather than to have it thrust upon them. Writers also often prefer to imply themes and ideas rather than spelling it out for their readers. There are also times when your main idea will be obvious enough without having to come out and state your topic sentence. If you're not sure about whether or not an implied topic is working in a paragraph, write an explicit topic sentence for the paragraph. Read the paragraph with and without your new explicit topic. Does addition of the explicit topic improve the clarity of the paragraph or essay? Share the essay with a couple of friends or classmates and get some second opinions.

Consider the following paragraph from an essay titled "The Bothersome Beauty of Pigeons," by author and Boise State writing professor, Bruce Ballenger. It's important to note that this is a personal narrative essay rather than a more traditional academic essay, but the paragraph provides a good example of an implied topic. In this essay Ballenger takes the time to consider the beauty of pigeons, a

bird that's usually thought of as nothing more than a nuisance. Just prior to this paragraph, Ballenger talks about how he used a fake owl to scare away pigeons on his property. He goes on to explain

My pigeons moved next door where an elderly couple feed them bird seed and have the time and willingness to clean up after their new charges; so it seems, in this case, things have worked out for everyone. But the large flocks still haunt the piazzas in Florence and Venice, the squares in London, and similar places in nearly every city across the globe. Despite their ability to distinguish between a Van Gogh and a Chagall, pigeons still deposit droppings that deface the great marble statues and facades—the works of art and architecture that are part of our human heritage—and yet people still buy bags of seed for about a dollar and pose for photographs, drenched in doves. Meanwhile, officials in these cities continue, sometimes quietly, to wage war against the birds (“Introduction”).

Here, Ballenger seems to be saying that in spite of the attempts of so many to rid themselves of the pigeons, others are still drawn to them and will feed them and encourage them to come back. His main idea seems to be that the battle against pigeons is a losing proposition, but he doesn't come out and say so. His message in this paragraph is implied. Do you think this paragraph would be improved with an explicit topic sentence? As you write and revise your own paragraphs, these will be important questions for you to consider about your own writing.

Characteristics of a Good Topic Sentence

If a reader or teacher comments that your paragraph lacks unity, you probably need a better topic sentence (or maybe you don't have one yet). So, how can you spot a good topic sentence when you've written one? A good topic sentence might meet the following criteria:

- Signals the topic and also the more focused ideas of the paragraph
- Presents an idea or ideas that are clear and easy to understand
- Provides unity to the paragraph (so it's clear how all supporting ideas relate)
- Omits supporting details
- Engages the reader

There's no right order in the writing process for identifying or writing the topic sentence of a paragraph. Some writers begin drafting a paragraph with a main idea already in mind and then decide how to support it. Others begin writing about details, examples, or quotations from sources that they feel somehow relate to what they want to say, writing for a while before deciding what the main idea is. Most writers rely on a variety of strategies that they have developed through trial and error. So don't let the lack of a main idea hold you back from getting out what you want to say. Write for a while, and a main idea will surely emerge.

Exercises

Here are some exercises to help you practice identifying and developing topics and topic sentences.

1. Identify the Topic and Focus

- Choose a piece of writing, perhaps an essay or some news articles provided by your instructor, and for each paragraph identify (1) the topic and (2) the more focused idea. Remember, the topic sentence applies more focus to the broader topic to help narrow the scope of the paragraph. For example, the topic of a paragraph might be school lunches. The more focused idea of that same paragraph might be the idea of having students plant school gardens as a way to help incorporate more fresh produce in the menu.

2. Ask Readers to Find the Topic Sentences

- Ask someone to read your essay and for each supporting paragraph, ask your reader to underline the most likely topic sentence. If your reader can't find a topic sentence, ask him or her to write a topic sentence for that paragraph.

3. Ask a Readers to Share Their Expectations

- Provide a reader with a list of your topic sentences, without the paragraphs that they belong to. Ask the reader what he or she thinks each paragraph is about and what kind of supporting details or discussion he or she would expect to see in the paragraph.

Image Description

Figure 6.1: Examples of focusing an idea. The more focused ideas are in curly braces and the topics are in parentheses.

{Additional state budget funding must be allocated} to subsidise (affordable housing initiatives.)

(The amazing sweater you knitted me) is {going to look especially great with my rainbow unicorn socks.} [\[Return to Figure 6.1\]](#)

Figure 6.2: Four examples of possible paragraph structures.

1. Topic sentence, details, topic sentence
2. Topic sentence, details
3. Details, topic sentence
4. Details, topic sentence, details [\[Return to Figure 6.2\]](#)

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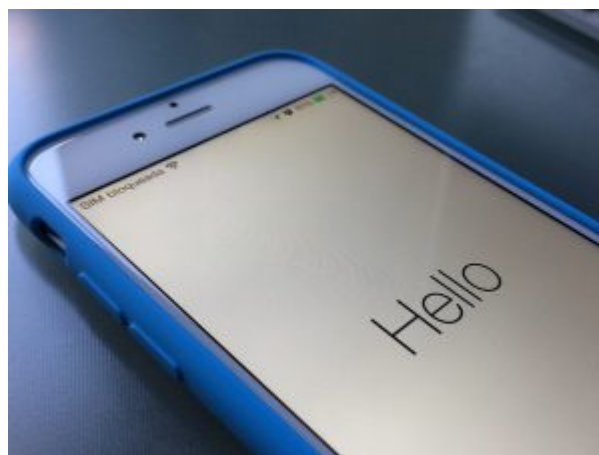
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35.

Writing Essay Introductions

“You don’t get a second chance to make a first impression.” This common **axiom** reminds us just how much weight people place on their first experiences, whether it be with a person, a road trip, or a piece of writing. Catching readers’ attention may be the most important work you do when you write, because if you lose them in the introduction, you don’t get a chance to share your message with them later.



What is the Purpose of an Introduction?

Introductions have two jobs:

- Catch readers’ attention.
- Introduce the focus and purpose of your writing.

How do I accomplish these jobs without giving away all of my essay in the introduction?

How do I know what will hook readers’ attention without sharing all the cool details?

You might start by using this simple formula and then choosing a method from the list below.

Formula

A good introduction = new information + ideas that everyone may not agree with.

To put it another way, if your piece begins with an idea most people know and agree with, it’s less likely to pull readers in. People are made curious by new ideas and opinions that have multiple perspectives or may be controversial.

Methods

The following are some methods and examples for introducing a topic and getting your reader’s attention.

Method: Share an interesting, shocking, or little known fact or statistic about your topic. Starting your paper with a fact or statistic that gives your readers insight into your topic right away will peak their curiosity and make them want to know more. It will also help you establish a strong *ethos*, or credibility, from the very beginning.

Example: According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, 68% of prison inmates do not have a high school diploma.

Method: Tell an anecdote or story that will help readers connect with your topic on a personal level. Sharing a human interest story right away will help readers connect with your topic on a personal level and will help to illustrate why your topic matters.

Example: Today, Michael Ondaatje is a celebrated Canadian poet, but he was born in Sri Lanka and lived in England before emigrating to Canada.

Method: Ask a question that gets readers curious about the answer. People tend to want to answer questions when they're presented with them. This provides you with an easy way to catch readers' attention because they'll keep reading to discover the answer to any questions you pose in the introduction. Just be sure to answer them at some point in your writing.

Example: Can prisons rehabilitate prisoners so they're able to return to their communities, find jobs, and contribute in positive ways?

Exercise: Strong or Weak Introduction?

One way to improve your introduction-writing skills is to look at different choices that other writers make when introducing a topic and to consider what catches your interest as a reader and what doesn't. Read the introductions below about teenagers and decision making. Which ones pull you in? Which ones are less interesting? What's the difference? Work with peers to decide.

1. Throughout history, teenagers have challenged the authority of adults. They do this because they want to be given more freedom and to be treated like adults themselves. This can cause real problems between teens and the adults in their lives.
2. Some days my sixteen-year-old niece, Rachael, does all of her homework, helps friends study after school, and practices her cello, and other days she forgets her books at school, lies about where she's going, and doesn't do her chores. This sporadic behavior seems like it comes out of nowhere, but it turns out teenage brains are different from adult brains, causing teens to sometimes not think about consequences before they act.
3. If teenage brains aren't fully formed, causing them to act before they think about the risks they're taking, should teens be restricted from some adult freedoms like driving, working, and socializing without adult supervision?
4. Teenagers are known to be less responsible than adults, so they should have at least some adult guidance to make sure they stay safe. Without adult supervision, teens will make poor decisions that could put them at unnecessary risk.

5. According to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, the frontal cortex in the brain, where reasoning and thinking before acting occurs, is not fully formed in teenagers. However, the amygdala, “responsible for immediate reactions including fear and aggressive behavior,” is fully formed early in life. This means teens aren’t as good at considering the consequences of their behavior before they react, so the adults in their lives should limit the risks in their lives until they’re better able to reason through them.

Exercise: Write an Introduction

Now that you’ve had an opportunity to think about some different approaches and techniques for writing introductions, let’s practice.

Find an entry in your journal or a draft of a piece of writing you’re working on this term and use what you’ve learned in this section to write an attention-grabbing introduction to your piece.

- If you don’t currently have a piece to work with, you can write an introduction using one of the following scenarios. Read through the following list and choose one. One to three sentences is enough.
- Persuade your local school board members that the elementary school should change the way it teaches sex education.
- Persuade teens to travel to a foreign country before they graduate from college.
- Give some tips to new parents that will help lower their stress and make their new baby feel safe and loved.
Inform young athletes who may want to play football of the possible risks and benefits.
- Review a movie, book, product, or trip for someone thinking of making one of these purchases to help them decide that they should or shouldn’t do it.
- Share your introduction with your classmates and discuss what about it is effective and how it could be improved.

See the discussion about “Writing Beginnings” in the “[Writing a First Draft](#)” section in this text for more on writing introductions as part of your drafting process.

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Writing the Essay Body: Supporting Your Ideas

Whether the drafting of a paragraph begins with a main idea or whether that idea surfaces in the revision process, once you have that main idea, you'll want to make sure that the idea has enough support. The job of the paragraph body is to develop and support the topic. Here's one way that you might think about it:

- **Topic sentence:** what is the main claim of your paragraph; what is the most important idea that you want your readers to take away from this paragraph?
- **Support in the form of evidence:** how can you prove that your claim or idea is true (or important, or noteworthy, or relevant)?
- **Support in the form of analysis or evaluation:** what discussion can you provide that helps your readers see the connection between the evidence and your claim?
- **Transition:** how can you help your readers move from the idea you're currently discussing to the next idea presented? For more specific discussion about transitions, see the following section on "[Transitions](#)."

For more on methods of development that can help you to develop and organize your ideas within paragraphs, see "[Patterns of Organization and Methods of Development](#)" later in this text.

Types of support might include

- Reasons
- Facts
- Statistics
- Quotations
- Examples

Now that we have a good idea what it means to develop support for the main ideas of your paragraphs, let's talk about how to make sure that those supporting details are solid and convincing.

Strong vs. Weak Support

What questions will your readers have? What will they need to know? What makes for good supporting details? Why might readers consider some evidence to be weak?

If you're already developing paragraphs, it's likely that you already have a plan for your essay, at least

at the most basic level. You know what your topic is, you might have a working thesis, and you probably have at least a couple of supporting ideas in mind that will further develop and support your thesis.

So imagine you’re developing a paragraph on one of these supporting ideas and you need to make sure that the support that you develop for this idea is solid. Considering some of the points about understanding and appealing to your audience (from the [Audience](#) and [Purpose](#) and the Prewriting sections of this text) can also be helpful in determining what your readers will consider good support and what they’ll consider to be weak. Here are some tips on what to strive for and what to avoid when it comes to supporting details.

Strong Support	Weak Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is relevant and focused (sticks to the point).• Is well developed.• Provides sufficient detail.• Is vivid and descriptive.• Is well organized.• Is coherent and consistent.• Highlights key terms and ideas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lacks a clear connection to the point that it’s meant to support.• Lacks development.• Lacks detail or gives too much detail.• Is vague and imprecise.• Lacks organization.• Seems disjointed (ideas don’t clearly relate to each other).• Lacks emphasis of key terms and ideas.

Breaking, Combining, or Beginning New Paragraphs

Like sentence length, paragraph length varies. There is no single ideal length for “the perfect paragraph.” There are some general guidelines, however.

Some writing handbooks or resources suggest that a paragraph should be at least three or four sentences; others suggest that 100 to 200 words is a good target to shoot for.

In academic writing, paragraphs tend to be longer, while in less formal or less complex writing, such as in a newspaper, paragraphs tend to be much shorter. Two-thirds to three-fourths of a page—or seven to twelve sentences—is usually a good target length for paragraphs at your current level of academic writing.

The amount of space needed to develop one idea will likely be different than the amount of space needed to develop another. So when is a paragraph complete? The answer is: when it’s fully developed. The guidelines above for providing good support should help.

Signs to end a paragraph and start a new one:

- You're ready to begin developing a new idea.
- You want to emphasize a point by setting it apart.
- You're getting ready to continue discussing the same idea but in a different way (e.g., shifting from comparison to contrast).
- You notice that your current paragraph is getting too long (more than three-fourths of a page or so), and you think your writers will need a visual break.

Signs to combine paragraphs include:

- You notice that some of your paragraphs appear to be short and choppy.
- You have multiple paragraphs on the same topic.
- You have undeveloped material that needs to be united under a clear topic.

Finally, paragraph number is a lot like paragraph length. You may have been asked in the past to write a five-paragraph essay. There's nothing inherently wrong with a five-paragraph essay, but just like sentence length and paragraph length, the number of paragraphs in an essay depends upon what's needed to get the job done. There's really no way to know that until you start writing. So try not to worry too much about the proper length and number of things unless those are specified in your assignment. Just start writing and see where the essay and the paragraphs take you. There will be plenty of time to sort out the organization in the revision process. You're not trying to fit pegs into holes here. You're letting your ideas unfold. Give yourself—and them—the space to let that happen.

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37.

Writing Essay Conclusions

Studies have shown that the human brain is more likely to remember items at the beginnings and at the ends of lists, presentations, and other texts. When people recall the last thing they read or hear, that's called the "recency effect" because they're remembering the most recent information they've encountered. This is why the last thing you write is so important; it's your final chance to make an impression on your readers.

What Is the Purpose of a Conclusion?

Conclusions have two jobs:

- Leave readers with something to think about.
 - Clarify why your topic matters to them and the larger community (whether that be the class, their neighborhood or the whole wide world).
 - Suggestions for further study.
- Remind readers of what you have written.

Sometimes the conclusion is called the "So what?" section of the text because it helps readers understand the significance of your subject.

Techniques to Keep Readers Thinking about the Topic at the End of a Piece

Funny enough, some of the same methods that work for the introduction also work for the conclusion. However, the formula is a little different.

Formula

A good conclusion = a call to action and/or a connection between the topic and the reader. In other words, because you're trying to end your piece, you don't want to start making new claims or sharing new research. Instead, you'll want to help readers see how they relate to your subject matter. Sometimes this means suggesting that the reader do something specific. That's a call to action. You can also end by raising questions related to your topic or by making suggestions for how this topic may develop in the future. Leaving readers with interesting ideas to think about is key to a successful conclusion.

Methods

The following are some methods and examples for concluding an essay and giving your readers a sense of closure or an idea of what you would like them to think about or do next.

Method: Make a call to action. The goal of a call to action is to prompt readers to do something.

Example: Citizens who agree that music education should be a part of all public schools in the United States can make a difference by writing their representatives, going to a school board meeting, and when a ballot initiative comes around, voting to fund music education.

Method: Ask a rhetorical question. A rhetorical question is meant to make people think, but not necessarily come to an answer. Often, the answer to rhetorical questions is clear right away, but the deeper significance needs to be pondered.

Example: Should schools in the U.S. be concerned with the kind of emotional and cognitive development that music education prompts? If we're interested in educating the whole child, not just the most academic parts of the brain, then the answer is yes, and we have to reconsider our priorities when it comes to school funding.

Method: Share an anecdote or story that will keep the issue in the forefront of the readers' minds. An interesting snapshot of someone's life or story about an intriguing character will help humanize the topic and help the readers remember your message. If you used an anecdote or story in the introduction, this is an opportunity to reconnect with that at the end of your piece.

Example: Lin-Manuel Miranda, the creator of the hit Broadway musical *Hamilton*, says that arts education saved his life. He went to an elementary school where the sixth grade put on a famous play every year—everything from *Fiddler on the Roof* to *The Wizard of Oz*—but by the time Miranda's class was in sixth grade, the teachers had run out of plays appropriate for children, so they had the sixth graders write their own musicals in addition to performing all the musicals from the previous years. That four-hour-long musical extravaganza was Miranda's first experience of writing and acting in his own production (Raskauskas). The opportunity that his teachers provided him turned into a lifelong passion. All students should have that same opportunity to connect with the arts in meaningful ways.

Method: Share a quote by an expert or historical figure. Choose a quote from someone who is well known in a relevant field and who has expertise on your topic. This will lend your conclusion credibility and leave readers with something powerful to consider.

Example: As Oliver Sacks notes in his book *Musicophilia*, “Rhythm and its entrainment of movement (and often emotion), its power to ‘move’ people, in both senses of the word, may well have had a crucial cultural and economic function in human evolution, bringing people together, producing a sense of collectivity and community” (268). Our schools aim to foster that same sense of community, which is why music must be part of a well rounded education.

Exercise: Strong or Weak Conclusion?

One way to improve your conclusion-writing skills is to look at different choices that other writers make when concluding a topic and to consider what feels satisfying or thought-provoking to you as a reader and what doesn't. Read the conclusions below about teenagers and decision making. Which ones pull you in? Which ones are less interesting? What's the difference? Work with peers to decide.

1. Should teens be given complete freedom? Probably not, but a measured level of responsibility helps kids of all ages learn to trust themselves to make good decisions. This is especially important for teens since they will be adults very soon.
2. Parents who want to teach their teenagers to be responsible decision makers can start by talking to their teens regularly about the kinds of decisions their teens are being faced with and allowing teens to make decisions about anything that won't put them in immediate danger. This may be difficult at first, but the reward will come when parents see their teens feeling more confident in the face of difficult decisions and more ready to face the adult world.
3. As stated above, research shows that the teenage brain isn't fully matured, so adults should consider this when deciding how much freedom to give them.
4. According to the AACAP, teens are more likely to make decisions based on emotions without thinking first. This means they're more likely to "engage in dangerous or risky behavior." Therefore, teens need to be protected until they're old enough to make thoughtful decisions.
5. Now that Rachael has been given the freedom to make some big decisions in her life, she's more willing to talk to her parents when she needs advice or isn't sure about something. Even though she sometimes makes mistakes, her parents trust that she will learn important lessons from those mistakes, and they help her feel supported when she experiences a failure. Raising a teenager isn't easy, but this family has found a method that's working for this particular teen.

Exercise: Write a Conclusion

Now that you've had an opportunity to think about some different approaches and techniques for writing conclusions, let's practice. Find an entry in your journal or a draft of a piece of writing you're working on this term and use what you've learned in this section to write a compelling conclusion to your piece.

- If you don't currently have a piece to work with, you can write a conclusion using one of the scenarios below. Read through the following list and choose one. Then, practice writing a concluding statement or paragraph on the topic. One to three sentences is enough.
1. Persuade your local school board members that the elementary school should change the way it teaches sex education.
 2. Persuade teens to travel to a foreign country before they graduate from college.

3. Give some tips to new parents that will help lower their stress and make their new baby feel safe and loved.
4. Inform young athletes who may want to play football of the possible risks and benefits.
5. Review a movie, book, product, or trip for someone thinking of making one of these purchases to help them decide that they should or shouldn't do it.

Share your conclusion with your classmates and discuss what about it is effective and how it could be improved.

See the discussion about “Writing Endings” in the “[Writing a First Draft](#)” section of this text for more on writing conclusions as part of your drafting process.

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VI

Revising Stage

38.

Revision: Higher Order Concerns

After you have written a draft, you very likely will need to make revisions—you should plan on it. In an academic writing class, your instructor probably might even have requirements about revising your work and showing the progression of drafts. You may feel that you write best “under pressure” the night before your assignment is due, but writing a single draft at the last minute rarely results in your best work.

You may feel that you’ve put a lot of effort into your first draft, and it can be challenging to think about changing your work or even eliminating words that you toiled over. But it’s well worth the pain of revising to produce a polished piece of writing that others can easily understand. Your instructor will expect that you have carefully considered the writing task, possibly done some research, and given considerable thought to your ideas and to the needs of your reader/audience. It’s unlikely that you will be able to do so without taking time in between drafts to reconsider your ideas and then revise your draft.

To revise a piece of writing, it may help you to think of three separate ways to improve your writing—even if you combine those three ways or move back and forth between them. You can look at the big picture, check your organization, and also edit and proofread your final draft.

Higher Order Concerns—Revision

Revising for higher order concerns means changing and revising sections of your paper and working on the organization of your ideas.

When you revise at the “big picture” stage, you are looking at the most important aspects of the writing tasks—the ones that require the most thought.

Here’s a set of questions to help you revise for these higher order concerns:

- Have I met the purpose and requirements?
- Does my draft say what I mean?
- Have I changed my thinking through writing or researching?
- Are there parts that do not belong here? (For more help with this, see “Reverse Outlining” later in this text.)
- Are there pieces missing?
- Are there places where the writing does not make sense?

- Is the tone right for my reader?
- Are my [sources](#) the right kind for my purpose and reader?
- Are all the pieces in the right place?
- Are sources [documented](#)?

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39.

Reverse Outlining

Often, [outlining](#) is recommended early in the writing process as a way to organize and connect thoughts so the shape of what you are going to write is clear before you start drafting it. This is a tool many writers use that is probably already familiar to you.

Reverse outlining, though, is different in a few ways.

1. It happens later in the process, after a draft is completed rather than before.
2. It gives you an opportunity to review and assess the ideas and [connections](#) that are actually present in the completed draft. This is almost an opposite approach from traditional outlining, as the traditional pre-writing outline considers an initial set of ideas, which might shift as the draft is actually being written and new ideas are added or existing ones are moved, changed, or removed entirely.

A reverse outline can help you improve the structure and organization of your already-written draft, letting you see where support is missing for a specific point or where ideas don't quite connect on the page as clearly as you wanted them to.



How to Create a Reverse Outline

1. At the top of a fresh sheet of paper, write your primary thesis or claim for the text you want to outline. This should be the thesis exactly as it appears in your draft, not the thesis you know you intended. If you can't find the actual words, write down that you can't find them in this draft of the paper—it's an important note to make!
2. Draw a line down the middle of the page, creating two columns below your thesis.
3. Read, preferably out loud, the first body paragraph of your draft.
4. In the left column, write the single main idea of that paragraph (again, this should be using only the words that are actually on the page, not the ones you want to be on the page). If you find more than one main idea in a paragraph, write down all of them. If you can't find a main idea, write that down, too.
5. In the right column, state how the main idea of that paragraph supports the thesis.
6. Repeat steps 3-5 for each body paragraph of the draft.

Once you have completed these steps, you have a reverse outline! It might look a little something like this (this one is only looking at two paragraphs of a draft for the sake of example; yours will likely be looking at more paragraphs than just two):

Example

Thesis: Katniss Everdeen, the heroine of *The Hunger Games*, creates as much danger for herself as she faces from others over the course of the film.

Main idea	How it supports the thesis
Body #1: She volunteers to fight in the games.	This is the root of most of the immediate danger she finds herself in, so her directly volunteering to do it definitely helped put her in front of that danger.
Body #2: Shooting the apple out of the pig's mouth.	This draws more attention to her and essentially puts a target on her back the other tributes will very much want to hit.

Working with the Results of Your Reverse Outline

Now what? You've probably already made some observations while completing this. Often students will notice places where they are repeating themselves or that some of their paragraphs have too many points or don't clearly support the thesis.

There are a number of observations that can be made with the aid of a reverse outline, and a number of ways it can help you strengthen your paper. Consider the following questions as you review yours.

Do Multiple Paragraphs Share the Same Main Idea?

If so, you might try combining them, paring back the information for that specific idea so it doesn't feel imbalanced in how much space it takes up, and/or organizing these paragraphs around the same point so they are next to each other in the paper.

Do Any Paragraphs Have Multiple Main Ideas?

Each paragraph should have only one primary focus. If you notice a paragraph does have more than one main idea, you could look for where some of those ideas might be discussed in other paragraphs and move them into a paragraph already focusing on that point, or select just the one main idea you think is most important to this paragraph and cut the other points out, or you might split that paragraph into multiple paragraphs and expand on each main idea.

Do Any Paragraphs Lack a Clear Main Idea?

If it was hard for you to find the main idea of a paragraph, it will also be hard for your reader to find. For paragraphs that don't yet have a main idea, consider whether the information in that paragraph points to a main idea that just isn't written on the page yet. If the information does all support one main idea, adding that idea to the paragraph might be all that is needed. Alternatively, you may find that some of the ideas fit into other paragraphs to support their ideas, or you may not need some of them in the next draft at all.

Do Any Main Ideas Not Connect Clearly and Directly Back to the Thesis?

Since the point of almost every paper is to support its thesis statement, this one can be critical. It should be clear how the main idea of each paragraph supports the thesis or claim of the paper. If that connection is not directly stated, ask yourself how the main idea of that paragraph furthers your thesis and then write that response.

Do Ideas Flow from Paragraph to Paragraph? Are There Gaps in Reasoning?

If a paper starts out introducing something that is a problem in a community, then presents a solution to the problem, and then talks about why the problem is...well, a problem, this organization is likely to confuse readers. Reorganizing to introduce the problem, discuss why it is a problem, and then move on to proposing a solution would do good work to help strengthen the next draft of this paper.

Note that you may need to move, revise, or add transition statements after moving paragraphs around—these go back into the [Lower Order Concerns](#) category, which always occurs after the bigger revisions are done.

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40.

Editing and Proofreading: Lower Order Concerns

Perhaps you are someone who edits and proofreads while you write a draft, so when you are done drafting and revising for content and structure, you may not have that much editing or proofreading to do. Or maybe you are a person who pays no attention to grammar and spelling as you draft, saving all of the editing until you are finished writing. Either way, for academic assignments (and professional work), plan to carefully edit and proofread your work.

Tip: For most people, editing and proofreading on a printed copy is more effective than working entirely on screen. Print out a version of your assignment and use a pen, pencil, highlighter, or even coloured pencils to make notes all over your draft. As you input the changes into your word processor, cross off your notations.

Pro Tip: When you meet with your instructor to get help before an assignment is due, when you receive feedback on a work in progress, or even if you have an opportunity to improve your grade through revisions and resubmission, do the same technique of crossing off notations from the instructor as you input them into your word processor.

Editing is the act of making changes at a moderate level of organization, or indicating what to change; proofreading means a detailed level of error and checking to make sure that changes discovered earlier were made. When you are working on improving the grammar, spelling, punctuation, and other formal aspects of your writing, instructors usually refer to that task as editing or proofreading, not revising.

Use a checklist to ensure you are catching errors and actually fixing them. You may have seen examples of editing checklists. One type of checklist is a general list of common errors that writers often make; another type is a checklist based on an assignment; and a third type is a checklist you make yourself that tracks the kinds of errors you make most often.

Proofreading

Proofreading is the final and most detailed step in the revision process. There is no point in making sure that you don't have an extra space between two sentences (proofreading) when you don't have a

thesis statement (revision) or correct sentence structure (editing). Using a system can ensure you've made all the corrections necessary.

Using a System

- **Circle, highlight, underline:** Select one method to mark all the corrections you want to make. You might choose to circle, underline, or highlight all errors you find. Check off each circle, highlight, or underline when you make the correction in the electronic document.
- **Check marks and checkboxes:** Some writers make a check mark in the margin for every error they find in a line of typing, then put a slash through the check mark once it is corrected. You can also make checkboxes and then check the box once the correction is made.
- **Using editor's marks:** You may have certain marks that you have learned to make for some kinds of errors, either from an instructor or from professional editing marks. If so, feel free to use those. For an extensive list of editing marks, consult the proofreading page at the Chicago Manual of Style online (at chicagomanualofstyle.org).

Using Technology to Edit

Computers revolutionized the way that we edit writing. Here are some useful tools to make editing easier and faster.

- **Find and Replace:** If you know that you frequently make the same spelling or punctuation error, use the Find and Replace function in your word processor (in most, pressing and holding the "CTRL" key and then simultaneously pressing the "F" key will get you to the Find and Replace function). For example, if you know that you often type "though" instead of "through," you can search for all instances of "though" and replace them, one by one, with "through," checking each item to be sure you are making the right choice.
- **Spell checkers:** Always use spell check. Do understand that spell check cannot find misspellings that are actual words. Spell check should mark "tge" as an error, but if you typed "accept" when you meant "except," spell check will not help you. (See "Find and Replace" in the previous paragraph.)
- **Grammar checkers:** Grammar checkers are sometimes correct, sometimes not. If you use a grammar checker and disagree with a suggested correction, use other resources such as dictionaries, grammar handbooks, or websites like [Purdue OWL](http://PurdueOWL) to determine what is correct. If you find that you often make a certain kind of mistake, it's worthwhile to study up on the topic and perhaps keep an editing checklist to help you remember to check for that type of error. Whatever you do, don't start randomly changing things just to make the grammar marks go away!
- **Screen readers:** Sometimes it helps to hear your words aloud. Using a screen reader can do that for you, and it will definitely read a mistake as a mistake, without correcting it. Many word processing programs have a screen reader built in. There are also apps you can purchase, and some schools provide applications to students for free.

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41.

Giving and Receiving Feedback

In many writing classes, students are expected to learn how to give feedback to their peers. This task is usually called **peer review**, a concept you will also learn about when you begin to use academic research. At first, this may seem intimidating.

Writers may think, “I’m not an instructor—how can I give useful feedback to another writer?”

What writers can do is give their peers an honest reaction as a reader and give advice based on their own experience. It is ultimately up to the writer to decide if they want to make use of the feedback given. If you feel unsure of your ability to give feedback, remember that you are learning from the process. In a class, the other students will also receive feedback from the instructor.

This understanding may also help when you don’t feel that other students are qualified to give feedback to you. If you feel that the advice given to you by a peer isn’t right, you can choose to ignore it or decide to check with your instructor first. Remember that your peers are learning how to give feedback, just as you are.

Giving feedback on writing is a powerful skill that you may use outside of school for work projects, for personal writing, or even to help your children with their homework.

Giving Peer Feedback

When your role in peer review is to give feedback, your job is to help the writer by giving your reaction as a reader to the writing. Think about the kind of feedback you would like to get and also how you would like that feedback to be given. What follows are some basic rules to follow for responding to someone else’s writing:

- **First, listen to the writer and follow the feedback assignment instructions.** What kind of feedback are they asking for? Do they want to know if their thesis is clear? Do they have questions about citing sources? Make a note about what kind of feedback the writer has requested and keep that in mind as you respond. Also, make sure that you completely fulfill what the instructor has asked you to do for the other student’s assignment.
- **Be respectful.** When you are receiving criticism, isn’t it easier to hear if the person giving the criticism is respectful to you? Do the same for your peer.

- **Comment on the higher order concerns first.** That means asking questions about anything that confuses you, checking to see if the writing did what the assignment called for, and considering if the order of the paper makes sense. Sometimes your instructor will give you specific things they want you to comment on; if so, be sure you do so.
- **Use “I” statements** to help stay focused on your reaction to the writing. For example, instead of saying, “You aren’t clear in this paragraph,” try saying, “I’m confused in this paragraph. Did you mean X or Y?”
- **Be specific.** Never say “I liked it” or “It was good” unless you follow up with an explanation of exactly what you liked or thought was good. The same goes for criticism; say exactly what confused you or what was missing.
- **Ask questions.** Use questions to clarify what the writer means, what the resources given are saying, and what the writer is trying to do.
- **Offer advice** based on your own experience. For example, you could say “if this were my paper, the two things I would do next are A and B.” Provide options such as, “If you wanted to expand this, you could do A, B, or C.”
- **Don’t try to make the writer sound like you.** If a word is the wrong word, note that, but if you just think of a word you like better, that’s just a matter of style and voice. In fact...
- **Don’t edit your peer’s writing for them.** Only comment on editing when the writing is a final draft or when your instructor has included checking for errors in the instructions for peer review. It’s okay to remind the writer to run spell check and grammar check if you notice minor errors. Otherwise, only ask about editing errors if you have trouble understanding the sentence because of the mistakes. If your instructor does want you to comment on editing, be sure to follow the instructions. Remember that the responsibility for correcting the errors lies with the writer, not with you.

Make the Most of Peer Feedback

Now let’s consider your role in receiving feedback, not giving it. Are you eager to get feedback? Scared to share your work? If you are receiving feedback from your peers, remember that ultimately you get to decide what feedback to accept. If you don’t think the feedback is correct, ask your instructor what they think. And give your peers a break; they are also just learning how to give feedback.

One way to improve the feedback you get is to ask for the kind of feedback you want. Don’t be afraid to give your peer reviewer some direction.

Listen to or read the feedback with an open mind. Consider that the peer reviewer is your reader. It’s good to know what a real reader got out of your writing.



If you aren't sure about the feedback or feel upset about it, reconsider the suggestions after a break. It's okay to say, "I'll think about that." If you feel that the reviewer is trying to change your style so that the paper doesn't sound like you anymore, consider whether the feedback helps you make the paper better. If not, feel free to set that feedback aside.

Meeting with a Writing Tutor

Sometimes your instructor may ask you to visit the Writing Centre, or it may even be a requirement for your class. Or you may just be curious about what a writing tutor has to offer. Many institutions have writing centres or subscribe to online services that provide tutoring in writing.

What's the benefit?

Writing tutors offer you another perspective on your writing. They serve as a real audience for your words and ideas. In addition to that, they have some additional expertise either because they are more experienced writers or they are writing instructors. Writing tutors also have experience with resources for writing that you may not be aware of.

Preparing to Meet with a Tutor

To prepare for a Writing Centre session, print out your assignment as well as the assignment instructions. Consider printing a second copy of your assignment to make it easier for both you and the tutor to read along at the same time.

Be ready to take notes and listen carefully.

Your tutor will spend a few minutes in the beginning of the session figuring out what you are writing, what the requirements are, and when your work is due. They may ask what you have already done to improve the writing, and they will almost always ask you what you would like help with.

Keep in mind that your tutor will want to focus on a few important things rather than try to catch every little thing in your paper. Tutors won't edit or proofread your paper for you, but they can help you learn how to edit your own work better.

Don't be surprised if your tutor shows you how to use a writing resource such as a handbook or the Purdue OWL online; part of the tutor's job is to help you learn to navigate resources on your own, so that you eventually have the same tools as the tutor.

At the end of a session, the tutor will probably ask you what you plan to do next with your writing. That's how they check to see that you got what you needed from the session and that you understood the advice given. After you revise your writing, you may want to schedule another tutoring session to work on additional aspects of the assignment.

What about Getting Help from a Friend or Family Member?

Getting feedback from a reader outside of your class can sometimes be a good idea. If you want to ask a friend or family member for feedback, set some ground rules. They should follow the same rules as a peer reviewer. At the very least, asking a friend or family member to read your paper aloud will help you hear how your paper sounds. You will probably catch more errors, too.

Meeting with Your Instructor

Getting in-person help from your instructor is one of the best ways to receive feedback. You can prepare for a meeting with your instructor so that you get the most out of it.

Bring your best work to the meeting. The more effort you have already made means that the instructor won't waste time telling you things you already know you need to fix. Re-read your work before the meeting and prepare some questions. What do you think is working? What do you need help with? During the meeting, take notes. If the instructor writes anything down, ask if you can take their notes with you. At the end of the meeting, work with your instructor on an action plan to revise your work.

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42.

Submission: MLA Style Document Format

Make sure to format in correct MLA style.

- MLA style is often used in the liberal arts and humanities.
- MLA style emphasizes brevity and clarity.
- A reader interested in your subject wants not only to read what you wrote but also to be informed of the works you used to create it.
- MLA style uses a citation in the body of the essay that refers to the works cited section at the end.
- If you follow MLA style, and indicate your source both in your essay and in the works cited section, you will prevent the possibility of plagiarism.

Document Format

Make sure that you have formatted your document as required for the writing task. If you are writing an essay in MLA or APA style, make sure that you have checked for the correct margins, header, first page heading, cover page if required, page numbering, spacing, and other formatting details. If you are writing for the web, make sure that you know where to find the style guide or guidelines for the type of document you are working on. Writing a personal blog has different requirements than writing a professional blog for a website.

- To learn more about MLA essay format and, see the Purdue OWL article on their website, “[MLA Formatting and Style Guide](#).”
- To learn more about APA essay format, see the Purdue OWL website article, “[APA Formatting and Style Guide](#).”
- Go to the Appendix “[Resources for Working with MLA](#)” to see formatting.

Documentation Style

Whenever you use material from another source, whether that means images, text, ideas, or media, you must do so ethically by giving credit to the originator. If you are writing a college essay, that usually means using either MLA or APA style. For academic writing, citing within your essay and also providing a bibliography are required. When writing for the web, you may be providing links to the original source and/or a list of sources.

- Also, see the “Four-Step Process for Working with Sources” portion of the “[Resources for Working with MLA](#)” appendix of this text

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VII

Researching

43.

Why is Information Literacy Important?



“Information literacy” is a term you’ll hear a lot during your academic career. It means that all students (and all people, really) should be able to find and use reliable information and source materials, and that they should be able to have the right material for whatever it is they’re doing or whatever questions they have.

As humans living in the digital age, we should know how to navigate the Web successfully, find the best materials, and evaluate and use them with confidence. Alas, in an age where a quick Google search nets millions of “hits” in half a second, evaluating the sources we choose can be trickier than it sounds. There’s a lot of great material on the Web, but there’s a lot of garbage, too. Being able to tell which is which is a digital-age-important life skill.

We also need to understand who “owns” information—whether print or digital—and how and when to give credit to the owner; this keeps us safe from accidentally committing plagiarism. Finding dependable information is especially important in the digital/internet age, where millions of ideas can be discovered in half a second but where much of that information is outdated or worthless.

Handling the materials correctly is important, too; this includes giving full credit when using materials created by others.

Exercise: Where can you check the “truth” of online materials?

Snopes is a widely respected, non-partisan site dedicated to investigating rumors, memes, social media statements, and news stories and then issuing decisions about whether the materials are correct or false.

- Go to [Snopes’ “What’s New” page](#)—a page that updates daily and includes the latest rumors
- Scroll through the list until you find an interesting hot topic. Click and read, then write a quick

paragraph that summarizes what you found. What did you learn? Were you surprised?

- If this captured your interest, you may want to explore Snopes a little more. It's a fun place to poke around and a great place to fact-check information.

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44.

Learning About Plagiarism and Guidelines for Using Information

Plagiarism: What It Is and How to Avoid It

Plagiarism occurs when you use someone else's **intellectual property** without giving them credit—when you use material as if it is your own creation for the purpose of the current assignment. There are other ways to plagiarize as well, such as submitting your own previously marked work as a new assignment in a different course. Make sure you always understand your own institution's plagiarism and cheating guidelines.

Academic institutions take plagiarism seriously; many discipline or even expel students who have plagiarized.

Exercise

There are a number of different practices which could lead to or be defined as plagiarism, so it's important that you understand what constitutes plagiarism and what doesn't. Which of the following would be a kind of plagiarism?

1. Overhearing someone's great idea while riding in an elevator and then later sharing the idea and saying it was yours.
2. Finding a beautiful photograph on the Web and using it as your profile picture on social media without showing the photographer's name.
3. Citing lines of poetry in a blog post without mentioning the poet.
4. Copying and pasting the source analysis from an old essay into a new one for a new class.

How can you avoid plagiarism? It's not hard once you know what you are doing. I always use what I call the "Chocolate Bar Analogy" when I talk to my students about plagiarism. It goes like this:

The Chocolate Bar Analogy

Would you do this?	Then why would you do this?
You want a chocolate bar, you need a chocolate bar, so you head into the local convenience store just to “see” what kinds of chocolate bars there are.	You want material for your assignment, you need material, so you head over to the computer just to “see” what is out there on your topic.
You find a good chocolate bar—it’s just what you need—so you put it in your pocket because you don’t want to “lose” it.	You find some good material—it’s just what you need—so you copy and paste it into your assignment so you won’t “lose” it.
You head to the counter to pay for the rest of the stuff you found at the store, but you a) aren’t sure how to properly pay for the chocolate bar, so you just leave it in your pocket or b) you “forget” all about it.	You head to the printer to print out your final assignment, but you a) aren’t sure how to properly cite the material you found online so you just leave it in your assignment or b) you “forget” all about it.
You would not do this!	So don’t do this!

When I am teaching students to credit source material by citing properly, I say, “Don’t put the chocolate bar in your pocket!”

1. **Do your own work.** In other words, always start by writing what you know about a subject, turning to sources only when you need to support your own ideas with authoritative backing, when there’s a knowledge gap you cannot fill on your own, or to satisfy requirements that you use a certain number of sources in an assignment.
2. **Cite the work immediately.** If you add source material to your work, mark it or identify it in such a way that you will *know* it’s from a source and add it to your works cited list. It doesn’t matter as much if your citations are *correct* as long as they are *present*.

Students studying English or writing will use Modern Language Association (MLA) guidelines to format their papers and handle sources. MLA is discussed elsewhere in this text (see the appendices [Resources for Working with MLA](#) and [Creating a Works Cited Page](#)) but understand for now that to properly cite intellectual property—also called source materials—in your writing, you must do the following:

- Mention the source’s author/creator (or anything that you can use to identify it) in your written work right at the point where the source is used.
- Create a list of all of the sources you used in your assignment; you’ll do this by arranging them in a works cited list at the end of your essay.
- Make sure sources on the works cited page are actually cited in your essay. If you read some source materials to learn more about your topic but do not mention them in your paper, you do *not* need to list them in the works cited list. But if you later end up using those sources in your paper, then you’ll need to add them to your works cited.

Copyright

Copyright is a legal term that refers to the person (or people) who own and distribute a piece of

information. The copyright holder has rights to that material, and if others use the material without getting permission first, they may be in violation of copyright. This can result in fines.

- If you're a student, your institution's librarians can help you navigate copyright issues. They may also be able to get you copyrighted material through Interlibrary Loan.
- As a student or faculty member, you may be able to access copyrighted material through the practice of "fair dealing" (below).
- You might find copyrighted materials in your institution's library.
- You may be able to find similar materials in Open Educational Resources (OERs), like the one you're reading now!

Fair Dealing for Academic Purposes

The concept of fair dealing allows students and instructors to use small amounts of copyrighted materials for a short-term, limited purpose—particularly for study, teaching, research, or increasing personal knowledge (see [What is Fair Dealing?](#) for more information).

In general, the following should be true if you claim fair dealing to work with copyrighted materials:

- You will use them for a limited purpose. For example, you'll use them to complete an assignment and then will return or release them. Specifically, you won't retain the material to use at a later date.
- You will not post them on the Web, make them available publicly, or share them with anyone else.
- You will not make permanent copies of the material.
- You will only use a small portion of the "whole" material. For example, using two or three chapters of a twenty-chapter book is a fine example of fair use; using twenty-four of twenty-five chapters without paying for them would *not* be considered fair use.
- You will not benefit, monetarily, in any way from the material.

Creative Commons

[Creative Commons](#) is a not-for-profit organization that aims to support people in sharing creative works for others to build upon legally and to share.

When a user creates a piece of content (writing, art, photography, or just about anything), they may choose to put a Creative Commons licence on the material. The licence explains how people share, remix, repurpose, or in other ways use the material. If you use any of the materials in your work, you should include the Creative Commons license in your source citation.

Open Educational Resources

[Open Education Resources](#) are teaching and learning materials that are available for free use by students and teachers everywhere. The move toward OERs has really taken off recently—both to take advantage of the Internet and digital publishing and also to help control the skyrocketing cost of textbooks. Open resources are easy to access and use and are continually updated and revised. You’re reading one right now!

Wiki Sources

A wiki is a website that functions as a public, open encyclopedia or collection of information. The best known of these is [Wikipedia](#). Wiki sources typically can be created and edited by anyone.

The best part of wikis is their openness, along with the fact that people collaborate to create them.

The worst part is that wikis can be created edited by anyone—including people who have no business doing so or, even worse, who intentionally enter false or defamatory information.

Because wikis are often created by people who don’t meet the academic definition of “expert,” instructors tend to discourage them as academic resources. That said, they can be good places to begin screening ideas and getting general information.

Torrent and BitTorrent Sites

A **BitTorrent** site is a website that encourages peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing. Files can consist of books, periodicals, music, film, data (many scientists use Torrent files to distribute large data packages) or virtually anything.

A major problem with these sites is that many of them engage in illegal file-sharing— particularly of music and film and lately of graphic novels. Notwithstanding the ethics involved, most of the sites are not secure, which raises the risk of users being implicated in illegal file-sharing activities. Most BitTorrent sites do not provide user anonymity and most can track (or at least record) IP addresses.

The best advice with BitTorrents: stay away from them unless you’re really good with technology and know exactly what you’re getting into.

Why is this worth mentioning? You’ll often be asked to watch film or access other resources as part of your classes. And, you’ll be asked to buy textbooks. You may be tempted to download a free book or movie through a Torrent site. Beware, and consider the implications first.

Reverse Image Search

Sometimes we find useful images online and wish to use them in our work, only to find we have no

idea where they came from. You can now do a reverse image search to try and find the owner or creator of images on the Web.

One of the best of these is [TinEye](#). Upload a copy of the image in question, and the TinEye engine will search for the original or oldest-known occurrence of the image. Google also has a reverse image search, and others are appearing on the Web as this is written.

Exercise

What if you have an image that you found somewhere on the Internet and you want to use it in an assignment or some sort of publication, but you don't remember where you found it. How will you credit the source? This is where knowing how to perform a reverse image search can come in handy.

1. Go to Google and search for "image."
2. Click "images" at the top of that page.
3. Pick an image and save it to your desktop or clipboard.
4. Go to [TinEye.com](#). Upload your image and use TinEye to search for its origins. See what you find!

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45.

Finding Quality Texts

The best place to find quality information is your institution's library—you can physically go to the library or search it online.

Your library:

- Gives you access to a world of source materials that have already been reviewed and approved by the librarian staff.
- Allows you free database access that would be extremely expensive if purchased as a non-student. For example, accessing an EBSCO online database (one of the best college research standards) can cost \$40-50 per article! Fortunately, the same article would be free through your college library.
- Provides current, constantly updated sources.
- Allows you to obtain materials that your library may not have through interlibrary loan, where your library will contact other libraries to get you the materials you need.
- Provides study spaces, tutoring, research assistance, and other aids.
- Gives you access to librarians—the library's greatest resource. Where a library database can give you thousands of results in response to a search, the librarian can help you figure out where to start looking, or what search terms to use. They can answer any and all of your questions relating to research.

CRAP Test

Many college libraries have adopted a new set of guidelines for helping students find good materials. It's called the **CRAP** Test. CRAP is an **acronym** for Currency, Reliability, Authority, and Purpose. The original CRAAP Test was created by Sarah Blakeslee of the University of California at Chico's Meriam Library and included another A for Accuracy, which is combined with Reliability here.

C: Currency

- Is this the most recent material you can find?
- Is the material recent enough to accurately represent your topic?
- Has it been updated recently?
- For electronic sites, does the site appear modern and up to date?

R: Reliability

- Is the material objective?
- Can you detect any obvious bias or loaded language?
- Are sources available to back up the piece?
- Is it well written and free of errors?

A: Authority

- Does the author have degrees, experience, or other expertise in the topic area?
- Is the host source reliable, i.e., a respected newspaper versus an individual blog?
- Is the publisher reputable and well known?
- Do you have a sense of trust for the author?

P: Purpose and Point of View

- What is the material's creator trying to accomplish? Are they trying to inform? Persuade? Push their own agenda? Convince you to buy something?
- Does the site include advertising or click-bait?
- Does the article seemed aimed at a specific audience?

If the material you are researching can not answer these questions satisfactorily, it is CRAP, and you shouldn't use it.

Can You Also Find Good Material on the Internet?

Of course. But doing so can be tricky. Think for a moment. If you've found a website or resource you feel might be useful, how do you convince yourself that it follows the **CRAP** approach?

Keep in mind that your academic work is different from your day to day activities. For instance, we may surf the Web for a number of different reasons, perhaps for pleasure, out of boredom, or chasing links. We can search and read as we like; nothing is at stake, so to speak.

But in your academic work, there's plenty at stake. Part of doing solid work in your education has to do with finding strong source materials and using them correctly and effectively.

Domain name endings

The domain name ending refers to the letters that follow the period at the end of a Web address (also

called a url, or uniform resource locator). For example, **.com**, **.edu**, and **.org** are all domain name endings.

Example of a Web address: **www.cnn.com**

Example of a domain name ending: **.com**

Different domain name endings refer to different kinds of websites and can be related to the quality of the site's material. Therefore, you have to examine them to decide whether they're reliable. Here are some examples:

- **.ca/.com:** may be commercial or personal sites. These may be considered less academically reliable sources because anyone can create one; they may be used for private blogs, web pages, and other personal uses or for commercial purposes and sales. **.ca** can refer to a Canadian-specific site with these criteria, while **.com** is international. ****.ca** sites can also be reputable sites within Canada that can fall under any of the following criteria:**
- **.org:** these used to belong solely to non-profit sites, such as The American Cancer Society. But these days, anyone can purchase and use a .org site for any purpose. Thus the content on a .org site may vary widely in terms of its authority.
- **.edu:** educational sites, usually maintained by colleges and universities but sometimes by high schools as well. These sites are considered to be very reliable.
- **.gov** and **.mil:** government and military sites, maintained by the governments and the military. These sites are considered to be very reliable.

Tip: You can check when a website has last been updated in several different ways—do a simple Google search for many sites that will walk you through the process.

Let's look at a couple of website examples and see how they hold up to the **CRAP** Test:

The Canadian athlete, author, and Vega cofounder Brendan Brazier uses a .com site, brendanbrazier.com. Visit his site and answer the CRAP Test.

- **C:** Is it **current**? Yes, it is. He is continually adding new materials and updating the site.
- **R:** Is it **reliable**? Yes. Brazier has many endorsements of his material and reviews on his website.
- **A:** Is it **authoritative**? Yes. Brazier's About page is full of references to his education, experience, and authority in his field. He is a highly respected nutritionist and athlete.
- **P:** What is its **purpose**? Brazier's website's purpose is to provide a portal for information about himself, his books, and his magazine; to book him for a speaking engagement; and to learn about his nutrition philosophy.
- **Result?** This website only provides a small amount of information on nutrition. Although it

passes the first three points of the CRAP Test, its purpose is not designed for academic research.

Let's try another one. The .org site, cellphonesafety.org may appear, at first glance, to be a reliable site. But not all .org sites are reliable. Let's look closer:

- **C:** Is it **current**? Although the date at the bottom looks recent, an exploration of the site will show a reliance on articles that are outdated or lead to broken links. This is a problem, because a topic that changes as quickly as one like technology must rely on current and constantly updated materials. No—we cannot say this is current.
- **R:** Is it **reliable**? The site does not provide a list of authors. Clicking “About” at the bottom of the page leads to a set of names that do not click through to the actual organizations—a bad sign. Further, it says it was “created by the National Consumer Advocacy Commission.” But a Google search reveals that this organization doesn't exist! So we'll give “reliable” a big NO.
- **A:** Is it **authoritative**? Again, this is a no. The materials used are not current, and many lead to broken links. The comments tend to use biased language and seem more focused on persuasion (or even manipulation) toward a certain view than on presenting facts.
- **P:** What is its **purpose**? The purpose seems to be to convince readers that there are no dangers or hazards associated with cell phone use. We know that's untrue, and so again, this fails the test.
- **Result?** fails the CRAP Test.

Don't get discouraged! It only takes a few minutes to keep searching for a reliable source, but it will take a lot longer to redo an assignment or worse, retake a course because you don't have good enough sources for your major assignments!

Authors

In many cases, it's easy to find an author's name on an online site. Evaluate the author fully—don't just assume they know what they're doing.

- Do they have the right academic credentials or professional experience to back up their authority? For instance, someone who's spent their life as a short-order cook wouldn't be considered an authority on astronomy, nor would a PhD-level astronomer be considered an expert on the art of donut making.
- Have they published work in the field?
- Does a quick review of the topic or field suggest that they're a known expert in that area?

Sometimes pages will list an author's **bio**, **resume**, or **curriculum vitae** (CV) on the site, allowing you to find out more about their education, work, and publication history. You can always do a Web search to find out more about them.

You can also find out about the reliability of an author by seeing if other reputable sites cite them.

Sometimes an online site will look good but won't show an author's name. Does that mean you shouldn't trust the site? Not necessarily. Many sites employ a staff of writers or freelance writers to create content on the site but don't list the author's name.

Periodical sites may post articles that don't credit an author. Many of these sites have their own department of **journalists**, writers, and **freelance writers** who create their content; these writers are often not credited individually.

Information/Page Date

You'll want to check to see if the material you're looking at has a date. As a general rule, the more current the date on the material, the better—especially if you're discussing something that undergoes near-constant change, like politics, science, or technology.

Scrolling to the bottom of a web page will often reveal a "last update" date at the bottom, and this can help your decision process. If you can't locate any dates on the material and the website hasn't been updated in years, you should probably find a better source.

But sometimes, information can be dated and still be useful. For instance, if I was writing a paper about transportation infrastructure in Canada adapting to changing demands of growing populations, I could use sources from any era in our transportation history to show a trend in how Canada has always been growing to support the increased movement of people in our country. If I was writing about current driving with cell phone-use fines across the provinces, I would need the newest information.

Other Points to Check

Consider the visual layout and appeal of the page:

- Does it look modern or dated (as if someone hasn't updated it in years)?
- Are there lots of advertisements or direct attempts to sell products?
- Are there pop-ups that interfere with navigating or reading the page?

And take a look at the page content:

- Are the articles or content well written and carefully proofread? Do they "sound" authoritative and feel reliable?
- Do articles include links to other materials or links to credible and/or reliable source materials? Has content been carefully edited, or can you detect lots of errors?
- Is the language intelligent and objective? Or does it include biased language, slang, rude, or negative words?
 - For example, let's imagine you were researching a question of why people buy beverages in single-use plastic bottles.
 - **An objective, fact-based statement:** Studies show that many people buy beverages in single-use plastic bottles because the bottles are convenient, easy to

carry, and available just about anywhere.

- **A biased, non-factual statement:** Let's face it—most people who buy single-use plastic bottles are just too lazy to carry reusable bottles. Or they just don't care if they single-handedly destroy the environment.

Look in the Right Places

Start your search in the right place. When looking for a specific piece of evidence, don't just automatically type a word into Google: instead, ask yourself, "What's the best place I might find this?" While thinking about the subject, consider the persons or organizations that are experts on the topic, and try beginning a search with those names.

If you begin in the right place, you're more likely to find useful information right away, and it's more likely to be credible. Likewise, try and find the best human sources as well. With a little research on your topic, you can identify the big names in the field.

Don't always start by turning to the Internet and Google. Yes, this may be the easiest way to go, but is it always the best? No—not always. Visit your institution's library, or search it electronically. Read textbooks or periodicals. Seek out human experts. Put your hands on your topic, if you can, by diving into it in a personal way. Try making an observation, conducting a survey, or interviewing a subject.

Tip: Whenever you identify a good printed source—book, journal, etc.—go to the end of it and read the bibliography. This will give you a brand new list of potential source materials on the same or similar topic.

Exercise: Evaluating a Website

Part 1: Consider what you've just learned about currency, reliability, accuracy, and purpose or point of view to help you evaluate the academic merit of a source.

Keep these qualities in mind as you explore one (or more) of these sites.

- [Feline Reactions to Bearded Men](#)
- [Aluminum Foil Deflector Beanie](#)
- [Dihydrogen Monoxide Research Division](#)

Part 2: Answer and consider the following.

1. What was your first impression when you first glanced at the site? Why did you have this impression?

2. Explore the site a little—clicking links, reading content, looking for authors and dates and so forth.
3. Did your opinion change? Why? What did you discover? Would you rely on the site for your academic work? Does it meet the CRAP test?

What About Finding Good Materials in print periodicals?

Follow the same guidelines given above for finding strong Web materials. Look at the author, date, and the material. Consider the publication itself: a mainstream, respected newspaper or magazine—like [*The Globe and Mail*](#) or [*The National Post*](#)—more or less automatically meets our **CRAP** test, while smaller or local publications may require a detailed evaluation.

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46.

Analyzing Content and Rhetoric

Rhetoric is the method of writing and speaking effectively and persuasively.

In developing your reading and analysis skills, always think about what you're reading, questioning the text—and your responses—as you read. Use the following questions to help analyze as you assess the text's content and the ways it makes its points. Think of it as taking the text apart—dissecting it to see how it works.

- **What is the author's main point?** Describe this in your own words. Do they make the point successfully? Is the point held consistently throughout the text, or does it wander at any point?
- **What information does the author provide to support the central idea?** Making a list of each point will help you analyze. Hint: each paragraph should address one key point, and all paragraphs should relate to the text's central idea.
- **What kind of evidence does the author use?** Is it based more on fact or opinion, and do you feel those choices are effective? Where does this evidence come from? Are the sources authoritative and credible?
- **What is the author's main purpose?** Note that this is different than the text's main idea. The text's main idea (above) refers to the central claim or thesis embedded in the text. The author's purpose, however, refers to what they hope to accomplish. For example, a cookbook is assembled in order to share recipes and cooking methods. But perhaps the author also wanted to include a group of treasured family recipes in hopes of sharing them with a wider cooking audience. The text has one purpose, while the author has an additional aim for the work.
- **Describe the tone in the piece.** Is it friendly? Authoritative? Does it lecture? Is it biting or sarcastic? Does the author use simple language, or is it full of jargon? Does the language feel positive or negative? Point to aspects of the text that create the tone; spend some time examining these and considering how and why they work.
- **Is the author objective, or does he/she try to convince you to have a certain opinion?** Why does the author try to persuade you to adopt this viewpoint? If the author is biased, does this interfere with the way you read and understand the text?
- **Do you feel like the author knows who you are?** Does the text seem to be aimed at readers like you or at a different audience? What assumptions does the author make about their audience? Would most people find these reasonable, acceptable, or accurate?
- **Does the text's flow make sense?** Is the line of reasoning logical? Are there any gaps? Are there any spots where you feel the reasoning is flawed in some way?

- **Does the author try to appeal to your emotions?** Does the author use any controversial words in the headline or the article? Do these affect your reading or your interest?
- **Do you believe the author?** Do you accept their thoughts and ideas? Why or why not?

Jargon

Jargon refers to language, abbreviations, or terms that are used by specific groups— typically those people involved in a profession. Using jargon within that group makes conversation simpler, and it works because everyone in the group knows the lingo.

The problem with using jargon when writing is that if your reader has no idea of what those terms mean, you'll lose them.

Exercise

Read this paragraph that relies heavily on jargon:

Those who experience sx of URI might consider visiting a PCP. This should happen ASAP with pyrexia >101, enlarged cervical nodes, purulent nares drainage, or tonsillar hypertrophy. Tx may include qid antibiotics, ASA, fluids, and a mucolytic.

If you're in a medical field, you probably understood that paragraph. Otherwise, it probably sounded like another language!

Now read this translation in lay (non-jargon) terms:

Those who have cold symptoms might consider visiting their primary care provider. This should happen quickly if there is fever over 101, swollen glands in the neck, green or yellow drainage from the nose, or inflamed, swollen tonsils. Treatment may include antibiotics, aspirin, fluids, and medications designed to loosen phlegm and make it easier to cough.

That's quite a change, yes? It's a good example of why we usually want to avoid jargon, only use it with an audience that understands it, or explain each term carefully as we use them.

- What did you discover about jargon? What areas are you familiar with that may have their own types of jargon?

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47.

Paragraph-Level Text Analysis

When exploring a text, consider the structure and arrangement of paragraphs.

In terms of structure, an “academic” paragraph includes a **topic sentence (bold text)**, which introduces the paragraph’s main idea. It then offers several sentences (or at least one, as a minimum) to support or explain the topic sentence (underlined text). Finally, it *concludes with a sentence that helps transition to the next paragraph (italicized text)*.

Note that the topic sentence is often, but not always, the first sentence in the paragraph. You’ll hear more about that later. (For more about topic sentences see [“Writing Paragraphs”](#) in the “Drafting” section of this text.)

Here’s an example:

Our reliance on single-use plastic water bottles is more than simply wasteful; it is bad for our environment because of the composition of the bottles themselves and the chemicals they release as they break down in our landfills. Single-use plastic water bottles cause dangerous substances to “leach” into the soil and water (Macklin). The bottles typically don’t begin to break down for one hundred years, or even longer. Their decomposition may be speeded up by extreme weather conditions, e.g., very hot or very cold temperatures. As they break down, they release dangerous chemicals like bisphenol-A into the soil. Bisphenol-A is an endocrine disruptor, i.e., it can affect the levels of hormones within the human body, creating disease. In addition, BPA is known to be carcinogenic (cancer-causing) in humans. As these chemicals accumulate in the soil, they eventually sink into the water table, contaminating the water (O’Connor). *Making the environmental threats of single-use water bottles even more frightening is the fact that there is currently no known technology for removing BPA and other leachates from the soil and water once they’re there.*

Writers may choose to use short or long paragraphs to create specific effects—much the same as using short and long sentences. Short paragraphs can build tension or a sense of expectation, while long ones may create a “stream of consciousness” feeling, in which the narrator’s thoughts, feelings, and reactions are given in a continuous, rambling flow.

The classic arrangement of paragraphs in a text may be described as “linear” or time-based. In other words, the narrator typically starts at the beginning and moves logically to the end. Sometimes a writer will use flashbacks, flash-forwards, or dream/imaginative sequences to affect the usual flow of time in

the story or to provide additional information. For example, a flashback allows the reader to learn something about the story's past they wouldn't have known otherwise.

Tip: Remember the tip about “bookmarking” your reading, or reading simply the first and last sentences of each section? See how you can get the meaning of the above paragraph without reading the entire thing.

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48.

Writing Summaries

A summary is a short overview of the main points of a text. The purpose of a summary is to quickly give the reader or listener an idea of what this material is saying. You may create summaries of material by other authors, such as articles, plays, films, lectures, stories, or presentations.

Why Summarize?

At some point in your classes, you will likely be given an assignment to summarize a specific text, an assignment in which summary is the sole intent. You will also use summaries in more holistic ways, though, incorporating them along with paraphrase, quotation, and your own opinions into more complex pieces of writing. You might summarize for several reasons, both in your time as a student and in your life outside of education.

Here are some common uses:

- A summary can show your understanding of the main points of an assigned reading or viewing, so your instructor might ask you to summarize in order to know that you've understood the material.
- You might summarize a section from a source, or even the whole source, when the ideas in that source are critical to an assignment you are working on and you feel they need to be included, but they would take up too much space in their original form.
- You might also summarize when the general ideas from a source are important to include in your work, but the details included in the same section as those main ideas aren't needed for you to make your point. For example, technical documents or in-depth studies might go into much, much more detail than you are likely to need to support a point you are making for a general audience. These are situations in which a summary might be a good option.
- Summarizing is also an excellent way to double-check that you understand a text—if you can summarize the ideas in it, you likely have a good grasp on the information it is presenting. This can be helpful for school-related work, such as studying for an exam or researching a topic for a paper, but is also useful in daily life when you encounter texts on topics that are personally or professionally interesting to you.

What Makes Something a Summary?

When you ask yourself, after reading an article (and maybe even reading it two or three times), “What was that article about?” and you end up jotting down—from memory, without returning to the original

article to use its language or phrases—three things that stood out as the author’s main points, you are summarizing. Summaries have several key characteristics.

You’re summarizing well when you

- Use your own words.
- Significantly condense the original text.
- Provide accurate representations of the main points of the text they summarize.
- Avoid personal opinion.

Summaries are much shorter than the original material—a general rule is that they should be no more than 10% to 15% the length of the original, and they are often even shorter than this.

It can be easy and feel natural, when summarizing an article, to include our own opinions. We may agree or disagree strongly with what this author is saying, or we may want to compare their information with the information presented in another source, or we may want to share our own opinion on the topic. Often, our opinions slip into summaries even when we work diligently to keep them separate. These opinions are not the job of a summary, though. A summary should *only* highlight the main points of the article.

Focusing on just the ideas that best support a point we want to make or ignoring ideas that don’t support that point can be tempting. This approach has two significant problems, though:

First, it no longer correctly represents the original text, so it misleads your reader about the ideas presented in that text. A summary should give your reader an accurate idea of what they can expect if we pick up the original article to read.

Second, it undermines your own credibility as an author to not represent this information accurately. If readers cannot trust an author to accurately represent source information, they may not be as likely to trust that author to thoroughly and accurately present a reasonable point.

How Should I Organize a Summary?

Like traditional essays, summaries have an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. What these components look like will vary some based on the purpose of the summary you’re writing. The introduction, body, and conclusion of work focused specifically around summarizing something is going to be a little different than in work where summary is not the primary goal.

Introducing a Summary

One of the trickier parts of creating a summary is making it clear that this is a summary of someone else’s work; these ideas are not your original ideas. You will almost always begin a summary with the author, title, and thesis of the piece. This information will appear again in your Works Cited, but is also useful here so the reader can follow the conversation happening in your paper. You will want to provide it in both places.

In summary-focused work, this introduction should accomplish a few things:

- Introduce the name of the author whose work you are summarizing.
- Introduce the title of the text being summarized.
- Introduce where this text was presented (if it's an art installation, where is it being shown? If it's an article, where was that article published? Not all texts will have this component—for example, when summarizing a book written by one author, the title of the book and name of that author are sufficient information for your readers to easily locate the work you are summarizing).
- State the thesis.

Summary within Your Essay

You will probably find yourself more frequently using summary as just one component of work with a wide range of goals (not just a goal to “summarize X”).

Summary introductions in these situations still generally need to:

- Name the author.
- Name the text being summarized.
- State just the relevant context, if there is any (maybe the author has a specific credential that makes their work on this topic carry more weight than it would otherwise, or maybe the study they generated is now being used as a benchmark for additional research).
- Introduce the author's full name (first and last names) the first time you summarize part of their text. If you summarize pieces of the same text more than once in a work you are writing, each time you use their text after that initial introduction of the source, you will only use the author's last name as you introduce that next summary component.

Presenting the Body of a Summary

Again, this will look a little different depending on the purpose of the summary work you are doing. Regardless of how you are using summary, you will introduce the main ideas throughout your text with transitional phrasing, such as “One of [Author's] biggest points is...,” or “[Author's] primary concern about this solution is...”

If you are responding to a “write a summary of X” assignment, the body of that summary will expand on the main ideas you stated in the introduction of the summary, although this will all still be very condensed compared to the original. What are the key points the author makes about each of those big-picture main ideas? Depending on the kind of text you are summarizing, you may want to note how the main ideas are supported (although, again, be careful to avoid making your own opinion about those supporting sources known).

When you are summarizing with an end goal that is broader than just summary, the body of your

summary will still present the idea from the original text that is relevant to the point you are making (condensed and in your own words).

Since it is much more common to summarize just a single idea or point from a text in this type of summarizing (rather than all of its main points), it is important to make sure you understand the larger points of the original text. For example, you might find that an article provides an example that opposes its main point in order to demonstrate the range of conversations happening on the topic it covers. This opposing point, though, isn't the main point of the article, so just summarizing this one opposing example would not be an accurate representation of the ideas and points in that text.

Concluding a Summary

If the author has a clear conclusion, use that. Otherwise, this is also a good place to state (or restate) the things that are most important for your readers to remember after reading your summary.

When your writing has a primary goal other than summary—such as response, analysis, or compare/contrast sources—your conclusion should

- Include an in-text citation, if appropriate. (To learn how to do this correctly, see the discussion of in-text citation in “[Crediting and Citing Your Sources](#),” part of the “Using Sources Correctly” section of this text.)
- Discuss the summary you’ve just presented. How does it support, illustrate, or give new information about the point you are making in your writing? Connect it to your own main point for that paragraph so readers understand clearly why it deserves the space it takes up in your work. (Note that this is still not giving your opinion on the material you’ve summarized, just making connections between it and your own main points.)

Exercise

Write a summary paragraph for a reading you are assigned. A summary is an effective restatement focusing on the main idea of a writing passage.

Requirements

- Your topic sentence should provide the author and title along with the thesis of the work.
- Only mention key points that support the thesis.
- Keep the same order or sequence of information.
- Mention only information from the original writing. Do not include new information, personal opinions, or interpretations.
- Include a fair distribution of summary statement, paraphrase, and quote.
- Your assignment must be formatted in correct MLA formatting.

Step-by Step Instructions

Follow these steps carefully.

1. Read through once, not taking notes or highlighting, but simply noting the overall main idea of the text.
2. Re-read with pen in hand. Make note of key words and ideas—highlight, underline, or circle them.
 - A. Divide the text into sections that focus on one key idea in each section.
 - B. Note a key term for each section.
 - C. Plan which sections best suit summary statement, paraphrase, and quote.
3. Write an outline: your topic sentence and a list of the points that support the main idea.
4. Write a sentence for each point. Conclude with a sentence showing the significance of the writing from the author's point of view, not yours. (If the author makes a clear conclusion, skip writing a conclusion of your own.)
5. Make sure to use correct MLA formatting. Run the spelling and grammar check and follow the revision process before submitting your final assignment.

Don't forget to ask for help if you need it!

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49.

Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is another way of presenting ideas from source material in your own words, but without the condensing that happens in a summary. Instead, paraphrases stay approximately the same length as the original source material being paraphrased.



Why Paraphrase?

To Demonstrate Understanding

Paraphrasing can demonstrate your understanding of a text, including its more complex details and connections between its main points, and can also help you double-check the depth of your understanding of a text.

To Provide Support

You might paraphrase a section from a source (unlike summary, it is unlikely that you will ever need to paraphrase an entire source) when an idea or point in that source is important to an assignment you are working on and you feel it needs to be included, but you can rephrase it in a way that fits your work without losing any key information.

Tip: Use paraphrase instead of direct quote unless you have compelling reasons to preserve the exact language of the original text. Often, the reason to preserve the original text in a direct quote is because that text uses specialized language that you can't easily rephrase. As much of your work as possible should be in your own voice.

Look at the last paragraph of the *Scientific American* article (found at www.scientificamerican.com) "[Are you a Magnet for Mosquitoes?](#)," about why mosquitoes are more attracted to some humans than others.

The following sentence would be a good candidate for a direct quote because you might not know how to paraphrase the part about MHC genes:

“Scientists that study human odors and genetics have previously suggested scent cues associated with genetics are likely controlled via the major histocompatibility complex (MHC) genes”

The sentence that follows, though, says this:

“Those genes appear to play a role in odor production and also in mammals’ mating choices—because humans and mice alike appear to prefer mates that smell less similar to themselves, which scientists have theorized may be a natural control against inbreeding.”

Since there isn’t particularly specialized or original language in here that must be preserved, this second sentence is a good candidate for paraphrase. One way might look like this:

These same genes that might be attracting mosquitoes more to some of us than to others could also be helping us choose partners that we aren’t likely to be related to.

What Makes Something a Paraphrase?

A paraphrase

- Is in your own words.
- Is not condensed.
- Avoids personal opinion.
- Is completely rephrased from the original.

WARNING: don’t “thesaurize” a paraphrase. This means, don’t take a thesaurus and find a replacement for the words in the text one by one. This is NOT writing in your own words, and it puts you at risk for plagiarism. It will also sound ridiculous.

Like summary, a paraphrase is someone else’s ideas rewritten in your own words. Unlike summary, though, paraphrase should not be condensed—the ideas as you write them should take up about the same amount of space as they do in the original text. A paraphrase should not include your own opinions about the topic, what the author of the text is saying about it, or how that author is presenting their point

It can be easy, when writing a paraphrase, to rely on some of the original author’s phrasing or direct synonyms for the author’s original words. Remember that a paraphrase must be entirely your own writing, not just phrases or words substituted in the same sentence structure, length, etc. used by the original text.

Write paraphrases in sentence structures that are natural to you and true to your own writing voice. The only job of a paraphrase is to accurately and completely represent the relevant idea presented in the text you are paraphrasing.

How Should I Organize a Paraphrase?

It is not likely that you will encounter an assignment that solely requires you to paraphrase a text. Instead, you will use paraphrase to support your own points and ideas in work with a wide range of goals. That said, there are still some guidelines for incorporating paraphrase into your work:

- Introduce the author and original text, just as you would for a summary.
- If there is relevant context, mention that as well.
- Then, restate the part of the original text that you want to use *into your own original language and sentence structures*.
- Include a parenthetical citation (if appropriate) at the end of the paraphrased material. (To learn how to do this correctly, see the discussion of in-text citation in “[Crediting and Citing Your Sources](#),” part of the “Using Sources Correctly” section of this text.)
- After delivering and citing the paraphrased material, reconnect that information to your own topic and point.

Exercise: Create a Paraphrase

Here is a brief passage from Sarah Boxer’s article in *The Atlantic*, “[An Artist for the Instagram Age](#)”:

The fact that some folks have managed to make the scene while others get left out in the cold is integral to the excitement of participatory art. The thrill is akin to exotic travel, or getting to see Hamilton. Because not everyone who wants the experience actually gets the experience, these works, even if their intentions and messages are democratic, tend to become exclusive affairs.

Which of the following is an appropriate paraphrase of this passage? Why is that one strong and the other one less functional as a paraphrase?

1. The truth that many people have been able to attend these events as others have been shut out of them is key to what makes this kind of art appealing. The excitement is similar to visiting foreign countries or attending a showing of a sold-out musical. Since some people who wish to attend can’t do so, these art forms, despite not necessarily wanting to, often end up denying access to many would-be attendees.
2. Boxer notes that this kind of art only maintains its appeal as long as there are more people clamoring to view it than can possibly actually view it. This reliance on scarcity means these artists are ultimately relying on elitist principles to find their success and remain in demand.

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50.

Quoting

A direct quotation is when you use the exact language from a source and place that language into your own paper. This is significantly different from both summary and paraphrase as you do not rephrase any part of the original language into your own words; in fact, it is important when directly quoting a source to be careful to exactly copy the source's original language word for word.

Why Quote?

- To retain the powerful, specialized, or unique language of the original
- To demonstrate authority
- To present an opposing view
- For variety in your use of the source material

If the original text is phrased in a way that is particularly powerful and paraphrasing it would be likely to weaken it, direct quotation is a good option. This is also true when the language of the original source is so special or unique that it can't be reasonably rephrased.

Direct quotation can demonstrate that existing authoritative sources support a point you are making. It can also present an opposing view to your own for you to then discuss. It can be useful to present opposing views as direct quotes to avoid the risk of personal bias affecting the language of a paraphrase.

Why It's Important to Limit Quotes

It is generally a good idea to limit quotes—don't rely too heavily on them in a paper. Remember that most of your paper should be in your own words and in your own voice. It's also a good rule of thumb to avoid using unnecessarily long quotes. If a quote is longer than a sentence or two, it is a good idea to examine whether the full quote is needed or if a summary, paraphrase, or just part of the quote would do the job you need done.

If you do find you need to use only part of a quote, it is very important to make sure that the part of the quote you are using doesn't change the meaning of the original writing. Be careful to retain the parts of the quote that accurately represent what the author was originally saying.

How Should I Organize a Quote?

Like paraphrase, quotation will only play a supporting role in your written work. Many of the guidelines for incorporating quotation into your written work will look familiar if you have already read the summary and paraphrase sections of this text, but quotation does have some special rules.

Introduce/Frame

Introduce the author and original text (and potentially context), just as you would for a summary or paraphrase. Often this introduction is only an introductory phrase, in which case it would be followed by a comma and the quote would begin immediately after this phrase as part of the same sentence. Example: According to Amelia Smith, a researcher affiliated with Harvard, “[insert quote here].”

Deliver

After introducing the author and text, you will deliver the quote. This is often as simple as copying and pasting the relevant material from the original text. Direct quotes need to have quotation marks (“”) around them, the first quotation mark just before the first word of the quote and the end quotation mark just after the last word of the quote.

The only exception to the requirement of quotation marks is when using a block quote. A block quote is quoted material that takes up space on four or more consecutive lines of your paper. This kind of quote has a significantly different set of formatting rules, but should also be used very sparingly because it takes up so much valuable space in your paper. If you’re interested in learning more about what block quotes do differently, have a look at the “[MLA Formatting Quotations](#)” article from the Purdue OWL (at owl.english.purdue.edu); scroll down a bit to find the section titled “Long Quotations”.

Cite

Include a parenthetical citation (if appropriate) at the end of the quote. (To learn how to do this correctly, see the discussion of in-text citation in “[Crediting and Citing Your Sources](#),” part of the “Using Sources Correctly” section of this text.)

Reconnect/Integrate

After delivering and citing the quote, reconnect that information and integrate it into your own topic and point.

Exercise: Work with Quotation

The reconnection/integration component of using a quote will vary depending on the type of essay you're writing, your intended audience, and how you're presenting the information to that audience. Introduction, delivery, and citation tend to look pretty similar regardless of those factors, so let's practice those components here.

Using the same article as in the "[Paraphrasing](#)" section, "[An Artist for the Instagram Age](#)" written by Sarah Boxer and published online in *The Atlantic*, here is a quote of just the third sentence of the passage we looked at in the paraphrasing activity:

"Because not everyone who wants the experience actually gets the experience, these works, even if their intentions and messages are democratic, tend to become exclusive affairs."

Which of these uses of that sentence would be strong in an essay? There may be more than one correct answer.

1. As Sarah Boxer observes in her article about Yayoi Kusama's "Infinity Mirrors" exhibit, "Because not everyone who wants the experience actually gets the experience, these works, even if their intentions and messages are democratic, tend to become exclusive affairs."
2. Because not everyone who wants the experience actually gets the experience, these works, even if their intentions and messages are democratic, tend to become exclusive affairs (Boxer).
3. Carrying these ideas into the art world, Sarah Boxer notes, "everyone who wants the experience actually gets the experience...their intentions and messages are democratic."
4. One article published recently in *The Atlantic* addresses this directly, stating, "Because not everyone who wants the experience actually gets the experience, these works, even if their intentions and messages are democratic, tend to become exclusive affairs" (Boxer).
5. "Because not everyone who wants the experience actually gets the experience, these works, even if their intentions and messages are democratic, tend to become exclusive affairs."

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51.

Critiquing a Text

Let's review:

- When we **summarize** a text, we capture its main points.
- When we **analyze** a text, we consider how it has been put together—we dissect it, more or less, to see how it works

When we **critique** a text, we evaluate it, asking it questions. Critique shares a root with the word “criticize.” Most of us tend to think of criticism as being negative or mean, but in the academic sense, doing a critique is a constructive way to better explore and understand the material we’re working with. The word critique’s origin means “to evaluate,” and through our critique, we do a deep evaluation of a text.

When we critique a text, we interrogate it. Our own opinions and ideas become part of our textual analysis. We question the text, we argue with it, and we delve into it for deeper meanings.

Ideas to Consider when Critiquing a Text

- How did you respond to the piece? Did you like it? Did it appeal to you? Could you identify with it?
- Do you agree with the main ideas in the text?
- Did you find any errors in reasoning? Any gaps in the discussion?
- Did the organization make sense?
- Was evidence used correctly, without manipulation? Has the writer used appropriate sources for support?
- Is the author objective? Biased? Reasonable? (Note that the author might just as easily be subjective, unbiased, and unreasonable! Every type of writing and tone can be used for a specific purpose. By identifying these techniques and considering *why* the author is using them, you begin to understand more about the text.)
- Has the author left anything out? If yes, was this accidental? Intentional?
- Are the text’s tone and language text appropriate?
- Are all of the author’s statements clear? Is anything confusing?
- What worked well in the text? What was lacking or failed completely?
- What is the cultural context¹ of the text?

These are only a few ideas relating to critique, but they'll get you started. When you critique, try working with these statements, offering explanations to support your ideas. Bring in content from the text (textual evidence) to support your ideas.

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1. Cultural context is way of asking who is affected by the ideas and who stands to lose or gain if the ideas take place. When you think about this, think of all kinds of social and cultural variables, including age, gender, occupation, education, race, ethnicity, religion, economic status, and so forth.

52.

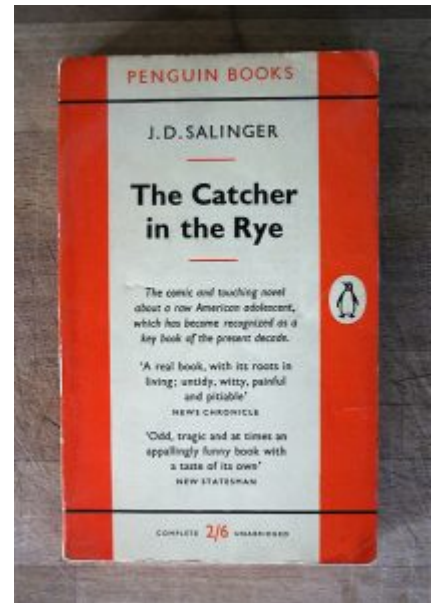
Synthesizing

To synthesize is to combine ideas and create a completely *new* idea. That new idea becomes the conclusion you have drawn from your reading. This is the true beauty of reading: it causes us to weigh ideas, to compare, judge, think, and explore—and then to arrive at a moment that we hadn't known before. We begin with simple summary, work through analysis, evaluate using critique, and then move on to synthesis.

For example, many people read J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* at some point during their lives, often during high school. The book focuses on an angsty, rebellious teen who relates aspects of his teenage experiences; he does this from his room in a mental institution. In the end, the teen understands more about himself and the world, and he begins to consider his possible future.

Many teens read this story and see themselves in it; grappling with the ideas in the text helps them better understand themselves and often encourages them to reach for their own futures. This is an example of how they draw their own conclusions from the text and synthesize their own directions and ideas.

Most of us can point to one or two books that have been life-changing—books that have held us captive for a moment in time and shaped our outlook. These are moments of synthesis. If this hasn't happened to you yet, grab a good book (ask a teacher or librarian if you need suggestions), pour a cup of tea, and start reading.



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VIII

Using Sources Correctly

53.

Crediting and Citing Your Sources

When you summarize, paraphrase, or directly quote a source, you must cite it. Giving credit to the sources you used creating a text is important, and useful, for several reasons:

1. It adds to your own credibility as an author by showing you have done appropriate research on your topic and approached your work ethically.
2. It gives credit to the original author and their work for the ideas you found to be useful, and in giving them credit it helps you avoid unintentionally plagiarizing their work.
3. It gives your readers additional resources (already curated by you in your research process) that they can go to if they want to read further your topic.



Credit/Cite Your Sources

For academic work, this generally means two things: in-text (or parenthetical) citation PLUS a “Works Cited” or “References” page. These two things may look different for different types of classes. For example, it’s likely your writing class will use [Modern Language Association](#) (MLA) format, while a psychology class is more likely to use American Psychological Association (APA) format.

The specific details required and the order in which they appear changes between different formats, but practicing one of them will give you a general idea of what most of them are looking for and will get you accustomed to following a strict, detail-oriented procedure. All of the information we look at here is specific to MLA—the format you will use for your writing and some other humanities classes.

In-Text Citation/Parenthetical Citation

Both in-text and parenthetical citations include the author’s last name and the page number—or place in the source—the information came from (if applicable). Sometimes you can accomplish in-text citation by mentioning the author or title of a source inside the language of your sentence, but other times you’ll use a parenthetical citation. Parenthetical means that the citation appears in parentheses within your sentence or at the end of it, before the period.

- For example, an article written by Lisa Smith is in a physical magazine and spans pages 38-42. If, on page 41, she says, “While most studies have shown that Expo dry erase markers have superior lasting power, erasability, and colour saturation than other brands on the market, their higher cost is a concern for some consumers,” I might incorporate that into a paper like this:
 - By most measurable standards, Expo markers are clearly the favored option (Smith 41).

However, you don’t always need both components (last name and page number) in the parenthetical citation.

- If I introduced the source material in the sentence above a little differently, introducing the author before delivering the material, I wouldn’t need to repeat the author’s name in that same sentence in the parenthetical citation. In that case, my sentence would look something like this:
 - According to Lisa Smith, Expo markers are clearly the favored option by most measurable standards (41).

Three Ways to Cite or Identify Written Source Materials

1. Introduce the Author and/or the Title of the Source—Framing

By introducing the author or the material, you make it clear to the reader that what you’re talking about is from a source. Here’s an example of a quotation that is identified by introducing the author and the title of source (which are underlined and are the first parts of the sentences).

In the article, “Grooming Poodles for Fun and Profit,” Jonas Fogbottom explains, “Poodle grooming is a labour of love. It takes years of practice to be good at it, but once learned, it’s a fun and worthwhile career.”

Here’s an example of a paraphrase that is identified in the same way:

In the article, “Grooming Poodles for Fun and Profit,” Jonas Fogbottom says that although it takes a long time to become a skilled poodle groomer, it’s well worth the effort and leads to a good career.

Note that, in the example above, (1) if there are no page numbers to cite and (2) if the name of the author is signaled in the phrase that introduces the bit of source material, then there is no need for the parenthetical citation. This is an example of a situation where mentioning the author by name is the only in-text citation you’ll need. And sometimes, if the name of the author is unknown, then you might just mention the title of the article instead. It will be up to you, as a writer, to choose which method works best for your given situation.

The first time that you mention a source in your writing, you should always introduce the speaker and, if possible, the title of the source as well. Note that the speaker is the person responsible for stating the

information that you're citing and that this is not always the author of the text. For example, an author of an article might quote someone else, and you might quote or paraphrase that person.

Use the speaker's full name (e.g., "According to Jonas Fogbottom . . .") the first time you introduce them; if you mention them again in the paper, use their last name only (e.g., "Fogbottom goes on to discuss . . .").

2. Use Linking or Attributive Language—Signal Phrases

Using linking language (sometimes called attributive language or signal phrases) simply means using words that show the reader you are still talking about a source that you just mentioned.

For example, you might use linking language that looks something like this:

1. The author also explains . . .
2. Fogbottom continues . . .
3. The article states next that . . .
4. The data set also demonstrates . . .

By using this kind of language, you make it clear to the reader that you're still talking about a source. And while you'll use this type of language throughout any researched essay whether you're also using parenthetical citations or not, as we mentioned above, sometimes this linking language will be all you need for in-text citation.

CAUTION: Make sure you use strong and respectful attributive language (signal phrases).

- Avoid phrases like
 - Smith talks about...
 - What does Smith actually **argue**? (Also, if it is a written source, "talk" is not accurate.)
 - Johnson mentions...
 - Johnson probably put a lot of thought into their material; they do not simply "mention" evidence.
 - Moriarty writes about...
 - Sure, we can write "about" anything, but what are we **arguing** about the topic? If I say that I write "about" racial profiling, you still don't know what I'm arguing about that.
 - Lake tries to...

- Unless you are writing a critique or response, and your point is that Lake truly does not actually achieve their purpose, don't say that authors simply "try" to argue but do not accomplish it.
- DO USE strong, respectful language, such as in the four linking language examples above this textbox.

Let's look back at the last Fogbottom example from above the textbox, and imagine you wanted to add two more sentences from the same source. The linking language is underlined:

In the article, "Grooming Poodles for Fun and Profit," Jonas Fogbottom tells us that, although it takes a long time to become a skilled poodle groomer, it's well worth the effort and leads to a good career. Fogbottom explains that one undergoes a great deal of training in the art of dog and poodle grooming. The article points out that there are many resources for people who want to know more about a dog grooming career.

Using the linking language makes it absolutely clear to your reader that you are still talking about a source.

Whatever comes first in the Works Cited citation is what will go into the parentheses in a parenthetical citation. Most often that item is an author's last name, but sometimes it's a title or abbreviated title of an article or other type of text. This is another good reason for starting by creating a Works Cited entry the moment you begin working with a source.

3. Parenthetical Citations

The parenthetical citation includes the author's name and, if there is one, a page number. To learn more about parenthetical citation and see some examples, see the *Purdue OWL* article "[MLA In-Text Citations: The Basics](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/paraphrase/citations/citations.html)" (available from owl.english.purdue.edu).

Here's an **example**:

(Fogbottom 16)

If there are **two authors**, list both (with a page number, if available):

(Smith and Jones 24)

If there are **three or more authors**, list the first author only and add "et al."* (with a page number, if available):

(Smith et al. 62)

**et al* means “and others.” If a text or source has three or more authors, MLA style has us just list the first one with *et al*.

But my source doesn’t have page numbers!

If you are using an electronic source or another kind of source with no page numbers, just leave the page number out:

(Fogbottom)

If you’re **quoting or paraphrasing someone who was cited by the author of one of your sources**, then that’s handled a bit differently. For example, what if you quote Smith, but you found that quote in the article by Fogbottom. In this case, you should introduce the speaker (Smith) as described above, and then cite the source for the quote, like this:

(qtd. in Fogbottom)

But my source doesn’t have an author!

This happens sometimes. Many useful documents, like government publications, organizational reports, and surveys, don’t list their authors. On the other hand, sometimes no clearly listed author can be a red flag that a source is not entirely trustworthy or is not researched well enough to be a reliable source for you.

If you encounter a source with no author, do look for other indicators that it is a good (or poor) source—who published it, does it have an appropriate list of references, is it current information, is it unbiased?

If you determine that this source is an appropriate source to use, then, when you create your in-text citation for it, you will simply use the title of the source (article, chapter, graph, film, etc.) in the place where you would have used the author’s name. If the title is long, you should abbreviate by listing the first one or two words of it (with a page number, if available).

Let’s imagine you’re working with a newspaper article entitled, “What’s New in Technology,” enclosed in quotation marks to indicate that this is an article title, and with **no known author**. Here’s what that would look in a parenthetical citation:

(“What’s New” B6)

If there is no author and you’re working with an electronic article, use the first one or two words in your parenthetical citation, again, enclosed in quotation marks. Let’s imagine you’re working with a web article entitled, “Pie Baking for Fun and Profit” and with no author. Here’s what that would look in a parenthetical citation:

(“Pie Baking”)

The parenthetical citation should be added at the end of the sentence that contains the source material. Let’s go back to the Fogbottom example and see how a parenthetical citation would work:

“Poodle grooming is a labor of love. It takes years of practice to be good at it, but once learned, it’s a fun and worthwhile career” (Fogbottom).

Here’s what it would look like if we used it with a paraphrase instead of a quotation:

Although it takes a long time to become a skilled poodle groomer, it’s well worth the effort and leads to a good career (Fogbottom).

Note that the citation is placed at the end of the sentence; the period comes after the parentheses. Misplacing the period is one of the most common formatting errors made by students.

Using parenthetical citation makes it clear that a sentence comes from source material. This is the easiest way to cite or identify your source materials.

If using parenthetical citations is easy, why would we bother with using introduction or linking language to identify sources?

Good question! Only using parenthetical citations all the way through your writing would do the job of citing the material, but it wouldn’t read smoothly and would feel somewhat rough because every time a parenthetical citation popped up, the reader would be “stopped” in place for a moment. Using a combination of framing, signal phrases, and parenthetical citations makes the writing smoother and easier to read. It also integrates the source material with the writer’s ideas. We call this synthesis, and it’s part of the craft of writing.

Works Cited Entries

At the end of texts that have drawn from existing sources, you will find a Works Cited page, which gives more information than the parenthetical citations do about the sources referenced in the work. The entries all follow a specific and consistent format so that it is easy for readers to find the information they are looking for and so that the shape and type of that information is consistent no matter who is writing the entries.

Until recently, the MLA required a slightly different format for every type of source—an entry for a Youtube video required certain information that was different from an entry for a book that was different from an entry for an online article. The most recent version of MLA, though—MLA 8—has simplified this so there is just one format rather than many.

You can learn how to create works cited entries in MLA 8 format, and see an example, in the “[Creating a Works Cited Page](#)” appendix to this text.

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54.

Citing or Identifying Images in Your Writing

Increasingly, instructors allow and even encourage students to use images—photographs, maps, sketches, graphs, and so forth—in their writing. Before you do this, check with your instructor to make sure they approve. Remember that if the image was created by someone else, you must give them credit just like with all source material.

We don't list images on the Works Cited page, but we do identify them in a few ways:



1. If your word processor allows captioning, you can add the image information in a caption.
2. Otherwise, mention it in the text at the point you are talking about it, enclosing the information in parentheses.
3. Ideally, include the author(s), title of source, title of container, publisher, date, and location.

Here's an example of how you might cite a sketch taken from a hard copy book, where "The Perfect Poodle Hairdo" is the name of sketch and *Styling Poodles for Fun and Profit* is the book title:

Groomer, Ima. "The Perfect Poodle Coif." *Styling Poodles for Fun and Profit*, Poodle Publishing, 2015.

Place this information in the caption box under the image, or near the image in some way. Alternatively, create a footnote that will place the information in the footer space at the bottom of the page.

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55.

Using Citation Generators

A citation generator is a piece of software that creates a Works Cited list for the writer. The writer types in the details about the source, and the citation generator creates the citations and the Works Cited list.

Some of them also create in-text (parenthetical) citations.

Sounds too good to be true, yes?

That's because it is.

I have yet to find a citation generator that works correctly. Most make at least a couple of errors—often more—which means you end up having to go back and manually correct the source. And this means that if you would have just created your own source citation in the beginning, you would have saved time!

I always suggest that students stay away from citation generators for the above reason. I also feel that it's important to learn to do this skill on your own before turning to a piece of software: it's much like learning your multiplication tables before using a calculator to do it for you. Plus, the newest version of MLA (version 8) is so simple that creating citations is quick and easy.

That said, if you are lucky enough to find a citation generator that works, it may save you some time. But be wary. Remember what I said above: "I have yet to find a citation generator that works correctly." Our institution's librarians have said the same.

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56.

Handling Titles

Here are a few basic rules for formatting titles:

Italics

- A long work or a complete work
 - Movie title (long work)
 - *Jurassic Park*
 - TV series (complete work)
 - *Trailer Park Boys*
 - Album (complete work)
 - *Changes*
- Periodical titles (complete work)
 - *The Vancouver Sun*
- Book titles (long work)
 - *Anne of Green Gables*

If you are writing by hand, like in a test or if you draft by hand, will underline the title.

“Quotation Marks”

- Short works or parts of a work
- Article titles (part of a work—part of the complete periodical)
 - “Downtown Eastside Clean-up”
- Chapter titles (part of a work—part of the long book)
 - “Amethyst Finally Finds Home”
 - “Grammar and Sentence Structure for Essays”

- Songs (part of a work—part of the complete album)
 - “All Around Me”
- Short story (short work)
 - “After ‘While’”
- Poem (short work)
 - “The Last Time I Saw Nimis”

Every word in a title is capitalized except for conjunctions (small joining words like and, but, or if), articles (a, an, and the), and prepositions (words that show position, like above, on, and between). Also, don’t capitalize “to” when it’s part of a verb (to Learn, to Practice).

- If a colon is used within the title, the word after the colon is always capitalized, e.g., Raising Golden Retrievers: An Exercise in Power Vacuuming.
 - Add a colon to a title yourself if the title has two parts: a title and subtitle.

Exercise

See if you can correctly format the following titles:

1. Web article: people are happier when they spend time in the outdoors
2. Short story from a magazine: once upon a time (title) a tale of lost love (subtitle)
3. Book title: overcoming adversity in life
4. Newspaper article: two people apprehended in attempt to rob a bank

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IX

Literature

57.

Elements of Fiction: Character

We can use several ways to think of character:

Importance	Roles	Characteristics	Development
Who are the main/important characters?	What is their purpose in the story?	What are the characters like? How are they acting?	How do the characters change and grow throughout the story? How does what they go through affect them?

A story can have many characters, but you may not find all of these character types in a story.

Characters by Importance

Protagonist (aka Main Character)

- The **protagonist** is the character who is most written about in the story.
- A story will always have at least one main character, but it can have several. (In movies or television, this is called an ensemble cast—when each character is as important as another.) They are the most important in the action in the story.

Secondary Characters

- These characters may be written about often in the story and are important but not as much as the main character.

Minor Characters

- These characters fill in the story but are not as important as the protagonist or secondary characters.
- They may have small roles and stories of their own, but don't drive the action of the protagonist/s main story.
- They might act as what we'd call "extras" in a movie. They can be as little important as background.

Characters by Role

Antagonist

- This character is generally in opposition to the main character. This is someone with whom the protagonist has a conflict.
- An **antagonist** can be any character who acts against any other.
- This does not necessarily make them “bad” characters. They are simply opposed to another.

Villain

- This is a character who is negative, bad, or evil.
- It might be the antagonist, but it might just be another bad character.

Sidekick

- This character goes along with another character in the story—usually the protagonist but can be with any character.
- This character’s purpose is to support another character.

Five Methods of Characterization (how we know what the characters are like)

1. Describing the character’s physical appearance
2. Showing the character’s actions
3. Revealing the character’s thoughts and words
4. Showing what other characters think and say about the character
5. Telling the reader directly what the writer thinks of the character

Exercise

Choose your own short story, or use a story your instructor has assigned. Use examples from the story where applicable.

1. Who is the protagonist in the story?
2. Describe the character. What he or she looks like, acts like, talks like, thinks like, etc.
3. Are there any secondary characters? Yes / No

4. Who are they?
5. Are there any minor characters? Yes / No
6. Who are they?
7. Is there an antagonist? Yes / No
8. Who is it?
9. Is there a villain? Yes / No
10. Who is it?
11. Is there a sidekick? Yes / No
12. Who is it?



What do you think? Can an animal be a character?

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58.

Elements of Fiction: Plot

Plot (aka narrative arc) is what happens in the story. The classic plot structure has a beginning, a middle, and an end. The way the pages unfold from the first page to last can be out of order chronologically as to what happens in the story.

It is useful to understand the elements of the classic plot, but know that many different storytelling cultures use different plot structures. We start by examining the basics of the classic plot so that we may become accustomed to how it feels to work with stories, not because we believe that this is the only or best way of representing stories. I will continue to refer to this element of fiction as “plot” for simplicity.

Beginning—3 Types of Beginnings

Plots can have different types of beginnings, but they often have just one type of middle and end.

1. The story can start at the very beginning of the action.
 - “Once upon a time...” a fairy tale beginning
 - Example: “Clarissa woke up in the morning, looking forward to a nice, relaxing day at the park.” Nothing is happening yet, and we don’t know what is going to happen
2. The story can start in the middle of the action.
 - In medias res (in the middle of things)
 - Example: “Clarissa was cramped up in the trunk of the speeding car, terrified that the kidnappers would hurt her.” We are right in the middle of the action, but we don’t know how it started or how it will end.
3. The story can start at the end of the action.
 - Ending first
 - Example: “The police officers finished their questioning and left Clarissa alone in her hospital room, but she couldn’t stop replaying the horrible day over in her mind.” We know how it all turned out, but we don’t know how it started or what

happened.

Middle

In the middle of the story, we are at the **climax** of the action. We know what the character wants and what the character has done up until this point. The action is at its most exciting, but we don't know what will happen to get us to the ending.

- The climax is where the conflict in the story reaches its peak.
- Conflict is a struggle between characters and other forces. The conflict defines what the characters need and want.
- The point where everything is at its height of excitement; everything builds to that point.

End

At the end of the story, we have the **resolution** to the action.

- The climax is over, and we know how the conflict has been resolved.
- We know how it all turns out.
- Almost always happy ending—usually resolved in a satisfactory way for the characters and the reader.

Conflict

“Man vs.” is the classic terminology to think of conflict. It originates from classic Greek literature. We understand now that much of the old use of the word “man” referred to all human beings; however, there were many instances where “man” or even “person” was considered to only refer to males who represented the gender known as “man” and excluded women and other people. It is acceptable to use “person vs.” to denote conflict. I am comfortable with using “man vs.” as I am aware I am studying conflict in the traditional sense—and not gender identity in our current time—when I use those terms.

- Man vs. man
 - Character is in a struggle with another character directly
- Man vs. self
 - Character is in a struggle with him/herself
- Man vs. fate
- Man vs. society

- Character is in a struggle with society
- Man vs. higher power
 - Character is in a struggle with a God or divine being
- Man vs. machine
 - May be an actual machine, such as a vehicle, factory machine, or robot
 - May be a usable item
 - May be known as people or groups working together to accomplish something, an organization or institution (eg. war, marriage, church)
- Man vs. nature

Other Plot Points

- Flashback—look back in time to get more information about present
- Foreshadowing—hints at what will happen later in the story
- Prologue—a chapter before the story even begins—usually giving background
- Epilogue—a chapter after the story ends—probably tells what happened after

Exercise

Choose your own short story, or use a story your instructor has assigned. Use examples from the story where applicable.

1. What happens at the beginning of the story?
2. Where does this story start? beginning / middle / end
3. What problems do the characters have? What is the conflict in the story? (type and example)
4. What happens because of these problems?
5. When do things change because of the problem?
6. What happens in the middle of the story—the climax?
7. How do they deal with this?

59.

Point of View, Narrative, and Dialogue

Prose fiction is a story written in the narrative. The narrator may or may not be a character in the story. There are three main **points of view (PoV)**; we describe writing as being in the first, second, or third person.

First Person PoV

First person PoV uses pronouns like **I, me, us, our,** and **we**.



- When you read a passage written in first person, it's as if you're inside that person's head, seeing through their eyes. You think what they think, see what they see, and know what they know.
- The **strength** of first person is in the way it shares emotional intensity. We *feel* what the narrator feels. We respond to events along with them.
- The **weakness** of first person is its lack of significant information. We only know what the narrator knows; we can't get into the heads of other characters who are nearby. We also only see what that narrator sees; we can't see what else is going on around them or even around the next bend in the road. The first person narrator's knowledge of all the story's events is limited.
- Writers tend to use first person when they want to convey emotional intensity, as in a personal narrative, or when they want us to know the narrator intimately.

Example

"I could picture it. I have a habit of imagining the conversations between my friends. We went out to the Cafe Napolitain to have an aperitif and watch the evening crowd on the Boulevard" (from Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*).

Second Person PoV

Second person PoV uses pronouns like **you, your,** and **yourself**.

When you read a passage written in second person, it's as if the writer is talking directly to you.

- The **strength** of second person is in a direct connection with narrator and reader; when reading second person, you feel as if you're having a conversation with the narrator. This is especially effective when they are giving instructions.
- The **weakness** of second person is that it limits the audience by making it seem the narrator is talking to only one person. It can create a strange "dreamy" tone that may make the text feel strange. It can also feel aggressive or accusatory.
- Writers may use second person when they want to talk directly to one reader, give instructions, or create a dreamy or meditative passage.

Examples

"You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose. You're on your own. And you know what you know" (from Dr. Seuss' *Oh, the Places You'll Go!*).

"You are walking through a forest.... It is peaceful.... You breathe deeply and slowly as you listen to the forest sounds around you.... You hear the sounds of leaves underfoot as you follow the path.... You find a fallen log.... You sit down" (meditation sequence).

"When you fill out the form, use a #2 pencil" (instructions).

Third Person PoV

Third person PoV uses pronouns like **she**, **he**, **it**, **them**, and **their** and omits "I."

- Can be **omniscient** or **limited omniscient**.
- When you read a passage written in third person, you experience a perspective that is all-seeing and all-knowing. A third person narrator can see past, present, and future; they can also know whatever any character knows as well as how that character feels and thinks. They have a full view of whatever is in front of, behind, beside, above, or below them. In short, they can see the entire scene. Third person is all about facts.
- The **strength** of third person is its ability to be informative. It sees all, knows all, and shares this with the reader. Because it does not use the "I" voice, it feels objective and smart.
- The **weakness** of third person is its lack of intimacy. It's focused on information and thus tells us little about emotion and feelings. We end up knowing a lot about the setting and events and not much about the human nature of the characters, what they're thinking, or what they plan to do next.
- Writers tend to use third person when they want to write objectively without sounding emotional or biased. Much college, research, and professional writing is done in third person. And note that there are a number of sub-forms of third person; you may hear more about these if you study creative writing.

Example

“The seller of lightning-rods arrived just ahead of the storm. He came along the street of Green Town, Illinois, in the late cloudy October day, sneaking glances over his shoulder. Somewhere not so far back, vast lightnings stomped the earth. Somewhere, a storm like a great beast with terrible teeth could not be denied” (from Ray Bradbury’s *Something Wicked This Way Comes*).

Exercise

Choose your own short story, or use a story your instructor has assigned. Use examples from the story where applicable.

1. What type of narrator does this story have? 1st person / 2nd person / 3rd person
2. Give two examples that show the point of view of the narrator. (2 marks)
3. Is the narrator a character in the story? Yes / No
4. If the narrator is 3rd person, is it omniscient or limited omniscient? Explain.
5. Who is/are the main character/s?
6. What other characters are in the story?
7. Write a brief plot summary of what happens in the beginning, the middle, and the end of the story. (3 marks)

Dialogue

Dialogue is the talking characters do. Narrative is everything other than dialogue.

Dialogue can also be one character talking to themselves or thinking—this is internal dialogue.

- Example of spoken dialogue: Nathan walked right up to Mr. Pearson and said, “I quit this stupid basketball team.”
 - This type of dialogue almost always has quotation marks around the spoken words.
- Example of internal dialogue: Cynthia wondered, *Will I ever fulfill my dreams?*
 - This type of dialogue is often in italics.

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How to Discuss/Present Literature

Discuss in a Literature Circle

A literature circle is a small group of readers who discuss their reading in depth. There are many possible ways to form a literature circle; usually, each participant in a lit circle has a different job. If you do work in a lit circle, then each participant can choose one or more of the Study Guide questions and work on them independently before getting together with other members of the circle. Some suggested roles for members of a lit circle are:



- **Questioner:** This person either writes or answers several comprehension questions about the reading. They should have a clear idea about the answers. They asked the group their questions and lead a discussion about them. The questioner may want to bring a handout for other members of the circle with their questions printed on it.
- **Character expert:** This person defines who the major characters are and describes their characters. They choose adjectives and quotations to support their ideas. This person may want to bring a handout with pictures or drawings of the characters to support their ideas.
- **Summarizer:** This person creates a summary of the plot to share with the group. This person might choose a timeline, a narrative arc, or a Time-order list as a way to summarize what happens in the story. They might want to bring a handout with their timeline or narrative arc to share with other group members, or they might want to prepare a small poster to share.
- **Clarifier:** This person is responsible for explaining some challenging quotations or words to the group. The teacher might assign some phrases, the group might choose some lines, or the clarifier might choose their own difficult parts. They should be able to explain the difficult sections until everyone in the group understands them.
- **Extender:** This person goes beyond the story itself to understand it. They may choose to research the author's life or the time period when the story was written. The extender can think about ways the story connects to today, or focus on predicting what will happen after the story ends. Their goal is to help the group understand the story at a deeper level. Several people can take the role of Extender, but they should focus on different things.

If you choose to complete the study guide in a lit circle, meet in your group to divide the tasks fairly.

Your teacher may prefer you to discuss the reading in your circle, then use your notes to complete the study guide, or they may prefer you to complete the study guide as part of the literature circle discussion.

Poster Presentation

To prepare a poster presentation, a group will work in a similar way to the literature circle. Each person should have a specific job within the group. Each person should be responsible for choosing and creating an attractive visual that explains some aspect of the story: setting, characters, plot, context, and meaning. As a group, design your poster, following any specific requirements your teacher gives you. You may choose to present your poster verbally to the class, or simply share by displaying it to everyone.

Slideshow Presentation

You might want to do this type of presentation individually or work in a group. Your teacher might provide a basic slide show for you to complete. Include pictures – always remember to give the source for every picture! – and quotes from the story. Present your slideshow to the class and explain each slide. This is a great opportunity to be creative.

61.

How to Write a Book Review

Book reviews are a way to think more deeply about a book you've read and to show your understanding of the author's main theme(s) or purpose. A book review should be both informative (what the book is about) and persuasive (why a reader should or shouldn't read this book). It should include both an objective summary and your personal comments and observations.



You can use these instructions for reviewing any kind of literature or texts noted in the RLOs above. You can also use these instructions as a starting point to create a review that is presented in a different delivery model: a presentation, group presentation, or others.

The following is an outline to help you prepare for and write your review. The review will include five paragraphs.

¶1 Introduction

The introduction paragraph provides basic information about the book and gives a sense of what your report will be about. Along with a standard essay introduction, include:

1. Title and Author
2. Publication information: publisher, year, number of pages
3. Genre
4. Brief description of characters
5. Brief plot summary (1-3 sentences)

Body Paragraphs

There are two main sections for this part. The first is an explanation of what the book is about (summary). The second contains your opinions about the book and how successful it is (evaluation).

¶2 Summary

For fiction or other creative writing:

1. Provide brief descriptions of the setting, the point of view (who tells the story), the main character(s) and other major characters. If there is a distinct mood or tone, mention that as well, for example gloom and doom, joyful, calm, tense, mysterious, etc.
2. Give a short, objective plot summary. Provide the major events and the book's climax and resolution.

Evaluation

In this section you explore and question the book in two paragraphs. Write your own opinions, but be sure to explain and support them with examples from the book.

¶3—Illustration/Expository paragraph

Define or explain the main literary element/s in the book. Some questions you might want to consider: Were you most struck by character, such as development or use of character types? Was the use of setting most memorable to you? Do you feel that conflict drove the plot? Which of the elements of Literature you have studied was most pivotal in this book?

¶4—Persuasive paragraph

Express whether a reader should or shouldn't read this book. Some questions you might want to consider:

- Did the author achieve his or her purpose? For example, if this is a mystery story, did you feel the mystery and tension?
- Is the writing effective, powerful, difficult, beautiful?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the book?
- What is your overall response to the book? Did you find it interesting, moving, dull?
- Would you recommend it to others? Why or why not?

¶5—Conclusion

Conclude by pulling your thoughts together into a standard conclusion paragraph. You may also want to say what impression the book left you with or highlight what you want your reader to know about it.

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62.

Elements of Literature: Setting, Theme

Setting

Setting is where the action in the story takes place. There are two main kinds of settings:

1. General Setting: the less specific and larger time and place in which a story takes place—the overall time and area.
 - e.g., A story may be set in the early twenty-first century in a small town in the interior of British Columbia
 - e.g., Europe in between the two World Wars
2. Specific Setting: the exact time and place in which a specific part of the story happens.
 - e.g., In a scene in a story, the sisters are in their parents' car driving home after school.
 - e.g., at the corner between two buildings at dusk on New Year's Eve



Theme

Theme is the meaning that *you* get out of a story. The theme is not given to readers directly—it is something that readers must figure out on their own.

- Example: a theme of a story may be unrequited love (love for someone who doesn't return that love).
- Example: The theme of a story may be overcoming great obstacles to succeed in life.
- Examples: "love," "family loyalty," "human behaviour in wartime."

Theme is a major concept the writer wants to explore with their work. It is usually a universal, abstract idea that any person could understand.

Problems with Theme

- Have you ever had a hard time finding “the theme” in a story?
- Have you ever received a poor grade on an answer or assignment about theme?

I pose this vote to my students, and I get a lot of hands up over these questions. I have noticed that there are three main reasons why students have trouble with theme:

1. Students will believe that there is “one” theme in a story.
 - This is a problem with the wording of a question. There can, and will, be many possible themes in a story. The question may be asking what is “the most significant theme”—a much different possibility.
2. Students may feel that they are wrong about a theme.
 - As long as it is a reasonable possibility that most people could recognize, you are not “wrong.”
 - Unless you think that a major theme in “Goldilocks and the Three Bears” is “interracial marriages,” you are probably not wrong.
 - But who would think that about “Goldilocks”? If you are thinking it, you are probably fine to explore it.
3. Students may not focus appropriately on only one theme (that they have selected as significant through their own understanding); instead, they may throw many different ideas into their assignment about the theme in a given story.
 - As with any assignment, a discussion of theme needs to be unified around a central idea and cohesive in that it proves only that main idea.
 - A theme about childhood poverty that might come out of “The Little Match Girl” should not include dangers of roads for children, the effects of cold upon the mind, and parent-child relationships. (Unless you will use each of those to prove that childhood poverty.)

Exercise

Choose your own short story, or use a story your instructor has assigned. Use examples from the story where applicable.

1. What is the general setting of the story?
2. Choose two scenes and describe the specific setting for each scene. (2 marks)
3. How much dialogue is there in this story?

4. Give two examples of the most frequent dialogue in the story. (2 marks)
5. Is there internal dialogue? Yes / No
6. What theme do you see in this story? Give a few examples of how the theme revealed itself to you. (3 marks)

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Context Clues for Literature

Besides clues to help you determine the pattern or genre of a reading selection, there are clues to help you figure out the meaning of specific words that are unfamiliar to you. Here are the five most common:

1. **Definition/Explanation Clues:** sometimes the meaning of a word or phrase is given right after its use.
Example: Taxidermy, the art of preparing, stuffing, and mounting the skins of animals (especially vertebrates) for display or for other sources of study, is popular among museum curators.
2. **Restatement/Synonym Clues:** sometimes a word is presented in a simpler way.
Example: Stuffing dead animals has been a dream of Stedman Nimblebody, author of *Taxidermy Through the Ages*, ever since his pet snake died when Steddie was six years old. He still misses Mr. Scaly Face.
3. **Contrast/Antonym Clues:** sometimes the meaning of a word is clarified by presenting a word or phrase opposite of its meaning.
Example: Little Steddie wanted to visit the Taxidermy Museum but the rest of the family preferred a trip to the Zoo to see live animals.
4. **Inference/General Context Clues:** sometimes the meaning of a word or phrase is in the surrounding sentences, or must be inferred or implied by the general meaning of a selection.
Example: When Steddie finally got the chance to visit the Taxidermy Museum, he was very excited. He even found a stuffed snake that looked exactly like Mr. Scaly Face! “Just think,” he exclaimed to his parents, “If Mr. Scaly Face was stuffed, I could still tease the cat and the dog with him!”
5. **Punctuation:** the correct use of punctuation helps a reader get the meaning of a term, phrase, or thought. Likewise, incorrectly placed or missing punctuation sometimes gives an entirely different and incorrect meaning across.
Example:
Missing punctuation: Is it time to eat Grandma?
Corrected: Is it time to eat, Grandma?

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64.

Close Reading for Literature

In addition to using reading comprehension skills such as predicting, “talking to the text,” skimming a textbook before reading, and noting patterns and context clues, another strategy called “close reading” is helpful. This is popular with literature instructors; however, the skills involved in close reading are applicable to any complex reading assignment.



Titles

Titles, for starters, particularly of non-fiction works, may tell you what the main idea, or thesis, is. For example, a book about “The History of the Roman Empire” usually gives you just that—the history of the Roman Empire.

This is not usually true, however, for works of fiction, for which inference is the key to comprehension. For example, “Story of an Hour,” by Kate Chopin, while it might seem to be something about time, also suggests it is about something other than a clock ticking away seconds and minutes, and indeed it is.

Author

Many people are familiar with Stephen King, who writes in the horror genre. Knowing this element lets the reader know to anticipate (and predict) a horror story with a lot of plot twists and turns in some horrible ways. Prediction has begun.

Knowing about the remaining elements—plot, characters, and setting—help the reader close in on meaning enough to be able to discuss the theme or themes of the work with reasonable evidence to support one’s conclusion.

Inference

We can do close reading of small passages, individual sentences, and even specific words. Each level of careful attention and thought helps a reader “read between the lines” when meaning is not overtly stated, when themes are inferred rather than explained outright. This is called **inference**.

Idioms

Idioms are good examples of inference, or “reading between the lines.” They also employ the comparison skill called metaphor (comparing two things without using the terms “like” or “as”).

Write out as many meanings for the list of idioms below as you can:

- Keep it under your hat.
- Over the hill.
- Barking up the wrong tree.
- Paint the town red.
- Lion’s share.
- Up a creek without a paddle.
- Eyes are bigger than your stomach.
- Put your nose to the grindstone.
- Keep your shoulder to the wheel.
- Running on empty.
- Too many irons in the fire.
- Spitting image.
- Born with a silver spoon in his mouth.
- Wild goose chase.
- Clear sailing.
- Walking on cloud nine.

Cartoons, especially editorial cartoons, also make good use of inference skills. For the cartoon, below, answer the questions about each of its elements to get to the meaning. Cartoons, like other forms of art, include additional visual elements such as facial expressions and setting. Many of us are able to comprehend cartoons within a few seconds just because we have so many inference skills already in our “hard drives,” so to speak, but examining them now will be a good reminder of how to comprehend complex subject matter—by close examination of all of the elements.

1. Setting:
2. Subject (what’s going on):
3. Facial expression(s):
4. Quote:
5. Meaning of quote (inference):



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X

Presentations

Public Speaking and Class Presentations

Public speaking—giving an oral presentation before a class or another group of people—is a special form of interaction common in education. You will likely be asked to give a presentation in one of your classes at some point, and your future career may also involve public speaking. It's important to develop skills for this form of communication.

Public speaking is like participating in class—sharing your thoughts, ideas, and questions with others in the group. In other ways, however, public speaking is very different. You stand in front of the class to speak, rather than from your usual seat—and for most students, that changes the psychology of the situation. You also have time outside of class to prepare your presentation, allowing you to plan it carefully—and, for many, giving more time to worry about it and experience even more anxiety!

Overcoming Anxiety

Although a few people seem to be natural public speakers, most of us feel some stage fright or anxiety about having to speak to a group, at least at first. This is completely normal. We feel like everyone is staring at us and seeing our every flaw, and we're sure we'll forget what we want to say or mess up. Take comfort from knowing that almost everyone else is dreading giving class presentations the same as you are! But you can learn to overcome your anxiety and prepare in a way that not only safely gets you through the experience but also leads to success in your presentation. The following are proven strategies for overcoming anxiety when speaking in public:

- **Understand anxiety.** Since stage fright is normal, don't try to deny that you're feeling anxious. A little anxiety can help motivate you to prepare and do your best. Accept this aspect of the process and work to overcome it. Anxiety is usually worst just before you begin and but eases up once you've begun.
- **Understand that your audience actually wants you to succeed.** They're not looking for faults or hoping you'll fail. Other students and your instructors are on your side, not your enemy. They likely won't even see your anxiety.
- **Reduce anxiety by preparing and practicing.** The next section discusses the preparation process in more detail. The more fully you prepare and the more often you have practice, the more your anxiety will go away.
- **Focus on what you're saying, not how you're saying it.** Keep in mind that you have ideas to share, and this is what your classmates and instructors are interested in. Don't obsess about speaking, but focus on the content of your presentation. Think, for example, of how easily you share your ideas with a friend or family member, as you naturally speak your mind. The same can work with public speaking if you focus on the ideas themselves.

- **Develop self-confidence.** As you prepare, you will make notes you can refer to during the presentation. You're not going to forget what you want to say. The more you practice, the more confident you'll become.

Guidelines for Presentations

Preparing and delivering a presentation in class (or in business or other settings) is a process that breaks down into these six basic steps:

1. Analyze your audience and goals
2. Plan, research, and organize your content
3. Draft and revise the presentation
4. Prepare speaking notes
5. Practice the presentation
6. Deliver the presentation

Step 1: Analyze Your Audience and Goals

Who will see and hear your presentation—and why? Obviously, other students and the instructor. But you still need to think about what they already know, and don't know, about your topic. If your topic relates to subject matter in class lectures and readings, consider what background information they already have and be careful not to give a boring recap of things they already know. It may be important, however, to show how your specific topic fits in with subjects that have been discussed already in class, especially in the beginning of your presentation, but be sure to focus on your new topic.

New terms and concepts may become familiar to you while doing your research and preparation, but remember to define and explain them to other students. Consider how much explanation or examples will be needed for your audience to grasp your points. If your topic involves anything controversial or may provoke emotion, consider your audience's attitudes and choose your words carefully. Thinking about your audience will help you find ways to get their attention and keep them interested.

Be sure you are clear about the goals for the presentation. Are you primarily presenting new information or arguing for a position? Are you giving an overview or a detailed report? Review the assignment and talk with the instructor if you're unsure. Your goals guide everything in the presentation: what you say, how much you say, what order you say it in, what visual aids you use, whether you use humor or personal examples, and so forth.

Step 2: Plan, Research, and Organize Your Content

Starting with the assignment and your goals, brainstorm your topic. Jot notes on specific topics that seem important. Often you'll do reading or research to gather more information. Take notes as you would with any reading. As you research the topic at this stage, don't worry at first about how much

content you are gathering. It's better to know too much and then pick out the most important things to say than to rush ahead to drafting the presentation and then realize you don't have enough material.

Organizing a presentation is similar to organizing topics in a class paper and uses the same principles. Introduce your topic and state your main idea (thesis), go into more detail about specific ideas, and conclude your presentation. Look for a logical order for the specifics in the middle. Some topics work best in chronological (time) order or with a compare-and-contrast organization. If your goal is to persuade the audience, build up to the strongest reason. Put similar ideas together and add transitions between different ideas.

While researching your topic and outlining your main points, think about visual aids that may help the presentation. Also start thinking about how much time you have for the presentation, but don't limit yourself yet in the outline stage.

Step 3: Draft and Revise the Presentation

Unless required by the assignment, you don't need to actually write out the presentation in full sentences and paragraphs. How much you write depends on your own learning and speaking style. Some students speak well from brief phrases written in an outline, while other students find it easier to write sentences out completely. There's nothing wrong with writing the presentation out fully like a script if that helps you be sure you will say what you intend to—just so you don't actually get up and read from the script.

You can't know for sure how long a presentation will last until you rehearse it later, but you can estimate the time while drafting it. On the average, it takes two to three minutes to speak what can be written on a standard double-spaced page—but with visual aids, pauses, and audience interaction, it may take longer. While this is only a rough guide, you can start out thinking of a ten-minute presentation as the equivalent of a three to four-page paper.

Never wait until the last minute to draft your presentation. Arrange your time to prepare the first draft and then come back to it a day or two later to ask these questions:

- Am I going on too long about minor points? Could the audience get bored?
- Do I have good explanations and reasons for my main points? Do I need more data or better examples? Where would visual aids be most effective?
- Am I using the best words for this topic and this audience? Should I be more or less informal in the way I talk?
- Does it all hold together and flow well from one point to the next? Do I need a better introduction or transition when I shift from one idea to another?

Visual Aids in Presentations

Except for very short informal presentations, most presentations gain from visuals—and visual aids are often expected. If encouraged or allowed to include visuals in your presentation, plan to do so. Consider all possible types:

- Charts or graphs
- Maps
- Photos or other images
- Video clips
- Handouts (only when necessary—they can be distracting)

Use the available technology, whether it's an overhead projector, PowerPoint slides, a flip chart, or posters. (Talk to your instructor about resources and software for designing your visuals.) Follow these guidelines:

- Design your visuals carefully. Here are some basic rules:
 - Use a simple, neutral background. A light-coloured background with text in a dark colour works best for words; a dark background used like matting works best for photos.
 - Minimize the amount of text in visuals—more than eight words per slide is usually too much. Avoid simply presenting word outlines of what you are saying. Make sure text is large enough for the audience to read.
 - Don't use more than two pictures in a slide, and use two only to make a direct comparison. Montages are hard to focus on and distract the viewer from what you're saying. Use images only when they support your presentation; don't use clip art just as decoration.
 - Don't put a table of numbers in a visual aid. If you need to illustrate numerical data, use a graph. (Microsoft Excel can make them for you easily.)
 - Don't use sound effects. Use a very brief recording only if directly related to your main points.
 - Don't use visual special effects such as dissolves, spins, box-outs, or other transitions. They are distracting. Use animation sparingly and only if it helps make a point.
- Don't use so many visuals or move through them so quickly that the audience gives all its attention to them rather than to you.
- Practice your presentation using your visual aids, because they affect your timing.
- Explain visuals when needed but not when they're obvious.
- Keep your eyes on your audience, only briefly glancing at visuals to stay in synch with them.
- Don't hand out a printout of your visuals. Your audience should keep their eyes on you instead of fiddling around with paper.

Step 4: Prepare Speaking Notes

As mentioned earlier, it's not a good idea to read your presentation from a written page rather than *deliver* it. To keep your audience's attention, it's important to make eye contact with them and to use a normal speaking voice—and you can't do this if you keep your eyes on a written script.

Speaking notes are a brief outline for your presentation. You might write them on index cards or sheets of paper. Include important facts and data as well as keywords for your main ideas, but don't write too much. (If you forget things later when you start practicing, you can always add more to your outline then.) Be sure to number your cards or pages to prevent a last-minute mix-up.

Think especially about how to open and close your presentation, because these two moments have the most impact of the whole presentation. Use the opening to capture the audience's attention, but be sure it is appropriate for your audience and the goals. Here are some possibilities for your opening:

- A striking fact or example (illustrating an issue or a problem)
- A brief interesting or humorous anecdote (historical, personal, or current event)
- A question to the audience
- An interesting quotation

Then relate the opening to your topic and your main point and move into the body of the presentation.

Your closing mirrors the opening. Transition from your last point to a brief summary that pulls your ideas together. You might end with a challenge to the audience, a strong statement about your topic, or a personal reflection on what you have been saying. Just make sure you have a final sentence planned so that you don't end up uncomfortably fumbling around at the end (“Well, I guess that ends my presentation”).

Step 5: Practice the Presentation

Practice may be the most important step. It is also the best way to get over stage fright and gain confidence.

Practice first in an empty room where you imagine people sitting, so that you can move your eyes around the room to this “audience.” The first time through, focus on putting your outlined notes into full sentences in your natural speaking voice. Don't read your notes aloud. Glance down at your notes only briefly and then look up immediately around the room. Practice two or three times just to find the right words to explain your points and feel more comfortable working with your notes. Time yourself, but don't obsess over your presentation being the exact length required. If your presentation is much too long, however, adjust it now in your notes so that you don't start memorizing things that you might accidentally still say later on even though you cut them from your notes.

Once you feel good speaking from your notes, practice to add some more polish to your delivery. You might want to record or videotape your presentation or ask a friend or roommate to watch your presentation. Pay attention to these aspects of how you speak:

- Try to speak in your natural voice, not in a monotone as if you were just reading aloud. If you will be presenting in a large room without a microphone, you will need to speak louder than usual, but still try to use a natural voice.
- In usual conversation, we speed up and slow down and vary the intensity of our words to show how we feel about what we're saying. Practice changes in your delivery style to emphasize key points.
- Don't keep looking at your notes. It's fine if you use words that are different from those you wrote down—the more you rehearse without looking at your notes, the more natural sounding you will be.
- Be sure you can pronounce all new words and technical terms correctly. Practice saying them slowly and clearly to yourself until you can say them naturally.
- Don't forget transitions. Listeners need a cue when you're moving to a new idea. Practice phrases such as "*Another* important reason for this is..." or "Now let's move on to *why* this is so...."
- Watch out for all those little "filler" words people use so often, such as "like," "you know," "well," and "uh." They're very distracting to most audiences. Listen to or watch your tape to see if you are using these fillers or ask your friend to point it out.
- Pay attention to body language when practicing. Stand up straight and tall in every practice session so that you become used to it. Unless you have to stand at a podium to use a fixed microphone in your presentation, practice moving around while you speak; this helps keep the audience watching you. Use hand and arm gestures if they are natural for you, but don't try to make up gestures for the presentation because they will look phony. Most important, keep your eyes moving over the audience. Practice smiling and pausing at key points.
- Finally, it's a good idea to be ready in case of an accident. Most likely your presentation will go smoothly, you'll stay on track with your notes, and your PowerPoint slides will work fine, but sometimes a mishap happens. Be ready to joke about it, rather than becoming flustered. If the computer fails and you lose your visuals, say something like, "Well, that's a shame, I had some really great photos to show you!" If you drop your index cards or notes, or accidentally skip ahead in your presentation and then have to backtrack, make a joke: "Sorry about that, I was so excited to get to my next point that I'm afraid I lost control there for a moment!" Let your audience laugh with you—they'll still be on your side, and you can defuse the incident and move on without becoming more nervous.

Step 6: Deliver the Presentation

Be sure to get enough sleep and eat a healthy breakfast. Don't drink too much caffeine or else you'll become hyper and nervous. Wear your favourite—and appropriate—clothing and comfortable shoes.

Remember, your audience is on your side! If you're still nervous before your turn, take a few deep breaths. Rehearse your opening lines in your mind. Smile as



you move to the front of the room, looking at your audience. You'll see some friendly faces smiling back encouragingly. As you start the presentation, move your eyes among those giving you a warm reception—and if you see some student looking bored or doing something else, just ignore them. But don't focus on any one person in the audience for too long, which could make them nervous or cause them to look away.

Don't keep looking at your watch or a clock: If your rehearsal times were close to your assigned time, your presentation will be also. If you do notice that you're running behind schedule, it may be that you're saying too much out of nervousness. Use your notes to get back on track and keep the pace moving. But it's better to deliver your presentation naturally and fluidly and be a bit long or short than to try to change your words and end up sounding unnatural.

At the closing, deliver your last line with confidence, sweeping your eyes over the audience. If appropriate, ask if there are any questions. When you're done, pause, smile, say "Thank you," and walk back to your seat.

Later on, ask other students and your instructor for comments. Be open minded—don't just ask for praise. If you hear a suggestion for improvement, file that in your memory for next time.

Group Presentations

You may be assigned to give a presentation in a small group. The six-step process discussed previously works for group presentations, too, although group dynamics often call for additional planning and shared responsibilities:

1. Schedule a group meeting as soon as possible to get started. Don't let another student put things off. Explain that you're too busy and won't have time at the last minute.
2. Begin by analyzing your audience and your goals together as a group to make sure everyone understands the assignment the same. Discuss who should do what. While everyone should talk about what content to include, from here onward, you will take on specialized roles. One or more may begin research and gathering information. Others who are good writers may volunteer to draft the presentation, while one or more others may develop the visual aids. Those who have public speaking experience may volunteer to do all or most of the speaking (unless the assignment requires everyone to have a speaking role). You also need a team leader to keep everyone on schedule, organize meetings, and so on. The best team leader is an even-tempered student with good social skills, who can motivate everyone to cooperate.
3. Steps 2 and 3 can likely be carried out individually with assigned tasks, but group members should stay in touch. For example, the person developing the visuals should be talking to those doing the researching and drafting to see what visuals are needed and get started finding or creating them.
4. Before preparing notes in step 4, meet again to go over the content and plan for visuals. Everyone should be comfortable with the plan so far. Make final decisions about who will do each section of the presentation. Set the time for each segment. Then speakers should prepare their own speaking notes. Let someone with strong speaking skills open or close the presentation (or both), with others doing the other parts.

5. The whole group should be present for practice sessions in step 5, even if not everyone is speaking. Those not speaking should take notes and give feedback. If one student is doing most of the presenting, an alternate should be chosen in case the first choice is sick on the scheduled day. The alternate also needs to practice.
6. During the delivery, especially if using technology for visual aids, one student should manage the visuals while others do the presenting. If several students present different segments, plan the transition from one to another so that the presentation keeps flowing without pauses.

Exercise

1. If you have given a class presentation in the past, what worked best for you? (If you have not given a presentation yet as a student, what aspect do you think will be most difficult for you?)
2. Name the two most important things you can do to reduce anxiety about a class presentation you will have to give.
3. For each of the following statements about class presentations, circle True or False:

True	False	Although you are delivering the presentation to the class, your real audience is your instructor, so you don't need to waste time defining terms and concepts he or she already knows.
True	False	Organizing a presentation or speech is similar to organizing topics in a paper you write for class.
True	False	When creating visual aids, put as many photos as you can in each PowerPoint slide to have the strongest impact.
True	False	In case your memory goes blank while giving a presentation, write the full presentation out so that you can read it aloud.

- Describe how best to use body language (facial expressions, eye movements, gestures, etc.) when giving a presentation.
- If you were assigned along with three other students to give a group presentation in the class using this textbook, what would be your preferred role in the preparation stages? Your least preferred role? If you had to take your least preferred role, what single thing would you want to work hardest on to make the presentation successful?

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66.

Presentations to Inform

Informative presentations focus on helping the audience to understand a topic, issue, or technique more clearly. There are distinct functions in a speech to inform, and you may choose to use one or more of these functions in your speech. Let's take a look at the functions and see how they relate to the central objective of helping your audience to understand your topic.

The basic definition of communication highlights the process of understanding and sharing meaning. An informative speech follows this definition when a speaker shares content and information with an audience. As part of a speech, you wouldn't typically be asking the audience to respond or solve a problem. Instead you'd be offering to share with the audience some of the information you have gathered related to a topic.



Increase Understanding

How well does your audience grasp the information? This should be a guiding question to you on two levels. The first involves what they already know—or don't know—about your topic, and what key terms or ideas might be necessary for someone completely unfamiliar with your topic to grasp the ideas you are presenting. The second involves your presentation and the illustration of ideas. The audience will respond to your attention statement and hopefully maintain interest, but how will you take your speech beyond basic content and effectively communicate to increase understanding? These questions should serve as a challenge for your informative speech, and by looking at your speech from an audience-oriented perspective, you will increase your ability to increase the audience's understanding.

Change Perceptions

How you perceive something has everything to do with a range of factors that are unique to you. We all want to make sense of our world, share our experiences, and learn that many people face the same challenges we do. For instance, many people perceive the process of speaking in public as a significant challenge, and in this text, we have broken down the process into several manageable steps. In so doing, we have to some degree changed your perception of public speaking.

When you present your speech to inform, you may want to change the audience member's perceptions of your topic. You may present an informative speech on air pollution and want to change common perceptions such as the idea that most of North America's air pollution comes from private cars. You won't be asking people to go out and vote, or change their choice of automobiles, but you will help your audience change their perceptions of your topic.

Gain Skills

Just as you want to increase the audience's understanding, you may want to help the audience members gain skills. If you are presenting a speech on how to make a meal from fresh ingredients, your audience may thank you for not only the knowledge of the key ingredients and their preparation but also the product available at the conclusion. If your audience members have never made their own meal, they may gain a new skill from your speech.

Exposition versus Interpretation

When you share information informally, you often provide your own perspective and attitude for your own reasons. The speech to inform the audience on a topic, idea, or area of content is not intended to be a display of attitude and opinion.

The speech to inform is like the classroom setting in that the goal is to inform, not to persuade, entertain, display attitude, or create comedy. If you have analyzed your audience, you'll be better prepared to develop appropriate ways to gain their attention and inform them on your topic. You want to communicate thoughts, ideas, and relationships and allow each listener specifically, and the audience generally, to draw their own conclusions. The speech to inform is all about sharing information to meet the audience's needs, not your own.

Exposition

This relationship between informing as opposed to persuading your audience is often expressed in terms of exposition versus interpretation.

Exposition means a public exhibition or display, often expressing a complex topic in a way that makes the relationships and content clear. The goal is to communicate the topic and content to your audience in ways that illustrate, explain, and reinforce the overall content to make your topic more accessible to the audience. The audience wants to learn about your topic and may have some knowledge on it as you do. It is your responsibility to consider ways to display the information effectively.

Interpretation and Bias

Interpretation involves adapting the information to communicate a message, perspective, or agenda. Your insights and attitudes will guide your selection of material, what you focus on, and what you delete (choosing what not to present to the audience). Your interpretation will involve personal bias.

Bias is an unreasoned or not-well-thought-out judgment. Bias involves beliefs or ideas held on the basis of conviction rather than current evidence. Beliefs are often called “habits of the mind” because we come to rely on them to make decisions. Which is the better, cheapest, most expensive, or the middle-priced product? People often choose the middle-priced product and use the belief “if it costs more it must be better” (and the opposite: “if it is cheap it must not be very good”). The middle-priced item, regardless of actual price, is often perceived as “good enough.” All these perceptions are based on beliefs, and they may not apply to the given decision or even be based on any evidence or rational thinking.

We take mental shortcuts all day long, but in our speech to inform, we have to be careful not to reinforce bias.

Point of View

Clearly no one can be completely objective and remove themselves from their own perceptual process. People express themselves and naturally relate what is happening now to what has happened to them in the past. You are your own artist, but you also control your creations.

Objectivity involves expressions and perceptions of facts that are free from distortion by your prejudices, bias, feelings or interpretations. For example, is the post office box blue? An objective response would be yes or no, but a subjective response might sound like “Well, it’s not really blue as much as it is navy, even a bit of purple.” Subjectivity involves expressions or perceptions that are modified, altered, or impacted by your personal bias, experiences, and background. In an informative speech, your audience will expect you to present the information in a relatively objective form. The speech should meet the audience’s need as they learn about the content, not your feelings, attitudes, or commentary on the content.

Here are five suggestions to help you present a neutral speech:

- **Keep your language neutral.**
- **Keep your sources credible and not from biased organizations.**
- **Keep your presentation balanced.** If you use a source that supports one clear side of an issue, include an alternative source and view. Give each equal time and respectful consideration.
- **Keep your audience in mind.** Not everyone will agree with every point or source of evidence, but diversity in your speech will have more to offer everyone.
- **Keep who you represent in mind:** Your business and yourself.

To summarize, the purpose of an informative speech is to share ideas with the audience, increase their understanding, change their perceptions, or help them gain new skills. An informative speech incorporates the speaker’s point of view but not attitude or interpretation.

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67.

Types of Presentations to Inform

Speaking to inform may fall into one of several categories. The presentation to inform may be

- an explanation,
- a report,
- a description,
- or a demonstration of how to do something.

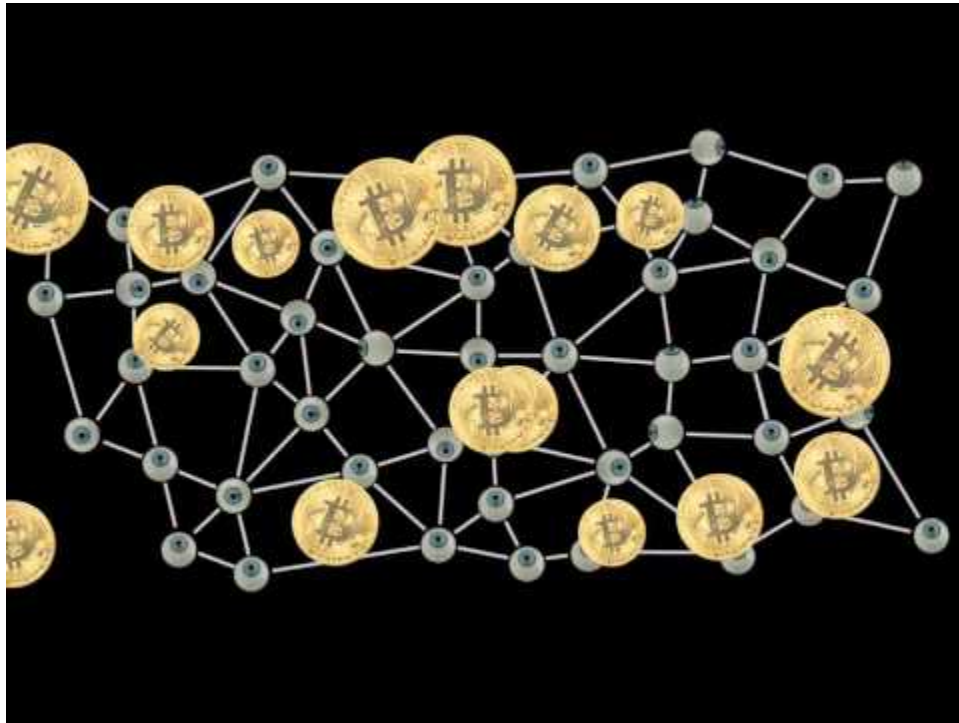
In the sections below each of these types of informative speech will be described.

Explanation

Have you ever listened to a lecture or speech where you just didn't get it? It wasn't that you weren't interested, at least not at first. Perhaps the presenter used language you didn't understand or gave a confusing example. Soon you probably lost interest and sat there, attending the speech in body but certainly not in mind. An effective speech to inform will take a complex topic or issue and explain it to the audience in ways that increase audience understanding.

No one likes to feel left out. As the speaker, it's your responsibility to ensure that this doesn't happen. Also know that to teach someone something new—perhaps a skill that they did not possess or a perspective that allows them to see new connections—is a real gift, both to you and the audience members. You will feel rewarded because you made a difference and they will perceive the gain in their own understanding.

Watch the following video: [Understand the Blockchain in Two Minutes](#)



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
<https://opentextbc.ca/advancedenglish/?p=156>

Report

As a business communicator, you may be called upon to give an informative report where you communicate status, trends, or relationships that pertain to a specific topic. The informative report is a speech where you organize your information around key events, discoveries, or technical data and provide context and illustration for your audience. They may naturally wonder, “Why are sales up (or down)?” or “What is the product leader in your lineup?” and you need to anticipate their perspective and present the key information that relates to your topic.

Description

Have you ever listened to a friend tell you about their recent trip somewhere and found the details fascinating, making you want to travel there or visit a similar place? Describing information requires emphasis on language that is vivid, captures attention, and excites the imagination. Your audience will be drawn to your effective use of colour, descriptive language, and visual aids. An informative speech that focuses description will be visual in many ways. Use your imagination to place yourself in their perspective: how would you like to have someone describe the topic to you?

Demonstration

You want to teach the audience how to program the applications on a new smartphone. A demonstrative speech focuses on clearly showing a process and telling the audience important details about each step so that they can imitate, repeat, or do the action themselves. Consider the visual aids or supplies you will need.

By considering each step and focusing on how to simplify it, you can understand how the audience might grasp the new information and how you can best help them. Also, consider the desired outcome; for example, will your listeners be able to actually do the task themselves? Regardless of the sequence or pattern you will illustrate or demonstrate, consider how people from your anticipated audience will respond, and budget additional time for repetition and clarification.

Chefs inform through demonstration. Although they make it seem easy, it is complex and difficult.

Informative presentations come in all sizes, shapes, and forms. The main goal in an informative presentation is to inform, not to persuade, and that requires an emphasis on credibility, for the speaker and the data or information presented.

Here are additional, more specific types of informative presentations:

- Biographical information
- Case study results
- Comparative advantage results
- Cost-benefit analysis results
- Feasibility studies
- Field study results
- Financial trends analysis
- Health, safety, and accident rates
- Instruction guidelines
- Laboratory results
- Product or service orientations
- Progress reports
- Research results
- Technical specifications



Depending on the situation, the audience, and the specific information to be presented, any of these types of presentation may be given as an explanation, a report, a description, or a demonstration.

In summary, an informative speech may explain, report, describe, or demonstrate how to do something.

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68.

Creating Your Presentation to Inform

Now that you've reviewed issues central to the success of your informative speech, there's no doubt you want to get down to work. Here are five final suggestions to help you succeed.

1. Start with What You Know

Regardless of where you draw the inspiration, it's a good strategy to start with what you know and work from there. You'll be more enthusiastic, helping your audience to listen intently, and you'll save yourself time.

2. Consider Your Audience's Prior Knowledge

The audience will want to learn something from you, not hear everything they have heard before. Think about age, gender, and socioeconomic status, as well as your listeners' culture or language.

In the same way, when you prepare a speech in a business situation, do your homework. Access the company website, visit the location and get to know people, and even call members of the company to discuss your topic. The more information you can gather about your audience, the better you will be able to adapt and present an effective speech.

3. Adapting Language and Technical Terms

Define and describe the key terms for your audience as part of your speech and substitute common terms where appropriate. Your audience will enjoy learning more about the topic and appreciate your consideration as you present your speech.

4. Using Outside Information

Even if you think you know everything there is to know about your topic, using outside sources will contribute depth to your speech, provide support for your main points, and even enhance your credibility as a speaker. There is nothing wrong with using outside information as long as you clearly cite your sources and do not present someone else's information as your own.

5. Presenting Information Ethically

A central but often unspoken expectation of the speaker is that we will be ethical. This means, fundamentally, that we perceive one another as human beings with common interests and needs, and that we attend to the needs of others as well as our own. An ethical informative speaker expresses respect for listeners by avoiding prejudiced comments against any group, and by being honest about the information presented, including information that may contradict the speaker's personal biases. The ethical speaker also admits it when they do not know something. The best salesperson recognizes that ethical communication is the key to success, as it builds a healthy relationship where the customer's needs are met, thereby meeting the salesperson's own needs. When presenting information ethically, you must consider the following:



Reciprocity

Reciprocity, or a relationship of mutual exchange and interdependence, is an important characteristic of a relationship, particularly between a speaker and the audience. You as the speaker will have certain expectations and roles, but dominating your audience will not encourage them to fulfill their roles in terms of participation and active listening. Communication involves give and take, and in a public speaking setting, where the communication may be perceived as “all to one,” don’t forget that the audience is also communicating in terms of feedback with you. You have a responsibility to attend to that feedback, and develop reciprocity with your audience. Without them, you don’t have a speech.

Mutuality

Mutuality means that you search for common ground and understanding with the audience, establishing this space and building on it throughout the speech. This involves examining viewpoints other than your own, and taking steps to insure the speech integrates an inclusive, accessible format, rather than an ethnocentric one.

Nonjudgmentalism

Nonjudgmentalism underlines the need to be open-minded, an expression of one’s willingness to examine diverse perspectives. Your audience expects you to state the truth as you perceive it, with supporting and clarifying information to support your position, and to speak honestly. They also expect

you to be open to their point of view and be able to negotiate meaning and understanding in a constructive way. Nonjudgmentalism may include taking the perspective that being different is not inherently bad and that there is common ground to be found with each other.

Honesty

Honesty, or truthfulness, directly relates to trust, a cornerstone in the foundation of a relationship with your audience. Without it, the building (the relationship) would fall down. Without trust, a relationship will not open and develop the possibility of mutual understanding. You want to share information and the audience hopefully wants to learn from you. If you only choose the best information to support only your point and ignore contrary or related issues, you may turn your informative speech into a persuasive one with bias as a central feature.

Respect

Respect should be present throughout a speech, demonstrating the speaker's high esteem for the audience. Respect can be defined as an act of giving and displaying particular attention to the value you associate with someone or a group. Displays of respect include making time for conversation, not interrupting, and even giving appropriate eye contact during conversations.

Trust

Communication involves sharing and that requires trust. Trust means the ability to rely on the character or truth of someone, that what you say you mean and your audience knows it. Acknowledging trust and its importance in your relationship with the audience is the first step in focusing on this key characteristic.

Avoid Exploitation

Finally, when we speak ethically, we do not intentionally exploit one another. Exploitation means taking advantage, using someone else for one's own purposes. Perceiving a relationship with an audience as a means to an end and only focusing on what you get out of it, will lead you to treat people as objects. The temptation to exploit others can be great in business situations, where a promotion, a bonus, or even one's livelihood are at stake.

Suppose you are a bank loan officer. Whenever a customer contacts the bank to inquire about applying for a loan, your job is to provide an informative presentation about the types of loans available, their rates and terms. If you are paid a commission based on the number of loans you make and their amounts and rates, wouldn't you be tempted to encourage them to borrow the maximum amount they can qualify for? Or perhaps to take a loan with confusing terms that will end up costing much more in fees and interest than the customer realizes? After all, these practices are within the law; aren't they just part of the way business is done? If you are an ethical loan officer, you realize you would be exploiting

customers if you treated them this way. You know it is more valuable to uphold your long-term relationships with customers than to exploit them so that you can earn a bigger commission.

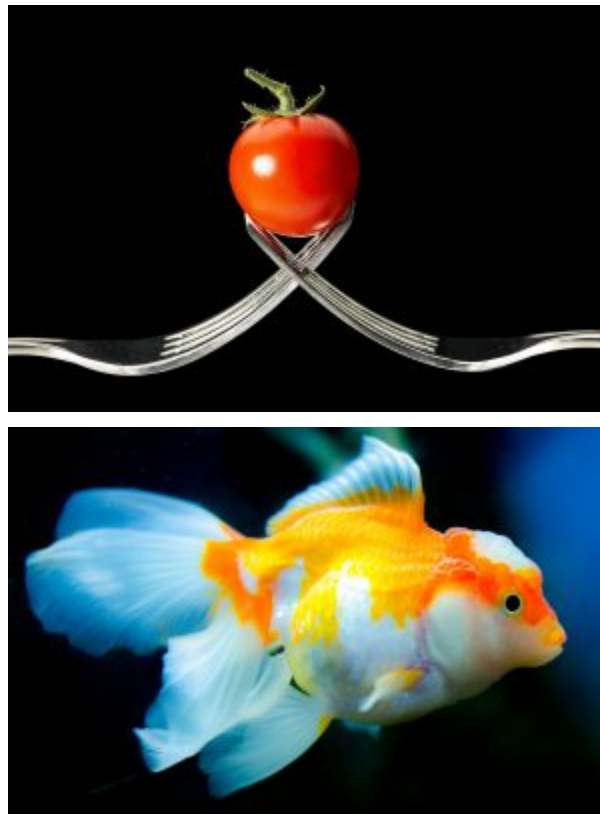
Consider these ethical principles when preparing and presenting your speech, and you will help address many of these natural expectations of others and develop healthier, more effective speeches.

Sample Informative Presentation

Here is a generic sample speech in outline form with notes and suggestions.

Attention Statement

Show a picture of a goldfish and a tomato and ask the audience, “What do these have in common?”



Introduction

1. Briefly introduce genetically modified foods.
2. State your topic and specific purpose: “My speech today will inform you on genetically modified foods that are increasingly part of our food supply.”
3. Introduce your credibility and the topic: “My research on this topic has shown me that our food supply has changed but many people are unaware of the changes.”

4. State your main points: “Today I will define genes, DNA, genome engineering and genetic manipulation, discuss how the technology applies to foods, and provide common examples.”

Body

1. Information. Provide a simple explanation of the genes, DNA and genetic modification in case there are people who do not know about it. Provide clear definitions of key terms.
2. Genes and DNA. Provide arguments by generalization and authority.
3. Genome engineering and genetic manipulation. Provide arguments by analogy, cause, and principle.
4. Case study. In one early experiment, GM (genetically modified) tomatoes were developed with fish genes to make them resistant to cold weather, although this type of tomato was never marketed.
5. Highlight other examples.

Conclusion

1. Reiterate your main points and provide synthesis, but do not introduce new content.
2. State your residual message (what you want to audience to remember most). “Genetically modified foods are more common in our food supply than ever before.”

In preparing an informative speech, use your knowledge and consider the audience’s knowledge, avoid unnecessary jargon, give credit to your sources, and present the information ethically.

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69.

Principles of Persuasion

Persuasion is an act or process of presenting arguments to move, motivate, or change your audience. Persuasion can be implicit or explicit and can have both positive and negative effects. In this chapter the importance of ethics will continued to be reviewed, especially related to presenting motivational arguments to your audience so that they will consider your points, adopt your view, or change their behavior.

Motivation is different from persuasion in that it involves the force, stimulus, or influence to bring about change. Persuasion is the process, and motivation is the compelling stimulus that encourages your audience to change their beliefs or behaviour, to adopt your position, or to consider your arguments.



Principles of Persuasion

What is the best way to succeed in persuading your listeners? There is no one “correct” answer, but many experts have studied persuasion and observed what works and what doesn’t. Social psychologist Robert Cialdini (2006) offers us six principles of persuasion that are powerful and effective:

1. Reciprocity
2. Scarcity
3. Authority
4. Commitment and consistency
5. Consensus
6. Liking

Reciprocity



Reciprocity is the mutual expectation for exchange of value or service. In all cultures, when one person gives something, the receiver is expected to reciprocate. If you are in customer service and go out of your way to meet the customer's need, you are appealing to the principle of reciprocity with the knowledge that all humans perceive the need to reciprocate—in this case, by increasing the likelihood of making a purchase from you because you were especially helpful. Reciprocity builds trust and the relationship develops, reinforcing everything from personal to brand loyalty. By taking the lead and giving, you build in a moment where people will feel compelled from social norms and customs to give back.

Scarcity



You want what you can't have, and it's universal. People are naturally attracted to the exclusive, the rare, the unusual, and the unique. If they are convinced that they need to act now or it will disappear, they are motivated to action. Scarcity is the perception of inadequate supply or a limited resource. For a sales representative, scarcity may be a key selling point—the particular car, or theater tickets, or pair of shoes you are considering may be sold to someone else if you delay making a decision. By reminding customers not only of what they stand to gain but also of what they stand to lose, the representative increases the chances that the customer will make the shift from contemplation to action and decide to close the sale.

Authority



Trust is central to the purchase decision. Whom does a customer turn to? A salesperson may be part of the process, but an endorsement by an authority holds credibility that no one with a vested interest can ever attain. Knowledge of a product, field, trends in the field, and even research can make a salesperson more effective by the appeal to the principle of authority. It may seem like extra work to educate your customers, but you need to reveal your expertise to gain credibility. Reading the manual of a product is not sufficient to gain expertise—you have to do extra homework. The principle of authority involves referencing experts and expertise.

Commitment and Consistency



People like to have consistency in what is said to them or in writing. Therefore, it is important that all commitments made are honored at all times.

Consensus



Testimonials, or first person reports on experience with a product or service, can be highly persuasive. People often look to each other when making a purchase decision, and the herd mentality is a powerful force across humanity. Leverage testimonials from clients to attract more clients by making them part of your team. The principle of consensus involves the tendency of the individual to follow the lead of the group or peers.

Liking



We tend to be attracted to people who communicate to us that they like us, and who make us feel good about ourselves. Given a choice, these are the people with whom we are likely to associate. The principle of liking involves the perception of safety and belonging in communication.

To summarize, a persuasive message can succeed through the principles of reciprocity, scarcity, authority, commitment and consistency, consensus, and liking.

Watch the following 12 minute RSA animated video: [The Science of Persuasion](#)



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
<https://opentextbc.ca/advancedenglish/?p=168>

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70.

Presentations to Persuade

Persuasive presentations have the following features:

Stimulate



When you focus on stimulation as the goal of your speech, you want to reinforce existing beliefs, intensify them, and bring them to the forefront. By presenting facts, you will reinforce existing beliefs, intensify them, and bring the issue to the surface.

You might consider the foundation of common ground and commonly held beliefs, and then introduce information that a mainstream audience may not be aware of that supports that common ground as a strategy to stimulate.

Convince



In a persuasive speech, the goal is to change the attitudes, beliefs, values, or judgments of your audience. If we look back at the idea of motive, in this speech the prosecuting attorney would try to convince the jury members that the defendant is guilty beyond reasonable doubt. He or she may discuss motive, present facts, all with

the goal to convince the jury to believe or find that his or her position is true.

Audience members will also hold beliefs and are likely to involve their own personal bias. Your goal is to get them to agree with your position, so you will need to plan a range of points and examples to get audience members to consider your topic.

Include a Call to Action



Figure 8.1 below shows the “Reduce, reuse, recycle, repeat” slogan. The recycle

movement is one of the most successful and persuasive call to action campaigns of the past twenty or more years in Canada (Babooram & Wang, 2007).



When you call an audience to action with a speech, you are indicating that your purpose is not to stimulate interest, reinforce and accentuate beliefs, or convince them of a viewpoint. Instead, you want your listeners to do something, to change their behaviour in some way.

If you were a showroom salesperson at Toyota for example, you might include the concept that the purchase of a Prius hybrid model is a call to action against issues of global warming related to fossil fuel consumption. The economics, even at current gas prices, might not completely justify the difference in price between a hybrid and a non-hybrid car. However, if you as a salesperson can make a convincing argument that choosing a hybrid car is the right and responsible decision, you may be more likely to get the customer to act. The persuasive speech that focuses on action often generates curiosity, clarifies a problem, and as we have seen, proposes a range of solutions. The key difference here is there is a clear link to action associated with the solutions.

- **Solutions** lead us to considering the goals of action. These goals address the question, “What do I want the audience to do as a result of being engaged by my speech?” The goals of action include adoption, discontinuance, deterrence, and continuance.
- **Adoption** means the speaker wants to persuade the audience to take on a new way of thinking, or adopt a new idea. Examples could include buying a new product, or deciding to donate blood. The key is that the audience member adopts, or takes on, a new view, action, or habit.
- **Discontinuance** involves the speaker persuading the audience to stop doing something what they have been doing. Rather than take on a new habit or action, the speaker is asking the audience member to stop an existing behaviour or idea.
- **Deterrence** is a call to action that focuses on persuading the audience not to start something if they haven’t already started. The goal of action would be to deter, or encourage the

audience members to refrain from starting or initiating the behavior.

- Finally, with **continuance**, the speaker aims to persuade the audience to continue doing what they have been doing, such as keep buying a product, or staying in school to get an education.

A speaker may choose to address more than one of these goals of action, depending on the audience analysis. If the audience is largely agreeable and supportive, you may find continuance to be one goal, while adoption is secondary.

Goals in call to action speeches serve to guide you in the development of solution steps. Solution steps involve suggestions or ways the audience can take action after your speech. Audience members appreciate a clear discussion of the problem in a persuasive speech, but they also appreciate solutions.

Increase Consideration

In a speech designed to increase consideration, you want to entice your audience to consider alternate viewpoints on the topic you have chosen. Audience members may hold views that are hostile in relation to yours, or perhaps they are neutral and simply curious about your topic. Returning to the Toyota salesperson example, you might be able to compare and contrast competing cars and show that the costs over ten years are quite similar. But the Prius has additional features that are the equivalent of a bonus, including high gas mileage. You might describe tax incentives for ownership, maintenance schedules and costs, and resale value. Your arguments and their support aim at increasing the audience's consideration of your position. You won't be asking for action in this presentation, but a corresponding increase of consideration may lead the customer to that point at a later date.

Develop Tolerance of Alternate Perspectives

Finally, you may want to help your audience develop tolerance of alternate perspectives and viewpoints. Perhaps your audience, as in the previous example, is interested in purchasing a car and you are the lead salesperson on that model. As you listen, and do your informal audience analysis, you may learn that horsepower and speed are important values to this customer. You might raise the issue of torque versus horsepower and indicate that the “uumph” you feel as you start a car off the line is torque. Many hybrid and even electric vehicles have great torque, as their systems involve fewer parts and less friction than a corresponding internal combustion-transaxle system. Your goal is to help your audience develop tolerance, but not necessarily acceptance, of alternate perspectives. By starting from common ground, and introducing a related idea, you are persuading your audience to consider an alternate perspective.

A persuasive speech may stimulate thought, convince, call to action, increase consideration, or develop tolerance of alternate perspectives.

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71.

Making An Argument

When people argue, they are engaged in conflict and it's usually not pretty. It sometimes appears that way because people resort to fallacious arguments or false statements, or they simply do not treat each other with respect. They get defensive, try to prove their own points, and fail to listen to each other.

But this should not be what happens in persuasive argument. Instead, when you make an argument in a persuasive speech, you will want to present your position with logical points, supporting each point with appropriate sources. You will want to give your audience every reason to perceive you as an ethical and trustworthy speaker. Your audience will expect you to treat them with respect, and to present your argument in way that does not make them defensive. Contribute to your credibility by building sound arguments and using strategic arguments with skill and planning.

Stephen Toulmin's (1958) rhetorical strategy focuses on three main elements, shown in Table 8.1 as claim, data, and warrant.

Rhetorical Strategy

Element	Description	Example
Claim	Your statement of belief or truth	It is important to spay or neuter your pet.
Data	Your supporting reasons for the claim	Millions of unwanted pets are euthanized annually.
Warrant	You create the connection between the claim and the supporting reasons	Pets that are spayed or neutered do not reproduce, preventing the production of unwanted animals.

This three-part rhetorical strategy is useful in that it makes the claim explicit, clearly illustrating the relationship between the claim and the data, and allows the listener to follow the speaker's reasoning. You may have a good idea or point, but your audience will be curious and want to know how you arrived at that claim or viewpoint. The warrant often addresses the inherent and often unspoken question, "Why is this data so important to your topic?" and helps you illustrate relationships between information for your audience. This model can help you clearly articulate it for your audience.

Appealing to Emotions

Emotions are a psychological and physical reaction, such as fear or anger, to stimuli that we experience as a feeling. Our feelings or emotions directly impact our own point of view and readiness to communicate, but also influence how, why, and when we say things. Emotions influence not only how

you say what you say, but also how you hear and what you hear. At times, emotions can be challenging to control. Emotions will move your audience, and possibly even move you, to change or act in certain ways.



Be wary of overusing emotional appeals, or misusing emotional manipulation in presentations and communication. You may encounter emotional resistance from your audience. Emotional resistance involves getting tired, often to the point of rejection, of hearing messages that attempt to elicit an emotional response. Emotional appeals can wear out the audience's capacity to receive the message.

The use of an emotional appeal may also impair your ability to write persuasively or effectively. Never use a personal story, or even a story of someone you do not know, if the inclusion of that story causes you to lose control. While it's important to discuss relevant and sometimes emotionally difficult topics, you need to assess your own relationship to the message. Your documents should not be an exercise in therapy and you will sacrifice ethos and credibility, even your effectiveness, if you become angry or distraught because you are really not ready to discuss an issue you've selected.

Now that you've considered emotions and their role in a speech in general and a speech to persuade specifically, it's important to recognize the principles about emotions in communication that serve you well when speaking in public. DeVito (2003) offers five key principles to acknowledge the role emotions play in communication and offer guidelines for their expression.

Emotions Are Universal

Emotions are a part of every conversation or interaction that you have. Whether or not you consciously experience them while communicating with yourself or others, they influence how you communicate. By recognizing that emotions are a component in all communication interactions, you can place emphasis on understanding both the content of the message and the emotions that influence how, why, and when the content is communicated.

Expression of emotions is important, but requires the three Ts: tact, timing, and trust. If you find you are upset and at risk of being less than diplomatic, or the timing is not right, or you are unsure about the level of trust, then consider whether you can effectively communicate your emotions. By considering these three Ts, you can help yourself express your emotions more effectively.

Emotions Are Communicated Verbally and Nonverbally

You communicate emotions not only through your choice of words but also through the manner in

which you say those words. The words themselves communicate part of your message, but the nonverbal cues, including inflection, timing, space, and paralanguage can modify or contradict your spoken message. Be aware that emotions are expressed in both ways and pay attention to how verbal and nonverbal messages reinforce and complement each other.

Emotional Expression Can Be Good and Bad

Expressing emotions can be a healthy activity for a relationship and build trust. It can also break down trust if expression is not combined with judgment. We're all different, and we all experience emotions, but how we express our emotions to ourselves and others can have a significant impact on our relationships. Expressing frustrations may help the audience realize your point of view and see things as they have never seen them before. However, expressing frustrations combined with blaming can generate defensiveness and decrease effective listening. When you're expressing yourself, consider the audience's point of view, be specific about your concerns, and emphasize that your relationship with your listeners is important to you.

Emotions Are Often Contagious

It is important to recognize that we influence each other with our emotions, positively and negatively. Your emotions as the speaker can be contagious, so use your enthusiasm to raise the level of interest in your topic. Conversely, you may be subject to "catching" emotions from your audience.

In summary, everyone experiences emotions, and as a persuasive speaker, you can choose how to express emotion and appeal to the audience's emotions.

Elevator Speech

An elevator speech is to oral communication what a Twitter message (limited to 280 characters) is to written communication. An elevator speech is a presentation that persuades the listener in less than thirty seconds, or around a hundred words.

Creating an Elevator Speech

An elevator speech does not have to be a formal event, though it can be. An elevator speech is not a full sales pitch and should not get bloated with too much information. The idea is not to rattle off as much information as possible in a short time, nor to present a memorized thirty-second advertising message, but rather to give a relaxed and genuine "nutshell" summary of one main idea. The emphasis is on brevity, but a good elevator speech will address several key questions:

- What is the topic, product or service?
- Who are you?
- Who is the target market? (if applicable)
- What is the revenue model? (if applicable)

- What or who is the competition and what are your advantages?

The following are the five key parts of your message:

1. Attention Statement – Hook + information about you
2. Introduction – What you offer
3. Body – Benefits; what’s in it for the listener
4. Conclusion – Example that sums it up
5. Residual Message – Call for action

Example

Person you’ve just met: How are you doing?

You: I’m great, how are you? [ensure that your conversation partner feels the conversation is a two-way street and that they might be interested in hearing your elevator speech]

Person you’ve just met: Very well thanks, what brings you to this conference?

You: Glad you asked. I’m with (X Company) and we just received this new (product x)—it is amazing. It beats the competition hands down for a third of the price. Smaller, faster, and less expensive make it a winner. It’s already a sales leader. Hey, if you know anyone who might be interested, call me! (Hands business card to the listener as visual aid). So what brings you to this conference? [be a good listener]

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Speaking Ethically and Avoiding Fallacies

Claiming the truth of the very matter in question, as if it were already an obvious conclusion.

What comes to mind when you think of speaking to persuade? Perhaps the idea of persuasion may bring to mind propaganda and issues of manipulation, deception, intentional bias, bribery, and even coercion. Each element relates to persuasion, but in distinct ways. We can recognize that each of these elements in some ways has a negative connotation associated with it. Why do you think that deceiving your audience, bribing a judge, or coercing people to do something against their wishes is wrong? These tactics violate our sense of fairness, freedom, and ethics.



Manipulation involves the management of facts, ideas or points of view to play upon inherent insecurities or emotional appeals to one's own advantage. Your audience expects you to treat them with respect, and deliberately manipulating them by means of fear, guilt, duty, or a relationship is unethical.

In the same way, **deception** involves the use of lies, partial truths, or the omission of relevant information to deceive your audience. No one likes to be lied to, or made to believe something that is not true. Deception can involve intentional bias, or the selection of information to support your position while framing negatively any information that might challenge your belief.

Bribery involves the giving of something in return for an expected favour, consideration, or privilege. It circumvents the normal protocol for personal gain, and again is a strategy that misleads your audience.

Coercion is the use of power to compel action. You make someone do something they would not choose to do freely. While you may raise the issue that the ends justify the means, and you are “doing it for the audience's own good,” recognize the unethical nature of coercion.

Eleven Points for Speaking Ethically

In his book *Ethics in Human Communication*, Johannesen (1996) offers eleven points to consider when

speaking to persuade. His main points reiterate many of the points across this chapter and should be kept in mind as you prepare, and present, your persuasive message.

Do not:

1. Use false, fabricated, misrepresented, distorted or irrelevant evidence to support arguments or claims
2. Intentionally use unsupported, misleading, or illogical reasoning
3. Represent yourself as informed or an “expert” on a subject when you are not
4. Use irrelevant appeals to divert attention from the issue at hand
5. Ask your audience to link your idea or proposal to emotion-laden values, motives, or goals to which it is actually not related
6. Deceive your audience by concealing your real purpose, by concealing self-interest, by concealing the group you represent, or by concealing your position as an advocate of a viewpoint
7. Distort, hide, or misrepresent the number, scope, intensity, or undesirable features of consequences or effects
8. Use “emotional appeals” that lack a supporting basis of evidence or reasoning.
9. Oversimplify complex, gradation-laden situations into simplistic, two-valued, either-or, polar views or choices
10. Pretend certainty where tentativeness and degrees of probability would be more accurate
11. Advocate something which you yourself do not believe in

In your speech to persuade, consider honesty and integrity as you assemble your arguments. Your audience will appreciate your thoughtful consideration of more than one view, your understanding of the complexity, and you will build your ethos, or credibility, as you present your document. Be careful not to stretch the facts, or assemble them only to prove yourself, and instead prove the argument on its own merits. Deception, coercion, intentional bias, manipulation and bribery should have no place in your speech to persuade.

Avoiding Fallacies

Fallacies are another way of saying false logic. These tricks deceive your audience with their style, drama, or pattern, but add little to your speech in terms of substance and can actually detract from your effectiveness. In Table 8.2 below, eight classical fallacies are described. Learn to recognize these fallacies so they can’t be used against you, and so that you can avoid using them with your audience.

Eight Fallacies

Fallacy	Definition	Example
Red Herring	Any diversion intended to distract attention from the main issue, particularly by relating the issue to a common fear.	It's not just about the death penalty; it's about the victims and their rights. You wouldn't want to be a victim, but if you were, you'd want justice.
Straw Man	A weak argument set up to be easily refuted, distracting attention from stronger arguments	What if we released criminals who commit murder after just a few years of rehabilitation? Think of how unsafe our streets would be then!
Begging the Question	Claiming the truth of the very matter in question, as if it were already an obvious conclusion.	We know that they will be released and unleashed on society to repeat their crimes again and again.
Circular Argument	The proposition is used to prove itself. Assumes the very thing it aims to prove. Related to begging the question.	Once a killer, always a killer.
Ad Populum	Appeals to a common belief of some people, often prejudicial, and states everyone holds this belief. Also called the Bandwagon Fallacy, as people "jump on the bandwagon" of a perceived popular view.	Most people would prefer to get rid of a few "bad apples" and keep our streets safe.
Ad Hominem	"Argument against the man" instead of against his message. Stating that someone's argument is wrong solely because of something about the person rather than about the argument itself.	Our representative is a drunk and philanderer. How can we trust him on the issues of safety and family?
Non Sequitur	"It does not follow." The conclusion does not follow from the premises. They are not related.	Since the liberal anti-war demonstrations of the 1960s, we've seen an increase in convicts who got let off death row.
Post Hoc Ergo Propter Hoc	"After this, therefore because of this," also called a coincidental correlation. It tries to establish a cause-and-effect relationship where only a correlation exists.	Violent death rates went down once they started publicizing executions.

Avoid false logic and make a strong case or argument for your proposition. Finally, here is a five-step motivational checklist to keep in mind as you bring it all together:

1. Get their attention
2. Identify the need
3. Satisfy the need
4. Present a vision or solution
5. Take action

This simple organizational pattern can help you focus on the basic elements of a persuasive message when time is short and your performance is critical. Speaking to persuade should not involve manipulation, coercion, false logic, or other unethical techniques.

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XI

Grammar

73.

Sentence Basics

In this chapter, please refer to the following grammar key:

- Subjects are underlined.
- **Verbs** are in bold.
- LV means linking verb
- HV means helping verb
- V means action verb
- N means noun
- Adj mean adjective
- Adv means adverb
- DO means direct object
- IO means indirect object

Components of a Sentence

Clearly written, complete sentences require key information: a subject, a verb and a complete idea. A sentence needs to make sense on its own. Sometimes, complete sentences are also called independent clauses. A clause is a group of words that may make up a sentence. An independent clause is a group of words that may stand alone as a complete, grammatically correct thought. The following sentences show independent clauses in curly brackets:

{ We went to the store. } { We bought the ingredients on our list }, and then { we went home. }

All complete sentences have at least one independent clause. You can identify an independent clause by reading it on its own and looking for the subject and the verb.

Subjects

When you read a sentence, you may first look for the subject, or what the sentence is about. The subject usually appears at the beginning of a sentence as a noun or a pronoun. A noun is a word that identifies a person, place, thing, or idea. A pronoun is a word that replaces a noun. Common pronouns are *I*, *he*, *she*, *it*, *you*, *they*, and *we*.

Malik is the project manager for this project. He will give us our assignments.

In these sentences, the subject is a person: *Malik*. The pronoun *He* replaces and refers back to *Malik*.

The computer lab is where we will work. It will be open twenty-four hours a day.

In the first sentence, the subject is a place: *computer lab*. In the second sentence, the pronoun *It* substitutes for *computer lab* as the subject.

The project will run for three weeks. It will have a quick turnaround.

In the first sentence, the subject is a thing: *project*. In the second sentence, the pronoun *It* stands in for the *project*.

Compound Subjects

A sentence may have more than one person, place, or thing as the subject. These subjects are called compound subjects. Compound subjects are useful when you want to discuss several subjects at once.

Desmond and Maria have been working on that design for almost a year. Books, magazines, and online articles are all good resources.

In the first sentence, the subjects are *Desmond* and *Maria*. In the second sentence, *books*, *magazines*, and *online articles* are the subjects.

Prepositional Phrases

You will often read a sentence that has more than one noun or pronoun in it. You may encounter a group of words that includes a preposition with a noun or a pronoun. Prepositions connect a noun, pronoun, or verb to another word that describes or modifies that noun, pronoun, or verb. Common prepositions include *in*, *on*, *under*, *near*, *by*, *with*, and *about*. A group of words that begin with a preposition is called a prepositional phrase. A prepositional phrase begins with a preposition and modifies or describes a word. It cannot act as the subject of a sentence. The following phrases inside curly brackets are examples of prepositional phrases.

We went {on a business trip}. That restaurant {with the famous pizza} was on the way. We stopped {for lunch}.

The prepositional phrases in this example include *on a business trip*, *with the famous pizza*, and *for lunch*.

Exercise

Read the following sentences. Underline the subjects, and circle the prepositional phrases.

1. The gym is open until nine o'clock tonight.
2. We went to the store to get some ice.
3. The student with the most extra credit will win a homework pass.
4. Maya and Tia found an abandoned cat by the side of the road.
5. The driver of that pickup truck skidded on the ice.
6. Anita won the race with time to spare.
7. The people who work for that company were surprised about the merger.
8. Working in haste means that you are more likely to make mistakes.
9. The soundtrack has over sixty songs in languages from around the world.
10. His latest invention does not work, but it has inspired the rest of us.

Verbs

Once you locate the subject of a sentence, you can move on to the next part of a complete sentence: the verb. A verb is often an action word that shows what the subject is doing. A verb can also link the subject to a describing word. There are three types of verbs that you can use in a sentence: action verbs, linking verbs, or helping verbs.

Action Verbs

A verb that connects the subject to an action is called an action verb. An action verb answers the question *what is the subject doing?* In the following sentences, the action verbs are in bold.

The dog **barked** at the jogger.
He **gave** a short speech before we ate.

Barked and *gave* are action verbs.

Linking Verbs

A verb can often connect the subject of the sentence to a describing word. This type of verb is called a linking verb because it links the subject to a describing word. In the following sentences, the linking verbs are in bold.

The coat **was** old and dirty.
The clock **seemed** broken.

Was and *seemed* are linking verbs.

If you have trouble telling the difference between action verbs and linking verbs, remember that an action verb shows that the subject is doing something, whereas a linking verb simply connects the subject to another word that describes or modifies the subject. A few verbs can be used as either action verbs or linking verbs.

Action verb: The boy **looked** for his glove.
Linking verb: The boy **looked** tired.

Although both sentences use the same verb *looked*, the two sentences have completely different meanings. In the first sentence, the verb describes the boy's action. In the second sentence, the verb describes the boy's appearance.

Helping Verbs

A third type of verb you may use as you write is a helping verb. Helping verbs are verbs that are used with the main verb to describe a mood or tense. Helping verbs are usually a form of *be*, *do*, or *have*. The word *can* is also used as a helping verb.

The restaurant **is known** for its variety of dishes.

Is is the helping verb. *Known* is the main verb.

She **does speak up** when prompted in class.

Does is the helping verb. *Speak up* is the main verb.

We **have seen** that movie three times.

Have is the helping verb. *Seen* is the main verb.

They **can tell** when someone walks on their lawn.

Can is the helping verb. *Tell* is the main verb.

Whenever you write or edit sentences, keep the subject and verb in mind. As you write, ask yourself these questions to keep yourself on track:

- **Subject:** Who or what is the sentence about?
- **Verb:** Which word shows an action or links the subject to a description?

Exercise

Copy each sentence onto your own sheet of paper and circle the verb(s). Name the type of verb(s) used in the sentence in the space provided (LV, HV, or V).

1. The cat sounds ready to come back inside. _____
2. We have not eaten dinner yet. _____
3. It took four people to move the broken-down car. _____
4. The book was filled with notes from class. _____
5. We walked from room to room, inspecting for damages. _____
6. Harold was expecting a package in the mail. _____
7. The clothes still felt damp even though they had been through the dryer twice. _____
8. The teacher who runs the studio is often praised for his restoration work on old masterpieces.

Sentence Structure, Including Fragments and Run-ons

Now that you know what makes a complete sentence—a subject and a verb—you can use other parts of speech to build on this basic structure. Good writers use a variety of sentence structures to make their work more interesting. This section covers different sentence structures that you can use to make longer, more complex sentences.

Sentence Patterns

Six basic subject-verb patterns can enhance your writing. A sample sentence is provided for each pattern. As you read each sentence, take note of where each part of the sentence falls. Notice that some sentence patterns use action verbs and others use linking verbs.

Subject – Verb

Computers **hum**.

Subject – Linking Verb – Noun

Computers **are** tools.

Subject – Linking Verb – Adjective

Computers **are** expensive.

Subject – Verb – Adverb

Computers **calculate** quickly.

Subject – Verb – Direct Object

When you write a sentence with a direct object (DO), make sure that the DO receives the action of the verb.

Sally **rides** a motorcycle.

Sally is the subject. *Rides* is the verb. *A motorcycle* is the direct object.

Subject – Verb – Indirect Object – Direct Object

In this sentence structure, an indirect object explains *to whom* or *to what* the action is being done. The indirect object is a noun or pronoun, and it comes before the direct object in a sentence.

My coworker **gave** me the reports.

My coworker is the subject. *Gave* is the verb. *Me* is the indirect object. *Reports* is the direct object.

Exercise

1. Use what you have learned so far to bring variety in your writing. Write six sentences that practice each basic sentence pattern. When you have finished, label each part of the sentence (S, V, LV, N, Adj, Adv, DO, IO).
2. Find an article in a newspaper, a magazine, or online that interests you. Bring it to class or post it online. Then, looking at a classmate's article, identify one example of each part of a sentence (S, V, LV, N, Adj, Adv, DO, IO). Please share or post your results.

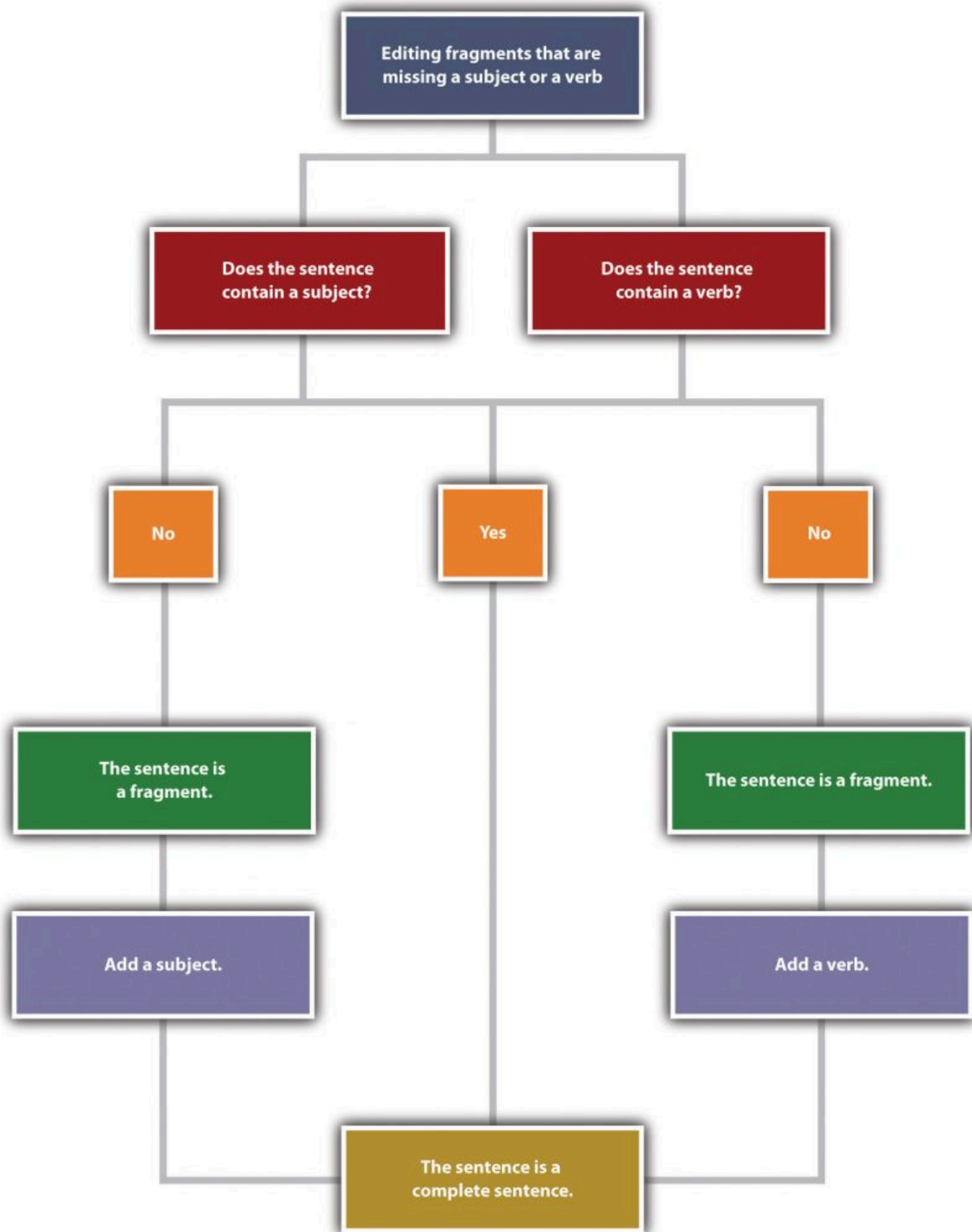
Fragments

The sentences you have encountered so far have been independent clauses. As you look more closely at your past writing assignments, you may notice that some of your sentences are not complete. A sentence that is missing a subject or a verb is called a fragment. A fragment may include a description or may express part of an idea, but it does not express a complete thought.

Fragment: Children helping in the kitchen.

Complete sentence: Children helping in the kitchen **often make a mess**.

You can easily fix a fragment by adding the missing subject or verb. In the example, the sentence was missing a verb. Adding *often make a mess* creates an subject-verb-noun sentence structure.



[\[Image description\]](#)

See whether you can identify what is missing in the following fragments.

Fragment: Told her about the broken vase.

Complete sentence: *I* told her about the broken vase.

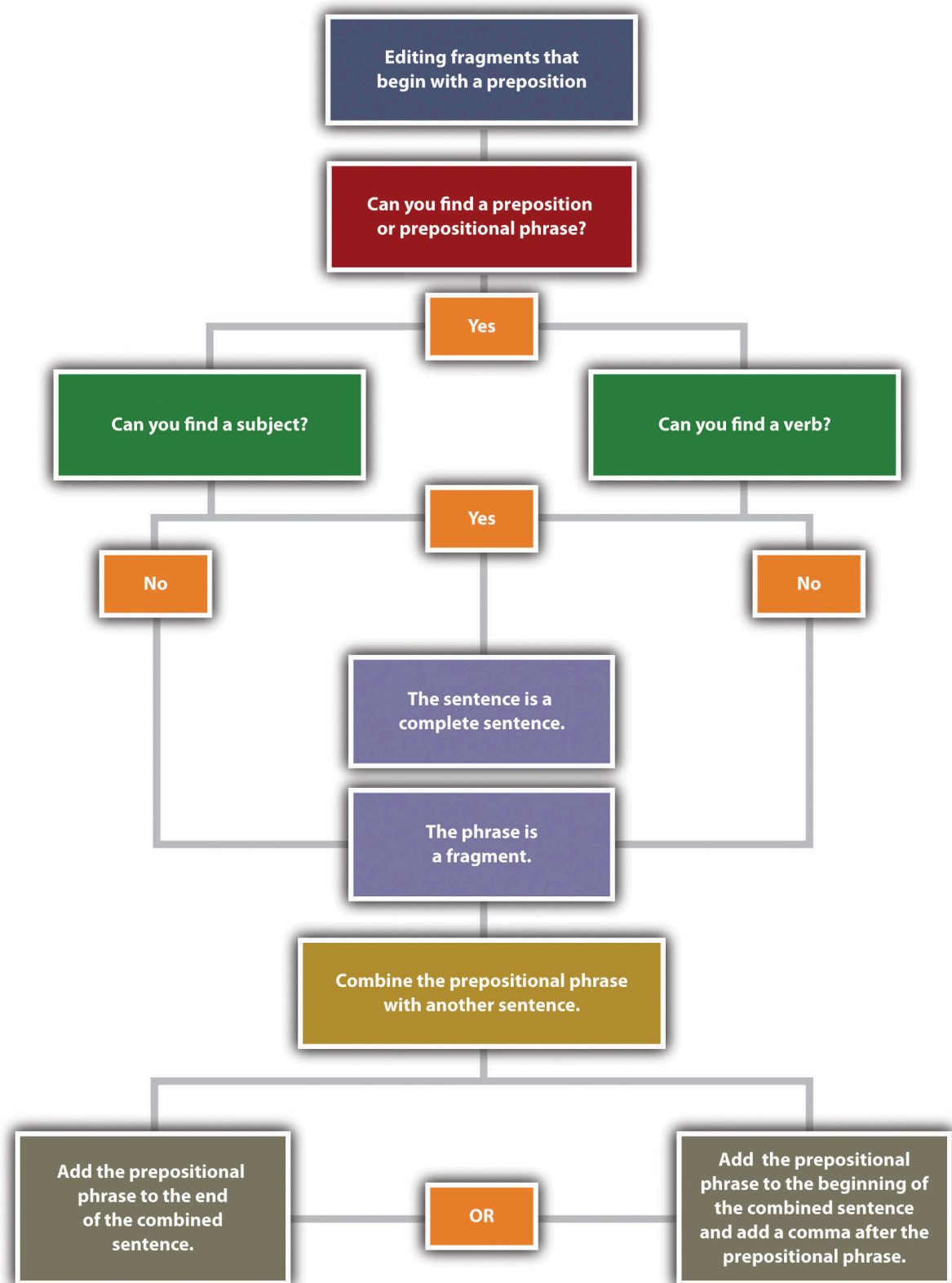
Fragment: The store down on Main Street.

Complete sentence: The store down on Main Street *sells music*.

Common Sentence Errors

Fragments often occur because of some common error, such as starting a sentence with a preposition, a dependent word, an infinitive or a gerund. If you use the six basic sentence patterns when you write, you should be able to avoid these errors and thus avoid writing fragments.

When you see a preposition, check to see that it is part of a sentence containing a subject and a verb. If it is not connected to a complete sentence, it is a fragment, and you will need to fix this type of fragment by combining it with another sentence. You can add the prepositional phrase to the end of the sentence. If you add it to the beginning of the other sentence, insert a comma after the prepositional phrase.



[\[Image description\]](#)

Example A:

Incorrect: After walking over two miles. John remembered his wallet.

Correct: After walking over two miles, John remembered his wallet.

Correct: John remembered his wallet after walking over two miles.

Example B

Incorrect: The dog growled at the vacuum cleaner. When it was switched on.

Correct: When the vacuum cleaner was switched on, the dog growled.

Correct: The dog growled at the vacuum cleaner when it was switched on.

Clauses that start with a dependent word—such as *since*, *because*, *without*, or *unless*—are similar to prepositional phrases. Like prepositional phrases, these clauses can be fragments if they are not connected to an independent clause containing a subject and a verb. To fix the problem, you can add such a fragment to the beginning or end of a sentence. If the fragment is added at the beginning of a sentence, add a comma.

Incorrect: Because we lost power. The entire family overslept.

Correct: Because we lost power, the entire family overslept.

Correct: The entire family overslept because we lost power.

Incorrect: He has been seeing a physical therapist. Since his accident.

Correct: Since his accident, he has been seeing a physical therapist.

Correct: He has been seeing a physical therapist since his accident.

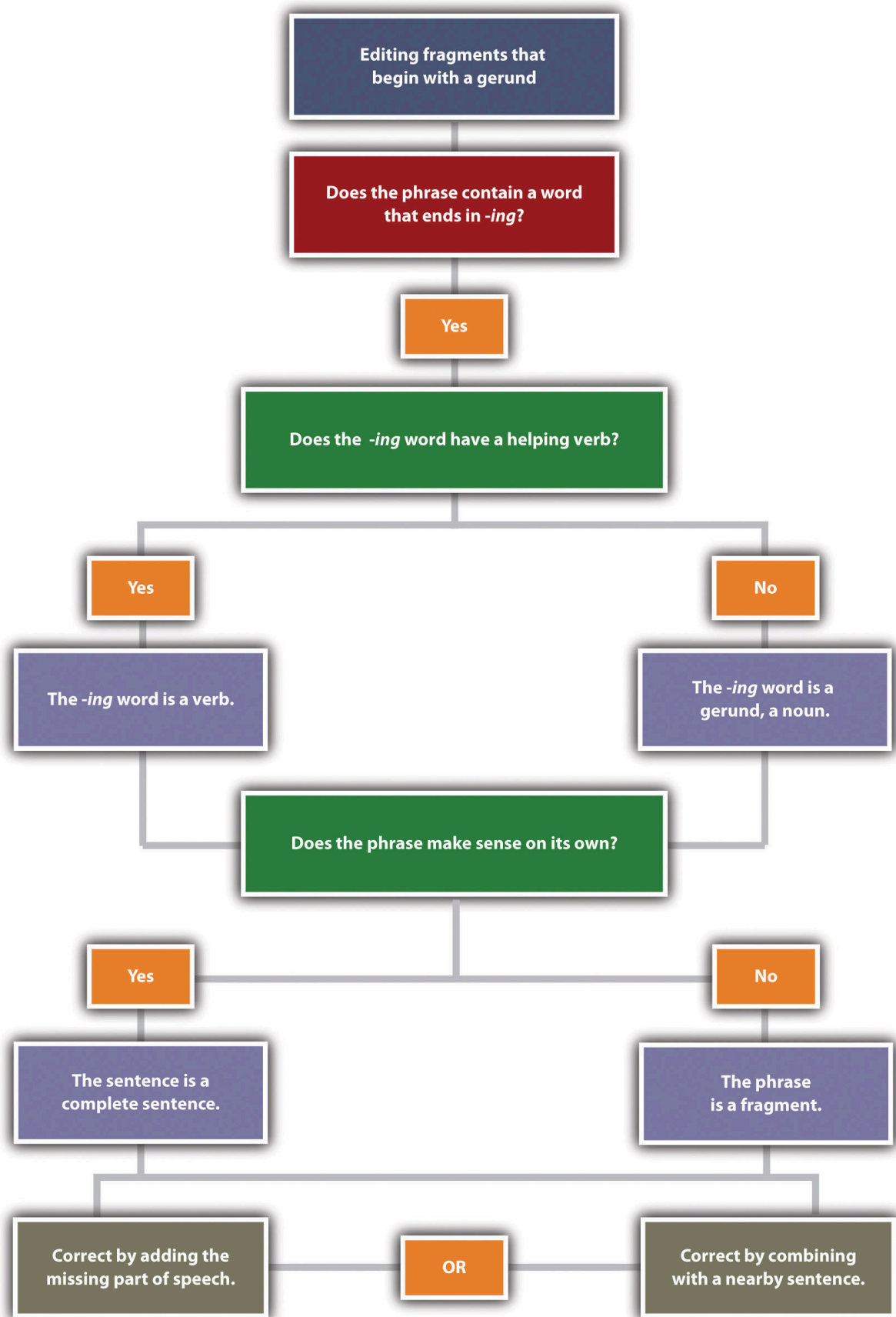
When you encounter a word ending in *-ing* in a sentence, identify whether or not this word is used as a

verb in the sentence. You may also look for a helping verb. If the word is not used as a verb or if no helping verb is used with the *-ing* verb form, the verb is being used as a noun. An *-ing* verb form used as a noun is called a gerund.

Verb: I **was working** on homework until midnight.

Noun: Working until midnight makes me tired the next morning.

Once you know whether the *-ing* word is acting as a noun or a verb, look at the rest of the sentence. Does the entire sentence make sense on its own? If not, what you are looking at is a fragment. You will need to either add the parts of speech that are missing or combine the fragment with a nearby sentence.



[\[Image description\]](#)

Incorrect: Taking deep breaths. Saul prepared for his presentation.

Correct: Taking deep breaths, Saul prepared for his presentation.

Correct: Saul prepared for his presentation. He **was taking** deep breaths.

Incorrect: Congratulating the entire team. Sarah raised her glass to toast their success.

Correct: She was congratulating the entire team. Sarah raised her glass to toast their success.

Correct: Congratulating the entire team, Sarah raised her glass to toast their success.

Another error in sentence construction is a fragment that begins with an infinitive. An infinitive is a verb paired with the word *to*; for example, *to run*, *to write*, or *to reach*. Although infinitives are verbs, they can be used as nouns, adjectives, or adverbs. You can correct a fragment that begins with an infinitive by either combining it with another sentence or adding the parts of speech that are missing.

Incorrect: We needed to make three hundred more paper cranes. To reach the one thousand mark.

Correct: We needed to make three hundred more paper cranes to reach the one thousand mark.

Correct: We needed to make three hundred more paper cranes. We wanted to reach the one thousand mark.

Exercise

Copy the following sentences and identify the fragments. Then combine the fragment with the independent clause to create a complete sentence.

1. Working without taking a break. We try to get as much work done as we can in an hour.
2. I needed to bring work home. In order to meet the deadline.
3. Unless the ground thaws before spring break. We won't be planting any tulips this year.
4. Turning the lights off after they were done in the kitchen. Kris tries to conserve energy whenever

possible.

5. You'll find what you need if you look. On the shelf next to the potted plant.
6. To find the perfect apartment. Deidre scoured the classifieds each day.

Run-on Sentences

Just as short, incomplete sentences can be problematic, lengthy sentences can be problematic too. Sentences with two or more independent clauses that have been incorrectly combined are known as run-on sentences. A run-on sentence may be either a fused sentence or a comma splice.

Fused sentence: A family of foxes lived under our shed young foxes played all over the yard.

Comma splice: We looked outside, the kids were hopping on the trampoline.

When two complete sentences are combined into one without any punctuation, the result is a fused sentence. When two complete sentences are joined by a comma, the result is a comma splice. Both errors can easily be fixed.

Punctuation

One way to correct run-on sentences is to correct the punctuation. For example, adding a period will correct the run-on by creating two separate sentences.

Run-on: There were no seats left, we had to stand in the back.

Correct: There were no seats left. We had to stand in the back.

Using a semicolon between the two complete sentences will also correct the error. A semicolon allows you to keep the two closely related ideas together in one sentence. When you punctuate with a semicolon, make sure that both parts of the sentence are independent clauses.

Run-on: The accident closed both lanes of traffic we waited an hour for the wreckage to be cleared.

Complete sentence: The accident closed both lanes of traffic; we waited an hour for the wreckage to be cleared.

When you use a semicolon to separate two independent clauses, you may wish to add a transition word to show the connection between the two thoughts. After the semicolon, add the transition word and follow it with a comma.

Run-on: The project was put on hold we didn't have time to slow down, so we kept working.

Complete sentence: The project was put on hold; **however**, we didn't have time to slow down, so we kept working.

Coordinating Conjunctions

You can also fix run-on sentences by adding a comma and a coordinating conjunction. A coordinating conjunction acts as a link between two independent clauses. Common coordinating conjunctions are *for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, and *so*.

These are the seven coordinating conjunctions that you can use: *for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, and *so*. Use these words appropriately when you want to link the two independent clauses. The acronym *FANBOYS* will help you remember this group of coordinating conjunctions.

Run-on: The new printer was installed, no one knew how to use it.

Complete sentence: The new printer was installed, **but** no one knew how to use it.

Dependent Words

Adding dependent words is another way to link independent clauses. Like the coordinating conjunctions, dependent words show a relationship between two independent clauses.

Run-on: We took the elevator, the others still got there before us.

Complete sentence: **Although** we took the elevator, the others got there before us.

Run-on: Cobwebs covered the furniture, the room hadn't been used in years.

Complete sentence: Cobwebs covered the furniture **because** the room hadn't been used in years.

Image Descriptions

A decision tree for editing sentence fragments that are missing a subject or a verb:

1. Does the sentence contain a subject?
 - If yes, go to #2.
 - If no, the sentence is a fragment. Add a subject to make it a complete sentence. Then go to #2.
2. Does the sentence contain a verb?
 - If yes, the sentence is a complete sentence.
 - If no, the sentence is a fragment. Add a verb to make it a complete sentence.

[\[Return to image\]](#)

A decision tree for editing fragments that begin with a preposition:

1. Can you find a preposition or prepositional phrase?
2. Can you find a subject?
 - If yes, go to #3.
 - If no, go to #4.
3. Can you find a verb?
 - If yes, the sentence is a complete sentence.
 - If no, go to #4.

4. The phrase is a fragment. Combine the prepositional phrase with another sentence. Add the prepositional phrase to the end of the combined sentence or add the prepositional phrase to the beginning of the combined sentence and add a comma after the prepositional phrase.

[\[Return to image\]](#)

A decision tree for editing fragments that begin with a gerund:

1. Does the phrase contain a word that ends in -ing?
 2. Does the -ing word have a helping verb?
 - If yes, the -ing word is a verb. Go to
 - If no, the -ing word is a gerund, a noun.
 3. Does the phrase make sense on its own?
 - If yes, the sentence is a complete sentence.
 - If no, go to #4.
4. The phrase is a fragment. Correct by adding the missing part of speech or correct by combining with a nearby sentence.

[\[Return to image\]](#)

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Coordination and Subordination for Sentence Variety

In the previous section, we learned how to use different patterns to create sentence variety and to add emphasis to important points in our writing.

- Coordination: Joining two related ideas of equal importance.
- Subordination: Joining two related ideas of unequal importance.

Connecting sentences with coordinate or subordinate clauses creates more coherent paragraphs, and in turn, produces more effective writing. Read the following writing excerpt:

When the red grapes arrive at the winery, they are destemmed and crushed. The liquid that is left is made up of skins, seeds, and juice. The stems are removed. They contain harsh-tasting tannins. Once the grapes are destemmed and crushed, the liquid is pumped into a fermentation container. Here, sulfur dioxide is added. It prevents the liquid from becoming oxidized. It also destroys bacteria. Some winemakers carry out the fermenting process by using yeast that is naturally present on the grapes. Many add a yeast that is cultivated in a laboratory.

This section examines several ways to combine sentences with coordination and subordination, using this excerpt as an example.

Coordination

Coordination joins two independent clauses that contain related ideas of equal importance.

Original sentences: I spent my entire paycheck last week. I am staying home this weekend.

In their current form, these sentences contain two separate ideas that may or may not be related. Am I staying home this week *because* I spent my paycheck, or is there another reason for my lack of enthusiasm to leave the house? To indicate a relationship between the two ideas, we can use the coordinating conjunction *so*:

Revised sentence: I spent my entire paycheck last week, **so** I am staying home this weekend.

The revised sentence illustrates that the two ideas are connected. Notice that the sentence retains two independent clauses (*I spent my entire paycheck; I am staying home this weekend*) because each can stand alone as a complete idea.

Coordinating conjunctions

A coordinating conjunction is a word that joins two independent clauses. The most common coordinating conjunctions are *for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, and *so*. Note that a comma precedes the coordinating conjunction when joining two clauses.

Independent Clause	Coordinating Conjunction	Independent Clause	Revised Sentence
I will not be attending the dance.	for (indicates a reason or cause)	I have no one to go with.	I will not be attending the dance, for I have no one to go with.
I plan to stay home.	and (joins two ideas)	I will complete an essay for class.	I plan to stay home, and I will complete an essay for class.
Jessie isn't going to be at the dance.	nor (indicates a negative)	Harjot won't be there either.	Jessie isn't going to be at the dance, nor will Harjot be there.
The fundraisers are hoping for a record-breaking attendance.	but (indicates a contrast)	I don't think many people are going.	The fundraisers are hoping for a record-breaking attendance, but I don't think many people are going.
I might go to the next fundraising event.	or (offers an alternative)	I might donate some money to the cause.	I might go to the next fundraising event, or I might donate some money to the cause.
My parents are worried that I am antisocial.	yet (indicates a reason)	I have many friends at school.	My parents are worried that I am antisocial, yet I have many friends at school.
Buying a new dress is expensive.	so (indicates a result)	By staying home I will save money.	Buying a new dress is expensive, so by staying home I will save money.

TIP: To help you remember the seven coordinating conjunctions, think of the acronym FANBOYS: *for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, *so*. Remember that when you use a coordinating conjunction in a sentence, a comma should precede it.

Conjunctive adverbs

Another method of joining two independent clauses with related and equal ideas is to use a conjunctive

adverb and a semicolon. A conjunctive adverb is a linking word that demonstrates a relationship between two clauses. Read the following sentences:

Original sentences: Bridget wants to take part in the next Olympics. They train every day.

Since these sentences contain two equal and related ideas, they may be joined using a conjunctive adverb. Now, read the revised sentence:

Revised sentence: Bridget wants to take part in the next Olympics; therefore, they train every day.

The revised sentence explains the relationship between Bridget's desire to take part in the next Olympics and their daily training. Notice that the conjunctive adverb comes after a semicolon that separates the two clauses and is followed by a comma.

Review the following chart of some common conjunctive adverbs with examples of how they are used:

Function	Conjunctive Adverb	Example
Addition	also, furthermore, moreover, besides	Alicia was late for class and stuck in traffic; furthermore, her shoe heel had broken and she had forgotten her lunch.
Comparison	similarly, likewise	Recycling aluminum cans is beneficial to the environment; similarly, reusing plastic bags and switching off lights reduces waste.
Contrast	instead, however, conversely	Most people do not walk to work; instead, they drive or take public transit.
Emphasis	namely, certainly, indeed	The Siberian tiger is a rare creature; indeed, there are fewer than five hundred left in the wild.
Cause and Effect	accordingly, consequently, hence, thus	I missed my train this morning; consequently, I was late for my meeting.
Time	finally, next, subsequently, then	Danzel crossed the barrier, jumped over the wall, and pushed through the hole in the fence; finally, he made it to the station.

Take a look at the excerpt on wine production and identify some areas in which the writer might use coordination.

When the red grapes arrive at the winery, they are destemmed and crushed. The liquid that is left is made up of skins, seeds, and juice. The stems are removed. They contain harsh-tasting tannins. Once the grapes are destemmed and crushed, the liquid is pumped into a fermentation container. Here, sulfur dioxide is added. It

prevents the liquid from becoming oxidized. It also destroys bacteria. Some winemakers carry out the fermenting process by using yeast that is naturally present on the grapes. Many add a yeast that is cultivated in a laboratory.

Now look at this revised paragraph. Did you coordinate the same sentences? You may find that your answers are different because there are usually several ways to join two independent clauses.

When the red grapes arrive at the winery, they are destemmed and crushed. The liquid that is left is made up of skins, seeds, and juice. The stems are removed, for they contain harsh-tasting tanins. Once the grapes are destemmed and crushed, the liquid is pumped into a fermentation container. Here, sulfur dioxide is added. It prevents the liquid from becoming oxidized and also destroys bacteria. Some winemakers carry out the fermenting process by using yeast that is naturally present on the grapes, however, many add a yeast that is cultivated in a laboratory.

Exercise

Combine each sentence pair into a single sentence using either a coordinating conjunction or a conjunctive adverb. Then copy the combined sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. Pets are not allowed in Mr. Taylor's building. He owns several cats and a parrot.
2. New legislation prevents drivers from sending or reading text messages while driving. Many people continue to use their phones illegally.
3. The professor concluded that the student had forgotten to submit his assignment. By the time the deadline had passed, there was still no assignment.
4. Amphibians are vertebrates that live on land and in the water. Flatworms are invertebrates that live only in water.
5. Tara carefully fed and watered her tomato plants all summer. The tomatoes grew juicy and ripe.
6. When he lost his car key, Simon attempted to open the door with a wire hanger, a credit card, and a paper clip. He called the manufacturer for advice.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Subordination

Subordination joins two sentences with related ideas by merging them into a main clause (a complete sentence) and a dependent clause (a construction that relies on the main clause to complete its meaning). Coordination allows a writer to give equal weight to the two ideas that are being combined, and subordination enables a writer to emphasize one idea over the other. Take a look at the following sentences:

Original sentences: Tracy stopped to help the injured man. She would be late for work.

To illustrate that these two ideas are related, we can rewrite them as a single sentence using the subordinating conjunction *even though*.

Revised sentence: Even though Tracy would be late for work, she stopped to help the injured man.

In the revised version, we now have an independent clause (*she stopped to help the injured man*) that stands as a complete sentence and a dependent clause (*even though Tracy would be late for work*) that is subordinate to the main clause. Notice that the revised sentence emphasizes the fact that Tracy stopped to help the injured man, rather than the fact she would be late for work. We could also write the sentence this way:

Revised sentence: Tracy stopped to help the injured man even though she would be late for work.

The meaning remains the same in both sentences, with the subordinating conjunction *even though* introducing the dependent clause.

TIP: To punctuate sentences correctly, look at the position of the main clause and the subordinate clause. If a subordinate clause precedes the main clause, use a comma. If the subordinate clause follows the main clause, no punctuation is required.

Subordinating conjunctions

A subordinating conjunction is a word that joins a subordinate (dependent) clause to a main (independent) clause. Review the following chart of some common subordinating conjunctions and examples of how they are used:

Function	Subordinating Conjunction	Example
Concession	although, while, though, whereas, even though	Sarah completed her report even though she had to stay late to get it done.
Condition	if, unless, until	Until we know what is causing the problem, we will not be able to fix it.
Manner	as if, as, though	Everyone in the conference room stopped talking at once, as though they had been stunned into silence.
Place	where, wherever	Rita is in Toronto where she has several important client meetings.
Reason	because, since, so that, in order that	Because the air conditioning was turned up so high, everyone in the office wore sweaters.
Time	after, before, while, once, when	After the meeting had finished, we all went to lunch.

Take a look at the excerpt and identify some areas in which the writer might use subordination.

When the red grapes arrive at the winery, they are destemmed and crushed. The liquid that is left is made up of skins, seeds, and juice. The stems are removed. They contain harsh-tasting tannins. Once the grapes are destemmed and crushed, the liquid is pumped into a fermentation container. Here, sulfur dioxide is added. It prevents the liquid from becoming oxidized. It also destroys bacteria. Some winemakers carry out the fermenting process by using yeast that is naturally present on the grapes. Many add a yeast that is cultivated in a laboratory.

Now look at this revised paragraph and compare your answers. You will probably notice that there are many different ways to subordinate sentences.

When the red grapes arrive at the winery, they are destemmed and crushed. The liquid that is left is made up of skins, seeds, and juice. Because the stems contain harsh-tasting tannins, they are removed. Once the grapes are destemmed and crushed, the liquid is pumped into a fermentation container. Here, sulfur dioxide is added in order to prevent the liquid from becoming oxidized. Sulfur dioxide also destroys bacteria. Although some winemakers carry out the fermenting process by using yeast that is naturally present on the grapes, many add a yeast that is cultivated in a laboratory.

Exercises

Combine each sentence pair into a single sentence using a subordinating conjunction and then copy the combined sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. Jake is going to Haida Gwaii. There are beautiful beaches in Haida Gwaii.
2. A snowstorm disrupted traffic all over the east coast. There will be long delivery delays this week.
3. My neighbor had his television volume turned up too high. I banged on his door and asked him to

keep the noise down.

4. Kathryn prepared the potato salad and the sautéed vegetables. Stewart marinated the chicken.
5. Romeo poisons himself. Juliet awakes to find Romeo dead and stabs herself with a dagger.

Exercise

Join the underlined sentences using coordination or subordination. Check your revised sentences for punctuation.

The yeast is added to the must. Alcoholic fermentation then begins. Here, the red wine production process differs from the method used in white wine production. Red wine is fermented for a shorter time. It is fermented at a higher temperature. Whereas white wines may ferment for over a month, red wines typically ferment for less than two weeks. During fermentation, contact between the skins and the juice releases tannins and flavor compounds into the must. This process is known as maceration. Maceration may occur before, during, or after fermentation. The fermentation process is completed. The next stage is pressing. Many methods are used for pressing, the most common of which is basket pressing.

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75.

More on Sentence Variety

Sometimes writers have a tendency to reuse the same sentence pattern throughout their writing. Like any repetitive task, reading text that contains too many sentences with the same length and structure can become monotonous and boring. Experienced writers mix it up by using an assortment of sentence patterns, rhythms, and lengths.

This chapter discusses how to introduce sentence variety into writing, how to open sentences using a variety of techniques, and how to use different types of sentence structure when connecting ideas. You can use these techniques when revising a paper to bring life and rhythm to your work. They will also make reading your work more enjoyable.

Experienced writers incorporate sentence variety into their writing by varying sentence style and structure. Using a mixture of different sentence structures reduces repetition and adds emphasis to important points in the text. Read the following example:

During my time in office I have achieved several goals. I have helped increase funding for local schools. I have reduced crime rates in the neighborhood. I have encouraged young people to get involved in their community. My competitor argues that she is the better choice in the upcoming election. I argue that it is ridiculous to fix something that isn't broken. If you reelect me this year, I promise to continue to serve this community.

In this extract from an election campaign, the writer uses short, simple sentences of a similar length and style. Writers often mistakenly believe that this technique makes the text more clear for the reader, but the result is a choppy, unsophisticated paragraph that does not grab the audience's attention. Now read the revised paragraph with sentence variety:

During my time in office, I have helped increase funding for local schools, reduced crime rates in the neighborhood, and encouraged young people to get involved in their community. Why fix what isn't broken? If you reelect me this year, I will continue to achieve great things for this community. Don't take a chance on an unknown contender; vote for the proven success.

Notice how introducing a short rhetorical question among the longer sentences in the paragraph is an effective means of keeping the reader's attention. In the revised version, the writer combines the choppy sentences at the beginning into one longer sentence, which adds rhythm and interest to the paragraph.

TIP: Effective writers often implement the "rule of three," which is basically the thought that things

that contain three elements are more memorable and more satisfying to readers than any other number. Try to use a series of three when providing examples, grouping adjectives, or generating a list.

Exercise

Combine each set of simple sentences into a compound or a complex sentence. Write the combined sentence on your own sheet of paper.

1. Fentanyl is causing a high rate of drug overdose deaths in British Columbia. BC created the Take Home Naloxone program. Naloxone is a medication that rapidly reverses an opioid overdose. This program provides free training and naloxone kits. Since 2012, over 60,000 kits have been used to reverse an overdose (TowardTheHeart.com, 2020).
2. Shakespeare's writing is still relevant today. He wrote about timeless themes. These themes include love, hate, jealousy, death, and destiny.
3. The *Civil Marriage Act* legalized same-sex marriage in Canada in 2005. Most provinces and territories had already legalized same-sex marriage. Ontario was the first province to legalize same-sex marriage. Same-sex marriage became legal in British Columbia in 2003.
4. Prewriting is a vital stage of the writing process. Prewriting helps you organize your ideas. Types of prewriting include outlining, brainstorming, and idea mapping.
5. Alicia Elliott is a Haudenosaunee writer. In 2019, she published a book called *A Mind Spread Out on the Ground*. This book is a collection of essays. These essays discuss personal experiences of colonialism, poverty, and mental health.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Using Sentence Variety at the Beginning of Sentences

Read the following sentences and consider what they all have in common:

John and Amanda will be analyzing this week's financial report.

The car screeched to a halt just a few inches away from the young child.

Students should study to ensure they come to the exam adequately prepared.

If you are having trouble figuring out why these sentences are similar, try underlining the subject in each. You will notice that the subject is positioned at the beginning of each sentence—*John and Amanda, the car, students*. Since the subject-verb-object pattern is the simplest sentence structure, many writers tend to overuse this technique, which can result in repetitive paragraphs with little sentence variety.

This paragraph is an excerpt from an essay about the American government bailout of banks in 2008. Read this excerpt from Naomi's essay:

The subprime mortgage crisis left many financial institutions in jeopardy. Some economists argued that the banks were too big to fail. Other economists argued that an infusion of credit and debt would exacerbate the problem. The government finally opted to bail out the banks. It acquired \$700 billion worth of mortgage-backed securities in 2008. The government optimistically expects these assets will rise in value. This will profit both the banks and the government itself.

This section examines several ways to introduce sentence variety at the beginning of sentences, using Naomi's essay as an example.

Starting a sentence with an adverb

One technique you can use so as to avoid beginning a sentence with the subject is to use an adverb. An adverb is a word that describes a verb, adjective, or other adverb and often ends in *-ly*. Examples of adverbs include *quickly, softly, quietly, angrily, and timidly*. Read the following sentences:

She slowly turned the corner and peered into the murky basement.
Slowly, she turned the corner and peered into the murky basement.

In the second sentence, the adverb *slowly* is placed at the beginning of the sentence. If you read the two sentences aloud, you will notice that moving the adverb changes the rhythm of the sentence and slightly alters its meaning. The second sentence emphasizes how the subject moves—slowly—creating a buildup of tension. This technique is effective in fictional writing.

Note that an adverb used at the beginning of a sentence is usually followed by a comma. A comma indicates that the reader should pause briefly, which creates a useful rhetorical device. Read the following sentences aloud and consider the effect of pausing after the adverb:

Cautiously, he unlocked the kennel and waited for the dog's reaction.
Eagerly, she raced down the steps to hug her mom.

Suddenly, he slammed the door shut and sprinted across the street.

In an academic essay, moving an adverb to the beginning of a sentence serves to vary the rhythm of a paragraph and increase sentence variety.

The subprime mortgage crisis left many financial institutions in jeopardy. Some economists argued that the banks were too big to fail. Other economists argued that an infusion of credit and debt would exacerbate the problem. The government finally opted to bail out the banks. It acquired \$700 billion worth of mortgage-backed securities in 2008. The government optimistically expects these assets will rise in value. This will profit both the banks and the government itself.

This paragraph has two adverbs that could be moved to the beginning of their respective sentences. Notice how the following revised version creates a more varied paragraph:

The subprime mortgage crisis left many financial institutions in jeopardy. *Finally*, some economists argued that the banks were too big to fail. Other economists argued that an infusion of credit and debt would exacerbate the problem. *Optimistically*, the government expects these assets will rise in value. This will profit both the banks and the government itself.

TIP: Adverbs of time—adverbs that indicate *when* an action takes place—do not always require a comma when used at the beginning of a sentence. Adverbs of time include words such as *yesterday*, *today*, *later*, *sometimes*, *often*, and *now*.

Exercise

On your own sheet of paper, rewrite the following sentences by moving the adverbs to the beginning. Once complete, please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

1. The red truck sped furiously past the camper van, blaring its horn.
2. Zoë snatched at the bread hungrily, polishing off three slices in under a minute.
3. Underage drinking often results from peer pressure and lack of parental attention.
4. The firefighters bravely tackled the blaze, but they were beaten back by flames.
5. Mayor Gill privately acknowledged that the budget was excessive and that further discussion was needed.

Starting a sentence with a prepositional phrase

A prepositional phrase is a group of words that behaves as an adjective or an adverb, modifying a noun or a verb. Prepositional phrases contain a preposition (a word that specifies place, direction, or time) and an object of the preposition (a noun phrase or pronoun that follows the preposition).

- | | | |
|-----------|--------------|--------------|
| • above | • beyond | • past |
| • beneath | • off | • with |
| • into | • underneath | • before |
| • till | • among | • for |
| • across | • by | • since |
| • beside | • on | • without |
| • like | • until | • behind |
| • toward | • around | • from |
| • against | • despite | • through |
| • between | • over | • below |
| • near | • up | • inside |
| • under | • at | • throughout |
| • after | • except | |

Read the following sentence:

The terrified cat hid **underneath the table**.

In this sentence, the prepositional phrase is *underneath the table*. The preposition *underneath* relates to the object that follows the preposition—*the table*. Adjectives may be placed between the preposition and the object in a prepositional phrase.

The terrified cat hid **underneath the heavy wooden table**.

Some prepositional phrases can be moved to the beginning of a sentence in order to create variety in a piece of writing. Look at the following revised sentence:

Underneath the heavy wooden table, the terrified cat hid.

Notice that when the prepositional phrase is moved to the beginning of the sentence, the emphasis shifts from the subject—the terrified cat—to the location in which the cat is hiding. Words that are placed at the beginning or end of a sentence generally receive the greatest emphasis. Take a look at the following examples. The prepositional phrase is bolded in each:

The bandaged man waited **in the doctor's office**.

In the doctor's office, the bandaged man waited.

My train leaves the station **at 6:45 a.m.**

At 6:45 a.m., my train leaves the station.

Teenagers hangout **under the railway bridge**.

Under the railway bridge, teenagers hangout.

Prepositional phrases are useful in any type of writing. Take another look at the paragraph on the government bailout.

The subprime mortgage crisis left many financial institutions in jeopardy. Some economists argued that the banks were too big to fail. Other economists argued that an infusion of credit and debt would exacerbate the problem. The government finally opted to bail out the banks. It acquired \$700 billion worth of mortgage-backed securities in 2008. The government optimistically expects these assets will rise in value. This will profit both the banks and the government itself.

Now read the revised version.

Throughout 2007 and 2008, the subprime mortgage crisis worsened, leaving many financial institutions in jeopardy. According to some economists, the banks were too big to fail. Other economists argued that an infusion of credit and debt would exacerbate the problem. Despite public objections, the government finally opted to bail out the banks. Since the 2008 bill passed, it has acquired \$700 billion worth of mortgage-backed securities. The government optimistically expects these assets will rise in value. This will profit both the banks and the government itself.

The underlined words are all prepositional phrases. Notice how they add additional information to the text and provide a sense of flow to the essay, making it less choppy and more pleasurable to read.

Unmovable prepositional phrases

Not all prepositional phrases can be placed at the beginning of a sentence. Read the following sentence:

I would like a chocolate sundae **without whipped cream**.

In this sentence, *without whipped cream* is the prepositional phrase. Because it describes the chocolate sundae, it cannot be moved to the beginning of the sentence. “Without whipped cream I would like a chocolate sundae” does not make as much (if any) sense. To determine whether a prepositional phrase can be moved, we must determine the meaning of the sentence.

Overuse of prepositional phrases

Experienced writers often include more than one prepositional phrase in a sentence; however, it is important not to overload your writing. Using too many modifiers in a paragraph may create an unintentionally comical effect as the following example shows:

The treasure lay buried under the old oak tree, behind the crumbling fifteenth-century wall, near the schoolyard, where children played merrily during their lunch hour, unaware of the riches that remained hidden beneath their feet.

A sentence is not necessarily effective just because it is long and complex. If your sentence appears cluttered with prepositional phrases, divide it into two shorter sentences. The previous sentence is far more effective when written as two simpler sentences:

The treasure lay buried under the old oak tree, behind the crumbling fifteenth-century wall. In the nearby schoolyard, children played merrily during their lunch hour, unaware of the riches that remained hidden beneath their feet.

Starting a sentence by inverting subject and verb

As we noted earlier, most writers follow the subject-verb-object sentence structure. In an inverted sentence, the order is reversed so that the subject follows the verb. Read the following sentence pairs:

A truck was parked in the driveway.
Parked in the driveway was a truck.

A copy of the file is attached.

Attached is a copy of the file.

Notice how the second sentence in each pair places more emphasis on the subject—*a truck* in the first example and *the file* in the second. This technique is useful for drawing the reader's attention to your primary area of focus. We can apply this method to an academic essay. Take another look the paragraph.

The subprime mortgage crisis left many financial institutions in jeopardy. Some economists argued that the banks were too big to fail. Other economists argued that an infusion of credit and debt would exacerbate the problem. The government finally opted to bail out the banks. It acquired \$700 billion worth of mortgage-backed securities in 2008. The government optimistically expects these assets will rise in value. This will profit both the banks and the government itself.

To emphasize the subject in certain sentences, we can invert the traditional sentence structure. Read this revised paragraph:

The subprime mortgage crisis left many financial institutions in jeopardy. The banks were too big to fail, argued some economists. Other economists argued that an infusion of credit and debt would exacerbate the problem. The government finally opted to bail out the banks. It acquired \$700 billion worth of mortgage-backed securities in 2008. These assets will rise in value, expects the government optimistically. This will profit both the banks and the government itself.

Notice that in the first underlined sentence, the subject (*some economists*) is placed after the verb (*argued*). In the second underlined sentence, the subject (*the government*) is placed after the verb (*expects*).

Exercise

On your own sheet of paper, rewrite the following sentences as inverted sentences. Once complete, please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

1. Marcus will never attempt to run another marathon.
2. A detailed job description is enclosed with this letter.
3. Bathroom facilities are across the hall to the left of the water cooler.
4. The well-dressed stranger stumbled through the doorway.
5. My colleagues remain unconvinced about the proposed merger.

Connecting Ideas to Increase Sentence Variety

Reviewing and rewriting the beginning of sentences is a good way of introducing sentence variety into your writing. Another useful technique is to connect two sentences using a modifier, a relative clause, or an appositive. This section examines how to connect ideas across several sentences in order to increase sentence variety and improve writing.

Joining ideas using an *-ing* modifier

Sometimes it is possible to combine two sentences by converting one of them into a modifier using the *-ing* verb form—*singing*, *dancing*, *swimming*. A modifier is a word or phrase that qualifies the meaning of another element in the sentence. Read the following example:

Original sentences: Jordan checked the computer system. They discovered a virus.

Revised sentence: Checking the computer system, Jordan discovered a virus.

To connect two sentences using an *-ing* modifier, add *-ing* to one of the verbs in the sentences (*checking*) and delete the subject (*Jordan*). Use a comma to separate the modifier from the subject of the sentence. It is important to make sure that the main idea in your revised sentence is contained in the main clause, not in the modifier. In this example, the main idea is that Jordan discovered a virus, not that they checked the computer system.

In the following example, an *-ing* modifier indicates that two actions are occurring at the same time:

1. Noticing the police car, she shifted gears and slowed down.

This means that she slowed down at the same time she noticed the police car.

2. Barking loudly, the dog ran across the driveway.

This means that the dog barked as it ran across the driveway.

You can add an *-ing* modifier to the beginning or the end of a sentence, depending on which fits best.

Beginning: Conducting a survey among her friends, Amanda found that few were happy in their jobs.

End: Maria filed the final report, meeting her deadline.

Dangling modifiers

A common mistake when combining sentences using the *-ing* verb form is to misplace the modifier so that it is not logically connected to the rest of the sentence. This creates a dangling modifier. Look at the following example:

Jogging across the parking lot, my breath grew ragged and shallow.

In this sentence, *jogging across the parking lot* seems to modify *my breath*. Since breath cannot jog, the sentence should be rewritten so that the subject is placed immediately after the modifier or added to the dangling phrase.

Jogging across the parking lot, I felt my breath grow ragged and shallow.

Joining ideas using an *-ed* modifier

Some sentences can be combined using an *-ed* verb form—*stopped*, *finished*, *played*. To use this method, one of the sentences must contain a form of *be* as a helping verb in addition to the *-ed* verb form. Take a look at the following example:

Original sentences: The Jones family was delayed by a traffic jam. They arrived several hours after the party started.

Revised sentence: Delayed by a traffic jam, the Jones family arrived several hours after the party started.

In the original version, *was* acts as a helping verb—it has no meaning by itself, but it serves a grammatical function by placing the main verb (*delayed*) in the perfect tense.

To connect two sentences using an *-ed* modifier, drop the helping verb (*was*) and the subject (*the Jones family*) from the sentence with an *-ed* verb form. This forms a modifying phrase (*delayed by a traffic jam*) that can be added to the beginning or end of the other sentence according to which fits best. As with the *-ing* modifier, be careful to place the word that the phrase modifies immediately after the phrase in order to avoid a dangling modifier.

Using *-ing* or *-ed* modifiers can help streamline your writing by drawing obvious connections between two sentences. Take a look at how modifiers might be used in this paragraph.

The subprime mortgage crisis left many financial institutions in jeopardy. Some economists argued that the banks were too big to fail. Other economists argued that an infusion of credit and debt would exacerbate the problem. Opting to bail out the banks, the government acquired \$700 billion worth of mortgage-backed securities in 2008. It optimistically expects these assets will rise in value. This will profit both the banks and the government itself.

The revised version of the essay uses the *-ing* modifier *opting* to draw a connection between the government's decision to bail out the banks and the result of that decision—the acquisition of the mortgage-backed securities.

Joining ideas using a relative clause

Another technique that writers use to combine sentences is to join them using a relative clause. A relative clause is a group of words that contains a subject and a verb and describes a noun. Relative clauses function as adjectives by answering questions such as *which one?* or *what kind?* Relative clauses begin with a relative pronoun, such as *who*, *which*, *where*, *why*, or *when*. Read the following examples:

Original sentences: The managing director is visiting the company next week. She lives in Vancouver.

Revised sentence: The managing director, who lives in Vancouver, is visiting the company next week.

To connect two sentences using a relative clause, substitute the subject of one of the sentences (*she*) for a relative pronoun (*who*). This gives you a relative clause (*who lives in Vancouver*) that can be placed next to the noun it describes (*the managing director*). Make sure to keep the sentence you want to emphasize as the main clause. For example, reversing the main clause and subordinate clause in the preceding sentence emphasizes where the managing director lives, not the fact that she is visiting the company.

Revised sentence: The managing director, who is visiting the company next week, lives in Vancouver.

Relative clauses are a useful way of providing additional, nonessential information in a sentence. Take a look at how relative clauses could be incorporated into this paragraph.

The subprime mortgage crisis, which has been steadily building throughout 2007 and 2008, left many financial institutions in jeopardy. Some economists, who favored the bailout, argued that the banks were too big to fail. Other economists, who opposed the bailout, argued that an infusion of credit and debt would exacerbate the problem. The government finally opted to bail out the banks. It acquired \$700 billion worth of mortgage-backed securities in 2008. The government optimistically expects these assets will rise in value. This will profit both the banks and the government itself.

Notice how the underlined relative clauses can be removed from the paragraph without changing the meaning of the sentence.

TIP: To check the punctuation of relative clauses, assess whether or not the clause can be taken out of the sentence without changing its meaning. If the relative clause is not essential to the meaning of the sentence, it should be placed in commas. If the relative clause is essential to the meaning of the sentence, it does not require commas around it.

Joining ideas using an appositive

An appositive is a word or group of words that describes or renames a noun or pronoun. Incorporating appositives into your writing is a useful way of combining sentences that are too short and choppy. Take a look at the following example:

Original sentences: Harland Sanders began serving food for hungry travelers in 1930. He is Colonel Sanders or “the Colonel.”

Revised sentence: Harland Sanders, “the Colonel,” began serving food for hungry travelers in 1930.

In the revised sentence, “*the Colonel*” is an appositive because it renames Harland Sanders. To combine two sentences using an appositive, drop the subject and verb from the sentence that renames the noun and turn it into a phrase. Note that in the previous example, the appositive is positioned immediately after the noun it describes. An appositive may be placed anywhere in a sentence, but it must come directly before or after the noun to which it refers:

Appositive after noun: Scott, a poorly trained athlete, was not expected to win the race.

Appositive before noun: A poorly trained athlete, Scott was not expected to win the race.

Unlike relative clauses, appositives are always punctuated by a comma or a set commas. Take a look at the way appositives are used to include additional facts in this paragraph.

The subprime mortgage crisis, the biggest financial disaster since the 1929 Wall Street crash, left many financial institutions in jeopardy. Some economists argued that the banks were too big to fail. Other economists argued that an infusion of credit and debt would exacerbate the problem. The government, the institution that would decide the fate of the banks, finally opted to bail them out. It acquired \$700 billion worth of mortgage-backed securities in 2008. The government optimistically expects these assets will rise in value. This will profit both the banks and the government itself.

Exercise

On your own sheet of paper, rewrite the following sentence pairs as one sentence using the techniques you have learned in this section. Once complete, please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

1. Baby sharks are called pups. Pups can be born in one of three ways.
2. The Pacific Ocean is the world's largest ocean. It extends from the Arctic in the north to the Southern Ocean in the south.
3. Clara Hughes is a Canadian cyclist and speed skater. She has won Olympic medals in both sports.
4. Riley introduced her colleague Dan to her partner, Delaney. She speculated that the two of them would have a lot in common.
5. Cacao is harvested by hand. It is then sold to chocolate-processing companies at the Coffee, Sugar, and Cocoa Exchange.

References

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Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers

A modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that adds to the meaning of, changes, clarifies, or describes another word, phrase, or clause.

Sometimes writers use modifiers incorrectly, leading to strange and unintentionally humorous sentences. The two common types of modifier errors are called misplaced modifiers and dangling modifiers. Another type of modifier error is called squinting error; this means that the writer “squints” at their sentence, trying to force a modifier error to work. Don’t squint!

If either of these errors occurs, readers can no longer read smoothly. Instead, they become stumped trying to figure out what the writer meant to say. Here, a reader may “squint” as well to figure out what the writer is saying. A writer’s goal must always be to communicate clearly and to avoid distracting the reader with strange sentences or awkward sentence constructions.

Misplaced Modifiers

A misplaced modifier is a modifier that is placed too far from the word or words it modifies. Misplaced modifiers make the sentence awkward and sometimes unintentionally humorous.

Incorrect: She wore a bicycle helmet on her head *that was too large*.

Correct: She wore a bicycle helmet *that was too large* on her head.

Notice in the incorrect sentence it sounds as if her head was too large! Of course, the writer is referring to the helmet, not to the person’s head. The corrected version of the sentence clarifies the writer’s meaning.

Look at the following two examples:

Incorrect: They bought a kitten for my brother *they call Shadow*.

Correct: They bought a kitten *they call Shadow* for my brother.

In the incorrect sentence, it seems that the brother's name is *Shadow*. That's because the modifier is too far from the word it modifies, which is *kitten*.

Incorrect: The patient was referred to the physician *with stomach pains*.

Correct: The patient *with stomach pains* was referred to the physician.

The incorrect sentence reads as if it is the physician who has stomach pains! What the writer means is that the patient has stomach pains.

Tip: Simple modifiers like *only*, *almost*, *just*, *nearly*, and *barely* often get used incorrectly because writers often stick them in the wrong place.

Confusing: Tyler *almost* found fifty cents under the sofa cushions.

Repaired: Tyler found *almost* fifty cents under the sofa cushions.

- How do you *almost* find something? Either you find it or you do not. The repaired sentence is much clearer.

Exercise

On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the following sentences to correct the misplaced modifiers.

1. The young lady was walking the dog on the telephone.
2. I heard that there was a robbery on the evening news.
3. Uncle Louie bought a running stroller for the baby that he called "Speed Racer."
4. Rolling down the mountain, the explorer stopped the boulder with his powerful foot.
5. We are looking for a babysitter for our precious six-year-old who doesn't drink or smoke and owns a car.
6. The teacher served cookies to the children wrapped in aluminum foil.
7. The mysterious woman walked toward the car holding an umbrella.

8. We returned the wine to the waiter that was sour.
9. Charlie spotted a stray puppy driving home from work.
10. I ate nothing but a cold bowl of noodles for dinner.

Dangling Modifiers

A dangling modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that describes something that has been left out of the sentence. When there is nothing that the word, phrase, or clause can modify, the modifier is said to dangle.

Incorrect: *Riding in the sports car*, the world whizzed by rapidly.

Correct: As Jane was *riding in the sports car*, the world whizzed by rapidly.

In the incorrect sentence, *riding in the sports car* is dangling. The reader is left wondering who is riding in the sports car. The writer must tell the reader!

Incorrect: *Walking home at night*, the trees looked like spooky aliens.

Correct: As Jonas was *walking home at night*, the trees looked like spooky aliens.

Correct: The trees looked like spooky aliens as Jonas was *walking home at night*.

In the incorrect sentence *walking home at night* is dangling. Who is walking home at night? Jonas. Note that there are two different ways the dangling modifier can be corrected.

Incorrect: To win the spelling bee, Luis and Gerard should join our team.

Correct: If we want to win the spelling bee this year, Luis and Gerard should join our team.

In the incorrect sentence, *to win the spelling bee* is dangling. Who wants to win the spelling bee? We do!

Tip: The following three steps will help you quickly spot a dangling modifier:

1. Look for an *-ing* modifier at the beginning of your sentence or another modifying phrase:
Painting for three hours at night, the kitchen was finally finished by Maggie. (*Painting* is the *-ing* modifier.)

2. Underline the first noun that follows it:

Painting for three hours at night, the kitchen was finally finished by Maggie.

3. Make sure the modifier and noun go together logically. If they do not, it is very likely you have a dangling modifier.

After identifying the dangling modifier, rewrite the sentence.

Painting for three hours at night, Maggie finally finished the kitchen.

Exercise

Rewrite the following the sentences onto your own sheet of paper to correct the dangling modifiers.

1. Bent over backward, the posture was very challenging.
2. Making discoveries about new creatures, this is an interesting time to be a biologist.
3. Walking in the dark, the picture fell off the wall.
4. Playing a guitar in the bedroom, the cat was seen under the bed.
5. Packing for a trip, a cockroach scurried down the hallway.
6. While looking in the mirror, the towel swayed in the breeze.
7. While driving to the veterinarian's office, the dog nervously whined.
8. The priceless painting drew large crowds when walking into the museum.
9. Piled up next to the bookshelf, I chose a romance novel.
10. Chewing furiously, the gum fell out of my mouth.

Exercise

Rewrite the following paragraph correcting all the misplaced and dangling modifiers.

I bought a fresh loaf of bread for my sandwich shopping in the grocery store. Wanting to make a delicious sandwich, the mayonnaise was thickly spread. Placing the cold cuts on the bread, the lettuce was placed on top. I cut the sandwich in half with a knife turning on the radio. Biting into the sandwich, my favorite song blared loudly in my ears. Humming and chewing, my sandwich went down smoothly. Smiling, my sandwich will be made again, but next time I will add cheese.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Exercises

See how creative and humorous you can get by writing ten sentences with misplaced and dangling modifiers. This is a deceptively simple task, but rise to the challenge. Your writing will be stronger for it. Exchange papers with a classmate, and rewrite your classmate's sentences to correct any misplaced modifiers.

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Parallelism

Earlier in this chapter, we learned that increasing sentence variety adds interest to a piece of writing and makes the reading process more enjoyable for others. Using a mixture of sentence lengths and patterns throughout an essay is an important writing technique. However, it is equally important to avoid introducing variation within individual sentences. A strong sentence is composed of balanced parts that all have the same structure. In this section, we will examine how to create a balanced sentence structure by using parallelism.

Using Parallelism

Parallelism is the use of similar structure in related words, phrases, or clauses. It creates a sense of rhythm and balance within a sentence. As readers, we often correct faulty parallelism—a lack of parallel structure—intuitively because an unbalanced sentence sounds awkward and poorly constructed. Read the following sentences aloud:

Faulty parallelism: Kelly had to iron, do the washing, and shopping before her parents arrived.

Faulty parallelism: Driving a car requires coordination, patience, and to have good eyesight.

Faulty parallelism: Ali prefers jeans to wearing a suit.

All of these sentences contain faulty parallelism. Although they are factually correct, the construction is clunky and confusing. In the first example, three different verb forms are used. In the second and third examples, the writer begins each sentence by using a noun (*coordination, jeans*), but ends with a phrase (*to have good eyesight, wearing a suit*). Now read the same three sentences that have correct parallelism.

Correct parallelism: Kelly had to do the ironing, washing, and shopping before her parents arrived.

Correct parallelism: Driving a car requires coordination, patience, and good eyesight.

Correct parallelism: Ali prefers wearing jeans to wearing a suit.

When these sentences are written using a parallel structure, they sound more aesthetically pleasing because they are balanced. Repetition of grammatical construction also minimizes the amount of work the reader has to do to decode the sentence. This enables the reader to focus on the main idea in the sentence and not on how the sentence is put together.

Tip: A simple way to check for parallelism in your writing is to make sure you have paired nouns with nouns, verbs with verbs, prepositional phrases with prepositional phrases, and so on. Underline each element in a sentence and check that the corresponding element uses the same grammatical form.

Creating Parallelism Using Coordinating Conjunctions

When you connect two clauses using a coordinating conjunction (*for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*), make sure that the same grammatical structure is used on each side of the conjunction. Take a look at the following example:

Faulty parallelism: When I walk the dog, I like **to listen to music** and **talking to friends** on the phone.

Correct parallelism: When I walk the dog, I like **listening to music** and **talking to friends** on the phone.

The first sentence uses two different verb forms (*to listen, talking*). In the second sentence, the grammatical construction on each side of the coordinating conjunction (*and*) is the same, creating a parallel sentence.

The same technique should be used for joining items or lists in a series:

Faulty parallelism: This committee needs to decide whether the company should **reduce its workforce, cut its benefits, or lowering workers' wages**.

Correct parallelism: This committee needs to decide whether the company should **reduce its workforce, cut its benefits, or lower workers' wages**.

The first sentence contains two items that use the same verb construction (*reduce, cut*) and a third item

that uses a different verb form (*lowering*). The second sentence uses the same verb construction in all three items, creating a parallel structure.

Exercise

On your own sheet of paper, revise each of the following sentences to create parallel structure using coordinating conjunctions. Once done, please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

1. Mr. Holloway enjoys reading and to play his guitar at weekends.
2. The doctor told Mrs. Franklin that she should either eat less or should exercise more.
3. Breaking out of the prison compound, the escapees moved carefully, quietly, and were quick on their feet.
4. I have read the book, but I have not watched the movie version.
5. Deal with a full inbox first thing in the morning, or by setting aside short periods of time in which to answer e-mail queries.

Creating Parallelism Using *Than* or *As*

When you are making a comparison, the two items being compared should have a parallel structure. Comparing two items without using parallel structure can lead to confusion about what is being compared. Comparisons frequently use the words *than* or *as*, and the items on each side of these comparison words should be parallel. Take a look at the following example:

Faulty parallelism: *Swimming in the ocean* is much tougher than **a pool**.

Correct parallelism: *Swimming in the ocean* is much tougher than **swimming in a pool**.

In the first sentence, the elements before the comparison word (*than*) are not equal to the elements after the comparison word. It appears that the writer is comparing an action (*swimming*) with a noun (*a pool*). In the second sentence, the writer uses the same grammatical construction to create a parallel structure. This clarifies that an action is being compared with another action.

To correct some instances of faulty parallelism, it may be necessary to add or delete words in a sentence.

Faulty parallelism: A brisk walk is as beneficial to your health as **going for a run**.

Correct parallelism: Going for a brisk walk is as beneficial to your health as **going for a run**.

In this example, it is necessary to add the verb phrase *going for* to the sentence in order to clarify that the act of walking is being compared to the act of running.

Exercise

On your own sheet of paper, revise each of the following sentences to create parallel structure using *than* or *as*. Once done, please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

1. I would rather work at a second job to pay for a new car than a loan.
2. How you look in the workplace is just as important as your behavior.
3. The firefighter spoke more of his childhood than he talked about his job.
4. Indian cuisine is far tastier than the food of Great Britain.
5. Jim's opponent was as tall as Jim and he carried far more weight.

Creating Parallelism Using Correlative Conjunctions

A correlative conjunction is a paired conjunction that connects two equal parts of a sentence and shows the relationship between them. Common correlative conjunctions include the following:

- either...or
- not only...but also
- neither...nor
- whether...or
- rather...than
- both...and

Correlative conjunctions should follow the same grammatical structure to create a parallel sentence. Take a look at the following example:

Faulty parallelism: We can neither **wait** for something to happen nor **can we take** evasive action.

Correct parallelism: We can neither **wait** for something to happen nor **take** evasive action.

When using a correlative conjunction, the words, phrases, or clauses following each part should be parallel. In the first sentence, the construction of the second part of the sentence does not match the construction of the first part. In the second sentence, omitting needless words and matching verb constructions create a parallel structure. Sometimes, rearranging a sentence corrects faulty parallelism.

Faulty parallelism: It was both a long movie and poorly written.

Correct parallelism: The movie was both long and poorly written.

Tip: To see examples of parallelism in use, read some of the great historical speeches by rhetoricians such as Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King Jr. Notice how they use parallel structures to emphasize important points and to create a smooth, easily understandable oration.

Here is a link to text, audio, video, and the music of Martin Luther King's speech "[I Have a Dream](#)."

Exercise

On your own sheet of paper, revise each of the following sentences to create parallel structure using correlative conjunctions. Once done, please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

1. The cyclist owns both a mountain bike and has a racing bike.
2. The movie not only contained lots of action, but also it offered an important lesson.
3. My current job is neither exciting nor is it meaningful.
4. Jason would rather listen to his father than be taking advice from me.
5. We are neither interested in buying a vacuum cleaner nor do we want to utilize your carpet cleaning service.

Exercise

Read through the following excerpt from Alex's essay and revise any instances of faulty parallelism. Rewrite the sentences to create a parallel structure.

Owning a pet has proven to be extremely beneficial to people's health. Pets help lower blood pressure, boost immunity, and are lessening anxiety. Studies indicate that children who grow up in a household with cats or dogs are at a lower risk of developing allergies or suffer from asthma. Owning a dog offers an additional bonus; it makes people more sociable. Dogs are natural conversation starters and this not only helps to draw people out of social isolation but also they are more likely to find a more romantic partner.

Benefits of pet ownership for elderly people include less anxiety, lower insurance costs, and they also gain peace of mind. A study of Alzheimer's patients showed that patients have fewer anxious outbursts if there is an animal in the home. Some doctors even keep dogs in the office to act as on-site therapists. In short, owning a pet keeps you healthy, happy, and is a great way to help you relax.

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78.

Dictionary, Thesaurus, Slang, Cliches

Effective writing involves making conscious choices with words. When you prepare to sit down to write your first draft, you likely have already completed some freewriting exercises, chosen your topic, developed your thesis statement, written an outline, and even selected your sources. When it is time to write your first draft, start to consider which words to use to best convey your ideas to the reader.

Some writers are picky about word choice as they start drafting. They may practice some specific strategies, such as using a dictionary and thesaurus, using words and phrases with proper connotations, and avoiding slang, clichés, and overly general words.

Once you understand these tricks of the trade, you can move ahead confidently in writing your assignment. Remember, the skill and accuracy of your word choice is a major factor in developing your writing style. Precise selection of your words will help you be more clearly understood—in both writing and speaking.

Using a Dictionary and Thesaurus

Even professional writers need help with the meanings, spellings, pronunciations, and uses of particular words. In fact, they rely on dictionaries to help them write better. No one knows every word in the English language and their multiple uses and meanings, so all writers, from novices to professionals, can benefit from the use of dictionaries.

Most dictionaries provide the following information:

- **Spelling.** How the word and its different forms are spelled.
- **Pronunciation.** How to say the word.
- **Part of speech.** The function of the word.
- **Definition.** The meaning of the word.
- **Synonyms.** Words that have similar meanings.
- **Etymology.** The history of the word.

Look at the following sample dictionary entry and see which of the preceding information you can identify:

myth, *mith*, *n.* [Gr. *mythos*, a word, a fable, a legend.] A fable or legend embodying the convictions of a people as to their gods or other divine beings, their own beginnings and early history and the heroes connected with it, or the origin of the world; any invented story; something or someone having no existence in fact.—**myth • ic**, **myth • i • cal**

Like a dictionary, a thesaurus is another indispensable writing tool. A thesaurus gives you a list of synonyms, words that have the same (or very close to the same) meaning as another word. It also lists antonyms, words with the opposite meaning of the word. A thesaurus will help you when you are looking for the perfect word with just the right meaning to convey your ideas. It will also help you learn more words and use the ones you already know more correctly.

precocious *adj.* *She's such a precocious little girl!:* uncommonly smart, mature, advanced, smart, bright, brilliant, gifted, quick, clever, apt.

Ant. slow, backward, stupid.

Using Proper Connotations

A denotation is the dictionary definition of a word. A connotation, on the other hand, is the emotional or cultural meaning attached to a word. The connotation of a word can be positive, negative, or neutral. Keep in mind the connotative meaning when choosing a word.

1. Scrawny

- **Denotation:** Exceptionally thin and slight or meager in body or size.
- **Word used in a sentence:** Although he was a premature baby and a **scrawny** child, Martin has developed into a strong man.
- **Connotation:** (Negative) In this sentence the word *scrawny* may have a negative connotation in the readers' minds. They might find it to mean a weakness or a personal flaw; however, the word fits into the sentence appropriately.

2. Skinny

- **Denotation:** Lacking sufficient flesh, very thin.
- **Word used in a sentence:** **Skinny** jeans have become very fashionable in the past couple of years.
- **Connotation:** (Positive) Based on cultural and personal impressions of what it

[illegible]

Avoiding Slang

Slang describes informal words that are considered nonstandard English. Slang often changes with passing fads and may be used by or familiar to only a specific group of people. Most people use slang when they speak and in personal correspondences, such as e-mails, text messages, and instant messages. Slang is appropriate between friends in an informal context but should be avoided in formal academic writing.

Exercise

Edit the following paragraph by replacing the slang words and phrases with more formal language. Rewrite the paragraph on your own sheet of paper. Once complete, please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

I felt like such an airhead when I got up to give my speech. As I walked toward the podium, I banged my knee on a chair. Man, I felt like such a klutz. On top of that, I kept saying “like” and “um,” and I could not stop fidgeting. I was so stressed out about being up there. I feel like I’ve been practicing this speech 24/7, and I still bombed. It was ten minutes of me going off about how we sometimes have to do things we don’t enjoy doing. Wow, did I ever prove my point. My speech was so bad I’m surprised that people didn’t boo. My teacher said not to sweat it, though. Everyone gets nervous his or her first time speaking in public, and she said, with time, I would become a whiz at this speech giving stuff. I wonder if I have the guts to do it again.

Avoiding Clichés

Clichés are descriptive expressions that have lost their effectiveness because they are overused. Writing that uses clichés often suffers from a lack of originality and insight. Avoiding clichés in formal writing will help you write in original and fresh ways.

- **Clichéd:** Whenever my brother and I get into an argument, he always says something that makes my **blood boil**.
- **Plain:** Whenever my brother and I get into an argument, he always says something that makes me really angry.
- **Original:** Whenever my brother and I get into an argument, he always says something that makes me want to go to the gym and punch the bag for a few hours.

Tip: Think about all the cliché phrases that you hear in popular music or in everyday conversation. What would happen if these clichés were transformed into something unique?

Exercise

On your own sheet of paper, revise the following sentences by replacing the clichés with fresh, original descriptions.

1. She is writing a memoir in which she will air her family's dirty laundry.
2. Fran had an ax to grind with Benny, and she planned to confront him that night at the party.
3. Mr. Muller was at his wit's end with the rowdy class of seventh graders.
4. The bottom line is that Greg was fired because he missed too many days of work.
5. Sometimes it is hard to make ends meet with just one paycheck.
6. My brain is fried from pulling an all-nighter.
7. Maria left the dishes in the sink all week to give Jeff a taste of his own medicine.
8. While they were at the carnival Janice exclaimed, "Time sure does fly when you are having fun!"
9. Jeremy became tongue-tied after the interviewer asked him where he saw himself in five years.
10. Jordan was dressed to the nines that night.

Avoiding Overly General Words

Specific words and images make your writing more interesting to read. Whenever possible, avoid overly general words in your writing; instead, try to replace general language with particular nouns, verbs, and modifiers that convey details and that bring your words to life. Add words that provide colour, texture, sound, and even smell to your writing.

- **General:** My new puppy is cute.
- **Specific:** My new puppy is a ball of white fuzz with the biggest black eyes I have ever seen.
- **General:** My teacher told us that plagiarism is bad.

- **Specific:** My teacher, Ms. Atwater, created a presentation detailing exactly how plagiarism is illegal and unethical.

Exercise

Revise the following sentences by replacing the overly general words with more precise and attractive language. Write the new sentences on your own sheet of paper.

1. Reilly got into her car and drove off.
2. I would like to travel to outer space because it would be amazing.
3. Jane came home after a bad day at the office.
4. I thought Milo's essay was fascinating.
5. The dog walked up the street.
6. The coal miners were tired after a long day.
7. The tropical fish are pretty.
8. I sweat a lot after running.
9. The goalie blocked the shot.
10. I enjoyed my Mexican meal.

Exercise: Writing Application

Review a piece of writing that you have completed for school. Circle any sentences with slang, clichés, or overly general words and rewrite them using stronger language.

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79.

More on Slang and Idioms

Words are the basis of how a reader or listener judges you, the writer and speaker. When you write an academic paper or speak in a business interview, you want to be sure to choose your words carefully. In our casual, everyday talk, we often use a lot of “ums,” “likes,” “yeahs,” and so on. This everyday language is not appropriate for formal contexts, such as academic papers and business interviews. You should switch between different ways of speaking and writing depending on whether the context is formal or informal.

Slang

Hey guys, let’s learn about slang and other cool stuff like that! It will be awesome, trust me. This section is off the hook!

What do you notice about the previous paragraph? You might notice that the language sounds informal, or casual, like someone might talk with a friend or family member. The paragraph also uses a lot of slang. Slang is a type of language that is informal and playful. It often changes over time. The slang of the past is different than the slang of today, but some slang has carried over into the present. Slang also varies by region and culture. The important thing to understand is that slang is casual talk, and you should avoid using it in formal contexts. There are literally thousands of slang words and expressions. [Table 5.17 “Slang Expressions”](#) explains just a few of the more common terms.

Slang Expressions

Slang Word or Phrase	Meaning
check it out, check this out	v. look at, watch, examine
chocoholic, workaholic, shopaholic	n. a person who loves, is addicted to chocolate/work/shopping
stuff	n. things (used as a singular, noncount noun)
taking care of business	doing things that need to be done
pro	n. a person who is a professional
crack up	v. to laugh uncontrollably
veg (sounds like the <i>veg</i> in <i>vegetable</i>)	v. relax and do nothing
dude, man	n. person, man
all-nighter	n. studying all night
cool	adj. good, fashionable
gross, nasty	adj. disgusting
pig out	v. eat a lot, overeat
screw up	v. make a mistake
awesome	adj. great

Exercise

Edit the business e-mail by replacing any slang words and phrases with more formal language.

Dear Ms. O'Connor:

I am writing to follow up on my interview from last week. First of all, it was awesome to meet you. You are a really cool lady. I believe I would be a pro at all the stuff you mentioned that would be required of me in this job. I am not a workaholic, but I do work hard and "take care of business." Haha. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

M. Ernest Anderson

Idioms

Idioms are expressions that have a meaning different from the dictionary definitions of the individual words in the expression. Because English contains many idioms, nonnative English speakers have difficulties making logical sense of idioms and idiomatic expressions. The more you are exposed to

English, however, the more idioms you will come to understand. Until then, memorizing the more common idioms may be of some help.

Ideoms

Idiom	Definition
a blessing in disguise	a good thing you do not recognize at first
a piece of cake	easy to do
better late than never	it is better to do something late than not at all
get over it	recover from something (like a perceived insult)
I have no idea	I don't know
not a chance	it will definitely not happen
on pins and needles	very nervous about something that is happening
on top of the world	feeling great
pulling your leg	making a joke by tricking another person
the sky is the limit	the possibilities are endless

What if you come across an idiom that you do not understand? There are clues that can help you. They are called context clues. Context clues are words or phrases around the unknown word or phrase that may help you decipher its meaning.

1. **Definition or explanation clue.** An idiom may be explained immediately after its use.

Sentence: I felt like I was sitting *on pins and needles* **I was so nervous.**

2. **Restatement or synonym clues.** An idiom may be simplified or restated.

Sentence: The young girl felt as though she had been *sent to the dog house* when her mother **punished her** for fighting in school.

3. **Contrast or Antonym clues.** An idiom may be clarified by a contrasting phrase or antonym that is near it.

Sentence: Chynna thought the 5k marathon would be *a piece of cake*, **but it turned out to be very difficult.**

Pay attention to the signal word *but*, which tells the reader that an opposite thought or concept is occurring.

Exercise: Writing Application

Write a short paragraph about yourself to a friend. Write another paragraph about yourself to an employer. Examine and discuss the differences in language between the two paragraphs.

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80.

Spelling and Homonyms

One essential aspect of good writing is accurate spelling. With computer spell checkers, spelling may seem simple, but these programs fail to catch every error. Spell checkers identify some errors, but writers still have to consider the flagged words and suggested replacements. Writers are still responsible for the errors that remain.

For example, if the spell checker highlights a word that is misspelled and gives you a list of alternative words, you may choose a word that you never intended even though it is spelled correctly. This can change the meaning of your sentence. It can also confuse readers, making them lose interest. Computer spell checkers are useful editing tools, but they can never replace human knowledge of spelling rules, homonyms, and commonly misspelled words.

Common Spelling Rules

The best way to master new words is to understand the key spelling rules. Keep in mind, however, that some spelling rules carry exceptions. A spell checker may catch these exceptions, but knowing them yourself will prepare you to spell accurately on the first try. You may want to try memorizing each rule and its exception like you would memorize a rhyme or lyrics to a song.

Write *i* before *e* except after *c*, or when pronounced *ay* like “neighbor” or “weigh.”

- achieve, niece, alien
- receive, deceive

When words end in a consonant plus *y*, drop the *y* and add an *i* before adding another ending.

- happy + er = happier
- cry + ed = cried

When words end in a vowel plus *y*, keep the *y* and add the ending.

- delay + ed = delayed

Memorize the following exceptions to this rule: *day, lay, say, pay* = *daily, laid, said, paid*

When adding an ending that begins with a vowel, such as *-able, -ence, -ing, or -ity*, drop the last *e* in a word.

- write + ing = writing
- pure + ity = purity

When adding an ending that begins with a consonant, such as *-less, -ment, or -ly*, keep the last *e* in a word.

- hope + less = hopeless
- advertise + ment = advertisement

For many words ending in a consonant and an *o*, add *-s* when using the plural form.

- photo + s = photos
- soprano + s = sopranos

Add *-es* to words that end in *s, ch, sh, and x*.

- church + es = churches
- fax + es = faxes

Exercise

Identify and correct the nine misspelled words in the following paragraph. Once done, please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Sherman J. Alexie Jr. was born in October 1966. He is a Spokane/Coeur d'Alene Indian and an American writer, poet, and filmmaker. Alexie was born with hydrocephalus, or water on the brain. This condition led doctors to predict that he would likely suffer long-term brain damage and possibly mental retardation. Although Alexie survived with no mental disabilities, he did suffer other serious side effects from his condition that plagued him throughout his childhood. Amazingly, Alexie learned to read by the age of three, and by age five he had read novels such as John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*. Raised on an Indian reservation, Alexie often felt alienated from his peers due to his avid love for reading and also from the long-term effects of his illness, which often kept him from socializing with his peers on the reservation. The reading skills he displayed at such a young age foreshadowed what he would later become. Today Alexie is a prolific and successful writer with several story anthologies to his credit, notably *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven* and *The Toughest Indian in the World*. Most of his fiction is about contemporary Native Americans who are influenced by pop culture and pop wows and everything in between. His work is sometimes funny but always thoughtful and full of richness and depth. Alexie also writes poetry, novels, and screenplays. His latest collection of stories is called *War Dances*, which came out in 2009.

Eight Tips to Improve Spelling Skills

1. **Read the words in your assignment carefully, and avoid skimming over the page.** Focusing on your written assignment word by word will help you pay close attention to each word's spelling. Skimming quickly, you may overlook misspelled words.
2. **Use mnemonic devices to remember the correct spelling of words.** Mnemonic devices, or memory techniques and learning aids, include inventive sayings or practices that help you remember. For example, the saying "It is important to be a beautiful person inside and out" may help you remember that *beautiful* begins with "be a." The practice of pronouncing the word *Wednesday* Wed-nes-day may help you remember how to spell the word correctly.
3. **Use a dictionary.** Many professional writers rely on the dictionary—either in print or online. If you find it difficult to use a regular dictionary, ask your instructor to help you find a "poor speller's dictionary."
4. **Use your computer's spell checker.** The spell checker will not solve all your spelling problems, but it is a useful tool. See the introduction to this section for cautions about spell checkers.
5. **Keep a list of frequently misspelled words.** You will often misspell the same words again and again, but do not let this discourage you. All writers struggle with the spellings of certain words; they become aware of their spelling weaknesses and work to improve. Be aware of which words you commonly misspell, and you can add them to a list to learn to spell them correctly.
6. **Look over corrected papers for misspelled words.** Add these words to your list and practice writing each word four to five times each. Writing teachers will especially notice which words you frequently misspell, and it will help you excel in your classes if they see your spelling improve.
7. **Test yourself with flashcards.** Sometimes the old-fashioned methods are best, and for spelling, this tried and true technique has worked for many students. You can work with a peer or alone.
8. **Review the common spelling rules explained in this chapter.** Take the necessary time to master the material; you may return to the rules in this chapter again and again, as needed.

Tip: Remember to focus on spelling during the editing and revising step of the writing process. Start with the big ideas such as organizing your piece of writing and developing effective paragraphs, and then work your way down toward the smaller—but equally important—details like spelling and punctuation.

Homonyms

Homonyms are words that sound like one another but have different meanings.

Commonly Misused Homonyms

- Principle, Principal
 - **Principle (noun).** A fundamental concept that is accepted as true.
The **principle** of human equality is an important foundation for all nations.
 - **Principal (noun).** The original amount of debt on which interest is calculated.
The payment plan allows me to pay back only the **principal** amount, not any compounded interest.
 - **Principal (noun).** A person who is the main authority of a school.
The **principal** held a conference for both parents and teachers.
- Where, Wear, Ware
 - **Where (adverb).** The place in which something happens.
Where is the restaurant?
 - **Wear (verb).** To carry or have on the body.
I will **wear** my hiking shoes when go on a climb tomorrow morning.
 - **Ware (noun).** Articles of merchandise or manufacture (usually, *wares*).
When I return from shopping, I will show you my **wares**.
- Lead, Led
 - **Lead (noun).** A type of metal used in pipes and batteries.
The **lead** pipes in my homes are old and need to be replaced.
 - **Led (verb).** The past tense of the verb *lead*.
After the garden, she **led** the patrons through the museum.
- Which, Witch

- **Which (pronoun).** Replaces one out of a group.
Which apartment is yours?
- **Witch (noun).** A person who practices sorcery or who has supernatural powers.
She thinks she is a **witch**, but she does not seem to have any powers.
- Peace, Piece
 - **Peace (noun).** A state of tranquility or quiet.
For once, there was **peace** between the argumentative brothers.
 - **Piece (noun).** A part of a whole.
I would like a large **piece** of cake, thank you.
- Passed, Past
 - **Passed (verb).** To go away or move.
He **passed** the slower cars on the road using the left lane.
 - **Past (noun).** Having existed or taken place in a period before the present.
The argument happened in the **past**, so there is no use in dwelling on it.
- Lessen, Lesson
 - **Lessen (verb).** To reduce in number, size, or degree.
My dentist gave me medicine to **lessen** the pain of my aching tooth.
 - **Lesson (noun).** A reading or exercise to be studied by a student.
Today's **lesson** was about mortgage interest rates.
- Patience, Patients
 - **Patience (noun).** The capacity of being patient (waiting for a period of time or enduring pains and trials calmly).
The novice teacher's **patience** with the unruly class was astounding.
 - **Patients (plural noun).** Individuals under medical care.
The **patients** were tired of eating the hospital food, and they could not wait for a home-cooked meal.
- Sees, Seas, Seize
 - **Sees (verb).** To perceive with the eye.
He **sees** a whale through his binoculars.
 - **Seas (plural noun).** The plural of sea, a great body of salt water.

The tidal fluctuation of the oceans and **seas** are influenced by the moon.

- **Seize (verb).** To possess or take by force.

The king plans to **seize** all the peasants' land.

- Threw, Through

- **Threw (verb).** The past tense of *throw*.

She **threw** the football with perfect form.

- **Through (preposition).** A word that indicates movement.

She walked **through** the door and out of his life.

Exercise

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct homonym.

1. Do you agree with the underlying _____ (principle, principal) that ensures copyrights are protected in the digital age?
2. I like to _____ (where, wear, ware) unique clothing from thrift stores that do not have company logos on them.
3. Marjorie felt like she was being _____ (led, lead) on a wild goose chase, and she did not like it one bit.
4. Serina described _____ (witch, which) house was hers, but now that I am here, they all look the same.
5. Seeing his friend without a lunch, Miguel gave her a _____ (peace, piece) of his apple.
6. Do you think that it is healthy for mother to talk about the _____ (passed, past) all the time?
7. Eating healthier foods will _____ (lessen, lesson) the risk of heart disease.
8. I know it sounds cliché, but my father had the _____ (patients, patience) of a saint.
9. Daniela _____ (sees, seas, seize) possibilities in the bleakest situations, and that is why she is successful.
10. Everyone goes _____ (through, threw) hardships in life regardless of who they are.

Commonly Misspelled Words

Below is a list of commonly misspelled words. You probably use these words every day in either speaking or writing. Each word has a segment in bold type, which indicates the problem area of the

word that is often spelled incorrectly. If you can, use this list as a guide before, during, and after you write.

Tip: Use the following two tricks to help you master these troublesome words:

1. Copy each word a few times and underline the problem area.
2. Copy the words onto flash cards and have a friend test you.

Commonly misspelled words:

- | | | |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| • across | • beginning | • crowded |
| • disappoint | • environment | • grammar |
| • integration | • judgment | • necessary |
| • particular | • possible | • psychology |
| • separate | • success | • thought |
| • address | • behaviour | • definite |
| • disapprove | • exaggerate | • height |
| • intelligent | • knowledge | • nervous |
| • perform | • prefer | • pursue |
| • similar | • surprise | • tired |
| • answer | • calendar | • describe |
| • doesn't | • familiar | • illegal |
| • interest | • maintain | • occasion |
| • perhaps | • prejudice | • reference |
| • since | • taught | • until |
| • argument | • career | • desperate |
| • eighth | • finally | • immediately |
| • interfere | • mathematics | • opinion |
| • personnel | • privilege | • rhythm |
| • speech | • temperature | • weight |
| • athlete | • conscience | • different |
| • embarrass | • government | • important |
| • jewelry | • meant | • optimist |
| • possess | • probably | • ridiculous |
| • strength | • thorough | • written |

Exercise

Identify and correct the ten commonly misspelled words in the following paragraph. Once complete, please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Brooklyn is one of the five boroughs that make up New York City. It is located on the eastern shore of Long Island directly accross the East River from the island of Manhattan. Its beginings stretch back to the sixteenth century when it was founded by the Dutch who originally called it “Breuckelen.” Immedietely after the Dutch settled Brooklyn, it came under British rule. However, neither the Dutch nor the British were Brooklyn’s first inhabitants. When European settlers first arrived, Brooklyn was largely inhabited by the Lenapi, a collective name for several organized bands of Indigenous people who settled a large area of land that extended from upstate New York through the entire state of New Jersey. They are sometimes referred to as the Delaware Indians. Over time, the Lenapi succumbed to European diseases or conflicts between European settlers or other Native American enemies. Finalley they were pushed out of Brooklyn completely by the British.

In 1776, Brooklyn was the site of the first importent battle of the American Revolution known as the Battle of Brooklyn. The colonists lost this battle, which was led by George Washington, but over the next two years they would win the war, kicking the British out of the colonies once and for all.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Brooklyn grew to be a city in its own right. The completion of the Brooklyn Bridge was an ocasion for celebration; transportation and commerce between Brooklyn and Manhattan now became much easier. Eventually, in 1898, Brooklyn lost its seperate identity as an independent city and became one of five boroughs of New York City. However, in some people’s opinien, the intagration into New York City should have never happened; they though Brooklyn should have remained an independent city.

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81.

Synonyms and Antonyms

As you work with your draft, you will want to pay particular attention to the words you have chosen. Do they express exactly what you are trying to convey? Can you choose better, more effective words? Familiarity with synonyms and antonyms can be helpful in answering these questions.

Synonyms

Synonyms are words that have the same, or almost the same, meaning as another word. You can say an “easy task” or a “simple task” because *easy* and *simple* are synonyms. You can say Hong Kong is a “large city” or a “metropolis” because *city* and *metropolis* are synonyms.

However, it is important to remember that not all pairs of words in the English language are so easily interchangeable. The slight but important differences in meaning between synonyms can make a big difference in your writing. For example, the words *boring* and *insipid* may have similar meanings, but the subtle differences between the two will affect the message your writing conveys. The word *insipid* evokes a scholarly and perhaps more pretentious message than *boring*.

The English language is full of pairs of words that have subtle distinctions between them. All writers, professionals and beginners alike, face the challenge of choosing the most appropriate synonym to best convey their ideas. When you pay particular attention to synonyms in your writing, it comes across to your reader. The sentences become much more clear and rich in meaning.

Exercise

Replace the underlined words in the paragraph with appropriate synonyms. Write the new paragraph on your own sheet of paper. Once complete, please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

When most people think of the Renaissance, they might think of artists like Michelangelo, Raphael, or Leonardo da Vinci, but they often overlook one of the very important figures of the Renaissance: Filippo Brunelleschi. Brunelleschi was born in Florence, Italy in 1377. He is considered the very best architect and engineer of the Renaissance. His impressive accomplishments are a testament to following one’s dreams, persevering in the face of obstacles, and realizing one’s vision.

The most difficult undertaking of Brunelleschi’s career was the dome of Florence Cathedral, which took sixteen years to construct. A major blow to the progress of the construction happened in 1428. Brunelleschi had designed a special ship to carry the one hundred tons of marble needed for the dome. He felt this would be the most inexpensive way to transport the marble, but the unthinkable happened. The ship went down to the bottom of the water, taking all the marble with it to the bottom of the river. Brunelleschi was really sad. Nevertheless, he did not give up. He held true to

his vision of the completed dome. Filippo Brunelleschi completed construction of the dome of Florence Cathedral in 1446. His influence on artists and architects alike was felt strongly during his lifetime and can still be felt in this day and age.

Exercise

On your own sheet of paper, write a sentence with each of the following words that illustrates the specific meaning of each synonym. Once complete, please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

1. leave, abandon
2. mad, insane
3. outside, exterior
4. poor, destitute
5. quiet, peaceful
6. riot, revolt
7. rude, impolite
8. talk, conversation
9. hug, embrace
10. home, residence

Antonyms

Antonyms are words that have the opposite meaning of a given word. The study of antonyms will not only help you choose the most appropriate word as you write; it will also sharpen your overall sense of language. The following table lists common words and their antonyms.

Common Antonyms

Word	Antonym	Word	Antonym
absence	presence	frequent	seldom
accept	refuse	harmful	harmless
accurate	inaccurate	horizontal	vertical
advantage	disadvantage	imitation	genuine
ancient	modern	inhabited	uninhabited
abundant	scarce	inferior	superior
artificial	natural	intentional	accidental
attractive	repulsive	justice	injustice
borrow	lend	knowledge	ignorance
bravery	cowardice	landlord	tenant
create	destroy, demolish	likely	unlikely
bold	timid, meek	minority	majority
capable	incapable	miser	spendthrift
combine	separate	obedient	disobedient
conceal	reveal	optimist	pessimist
common	rare	permanent	temporary
decrease	increase	plentiful	scarce
definite	indefinite	private	public
despair	hope	prudent	imprudent
discourage	encourage	qualified	unqualified
employer	employee	satisfactory	unsatisfactory
expand	contract	tame	wild
forget	remember	vacant	occupied

Tip: Learning antonyms is an effective way to increase your vocabulary. Memorizing words in combination with or in relation to other words often helps us retain them.

Exercise

Correct the following sentences by replacing the underlined words with an antonym. Write the antonym on your own sheet of paper.

1. The pilot who landed the plane was a coward because no one was injured.
2. Even though the botany lecture was two hours long, Gerard found it incredibly dull.
3. My mother says it is impolite to say thank you like you really mean it.
4. Although I have learned a lot of information through textbooks, it is life experience that has given me ignorance.
5. When our instructor said the final paper was compulsory, it was music to my ears!
6. My only virtues are coffee, video games, and really loud music.
7. Elvin was so bold when he walked in the classroom that he sat in the back row and did not participate.
8. Maria thinks elephants who live in freedom have a sad look in their eyes.
9. The teacher filled her students' minds with gloomy thoughts about their futures.
10. The guest attended to every one of our needs.

Exercise: Writing Application

Write a paragraph that describes your favorite dish or food. Use as many synonyms as you can in the description, even if it seems too many. Be creative. Consult a thesaurus, and take this opportunity to use words you have never used before. Be prepared to share your paragraph.

Text Attributions

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82.

Prefixes and Suffixes

The English language contains an enormous and ever-growing number of words. Enhancing your vocabulary by learning new words can seem overwhelming, but if you know the common prefixes and suffixes of English, you will understand many more words.

Mastering common prefixes and suffixes is like learning a code. Once you crack the code, you can not only spell words more correctly but also recognize and perhaps even define unfamiliar words.

Prefixes

A prefix is a word part added to the beginning of a word to create a new meaning. Study the common prefixes in the following table.

Tip: The main rule to remember when adding a prefix to a word is **not** to add letters or leave out any letters.

Common Prefixes

Prefix	Meaning	Example
dis	not, opposite of	dis + satisfied = dissatisfied
mis	wrongly	mis + spell = misspell
un	not	un + acceptable = unacceptable
re	again	re + election = reelection
inter	between	inter + related = interrelated
pre	before	pre + pay = prepay
non	not	non + sense = nonsense
super	above	super + script = superscript
sub	under	sub + merge = submerge
anti	against, opposing	anti + bacterial = antibacterial

Exercise

Identify the five words with prefixes in the following paragraph, and write their meanings on a separate sheet of paper. Once complete, please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

At first, I thought one of my fuzzy, orange socks disappeared in the dryer, but I could not find it in there. Because it was my favorite pair, nothing was going to prevent me from finding that sock. I looked all around my bedroom, under the bed, on top of the bed, and in my closet, but I still could not find it. I did not know that I would discover the answer just as I gave up my search. As I sat down on the couch in the family room, my Dad was reclining on his chair. I laughed when I saw that one of his feet was orange and the other blue! I forgot that he was colour-blind. Next time he does laundry I will have to supervise him while he folds the socks so that he does not accidentally take one of mine!

Exercise

Add the correct prefix to the word to complete each sentence. Write the word on your own sheet of paper.

1. I wanted to ease my stomach _____ comfort, so I drank some ginger root tea.
2. Lenny looked funny in his _____ matched shirt and pants.
3. Penelope felt _____ glamorous at the party because she was the only one not wearing a dress.
4. My mother said those _____ aging creams do not work, so I should not waste my money on them.
5. The child's _____ standard performance on the test alarmed his parents.
6. When my sister first saw the meteor, she thought it was a _____ natural phenomenon.
7. Even though she got an excellent job offer, Cherie did not want to _____ locate to a different country.
8. With a small class size, the students get to _____ act with the teacher more frequently.
9. I slipped on the ice because I did not heed the _____ cautions about watching my step.
10. A _____ combatant is another word for civilian.

Suffixes

A suffix is a word part added to the end of a word to create a new meaning. Study the suffix rules in the following boxes.

Rule 1: -ness and -ly

When adding the suffixes *-ness* and *-ly* to a word, the spelling of the word does not change.

Examples:

- dark + ness = darkness
- scholar + ly = scholarly

Exceptions to Rule 1

When the word ends in *y*, change the *y* to *i* before adding *-ness* and *-ly*.

Examples:

- ready + ly = readily
- happy + ness = happiness

Rule 2: Suffix Begins with a Vowel

When the suffix begins with a vowel, drop the silent *e* in the root word.

Examples:

- care + ing = caring
- use + able = usable

Exceptions to Rule 2

When the word ends in *ce* or *ge*, keep the silent *e* if the suffix begins with *a* or *o*.

Examples:

- replace + able = replaceable
- courage + ous = courageous

Rule 3: Suffix Begins with a Consonant

When the suffix begins with a consonant, keep the silent *e* in the original word.

Examples:

- care + ful = careful
- care + less = careless

Exceptions to Rule 3**Examples:**

- true + ly = truly
- argue + ment = argument

Rule 4: Word Ends in a Consonant + y

When the word ends in a consonant plus *y*, change the *y* to *i* before any suffix not beginning with *i*.

Examples:

- sunny + er = sunnier
- hurry + ing = hurrying

Rule 5: Suffix Begins with a Vowel

When the suffix begins with a vowel, double the final consonant only if (1) the word has only one syllable or is accented on the last syllable and (2) the word ends in a single vowel followed by a single consonant.

Examples:

- tan + ing = tanning (one syllable word)
- regret + ing = regretting (The accent is on the last syllable; the word ends in a single vowel followed by a single consonant.)
- cancel + ed = canceled (The accent is not on the last syllable.)
- prefer + ed = preferred

Exercise

On your own sheet of paper, write correctly the forms of the words with their suffixes.

1. refer + ed
2. refer + ence
3. mope + ing
4. approve + al
5. green + ness
6. benefit + ed
7. resubmit + ing
8. use + age
9. greedy + ly

10. excite + ment

Exercise: Writing Application

Write a paragraph describing one of your life goals. Include five words with prefixes and five words with suffixes. Exchange papers with a classmate and circle the prefixes and suffixes in your classmate's paper. Correct each prefix or suffix that is spelled incorrectly.

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Resources for Working with MLA

What is the MLA?

The acronym MLA stands for [Modern Language Association](#). The MLA is a professional, international organization based in New York City, New York, U.S.A. Its stated purpose is to strengthen the study and teaching of language and literature. It also provides a way for people working in the humanities to format their documents and handle source materials (we call this “MLA style”), and it is the principal professional organization for the humanities field.

The humanities are the field of study concerned with human culture, including literature, history, art, music, religion, foreign languages, and philosophy.

In contrast, the empiric disciplines are those concerned with subjects involving verification through data collections, measurement, observation and other techniques for verification. The empiric fields of study include the sciences, math, teaching, psychology, and others.

What is MLA Style?

MLA style helps us format our documents and handle source materials. The use of a consistent document format by *everyone* using MLA makes it possible for us to pick up an MLA-formatted paper and follow it easily, without having to figure out how it’s arranged. Likewise, the use of a consistent approach to handling sources helps a writer avoid plagiarism and also helps a reader follow the writer’s use of sources.

Modern Language Association style periodically undergoes revision to keep up with changes in writing and publishing. The most recent eighth edition of MLA came out in 2016. Here’s what the MLA organization had to say about “MLA 8”:

The eighth edition of the *MLA Handbook*, published in 2016, rethinks documentation for an era of digital publication. The MLA now recommends a universal set of guidelines that writers can apply to any source and gives writers in all fields—from the sciences to the humanities—the tools to intuitively document sources (“What’s New”).

As a college student studying writing, you’ll use MLA style to accomplish the following:

1. **To format your documents using a consistent style.** MLA style is the “outfit” of our written documents in the humanities. Much like a football player wears a helmet and pads or a soccer player wears shin guards, our documents “wear” a certain style of formatting. We’ll discuss that more below.
2. **To identify and manage source materials when you use them in your own writing.** This insures you use sources correctly in your own work and give credit to the person who owns

and/or created the source material, both of which help you avoid plagiarism. It also allows others—who read and are interested in your work—to easily review and consult the sources you’ve used.

Using MLA to Format Your Documents

The following are the basic guidelines for setting up an MLA-formatted document. Your word processor will have menu controls to help you with these settings.

- Set side margins to 1” on left, right, top, and bottom.
- Set margins to 0.5” for header and footer.
- Use a standard¹ 12-point font throughout the document.
- Double-space throughout the document.
- Use a straight left edge and a “ragged” right edge.
- Indent paragraphs ½” (1 tab).
- Centre a document title on page 1. Use plain 12-point font—do not bold, underline, or italicize.
- Create an upper left heading on page 1 only. This should include the following:
 - Your name (first and last name)
 - The instructor’s name
 - The name of the class
 - The date, in MLA style²
- Create an upper right *header* for all pages. This should include the following:
 - Your last name
 - An automatic page number

Use this format for your document heading and on your Works Cited list. When mentioning dates in your paper, use traditional format, i.e., “On February 11, 2016, I found the world’s best coffee shop.”

For examples of what an MLA-formatted papers looks like, try visiting [Sample Papers in MLA Style](#)

A Four-Step Process for Working with Sources

1. **Create a Works Cited page.** When you bring a source into to your writing, create a Works

1. Examples of standard fonts include Times, Times New Roman, Arial, Helvetica, and others. Avoid non-standard Microsoft fonts like Calibri and Cambria, typewriter fonts (Courier), and overly-casual fonts (Comic Sans and Papyrus).
2. MLA date format is very specific: it includes, in this order, the day of month, month, and year. For example, the day February 11 in the year 2016 would look like this: **11 February 2016**. Longer months can also be abbreviated, so it could also look like this: **11 Feb. 2016**. Note that there are no commas in an MLA-style date.

Cited page and *immediately* add your source to the page, creating a complete, correct listing.

2. **Use sources correctly.** Bring written sources into your paper using quotation, paraphrase, or summary.
3. **Cite/identify in-text sources.** When you add a source to your paper, *immediately* cite or identify it where it occurs.
4. **Proofread your work with sources.**
 - Check and double-check to make sure every sentence containing a source has been properly cited or identified.
 - Make sure Works Cited listings and in-text citations “match.” If you mention a source in your paper, it must also appear on the Works Cited list. If you mention a source on your Works Cited list, it must also appear in the paper.

Additional Resources

Here are some excellent online resources to help you work with MLA:

- **[The Purdue University Online Writing Lab \(OWL\)](#):** this site is used by universities and colleges all over Canada and in other countries as well. It will help you not just with MLA but with all aspects of writing, research, grammar, usage, etc. It has an excellent search tool. It’s also updated almost continuously.
- **[The MLA Style Center](#):** this is a subdivision of the larger MLA website. It has great materials to help students practice with MLA. It has a downloadable copy of the MLA template, FAQ pages, and more.
- **[MLA Practice Template](#):** from the MLA Style Center. Use this to practice formatting your citations.

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Creating a Works Cited Page

The purpose of the Works Cited page is to collect all of the sources used in a text and to arrange them so they are easy for your reader to locate. Listing the sources also helps you track them and makes it less likely that you might accidentally plagiarize by forgetting to mention a piece of source material.

Setting up the Page

Follow these guidelines to set up your Works Cited:

- Works Cited is located at the end of a paper. Always start it at the top of a new page.
- Title it Works Cited, even if there is only a single source listed.
- Centre the title at the topmost point on the page.
- The Works Cited page uses the same formatting as the rest of the paper: 12 point standard font, double spacing, 1" margins on all sides, etc.
- List sources alphabetically, according to whatever comes first in each citation. (Do not list them in the order they occur within the paper.)
- Use hanging indents. This means that the first line of each source begins at the left margin, while second and subsequent lines are indented by ½" (1 tab). This is the reverse of a regular paragraph. The hanging format makes it easy to visually scroll down the list and see each source. If you are using Microsoft Word, you can set hanging paragraphs by choosing the "hanging" setting in the "Paragraphs" menu.

Here's an annotated example of a Works Cited page ([Works Cited example \[PDF\]](#)):

Works Cited

Akanegbu, Anuli. "50 Striking Statistics about Distance Education in Higher Education." *EDTech*, CDW, 12 July 2012, www.edtechmagazine.com/higher/article/2012/07/50-striking-statistics-about-distance-learning-higher-education.

Akanegbu, Anuli. "50 Striking Statistics about Distance Education in Higher Education." *EDTech*, CDW, 12 July 2012, www.edtechmagazine.com/higher/article/2012/07/50-striking-statistics-about-distance-learning-higher-education.

Disconnected: A Documentary. Directed by Melody Gilbert, performance by Mitchell Lundin, Caitlin Magnusson, and Andrew Tatge, Carleton College, MN, 2008, www.snagfilms.com/films/title/disconnected.

Disconnected: A Documentary. Directed by Melody Gilbert, performance by Mitchell Lundin, Caitlin Magnusson, and Andrew Tatge, Carleton College, 2008, www.snagfilms.com/films/title/disconnected.

Jones, Carol Larson. "Online Education." *Encyclopedia of Business and Finance*. Edited by Burton S. Kaliski, 2nd edition, Volume 2, Macmillan Reference USA, 2007.

Jones, Carol Larson. "Online Education." *Encyclopedia of Business and Finance*. Edited by Burton S. Kaliski, 2nd edition, Volume 2, Macmillan Reference USA, 2007.

Commented [MB1]: This is a sample works cited page.

Commented [MB2]: This example shows how an article from a website would be listed on Works Cited.

Commented [MB3]: Same citation, broken down to show each component using MLA8.

Commented [MB4]: This example shows how a film would be listed on Works Cited.

Commented [MB5]: Same citation, broken down to show each component using MLA8.

Commented [MB6]: This example shows how a book would be listed on Works Cited.

Commented [MB7]: Same citation, broken down to show each component using MLA8.

Creating Entries on the Works Cited Page

The newest version of MLA—version 8—came out during the winter of 2016 and promises to be the citation style of the electronic age. Rather than the previous method, which involved creating a separate style for each different kinds of source (and was very time-intensive), it created a single template (see the link provided below) to be used for all types of source materials.

Let's look at how to set up Works Cited citations. We'll work through one, and then I'll add some details.

We'll work with this article from *The Atlantic* (found at theatlantic.com): "[The Importance of High School Mentors](#)."

Open the MLA template, too: <https://style.mla.org/files/2016/04/practice-template.pdf>

To use the template, start at the top and fill in information about the source. If there are lines in the template you can't fill in, we simply leave them blank. Note that on the template, each item is followed with specific punctuation. Copy these as you create your own citations.

Author

Enter the author's name on line 1 of the template.

- The first author’s name is always reversed: Last Name, First Name.
- It is in plain font and (as you’ll note in the template) is followed with a period.

Here’s what you should have on line 1:

Sebenius, Alyza.

Title of Source

This is the name of the material you’re working with.

- Capitalize all words in the title of source except for articles, conjunctions, and prepositions.
- If it is an article, essay, chapter, or any other “small” piece of material, it will be in quotation marks and plain font.
- If it is a book, film, periodical, or an entire web page, it will be in italic font with no quotation marks.
- The title of source is followed with a period—and when quotation marks are used, note that the period always goes inside the quotation marks (see below).

Here’s what should be on line 2:

“The Importance of High School Mentors.”

Title of Container

The container is the “place” that holds or houses the source you’re using. For example:

A book chapter (the “title of source”) is held within a book (the “container”).

A newspaper article (the “title of source”) is held within a newspaper (the “container”).

An essay on a web page (the “title of source”) is held within a website (the “container”).

A magazine article (the “title of source”) is held within a magazine (the “container”).

(And so forth)

- The container is almost always in italic font and followed by a comma.¹
- Capitalize it fully.

You have two options for the container in this case; either would be correct:

The Atlantic,

1. An example of a non-italicized container would be if you were citing an actual painting and the “container” was an art museum. The museum would be listed as the container but in plain font.

theatlantic.com,

Other Contributors

This line provides a way to mention people who assisted with creating or handling the source, e.g., directors, translators, performers, illustrators, etc.

- List them using plain, unabbreviated language, e.g., performed by, directed by, etc.
- Other contributors are listed in plain font and followed with a comma.

Our article has no “other contributors,” and so we would leave this blank, skipping it. When you hit sections of the template where you have no information, just skip them and move on.

Version

Use this if you want to mention an edition number (e.g., Second Edition, Evening Edition, etc.) or if you want to list a volume (Volume 3), a month (January), etc.

- Version is written in plain font and followed by a comma.

Our article has no version, so we'll leave line 5 blank.

Number

Use this to provide an issue number (e.g., for a magazine or journal), a special archive number (e.g., with museum pieces), or something similar.

- Number is in plain font and followed by a comma.

Our article has no number, so we'll leave line 6 blank.

Publisher

The publisher is the person or institution that makes the source available to the world.

- Publishers for books, periodicals, and printed materials are usually written on one of the first pages.
- Web page publishers can usually be found at the page bottom. If you cannot find the publisher quickly, you might use Google to search for it, i.e., searching ‘New York Times Publisher.’
- Film and music publishers will usually be located on the material.
- Write out the complete publisher name; capitalize it fully and don't abbreviate or omit words.
- The publisher is in plain font and followed by a comma.

If we scroll to the page bottom, we find our publisher for line 7:

The Atlantic Monthly Group,

Publication date

This is the date of the “title of source” (see line 2).

- Use MLA date format: day month year
- Follow the date with a comma.
- With longer months, you may abbreviate the source; if you do, follow the abbreviation with a period.

We could use either of these options for our source:

13 January 2016,

13 Jan. 2016,

Location

The source’s location tells the reader where to find the source. Many sources will not have a location, but it should be listed if present.

- If using a book, the page number is the location.
 - For single pages, use this format: p. 6.
 - For two or more pages, list like this: pp. 62-4 or pp. 184-96.
 - If using two or more pages and they cross a “hundred” marker, list like this: pp. 456-502.
- With web pages, give the URL—but omit the http:// at the beginning.
- If a doi (digital object indicator) number is available, use that instead of a URL.
- You can break URLs or doi’s manually to try and fit them into your Works Cited, or just type them in and let your Word processor decide where to break them.
- If you have a different kind of source and believe you have a location with it, share it as best you can, following these guidelines.
- Locations are in plain font and followed by a period.

Here’s what you would have for line 9:

www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/01/mentorship-in-public-schools/423945/.

Put it all Together

Now, to create a Works Cited citation, link all of the available elements together, following the correct punctuation and placing a space between each component.

- Use your word processor’s menus to set hanging paragraphs
- Don’t break your lines manually: set hanging paragraphs and then keep typing, allowing the software to determine the line breaks.
- Your citation should always end with a period.

Here’s how the final citation would look:

Sebenius, Alyza. “The Importance of High School Mentors.” *The Atlantic*, The Atlantic Monthly Group, 13 Jan. 2016, www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/01/mentorship-in-public-schools/423945/.

And here’s what it will look like on the Works Cited page with double spacing and hanging paragraphs (it would not be in BOLD; this example simply appears darker on this page):

Works Cited

Sebenius, Alyza. "The Importance of High School Mentors." *The Atlantic*, The Atlantic Monthly Group, 13 Jan. 2016, www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/01/mentorship-in-public-schools/423945/.

Exercise

Create a Works Cited citation for this story from the *Los Angeles Times* (found at latimes.com): “[Inside the Deal that Brought Sony’s ‘Spider-Man’ Back to Marvel’s Cinematic Universe.](#)”

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Glossary of Terms

Annotate: To add notes or symbolic marks to a text, diagram, or other content.

Copyright: A right granted by statute to the author or originator of certain literary or artistic productions, whereby he is invested, for a limited period, with the sole and exclusive privilege of multiplying copies of the same and publishing and selling them (“What Is Copyright?”).

Curriculum vitae (CV): A lifelong account of a person’s education, awards and honors, conferences and presentations, publications, professional memberships, employment, and so forth. A CV may be dozens of pages long; it doesn’t attempt to be brief—as would a résumé; rather, it is an encyclopedic collect of a person’s accomplishments.

Empiric disciplines: the fields of study concerned with subjects that can be measured or subjected to quantification or testing. For example: history, science, math, and psychology..

Figurative language: writing or speaking that uses metaphor, simile, irony, sarcasm, personification, or other techniques to create a specific response.

Freelance writer: a professional writer who is hired and assigned to write specific stories or articles. Freelancers may not be experts in subjects they’re assigned to write about, but they are skilled researchers, enabling them to write about varied topics.

Humanities: the fields of study concerned with human culture, especially literature, history, art, music, and philosophy.

Inform (e.g., The story was informed by his experience in Nepal): an essential idea or principle that supports the development of another idea, e.g., understanding U.S. history informs our understanding of current events.

Information literacy: refers to skill and competence in locating, examining, understanding, and working with all kinds of information.

Intellectual property: material or ideas envisioned and/or created by another person.

Jargon: special words, abbreviations, or expressions that are used by a particular profession or group and are often difficult for others to understand.

Journalist: a skilled writer who has completed a college bachelor’s degree in journalism. Journalistic writing follows a specific style that is fact-based and objective. Journalists subscribe to codes of ethics and behavior in terms of creating factual, verified, and unbiased writing.

Navigate: to find one’s way, whether over open seas or through a challenging piece of writing.

Open Educational Resources (OERs): documents, media, and other materials that are useful for teaching and learning and which are free and available to all.

Periodical: a publication that is printed on a regular schedule (i.e., periodically). Periodicals include newspapers, magazines, journals, and more. Periodical titles should always be italicized in your academic writing.

Résumé: a brief (1-2 page) account of a person's education, work experience, and qualifications, typically sent with a job application. A longer version of the resume is the *curriculum vitae*, often called the CV.

Rhetoric: the art of effective or persuasive speaking or writing, especially in the use of figurative language or special techniques in argument and composition.

Zine: short for magazine, a zine is a self-published collection of writing, drawing, poetry, art, or just about any type of creative material that can be part of a printed page. Zines are informal publications and are usually published or created in small lots. They're often low-tech, not looking anything like what we imagine as an actual magazine. Their purpose is to allow one or more contributors to express their creative ideas about a specific theme or idea. To learn more, go to Google and search for "zine."

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Versioning History

This page provides a record of edits and changes made to this book since its initial publication. Whenever edits or updates are made in the text, we provide a record and description of those changes here. If the change is minor, the version number increases by 0.01. If the edits involve substantial updates, the version number increases to the next full number.

The files posted by this book always reflect the most recent version. If you find an error in this book, please fill out the [Report an Error](#) form.

Version	Date	Change	Details
1.00	August 20, 2021	Book published.	