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ENGL 1302 Composition II Research and Analysis - Language and Communication

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ENGL 1302 Composition II Research and Analysis

Edited by

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Resources:

[Exploring Perspectives](#)

[Let's Get Writing!](#)

[The RoughWriter's Guide](#)

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Chapter 1

Why Write?

Self-Exploration and Self-Enrichment



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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 a college writing class 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 in college 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 another. 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!

Creativity



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You might already be sensing that the process of self-exploration described above is a creative one, as it most definitely is. Writing your observations and thoughts and how they relate to other observations and thoughts can ignite your imagination and expand the possibilities of what you can accomplish—personally, academically, professionally, and creatively.

In so many ways, as modern humans, we are consumers, probably more so than we ever have been in the whole of human history. And in the information age, we consume media and information more than ever before. Every day, we consume texts, email messages, television and radio programming, YouTube videos, movies, music, social media, print media, advertisements, and more, and the current rate of media consumption doesn't appear to be slowing anytime soon.

But you need to possess some writing skills in order to move beyond the consumer status to become someone who produces ideas and media of your own. Writing is one way that you can make sure that your voice is heard among all the other voices in that media stream. Writing not only helps you make sense of the information that you consume, it also helps you develop and shape those ideas in a way that makes them useful, entertaining, or thought provoking for others.

Comprehension and Academic Performance

The previous paragraphs have already discussed the potential for writing to help you think, so it also should come as no surprise that it's a wonderful tool to help you learn. At some point in your experience as a student so far, you may have noticed that you understand a concept better once you've used it or worked with it somehow. By the middle of the 20th century, the idea that experience is a critical part of learning was gaining quite a bit of attention among experts who study theories of learning. It seems obvious, but sometimes it takes educators a while to catch on. They were beginning to realize what students of life have long known. We learn more about how to build a birdhouse by actually building one than we do by just reading a book about how to build one. Sure, the book is helpful, but we need to work with the materials and the tools to help us understand the process.

One of the reasons that experiencing or working with a concept helps you understand and remember it is that experience requires action. Have you ever read a chapter or two in a textbook only to ask yourself a few hours later (or even a few minutes later), "What did I just read?" The consumption of media and information can be a passive experience. We read. We watch. We listen. It takes effort to keep our brains engaged in a passive experience. Moreover, educational materials usually lack the level of excitement of our favorite action movie franchise or the adorable allure of cute animal videos that abound on YouTube. It's easy for our entertainment-hungry brains to check out and stop absorbing the meaning of what we're reading. So, if we can experience a subject in multiple ways, with increasing levels of engagement, we are more likely to remember what we're trying to learn. More importantly, beyond simply remembering it, we are more likely to understand its relevance to our own lives.

Writing about what you're learning can expand your understanding of a topic by helping you make connections between that topic and other things that you already understand or to other things that you're learning about. You can use writing to help you organize complex topics, to pick out main ideas, and to help you remember important concepts. If you can say it in your own words, you can move beyond merely knowing something to comprehending it. Part of this process of understanding involves extending our usual thoughts and reactions to a topic to gain new thoughts and new perspectives. Part of the process of academic writing (or even personal writing, for that matter) involves wrestling with new or contradictory ideas. And even if right now you're mostly writing for your teachers, as your academic and professional experience broadens, through writing, you can participate more fully in your academic or professional community.

Professional Opportunities



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Good writing and communication skills can help you to be more professionally (and therefore financially) successful. As a member of a professional or working community, you may also find that you need 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 scheduling and time management skills (don't forget the ever-important to-do list!). In a 2016 survey, conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, when employers were asked what they're most looking for in a job candidate, more than 70 percent responded that they want good written communication skills. This was only exceeded by ability to work in a team at nearly 80 percent and leadership at just over 80 percent ("Job Outlook 2016").

Effective Communication and Persuasion

Whether for the benefit of your academic or professional life, or even for your personal life, writing is an effective tool to help you to be understood and to influence others. Much of what we've talked about so far regarding the value of writing has been about its ability to help you understand yourself and to help you understand the world. But writing also has an important power to help you to get others to understand your message.

As we've already stated in discussing its creative potential, writing gives you a voice. Writing can help you to state your position and support it in a way that might persuade others not only to understand your perspective, values, and beliefs, but also to adopt them. And when you're unsure about something, you can even use writing as a method for self-persuasion, to help you make up your mind about an important topic.

From resumes to term papers to work-related documents to journaling and self-exploration, writing is an important and powerful tool to have at the ready. This text can help you sharpen that tool and to use it to the best of your ability.



Discussion

Take two or three minutes to list as many of your own current goals that you can think of. These might be academic goals, professional goals, or personal goals. For instance, you might want to learn more about a certain academic subject or achieve a degree or certification. You might want to advance yourself in your current career, or you might want to find a job in a completely new field than the one you're working in right now. You might want to gain a new skill that will help you with a hobby that you enjoy.

Now, consider how writing might be a useful tool in helping you to achieve some of these goals. Can writing help you to explore, to create, to understand, to persuade, or to share in ways that can help you reach some of these goals? Discuss your thoughts with some classmates in a small group, and if class time allows for it, your small group might share some conclusions about the value of writing with the whole class.

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Chapter 2

Dealing with Obstacles and Developing Good Habits

Overcoming Writing Anxiety and Writer's Block



"Overcoming Obstacles" by The U.S. Army is licensed under CC BY 2.0

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. Uh oh. Do you have it? 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.



Unsculpted Pottery Clay, CC0 Public Domain Image

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 potters 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.

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 an 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 center, 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 center. 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 center 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.

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](#)" (found online at naturalhistorymag.com). 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.



Discussion

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

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.

Procrastination



Stop procrastination by Lynn Friedman is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

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 tend 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 free write. 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: Free write 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 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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Chapter 3

Overview of the Writing Process

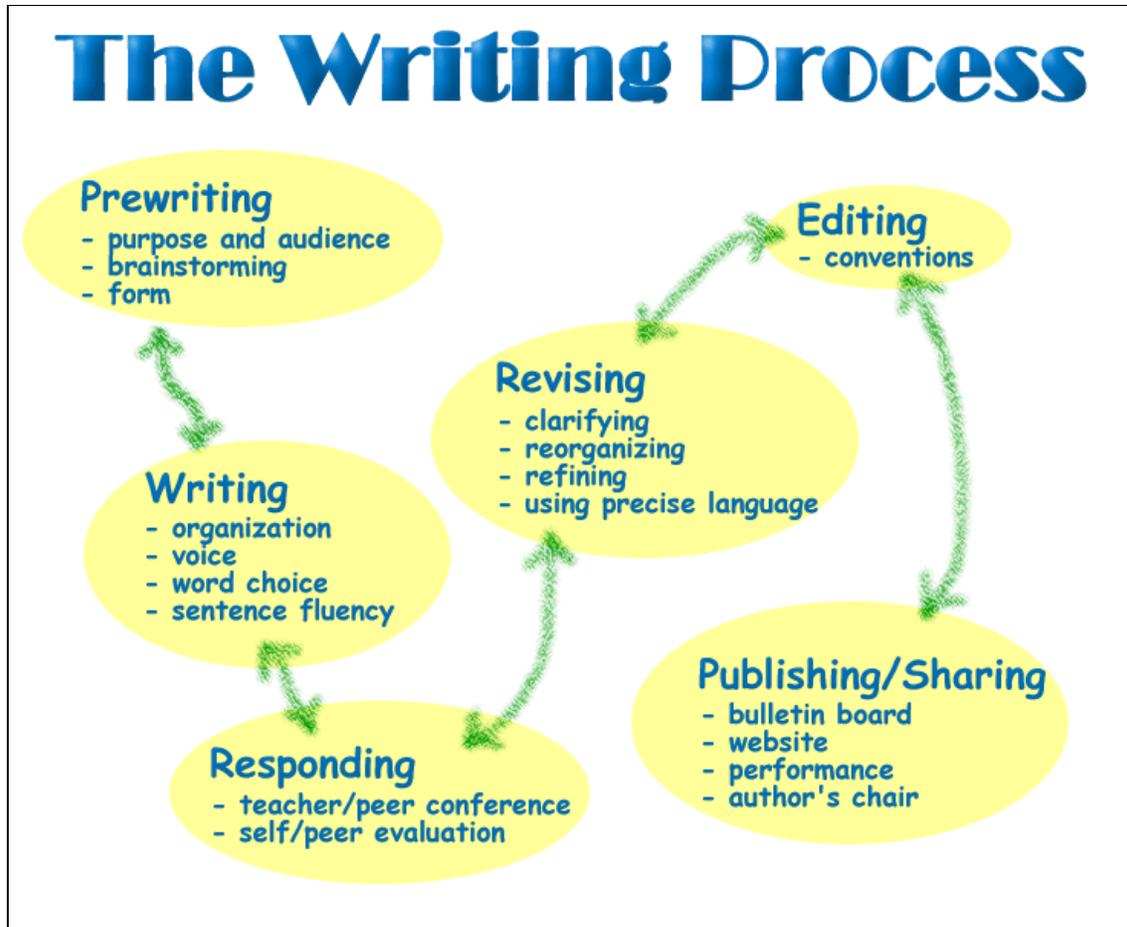


First drafts
don't have to be
perfect.
They just have to
be written.

Stages of the Writing Process

There are several stages to the Writing Process. Each stage is essential.

1. Pre-writing
2. Writing (Drafting)
3. Revising
4. Editing



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1. Pre-writing

During the pre-writing stage, choose and narrow your topic. You should be able to answer “yes” to these three questions about your topic:

1. Does it interest me?
2. Do I have something to say about it?
3. Is it specific?

During the pre-writing stage, determine your *audience*. Ask yourself:

1. Who are my readers?
2. What do my readers know about my topic?
3. What do my readers need to know about my topic?
4. How do my readers feel about my topic?

During the pre-writing stage, determine your *purpose*. Your purpose is the reason you are writing. Whenever you write, you always have a purpose. Most writing fits into one of these three categories:

- To express
- To inform
- To persuade

More than one of these may be used, but one will be primary.

During the pre-writing stage, determine your *tone* and *point-of-view*. Tone is the mood or attitude you adopt as you write. It can be:

- Serious or frivolous/humorous
- Intimate or detached
- Academic/formal

Point-of-view is the perspective from which you write an essay. There are 3 points-of-view:

- First person—"I, we"
- Second person—"you"
- Third person—"he, she, they"

Note: Most instructors prefer that students only use third person, academic voice in their essays. Follow your instructor's directions and ask if you aren't sure.

Pre-writing techniques can be used to explore your topic. There are several choices of pre-writing techniques, including:

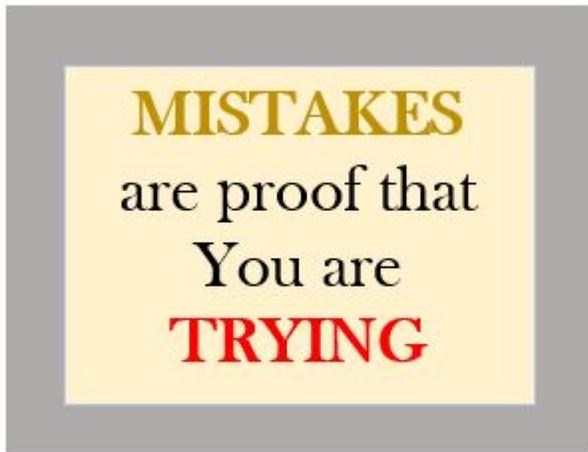
- Brainstorming/Listing
- Freewriting
- Clustering/Mapping
- Questioning
- Discussing
- Outlining

2. Writing (Drafting)

During drafting, you should compose a FULL rough draft. A draft is the first whole version of all your ideas put together. The basics of a good draft:

- Has a fully developed introduction and conclusion
- Has fully developed body paragraphs, each containing a topic sentence, and examples and details from the text(s) as support

3. Revising



Revising is finding and correcting problems with content; changing the ideas in your writing to make them clearer, stronger, and more convincing.

- Revising looks at important areas such as essay structure, organization, and sentence structure.
- You should read through your essay numerous times during this stage.

Revision is an important part of the writing process. Our first draft should never be our final draft. There is always room for improvement. A published author of a New York Times best-selling novel can still find opportunities to make the novel better.

It's important to note that revision concerns making changes to what is said and how it is said. It includes adding or deleting paragraphs, changing the organization of points in the paper, adding more support, clarifying ideas, etc. Revision is not a matter of fixing spelling errors and adding punctuation marks. Instead, revision is where an author refines the ideas to ensure that the purpose of the message is fulfilled.

In addition to taking note of comments from peer review, students should consider taking their papers to a Writing Lab or Learning Center on their campus for additional feedback. Reading the paper out loud to a friend or a family member can also help students find areas that could be improved.

Revise Purposefully

You should read through your first complete draft once you have finished it and carefully reconsider all aspects of your essay. As you review, keep in mind that your paper's purpose has to be clear to others, not just to you. Try to read through your paper from the point of view of a member of your targeted audience who is reading your paper for the first time. Make sure you have clarified the points your audience will need to have

clarified and that you haven't over-clarified the points your audience will already completely understand.

Revisiting Your Statement of Purpose

Self-questioning is a useful tool when you are in the reviewing process. As you begin the process of revision, reexamine the six elements of the rhetorical situation that made up your original statement of purpose (voice, audience, message, tone, attitude, and reception):

Voice: Does it sound like a real human being wrote this draft? Does my introduction project a clear sense of who I am? Honestly, would someone other than my paid instructor or assigned peer(s) read beyond the first paragraph of this essay?

Audience: Does my writing draw in a specific set of readers with a catchy hook? Do I address the same audience throughout the essay? If I don't, am I being intentional about shifting from one audience to another?

Message: Are my main points strong and clear? Do I have ample support for each of them? Do my supporting details clearly support my main points?

Tone: Am I using the proper tone given my audience? Is my language too casual or not professional enough? Or is it needlessly formal and stiff sounding? Does my tone stay consistent throughout the draft?

Attitude: Will my organization make sense to another reader? Does my stance toward the topic stay consistent throughout the draft? If it doesn't, do I explain the cause of the transformation in my attitude?

Reception: Is my goal or intent for writing clear? How is this essay likely to be received? What kind of motivation, ideas, or emotions will this draft draw out of my readers? What will my readers do, think, or feel immediately after finishing this essay?

Additional Revision Strategies

As you read through your paper look for:

- Unity
- Does everything refer back to main point?
- Does each topic sentence refer to the thesis?
- Does each sentence in each body paragraph refer back to the topic sentence?
- Do I have enough details, examples, and other forms of support?
- Is each example followed by at least one supporting detail?
- Are all points connected to form a whole?
- Are transitions used to move from one idea to the next?

Revision Tips

- Take a break from your draft before attempting to revise.
- Read your draft out loud and listen to your words.
- Imagine yourself as your reader.
- Look for consistent problem areas.
- Get feedback from peers.
- Get help from a tutor at your college's Learning Center or Writing Lab (usually free!)

Exercise 1

Find multiple drafts of an essay you have recently completed. Write a descriptive outline of at least two distinct drafts you wrote during the process.

For a recently completed essay, discuss how at least one element of your statement of purpose (voice, audience, message, tone, attitude, or reception) changed over the course of the writing process.

Exercise 2

With your writing group, develop five questions you think everyone in your class should have to answer about their essay drafts before submitting them for evaluation from a peer or your instructor.

4. Editing

Editing is finding and correcting problems with grammar, style, word choice/usage, and punctuation. In addition:

- Editing focuses on smaller details and involves proofreading.
- Editing also involves making sure citations and the Works Cited are correct.

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Chapter 4

Basics of Rhetoric

Dr. Karen Palmer

The Rhetorical Situation

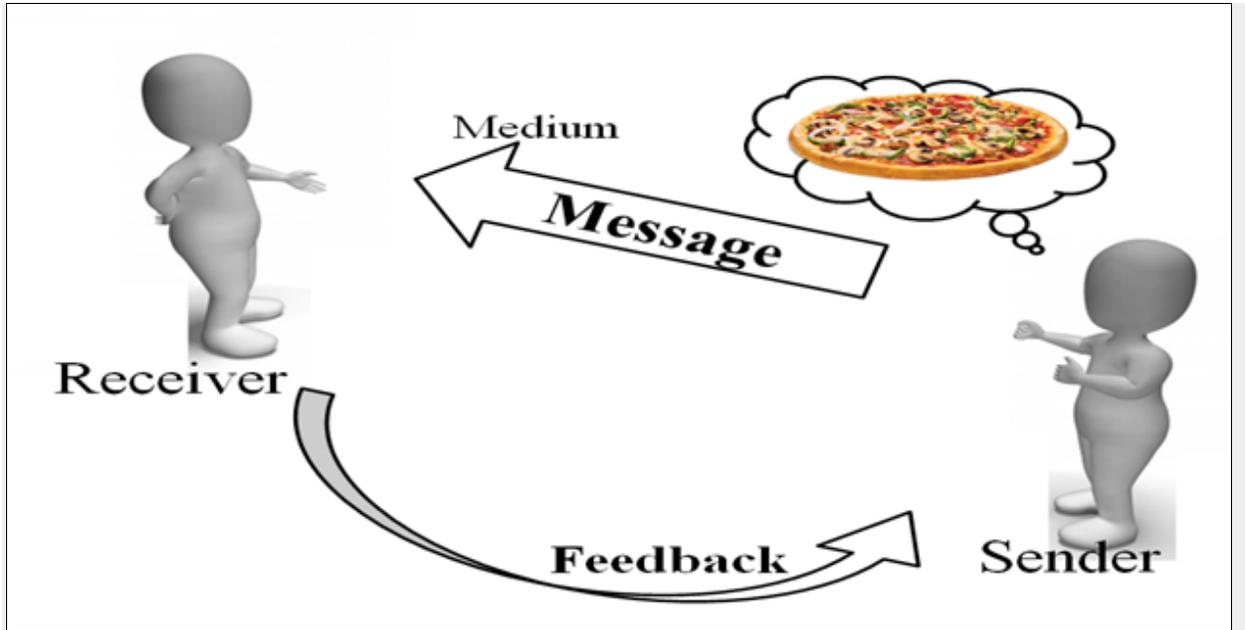
Having a clear understanding of the purpose, audience, and authorial stance when writing is vital for effective communication. The art of effective communication is an ancient one. In fact, people have been studying how to communicate effectively since the time of the ancient Greeks! The study of the art of communication is called Rhetoric.



Aristotle Image in the Public Domain

Aristotle, a Greek scholar, teacher, and philosopher, taught his students how to practice the art of speaking well. He believed that, in order to be effective, a speaker must carefully consider the situation—the audience and the purpose, as well as the presentation of the speaker!

When we talk about writing or communicating well in terms of rhetoric, what we mean is thinking carefully about not just what we are saying, but how we say it. Most people use rhetoric instinctively to communicate with different audiences. For example, imagine that you're telling a story about something that happened over Spring Break. Without even thinking about it, you will likely tell the story differently to your mom and to your best friend. You might emphasize different people or events or leave out the things that you know might interest one party but not the other (or that might get you in trouble). Remembering that rhetoric is something that you already use all the time helps to alleviate any stress about how to use it.



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Purpose is what an argument hopes to achieve. Most communication occurs because something needs to happen. Writers must think about what they want their readers to do once they've read the message. If a person purchases a t-shirt with a logo or slogan, the purpose might be to show support for that brand. It's telling your audience—the people who look at your shirt—to think about you a certain way. If someone wears a Yavapai College T-shirt, they are telling their audience that they go to YC and are proud of it! So, whenever you write, think about the purpose. What is the end result you are hoping to achieve? What do you want the reader to do with what you're telling them? The best writing will always have a clear purpose.

A writer's purpose is very often related to the **audience**. The audience consists of the specific person or group or groups of people for whom the message is intended. Knowing and understanding the audience is vital for successful communication and accomplishing the purpose. In an academic setting, many students think of their instructor as their audience. However, while your instructor is grading your papers, the message or the purpose should not be related to your instructor. Your instructor is grading how effective you are at getting your message across to your intended

audience—NOT necessarily to them. If you are not given a specific audience, or you aren't sure, a good solution is to write for an audience of your peers. This allows you to define your audience, which will help you to craft papers that are more interesting, not only for you to write and your audience to read, but also for your secondary audience—your instructor!

The final element of our rhetorical situation is the **author**. The position and the persona of the author may seem unimportant. However, the writer is always in the text, and how an author portrays him/herself can be very important in getting the message across. How you portray yourself in a text is important! After all, most writers want to be taken seriously. When you're writing an academic paper, you want to present yourself as a credible source of information. What does that mean? In part, it means using proper grammar and formatting and making sure your words are spelled correctly. Doing these things show the audience that you are serious about the topic and professional. Using good sources and citing them correctly, giving examples, and showing that you understand all sides of an issue tells readers that you are knowledgeable and that you can be trusted. If you don't portray yourself well in your writing, your message may not be taken seriously—even worse, it may turn your audience against you.

When writing, it's important to think about not just what you have to say, but how you say it. And how you say it should be determined by a careful examination of your purpose, audience, and the persona you want to project as a writer.

The Rhetorical Appeals

The rhetorical appeals of logos, pathos, and ethos go hand in hand with the Rhetorical Situation and make up what is called the Rhetorical Triangle. The ancient Greek scholar Aristotle believed that an argument would not be successful without the skillful use of all three rhetorical appeals.

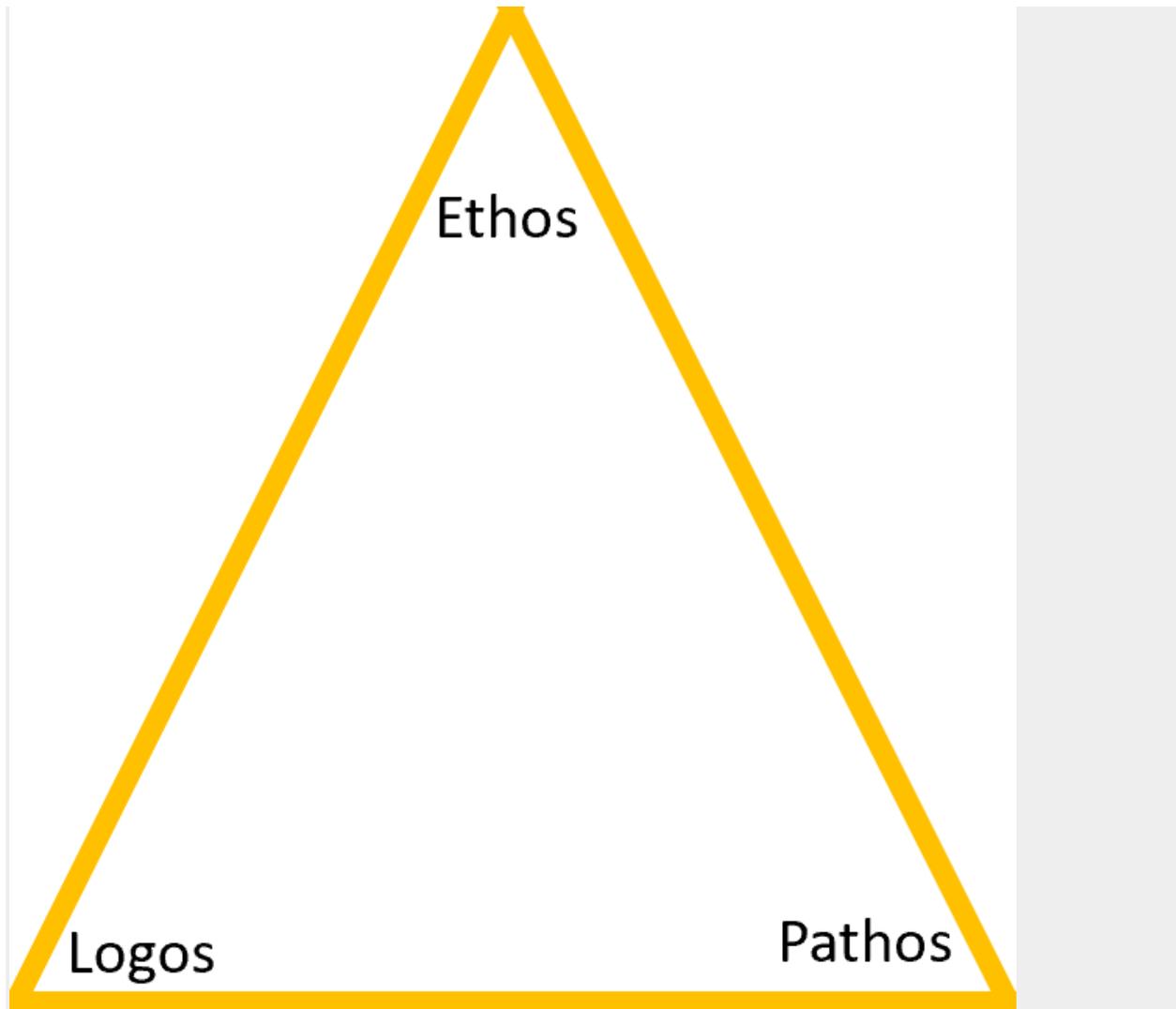
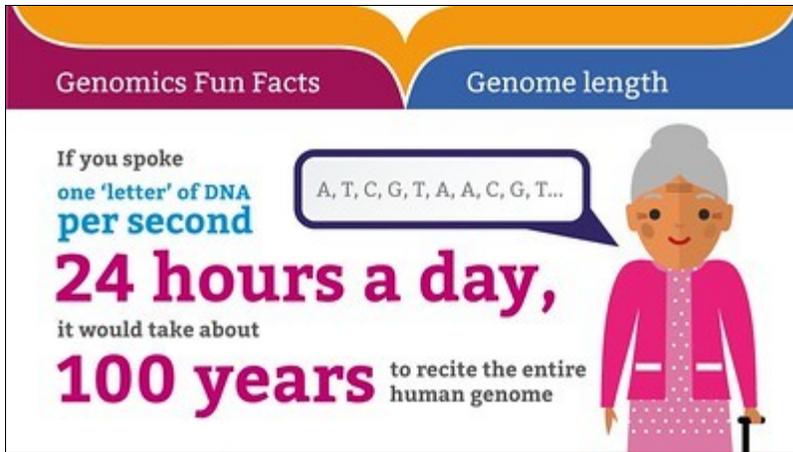


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The rhetorical appeals connect the purpose to the audience and are necessary in some fashion for a good argument. An argument that only appeals to logic but lacks emotion, for example, will not move readers to action. An argument that has great logic and emotion but presents the author as a shady character is not going to be persuasive, either. It's only when the three appeals work in harmony that the most effective arguments are created.

Appeal to Logic (Logos)

Logos is the rhetorical appeal based on facts and reason. Evidence and statistics strengthen logical arguments, which can be based on hard evidence or on reason and common sense.



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Every reason in the paper should be supported by at least one piece of hard evidence. If a reason listed in the paper cannot be supported by evidence, it is considered *personal opinion*. Personal opinion is valuable in many writing situations, but it is not helpful in argument, where the readers expect the author to offer proof, rather than assumption. Evidence includes facts, statistics, surveys, polls, studies, testimonies, narratives, and interviews.

Appeals to Emotion (Pathos)

While logos appeals may convince an audience, it is the **pathos** appeals that move the audience to action through emotions—anger, sadness, fear, joy, etc. A writer might appeal to a reader’s emotions by telling a story, painting a picture, or using loaded language. Pathos is powerful but can be difficult to use.



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Emotions can be used to establish a bond between writer and reader. Arguments expressed in emotional terms that readers can relate to can create strong reactions. Using personal experience to communicate hardship, pain, joy, faith, or any other

emotion often allows the reader to empathize more fully with the goals of an argument. Some emotions, however, may work in the opposite way. Emotions such as rage, pity, or aggression may turn readers away. Some tactics for incorporating pathos in your writing include telling a story, using vivid description, and choosing words carefully.

Appeal to Character (Ethos)

An appeal to **ethos** (the author's character) establishes a speaker's credibility. Ethical appeals convey honesty and authority. Appeals to character answer the questions, "What does this person know about the subject?" and "Why should I pay attention?" To seem credible sometimes means to admit limitations. Honesty and likeability are important characteristics used to persuade. Your character is established through your use of good support, through documenting your sources, through your tone, and through your background.



Credibility image by [Nick Youngson CC BY-SA 3.0 Alpha Stock Images](#)

It will be almost impossible to convince all readers in all contexts. However, by paying careful attention to the ways you use the rhetorical appeals, you will be more likely to succeed in your goals.



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Thinking Rhetorically

The habit of thinking rhetorically starts with being comfortable enough with the rhetorical triangle to see it in practically every form of communication you produce and consume—not only those you encounter in academic settings but also those you encounter in everyday life.

Exercise 1

1. Choose any piece of communication—a textbook, a newscast, an advertisement, an e-mail, a social media post. How do the rhetorical choices made in the communication increase/decrease its effectiveness?

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Chapter 5

Using Quotes, Paraphrases, and Summaries

Dr. Karen Palmer and Dr. Sandi Van Lieu

This chapter will discuss using and integrating sources into your essay to support your ideas. This is one of the most important parts of the writing process, because the sources “support” and “prove” your claims. Remember the 80% rule, though—at least 80% of your writing should be your own words!

Integrating Sources

Your goal within a research paper is to integrate other sources smoothly into your paper to support the points you are making. As long as you give proper credit, you can ethically reference anyone else’s work. You should not, however, create a paper that is made up of one reference after another without any of your input. You should also avoid using half-page or whole-page quotations. Make sure to write enough of your material so that your sources are integrated into your work rather than making up the bulk of your paper.

- Read, Think, Write:
- As you look for sources:
- *Underline*
- Main ideas, support, answers to questions, key words
- *Annotate*
- Notes in the margins
- *Outline*
- Reduce the piece into a simple outline to see the relationship of ideas.
- *Take Notes*
- Jot down relevant points.

Think of yourself as a kind of museum docent or tour guide when you are integrating sources into your work. You’ll usually want to take some time to set up your use of a source by placing it in a proper context. That’s why in most cases, before you even launch into quotation, paraphrase, or summary, you will have probably already used what’s called a “signal phrase” that identifies the author of the source, and often the specific publication (whether web or print) from which it is taken. After your use of the source, you’ll need to follow up with analysis and commentary on how you think it fits into the larger context of your argument.

Quotes

Quotes involve the following:

- Introducing the quote
- Taking a source word-for-word, putting it in your paper, and using quotation marks.
- Citing the source correctly in the documentation style you are using for your paper.
- Wrapping up the quote with your own words in a way that clearly shows readers how the quote is related to your argument.

Paraphrases and Summaries

Paraphrases involve the following:

- Taking details from a source and putting them in your own words.
- Must be cited correctly.
- No page number needed.

Summaries involve the following:

- Taking the main idea of a source and summarizing it in your own words.
- Must be cited correctly.
- No page number needed.

Paraphrased and summarized text is cited within text in the same way that quoted material is cited except that quotations are not used.

Properly Summarizing and Paraphrasing

When you summarize, you should write in your own words and the result should be substantially shorter than the original text. In addition, the sentence structure should be your original format. In other words, you should not take a sentence and replace core words with synonyms.

Summary Key Points:

- Reduce the original passage to about two-thirds.
- Concentrate on main ideas.
- Put it in your own words without changing the idea.
- Don't add ideas or personal thoughts.
- Hint: Read it, close it, then tell someone what it was about.
- Use a citation.

You should also use your words when you paraphrase. Paraphrasing should also involve your own sentence structure. Paraphrasing might, however, be as long or even longer than the original text. When you paraphrase, you should include, in your words, all the ideas from the original text in the same order as in the original text. You should not insert any of your ideas.

Both summaries and paraphrases should maintain the original author’s intent and slant. Taking details out of context to suit your purposes is not ethical since it does not honor the original author’s ideas.

Study the examples in the following table for clarification between summarizing, paraphrasing, quoting, and plagiarizing.

Original text	Some dramatic differences were obvious between online and face-to-face classrooms. For example, 73 percent of the students responded that they felt like they knew their face-to-face classmates, but only 35 percent of the subjects felt they knew their online classmates. In regard to having personal discussion with classmates, 83 percent of the subjects had such discussions in face-to-face classes, but only 32 percent in online classes. Only 52 percent of subjects said they remembered people from their online classes, whereas 94 percent remembered people from their face-to-face classes. Similarly, liking to do group projects differs from 52 percent (face-to-face) to 22 percent (online) and viewing classes as friendly, connected groups differs from 73 percent (face-to-face) to 52 percent (online). These results show that students generally feel less connected in online classes.
Summarized text	Students report a more personal connection to students in face-to-face classes than in online classes.
Paraphrased text	Study results show a clear difference between online and face-to-face classrooms. About twice as many students indicated they knew their classmates in face-to-face classes than in online classes. Students in face-to-face classes were about two-and-a-half times more likely to have discussions with classmates than were students in online classes. Students in face-to-face classes were about twice as likely to remember classmates as were students in online classes. Students in face-to-face classes viewed group projects as positive about two-and-a-half times more often than did students in online classes. Students in face-to-face classes saw class as a friendly place 73 percent of the time compared to 52 percent for online classes. Summing up these results, it is clear that students feel more connected in face-to-face classes than in online classes.
Quoted text	The study showed that personal discussions are much more likely to take place in face-to-face classes than in online classes since “83

	percent of the subjects had such discussions in face-to-face classes, but only 32 percent in online classes.”
Plagiarized text	Some major differences were clear between Internet and in-person classrooms. For example, 73 percent of the study participants felt they were acquainted with their in-person classmates, but only 35 percent of the participants indicated they knew their distance classmates.

Exercise 1

1. Consider these two sentences:

- The KOA system is a large camping organization in the United States.
- KOA campers and staff take part in many public service activities.

Explain whether each of these statements is common knowledge or proprietary and why.

2. Online, find a source on a topic of interest to you. Copy a paragraph from the source. Then, complete the following:

1. Summarize the paragraph.
2. Paraphrase the paragraph.
3. Write a paragraph about the passage that includes a direct quotation from it.

Integrating Summaries, Paraphrases, and Quotes within Paragraphs

Below are some examples of how paragraphs can be organized. You'll see that all paragraphs have a topic sentence. After this you may include summaries, paraphrases, or quotes from your sources, along with your own commentary or analysis on the topic.

Example 1:

Throughout the play, and as the secret is rapidly uncovered, the audience is made to think that Torvald dearly loves Nora. He gives her an allowance in order to make their Christmas a joyful one and he rushes to her aid when she asks for help in perfecting the tarantella dance. Then right before their marriage started to fall apart due to the secret, he confessed how strong his attraction was for her. However, having spent much time with the couple, Nora's friend Kristine Linde is aware of the couple's lack of communication and deep connection that show they truly understand one another (Ibsen 580). Prior to the dialogue between Torvald and Nora at the end of the play, she tells Mr. Krogstad, "This terrible secret has to come out. They have to have a complete understanding between them" (Ibsen 581). What Kristine said was what made the audience anticipate the scene with Nora and Torvald in the end. It is due to this conversation between her and Mr. Krogstad that the secret of Nora forging her father's signature in order to borrow four thousand eight hundred kroners was finally made known to Torvald. Torvald's reaction to it, with much anticipation to the conversation following his reading the letter, came as a surprise to most of the audience.

Topic sentence

Summary

Example as support

Quote as support

Analysis/Evaluation

Example 2:

The myths of the sea diminish as the boat approaches the shore, undetected by the rescue house. The crew is made diminutive by the ignorance of the land inhabitants within their view. The crew imagines "drowned—if I am going to be drowned, why, in the name of the seven mad gods who rule the sea, was I allowed to come thus far and contemplate sand and trees? Was I brought here merely to have my nose dragged away as I was about to nibble the sacred cheese of life?" (Crane 9, 13, 15). These 'gods' remain unnamed, except for 'fate,' almost as if they do not exist at all; yet this phrase is repeated three times in the story, as the grim, lonely reality of their plight sets in. The mysticism is sufficiently reduced and without fanfare, the difficult realism of being stranded takes over.

Topic sentence

Summary

Quote as support

Analysis/Evaluation

Example 3:

Even though Dickens believes in and hates the evil in the world, he rejects Original Sin. In fact, 'sin' is hardly mentioned at all in his writings (House 112). Martha in Dickens's *David Copperfield* speaks of repentance, but neither she nor David says that it is 'sin' she must repent of. House notes that, "Edith expects repentance of Mr. Dombey, but she does not say that he has sinned. Evil is always terrifyingly real; but the source of it is obscure" (112). Instead of believing that sin came to men through Adam (see Romans 15:12-15), Dickens implies that it comes from one's own self will. Copperfield says, "We can all do some good, if we will" (House 111). Dickens sees virtue in everyone, and it is the evil in the world that acts as barricades "which prevent him from being himself" (House 112). In essence, Dickens sees all mankind as good and the evils in the world have blinded him of that good. Through his stories, Dickens tries to produce an emotion of sympathy and a spirit of goodness that has always been there, but has been hidden. This good comes from one's own self will.

Topic sentence

Summary

Quote as support

Analysis

Quote as support

Analysis/Evaluation

Example 4:

Hester goes against traditional societal thought by committing the affair.

Topic sentence

Although the book skips telling the details of the affair, it is clear that what Hester has done is “sinful passion” (Hawthorne 73). Being in the puritan society, she had to have known the risk she was taking by committing the affair, and afterward she does acknowledge that she was wrong (though we are not quite sure whether or not she actually regrets it). Still, she was willing to challenge her society in order to fulfill her heart’s passion, showing her willingness to be an individual and create her own ideology. After her punishment, she spends most of her time isolated in deep thought—a Byronic trait. As Hawthorne commentator McFarland Pennell points out, “Hester develops independent ways of thinking, assuming a freedom of thought that allows her to reject the world’s laws....Hester questions woman’s lot in life. She comes to reject the social systems that govern woman’s place” (74). Not only does Hester reject her society’s thoughts by committing the affair, but through her isolation and cruel treatment she also expands her beliefs on woman’s roles thus ushering in a form of subtle feminism.

Analysis

Summary

Analysis/Evaluation

Example as support

Quote as support

Analysis/Evaluation

Example 5:

If colleges, states, and the federal government do not get a hold of rising tuition prices and make changes, there could be severe impacts. Education Secretary Arne Duncan says, “As a nation, we need more college graduates in order to stay competitive in the global economy. But if the costs keep on rising, especially at a time when family incomes are hurting, college will become increasingly unaffordable for the middle class” (“Cost of college degree,” 2012, para. 8-9). If tuition continues to rise, student enrollment may drop, which will affect colleges financially, both of which will have negative effects on the economy; this is similar to the concept of inflation. Another severe impact will be students getting more and more loans, which has the potential to lead to a “bubble burst,” similar to the housing crisis. One source argues that until the root cause of the problems are addressed, students will continue to graduate with large amounts of debt that burden them and create a drag on the economy (Moon, 2014). Therefore, it is critical that colleges, states, and the federal government work on steadying college tuition prices.

Topic sentence

Quote as support

Arguments

Paraphrase as support

Argument

Exercise 2

1. Look at one specific paragraph in your essay rough draft. Using colored pens, mark what each sentence is (topic sentence, paraphrase, summary, support, argument, etc...). If your paragraph is lacking source support, work on integrating it as demonstrated above.

Correctly Citing Sources

Citing sources is critical since you do not want to be guilty of stealing ideas from others and using others’ intellectual property without giving them credit is, indeed, a form of stealing. A bonus that comes with citing sources is that aligning others’ ideas with your ideas adds credibility to your ideas and helps establish your ethos. Also, when you address more than one viewpoint, you strengthen your viewpoint.

In order to know exactly how you should cite sources, you need to know the reference style you will be using. Regardless of which citation style you use, you should follow the following general guidelines:

- Enclose all direct quotations in quotation marks and cite the source within the text, including page number, author, and year (if your style requires all these parts) so it is very clear where you acquired the information.
- When you summarize or paraphrase text, do not use quotations, but note the author and year (or other required information depending on the citation style) either as part of the sentence or in parentheses following the sentence to clearly note that the ideas belong to someone else.
- At the end of your paper, include a complete list of references, each properly cited using the required citation style.

Additional Resources

Quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing sources:

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/using_research/quoting_paraphrasing_and_summarizing/index.html

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Chapter 6

What Is a Thesis Statement?

Once the topic has been narrowed to a workable subject, then determine what you are going to say about it; you need to come up with your controlling or main idea. A **thesis** is the main idea of an essay. It communicates the essay's purpose with clear and concise wording and indicates the direction and scope of the essay. It should not just be a statement of fact nor should it be an announcement of your intentions. It should be an idea, an opinion of yours that needs to be explored, expanded, and developed into an **argument**.

A thesis statement:

- tells the reader how you will interpret the significance of the subject matter under discussion.
- is a road map for the paper; in other words, it tells the reader what to expect from the rest of the paper.
- is an interpretation of a question or subject, not the subject itself. The subject, or topic, of an essay might be World War II or *Moby Dick*; a thesis must then offer a way to understand the war or the novel.
- makes a claim that others might dispute.
- is usually a single sentence somewhere in the introductory paragraph that presents the writer's argument to the reader. However, as essays get longer, a sentence alone is usually not enough to contain a complex thesis. The rest of the paper, the body of the essay, gathers and organizes evidence that will persuade the readers of the logic of their interpretation.

If an assignment asks you to take a position or develop a claim about a subject, you may need to convey that position or claim in a thesis statement near the beginning of your draft. The assignment may not explicitly state that the writer needs a thesis statement because the instructor may assume the writer will include one. When an assignment asks you to analyze, to interpret, to compare and contrast, to demonstrate cause and effect, or to take a stand on an issue, it is likely that you are being asked to develop a thesis and to support it persuasively.

How do I get a thesis?

A thesis is the result of a lengthy thinking process. Formulating a thesis is not the first thing you do after reading an essay assignment. Before you develop an argument on any topic, you have to collect and organize evidence, look for possible relationships between known facts (such as surprising contrasts or similarities), and think about the significance of these relationships. Once you have done this thinking, you will probably have a "working thesis," a basic or main idea, an argument that you can support with

evidence. It is deemed a “working thesis” because it is a work in progress, and it is subject to change as you move through the writing process. Writers use all kinds of techniques to stimulate their thinking and to help them clarify relationships or comprehend the broader significance of a topic to arrive at a thesis statement.

For example, there is the question strategy. One way to start identifying and narrowing a thesis idea is to form a question that you want to answer. For example, if the starting question was “Do cats have a positive effect on people with depression? If so, what are three effects?”

The question sends you off to explore for answers. You then begin developing support. The first answer you might find is that petting cats lowers blood pressure, and, further question how that works. From your findings (research, interviews, background reading, etc.), you might detail how that happens physically or you might describe historical evidence. You could explain medical research that illustrates the concept. Then you have your first supporting point — as well as the first prong of your thesis: Cats have a positive effect on people with depression because they can lower blood pressure

When you start with a specific question and find the answers, the argument falls into place. The answer to the question becomes the thesis, and how the answer was conceived becomes the supporting points (and, usually, the topic sentences for each point).

How do I know if my thesis is strong?

If there is time, run it by the instructor or make an appointment at the **Writing Center** (<https://tinyurl.com/ybqafbf>) to get some feedback. Even if you do not have time to get advice elsewhere, you can do some thesis evaluation of your own.

When reviewing the first draft and its working thesis, ask the following:

- *Is my thesis statement an opinion, and is it a complete thought?* Beware of posing a question as your thesis statement. Your thesis should answer a question that the audience may have about your topic. Also, be sure that your thesis statement is a complete sentence rather than just a phrase stating your topic.
- *Have I taken a position that others might challenge or oppose?* If your thesis simply states facts that no one would, or even could, disagree with, it is possible that you are simply providing a summary, rather than making an argument.
- *Is my thesis statement provable?* Can I establish the validity of it through the evidence and explanation that I offer in my essay?
- *Is my thesis statement specific?* Thesis statements that are too vague often do not have a strong argument. If your thesis contains words like “good” or

“successful,” see if you could be more specific: *Why* is something “good”; *what specifically* makes something “successful”?

- *Does my thesis pass the “So what?” test?* If a reader’s first response is, “So what?” then you need to clarify, to forge a relationship, or to connect to a larger issue.
- *Does my essay support my thesis specifically and without wandering?* If your thesis and the body of your essay do not seem to go together, one of them has to change. It is okay to change your working thesis to reflect things you have figured out in the course of writing your paper. Remember, always reassess and revise your writing as necessary.
- *Does my thesis pass the “how and why?” test?* If a reader’s first response is “how?” or “why?” your thesis may be too open-ended and lack guidance for the reader. See what you can add to give the reader a better take on your position right from the beginning.

To create a thesis statement simply follow this formula:

TOPIC + CLAIM = THESIS STATEMENT

Examples:

1. Animals + Dogs make better pets than cats. =When it comes to animals, dogs make better pets than cats because they are more trainable, more social, and more empathetic.
2. Movies & Emotions + *Titanic* evoked many emotions. = The movie *Titanic* evoked many emotions from an audience.
3. Arthur Miller & *Death of a Salesman* + Miller’s family inspired the Loman family. = Arthur Miller’s family and their experiences during the Great Depression inspired the creation of the Loman family in his play *Death of a Salesman*.

For more information on bad, good and better thesis statements from the writing center at the University of Evansville, go [here](https://tinyurl.com/y8sfjale) (<https://tinyurl.com/y8sfjale>).

Exercise: Creating Effective Thesis Statements

Using the formula, create effective thesis statements for the following topics:

1. Fake News
2. Drone Technology
3. Fast Food
4. Homework
5. Helicopter Parents

Then have a partner check your thesis statements to see if they pass the tests to be strong thesis statements.

Once a working thesis statement has been created, then it is time to begin building the body of the essay. Get all of the key supporting ideas written down, and then you can begin to flesh out the body paragraphs by reading, asking, observing, researching, connecting personal experiences, etc. Use the information from below to maintain the internal integrity of the paragraphs and smooth the flow of your ideas.

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Chapter 7

Titles, Introductions Conclusions, and Body Paragraphs

Creating a Title

Dr. Sandi Van Lieu

Your Essay's Title Should

- Be original
- Be a reasonable length
- Reflect your topic
- Be lively and attention-getting

Your Title Should Not

- Be generic/repeat the assignment
- Be in ALL CAPS
- Be in boldface, "quotation marks," underlined, or italicized
- Be followed by a period

Capitalization Rules for Titles

- Always capitalize the first letter of the first word and the last word.
- Capitalize the first letter of each "important" word in between the first and last words.
- Do not capitalize articles (a, an, the), unless they are after a colon
- Do not capitalize coordinating conjunctions (and, but, or, etc.)
- Do not capitalize prepositions (on, at, in, off, etc.)

Example

Following are some of examples of real student titles:

1. "Hills Like White Elephants:" A Dance Between Two Lovers
2. Behind the Mask of Seduction in "The Cask of Amontillado"
3. Changes: An Existential Journey
4. Kinder is the War with "The Things They Carried"

5. What We Do Affects Us: An Argument for Masks during Covid-19
6. Healthcare Workers: Overworked and Underappreciated

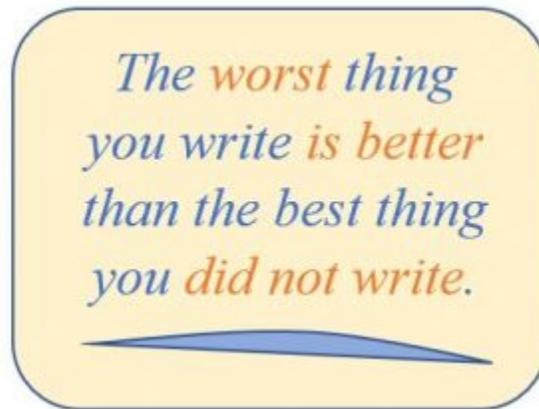
Exercise 1

1. Using the above criteria, create three different possible titles for your essay.
2. Swap titles with a classmate and give advice about which one is the strongest.

Introductions and Conclusions

Dr. Karen Palmer and Sandi Van Lieu

Introductions



The introduction has two main jobs. First, it sets the stage for the argument that you will be making, letting readers know what is coming. Second, it connects that argument to the audience's experiences so that they will want to read the argument. For the purposes of an introductory composition course, an introduction is usually no longer than a paragraph (four-six sentences). However, if a paper is longer than 5-6 pages, the introduction might be longer. In a 10-page paper, an introduction might be about a page. In a 200-page dissertation, the introduction will be chapter length—10-15 pages!

Parts of an Introduction

An introduction has three parts: a hook, an introduction to the topic, and a thesis.

- **Hook:** The hook captures the reader's attention with an intriguing question, a surprising fact, or a story that pulls them in. Your hook should relate the information in the argument to the reader's experience, connecting the reader to the argument. (Hint: you must know who your audience is to do this effectively!)
- **Introduction to the topic:** The introduction to the topic serves as a bridge between the hook and the thesis. It tells readers how the hook relates to your argument and gives them the basic details about the topic. If you are writing about a piece of literature, for example, this is where you would include the title and author.

- **Thesis:** The thesis is a one sentence statement that tells readers what the purpose of your essay is and gives a “map” of the paper. Your thesis should include both an arguable opinion about your topic and the main points you will cover in your essay.

Here is a sample introduction paragraph from an argument paper about community gardens:

Did you know that three in four college students will go hungry at some point of their college career? Even though there are campus food banks popping up around the country to address food insecurity for college students, the problem still exists. Campus gardens might be a way to enhance what food banks are already doing. Wasatch Gardens provides an innovative solution for fighting hunger on college campuses through creating community gardens that can assist the efforts of food banks.

The Hook is the question at the beginning of the paragraph—it provides a surprising statistic about food insecurity on college campuses. The last sentence is the **thesis**—it presents the author’s opinion on the topic. The middle two sentences introduce the topic of the paper and connect the hook to the thesis.

Checklist

Here’s a checklist that can help you make sure your introduction includes all the necessary components. My introduction is a minimum of 4-6 sentences:

- ◇ I start with an engaging sentence that relates to my main topic.
- ◇ I grab the reader’s attention with a surprising fact, and interesting quote, or a question.
- ◇ I set the tone for the rest of the essay.
- ◇ I move from general to specific, with the thesis as the last sentence in the intro.
- ◇ I have a clear thesis that sums up what the paper is about.

Conclusions

Like the introduction, the conclusion of a paper should be brief but powerful. A conclusion helps the writer to wrap up the argument successfully. One way to do this is by presenting the introduction backward. Instead of moving from broad to specific, go the other way. First, re-state the thesis, then relate it back to your topic. Finally, end with that idea that you used to connect readers to the topic. If you asked a question, give the answer in the conclusion. If you told a story, tell readers the rest of the story. Depending on the type of essay, a conclusion might also include a call to action. The goal is to leave readers feeling that the time they spent reading the essay was worth their time because they learned something new or were presented information in a way that they hadn’t considered previously.

Here is a sample conclusion from the Community Garden essay:

Wasatch Gardens provides college campuses with a model for an innovative solution that can help to alleviate food insecurity on their campuses. Even for colleges that already have a campus food bank, adding a campus garden might be a way to enhance the services they provide. Not only would campus gardens provide nutritious food for students, but it could provide job experience for agriculture students and provide a living wage, as well. College campuses would do well to consider the benefits of incorporating a community garden to combat food insecurity on their campuses.

Note that the first sentence here restates the thesis, then the paragraph moves from the specific solution to a more general call to action that is related to the hook—the number of students facing food insecurity on college campuses—recapping the main points of the essay along the way.

Exercise 1

1. Using your current course essay topic, write an outline. Then, use the checklist as you edit your introduction:

- ◇ I start with an engaging sentence that relates to my main topic.
- ◇ I grab the reader's attention with a surprising fact, and interesting quote, or a question.
- ◇ I set the tone for the rest of the essay.
- ◇ I move from general to specific, with the thesis as the last sentence in the intro.
- ◇ I have a clear thesis that sums up what the paper is about.

Body Paragraph Basics

Dr. Karen Palmer and Dr. Sandi Van Lieu

While body paragraphs can and should vary within your essay, there are some basic guidelines to follow when writing your paragraphs. Each paragraph should begin with a topic sentence, include primary support and evidence, and wrap up with a concluding statement. Body paragraphs must have the following:

- Unity—everything refers back to main point
- Coherence—all points connect to form a whole; one-point leads to another
- Support—examples and details

Begin with a Topic Sentence

By definition, all sentences in the paragraph should relate to one main idea. This is referred to as **unity**. Unity is achieved when everything refers back to the main point.

- All sentences should relate back to topic sentence & thesis.
- Do not include any ideas that are irrelevant or off-topic.

The main idea should be clear and obvious to readers and is typically presented within the topic sentence. If another main idea comes up as you are drafting a paragraph, it's time to go back to your outline to see where that idea fits in. If in revising a draft you notice that a paragraph has wandered into another main idea, you should consider splitting it into two paragraphs.

In academic writing, the topic sentence is usually the first sentence in a paragraph, but it does not have to be located there. The topic sentence is, in essence, a one-sentence summary of the point of the paragraph. All topic sentences should do the following:

- Narrow the focus of the paragraph
- Accurately predict the direction of the paragraph
- Refer back to the Thesis statement

Use Transition Words

Coherence is achieved when all points connect to form a whole; one point leads to another. Coherence is mainly achieved through the use of transitions.

Transitions—words and phrases which connect your sentences so that your writing flows smoothly.

The first sentence of a paragraph always has to help a reader move smoothly from the last paragraph. Sometimes two paragraphs are close enough in content that a transition can be implied without actually using transition words. Other times, specific transitions are needed.

Transition words are useful for more than just transitioning to a new paragraph. They can also help you connect ideas to each other within paragraphs. This table gives some ideas for how to use transitions to connect ideas in different ways:

Purpose	Examples
To compare/contrast	after that, again, also, although, and then, but, despite, even though, finally, first/second/third, etc, however, in contrast, in the same way, likewise, nevertheless, next, on the other hand, similarly, then
To signal cause/effect	as a result, because, consequently, due to , hence, since, therefore, thus

To show sequence or time	after, as soon as, at that time, before, during, earlier, finally, immediately, in the meantime, later, meanwhile, now, presently, simultaneously, so far, soon, until, then, thereafter, when, while
To indicate place or direction	above, adjacent to, below, beside, beyond, close, nearby, next to, north/south/east/west, opposite, to the left/right
To present examples	for example, for instance, in fact, to illustrate, specifically
To suggest relationships	and, also, besides, further, furthermore, in addition, moreover, too

Introductory Sentences

When no transition is used, an introductory sentence is needed so the reader knows what is going on. If a transition sentence is used, it is logical to follow it with an introductory sentence or to have one joint sentence.

Here are some examples:

- **A transition sentence:** Canned goods are not the only delicious foods available at a farmers' market.
- **An introductory sentence:** Farmers' markets feature a wide variety of fresh produce.
- **A transition/introductory combination sentence:** Along with canned goods, farmers' markets also feature whatever produce is fresh that week.

Support the Topic Sentence

Finally, a body paragraph must have **support**. All sentences in the paragraph should present details that clarify and support the topic sentence. Together, all the sentences within the paragraph should flow smoothly so that readers can easily grasp its meaning.

Support is achieved through adequate examples and details. Each body paragraph should include at least two examples to support the main idea of the paragraph. In an essay in which you are incorporating outside sources, this means that you should have at least one citation in all body paragraphs. Each example should include at least one specific detail that further illustrates the point. Always follow-up quotes with your own thoughts, arguments, analysis, etc.

When you choose sentences and ideas to support the topic sentence, keep in mind that paragraphs should not be overly long or overly short. A half page of double-spaced text is a nice average length for a paragraph. At a minimum, unless you are aiming for a dramatic effect, a paragraph should include at least three sentences. Although there is really no maximum size for a paragraph, keep in mind that lengthy paragraphs create confusion and reading difficulty. For this reason, try to keep all paragraphs to no more than one double-spaced page (or approximately 250 words).

The Quote Formula

When using quotes to support your topic sentences, it's important to follow the quote formula. Simply inserting a quote is not enough—you must explain to readers why you are using the particular quote and guide them in understanding how the quote pertains to your argument. There are three simple steps to incorporating quotes in your writing:

1. Introduce the quote. Here, you tell readers what the author is doing.
2. Give the quote. Here, you give an actual quote from the poem. Make sure to use quotation marks.
3. Use a parenthesis after the quotation marks to include the source information.
4. Explain the quote. Tell readers what the quote means.

To illustrate, take a look at the next paragraph in the paper quoted above. The parts of the quote formula are identified by using **bold** font for the introduction to the quote and *italics* for the explanation of the quote (note that the numbers in parenthesis indicate the lines of the poem being discussed):

Lawrence continues showing the gentler side of the snake by using similes. **For example, Lawrence says**, “He lifted his head from his drinking, as cattle do, / And looked at me vaguely, as drinking cattle do” (16-17). *By comparing the snake to harmless, everyday farm animals, Lawrence is saying that he sees this snake as a harmless animal.* **He continues showing the gentle side of the snake when he says**, “He drank enough / And lifted his head, dreamily, as one who has drunken” (41-42). *An evil animal would not look “dreamily” and satisfied like a person whose thirst has been quenched.* **He also shows the snake to be more of a person when he says**, “How glad I was he had come like a guest in quiet, to drink at my water-trough / And depart peaceful, pacified, and thankless” (28-30). *By using the word “guest”, Lawrence shows that he does not think the snake is invading his yard but is welcome to come and help himself.* **Then Lawrence sees an even greater side of the snake when he says**, “[a]nd [the snake] looked around like a god, unseeing, into the air” (45). *Quite opposite of the snake representing the evil devil, Lawrence compares the*

snake to a god. And, like most gods described in mythology, the snake is arrogant. When Lawrence says the snake “looked around...unseeing” (45), it seems as if everything around the snake is beneath him, not worthy of his notice. The use of similes throughout the poem enhances the idea that the snake is gentle and even god-like.

Don't Forget to Wrap the Paragraph Up!

Each paragraph needs a final sentence that lets the reader know that the idea is finished, and it is time to move onto a new paragraph and a new idea. A common way to close a paragraph is to reiterate the purpose of the paragraph in a way that shows the purpose has been met.

Here's an example body paragraph from a student paper. In this paper, the student is analyzing a poem. Note that the parts of the paragraph are identified as follows:

Hook: **Bold**

Support: Regular text

Wrap up: *Italics*

By using personification throughout the poem, Lawrence depicts a gentle snake that is more like a person than a creature. Lawrence begins the poem by telling how a snake came to drink at his water-trough. Instead of describing the snake as an animal or using “it” to talk about the snake, Lawrence says that he “...must wait...for there he was at the trough before me” (6). Lawrence continues to show a softer side of the snake when he says “[the snake] rested his throat upon the stone bottom... / He sipped with his straight mouth, / Softly drank... / Silently” (9-13). Instead of a thrashing, dangerous creature, here is a quietly drinking person. Lawrence continues this image in the very next line. “Someone was before me at my water-trough, / And I, like a second comer, waiting” (14-15). *Throughout these lines, the snake becomes less of an animal and more of a person coming to drink.*

Note how the last sentence tells the reader what his examples show. Also note that the in-text citation shows the LINE of the poem only.

Exercise 1

1. Choose a paragraph in an essay. You may use either an essay that you find online or one that you have written. Identify the topic sentence, supporting sentences, and wrap up sentence.
2. Write a short paragraph about the importance of time management. Chose a quote from [THIS](#) site (or use any quote about time management) and incorporate the quote by using the quote formula.

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Chapter 8

What is Information Literacy?

Why is Information Literacy Important?



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“Information literacy” is a term you’ll hear a lot during your college years. 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 find the right material for whatever it is they’re doing or whatever questions they have (see the [glossary of terms](#)).

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.

Here are a few of the questions we’ll explore:

- Why is information literacy important and necessary?
- How can I learn to find reliable, high-quality information and texts?
- How can I build my reading skills?
- How can I read, understand, and use texts effectively?
- How can I use my reading skills as a springboard to writing?
- What is plagiarism, and how do I avoid it?
- How can I cite source materials correctly in my college work?

As a college student, it’s important that you can find reliable sources for your class work and assignments. It’s also essential that you know how to correctly use and handle the sources when you make them part of your own work.

Outside of school, most of us also feel it's important to be informed about current issues and ideas. Knowing what's going on in the world is, arguably, a citizen's responsibility. Plus, it feels good to join in a conversation and know the facts, or to be sure we're sharing a meme, social media post, or news article that's accurate and trustworthy.



Check Your Understanding: Snopes

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: (<http://www.snopes.com/whats-new/>)

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.

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 hard copy (printed) or digital—and how and when to give credit to the owner: this keeps us safe from accidentally committing plagiarism.

Plagiarism occurs when we use someone else's "intellectual property" without giving them credit. Intellectual property is defined as material or ideas envisioned and created by another person. There are many kinds of intellectual property, including books, articles, essays, stories, poems, films, photographs, works of art or craft, or even just ideas. If someone else thought of an idea and brought it into the world, they own it, and if you use their idea in your work, you have to acknowledge them as the actual owner. If you don't? You've committed plagiarism. That's not a good idea—and we'll talk more about this.



Check Your Understanding: Plagiarism

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 these would be a kind of plagiarism?

- Copying written material from the Web and pasting it into your paper so it would look like you wrote it.
- Overhearing someone's great idea while riding in an elevator and then later sharing the idea and saying it was yours.
- Finding a beautiful photograph on the Web and using it as your profile picture on social media without showing the photographer's name.
- Citing lines of poetry in a blog post without mentioning the poet.

Finding Quality Texts

In the world of academia, our gold standard for texts requires them to be created by people with substantial education, advanced degrees, and life expertise, making them experts in their fields. If I'm reading a cookbook, I want it to be by someone who really knows their way around a kitchen—not someone who's a mediocre cook but decided it would be fun to collect the family favorites into a self-published book.

You're a college student. Without a doubt, the best place for you to find quality information is the college library—and you can do this by walking into the library or searching it via the Web. Many college libraries in the U.S. have adopted a new set of guidelines for helping students find good materials. It's called **CRAP**. Yes, really! CRAP stands for currency, reliability, authority, and purpose/point of view.

Let's look further at those words (CRAP):

Note: some libraries use **CRAAP** instead of **CRAP**, adding a second "A" for "accuracy." The simple **CRAP** method, below, incorporates "accuracy" into the "reliable" category. Besides, using **CRAP** is more fun.

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?

<p>R: Reliability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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?
<p>A: Authority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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>P: Purpose and Point of View</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 seem aimed at a specific audience?

Sounds like our gold standard, yes? Keeping the metaphor going, your college library is a gold mine for students. Your college 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—online 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. How? Through a wonderful service called interlibrary loan, where your library will actually contact other libraries—all over the country!—to find the materials you need and get them to you.
- Provides study spaces, tutoring, research assistance, and other helps.
- 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.

Wander into your college library (or search the library's online help) to get started—and if you have problems, ask a librarian! They love to work with students.

Can You Also Find Good Material on the World Wide Web?

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 college 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, perhaps out of boredom, or maybe chasing links. We can search and read as we like; nothing is at stake, so to speak.

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

So, how do you find good material on the Web?

Finding good materials on the Internet takes a bit of detective work. You can use your **CRAP** detective skills, but it also helps to know a little something about how to navigate and use Web materials. Let's explore!

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:

.com: a commercial or personal site. These are generally considered to be some of the least reliable sources because anyone can create one and they're typically used for either private blogs, web pages, and other personal uses or for commercial purposes and sales. (**CRAP+/-**, i.e., "**CRAP positive or negative**")

.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. **(CRAP+/-)**

.edu: educational sites, usually maintained by colleges and universities but sometimes by high schools as well. These sites are considered to be very reliable. **(CRAP+)**

.gov and **.mil:** government and military sites, maintained by the governments and the military. These sites are considered to be very reliable. **(CRAP+)**

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

The noted food journalist Michael Pollan uses a .com site, (michaelpollan.com), to host many of his writings. He's a respected writer and resource, and his .com site is a wonderful resource for anyone writing about food.

C: Is it **current**? Yes, it is. He is continually adding new materials and updating the site.

R: Is it **reliable**? Yes. Pollan uses sources and/or provides source lists for his writings. His work is objective and fact-based.

A: Is it **authoritative**? Yes. Pollan provides an extensive biography and a list of his publications and honors. His work is widely respected throughout the publishing and journalism communities, and his books have been published by some of our best-known publishing companies.

P: What is its **purpose**? Pollan is a journalist who tries to share science-based information about food and the food industry. He seeks to inform, and he does this with the intention of wanting to make people's lives better. He is addressing a vast audience: the American people.

Result? CRAP+

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? CRAP-

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. For example,

- 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*, résumé**, 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.

*A "bio" (biographical sketch) is a short piece of information about the author and their life, often highlighting unique or interesting events—especially those relevant to the piece they've just written (see the [glossary of terms](#)).

**A résumé is a *short* listing of a person's education, qualifications, and relevant job skills. Résumés are typically used when applying for a job. They are 1-2 pages long (see the [glossary of terms](#)).

***A curriculum vitae (CV) is like a résumé on steroids. Where a résumé tends to be limited in scope, a CV is a comprehensive listing of one person's lifetime educational accomplishments and honors, professional memberships, employment, and accomplishments (including publications, lectureships, conference participations, and so forth). These may be dozens of pages in length! (see the [glossary of terms](#))

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. For example, the National Institute of Health's information page about headaches lists no authors. Scroll to the page bottom, and you'll see the page was "prepared by: Office of Communications and Public Liaison." However, the NIH is a highly respected national institution, and their site is full of information that absolutely meets our **CRAP** criteria. They list no authors, but they point to the information's origin, and we can be confident that they are relying on strong writers for their material. Is this a useful site? Absolutely.

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.

*A periodical is anything that is printed on a regular schedule (i.e., periodically). Periodicals include newspapers, magazines, journals, zines, and more (see the [glossary of terms](#)).

**A journalist is 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 (see the [glossary of terms](#)).

***A freelance writer is 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 (see the [glossary of terms](#)).

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.

But sometimes, information can be dated and still be useful. For instance, if I was writing a paper about organic gardening, I might be interested in some of [Dr. Rudolph Steiner's original lectures on biodynamic farming](#). These can be found on the Rudolph Steiner Archive and eLibrary. They date back to the 1920s, but their content is still considered useful and informative by many farmers (**CRAP+**). This example shows how important it is to consider date when evaluating a source.

Sometimes, you won't find any date on the material. Again, you'll need to evaluate this in terms of the strength of the rest of the page. 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.

Other Points to Check

Consider the visual layout and appeal of the page:

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

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? (**CRAP+**)
- Do articles include links to other materials or links to credible and/or reliable source materials? (**CRAP+**) Has content been carefully edited, or can you detect lots of errors? (**CRAP-**)
- Is the language smart and objective? (**CRAP+**) Or does it include biased language, slang, or frankly rude or negative words? (**CRAP-**) 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 considered experts on the topic, and try beginning a search with those names. For instance, if you wanted to answer a question about spaceflight, you might think of starting with NASA.

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 college 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. In a recent research writing class, a student writing about Starbucks' business practices actually drove to company headquarters in Seattle and interviewed a top executive. Another student—this one investigating Ebola virus—met with two local microbiologists, while a third student researching the geology of Crater Lake went on a weekend outing to experience the national park up close and personal.

Practice these strategies when you evaluate websites, and you should be able to find strong materials that will boost your college work.



Whenever you identify a good printed source—book, journal, etc.—go to the end of it and read the bibliography. Voila: a brand new list of potential source materials!



Check Your Understanding: 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](#)
(found at www.improbable.com)
- [Aluminum Foil Deflector Beanie](#)
(found at zapatopi.net)
- [Dihydrogen Monoxide Research Division](#)
(found at www.dhmo.org)

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. Did your opinion change? Why? What did you discover? Would you rely on the site for your college work? Does it meet the **CRAP** test?

What About Finding Good Materials in “Hard Copy” Periodicals?

Follow the same guidelines given above for finding strong Web materials. Look at the author, date, and the material itself. Consider the publication itself: a mainstream, respected newspaper or magazine—like *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, or *The Atlantic*—more or less automatically meets our **CRAP+** test, while smaller or local publications may require a detailed evaluation.

A Few Thoughts on *Wikipedia* and other Open Encyclopedias

As a rule, *Wikipedia* and other “Wiki” sources are not considered to be acceptable sources for college work.

Why not?

The beauty of *Wikipedia* is its egalitarianism: It’s billed as a public encyclopedia for everyone. The problem with this is that anyone can create a *Wikipedia* entry, and likewise, anyone can edit the entries. Unfortunately, “anyone” is usually not an authority in the field. Remember, we’re looking for sources that meet the **CRAP** criteria and that are written by people with degrees, education, and/or expertise in the field. *Wikipedia* doesn’t follow this model, and so we don’t rely on it as a reliable source.

But now that I’ve told you not to use *Wikipedia*, be aware that sometimes a teacher may ask you to use *Wikipedia* for a specific purpose. In that case, they’ll explain to you why they’re asking you to use it and explain how you should proceed.

Also, consider this: studies have shown that the information in *Wikipedia* is, in most cases, as accurate as that from standard encyclopedias (Taraborelli; Terdimann). Yet despite these findings, two problems remain:

One, as discussed above, Wiki entries can be made and edited by anyone. (**CRAP-**)

Two, there are multiple instances of *Wikipedia* entries being changed as a “joke” or to defame or damage a source’s credibility. (**CRAP-**)

These problems once again point out why we don’t rely on *Wikipedia* for academic work.

Wikipedia, however, has two great features that you can use right away:

1. Most entries have long lists of source materials at the bottom of each topic page. Many of these listed materials will be useful when you’re doing research or at least will aim you in a sound direction.
2. *Wikipedia* can be a great place to start learning more about a topic. Just remember that it is a springboard—not a reliable source itself.

In addition to not using *Wikipedia* as an academic source, you should also avoid *DotDash* (formerly *About.com*), *Yahoo! Answers*, *eHow*, and other similar public information sites. If you have questions about using these sources, discuss this with your teacher.

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Chapter 9

Avoiding Plagiarism

Dr. Karen Palmer

What Is Plagiarism?



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The term plagiarism is derived from the Latin word for “kidnapper.” When you plagiarize, you essentially ‘kidnap’ another person’s words or ideas and pass them off as your own without acknowledgment. Plagiarism is often a deliberate act. Whether a student is trying to get out of writing a paper and copies one from the web or a songwriter ‘steals’ lyrics from a band member, plagiarism is wrong. Deliberate plagiarism is an intentional misrepresentation meant to deceive the reader.

Students often plagiarize **unintentionally**, as well, simply because they do not realize what should be cited. For example, a student might include a statistic in his/her paper and not give the source. That is plagiarism. If a student copies a sentence or two from a Wikipedia article and gives the source in parentheses after the quote, but does not put the quote in quotations marks, that is plagiarism.

Another method of inadvertent plagiarism is to paraphrase too closely. You can avoid this pitfall by reading a paragraph and then, without looking back, writing about the paragraph. Unless you have a photographic memory, this method will result in you rewording the idea. When you finish writing, look back to make sure you included all aspects of the original text and to clarify that you depicted the ideas accurately.

When you are planning to quote an author’s exact words, follow these guidelines:

- If possible, copy and paste the quotation directly from your Research Journal so you know you have not made any inadvertent changes.
- Be very careful not to change any word orders, word choices, spellings, or punctuation.
- Use quotation marks.
- If you choose to omit any words from the quotation, indicate this omission by replacing the words with ellipses (...).
- If you add additional words to the quotation, place them within square brackets ([]).
- Immediately include the in-text citation in parenthesis at the end of the sentence in which the quotation appears.

Avoiding Plagiarism

One way to avoid unintentional plagiarism is to begin by writing down your own ideas first. Put an asterisk * in the text where you know you want to insert a quote, but don’t put the quote in yet. This method ensures that you are consciously inserting quotes at a time when you can take the time to cite the source properly. One side benefit of this method is that you don’t lose your train of thought while writing. Another is that you are focusing on your own words and ideas—not simply reporting what others have said. In fact, APA guidelines state that no more than 20% of a text should be referenced from other sources.

Note that ideas that are common knowledge do not need to be cited. Common knowledge includes well-known facts or general knowledge (like the number of states in the union or the team that won the Super Bowl). Sometimes what is common knowledge in the field you are studying may not be common knowledge to you. But, if you see the same thing over and over again in all of your sources, this is probably common knowledge. When in doubt, always cite!

Consequences of Plagiarism

The consequences of plagiarism vary widely, depending on the writing situation. Songwriters caught plagiarizing face hefty fines, as well as the possible end to their careers. Academic writers may lose their jobs. Students can receive failing grades or even be expelled from school. Regardless of your writing situation, your credibility as a writer and as a person and as a research is compromised. Take the extra time to verify your sources and give credit where credit is due.

Exercise 1

1. Research an instance of plagiarism that made the news. Discuss the issue with your group. What happened? What could the person have done differently to avoid plagiarism?

Exercise 2

1. Look at your Turnitin report for your essay rough draft. Is there anything you should adjust as to avoid plagiarism?

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Chapter 10

Doing Research

Dr. Karen Palmer and Dr. Sandi Van Lieu

Conducting Research

Research at the university level requires expertise on a topic while drawing from a wide variety of sources. Your University Library is a wonderful source of information, with articles and even whole books accessible completely online. In addition, there are many reputable websites from which credible information can be gleaned.

As you research, remember that your goal is to find out more about your topic. Many students begin research simply by looking for quotes that will support their own opinions. This method does not create good arguments! Before you begin researching, write down some questions you have about your topic. Do your best to find the answers to those questions in your research.



Image in the public domain

Determining Your Timeline

Begin with the amount of time you have to complete your project. Create a research and writing schedule that can realistically fit into your life and allow you to generate a quality product. Then stick with your plan. As with many time-consuming tasks, if you fall off your schedule, you are likely to find yourself having to work long hours or having to make concessions in order to finish in time. Since such actions will probably result in an end product of lesser quality, making and keeping a schedule is an excellent idea.

As a rule, when you make a schedule, it's best to plan to spend a little time each day as opposed to long blocks of time on a few days. Although, on a long project, you might find it beneficial to have some lengthy days, as a rule, long hours on a single project do not fit into one's daily life very well.

As you schedule your time, plan for at least one spare day before the project is due as sort of an insurance policy. In other words, don't set your schedule to include working through the last available minute. A spare day or two gives you some flexibility in case the process doesn't flow along perfectly according to your plan.

If you plan to have others proofread your work, respectfully consider their schedules. You can't make a plan that requires others to drop what they are doing to read your draft on your schedule.

Defining Your Research Question

When you are researching for an essay, your attitude and stamina are key to your success. If you let either of these issues get out of hand, you can seriously weaken your project. Before you begin what is essentially a month-long relationship with a topic, you should choose something that interests you, something about which you have an opinion. Even when it is on a topic you care deeply about, researching is often tedious and demands stamina. Assume from the beginning that the project will be time consuming and sometimes exhausting, so make sure to allot the needed time and energy to complete it.

If you feel strongly about a topic, you might find it a challenge to keep your attitude in check and to read your sources with an open mind. It's critical not to let your personal opinions drive the information you choose to include. Try to create a well-rounded paper. If all the sources you find appear to agree with your viewpoints, actively search out a different viewpoint to strengthen your paper. Or consider changing your path entirely because if there really isn't a range of sources out there, you're probably not working with an arguable topic.

Along with keeping an open mind (attitude) and keeping to a schedule (stamina), you should, of course, read critically. In other words, you should evaluate the arguments and assumptions authors make and, when appropriate, present your evaluations within your paper. You can include biased information if you choose but be certain to note the bias.

This move might be appropriate in a persuasive essay if you are taking issue with a source with which you disagree.

Be careful not to settle for too easy a target in such an essay. Don't pick on a fringe voice in the opposing camp when there's a more reasonable argument that needs to be dealt with fairly. If a source is simply too biased to be useful even as an opposing argument, then you may choose not to include it as part of your essay. Your basic principle of selection for a source, regardless of whether you agree with it as a matter of opinion, should be based on whether you think the information includes sound assumptions, meaningful evidence, and logical conclusions.

You also need to pose productive questions throughout the process. If you are writing on a topic about which you already have a very clear stance, consider whether there is common ground you share with your ideological opponents that might lead to a more productive use of your time and theirs. In general, persuasive essays are more effective if they also solve problems instead of just staking out an inflexible position based on a core set of inflexible assumptions. It's not that you shouldn't write about abortion or capital punishment if these issues mean something to you, it's just that you don't want to go down the same path that's been followed by millions of students who have come before you. So how do you ask fresh questions about classic topics? Often by rewinding to the causes of the effects people typically argue about or simply by pledging to report the facts of the matter in depth.

Old Question about Classic Topic	New Questions about Classic Topic
Is abortion acceptable under any circumstances?	<p>What forms of sexual education have been shown to be effective with teens most at risk of unplanned pregnancies?</p> <p>What are some of the social and cultural causes of unplanned teen pregnancies?</p>
Is capital punishment acceptable under any circumstances?	<p>What are states doing to ensure fair and thorough trials for capital crimes?</p> <p>What are the results in the capital crime rate in states that have imposed moratoriums on capital punishment?</p> <p>What is the relative average cost to conduct a capital prosecution and execution versus life imprisonment without parole?</p>

Old Question about Classic Topic	New Questions about Classic Topic
Is censorship acceptable under any circumstances?	<p>What is the recent history of legislative and judicial rulings on First Amendment issues?</p> <p>What are the commercial motivations of advertisers, music, television, and film producers to push the boundaries of decency?</p>

Exercise 1

1. Using the table above as an example, choose four “high school” topics. Write down the classic question, and then write one or two new questions about the topic that might lead to a more interesting and unique research project.

Different Types of Sources

Your status as a student grants you access to your college library, and it is in your best interest to use it. Whether you are using your library online or in person, you will most likely need some guidance so that you know the research options available and how to access them.

If you are attending a traditional brick-and-mortar college, the quickest way to learn about your library options is to physically go to the library and meet with a librarian. If you are attending school mostly or completely online, look for online tutorials offered by your college library.

Within the array of online options available to you, the academic databases to which your library subscribes are generally more authoritative because they have been edited and, in many cases, peer reviewed before being approved for publication. These sources often appeared in print before being collected in the database.

However, databases can take you only so far in your research. If you have questions that need quick answers, especially involving facts or statistics, there’s nothing wrong with using popular search engines like Google or even online encyclopedias like Wikipedia, provided you use them critically. Confirm the truth of the information you find by finding corroboration from at least two other sources and follow up on the sources listed in the sites to which you are directed.

The Internet also offers a variety of additional tools and services that are very useful to you as a researcher. Some of these options include citation builders and writing guides, dictionaries, thesauruses, encyclopedias, collections of famous quotations, government data, stock photo collections, collaboratively produced wikis and websites, and much

more. An effective research project will likely combine source material from both academic databases and more popularly available online sites.

In addition to print and online sources, you might also wish to find some primary sources, such as interviewing an expert, sorting through relevant documents, making observations, or attending an event that relates to your topic. For example, if you are researching the effects of inclusion on third grade students with special needs, you could add meaningful information to your paper by speaking with a local educator who has reviewed achievement scores before and after they have received inclusion services.

Exercise 2

1. Provide contact information, including personal name(s), for school library staff you could turn to for help when you start a research project.

2. Once you've gotten to know more about your library's online databases, use what you already know about popular search engines to decide which would be an easier method of finding reliable, trustworthy sources for the following information:

- an academic database or a popular search engine?
- rates of military service in the United States since World War II
- arguments in favor of and against the existence of climate change
- studies on the effects of television viewing on infants
- average age of first marriage among men and women every year since 1960
- proposed solutions to unemployment
- the highest grossing films of the last twenty years

3. Indicate three research topics of interest to you. Then describe a field source for each topic that you could use as a resource.

Using Databases

The YC Databases will prove to be your most important research tool over the course of your academic career. With the databases, you can find credible, academic sources online right from your computer. The databases even include a citation shortcut!

Choosing Search Terms

Whether you are searching research databases or conducting general online searches, the search terms and phrases you use will determine what information you find. Following some basic search term guidelines can make the process go smoothly.

When searching for articles within a database, start by using keywords that relate to your topic.

Example: alternative energy

To expand your search, use synonyms or components of the initial search terms.

Synonym Example: renewable energy

Components Example: algae energy, wind energy, biofuel

Another technique you can use is to refine the presentation of your search terms using suggestions in the following table:

Strategy	Explanation	Example
Use multiple words.	Use multiple words to more narrowly define your search.	renewable energy instead of energy
Use quotation marks.	Place quotation marks around two or more words that you want to search for only in combination, never individually.	“renewable energy”
Use “AND” to connect words.	Use “AND” between words when you want to retrieve only articles that include both words.	algae AND energy
Use “OR” to choose one or the other.	Use “OR” to find information relating to one of two options but not both. This option works well when you have two terms that mean the same thing and you want to find articles regardless of which term has been chosen for use.	ethanol OR ethyl alcohol
Use “NOT” to eliminate likely options.	Use “NOT” to eliminate one category of ideas you know a search term will likely generate.	algae NOT food
		alternate* energy

Strategy	Explanation	Example
Use “*” or “?” to include alternate word endings.	Use “*” or “?” to include a variety of word endings. This process is often called using a “wildcard.”	alternate? energy
Use parentheses to combine multiple searches.	Use parentheses to combine multiple related terms into one single search using the different options presented in this table.	(renewable OR algae OR biofuel OR solar) AND energy

When you find a helpful article or Internet site, look for additional search terms and sources that you can follow up on. If you don't have time to follow up on them all when you find them, include them in your research log for later follow-up. When possible, copy and paste terms and links into your log. When you have to retype, take great care with spelling, spacing, and most of all, attributing direct quotations to their original source.

The aforementioned tips are general ideas for keyword searching. When you are searching within a database or a search engine, pay attention to any search tips or help screens that present methods that work well with the specific database or search engine. For example, you may have the option to narrow your search to “full text” entries only or to refine it to texts published within a certain time frame.

Making Ethical and Effective Choices

Three keys to referencing others' ideas ethically are to know the difference between common knowledge and proprietary ideas, to be aware of how to properly summarize and paraphrase, and to understand the correct methods for citing sources. In addition, you need to make sure that material is available for use at any level.

Differentiating between Common Knowledge and Proprietary Ideas

Common knowledge is that bank of information that most people know. This information does not require a citation. One way to identify common knowledge is to note that it is presented in multiple sources without documentation. Another identification method is to realize that you, along with most people you know, are aware of the information. For example, you can write that “Cheyenne is the capital of Wyoming” without needing a reference. On the other hand, if you were to note that there is a high rate of divorce in Cheyenne, you would need to cite that detail.

Making Sure Material Is Available for Use

As you are searching for sources, be sure to determine that you can ethically use the material. As a rule, you can reference most text as long as you properly cite it. Images are another issue. When you search online for images, you will find many private and for-profit sources. You should not use these images without contacting the source and requesting permission. For example, you might find a picture of a darling little boy from someone's personal unprotected photo page or a good picture of an orderly closet from a company's web page. Using such photos just because you can access them is not ethical. And citing the source is not adequate in these situations. You should either obtain written permission or forgo the use of such images.

Important Research Reminders:

- ALWAYS, ALWAYS keep track of your sources!
- You can keep a file on your computer where you save PDF articles.
- You can open up a Word document that will be your essay or a blank Word document where you can copy/paste the links and notes you've found.
- Be careful, though, if you are logged into your college account and on the library page searching databases. You will have to log in again to use the link.
- You can have your own method; just be sure you do indeed have one.
- You must know where a source came from so that you can go back and get the MLA information for your citations.

Exercise 3

1. Write a search term you could use if you wanted to search for sites about the Eisenhower family, but not about Dwight Eisenhower.
2. Write a search term that would work to find sites about athlete graduation rates but not about non-athlete graduation rates or other information about athletes.
3. Brainstorm a list of search terms to use when researching the topic "television violence." Include all the techniques from this section at least once.

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Chapter 11

Keeping a Research Journal and an Annotated Bibliography

Dr. Karen Palmer

As you research, it's important to keep a record of the information you find. It might not seem difficult to remember a handful of sources, but, as you continue on in your academic career, you may have a source list of 10, 20, or even more sources for a single paper. Getting in the habit of keeping track of your sources by using a research journal will help you to keep your information organized and make writing your paper much less work.

Keeping a research journal is simple.

1. First, create a new Word document.
2. As you do your research, take note of the correct citation of each source.
3. Write a short summary of the source, including any important notes (ie this source contains a lot of data).
4. Finally, write any quotes that stand out. Make sure to put the quotes in quotation marks and add the in-text citation at the end of the quote.

Notes and Quotes

Since, at the note taking stage, you do not know for sure how you will use the information you find, you will not know for sure which kind of notes to take for which sources. Use the following general guidelines to decide:

- Summarize lengthy information that will add to your paper without including the smaller details.
- Paraphrase information and details that will serve as significant support for your core points but that isn't so eloquently stated that you want to use the exact words. Also, paraphrase texts with vital details that are simply too lengthy to quote.
- Use quotations to emphasize important information that will be very impressive or poignant and that will serve its purpose best if the original words are used. Keep in mind that no more than about 20 percent of your paper should be quoted text. Your paper should be in your words with a few quotations as opposed to a collection of quotations connected with your words.
- Think critically about why you are using the information you've chosen from your sources.



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You will use most of the information you find in either a summarized or paraphrased format. So, use those formats as you write. Make your best guess about how you will want to use the information. Do not ever copy and paste from a source directly into your working files unless you intend to use the information as an exact quotation. If you do intend to use an exact quotation, use the quotations when you take the initial note.

For all notes you take, record the page(s) where you found the information. Doing so will assure you have the information at hand if you need it for your reference. In addition, having the page numbers readily available will allow you to easily revisit sources. So that you do not inadvertently leave a page number where you do not want it, add bolding and color to your page numbers to make them stand out.

Tip: You might find it helpful to use a table to keep track of your sources. Simply put each source in a different row of the table. Another option is to add a dividing line after each source. This helps keep sources visually separated on the page.

Exercise 1

1. Using the guidelines above, create a research journal on your computer. Follow your instructor's directions on what to begin putting into the research journal.

Annotated Bibliography

Dr. Sandi Van Lieu

During your research in your college classes, you may be asked to write an annotated bibliography.

What Is an Annotated Bibliography?

An annotated bibliography is a full citation (in either MLA or APA format) of a source, followed by a brief description and evaluation of the book or article. See the following example:

Example:

Darling, Nancy. "Peer Pressure is Not Peer Influence." *Principal*. Sept./Oct. 2002: 67-69.

Darling, a professor of education at Bard College, writes that adolescents are most often influenced not by what their friends do or say, but how they think their friends will react to a situation. Schools can use this information to redirect peer influence toward a more positive course. By providing positive information, involving all students, and grouping students differently, schools can provide opportunities to reinforce positive values. This idea of adolescent positive peer influence is a timely theory and strongly supports the theme of my paper.

←
MLA
citation

↑
Annotation

What to Put in the Annotation:

- Information: A summary of your findings
- Evaluation: What did you think of it, how will it help your topic
- Comparison: How it compares to other books/articles
- Authority: The background of the author

Annotated bibliographies are not difficult; just remember it's an organized list of the sources you've used, each of which is followed by a brief note—the annotation.

Examples

Here are a couple of entries Antonio makes in his annotated bibliography for an essay he is writing on head injuries in football. Using the same search terms ("helmets," "NFL," and "head injuries"), a search of Academic Search Complete in his college library nets him entries 1, 2, and 4, and a search on Google nets him entry 3. Drawing from the color-coding suggestion, Antonio distinguishes between direct quotation (red), paraphrase (blue) and summary (purple), by using different font colors for each.

Gregory, Sean. "The Problem with Football." *Time* 175.5 (2010): 36-43. *Academic Search Complete*. EBSCO. Web. 11 Nov. 2010.

Gregory suggests four main areas of potential reform in this proposal to solve the crisis of head injuries in the NFL: changes to the game's rules, to the equipment, to instruction in the youth leagues, and to the culture of football at large. All four are really necessary in concert with each other in what Gregory calls a "game plan to lessen the pain" (par. 18). Gregory closes with some devastating statistics about the different rates of diagnosis of dementia, Alzheimer's, or memory disease for 30-49 year-old men who are NFL veterans compared to the general population: 1 in 1000 (general population) vs. 1 in 53 (NFL retirees).

McDonnell, Terry. "Staggered by The Impact." *Sports Illustrated* 113.16 (2010): 14-15. *Academic Search Complete*. EBSCO. Web. 11 Nov. 2010.

McDonnell is realistic about the history of violence in the game at all levels, but he also makes the point that casual viewers and fans may give up on football if they believe it is becoming so violent that players are sustaining dangerous, permanent head injuries. He closes on an optimistic note, suggesting that newly instituted regulations, penalties and fines for helmet hits in the NFL are already leading to a reduction in the number of concussions. He suggests in closing "that the game can correct itself and that the players can adjust" (par.9).

Jackson, Nate. "The N.F.L.'s Head Cases." *New York Times*. 23 Oct. 2010: New York ed.: WK11. Web. 11 Nov. 2010.

This editorial, written by a six-year veteran of the NFL who played for the Denver Broncos from 2003-08, provides a rebuttal to the arguments being made in favor of stiff penalties for helmet hits. Jackson questions what will happen to the spirit of the game if referees and players are required to make split-second decisions about what constitutes an excessively violent hit. Here, Jackson gives a valuable perspective from his point of view as a former defensive back: "But when a receiver is trying to catch a ball or avoid being tackled, the height of his head is constantly changing, often making it impossible for a defensive player to judge the point of impact" (par. 10).

Aikman, Troy. "The NFL should proceed with caution on head injuries." *Sporting News* 233.28 (2009): 71. *Academic Search Complete*. EBSCO. Web. 11 Nov. 2010.

Like Jackson, Aikman provides some field-level commentary from the point of view of a player. He too believes that excessive regulation will damage the spirit of the game. On the other hand, he admits that if football is deemed by parents to be too violent, they will begin to pull their kids out of youth leagues, shrinking the pool of talent coming up from the next generation. Aikman closes by suggesting that perhaps the game should just do away with helmets entirely, because defenders would be less likely to make these kinds of hits "if their noggins weren't protected" (par. 11).

See below for another example of how your annotated bibliography can look in **MLA format**.

Annotated Bibliography

Chiras, Dan. *Wind Power Basics: A Green Energy Guide*. New Society Publishers, 2010.

This book has a great introduction to the history of wind power beginning with the windmills used in the 1920's to pump water and electricity especially for farmers on the plains. It takes us through today and the evolvement of the wind turbines. Chiras explains why the technology stopped being developed for quite awhile. The author goes on to explain the wind power technology. While Chiras is a supporter of wind energy he does clearly explain the pros and cons of this renewable energy source. This book will be a great resource because it thoroughly explores wind energy. Chiras is an author and green building consultant and has written more than 240 articles and 21 books.

Gipe, Paul. *Wind Power Renewable Energy for Home, Farm, and Business*. Chelsea Green Publishing, 2004.

In 1976 Paul Gipe was interested in wind energy and has followed its development. He has researched its use in many countries; from a wind power plant in the Netherlands, to using wind power on an electric fence, and a wind/solar power telecommunications tower in South America. He gets into the technology, size, and wind requirements. In this book he talks about

Source listed in MLA format

When a source is longer than one line, use the Hanging Indent feature

Annotated Bibliography

APA Annotated Bibliographies

The format above is similar for APA format — your annotated bibliography should be double-spaced; references should be in alphabetical order and have a hanging indent. However, your annotations should be fully indented as you would for a block quote. Here is an example:

Annotated Bibliography


 Dolan, V. (2011). The isolation of online adjunct faculty and its impact on their performance. *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, 12(2), 62-77.

Source listed in APA format

Annotation

Dolan (2011) presents a grounded theory qualitative research study to see if occasional in-person meetings with management and peers impacts their job motivation and consequently the quality of education they provide. Dolan (2011) examined twenty-eight adjunct faculty at the same university. The researcher gave adjunct faculty open-ended questionnaires and/or spoke with them on the telephone, then the researcher used coding and theming to find patterns and analyzed those patterns for results.

Hoyt, J. E. (2012). Predicting the satisfaction and loyalty of adjunct faculty. *The Journal of Continuing Higher Education*, 60, 132–142.


Second line has a hanging indent

The study examines predictors of adjunct faculty loyalty. These predictors are satisfaction with the quality of students, autonomy, faculty support, honorarium, and preference for teaching. These factors, except for autonomy, along with a heavy teaching load, collaborative research with full-time faculty, and satisfaction with teaching schedule are predictive of overall job satisfaction. The authors suggest that higher education that employ adjunct faculty need to provide more support to promote quality educational

Exercise 1

1. Choose a research topic of interest to you. Find a related website and find the following pieces of information: name of author, editor, or sponsoring organization; title of article; title of journal or site that has published the article; version or issue number; date of publication or access date.
2. Choose a research topic of interest to you. Find a related online blog.
3. Choose a research topic of interest to you and set up a related RSS feed.
4. Choose a research topic of interest to you. Find a related government site.
5. Choose a research topic of interest to you. Online, find a related photo, video, and table.
6. With your writing group sharing a couple of computers, amass several sources of an essay and write up an annotated bibliography.

7. Using Antonio's essay idea on helmet hits in the NFL, draw up two statements of purpose that differ from each other in at least three of the six concerns (voice, audience, message, tone, attitude, or reception).

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Chapter 12

Annotating a Text

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

Tip:

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

How to Annotate:

- Underline, highlight, or mark sections of the text that seem important, interesting, or confusing.
- Be selective about which sections to mark; if you end up highlighting most of a page or even most of a paragraph, nothing will stand out, and you will have defeated the purpose of annotating.
- Use symbols to represent your thoughts.
- Asterisks or stars might go next to an important sentence or idea.
- Question marks might indicate a point or section that you find confusing or questionable in some way.
- Exclamation marks might go next to a point that you find surprising.
- Abbreviations can represent your thoughts in the same way symbols can
- For example, you may write “Def.” or “Bkgnd” in the margins to label a section that provides definition or background info for an idea or concept.
- Think of typical terms that you would use to summarize or describe sections or ideas in a text and come up with abbreviations that make sense to you.
- Write down questions that you have as you read.
- Identify transitional phrases or words that connect ideas or sections of the text.
- Mark words that are unfamiliar to you or keep a running list of those words in your notebook.

- Mark key terms or main ideas in topic sentences.
- Identify key concepts pertaining to the course discipline (i.e.–look for literary devices, such as irony, climax, or metaphor, when reading a short story in an English class).
- Identify the thesis statement in the text (if it is explicitly stated).

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

Figure 1.4 Sample Annotated Emily Dickinson Poem

Sample Annotated Emily Dickinson Poem

Emily Dickinson 185 [Fr 202]

"Faith" is a fine invention
 When Gentlemen can see -
 But Microscopes are prudent
 In an Emergency.

Handwritten notes:

- This suggests a conditional - when they can see - doesn't assume they do see. Faith isn't given?
- Why the "is"? To draw our attention? faith? Sarcastic? idea? To the concept of faith? How we define it? Or to be To study this
- potent/challenging word - invention is manmade. Faith is based on belief (coming from God) - a bit blasphemous - showing that maybe we invent our faith?
- showing a contrast
- the microscope really is an invention that helps us to see - but in science. - could we use a microscope to see faith? - it's about practical seeing - or prudent - implies the right choice, the more useful(?)
- (Ha!)
- literal seeing? But can one see faith that way? or see as in understanding?
- * draws a comparison between faith + reason, religion & science. She does not condemn either - but suggests that faith doesn't cover everything

type of poem - epigram -> short + funny/witty

- or -
 in ven tion

a	/	-	-	/	-	-
b	-	/	-	/	-	/
c	-	/	-	-	-	-
b	/	-	-	-	-	/

rhyme scheme

Handwritten notes:

- the rhythm trips along lightly - like a little song. Adds to the light hearted mood - interesting contrast to the subjects - faith + science!

Figure 1.5 Sample Annotated Walt Whitman Poem "The Dalliance of the Eagles"

Sample Annotated Walt Whitman Poem "The Dalliance of the Eagles"

a (maybe) likely sexual meeting.
a bit risqué subject at this time?

Walt Whitman

"The Dalliance of the Eagles"

Also motion really comes out here but with more speed, momentum. And so commas are missing no pauses here.

only reference to a 1st person speaker but gives us a sense of a person in nature, watching this scene unfold

Skirting the river road, (my forenoon walk, my rest,) Skyward in air a sudden muffled sound, the dalliance of the eagles, The rushing amorous contact high in space together, The clinching interlocking claws, a living, fierce, gyrating wheel, Four beating wings, two beaks, a swirling mass tight grappling, In tumbling turning clustering loops, straight downward falling, Till o'er the river pois'd, the twain yet one, a moment's lull, A motionless still balance in the air, (then parting, talons loosing, Upward again on slow-firm pinions slanting, their separate diverse flight, She hers, he his, pursuing,

Great motion suggested here but with strong beats. Commas help emphasize the beats - like claps on the strong syllables!

No -ing words

look at how this reads like a pause in the action - more halting & harder to say quickly.

to end on this word suggests the action continues - even after the poem is done

- free verse - no rhyme scheme & no regular meter
- But - at least 17 -ing words - implies motion happening right now
- A lot of crisp sounds repeated - t, k, st, b, sk - plays up the action - this is not a calm scene
- Also s sounds - perhaps suggesting some grace in all this activity - some majesty.

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

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

“[5 Active Reading Strategies](https://youtu.be/JL0pqJeE4_w)” (https://youtu.be/JL0pqJeE4_w, transcript [here](#))

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

After You Read

Once you’ve finished reading, take time to review your initial reactions from your first preview of the text. Were any of your earlier questions answered within the text? Was the author’s purpose similar to what you had speculated it would be?

The following steps will help you process what you have read so that you can move onto the next step of analyzing the text.

- Summarize the text in your own words (note your impressions, reactions, and what you learned) in an outline or in a short paragraph
- Talk to someone, like a classmate, about the author’s ideas to check your comprehension
- Identify and reread difficult parts of the text
- Review your annotations
- Try to answer some of your own questions from your annotations that were raised while you were reading
- Define words on your vocabulary list and practice using them (to define words, try a learner’s dictionary, such as Merriam-Webster’s)

Critical Reading Practice Exercises

Choose any text that you have been assigned to read for one of your college courses. In your notes, complete the following tasks:

1. Follow the steps in the bulleted lists beginning under Section 3, “How do you read critically?” (For an in-class exercise, you may want to start with “Establishing Your Purpose.”)

Before you read: Establish your purpose; preview the text.

While you read: Identify the main point of the text; annotate the text.

After you read: Summarize the main points of the text in two to three sentences; review your annotations.

2. Write down two to three questions about the text that you can bring up during class discussion. (Reviewing your annotations and identifying what stood out to you in the text should help you figure out what questions you want to ask.)

Tip

Students are often reluctant to seek help. They believe that doing so marks them as slow, weak, or demanding. The truth is, every learner occasionally struggles. If you are sincerely trying to keep up with the course reading but feel like you are in over your head, seek out help. Speak up in class, schedule a meeting with your instructor, or visit your university learning center for assistance. Deal with the problem as early in the semester as you can. Instructors respect students who are proactive about their own learning. Most instructors will work hard to help students who make the effort to help themselves.

Tip

To access a list of Virginia Western Community College's learning resources, visit The [Academic Link's webpage](https://tinyurl.com/yccryaky) (<https://tinyurl.com/yccryaky>)

Now What?

After you have taken the time to read a text critically, the next step is to analyze the text rhetorically to establish a clear idea of what the author wrote and how the author wrote it, as well as how *effectively* the author communicated the overall message of the text.

Key Takeaways

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

1. Textbooks often include comprehension questions in the margins or at the end of a section or chapter. As you read, stop occasionally to answer these questions on paper or in your head. Use them to identify sections you may need to reread, read more carefully, or ask your instructor about later.
2. Even when a text does not have built-in comprehension features, you can actively monitor your own comprehension. Try these strategies, adapting them as needed to suit different kinds of texts:
3. Summarize. At the end of each section, pause to summarize the main points in a few sentences. If you have trouble doing so, revisit that section.

Ask and answer questions. When you begin reading a section, try to identify two to three questions you should be able to answer after you finish it. Write down your questions and use them to test yourself on the reading. If you cannot answer a question, try to determine why. Is the answer buried in that section of reading but just not coming across to you, or do you expect to find the answer in another part of the reading?

Do not read in a vacuum. Simply put, don't rely solely on your own interpretation. Look for opportunities to discuss the reading with your classmates. Many instructors set up online discussion forums or blogs specifically for that purpose. Participating in these discussions can help you determine whether your understanding of the main points is the same as your peers'.

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

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Figure 1.2 “Lean In Tweets,” Kalyca Schultz, Virginia Western Community College, CC-0.

Figure 1.3 “Example Questions to Ask a Text,” Kalyca Schultz, Virginia Western Community College, CC-0.

Figure 1.4 “Sample Annotated Emily Dickinson Poem,” Kirsten DeVries and Kalyca Schultz, Virginia Western Community College, CC-0.

Figure 1.5 “Sample Annotated Walt Whitman Poem ‘The Dalliance of the Eagles,’” Kirsten DeVries and Kalyca Schultz, Virginia Western Community College, CC-0.

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Chapter 13

Summary Vs. Analysis

Dr. Sandi Van Lieu

In your classes, you may be asked to analyze text. Analysis is not simply summary—summary gives the reader a shortened overview of the topic.

Summary

A summary would be telling the reader what happened in the story. Take for example, summaries about the short story “The Lottery” by Shirley Jackson:

Example 1 Summary:

“The Lottery” is about a town that comes together every year for a tradition. The town’s people draw a name, and the person’s whose name is drawn is killed by everyone else.

Example 2 Summary:

The black box in “The Lottery” is used to hold slips of paper with the names of the townspeople. It is old and splintered, and every year the townspeople talk about replacing the box, but no one wants to break tradition.

The examples above tell us what the story is about. They present facts, but they are not arguments.

Analysis

In your courses, you’ll be asked do *higher-level thinking*. Summary, which gives a brief overview of the main points, is a lower level of thinking.

Using **analysis** and **evaluation** are higher levels of thinking. Analysis is when you break down something (in this case, breaking down the story) into parts in order to see how they relate.

Evaluation is to make a judgment about something based on evidence. Analysis and evaluation go above and beyond summary to explain, examine, and tell us what you think or what you believe about the text or topic. They give *arguments*. Take, for example, the same above summaries about “The Lottery,” but revised to show analytical thinking:

Example 1

“The Lottery,” a fiction story by Shirley Jackson, was written to portray the point that tradition often overtakes reason, and humans sometimes stick to traditions that are outdated or irrelevant simply because they don’t want to make changes.

Example 2

The black box in “The Lottery” is symbolic of death and of tradition. It is the color black, which is the color to represent death, it is old and splintery, and it holds the names of the townspeople, one of whom will be chosen to die. In addition, the text says, “Mr. Summers spoke frequently to the villagers about making a new box, but no one liked to upset even as much tradition as was represented by the black box” (Jackson, par. 5). The black box is symbolic not just about death, but it also represents tradition and how some people want to change it but can’t overpower the majority who insist tradition remain.

The above examples don’t just give facts; they make arguments about the text. The second example breaks down the symbol of the black box and makes arguments about what it represents.

Using Analysis for Arguments and Support

Each body paragraph of an essay should include analysis. When you’re revising your essay, look at each individual body paragraph and ask yourself: Am I simply re-telling the story/text and giving facts, or am I making an **argument** about the story?

In addition to having analysis in each body paragraph, you should also include support. You can tell me that “The Lottery” is an argument for breaking traditions, but I need to “see” that—you have to prove it to me. This is where using the text and outside sources as quotes, paraphrases, and summaries will come in.

Exercise 1

Find a passage of something you have read for a college course—an article, a story, textbook pages, etc. Then do the following:

1. Read the passage. Then without looking at it, write a summary of it.
2. Now, make an argument in the form of analysis or evaluation of the passage.

Additional Resources

- <http://www.csun.edu/~hbeng112/098/howtowriteshortstoryanalysis.pdf>
- A professor’s explanation and examples of an analysis essay.
- <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/697/1/>
- OWL’s basic information on what is a literary analysis, with a presentation.

- <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/618/01/>
- OWL's information on writing a thesis for a literary analysis.
- <http://www.irsc.edu/uploadedFiles/Students/AcademicSupportCenter/WritingLab/L1-Analyzing-a-Short-Story.pdf>
- A college handout that breaks down writing an analysis essay in an easy format.
- <http://www.csun.edu/~hbeng112/098/howtowriteshortstoryanalysis.pdf>
- This is a professor's assignment and helps break the analysis down.
- <http://www.gmc.edu/students/arc/documents/Literary%20analysis.pdf>
- A college document with great advice about how to write an analysis (and specific examples of such).

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Chapter 14

Evaluating Sources

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Evaluating Sources

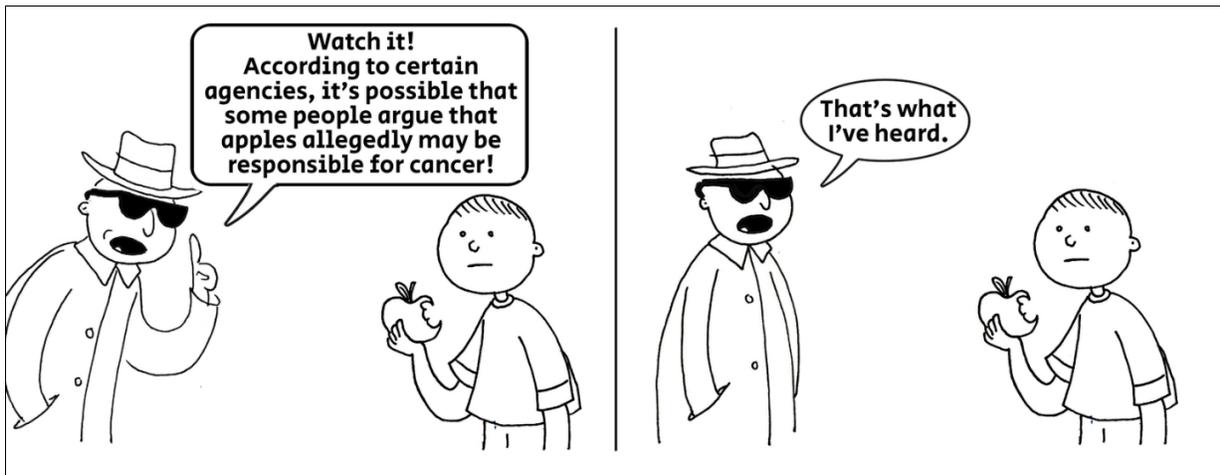


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As mentioned previously, the quality of your sources is an important factor in establishing your credibility with your audience. When you evaluate a source, you need to consider the seven core points shown below:



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1. Credible

A **credible** source is one that has solid backing by a reputable person or organization with the authority and expertise to present the information. The credibility of a source can be determined in many ways. Always think and read critically so you aren't fooled.

- When you haven't heard of an author, you can often judge whether an author is credible by reading his or her biography. If no biography is available, you can research the author yourself.
- Check for spelling and grammatical errors.
- Look for logical fallacies and author bias. Does the author make reasonable claims, support them with reliable evidence, and appear to treat any opposing voices with respect?
- Judge the credibility of an online source by looking at the site's domain name. A .gov site, for example, is a site published by the government, which we can assume is credible. A .com site generally indicates a commercial or for profit site. A .edu site might be credible, but many institutions give students webspace, as well, so don't assume that an .edu site is created by a university or a professor.

Domain Names and Website Types

Domain	Website Type
.edu	Educational
.com	Commercial, for-profit, business
.gov	Government
.mil	Military
.net	Network
.org	Not-for-profit organization

2. Relevant

Is the source relevant to your topic? A source is **relevant** if it can contribute to your paper in a meaningful way, which might include any of the following:

- Supplies support for core argument(s)
- Adds a sense of authority to your argument(s)
- Contributes background information
- Provides other viewpoints
- Offers definitions and explanations that your audience will need for clarification

For example, if I were to write an essay about creating a community garden on a college campus, a source relating the history of community gardens might be relevant, but one discussing the creation of a campus garden might be even more relevant to my topic.

3. Current/Timely

When determining if a source is **current** enough to use, a general rule of thumb is that a source must be no more than ten years old. In some situations, very few sources exist that were published within the last ten years, so older sources can be used as long as you explain why the use of the older sources is acceptable and meaningful. Or perhaps you may be using older sources to establish a historical record of thoughts and statements on your issue in question. Check the date the source was published. If the topic is very current, older sources may not add useful information. If the topic is historical, older sources may help put the issue in perspective. For example, a 1997 report on elderly drivers may or may not be helpful in an argument about elderly drivers 23 years later in 2020.

4. Accurate

Before you use a source, you need to satisfy yourself that the information is **accurate**. In print sources, you can use the author (if known) and the publisher to help you decide. If you think the author and publisher are legitimate sources, then you are probably safe in assuming that their work is accurate. In the case of online information, in addition to considering the author and publisher, you can look at how long ago the site was updated, if evidence is provided to back up statements, and if the information appears to be thorough. For either print or online sources, you can check accuracy by finding other sources that support the facts in question.

5. Reasonable

You can deem a source to be **reasonable** if it makes overall sense as you read through it. In other words, use your personal judgment to determine if you think the information the source provides sounds plausible.

6. Reliable

Reliable sources do not show bias or conflict of interest. They do present verifiable information. Sources that do not give citations or references are not reliable because the information given cannot be verified. In written sources, documentation is usually provided within the text and in a references page, as well. Internet sources may have documentation incorporated, or they may simply include hyperlinks to the source itself. If you are unsure about the reliability of a source, check to see if it includes a list of references, and then track down a sampling of those references. Also, check the publisher. Reliable publishers rarely involve themselves with unreliable information.

7. Objective

A source is **objective** if it provides both sides of an argument or more than one viewpoint. Although you can use sources that do not provide more than one viewpoint, you need to balance them with sources that provide other viewpoints. In addition: *Diverse*. Does the author utilize sources that all come from the same website, for example, or sources all written by the same author, or does the author's work contain references from a wide variety of perspectives?

Exercise 1

1. Choose a research topic of interest to you. Find one source that is both related to the overall topic and relevant to your specific topic. Describe the relevant role the source could make (support, authority, background, viewpoints, or knowledge). Find a second source that is related to the overall topic but not as relevant to your specific topic.

2. Find a source that you think is not acceptable due to not being accurate, reasonable, reliable, or objective. Share the source with your classmates and explain why you have deemed the source as unacceptable.
3. Choose a research topic of interest to you. Find two sources with information that relate to your topic—one that is credible and one that is not credible. Explain what makes one credible and the other not credible.

Practice Evaluating a Text Source

Exercise 2

1. Use the following questions to evaluate a text source:

- Who is the author?
- What type—or genre—of source is it?
- What kind of audience does the author anticipate?
- What is the author's primary purpose?
- What are the author's sources of information?

2. Decide on the overall credibility of the source:

Excellent Good Fair Poor

3. Provide a Reason for your Evaluation:

- Credible
 - trustworthiness of the source, author's credentials
 - publisher or sponsoring organization reputable
 - author a specialist in field
- Relevant
 - information relevant to research topic
- Current
 - if currency of information relevant to topic: up-to-date publication with recent copyright date
 - updates provided if new information should be considered to increase knowledge base
- Accurate
 - claims supported
 - facts and statistics backed by verifiable research or studies
 - presence of bibliography indicating what research was done
- Reasonable
- Reliable
 - no obvious conflicts of interest
 - fallacies absent; lack of bias
- Objective

- information presented in fair, balanced, objective
 - both sides of issue presented or clearly stated point of view
- Diverse

Practice Evaluating an Online Source

Exercise 3

1. Use the following questions to evaluate an online source:

- Who is the author?
- What type—or genre—of source is it?
- What kind of audience does the author anticipate?
- What is the author's primary purpose?
- What are the author's sources of information?

2. Decide on the overall credibility of the source:

Excellent Good Fair Poor

3. Provide a Reason for your Evaluation:

- Credible
 - author clearly identified
 - author's credentials listed
 - affiliation of the author with a reputable organization
 - if organization is involved, there is a way provided to contact organization
 - possible to verify credibility of author and/or organization
 - site does not require passwords or memberships
 - lack of typos or other signs of sloppiness
 - presence of editor or someone who verifies the information
- Relevant
 - information relevant to research topic
- Current
 - clear when information was published and last updated
 - version studied is most current
 - current links to other Web pages
 - site maintained and updated frequently
- Accurate
 - information mirrors or matches other information sources, including print
 - if page contains advertising, can clearly distinguish between ads and content
 - claims supported
 - hyperlinks to additional information included
 - presence of bibliography indicating what research was done
- Reasonable
 - information seems reasonable and/or verifiable

- content presented in organized, functional way
- Reliable
 - fallacies absent; lack of bias
 - no obvious conflicts of interest
 - easy way to search the site or help feature
- Objective
 - both sides of issue presented or clearly stated point of view
 - facts and statistics backed by verifiable research or studies
- Diverse

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Chapter 15

How and Why to Cite

Katelyn Burton



Figure 7.1 Citation Needed

One of the most important skills you can develop as a student is the ability to use outside sources correctly and smoothly. Academic knowledge builds on the knowledge of others. When we cite others through our quotations and paraphrases, we start with ideas established by others and build upon them to develop our own ideas.

1. What Is a Quotation?

A quotation is one way you may make use of a source to support and illustrate points in your essay. A quotation is made up of exact words from the source, and you must be careful to let your reader know that these words were not originally yours. To indicate your reliance on exact words from a source, either place the borrowed words between quotation marks or if the quotation is four lines or more, use indentation to create a block quotation.

Once you have determined that you want to use a quotation, the following strategies will help you smoothly fit quotations into your writing. We will discuss these strategies in more detail later in this chapter.

- Signal phrases help you integrate quoted material into your essay.
- Quotations must be made to work within the grammar of your sentences, whether you are quoting phrases or complete sentences.
- Quotations must be properly punctuated.
- Quotations must contain a citation.

2. When Should I Quote?

Quote when the exact wording is necessary to make your point. For example, if you were analyzing the style choices in Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, you would quote because it would be important to illustrate the unforgettable language or to use exact wording in a discussion of word choice and sentence structure. You would also quote if the exact wording captures information, tone, or emotion that would be lost if the source were reworded. Use quotations to assist with conciseness if it would take you longer to relate the information if you were to put it into your own words. Finally, if you cannot reword the information yourself and retain its meaning, you should quote it.

Source: It has begun. It is awful—continuous and earthshaking.

Quoting to preserve emotion: One nurse described an exchange between the two sides as "awful—continuous and earthshaking" (Burton 120).

3. How Long Should a Quotation Be?

Quote only as many words as necessary to capture the information, tone, or expression from the original work for the new context that you are providing. Lengthy quotations actually can backfire on a writer because key words from the source may be hidden among less important words. In addition, your own words will be crowded out. Never quote a paragraph when a sentence will do; never quote a sentence when a phrase will do; never quote a phrase when a word will do.

Source: It has begun. It is awful—continuous and earthshaking.

Quoting everything: One nurse described an artillery exchange between the two sides. She wrote, "It has begun. It is awful—continuous and earthshaking" (Burton 120).

Quoting key words: One nurse described an artillery exchange between the two sides as "awful—continuous and earthshaking" (Burton 120).

4. What Is a Paraphrase?

A **paraphrase** preserves information from a source but does not preserve its exact wording. A paraphrase uses vocabulary and sentence structure that is largely different from the language in the original. A paraphrase may preserve specialized vocabulary shared by everyone in a field or discipline; otherwise, the writer paraphrasing a source starts fresh, creating new sentences that repurpose the information in the source so that the information plays a supportive role in its new location.

5. When Should I Paraphrase?

Paraphrase when information from a source can help you explain or illustrate a point you are making in your own essay, but when the exact wording of the source is not crucial.

Source: The war against piracy cannot be won without mapping and dividing the tasks at hand. I divide this map into two parts: that which anyone can do now, and that which requires the help of lawmakers.

Paraphrase: Researchers argue that legislators will need to address the problem, but that other people can get involved as well (Lessig 563).

If you were analyzing Lessig's style, you might want to quote his map metaphor; however, if you were focusing on his opinions about the need to reform copyright law, a paraphrase would be appropriate.

6. What Is Effective Paraphrasing?

Effective paraphrasing repurposes the information from a source so that the information plays a supportive role in its new location. This repurposing requires a writer to rely on her own sentence structure and vocabulary. She creates her own sentences and chooses her own words so the source's information will fit into the context of her own ideas and contribute to the development of her thesis.

Source: Citizens of this generation witnessed the first concerted attempt to disseminate knowledge about disease prevention and health promotion, downplaying or omitting altogether information about disease treatment.

Effective Paraphrase: Murphy pointed out that in the first half of the nineteenth century, people worked hard to spread information about how to prevent disease but did not emphasize how to treat diseases (415).

7. When Does Paraphrasing Become Plagiarism?

A paraphrase should use vocabulary and sentence structure different from the source's vocabulary and sentence structure. Potential plagiarism occurs when a writer goes through a sentence from a source and inserts synonyms without rewriting the sentence as a whole.

Source: Citizens of this generation witnessed the first concerted attempt to disseminate knowledge about disease prevention and health promotion, downplaying or omitting altogether information about disease treatment.

Potential plagiarism: People of this period observed the first organized effort to share information about preventing disease and promoting health, deemphasizing or skipping completely information about treating diseases (Murphy 141).

The sentence structure of the bad paraphrase is identical to the sentence structure of the source, matching it almost word for word. The writer has provided an in-text citation pointing to Murphy as the source of the information, but she is, in fact, plagiarizing because she hasn't written her own sentence.

8. How Do I Use Signal Phrases to Introduce Quotations and Paraphrases?

Use signal phrases that mention your source to help your reader distinguish between the source and your own ideas. Do not drop quotes into your paper with no setup or explanation. This is your paper and your arguments must be supported; this includes showing how the quote or paraphrase connects to and proves your ideas. A signal verb introduces the quote that is coming and indicates your stance towards the material.

Figure 7.2 Some Sample Signal Verbs

acknowledge	emphasize
admit	illustrate
agree	note
argue	observe
assert	point out
claim	report
comment	state
compare	suggest
complain	summarize
describe	write

Use different verbs of expression to avoid being monotonous but also because some verbs are better for setting up the point you are making. For example, to stress weakness in a source's argument, you might choose to write that your source *admits* or *concedes* a point.

Paraphrase with signal phrase:

As the author points out, quotations are great, but sometimes paraphrases are better (DeVries 3).

Quotation with signal phrase:

In her diary, the nurse lamented that “one of the most stabbing things in this war is seeing the lines of empty motor ambulances going up to bring down the wrecks who at this moment are sound and fit” (Burton 413).

Some signal phrases do not make use of verbs but rely on signal phrases like *according to* or *in the opinion of* or *in the words of*.

9. How Do I Make a Quotation Work with the Grammar of My Own Sentence?

Each quotation should be an element inside one of your own sentences and should not stand alone.

Example of an incorrect placement of quotation:

The author wrote about conditions for nurses during World War I. “One of the most stabbing things in this war is seeing the lines of empty motor ambulances going up to bring down the wrecks who at this moment are sound and fit” (Burton 441).

Notice that the quotation stands alone. It is not an element within one of your own sentences. Some beginning writers might try to correct the problem by changing the period after “World War I” to a comma. However, that simply tacks one sentence to the end of another and creates a punctuation error. Instead, each quotation must work within the grammar of one of your sentences.

One way to make a quotation work with sentence grammar is to place it after a verb of expression.

The author states, “One of the most stabbing things in this war is seeing the lines of empty motor ambulances going up to bring down the wrecks who at this moment are sound and fit” (Burton 498).

10. How Do I Make a Quotation Work with the Grammar of My Own Sentence If I Am Not Quoting a Complete Sentence?

A quoted phrase can play any number of roles in the grammar of a sentence: verb, subject or object, adjective or adverb. Look at the example below and pretend that there are no quotation marks. Would the sentence still be grammatical? Yes. That shows that the quoted material works with the grammar of the sentence.

The nurse makes the ambulances sound like tow trucks going to retrieve demolished vehicles when she writes that it was horrible to watch “empty motor ambulances going up to bring down the wrecks” of men (Burton 72).

To integrate a quotation into a sentence, omitting words from the source is acceptable if you follow two rules: use ellipses (...) to signal the omission and avoid distorting the source's meaning. It is also acceptable to adjust capitalization and grammar provided that you follow two rules: use brackets [] to signal the change and, again, avoid distorting the source's meaning.

Lessig argues against the position that “[f]ile sharing threatens... the ability of creators to earn a fair return from their creativity” (Lessig 203).

When he wrote his book, nearly everyone in the music industry felt that “[f]ile sharing threaten[ed]...the ability of creators to earn a fair return from their creativity” (Lessig 203).

11. What Punctuation Should I Use with Quotations?

Place quotation marks at the start and the end of direct quotations unless the quotation is long enough to justify the use of the block quotation format (four lines or more).

The in-text, or parenthetical, citation shows your reader where your quotation or paraphrase ends. In-text citations are inserted after the final quotation marks. An in-text citation is not found in the words that you are quoting; it is something you create to identify the source for your readers.

If the quotation immediately follows a verb capturing the act of expression, place a comma after the verb:

As the author wrote, “A free culture has been our past, but it will only be our future if we change the path we are on right now” (Lessig 287).

Under limited circumstances, a colon (:) can be used to introduce a quotation. The quotation must re-identify or restate a phrase or idea that immediately precedes the colon.

Lessig reached a radical conclusion about copyrighted material: “It should become free if it is not worth \$1 to you” (251).

12. What Is Plagiarism?

Plagiarism is using someone else's work without giving him or her credit. “Work” includes text, ideas, images, videos, and audio. In the academic world, you must follow these rules:

When you use the exact words, you must use quotation marks and provide a citation.

When you put the information into your own words, you must provide a citation.

When you use an image, audio, or video created by someone else, you must provide a citation.

Plagiarism could happen with a sentence, a paragraph, or even just a word! For example, Stephen Colbert, of the television show *The Colbert Report*, made up the word “truthiness,” meaning something that sounds like it should be true. If you say in a paper something has a ring of “truthiness,” you should cite Colbert. If someone else’s words catch your interest, you should cite them.

Figure 7.3 Colbert in May 2009



Key Takeaway

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense. Penalties can range from failing the assignment to failing the course to being expelled. See the VWCC [Student Policies](https://tinyurl.com/ycoznkku) (<https://tinyurl.com/ycoznkku>) webpage for more information about academic misconduct and penalties.

Writing at Work



Image 7.4 Jonah Lehrer

Plagiarism isn't just a problem in the academic world. There are many examples of people who plagiarized at work and faced severe consequences. [Jonah Lehrer](https://tinyurl.com/yb2ah7me) (<https://tinyurl.com/yb2ah7me>), an author and staff writer for *The New Yorker*, fabricated quotes and copied previous work for his book *Imagine*. Once his plagiarism was revealed, his book was removed from bookstores and he was forced to resign from his job.

13. Why Should I Cite?

Whenever you use sources, it is important that you document them completely and accurately. You make your work more useful to your reader through complete and careful documentation, so you should think of documentation as essential rather than as an “add on” tacked on at the last minute.

When asked why you should cite your sources, many students reply, “So you don't get accused of plagiarizing.” It is true that you must provide citations crediting others' work so as to avoid plagiarism, but scholars use citations for many other (and more important!) reasons:

To make your arguments more credible. You want to use the very best evidence to support your claims. For example, if you are citing a statistic about a disease, you should be sure to use a credible, reputable source like the World Health Organization or Centers for Disease Control (CDC). When you tell your reader, the statistic comes from such a source, she will know to trust it— and thereby trust your argument more.

To show you've done your homework. You want to make it clear to your audience that you've researched your subject, tried hard to inform yourself, and know what you are talking about. As you dive deeper into your research, you will probably find certain authors are experts on the topic and are mentioned in most of the articles and books. You should read these experts' works and incorporate them into your paper.

To build a foundation for your paper. Great breakthroughs in scholarship are accomplished by building on the earlier, groundbreaking work of others. For example, Isaac Newton's law of universal gravitation would not have been possible without Johannes Kepler's law of planetary motion. What articles, books, and texts, inspired you to create your argument? You are not the first person to ever consider this issue. You want to provide references to the works which led to your thesis.

To allow your readers to find the sources for themselves. Someone interested in your topic may be inspired to read some of the sources you used to write your paper. The citation within the paper tells readers what part of your argument is addressed by a particular source, and the full citation in the bibliography provides the information needed to track down that original research.

Key Takeaway

Citing sources doesn't just save you from plagiarizing, it also adds credibility to your arguments, helps you build a strong foundation for your work, and helps your readers locate more information about your topic.

14. How Can I Avoid Plagiarism?

Don't procrastinate. Students who rush make careless mistakes, such as forgetting to include a particular citation or not having all the information needed for documentation. Students under pressure may also make poor choices, such as not documenting sources and hoping the professor won't notice. Your professor will notice.

Take careful notes. You need to be very clear in your notes whether you are writing down word-for-word what you found somewhere else, or if you are jotting down your own idea. You should take down all the information you will need to create your citations.

Cite your sources. Whenever you quote, paraphrase, summarize, or share an unusual fact, tell your reader where the information came from.

Document at the same time you draft. As you begin drafting, prepare a correctly formatted Works Cited page that captures the information also needed for in-text citations. Insert citations into your paper as you are writing it. If you cite-as-you-go, you won't consume time looking up information all over again at the end, and you make it less likely that you will misidentify or omit necessary documentation.

Get comfortable with the required citation style. The most commonly used citation styles are APA, MLA, and Chicago/Turabian. While they share many similarities, they also have differing requirements about what and when to cite. In English, we use MLA style. See section number 16 for more information about MLA citations.

Figure 7.5 Citations



Ask your professor. If you're not sure about citing something, check with your instructor. Learning when to cite, how to lead-in to sources, and how to integrate them into your sentence structures and ideas takes place over time and with feedback.

Key Takeaway

Don't put off creating your citations until the last minute. Cite as you go and don't be afraid to ask for help if you need it along the way.

15. What Is Common Knowledge?

Common knowledge is information that is accepted and known so widely you do not need to cite it:

- **Common sayings or clichés.** Examples: Curiosity killed the cat. Ignorance is bliss.
- **Facts that can be easily verified.** As you are conducting your research on a topic, you will see the same facts repeated over and over. Example: You are writing a paper on presidential elections, and you want to mention that Ronald Reagan was elected in 1980. Although you might not have known this fact before your research, you have seen it multiple times and no one ever argues about it.
- **Facts that you can safely assume your readers know.** Examples: Richmond is the capital of Virginia. The North won the U.S. Civil War. Fish breathe using gills.

Not all facts are common knowledge. You will still need to cite:

- **Facts that surprise you or your reader.** Example: Michelangelo was shorter than average (Hughes and Elam 4).
- **Facts that include statistics or other numbers.** Example: As of June 2009, forty-two states had laws that explicitly ban gay marriage, and six states have legalized it (U.S. Department of Labor).
- **If you use the exact words of another writer, even if the content could be considered common knowledge.** Example: Lincoln's first campaign dates to "1832, when he ran as a Whig for the Illinois state legislature from the town of New Salem and lost" (Lincoln 451).

Tip

Common knowledge can be course specific. For example, the number of bones in the leg could be considered common knowledge in an athletic training course. However, if

you are using that fact in an English paper, you cannot assume your professor would have that knowledge, and you would need to cite it.

Key Takeaway

Deciding if something is common knowledge is tricky and can vary depending on your course and your topic. When in doubt, ask your professor for advice.

16. What Is MLA?

Different fields prefer different methods of documenting the use of sources. In English, the citation style is called MLA, from the initials of the Modern Language Association. When it comes to documentation, learn to notice and apply the particular style that you are asked to use. Brown Library has [online citation guides](http://infoguides.virginiawestern.edu/citations) (<http://infoguides.virginiawestern.edu/citations>) for several styles.

Writing at Work

Citations aren't just for research papers and schoolwork. Any time you use outside sources, including in a speech or PowerPoint presentation, you should cite your sources. When you give credit to others, your work is strengthened!

17. How Do I Format References?

References record bibliographic information about sources that have been cited in the text. The necessary information is author, title, and details about publication (when the source was published and who published it). The order of the information and the punctuation, abbreviation, and spacing conventions may differ depending on the documentation style, but the purpose of the references will be the same: to allow a reader to easily track down your sources.

Basic MLA style reference for a book:

Author(s). *Title of the Book.* **Publisher, Date.**

Example:

Burton, Katelyn. *The Best Librarian in the World.* **Oxford Press, 2016.**

Basic MLA style reference for a journal article:

Author(s). "Title of the Article." *Title of the Journal*, **Volume number, Issue number.** **Date, including month or season if you have it, Page numbers.** *Database Title, URL/Link to the article.*

Example:

Burton, Katelyn. “**Librarians Are Amazing.**” *Library Journal*, vol. 22, no. 3. Spring 2016, pp. 7-28. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/61245>.

Basic MLA style reference for a webpage:

Author(s). “**Title of the Webpage.**” *Title of the Website*, Date, including day and month if you have it, URL/Link to the webpage.

Example:

Burton, Katelyn. “**Tips for Citing Sources.**” *Brown Library Website*, 14 June 2016, <http://http://www.viriniawestern.edu/library/index.php>.

18. What Should I Do If My Source Differs from the Basic Pattern for a Reference?

The basic pattern is easy to recognize, but it is impossible to memorize all the variations for different sources. Some sources are available online; some sources are audiovisual instead of print; some sources have translators and editors. These and other details find their way into references. Learn to consult resources that illustrate some of the variations, and then ask yourself which examples seem closest to the source you are trying to document. Creating helpful references for your readers requires attention to both the basic pattern and to details, as well as problem-solving skills and creativity.

Tip

Brown Library has some MLA examples on our [MLA InfoGuide](https://tinyurl.com/y9fxlz7d) (<https://tinyurl.com/y9fxlz7d>). Virginia Commonwealth University maintains a [VCU Writes! website](https://rampages.us/vcuwrites/) (<https://rampages.us/vcuwrites/>) with many more examples of correct MLA citations for different materials. Librarians and Writing Center Consultants at Brown Library can also help you create MLA citations for sources that don't follow the basic pattern.

19. How Do I Format In-Text Citations?

In-text citations point readers toward a source that a writer is using in her own article or essay. They are placed inside your paragraphs, a position that explains why they are called “in-text.” In-text citations are also called parenthetical citations because information identifying the source will be placed inside parentheses (). A writer using MLA style will provide the following in-text information for her readers:

Author's last name or the name of the organization that created the source, unless it is previously mentioned in the text.

Page number if available

Example: In the first half of the nineteenth, century people worked hard to spread information about how to prevent disease but did not emphasize how to treat diseases (Murphy 141).

Key Takeaways

Different fields require different citation styles. In English, we use rules developed by the MLA.

Don't panic when it comes to learning MLA. Just find an example that closely matches your source and use the pattern to help you decide what to do.

Librarians and [Writing Center](http://infoguides.viriniawestern.edu/writingcenter) (<http://infoguides.viriniawestern.edu/writingcenter>) Consultants can help you figure out how to cite a source that doesn't match the common examples.

Additional Links

[Annotated MLA Sample Paper](https://tinyurl.com/qzv2afu), (<https://tinyurl.com/qzv2afu>) Purdue Online Writing Lab

[Citation InfoGuide](http://infoguides.viriniawestern.edu/citations), (<http://infoguides.viriniawestern.edu/citations>) Brown Library

[MLA Examples](https://tinyurl.com/ycanqqzx), (<https://tinyurl.com/ycanqqzx>) VCU Writes!, Virginia Commonwealth University

[Exploring Academic Integrity](https://tinyurl.com/ya3ckaxs) (<https://tinyurl.com/ya3ckaxs>), Indiana University Libraries

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Chapter 16

Formatting APA Style

Dr. Karen Palmer

APA stands for the American Psychological Association. APA formatting is used by disciplines in the Social Sciences, like psychology. It is also used by nursing students.

Some sample papers: (<https://apastyle.apa.org/learn/faqs/view-sample-papers>)

Order of Pages

APA requires the following set order of pages with each listed page on the list starting on a new page. If your paper does not require one or more of the pages, skip over those pages, but maintain the order of the pages you do use.

- Title page
- Abstract
- Body
- Text
- References
- Footnotes (If used, these may be placed at bottom of individual pages or placed on a separate page following the citations.)
- Tables too large to place within the text body can be included in this position
- Figures too large to place within the text body can be included in this position
- Appendices

Title Page

A double-spaced title page should include the required information centered on the top half of the page. The title page information can vary based on your instructor's requests, but standard APA guidelines include either the title, your name, and your college name, course name, the instructor's name, and the due date.

The title should be centered about three to four lines down from the top of the page.

Here is an example:

1

An Innovative Approach to Eliminating Food Insecurity

Jane Doe

Yavapai College

ENG 102

Dr. Palmer

February 26, 2020

APA also provides students with a [Title Page Guide](#).

Page Numbers and Paper Identification



Page numbers should be placed at the top, right margin one-half inch down from the top of the page. In professional papers, a running head is required. APA does not require a running head for student papers, but some professors might ask you to include one as practice. Across from the page number, flush left, include the title of the paper in a running head. If the title of the paper is lengthy, use an abbreviated version in the running head.

Margins

Make margins one inch on both sides and top and bottom.

Headings and Subheadings

Use double spacing with no additional returns. Before you decide where to place your headings, you have to decide how many levels of headings you will have. Typically, you will have two or three levels, but you might have as many as five levels. Keep in mind that the title does not count as a heading level, you should use the levels consistently, and you must have a minimum of two headings at each level.

Example

<p>First level heading: Centered, Bold Title</p> <p>Text begins in a new paragraph.</p> <p>Second level heading: Flush Left, Bold</p> <p>Text begins in a new paragraph.</p> <p><i>Third level heading: Flush Left Bold Italic</i></p> <p>Text begins in a new paragraph.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Fourth level heading: Indented, Bold, Ends with a Period. Text continues on after the heading.</p> <p style="padding-left: 80px;"><i>Fifth level heading: Indented, Bold Italic. Ends with a Period.</i> Text continues on after the heading.</p>

Fonts

A variety of fonts can be used in APA style papers.

Sans serif options: 11-point Calibri, 11-point Arial, or 10-point Lucida Sans Unicode.

Serif options: 12-point Times New Roman, 11-point Georgia, or normal (10-point) Computer Modern.

Paragraph Indentations

Indent the first word of each paragraph by using the tab key.

Line Spacing

Double-space all text, including titles, subheadings, tables, captions, and citation lists.

Spacing After Punctuation

Space once after punctuation within a sentence, such as commas, colon, and semicolons, and twice after end punctuation.

For additional help formatting your paper in APA Style, please click [HERE](#).

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Chapter 17

The Analytical Essay: Expressing Your Points of View

Focusing, Developing, and Synthesizing

Learning Objectives

1. Discuss how to focus and develop the essay.
2. Reveal how to convey an effective organization through transitions.
3. Suggest strategies for producing effective opening and closing paragraphs.

After discussing general strategies for analysis and applying these strategies to specific examples in class, I inevitably encounter a student asking, “This has all been well and good, but when are we going to actually learn how to write?” The student’s confusion most likely emerges from how he was taught in the past. In most school assignments, writing does not require thinking so much as the stuffing of obvious considerations or memorized material into formulated structures, like a five-paragraph essay or a short answer exam. However, in less restrictive writing situations the specific way we articulate our analysis emerges from what we think of it, and thus our best writing comes through our most careful considerations. The good news, then, is that if you have been following the advice I’ve given throughout this book about coming up with your analysis, then you will have already finished most of the work on your essay. The bad news is that there is no easy formula for putting it all together. However, we still can examine general strategies that successful analytical writers tend to use, though the specific way you enact these strategies will depend on the ideas that you have already discovered.

Focusing Your Analysis

If you have taken the time to examine your subject thoroughly and read what others have written about it, then you might have so much to say that you will not be able to cover your perspective adequately without turning your essay into a book. In such a case you would have two options: briefly cover all the aspects of your subject or focus on a few key elements. If you take the first option, then your essay may seem too general or too disjointed. A good maxim to keep in mind is that it is better to say a lot about a little rather than a little about a lot; when writers try to cover too many ideas, they often end up reiterating the obvious as opposed to coming up with new insights. The second option leads to more intriguing perspectives because it focuses your gaze on the most relevant parts of your subject, allowing you to discern shades of meaning that others might have missed.

To achieve a stronger focus, you should first look again at your main perspective or working thesis to see if you can limit its scope. First consider whether you can

concentrate on an important aspect of your subject. For instance, if you were writing an essay for an Anthropology class on Ancient Egyptian rituals, look over your drafts to see which particular features keep coming up. You might limit your essay to how they buried their dead, or, better, how they buried their Pharaohs, or, even better, how the legend of the God Osiris influenced the burial of the Pharaohs. Next, see if you can delineate your perspective on the subject more clearly, clarifying your argument or the issue you wish to explore. This will help you move from a “working” thesis, such as “Rituals played an important function in Ancient Egyptian society,” to an “actual” thesis: “Because it provided hope for an afterlife, the legend of Osiris offered both the inspiration and methodology for the burial of the Pharaohs.”

Once you have focused the scope of your thesis, revise your essay to reflect it. This will require you to engage in what is usually the most painful part of the writing process—cutting. If something does not fit in with your perspective, it has to go, no matter how brilliantly considered or eloquently stated. In the course of writing this book, I’ve had to cut several sections simply because they no longer corresponded with the main perspective I wanted to convey. But do not throw away the parts you cut. You never know when you might find a use for them again. Just because a particular section does not fit well with the focus of one essay does not mean that you won’t be able to use it in another essay down the road.

Expanding

After cutting your essay down to the essential ideas, look it over again to make sure that you have explored each idea adequately. At this point it might help to recall the AXES acronym I introduced in the first chapter to ask yourself the following questions:

- Are there clear assertions throughout the essay that reveal your perspectives on the subject?
- Do you provide the specific examples that inspired these assertions?
- Do you explain how you derived your assertions from a careful reading of these examples?
- Do you explore the significance of these assertions as they relate to personal and broader concerns?

If any long sections seem lacking in any of these areas of AXES, you might explore them further by taking time out from your more formal writing to play with one of the heuristics recommended in various sections throughout this book (freewriting, metaphor extension, issue dialogue, the Pentad, brainstorming, and clustering). You can then incorporate the best ideas you discover into your essay to make each section seem more thoughtful and more thorough.

Now that we’ve looked at each of these areas of analysis more carefully, let’s go back to the main example from the first chapter, the passage from Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. At the end, I provide an example of a paragraph that includes each aspect of analysis, but while these aspects are all present, none of them are developed fully enough for

even a brief essay on the passage. Beginning with the examples, the paragraph makes brief reference to the “baseless fabric of the vision of cloud capped towers” and to the “great globe itself,” pointing out how these phrases refer to items associated with Shakespeare’s theater as well as the world outside of it. But we could also discuss other terms and phrases that appear in the quote. For instance, we could discuss the implications of the word “revels” in the first line. These days we probably wouldn’t say “revels” but instead “celebrations,” or, less formally, “partying,” but the word clearly refers back to the play within the play that ends abruptly. In this context, the implication is that above all, the purpose of plays should be for enjoyment, a sentiment reflected in the epilogue when Prospero speaks directly to the audience: “gentle breath of yours my sails/Must fill, or else my project fails,/Which was to please.”

As we further consider the implications, we might be reminded of past teachers who made reading Shakespeare feel less like a celebration and more like a task, as something to be respected but not enjoyed. We could then explain how the word “revels” serves as a reminder to enjoy his plays, and not because they are “good for us” like a nasty tasting vitamin pill, but because if we’re willing to take the effort to understand the language, the plays become deeply entertaining. Looking back over the passage and seeing how plays are equated to our lives outside the theater leads to an even more significant insight. We should try to see life as a celebration, as something to be enjoyed before we too disappear into “thin air.” In discussing the significance of this, we wouldn’t simply wrap it up in a cliché like “I intend to live only for today,” but explore more responsible ways we can balance fulfilling our obligations with enjoying the moments that make up our lives.

Now we can go back and expand the main assertion. Instead of simply writing, *In The Tempest, Shakespeare connects plays, lives and dreams by showing that while each contains an illusion of permanence, they’re all only temporary*, we might also add, *But this does not mean that we should waste the time we have on earth or in the theater lamenting that it will all soon be over. Instead we should celebrate, in a responsible manner, our remaining moments.* And because all of these insights came about from examining the implications of only one word, “revels,” the essay will continue to expand as we consider more details of the passage and consult related research. Eventually, however, we will need to stop expanding our analysis and consider how to present it more deliberately.

Introducing the Essay

When revising your essay, you do not have to write it in the exact order that it will be read, as any section you work on in a given moment may appear anywhere in your final draft. In fact, many times it’s best to write the first paragraph last because we may not know how to introduce the essay until we’ve discovered and articulated the main perspectives. However, eventually you will need to consider not only what your analysis consists of, but also the effect you want it to have. An essay that commands attention seems like a discussion between intelligent and aware people, in which ideas are not thrown out randomly but in a deliberate manner with each thought leading logically to the next.

For this reason, the opening paragraph should be the place where you invite your readers into this discussion, making them want to read what will follow without delineating the main content in a rigid manner. Again, imagine being at a party, but this time instead of meeting someone who bores you by reciting irrelevant details of the past, he tells you exactly what will follow in the near future: “Over the next ten minutes we will discuss three things: work, politics, and leisure activities. During the course of our discussion, we will raise relevant personal experiences, draw from a bevy of beliefs and morals, and reflect on the current state of international affairs.” Again, most likely you and everyone else this person approaches will find an excuse to move to the other side of the room as quickly as possible. Similarly, when writers begin their essays with a step-by-step announcement of what will follow, we don’t feel the sense of anticipation that we do when the perspective unfolds more organically. Successful analytical essay writers do not begin by blatantly spelling out the main points that they will cover, but rather create “leads,” openings that hook the reader into wanting to read further.

One way to capture the reader’s attention is to share a story or anecdote that directly relates to the main perspective. For instance, in the first chapter, I created a story about a hypothetical student named Jeff who was having difficulty writing an analytical paper on *The Tempest* in order to reveal a situation that not only was widely familiar but also allowed me to introduce the various components of analysis.

You can also capture your reader’s attention with a quote: *“Oh what fools these mortals be” has become one of my favorite Shakespeare quotes since I began working in a restaurant. I am always amazed by the litany of ridiculous questions and requests I have to entertain during each of my shifts.*

Or you might try a joke: *Once there was a small boy who lost the key to his house. Though he dropped it in the front yard, he chose to look for it near the sidewalk because they light was much better there. Like him, many people look for the easiest solutions to their problems even when they know the truth is far more complicated and obscure.*

Or perhaps you can startle the reader with an unexpected twist: *The best day of my life occurred last summer. First, I was fired from my job, next my girlfriend dumped me, and finally I was kicked out of my parent’s house. All this motivated me to find a better job, a better girlfriend, and a better place to live. History is full of days like this, ones that seem tragic yet turn out to have positive consequences in the long run.*

Finally, you might begin with an analogy: *Trying to write a perfect essay all at once is like attempting to ride a bike while juggling and singing opera. You are likely to crash unless you take on each task separately: invention, drafting, revising, and editing.*

These are just a few suggestions for grabbing the reader’s attention and many other possibilities exist (though try to avoid beginning with a dictionary definition unless you want to provide your own twist on it). Whichever way you decide to open your paper, make certain that you go on to relate your lead-in to the main perspective or thesis you have on your subject. For instance, you wouldn’t want to start an essay by telling a joke

that has nothing to do with the subject of your analysis, just to get an easy laugh. However, it would be fine if you were to write:

There's an old Sufi joke that points out that "the moon is more valuable than the sun because at night we need the light more." Of course the joke's humor arises from the fact that without the sun, it would be night all the time, and yet it does seem to be human nature to take advantage of that which is constant in our lives, the people and things that add warmth and light on a daily basis. In applying this to the television show, Mad Men, it's easy to see how Donald Draper, the main character, undervalues his wife Betty in order to chase after other women. Though these other women are as inconstant as the moon, disappearing and reappearing in new forms, they give him light during the dark times in his life when he needs it the most. His affairs, however, do not provide lasting satisfaction, but only a fleeting illusion of happiness, much like the advertisements he creates for a living.

Notice how this paragraph leads the reader from the hook to the main focus of the essay without spelling out what will follow in a rigid manner. The Sufi joke is not simply thrown out for a chuckle, but to set up the thesis that the main character of the show prefers illusions to reality in both his personal life and his work. As a result, this paragraph is likely to engage our attention and make us want to read further.

Organization of the Body Paragraphs

Once you've led your readers into your essay, you can keep their attention by making certain that your ideas continue to connect with each other by writing transitions between your paragraphs and the main sections within them. At the beginning of a paragraph, a transition functions as a better kind of assertion than a topic sentence because it not only reveals what the paragraph will be about but also shows how it connects to the one that came before it. Take this paragraph you are currently reading as an example. Had I begun by simply writing a topic sentence like "A second strategy for effective writing is to develop effective transitions," I would not only have ignored my own advice, but also would have missed an important point about how transitions, like opening paragraphs, function to lead readers through various aspects of our perspectives.

Before you can write effective transitions, you need to make certain that your paper is organized deliberately throughout. To insure this, you might try the oldest writing trick in the composition teacher's handbook, the outline. But wait until after you have already come up with most of your analysis. To begin a paper with an outline requires that you know the content before you have a chance to consider it. Writing, as I've argued throughout this book, is a process of discovery—so how can you possibly put an order to ideas that you have not yet articulated? After you have written several paragraphs, you should read them again and write down the main points you conveyed in each of them on a separate piece of paper. Then consider how these points connect with each other and determine the best order for articulating them, creating a reverse outline from the content that you've already developed. Using this outline as a guide, you can then

reorganize the paper and write transitions between the paragraphs to make certain that they connect and flow for the reader.

An excellent method for producing effective transitions is to underline the key words in one paragraph and the key words in the one that follows and then to write a sentence that contains all of these words. Try to show the relationship by adding linking words that reveal a causal connection (however, therefore, alternatively) as opposed to ones that simply announce a new idea (another, in addition to, also). For example, if I were to write about how I feel about having to pay taxes, the main idea of one paragraph could be: *Like everyone else, I hate to see so much of my paycheck disappear in taxes.* And the main idea of the paragraph that follows could be: *Without taxes we wouldn't have any public services.* My transition could be: *Despite the fact that I hate to pay taxes, I understand why they are necessary because without them, we wouldn't be able to have a police force, fire department, public schools and a host of other essential services.* If you cannot find a way to link one paragraph to the next, then you should go back to your reverse outline to consider a better place to put it. And if you cannot find any other place where it fits, then you may need to cut the paragraph from your paper (but remember to save it for potential use in a future essay).

This same advice works well for writing transitions not only between paragraphs but also within them. If you do not provide transitional clues as to how the sentences link together, the reader is just as likely to get lost:

I love my two pets. My cat, Clyde is very independent. My dog, Mac, barks if I leave him alone for very long. I can leave Clyde alone for four days. I'm only taking Clyde with me to college. I have to come home twice a day to feed Mac. Mac does a lot of tricks. Clyde loves to purr on my lap.

The reason that reading this can make us tired and confused is that we can only remember a few unrelated items in a given moment. By adding transitional phrases and words, we store the items in our memory as concepts, thus making it easier to relate the previous sentences to the ones that follow. Consider how much easier it is to read an analysis with transitions between sentences:

I have two pets that I love for very different reasons. For instance, I love when my cat, Clyde, sits on my lap and purrs, and I also love when my dog Mac performs many of the tricks I've taught him. But when I leave for college, I plan to take only Clyde with me. Unfortunately, I can only leave Mac at home for a few hours before he starts to bark; however, Clyde is very independent and can be left in my dorm for days without needing my attention.

This revision not only is much easier to read and recall but also gives a sense of coherence to what previously seemed liked scattered, random thoughts.

Ending the Essay

Once you've led your readers all the way through to the closing paragraph, try not to sink their enthusiasm by beginning it with the words "in conclusion." Not only is this phrase overused and cliché, but it also sends the wrong message. The phrase implies that you have wrapped up all the loose ends on the subject and neither you nor your readers should have any need to think about it further. Rather than close off the discussion, the last paragraph should encourage it to continue by stressing how your analysis opens up new avenues for thinking about your subject (as long as these thoughts emerge from your essay and are not completely unrelated to what you wrote about before). This is the place where you should stress the significance of your analysis, underscoring the most important insights you discovered and the implications for further thought and action.

However, you choose to stress the importance of your analysis in your final paragraph, you can do so without simply repeating what you wrote before. If you have effectively led your readers through your paper, they will remember your main points and will most likely find a final summary to be repetitive and annoying. A much stronger choice is to end with a statement or observation that captures the importance of what you have written without having to repeat each of your main points. For example, in his book, *City of Quartz*, Mike Davis ends his discussion of how Southern Californians do not care to preserve their past by calling attention to a junkyard full of zoo and amusement park icons:

Scattered amid the broken bumper cars and ferris wheel seats are nostalgic bits and pieces of Southern California's famous extinct amusement parks (in the pre-Disney days when admission was free or \$1); the Pike, Belmont Shores, Pacific Ocean Park, and so on. Suddenly rearing up from the back of a flatbed trailer are the fabled stone elephants and pouncing lions that once stood at the gates of Selig Zoo in Eastlake (Lincoln) Park, where they had enthralled generations of Eastlake kids. I tried to imagine how a native of Manhattan would feel, suddenly discovering the New York Public Library's stone lions discarded in a New Jersey wrecking yard. I suppose the Selig lions might be Southern California's summary, unsentimental judgment on the value of its lost childhood. The past generations are like so much debris to be swept away by the developers' bulldozers. Mike Davis, *City of Quartz* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 435.

Imagine, if instead of this paragraph, he had written: *In conclusion I have shown many instances in which Southern Californians try to erase their past. First, I showed how they do so by constructing new buildings, concentrating especially on the Fontana region. Second, I showed...* Can't you just feel the air leaving your sails?

In light of this advice, you have probably already discerned that certain parts of your essay will emphasize various aspects of analysis. The beginning of the paper will announce your main assertion or thesis and the transitions in subsequent paragraphs will present corollary assertions. The bulk of your paper will most likely center on your examples and explanations, and the end will focus more on the significance. However,

try to make certain that all of these elements are present to some degree throughout your essay. A long section without any significance may cause your readers to feel bored, a section without assertions may cause them to feel confused, and a section without examples or explanations may cause them to feel skeptical.

Exercise

Write a lead paragraph for a potential essay on a subject that you've already developed a strong perspective on. Begin with one of the strategies I mention in this section—an anecdote, a quote, an analogy, a story, an unexpected twist—and connect your lead to your thesis or question that you wish to explore. Consider, too, how you might end this essay. Think further about what you find to be the most significant aspect of your subject and what key images or thoughts you want to leave lingering in the minds of your readers.

Key Takeaways

- The writing process begins when we first start to consider a subject because we form, develop, and articulate our thoughts recursively.
- It is important to focus your analysis on the essential features of the subject and to make sure that each of these features receives adequate development.
- Effective essays subtly lead us into the key perspective, provide transitions between the main sections, and leave us with something important to consider.

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Chapter 18

Developing Assertions: From a Close Reading of Examples

A Close Reading of the Details

Learning Objectives

1. Understand how to provide a close reading of different types of details.
2. Explain how to provide a close reading of creative works, non-fiction, and personal experiences.
3. Discuss how to extend the implications of loaded words, metaphorical language, images, and sounds.

Everywhere we turn, we hear people engaging in analysis. Sitting in a coffee shop, we overhear fellow caffeine addicts discussing diet fads, politics, and the latest blockbusters. Watching television, we listen to sports commentators discuss which team has the best chance to win the Super Bowl, comedians rip on the latest cultural trends, and talk show hosts lecture their guests on the moral repugnance of their actions. Still most of the time I find myself dissatisfied with the level of these conversations. Too many people throw out blanket judgments they can't defend while too many others mindlessly nod in agreement. If more people actually took the time to carefully examine their subjects, they might discover and articulate more satisfying and worthwhile perspectives. This chapter will help you to consider the components that make up your subject in a way that avoids the traps of a closed mind—trying to make everything fit into a ready-made interpretation—or an empty mind—giving your subject a fast read or a cursory glance.

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

Learning to prioritize the details on which to focus is just as important as learning how to pay close attention to a subject. Each detail does not warrant the same amount of

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

Events, Plots, and Actions

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

The subject that focuses the most closely on this type of detail is, of course, history. Certain events are so central to a particular era that they are studied again and again, often with different perspectives and conclusions. Take, for example, the big event of 1492. Up until I got to college, I was told that this was the year Columbus discovered America. Later I discovered that many historians disagree with this assessment of what happened. First of all, you can’t discover a place that has already been found, yet the fact that people were living in America already was always brushed aside in my high school history texts. Given that many Native Americans had more sophisticated forms of government and agriculture than their European counterparts makes this oversight seem particularly troubling. And even if we were to revise the assessment to state “Columbus was the first European to discover America,” that too would be wrong. New discoveries of Viking settlements in southern Canada and the northern United States suggest that they beat Columbus by several decades. Understanding the event in light of these facts may cause us to revise the assessment of the event to “Columbus introduced the Americas to the people of Europe,” or, less charitably, “Columbus opened up the Americas to modern European imperialism.”

This is not to say that we should now consider Columbus a nefarious figure (at least from the Native American’s point of view). He could not have anticipated the centuries of conquest that would follow his arrival. Often in history, people are caught up in forces they don’t completely understand. The same holds true when you examine the actions of fictional characters. For instance, sometimes characters create the condition for their own downfall, which inspires us to learn from their mistakes. Other times, characters may act nobly yet come to bad ends anyway. Such plots may encourage us to try to

change the system that rewards bad behavior and punishes good, or they might leave us feeling frustrated with the seemingly random nature of our existence.

In the first ten minutes of Mike Judge's film *Office Space*, all the actions solidify into a very definitive attitude about the problems with the modern workplace. (Mike Judge, dir., *Office Space* Twentieth Century Fox, 1999). Angry music plays as we see an above shot of a typical Southern California traffic jam. We now see it from the perspective of Peter Gibbons, one of the unfortunate drivers attempting to get through the jam. He moves a couple of feet, brakes; moves a couple of more feet, brakes. He tries to switch lanes, but whenever he does, the one he just left begins to move and the one into which he moved comes to a grinding halt. All this time, an elderly man with a walker, who was once behind him on an adjacent sidewalk, has caught up and passed him. Peter responds with a momentary flare of anger that ends with a sigh of resignation. After the camera switches to a few of his colleagues stuck in the same jam, we see Peter arrive at his place of work, "Initech." He sighs again with resignation as he gets the usual electrical shock from the brass doorknob that opens into a large room made up of a sea of office cubicles. Once again, the camera shot is from above, showing Peter lost among the crowd of workers.

Before he has a chance to get much work done, his boss comes by his cubicle to talk to him. He begins by asking Peter "how's it going?" in a tone of voice that makes it clear that he doesn't really care about the answer, and before Peter can respond the boss interrupts to chastise him for not using the correct cover sheet for the "TPS Report" he sent out the previous day. Two other bosses visit Peter repeating their predecessor's instruction and tone. During all of this, Peter continues to reveal the same look and sigh of resignation, until finally he begs two of his friends to take a coffee break out of fear that he might "lose it."

All of these actions inspire us to ask the question: Does it have to be this bad? I don't think so. A more critical analysis could provide solutions to both the social and personal concerns touched on in the film. It could lead us to create much better systems of public transportation that get us to work in a timely, less stressful manner. It could also lead bosses to discover better ways to encourage enthusiasm and dedication from their employees.

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

Loaded Terms and Stock Phrases

Though actions may speak louder than words, words are what usually inspire the actions to occur in the first place. In addition, we often base what we know of the world on what people tell us rather than on our direct experiences. Thus, unless we are able to discern how language may be manipulated, we stand a good chance of being manipulated ourselves. For instance, consider how politicians often ignore their opponent's actions and simply repeat loaded terms, words infused with negative associations like “bleeding heart liberal” or “heartless conservative,” to characterize an opponent as being against the public good. I came across a particularly blatant example of this when writing my dissertation on the Red Scare in America that followed World War II. The Red Scare was a period when the fear of the spread of communism abroad inspired a great deal of domestic suspicion and conformity. In a series of pamphlets released by the House Committee on Un-American Activities (often referred to as HUAC), the members attempted to feed this fear in the manner in which they explained the nature of communism to the American public. The pamphlets were set up in a question/answer format, similar to the FAQ sections of websites today. Several of the answers attempted to show communism as a warped view from its inception by going after the man whom we often credit with inventing it: “What was Marx’s idea of a Communist World?” HUAC’s answer: “That the world as we know it must be destroyed—religion, family, laws, rights, everything. Anybody opposing was to be destroyed too.” U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Un-American Activities, *100 Things You Should Know About Communism in the USA* (80th Congress, 2d Session), 1. The repetition of “destroyed” clearly inspires a feeling of dread, and presents an overly simplistic, and nearly cartoonish duality: melodramatic socialist villains twirling their mustaches while planning the destruction of their own families versus the warm-hearted capitalistic politicians in Washington who are only out to serve the public’s best interests.

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

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

exchange, Mr. Spencer asks Holden to repeat what Dr. Thurmer, the principal, said to him just before giving him the boot:

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

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

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

“Yes, sir. I know it is. I know it.” J.D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye* (Boston, MA: LB Books, 1951), 8.

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

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

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

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

Arguments and Policies

When analyzing a more articulated argument or policy, we’re often tempted to use a phrase either to wholeheartedly agree with a position or to dismiss it entirely. But in doing so, a critical examination often gets lost in a barrage of name-calling and hyperbole. To try to understand the other side of an argument, I like to write an issue dialogue, starting with the most extreme positions and moving toward more reasonable compromises. Consider, for instance, the debate that surrounds whether universities should continue to raise tuition in order to make up for government cutbacks to education:

- **For:** *Universities should raise tuition. Why should taxpayers cover the expense? You students want to have a first-rate education, but you don’t want to pay for it.*

You're just a bunch of lazy young people who feel entitled to every government handout you can get.

- **Against:** Not true. Education is an investment. What greedy old people don't realize is that when a student eventually receives a better job because of his education, he will pay more in taxes. This increased revenue will more than repay the government for what it spent on his education.
- **For:** *That's assuming that a student will get a better job because of his education; many people, like Bill Gates, have done pretty well without a degree. And even if you can prove that students will make more money, that doesn't mean that they will remain in the community that invested in their education.*
- **Against:** True, but most probably will, and anyway, the university invests a lot of its money in these surrounding communities. As for your second point, for every Bill Gates, there are thousands of college dropouts who are flipping burgers or living on the streets.
- **For:** *But why should someone who doesn't have children or live near a university town have to support an institution that doesn't give anything back to them? Would you want to have to spend your hard-earned money to support a senior center's golf course?*
- **Against:** Studies have shown that when governments do not spend money on education, they have to spend more on prisons so it's not as though cutting funding for education will benefit those taxpayers you describe. However, I agree that certain families should pay more for their children's education, as long as they can afford it.
- **For:** *And I will concede that governments should continue to provide access to education for those who can't afford it, but I think even children of poor families have an obligation to give back to the community that supported them when they finish their degrees.*

Though this could continue for several more pages, you can see that both sides are starting to move toward more reasonable characterizations of each other. Again, when writing an issue dialogue, it is tempting to ridicule those on the other side with stock phrases to make it easier to dismiss their views (especially when looking at perspectives from different cultures and eras). But the more we can reasonably state the opposing view's arguments, the more we can reasonably state our own, and we should apply the same amount of scrutiny to our own beliefs that we do to those who disagree with us.

Part of this scrutiny may involve raising questions about the author's period, culture, and biases (see the previous chapter, regarding analysis of sources). In addition, you should consider the strength of the arguments, evaluating how well the author supports the main assertions with sound evidence and reasoning while paying particular attention to whether they rely on any fallacies—errors in reasoning.

For instance, does the author make any hasty generalizations? Consider someone who attempts to argue that global warming doesn't exist on the basis that the weather has been quite cold for the last few days. Obviously, the person would make a stronger case for her argument by presenting more encompassing evidence.

Another common fallacy is the faulty syllogism (i.e. all cats die; Socrates is dead; therefore, Socrates was a cat). Just because two items under considerations have a certain quality in common, does not mean that these items are the same.

Perhaps the most common fallacy that I see students make is “guilt by association.” This may be due to the fact that politicians use it all the time. For instance, in the 2008 presidential election, many tried to associate Barack Obama with terrorists simply because his middle name (Hussein) was the same as the deposed leader of Iraq. John McCain’s significant personal wealth was seen as evidence that he would be insensitive to the needs of the poor, even though liberals like Franklin Roosevelt and John Kennedy were also very well off.

Also, be aware of the opposite fallacy—success by association. Go to any tennis shoe commercial on YouTube and you will see famous athletes performing incredible acts, as though the shoes, and not years of practice, are responsible for their success.

Metaphorical Language

Not all the details you analyze will suggest a literal action or point of view; many will be of a metaphorical, or symbolic, nature. Though there are many different types of tropes (words or phrases that point toward a figurative meaning)—such as metaphor, simile, and synecdoche. The basic function of each is to allow someone to literally “see what you mean” by comparing an abstract concept to something concrete. One reason the metaphor “love is a rose” is so well known is that the object and the concept match extremely well. A rose, like love, may manifest in many different forms and have several complex layers when examined closely. Roses show the cheerful side of love because they look nice, smell sweet, and inspire warm fuzzy feelings. However, they also show the dangers of love by having thorns and being difficult to care for. Like the different people you love, a rose requires just the right amount of attention and care—neither too much nor too little.

The need to extend metaphorical implications is especially apparent when analyzing a poem or a song. For instance, in her song “China,” Tori Amos explores the different metaphorical significance the central term has on a crumbling relationship: a faraway location that represents the distance couples often feel between each other, a place with a Great Wall that can refer to the figurative barriers we build to protect ourselves emotionally, and fancy plates that, on closer examination, have cracks (just like those who seem to have the perfect relationship and then suddenly announce that they are breaking up). Tori Amos, “China,” *Little Earthquakes* (Atlantic Records, 1992). In this case, understanding the metaphorical significance can give us an even greater appreciation of the song. When we say that a song (or any piece of art) “strikes a chord,” we mean that it resonates with our thoughts, feelings, and memories, and an understanding of its central metaphors allows us to relate to it in even more ways.

Metaphorical language does not come up only in the arts, but also in other disciplines, especially theology and philosophy. Nearly all religious texts are filled with parables and analogies because they provide us with concrete images to explain spiritual concepts.

Perhaps the most famous analogy from antiquity is Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave,” in which Socrates compares human understanding to people locked in chairs and forced to look at the shadows of themselves, cast by the light of candles against a cave wall. In time, they confuse that reality for the true reality that lies above them. When one brave soul (read Socrates) escapes these confines and leaves the cave to discover the true reality, he returns to the people left behind to tell them of their limited existence. Instead of being grateful, they choose not to believe him and have him put to death because they prefer to accept the reality to which they’ve become accustomed.

While this analogy continues to be told in various forms, it still needs to be examined critically. For instance, you might ask who put them in the cave and why? Is our reality set up as a training ground to move on to more satisfying forms of existence, as proposed in the film *The Matrix*? Or is it a cruel joke in which we’re allowed only a glimpse of the way things should be while wallowing in our own inability to effect change? In addition, many have argued that the analogy relies on a transcendent notion of Truth that cannot be communicated or realized—that Socrates believes that there is a greater place outside of our natural existence only because he has a vivid imagination or a need to prove his own importance. If this is true, then we might do better to improve the existence we actually experience than to stagnate while hoping for a better one.

But while poets, philosophers, and songwriters use metaphorical language to entertain and enlighten, many others use it primarily to manipulate—drawing off of the symbolic value of certain terms. Again, advertisers are masters of this, helping companies to embed their products with metaphorical significance, beginning with what they choose to call them. Car companies often use the names of swift predatory animals to associate their products with speed, control, and power. And advertisers love to use analogies because they don’t have to be proven. For example, when stating that a product works “like magic,” they get all the associations with a mystical process that offers quick, painless solutions without having to demonstrate its actual effectiveness. Be particularly on guard for inappropriate analogies when analyzing arguments. For instance, people may attempt to justify violent acts to advance their version of the public good by using the analogy that “you have to break a few eggs to make a cake.” A person is far more valuable than an egg, and the analogy is simply inappropriate. The analogy would be far more appropriate and effective if used to justify how you might need to give up smoking or sleeping late in order to get back into shape.

Images, Sounds, Tastes, and Smells

Images, like words, are often imbued with metaphorical significance and thus can be manipulated in a similar manner. For instance, the politician who stands in front of a flag while giving a speech is attempting to feed off of the patriotic implications associated with it. Likewise, fast food companies often use images of clowns and cartoon figures to associate their products with the carefree days of childhood when we didn’t have to worry about gaining weight or having high cholesterol. But images we see in painting, sculpture, photography, and the other arts offer more subtle and variant interpretations and deserve more careful examination.

In fact, we can look at certain paintings more than a hundred times and continue to discern new patterns of meaning. For me, this is especially true of Van Gogh's "The Starry Night." In his song "Vincent," singer-songwriter Don Mclean describes the painting as "swirling clouds in violet haze" that reflect the eyes of an artist who suffered for his sanity because the people around him could not understand or appreciate his vision. Don McLean, "Vincent," *American Pie* (United Artists Records, 1971). Sometimes I see the painting this way, and other times I see it as a joyous dance of the stars moving in constant circles unencumbered by human misery (if you want to consider what the painting might mean to you, go to <http://www.vangoghgallery.com/painting/starryindex.html>).

Music can also create feelings of triumph, joy, or despair without the need for any words to convey a direct message. Again, sometimes this can happen in a way that seems apparent and universal, (such as how the theme song from the film *Star Wars* evokes feelings of heroism, excitement, and adventure) or in ways that are more subtle and complex. Jerry Farber, Professor of Comparative Literature, explains that the aesthetic appeal of Mozart's *Violin Concerto in A Major* emerges through the contrast among the various musical themes within it:

Now there are moments when many listeners, I think, are likely to get isolated in the music immediately at hand, losing much of their awareness of the whole structure. Particularly during one section, a so-called 'Turkish' episode in a different time signature and a minor key, the listener is likely, once having adjusted to this new and exotic atmosphere, to be swept far away from the courtly minuet. Still, the overall structure is the context in which we hear this episode and is likely, if only by effect of contrast, to help shape our resonant response. Jerry Farber, *A Field Guide to the Aesthetic Experience* (New York: Forwards, 1982), 106.

Which of these details you analyze depends on the unique features of the subject's particular genre. For instance, in analyzing both a poem and a song, you can consider the major metaphors, key terms, and actions. But with a song, you should also consider how it's sung, which instruments are used, and how the music underscores or contrasts with the lyrics. Likewise, an analysis of both a painting and a film requires attention to the color, composition, and perspective of the scene. But with a film, you should also consider the dialogue, background music, and how each scene relates to the ones that come before and after it. Keep in mind that although different kinds of texts tend to stimulate particular types of responses, sometimes it is fruitful to think about pieces in light of seemingly incongruous perspectives. For instance, you could look at a love song as reflecting cultural attitudes about gender roles or a political speech as encouraging psychological disorders such as paranoia.

When your analysis focuses on personal experiences, decisions, and encounters, you can discuss those details that correspond with the other senses as well. In fact, taste and smell can play a crucial role in our experiences, as they have the strongest connection to memory. In *Swann's Way*, the first part of his prolific novel *In Search of Lost Time*, French author Marcel Proust describes how dipping a pastry in tea helped him to recall a period of his life that he might have otherwise permanently forgotten.

Though at first he couldn't recall why the taste had such a powerful effect on him, he eventually remembered that it was something his grandmother gave him as a child when the family visited her in the summer. The taste helped him to recall not only his moments with his grandmother but the details of the house and town itself. As he puts it:

But when from a long-distant past nothing subsists, after the people are dead, after the things are broken and scattered, taste and smell alone, more fragile but more enduring, more unsubstantial, more persistent, more faithful, remain poised a long time, like souls, remembering, waiting, hoping, amid the ruins of all the rest; and bear unflinchingly, in the tiny and almost impalpable drop of their essence, the vast structure of recollection. Marcel Proust, *Swann's Way*, trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Killmartin (New York: Random House, 1981), 50–51.

Though the personal experiences you write about do not have to be as significant to you as this was for Proust's narrator, you still need to recall the details as best you can. When doing so, take a step back and try to look at yourself as you might a character in a novel. Detaching yourself like this can be very hard to do, especially when you have a vested interest in seeing yourself in a certain light. However, you often get your best insights when you try, to paraphrase the poet Robert Burns, to see yourself as others see you. To illustrate, I will show how I can both present and analyze a recent visit to my gym.

As I swiped my card at the entrance, the gentleman at the front desk greeted me with a friendly, "Hi Randy." I felt the usual twang of guilt because I can never remember his name and have to respond with a generic and slightly overenthusiastic, "Hey, how's it going?" Inside, the YMCA has its usual mix of old and young, most of whom are trying to get back into shape as opposed to other gyms where the main motivation for coming is to show off the body you already have.

I take a bitter sip from the rusty drinking fountain and head to the weight room where I see a young man completing his set on the first machine. He is definitely impressed with himself, periodically looking in the mirror with an expression that would make Narcissus ashamed. When he gets off, I wait until he turns around so he can see me move the key down to include more weight than he was just using. The satisfaction I get from this action comes partly from deflating some of his ego and partly from inflating my own. However, my own smugness is short-lived, because as soon as I get up, a much older man with a noticeable beer belly and smelling of Ben Gay sits at the machine and lowers the key much further than where I had it.

I go through my weight routine with a bit more humility and then wander over to the elliptical for the aerobic portion of my workout. I pull out my iPod and click to Credence Clearwater Revival, the only group with a happy enough sound to take my mind off my aching feet. After enough time, I leave the same way via the guy at the front desk (only now I return his, "Bye Randy," with a generic and slightly over enthusiastic, "See you later; have a good day").

Though there was no text to consult this time, I can still interpret the experience by recalling and focusing on the key details that make it up. I could discuss why I find it embarrassing to admit any personal weakness, whether it stems from my bad memory for trying to recall names or from my inability to lift as much weight as others. I could discuss the key in the weight machine metaphorically, and how I warped it in my mind from a simple tool to a larger symbol of competition. I could also discuss the effect of music and how it takes a lot of sting out of exercise by allowing me to focus on something other than the painful routine that stretches out before me. Finally, I could discuss how the rusty taste of the drinking fountain water or the smell of Ben Gay and sweat will always remind me of this particular gym.

When looking at a relationship or a decision, the analytical process is essentially the same as when you examine a specific event; you still need to consider, recall, and imagine various moments—just more of them. Whereas a relationship with another person is the sum total of all the time you’ve already spent with that person, deciding involves imagining what might come about as a result of our choices. Oftentimes our analysis inspires thoughts that leap around in time as we reconsider past patterns to predict likely future events. For instance, if I were to analyze whether I should get a kitten, my mind may race through a string of potentially good and bad memories of having had cats in the past: images of soft, cuddly, purring little creatures that also like to destroy drapes and meow in my ear at five in the morning. Of course, no matter how long and hard we think about something, we can never be sure that the outcome will work out for us in the way we hope and expect. Still, to be satisfied that we at least tried to make an informed, intelligent, and aware decision, we must slow down and reconsider all the relevant moments that we’ve already experienced.

Exercise 1

Think of four concrete words, those which represent something we can see, touch, taste, or smell (for example, desk, willow, seaweed, or sidewalk), and four abstract words, those that represent concepts, feelings, or attitudes (for example, jealousy, freedom, fear, or arrogance), and then think of how each of your concrete words illustrate an aspect of your abstract ones. For instance, you might consider how fear is like a willow. Both may spread a lot of shade over our lives. At times fear may keep us in the dark, “rooted” like a willow from moving forward to places we need to go. However, at other times our fears may protect us from those dangers we are not yet ready to face.

Exercise 2

Write an issue dialogue on a policy that is important to you. First free write on your own position, considering all of the places where you got your information from in the first place; then free write on the opposite point of view, again, considering all the places where you have heard these perspectives articulated. Write a dialogue in which you take both sides seriously by fully considering the

merits of each argument. How did your own position change as you considered other points of view? What possible compromises did you come to?

Exercise 3

Select something in your own life that is important to you at the moment. It could be the desire to recall a past experience, to reflect on an important relationship, or to analyze a decision that you must make. Now, take a moment to free write on all the significant details and factors that are involved. Reflect further on what you just wrote. To what extent do/did you have choices regarding the outcome? To what extent does/did it seem predetermined and by which people and what circumstances? What can you still learn or do about the situation to maximize its benefits? How can you better accept those aspects of it that are not likely to change?

Key Takeaways

1. A close reading of a subject involves understanding the implications of the actions, terms, phrases, arguments, and images that make it up.
2. Metaphorical language can help us to understand a concept further as we extend how something concrete compares to something abstract.
3. An analysis of personal experiences, decisions, and relationships necessitates a certain level of detachment and a close reading of the relevant details.

From Interpretations to Assertions

Learning Objectives

1. Reveal the kinds of assertions that block a successful analysis.
2. Discuss how to produce meaningful assertions.
3. Explain how to unite meaningful assertions into a working thesis.
4. Show how to evaluate and modify a working thesis.

A close reading of the key details of a subject should help you to discover several intriguing interpretations about an array of different subjects: the consequences of an event, the motivations of a character, the effectiveness of an argument, or the nature of an image.

Interpretations

An assertion differs from an interpretation by providing *perspective* on an underlying pattern, a perspective that implies what it means to you and why you think it's significant. Without such a perspective, an interpretation merely becomes a statement with no potential for development. Just as one might utter a statement that kills the mood of a particular situation (“What a romantic dinner you cooked for me! Too bad I’m allergic to lobster and chocolate...”), so one can make types of statements that block any possibility for further analysis. What follows are some of the most common:

1. Statements of Fact

Factual statements might help support an analysis but should not be the main force that drives it. I might notice that Vincent Van Gogh used twenty-five thousand brush strokes to create *Starry Night*, that global warming has increased more rapidly in the polar regions, or that Alfred Hitchcock used erratic background music throughout his film *Psycho*. But what else can I say about any of these statements? They simply are true or false. To transform these factual statements into assertions that can be explored further, you need to add your own perspectives to them. For instance, you could argue that the erratic music in *Psycho* underscores the insanity of the plot and results in a cinematic equivalent to Edgar Allen Poe’s frantic short sentences, or that global warming in the polar regions will result in higher sea levels that will cause enormous damage if we don’t do anything to keep it in check.

2. Statements of Classification

It is not enough to simply assert that the focus of your analysis fits into a pre-established category like “modernism,” “impressionism,” “neo-conservativism,” or “first wave feminism.” Of course, it can be useful to understand the nature of these broader categories, but you still need to explore why it is important to see your subject in this light. For instance, rather than simply point out that *Family Guy* can be seen as a satire of the American family, you should also consider what this perspective reveals about the show’s development and reception. It might also be worthwhile to consider how a work transcends the standard notions of its period or genre. You might point out that while most of the time the *Family Guy* characters are show as broad and ridiculous, they can sometimes act in ways that are familiar and endearing. Similarly, when looking at a policy or argument, you should not simply categorize it as belonging to a particular social attitude or political party but consider it on its own merits. Though political pundits often use terms associated with their opposition as curse words and summarily dismiss anything they advocate, you want to appear much more reasonable in an academic analysis.

3. Statements of Taste

Similarly, an analysis is not just a review in which you simply state how you feel about a piece or dismiss an argument or policy as being “distasteful.” A good assertion will not

only reveal how you feel about the focus of your analysis but will also inspire you to explore why it makes you feel that way. In her article, “*Babe, Braveheart and the Contemporary Body*,” Susan Bordo, Professor of Media Studies, explains that the reason she liked the film *Babe* much better is that it shows the need for self-acceptance and connection to others in a society that overly values conformity and competition. Susan Bordo, *Twilight Zones: The Hidden Life of Cultural Images from Plato to O.J.* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press), 1999. This assertion allows her to explore different aspects of contemporary American culture that may have inspired each of these films. Had she simply stated her opinion without stating why her subject, the films, made her feel this way, her article would not have been as compelling or convincing.

4. Statements of Intention

When looking at creative works, we often want to assert that our point of view is the one the author intended, yet when we equate our perspective with the author’s, we (rather arrogantly) assume that we have solved the mystery of the piece, leaving us with nothing more to say about it. And even if we can quote the author as saying, “I intended this,” we should not stop exploring our own interpretations of what the piece means to us. John Lennon tells us that his song “Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds” was written in response to a drawing given to him by his son, Julian. Others suspect that his real intention was to describe a drug trip brought about by LSD, the initial letters in the words of the title of the song. John Lennon and Paul McCartney, “Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds,” *Sgt Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band* (Apple Records, 1967). I have never seen his son’s drawing, and I don’t use psychedelic drugs, so neither interpretation means much to me. I love the song because it guides me through a kind of *Alice in Wonderland* fantasy of “looking glass ties” and “tangerine trees.” To be able to show why a given interpretation matters to us, we should not phrase our assertions as being about what we think the author intended but what it causes us to consider.

Likewise, you should be careful to avoid simply stating that you know the “real intentions” behind a work of non-fiction, a social policy, or a particular action or decision. For example, consider if a business decides to move its operations overseas to save money. This may inspire some to say that the company’s real intention is to destroy the American economy or to exploit workers overseas, but it would sound far more persuasive and reasonable to actually show how these concerns could come about, even if they were never the stated intentions.

Worthwhile Assertions

In short, worthwhile assertions should reveal a perspective on your subject that provides possibilities for further exploration. Statements based on facts, classifications, opinions, and author intentions provide only inklings of perspectives and should be revised to inspire more prolific and meaningful analysis. Once you come up with some initial interpretations of your subject, reconsider it in light of what it means to you, perhaps by asking some or all of the following questions:

- What memories does it spark?
- How does it cause you to react emotionally and intellectually?
- What personal decisions/relationships does it cause you to ponder?
- What social, political, or intellectual concerns does it make you consider?
- How does it confirm or contradict your morals and beliefs?

Questions like these will help you to reflect on the subject further, enabling you to transform the aforementioned problematic statements into meaningful assertions. For instance, consider how the interpretation, “The CEO is moving his company’s operations overseas because he hates America and wants to exploit the workers of the third world” can be revised: “Though the CEO’s stated intention for moving the company’s operations overseas is to save money, the end result could be disastrous for both the local economy and the new country’s employees who will have to work under unsafe conditions.” Similarly, the statement “John Lennon’s real intention in writing ‘Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds’ is to promote the use of LSD” can be revised: “Whatever John Lennon’s real intention, I see ‘Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds’ as being about the power of the imagination to transcend the deadening routine of daily life.”

Once you have made several assertions like these, you can combine your favorite ones into a working thesis, your initial argument or center of focus for your essay. It’s called a “working” thesis because your point of view is likely to evolve the more you consider each aspect of your subject. Contrary to what you may have heard, the thesis does not have to be set in stone before you begin to write, guiding all the ideas that follow. When you revisit your responses, your point of view will evolve to become more precise, more thoughtful, and more sophisticated. For example, sometimes your thesis may start off as a brief and somewhat vague notion: “This ad manipulates through patriotic images of our country’s nature,” and later becomes more developed and clear: “Though this ad appeals to the patriotic spirit by showing images of our cherished countryside, it attempts to sell a product that will cause harm to the very environment it uses in the background for inspiration.” Each time you return to your thesis, you will think about it in a more nuanced manner, moving from the initial simplicity of a gut reaction to the complexity of a thoughtful and sophisticated response.

For this reason, you do not always need to state your thesis as a definitive argument that shows how you feel in no uncertain terms. Instead, it is often desirable to show your ambivalence about your position as long as you are clear about why you feel this way. For example, you might feel uncertain as to whether your school should build a new football stadium. Although you might think the money could be spent on more pressing educational needs, you might also want to have a safer and more comfortable place to watch the games. You can discuss the advantages and disadvantages of such a proposal, making it clear that you haven’t yet decided which side to support. Some of the most intriguing essays are exploratory, highlighting the mysteries of a subject, rather than persuasive, trying to convince us of a particular point of view.

While a thesis does not need to be limited in terms of argument, it should be limited in terms of scope. Perhaps the most common mistake I see students make is to choose a

thesis that encompasses too many aspects of the subject. Remember that it is almost always better to write “a lot about a little” than “a little about a lot.” When you discuss too many aspects of your subject, it becomes difficult to provide any new perspectives. Challenge yourself to write about an aspect of your subject that may appear too small to inspire even a page response. Then think about the nature of your perspective a bit further, putting it to the following tests before you put too much more time into it.

1. The Evidence Test

Before engaging in further analysis, look again at your subject and ask yourself, “Is there really enough evidence here to support my point of view?” If I were to write about the film *Office Space* as showing just how much employees love to go to work in the Tech Industry, I might have a very difficult time finding enough scenes to match my perspective. You should also research the details surrounding your subject to see if your assertion needs to be modified, for instance by considering the historical circumstances that were in place at the time the event happened, or the piece was created. One student, when writing about the speech from *The Tempest*, (quoted in Chapter 1), wrote that when Prospero’s actors disappear into “thin air,” they must have been projected on film with the camera suddenly switching off. Of course, Shakespeare could not have had that in mind given that he wrote three hundred years before we had the technology to carry this out. Still, one could argue that the scene might best be performed this way now. If a statement cannot be justified or at least modified to match the evidence, then you may have even more problems with the next category.

2. The Explanation Test

Oftentimes when there isn’t enough evidence to support a thesis, writers will be accused of stretching their explanations. I once heard a talk on how technicians assigned terms associated with women to parts of the computer to give themselves an illusion of control. Some of the assertions made sense—for instance that “mother” in motherboard shows how men may want to recall/dominate the nurturing figure of their childhoods. However, when the speaker pointed out that the “apple” in Apple Computers recalls the forbidden fruit that Eve handed to Adam, I started to squirm. The speaker even tried to argue that the name Macintosh was chosen because it’s a “tart” apple, and “tart” is a derogatory term that men use to refer to women of ill repute. Nonetheless, I would rather see a stretch than an analysis in which the explanation isn’t even necessary because the thesis is so obvious: “Othello reveals the destructive consequences of jealousy,” or “Beavis and Butthead’s stupidity often gets them into trouble.” Ideally, the assertion should require some explanation of the relevant details within or directly implied by the thesis. Remember that the goal is not to come up with an answer to the question “what’s THE meaning of the piece?” But rather to explore dimensions of the subject that do not have definitive answers, allowing us to consider our own subjectivities.

3. The Significance Test

You should also try to avoid wasting time on a thesis that does not have any significance by applying what many teachers call the “so what?” test. If your assertions do not lead to a deeper consideration of any of the questions for further thought raised earlier, then it probably will be boring for both you to write and for your audience to read. Oftentimes to make an assertion more interesting, we simply need to add more to it. For instance, I could argue that Peter feels beaten down by the soulless routine of his workplace throughout the film *Office Space*. But I need to remember that Peter is just a character in a film and cannot benefit from any of my conclusions. To make this more significant, I also need to consider how Peter represents the attitude of many contemporary workers and reveal the broader consequences of this attitude.

All of these considerations will help your thesis to become clearer, nuanced, and unique. In addition, it will allow your research questions (discussed in the previous chapter) to become more precise and fruitful as you compare and contrast your points of view with those of others. If there is one thing that I hope that I made clear throughout this chapter, it is that the goal of a careful examination should not be to arrive at the same conclusions and have the same thoughts as everyone else. If we all came to the same conclusions when looking at a subject, then there would be no reason to write a new essay on it. I always tell my students that I know what I think and sometimes what most experts think when I look at a subject; I want you to tell me what you think instead of presenting opinions that have already been stated by someone else. Developing a perspective that is both unique and worthwhile takes time, and although carefully examining a piece may help you to form an initial understanding and lay the cornerstone for your analysis, you still need to build the rest of the essay. In the next chapter, we’ll look at ways to do this, first by helping you to explain more thoroughly how you arrived at your perspective and second by helping you to explore the significance of your perspective in a manner that moves beyond the most obvious lessons.

Exercise

Look over the exercises you have completed so far in this chapter. Choose one and list the main assertions that you came up with on your subject. Cross out those that reveal only statements of fact, classification, taste, or intention and then consider what the remaining ones have in common. Try to construct a working thesis that presents a point of view that implies all of these perspectives. Put this working thesis to the evidence, explanation, and significance tests, and modify it accordingly. Remember the thesis does not have to be stated as a definitive argument but can reveal your ambivalence about your subject.

Key Takeaways

1. Certain statements do not lead to productive essays, especially if they reveal only a fact, an individual taste, or a particular classification.

2. The remaining worthwhile assertions should connect to each other through a working thesis or center of focus.
3. This thesis may reveal a definitive perspective or an exploration of ambivalence, as long as it is justifiable, clear, and worthwhile (passes the evidence, explanation, and significance tests).

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Chapter 19

Analysis for Multiple Perspectives

The Nature of Analysis

Learning Objectives

Define analysis.

Show how we use analysis in everyday situations and in academic writing and discussion.

Understand the components of analysis (assertions, examples, explanations, significance), and explain why each is a necessary part of any analysis.

Show how too much attention to one particular component of analysis makes an essay seem like a different type of writing.

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

In actuality, Jeff already possesses the ability to write an analytical essay. He would have realized this if he had considered the discussions and activities he engaged in during the previous week. In planning a date, and in thinking of the best way to convince his parents to send him more money, Jeff had to carefully evaluate a variety of situations to develop a point of view that he then had to justify and show why it mattered. In each of these instances, he made plenty of assertions, statements which present points of view; used examples, specific passages, scenes, events, or items which inspire these points of view; gave explanations, statements which reveal how the examples support and/or complicate the assertions; and provided significance, statements which reveal the importance of the analysis to our personal and/or cultural concerns.

Analysis is a way of understanding a subject by using each of these elements, expressing an opinion (making assertions), supporting that opinion (including examples), justifying that opinion (explaining the examples), and showing why the opinion matters (extending the significance). The second letter in the second component (examples) helps create the acronym AXES, which is the plural form of both *axe* and *axis*. This acronym provides a way not only to remember the four components but also to visualize them working together. Like an axe, analysis allows us to “chop” our subjects into their essential components so that we can examine the pieces more thoroughly, and, like an axis, analysis inspires insights that become the new reference points around which we rearrange these pieces.

Though a complete analysis always needs to use these elements, the reasons for engaging in it may vary widely. For instance, sometimes the goal is to persuade the reader to accept an interpretation or to adapt a course of action, and other times the goal is to explore several possible interpretations or courses of action without settling on any one in particular. But whether the goal is to persuade, explore, or enlighten, analysis should always spring from a careful examination of a given subject. I always tell my students that they do not need to convince me that their points of view are correct but rather to reveal that they have thought about their subject thoroughly and arrived at reasonable and significant considerations.

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

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

Our revels now are ended. These, our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits and

Are melted into air; into thin air.
 And, like the baseless fabric of this vision
 The cloud capped towers, the great globe itself,
 Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
 And like this insubstantial pageant faded,
 Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
 As dreams are made on, and our little life
 Is rounded with a sleep
 (Act IV, Scene 1: 148-57).

Response 1: Review (assertion emphasis)

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

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

Response 2: Summary (example emphasis)

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

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

Response 3: Description (explanation emphasis)

In Prospero's speech, Shakespeare points out how life, plays, and dreams are always being interrupted. He makes a lot of comparisons between these different areas of existence, yet it makes them all seem somewhat similar. I never really thought about how they are all so similar, but Shakespeare helps me consider ways they all kind of fit together.

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

Response 4: Tangent (significance emphasis)

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

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

Response 5: Analysis (attention to each aspect)

In *The Tempest*, William Shakespeare connects plays, lives, and dreams by showing that while each contains an illusion of permanence, they're all only temporary. The "baseless fabric of this vision" of "cloud capped towers" may immediately refer to the painted sets contained within the "great globe itself," the name of Shakespeare's theater. Yet when we measure time in years rather than hours, we can see that most of the real "cloud capped towers" of the Seventeenth Century have already faded and at some point in the future even the globe we live on will disappear and "leave not a rack behind." Likewise, it is not just the actors who are "such stuff as dreams are made on," but all of us. We are unconscious of the world before we are born and after we die, so our waking lives mirror our sleeping lives. Thinking of it this way leaves me with mixed feelings. On the one hand, I find it a bit disturbing to be reminded that neither we nor our world are permanent and all that we do will dissipate in time. On the other hand, it

inspires me to enjoy my life further and not to worry too much about my inability to accomplish every one of my goals because nothing I do will last forever anyway.

Had Jeff not waited until the last minute to write his essay, he might have come up with a paragraph like this last one that gives adequate attention to each of the elements of analysis. The main assertion that our dreams, our lives, and our creative works only provide an illusion of permanence sets the analytical stage in a compelling fashion. The examples are well chosen and intelligently explained. For instance, the analysis shows that whether we see the “cloud capped towers” as actually existing or as paintings on the sets of the stage, they both have succumbed to time. Finally, it reveals the significance of the author’s perspective without coming to a trite conclusion or skipping off on a tangent. In general, the analysis reflects the thoughts of a writer who is engaged enough with the text to take the time to carefully consider the quote and reflect on its implications. Though the paragraph could use a more thorough development (especially of the significance) and a more deliberate style, it certainly reveals a more compelling analysis than the previous four paragraphs.

So, is it a waste of time to write paragraphs that mostly consist of summaries, opinions, descriptions, or tangents? Absolutely not. Thinking and writing are not separate processes but occur simultaneously, and we often need to produce responses that focus on one of these simpler rhetorical modes before we can understand the underlying complexity that allows us to develop a more thorough analysis. And Jeff will experience essentially the same thinking and writing process when he switches from his Shakespeare essay to the ones he’s composing for his courses in history, political science, and psychology. Understanding an event, an issue, or an aspect of human nature requires careful attention to the details of what happened and to the arguments and theories that make up a particular perspective. But before Jeff can develop his own point of view on any of these subjects, he first needs to consider what might influence the way he sees them, a process that will require him to look at his culture and his experiences while consulting the points of view of others. In the following chapter, I will discuss how to set the stage for analysis by bringing together all of these factors.

Exercise

Write about a time you tried to persuade a friend to see a creative work, issue or subject in the way that you do. What assertions did you make? What examples did you use to back them up? How did you explain how you saw the examples? How did you reveal the lasting significance of the decision that you wanted your friend to make? How did these components take a different form the next time you tried to persuade your friend to see a different subject in a new light?

Key Takeaways

We use analysis many times throughout the day, especially when trying to persuade others to see our points of view.

Analysis consists of four main components: assertions (our points of view), examples (evidence that supports these points of view), explanations (justifications of these points of view), and significance (discussions of why these points of view matter).

These components need to be present for an effective analysis, but not in a strictly formulaic manner; they can appear throughout an essay to various degrees and in various orders.

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