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ENGL 0111 - Integrated Reading & Writing - Language and Communication

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English 0111: Integrated Reading & Writing

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With special thanks to:

Dr. James Palmer, Dr. Ymitri Mathison, and Mr. Henry Koshy

Resources:

[*The Word on College Reading and Writing*](#)

[*Making Inferences.*](#)

[*Cohesion: Uniting Reading and Writing*](#)

[*Academic Writing 1*](#)

[*The Writing Process*](#)

[*Writing for Success*](#)

[*Let's Get Writing*](#)

[*Basic Reading and Writing.*](#)

[*Informed Arguments: A Guide to Writing and Research.*](#)

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Chapter 1: Building Strong Reading Skills

Reading and Writing Connection

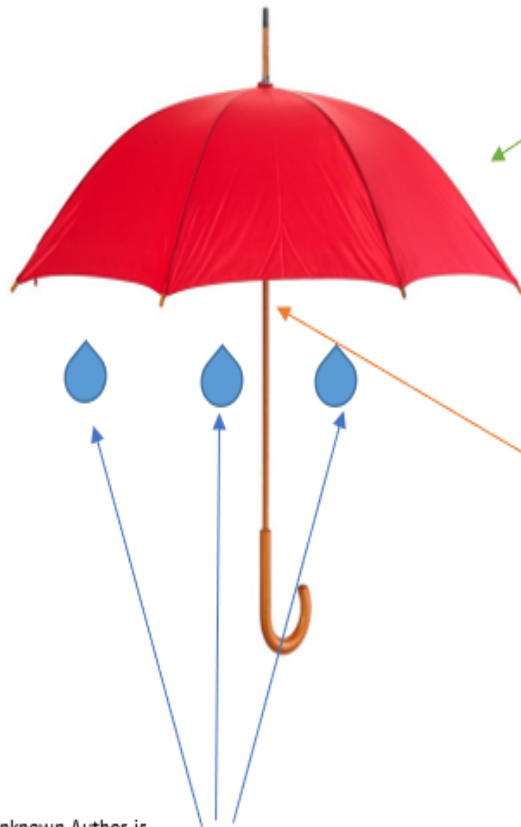
It is very easy to think and assume that reading and writing are two different academic areas or disciplines. They do require different skill sets. However, they work together.

Reading is considered *input*. Anytime we listen to something or read information, we are *taking in* information. Writing is considered *output*. Anytime we read something or say something, we are putting *information out* there to others.

While different skills are used to read and write, these areas work together because what you read is what someone else wrote, and when you write, someone will be reading that information! When you know HOW reading and writing work, and more importantly, you know what to look for as a reader and writer, your reading will become stronger, and your writing will become more advanced. You will write with the reader in mind, and you will read looking for writer's tips and tricks!

Writers:	Readers:
Write for an audience! They write with people in mind.	Readers ARE the audience anytime the writer writes something.
Writers MUST keep their audience in mind when writing.	Readers may stop reading after the first few lines if they do not "connect" with the reading or if they think the piece is not written for them.
Writers use certain organization strategies: thesis, or main idea, details, and signal words, to express their thoughts.	Readers know what to look for when reading pieces; they look for the main idea and the details to determine whether they agree with the piece or with the author's stance or point about the topic.
Writers understand that readers will bring their own backgrounds to the reading of their article or essay.	Readers make connections to readings. Sometimes these connections are to themselves, to other things they have read, or to the world around them.

All Writings Have These Key Elements!



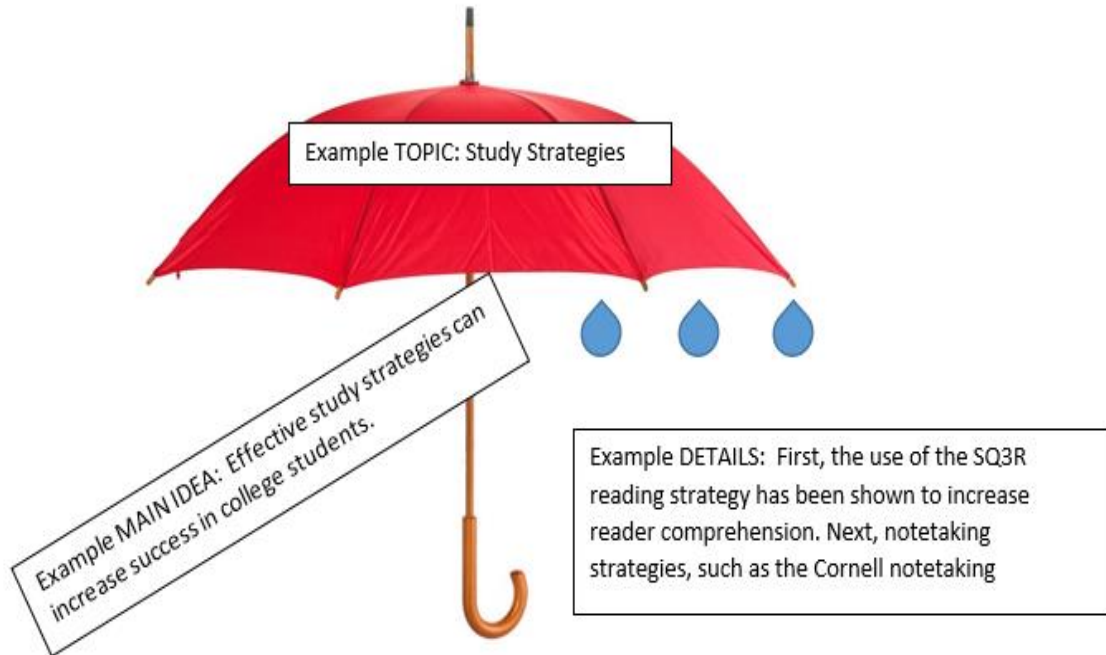
TOPIC – think of the umbrella as the topic that covers the **WHOLE** idea. Everything under it – the main idea and the details – work to support that topic. When you find the topic, as yourself, “What about _____?” to find the main idea.

MAIN IDEA – the main idea is the author’s **POINT** (or stance or argument) about the topic. Think of this as the handle of the umbrella. It is the spine or backbone, the structure, of the essay or paragraph.

SUPPORTING DETAILS – these support the main idea and provide evidence to back up the main idea. Supporting details can come in a lot of “shapes and sizes,” such as numbers, stats, percentages, quotes, expert opinion, and examples.

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Putting it All Together!



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High School vs. College

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

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

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

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

High School	College
Reading assignments are moderately long. Teachers may set aside some class time for reading and reviewing the material in depth.	Some reading assignments may be very long. You will be expected to come to class with a basic understanding of the material.
Teachers often provide study guides and other aids to help you prepare for exams.	Reviewing for exams is primarily your responsibility.
Your grade is determined by your performance on a wide variety of assessments, including minor and major assignments. Not all assessments are writing based.	Your grade may depend on just a few major assessments. Most assessments are writing based.
Writing assignments include personal writing and creative writing in addition to expository writing.	Outside of creative writing courses, most writing assignments are expository.
The structure and format of writing assignments is generally stable over a four-year period.	Depending on the course, you may be asked to master new forms of writing and follow standards within a particular professional field.
Teachers often go out of their way to identify and try to help students who are performing poorly on exams, missing classes, not turning in assignments, or just struggling with the course. Often teachers will give students many “second chances.”	Although teachers want their students to succeed, they may not always realize when students are struggling. They also expect you to be proactive and take steps to help yourself. “Second chances” are less common.

Table 1.1 “High School versus College Assignments”

This chapter covers the types of reading and writing assignments you will encounter as a college student. You will also learn a variety of strategies for mastering these new challenges—and becoming a more confident student and writer.

Throughout this chapter, you will follow a first-year student named Crystal. After several years of working as a saleswoman in a department store, Crystal has decided to pursue a degree in elementary education and become a teacher. She is continuing to work part-time, and occasionally she finds it challenging to balance the demands of work, school, and caring for her four-year-old son. As you read about Crystal, think about how you can use her experience to get the most out of your own college experience.

Review Table 1.1 “High School versus College Assignments” and think about how you have found your college experience to be different from high school so far. Respond to the following questions:

1. In what ways do you think college will be more rewarding for you as a learner?
2. What aspects of college do you expect to find most challenging?
3. What changes do you think you might have to make in your life to ensure your success in college?

Use Pre-reading Strategies

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

Start by Reading and Considering the Title

A good title will inform you about the text’s content. It’s always nice if titles are also interesting, catchy, or even clever, but the most important job of a title is to let the reader know what’s coming and what the text will be about.

For instance, imagine you’re reading a magazine article entitled “Three Hundred Sixty-five Properly Poofy Days.”*

Reading that, do you have any idea what this article is going to be about? It could be written by a meteorologist, reporting on a year of observing cloud formations.

It might be a biopic (a biographical story) about an eccentric salon that specializes in “big hair” dos, retro-style. Or perhaps it’s a set of guidelines for using poofy cotton balls to apply cosmetics.

Would you be surprised to discover it’s a story about a dog groomer who does show grooms for poodles, the poofiest of dogs? See my point? The title should, hopefully, give you clues to the article content. (Keep this in mind when you’re writing your own titles.)

Look at the author’s name. Have you heard of the author? Do you know anything about them? Sometimes you’ll find a short bio about the author at the beginning or end



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of a text. You can always Google them to look for more details. Ideally, the author should be an acknowledged expert on the subject or should have degrees, training, or credentials that make them an expert.

Skim through the article, looking for headings or “pull-outs” (content that is pulled off to one side or highlighted in a box). Headings, if present, will often give you clues as to the text’s content as well as showing you how the subject has been divided into sections.

Look for any images: photographs, charts, graphs, maps, or other illustrations. Images—and their captions—will often give you valuable information about the topic.

If working with an e-text, you may also find embedded web links. Follow these: they’ll often lead you to resources that will help you better understand the article.

Here’s a seriously expert level suggestion: most academic texts and essays follow a fairly similar structure—including beginning every paragraph with a strong, focused topic sentence—you can often get a quick summary or understanding of a written text by simply reading the first sentence in every paragraph. Some authors may use the second sentence as their topic sentence, and if you notice this pattern, reading all of the second sentences in each paragraph will help you follow the text.

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

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



Check Your Understanding: Practicing Your Pre-reading Skills

Now that we’ve covered some pre-reading practices, let’s put those skills to the test. Find the *Scientific American* article, [“U.S. Cracking Down on Brain-Training Games.”](#)

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

1. Based on what you found in your pre-reading, what do you think the text is about? What position will the article take on the idea of brain-training games? How much do you know about the topic already? What did you already know (before you even looked at the article)?
2. Now, switch to in-depth reading and read the article carefully, taking notes of any questions you have or words you don’t understand.

3. If needed, do a bit of quick research on any questions or unknown words you identified.
4. How did the pre-reading affect your ideas of what to expect from the text? How did your understanding of the piece compare between what you learned from pre-reading versus a complete reading? What does this tell you about the relationship between pre-reading and in-depth reading?

Annotate and Take Notes

As children, most of us were told never to write in books, but now that you're a college student, your teachers will tell you just the opposite. Writing in your texts as you read—annotating them—is encouraged! It's a powerful strategy for engaging with a text and entering a discussion with it. You can jot down questions and ideas as they come to you. You might underline important sections, circle words you don't understand, and use your own set of symbols to highlight portions that you feel are important. Capturing these ideas as they occur to you is important, for they may play a role in not just understanding the text better but also in your college assignments. If you don't make notes as you go, today's great observation will likely become tomorrow's forgotten detail.

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

If you can't write on the text itself, you can accomplish almost the same thing by taking notes—either by hand (on paper) or e-notes. You might also choose to use sticky notes to capture your ideas—these can be stuck to specific pages for later recall.

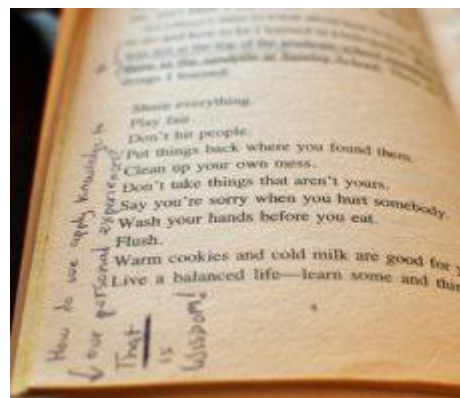
Many students use brightly-colored highlighting pens to mark up texts. These are better than nothing, but in truth, they're not much help. Using them creates big swaths of eye-popping color in your text, but when you later go back to them, you may not remember why they were highlighted. Writing in the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



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

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

access.



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Many students also like to keep reading journals. A good way to use these is to write a quick summary of your reading immediately after you've finished. Capture the reading's main points and discuss any questions you had or any ideas that were raised. Include the author and title, and write out an MLA citation for the source.



Check Your Understanding: Annotation

Print a hard copy* of the New York Times article, "[Are We Loving Our National Parks to Death?](#)"

Pre-read the article to gather some first impression ideas. Then read the article completely, annotating as you go.

*If you aren't able to print a hard copy, carry out the following instructions using a piece of paper and a pen or pencil.

Double-underline what you believe to be the topic or thesis statement in the article. (The thesis statement is one or two sentences that summarizes the article's main point and tells what it's about. The thesis statement can occur anywhere in the article—even near the end.)

As you read, underline points that you find especially interesting. Make notes in the margins as ideas occur to you.

Write question marks in the margin where questions occur to you, and make written margin notes about them, too.

Circle all words you don't understand. Then look them up! ([Dictionary.com](#) is a good online dictionary and even pronounces words so you'll know how they sound.)

When you're finished, write a quick summary—several sentences or a short paragraph—that captures the article's main points.

Reading Strategies

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

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

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

Managing Your Reading Time

Have you ever stayed up all night cramming just before an exam? Or found yourself skimming a detailed memo from your boss five minutes before a crucial meeting? The

first step in handling college reading successfully is planning. This involves both managing your time and setting a clear purpose for your reading.

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

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

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

Tip: College instructors often set aside reserve readings for a particular course. These consist of articles, book chapters, or other texts that are not part of the primary course textbook. Copies of reserve readings are available through the university library; in print; or, more often, online. When you are assigned a reserve reading, download it ahead of time (and let your instructor know if you have trouble accessing it). Skim through it to get a rough idea of how much time you will need to read the assignment in full.

Setting a Purpose

The other key component of planning is setting a purpose. Knowing what you want to get out of a reading assignment helps you determine how to approach it and how much time to spend on it. It also helps you stay focused during those occasional moments when it is late, you are tired, and relaxing in front of the television sounds far more appealing than curling up with a stack of journal articles.

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

- **How did my instructor frame the assignment?** Often your instructors will tell you what they expect you to get out of the reading:
 - Read Chapter 2 and come to class prepared to discuss current teaching practices in elementary math.
 - Read these two articles and compare Smith's and Jones's perspectives on the 2010 health care reform bill.
 - Read Chapter 5 and think about how you could apply these guidelines to running your own business.

- **How deeply do I need to understand the reading?** If you are majoring in computer science and you are assigned to read Chapter 1, “Introduction to Computer Science,” it is safe to assume the chapter presents fundamental concepts that you will be expected to master. However, for some reading assignments, you may be expected to form a general understanding but not necessarily master the content. Again, pay attention to how your instructor presents the assignment.
- **How does this assignment relate to other course readings or to concepts discussed in class?** Your instructor may make some of these connections explicitly, but if not, try to draw connections on your own. (Needless to say, it helps to take detailed notes both when in class and when you read.)
- **How might I use this text again in the future?** If you are assigned to read about a topic that has always interested you, your reading assignment might help you develop ideas for a future research paper. Some reading assignments provide valuable tips or summaries worth bookmarking for future reference. Think about what you can take from the reading that will stay with you.

Improving Your Comprehension

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

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

Identifying the Main Points

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

- **Textbooks.** These usually include summaries, glossaries, comprehension questions, and other study aids.
- **Nonfiction trade books.** These are less likely to include the study features found in textbooks.
- **Popular magazines, newspapers, or web articles.** These are usually written for a general audience.
- **Scholarly books and journal articles.** These are written for an audience of specialists in each field.

Regardless of what type of expository text you are assigned to read, your primary comprehension goal is to identify the main point: the most important idea that the writer wants to communicate and often states early on. Finding the main point gives you a framework to organize the details presented in the reading and relate the reading to

concepts you learned in class or through other reading assignments. After identifying the main point, you will find the supporting points, the details, facts, and explanations that develop and clarify the main point.

Some texts make that task relatively easy. Textbooks, for instance, include the features as well as headings and subheadings intended to make it easier for students to identify core concepts. Graphic features, such as sidebars, diagrams, and charts, help students understand complex information and distinguish between essential and inessential points. When you are assigned to read from a textbook, be sure to use available comprehension aids to help you identify the main points.

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

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

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

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

Monitoring Your Comprehension

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

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

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

- **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.** Look for opportunities to discuss the reading with your classmates. Many instructors set up online discussion forums or blogs specifically for that purpose. Participating in these discussions can help you determine whether your understanding of the main points is the same as your peers'.

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

As a working mother, Crystal found that the best time to get her reading done was in the evening, after she had put her four-year-old to bed. However, she occasionally had trouble concentrating at the end of a long day. She found that by actively working to summarize the reading and asking and answering questions, she focused better and retained more of what she read. She also found that evenings were a good time to check the class discussion forums that a few of her instructors had created.

Tip: Students are often reluctant to seek help. They feel like 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.

Taking It to the Next Level: Active Reading

Now that you have acquainted (or reacquainted) yourself with useful planning and comprehension strategies, college reading assignments may feel more manageable. You know what you need to do to get your reading done and make sure you grasp the main points. However, the most successful students in college are not only competent readers but active, engaged readers.

Using the SQ3R Strategy

One strategy you can use to become a more active, engaged reader is the SQ3R strategy, a step-by-step process to follow before, during, and after reading. You may already use some variation of it. In essence, the process works like this:

Survey the text in advance.

- Form **questions** before you start reading.
- **Read** the text.
- **Recite** and/or **record** important points during and after reading.
- **Review** and **reflect** on the text after you read.

Before you read, you survey, or preview, the text. As noted earlier, reading introductory paragraphs and headings can help you begin to figure out the author's main point and identify what important topics will be covered. However, surveying does not stop there. Look over the sidebars, photographs, and any other text or graphic features that catch your eye. Skim a few paragraphs. Preview any boldfaced or italicized vocabulary terms. This will help you form a first impression of the material.

Next, start brainstorming questions about the text. What do you expect to learn from reading? You may find that some questions come to mind immediately based on your initial survey or based on previous readings and class discussions. If not, try using headings and subheadings in the text to formulate questions. For instance, if one heading in your textbook reads "Medicare and Medicaid," you might ask yourself these questions:

- When was Medicare and Medicaid legislation enacted? Why?
- What are the major differences between these two programs?

Although some of your questions may be simple factual questions, try to come up with a few that are more open-ended. Asking in-depth questions will help you stay more engaged as you read.

The next step is simple: read. As you read, notice whether your first impressions of the text were correct. Are the author's main points and overall approach about the same as what you predicted—or does the text contain a few surprises? Also, look for answers to your earlier questions and begin forming new questions. Continue to revise your impressions and questions as you read.

While you are reading, pause occasionally to recite or record important points. It is best to do this at the end of each section or when there is an obvious shift in the writer's train of thought. Put the book aside for a moment and recite aloud the main points of the section or any important answers you found there. You might also record ideas by jotting down a few brief notes in addition to, or instead of, reciting aloud. Either way, the physical act of articulating information makes you more likely to remember it.

After you have completed the reading, take some time to review the material more thoroughly. If the textbook includes review questions or your instructor has provided a study guide, use these tools to guide your review. You will want to record information in a more detailed format than you used during reading, such as in an outline or a list.

As you review the material, reflect on what you learned. Did anything surprise you, upset you, or make you think? Did you find yourself strongly agreeing or disagreeing with any points in the text? What topics would you like to explore further? Jot down your reflections in your notes. (Instructors sometimes require students to write brief response papers or maintain a reading journal. Use these assignments to help you reflect on what you read.)

Choose another text that you have been assigned to read for a class. Use the SQ3R process to complete the reading. (Keep in mind that you may need to spread the reading over more than one session, especially if the text is long.)

Be sure to complete all the steps involved. Then, reflect on how helpful you found this process. On a scale of one to ten, how useful did you find it? How does it compare with other study techniques you have used?

Using Other Active Reading Strategies

The SQ3R process encompasses a few valuable active reading strategies: previewing a text, making predictions, asking and answering questions, and summarizing. You can use the following additional strategies to further deepen your understanding of what you read.

- **Connect what you read to what you already know.** Look for ways the reading supports, extends, or challenges concepts you have learned elsewhere.
- **Relate reading to your own life.** What statements, people, or situations relate to your personal experiences?
- **Visualize.** For both fiction and nonfiction texts, try to picture what is described. Visualizing is especially helpful when you are reading a narrative text, such as a novel or a historical account, or when you read expository text that describes a process, such as how to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).
- **Pay attention to graphics as well as text.** Photographs, diagrams, flow charts, tables, and other graphics can help make abstract ideas more concrete and understandable.
- **Understand the text in context.** Understanding context means thinking about who wrote the text, when and where it was written, the author's purpose for writing it, and what assumptions or agendas influenced the author's ideas. For instance, two writers might both address the subject of health care reform, but if one article is an opinion piece and one is a news story, the context is different.
- **Plan to talk or write about what you read.** Jot down a few questions or comments in your notebook so you can bring them up in class. (This also gives you a source of topic ideas for papers and presentations later in the semester.) Discuss the reading on a class discussion board or blog about it.

As Crystal began her first semester of elementary education courses, she occasionally felt lost in a sea of new terms and theories about teaching and child development. She found that it helped to relate the reading to her personal observations of her son and other kids she knew.

Many college courses require students to participate in interactive online components, such as a discussion forum, a page on a social networking site, or a class blog. These

tools are a great way to reinforce learning. Do not be afraid to be the student who starts the discussion.

Remember that when you interact with other students and teachers online, you need to project a mature, professional image. You may be able to use an informal, conversational tone, but complaining about the workload, using off-color language, or “flaming” other participants is inappropriate.

Active reading can benefit you in ways that go beyond just earning good grades. By practicing these strategies, you will find yourself more interested in your courses and better able to relate your academic work to the rest of your life. Being an interested, engaged student also helps you form lasting connections with your instructors and with other students that can be personally and professionally valuable. In short, it helps you get the most out of your education.

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Chapter 2: Introduction to the Writing Process

Common Writing Assignments

College writing assignments serve a different purpose than the typical writing assignments you completed in high school. In high school, teachers generally focus on teaching you to write in a variety of modes and formats, including personal writing, expository writing, research papers, creative writing, and writing short answers and essays for exams. Over time, these assignments help you build a foundation of writing skills.

In college, many instructors will expect you to already have that foundation.

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

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

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

Table 2.1 “Common Types of College Writing Assignments” lists some of the most common types of college writing assignments. It includes minor, less formal assignments as well as major ones. Which specific assignments you encounter will depend on the courses you take, and the learning objectives developed by your instructors.

Assignment Type	Description	Example
Personal Response Paper	Expresses and explains your response to a reading assignment, a provocative quote, or a specific issue; may be very brief (sometimes a page or less) or more in-depth	For an environmental science course, students watch and write about President Obama’s June 15, 2010, speech about the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

Summary	Restates the main points of a longer passage objectively and in your own words	For a psychology course, students write a one-page summary of an article about a man suffering from short-term memory loss.
Position Paper	States and defends your position on an issue (often a controversial issue)	For a medical ethics course, students state and support their position on using stem cell research in medicine.
Problem-Solution Paper	Presents a problem, explains its causes, and proposes and explains a solution	For a business administration course, a student presents a plan for implementing an office recycling program without increasing operating costs.
Literary Analysis	States a thesis about a particular literary work (or works) and develops the thesis with evidence from the work and, sometimes, from additional sources	For a literature course, a student compares two novels by the twentieth-century African American writer Richard Wright.
Research Review or Survey	Sums up available research findings on a particular topic	For a course in media studies, a student reviews the past twenty years of research on whether violence in television and movies is correlated with violent behavior.
Case Study or Case Analysis	Investigates a particular person, group, or event in depth for the purpose of drawing a larger conclusion from the analysis	For an education course, a student writes a case study of a developmentally disabled child whose academic performance improved because of a behavioral-modification program.
Laboratory Report	Presents a laboratory experiment, including the hypothesis, methods of	For a psychology course, a group of students presents the results of an experiment in which they

	data collection, results, and conclusions	explored whether sleep deprivation produced memory deficits in lab rats.
Research Journal	Records a student's ideas and findings during the course of a long-term research project	For an education course, a student maintains a journal throughout a semester-long research project at a local elementary school.
Research Paper	Presents a thesis and supports it with original research and/or other researchers' findings on the topic; can take several different formats depending on the subject area	For examples of typical research projects, see Chapter 12 "Writing a Research Paper."

Table 2.1 "Common Types of College Writing Assignments"

Introduction to the Process

The College Essay

The methods for creating a successful college essay are not the same for everyone. Some writers require complete silence with no distractions, while others crave noise and interaction while they work. Many of us have little choice concerning how and when to write. We fit it in between life and work and death and taxes.

While no guide can help you find what exact situations will work best for you, there are aspects of the process that, when followed, promote a cleaner, more stable final draft. These six general steps are: **discovery & investigation**, **prewriting**, **drafting**, **revising**, **editing**, and **formatting**.



"Rewrite Edit Text on a Typewriter" by Suzy Hazelwood, Pexels is in the Public Domain, CC0

Discovery & Investigation

The first step in writing a successful college essay requires an active engagement with your sources. Simply reading a source for basic content is not quite enough. The questions should not be simply "What does this say?" or "What happened?" but rather "Why did that happen?" "What does that say about the larger themes and ideas I am

exploring?” and “How does this help advance my thinking into the deeper layers of this topic?”

Make notes of your thoughts, ideas, and reactions as you read. Research is about following the conversation into your sources and allowing your sources to “talk to one another” as you develop your own presence in the conversation.

As you become more informed on the topic, *your voice* will begin to emerge, and even direct the conversation. But now it will be a voice as rooted in authoritative research as it is in your own valid experience and perspective.

Once you have completed an active reading of a primary source, it will often be necessary to obtain secondary sources to back up your thesis. Peer-reviewed journals available online through the college databases will be your most-used secondary resource. But remember that other search engines, such as Google Scholar, can yield strong results too.

Prewriting

Prewriting is the step in which tools such as free writing, brainstorming, outlining, or clustering are used. In prewriting, no idea is too off-topic or too strange to pursue. It is these sometimes-dissociative ideas that can lead you to a paper topic that you never would have considered.

You will have time to tailor and sculpt your prewriting ideas to fit the parameters of your given assignment later. For now, just let your mind wander. Be open, curious, and attentive to where your questions lead you.

Though the common perception is that there is nothing that hasn’t been written about before, if you allow yourself to think outside the box, you can find a way of looking at an old topic through new eyes.

Even if it has been covered by another writer, you will be able to bring your unique perspective and relevant experiences to the larger discussion through initially casting a wide research net to pull in potential new ideas and relevant associations.

It is also during prewriting that the writer needs to decide about the audience. Asking questions like: “Who is going to read my paper?” “What is the purpose of this paper?” and “Why are they going to read my paper?” will help you set your audience.

The simple answers to these questions are “My professor” and “Because they assigned it.” But these are not the true answers. It could be that your paper needs to be geared towards elementary level students, participants in a seminar, peers at a conference, or your classmates.

The language and tone for each of these audiences would be very different. Considering this also helps you set your relationship to the topic and to the audience in ways that will make the essay more readable and accessible.

Drafting

Drafting is the beginning of “writing” your paper. It is important to remember that in drafting you should already have a thesis idea to guide your writing. Without a thesis,

your writing will be prone to drift, making it harder to structure after the fact. In drafting, the writer should use materials created in the prewriting stage and any notes taken in discovery and investigation to frame and build body paragraphs.

Many writers will tackle their body paragraphs first instead of beginning with an introduction (especially if you are not sure of the exact direction of your paper). Beginning with body paragraphs will allow you to work through your ideas without feeling restricted by a specific thesis but be prepared to delete paragraphs that don't fit.

Also be prepared to move body paragraphs around, if necessary, to better fit your pattern of development and thesis. Afterward, create an opening and concluding paragraphs (With an appropriately revised thesis) that reflects the body of your essay.

Revising

There are two different scopes of revision: *global* and *local*.

Global revision involves looking for issues like cohesion of your main idea(s) and the overall progression of your essay. If your essay has paragraphs that do not flow into each other, but rather change topics abruptly only to return to a previous thought later, your essay has poor cohesion.

If your topics change from paragraph to paragraph, it is necessary to consider altering the order of your paragraph and/or revising your writing either by adding to existing paragraphs or creating new ones that explain your change in topic. An essay with a logical flow and smooth transitions is significantly easier to read and understand.

Local revision involves looking for clarity in sentences, ensuring coherence within your body paragraphs, and addressing grammar, syntax, and formatting issues. This should be done after you are comfortable with the larger issues addressed in global revision.

The greatest trick to avoid having to fix too many local issues is to use varied sentence structure and to avoid using the same words repeatedly. Repeating the same sentence structure can make your paper feel mechanical and make an interesting topic feel boring. Also, if you can, have someone else read a draft of your essay to help catch the many small mistakes our eyes can miss when looking at the same essay for too long.

Editing

The final stage in writing a strong college essay requires a review of what you have written. In this last read of your essay, you should look for any grammar, spelling, or punctuation errors that have slipped through the cracks during the revising stage, or that were introduced in your revisions.

Reading your essay aloud or asking a friend to read your essay back to you are good ways to catch errors. Often if you read your own essay, especially out loud, you can catch errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation that can be missed in silent reading. Though this step seems minor within the process of writing, it is an easy way to prevent the loss of points over simple mistakes.

Formatting, In-text citation, and Works Cited

The formatting required for your paper will change depending on the field of study and academic discipline. Generally, the sciences and business and economics use APA or CSE formatting. English and other humanities will use MLA, and History uses Chicago. The appearance of the first page of the essay, in-text citations, and the Works Cited page will all be affected by these different formats.

Step #1: Thesis Statement

Your thesis is the engine of your essay. It is the central point around which you gather, analyze, and present the relevant support and philosophical reasoning which constitutes the body of your essay. It is the center, the focal point. The thesis answers the question, “What is this essay all about?”

A strong thesis does not just state your topic but your perspective or feeling on the topic as well. And it does so in a single, focused sentence. Two tops. It clearly tells the reader what the essay is all about and engages them in your big idea(s) and perspective. Thesis statements often reveal the primary pattern of development of the essay as well, but not always.

Thesis statements are usually found at the end of the introduction. Seasoned authors may play with this structure, but it is often better to learn the form before deviating from it.

Step #2: Primary Pattern of Development

Many college essays follow a primary pattern of development for laying out their ideas and expressing their main thesis. A pattern of development is the way the essay is organized, from one paragraph to the next, in order to present its thesis and the relevant, authoritative support for it.

Your readers will be experiencing your essay in time. That is, they will read it starting in paragraph one and then two, then three, four, five, six... This may seem obvious, but you will need to consider how the reader will experience the essay *in time* and *in relation* to your thesis statement.

Thus, we will need to organize the essay into a coherent pattern which allows the reader to easily follow our logic through the essay and fully relate it back to our central theme(s). Some essays use a combination of patterns to communicate their ideas but usually a primary pattern is established to present the overall structure and logical flow of the essay. Common patterns include:

- Narration & Description
- Exemplification



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- Cause & Effect
- Comparison & Contrast
- There are several more variations of patterns of development (see below) but these are the most common.

Step #3: Coherent, Unified Paragraphs

Strong essays are built with solid, coherent, and unified paragraphs. They should be digestible units of thought that have similar structure to the essay itself: a topic sentence, a body of support, and a concluding or transitional statement to help the reader move through the essay with clarity. Body paragraphs should also be arranged according to your primary pattern of development and focused on supporting your big idea(s).



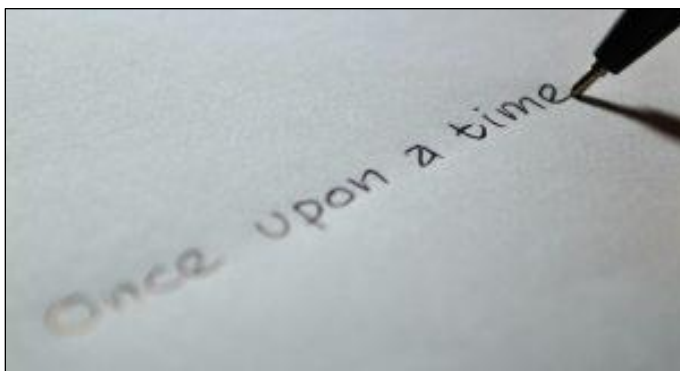
“Startup” by StartupStockPhotos, Pixabay is in the Public Domain, CC0

A body paragraph is an expansion of a single thought that is laid out according to a specific, logical structure:

- A strong, clear topic sentence that states the main idea of the paragraph (which will likely be a sub-point helping to explore your thesis).
- Several (two-four) sentences of development and support for your topic sentence: including quotes, summaries, and paraphrases of relevant sources and your substantive responses to the source material.
- A closing sentence of summary and/or a transition into the next paragraph.

BEST: When the writer uses paragraphs to present unified, coherent, organized, and well-developed thoughts in support of their overall thesis.

Step #4: Strong, Clear Introductions and Conclusions



“Once Upon a Time” by Ramdlon, Pixabay is in the Public Domain, CC0

The beginning and the ending of any communication event, studies show, provide the best opportunities to speak to any audience when their attention is the highest and most focused on what you have to say. Something about our species pays special attention

to the way things start and the way they end. We should use this to our advantage as writers.

In communication theory, there is a saying, “Tell them what you are going to tell them (introduction), tell them (body), then tell them what you just told them (conclusion).” While this seems a redundant structure, it is useful to be reminded of the need to build a logical and self-supporting flow into your academic writing.

Clear intent and focus help your reader concentrate on the major ideas you are trying to communicate; and help you stay disciplined and calculated in how you structure the essay to establish, highlight, and support those very ideas.

The introduction should grab your reader’s attention, focus it on your general topic, and move towards your specific, engaging thesis. The conclusion should provide a restatement of your main idea (thesis), provide a sense of finality or closure, and possibly challenge the reader with a “so what?” moment.

Both should clearly state the main point of the essay (thesis). Both should grab and focus the reader’s attention on the greater topic and larger significance of the thesis. Both should provide a sense of momentum for the reader to move through the essay with clarity, confidence, and full awareness of the main point. Both should inspire as much as they inform.

BEST: When the writer uses both the introduction and the conclusion to grab and focus the reader’s attention on the main point of their essay.

Step #5: Proper Use of Relevant, Authoritative Sources



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The discovery, analysis, and integration of relevant source material into a research project is referred to as a “research methodology.” This can be a daunting, frustrating, and sometimes scary process.

It takes a lot of discipline and courage to boldly go into the world of a given topic to check our ideas against those of authoritative, current, and reliable source material. It can also expose us to the reality that most topics are far more complicated than they originally appear.

This is an essential component of college writing. It is important to get our thoughts and ideas down on paper in clear and understandable ways. But it is equally important to verify, challenge, and expand those ideas by comparing/contrasting them with the most reliable information we can find on our chosen topic.

We do not research just to verify what we already believe about a topic, but to *challenge* our previously held ideas and, hopefully, move beyond the echo chamber of our own thoughts into a meaningful, substantive dialogue with others who have relevant experience and expertise on the topic.

Doing this will help us to generate a depth of knowledge that goes beyond the superficial and into the real mechanics of knowing. The result will be an essay that is engaging, grounded, and integrative.

The “essay” format itself is intended to get the writer to explore a topic by beginning with a question or idea and then going out into the world of the topic and finding relevant, authoritative sources to help develop, test, and explore that idea.

Authoritative sources do more than just back up the ideas we already have. They challenge us to dive deeper into the topic we are exploring to address their full complexity and broad application. And perhaps, even change our minds entirely.

- Watch this video on [Searching the Databases](#).
- Consult the [Library Databases](#) for help to find and use relevant, authoritative sources.
- Follow this [link](#) for helpful tips on finding, using, and properly citing sources.

BEST: When the writer uses relevant, authoritative sources to enhance a dialogue with the audience and themselves around the significant issues the essay addresses. Most effective when they are blended carefully and properly into an honest and focused exploration of the topic that is lead by the writer but open to where the relevant source material can take the discussion.

A strong essay will include enough relevant, authoritative, and reliable sources to help develop and explore the topic and thesis. The exact level of what constitutes “enough” will largely depend on the weight and scope of the thesis and the particulars of a given topic or assignment.

Try to include a variety of sources from various academic, professional and popular institutions to provide a wide array of perspectives on the topic and thesis under discussion. But, a good essay doesn’t JUST report what the source material says.

A strong essay will also effectively blend sources into a focused, academic conversation by integrating them into the larger topic, allowing them to “talk to one another,” and commenting on them in ways that stay true to their original intent but also include your thoughtful responses. Ultimately, the writer is directing the course of the discussion. But the sources should be, in turn, leading the writer.

Step #6: Properly Formatted (MLA)

Essays in Humanities classes are formatted according to Modern Language Association (MLA) guidelines. Formatting can be a frustrating and time-consuming process. But there are many tools and tricks to help you through the weeds.

Stay calm and focused and learn how to use the tools that will assist you in proper MLA formatting. If something doesn't make sense, ask for help. Do this at the end of the process, during your "local editing" phase. MLA involves three primary components when getting your essay into proper format:

- Formatting of the first page of your essay.
- Proper use of "in-text" citations (citing sources you use in the body of the text of your essay).
- Properly formatted "Works Cited" or "Works Consulted" page.

BEST: When an essay is properly crafted and formatted, the reader is able to clearly and easily follow the ideas and trace outside information to its original sources.

Lastly, although most essays in Writing and Humanities classes will be formatted according to the Modern Language Association (*MLA*) guidelines, many other classes will use alternative formats such as APA, Chicago and ASA documentation styles. Use this [link](#) to assist in the construction of these alternative formats.

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Chapter 3: Patterns of Organization

Rhetorical modes simply mean the ways in which we can effectively communicate through language. This chapter covers nine common rhetorical modes. As you read about these nine modes, keep in mind that the rhetorical mode a writer chooses depends on his or her purpose for writing. Sometimes writers incorporate a variety of modes in any one essay. In covering the nine modes, this chapter also emphasizes the rhetorical modes as a set of tools that will allow you greater flexibility and effectiveness in communicating with your audience and expressing your ideas.

Chapter 3.1: Narration

The Purpose of Narrative Writing

Narration means the art of storytelling, and the purpose of narrative writing is to tell stories. Any time you tell a story to a friend or family member about an event or incident in your day, you engage in a form of narration. In addition, a narrative can be factual or fictional. A factual story is one that is based on, and tries to be faithful to, actual events as they unfolded in real life. A fictional story is a made-up, or imagined, story; the writer of a fictional story can create characters and events as he or she sees fit.

The big distinction between factual and fictional narratives is based on a writer's purpose. The writers of factual stories try to recount events as they actually happened, but writers of fictional stories can depart from real people and events because the writers' intents are not to retell a real-life event. Biographies and memoirs are examples of factual stories, whereas novels and short stories are examples of fictional stories.

Tip: Because the line between fact and fiction can often blur, it is helpful to understand what your purpose is from the beginning. Is it important that you recount history, either your own or someone else's? Or does your interest lie in reshaping the world in your own image—either how you would like to see it or how you imagine it could be? Your answers will go a long way in shaping the stories you tell.

Ultimately, whether the story is fact or fiction, narrative writing tries to relay a series of events in an emotionally engaging way. You want your audience to be moved by your story, which could mean through laughter, sympathy, fear, anger, and so on. The more clearly you tell your story, the more emotionally engaged your audience is likely to be.

Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, start brainstorming ideas for a narrative. First, decide whether you want to write a factual or fictional story. Then, freewrite for five minutes. Be sure to use all five minutes, and keep writing the entire time. Do not stop and think about what to write.

The following are some topics to consider as you get going:

- Childhood
- School

- Adventure
- Work
- Love
- Family
- Friends
- Vacation
- Nature/space

The Structure of a Narrative Essay

Major narrative events are most often conveyed in chronological order, the order in which events unfold from first to last. Stories typically have a beginning, a middle, and an end, and these events are typically organized by time. Certain transitional words and phrases aid in keeping the reader oriented in the sequencing of a story. Some of these phrases are listed in Table 3.1 below.

after/afterward	as soon as	at last	Before
Currently	During	Eventually	Meanwhile
Next	Now	Since	Soon
Finally	Later	Still	Then
Until	when/whenever	While	first, second, third

Table 3.1 Transition Words and Phrases for Expressing Time

The following are the other basic components of a narrative:

- Plot. The events as they unfold in sequence.
- Characters. The people who inhabit the story and move it forward. Typically, there are minor characters and main characters. The minor characters generally play supporting roles to the main character, or the protagonist.
- Conflict. The primary problem or obstacle that unfolds in the plot that the protagonist must solve or overcome by the end of the narrative. The way in which the protagonist resolves the conflict of the plot results in the theme of the narrative.
- Theme. The ultimate message the narrative is trying to express; it can be either explicit or implicit.

Exercise 2

Take your freewriting exercise from the last section and start crafting it chronologically into a rough plot summary. Be sure to use the time transition words and phrases listed in Table 3.1 to sequence the events.

Collaboration: Please share with a classmate and compare your rough plot summary.

Writing a Narrative Essay

When writing a narrative essay, start by asking yourself if you want to write a factual or fictional story. Then freewrite about topics that are of general interest to you.

Once you have a general idea of what you will be writing about, you should sketch out the major events of the story that will compose your plot. Typically, these events will be revealed chronologically and climax at a central conflict that must be resolved by the end of the story. The use of strong details is crucial as you describe the events and characters in your narrative. You want the reader to emotionally engage with the world that you create in writing.

Tip: To create strong details, keep the human senses in mind. You want your reader to be immersed in the world that you create, so focus on details related to sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch as you describe people, places, and events in your narrative.

As always, it is important to start with a strong introduction to hook your reader into wanting to read more. Try opening the essay with an event that is interesting to introduce the story and get it going. Finally, your conclusion should help resolve the central conflict of the story and impress upon your reader the ultimate theme of the piece.

Exercise 3

On a separate sheet of paper, add two or three paragraphs to the plot summary you started in the last section. Describe in detail the main character and the setting of the first scene. Try to use all five senses in your descriptions.

Key Takeaways:

- Narration is the art of storytelling.
- Narratives can be either factual or fictional. In either case, narratives should emotionally engage the reader.
- Most narratives are composed of major events sequenced in chronological order.
- Time transition words and phrases are used to orient the reader in the sequence of a narrative.
- The four basic components to all narratives are plot, character, conflict, and theme.
- The use of sensory details is crucial to emotionally engaging the reader.
- A strong introduction is important to hook the reader. A strong conclusion should add resolution to the conflict and evoke the narrative's theme.

Chapter 3.2: Illustration

The Purpose of Illustration in Writing

To illustrate means to show or demonstrate something clearly. An effective illustration essay clearly demonstrates and supports a point through the use of evidence.

As you have already learned, the controlling idea of an essay is called a thesis. A writer can use different types of evidence to support his or her thesis. Using scientific studies, experts in a particular field, statistics, historical events, current events, analogies, and personal anecdotes are all ways in which a writer can illustrate a thesis. Ultimately, you want the evidence to help the reader “see” your point, as one would see a good illustration in a magazine or on a website. The stronger your evidence is, the more clearly the reader will consider your point.

Using evidence effectively can be challenging, though. The evidence you choose will usually depend on your subject and who your reader is (your audience). When writing an illustration essay, keep in mind the following:

Use evidence that is appropriate to your topic as well as appropriate for your audience.

Assess how much evidence you need to adequately explain your point depending on the complexity of the subject and the knowledge of your audience regarding that subject.

For example, if you were writing about a new communication software and your audience was a group of English-major undergrads, you might want to use an analogy or a personal story to illustrate how the software worked. You might also choose to add a few more pieces of evidence to make sure the audience understands your point. However, if you were writing about the same subject and your audience members were information technology (IT) specialists, you would likely use more technical evidence because they would be familiar with the subject.

Keeping in mind your subject in relation to your audience will increase your chances of effectively illustrating your point.

Tip: You never want to insult your readers’ intelligence by overexplaining concepts the audience members may already be familiar with, but it may be necessary to clearly articulate your point. When in doubt, add an extra example to illustrate your idea.

Exercise 1

On a separate piece of paper, form a thesis based on each of the following three topics. Then list the types of evidence that would best explain your point for each of the two audiences.

Topic: Combat and mental health

Audience: family members of veterans, doctors

Topic: Video games and teen violence

Audience: parents, children

Topic: Architecture and earthquakes

Audience: engineers, local townspeople

The Structure of an Illustration Essay

The controlling idea, or thesis, belongs at the beginning of the essay. Evidence is then presented in the essay's body paragraphs to support the thesis. You can start supporting your main point with your strongest evidence first, or you can start with evidence of lesser importance and have the essay build to increasingly stronger evidence.

The time transition words listed in Table 3.1 "Transition Words and Phrases for Expressing Time" are also helpful in ordering the presentation of evidence. Words like *first*, *second*, *third*, *currently*, *next*, and *finally* all help orient the reader and sequence evidence clearly. Because an illustration essay uses so many examples, it is also helpful to have a list of words and phrases to present each piece of evidence. Table 3.2 "Phrases of Illustration" provides a list of phrases for illustration.

case in point	for example
for instance	in particular
in this case	one example/another example
specifically	to illustrate

Table 3.2 Phrases of Illustration

Tip: Vary the phrases of illustration you use. Do not rely on just one. Variety in choice of words and phrasing is critical when trying to keep readers engaged in your writing and your ideas.

Exercise 2

On a separate sheet of paper, form a thesis based on one of the following topics. Then support that thesis with three pieces of evidence. Make sure to use a different phrase of illustration to introduce each piece of evidence you choose.

Cooking

Baseball

Work hours

Exercise

Traffic

Collaboration: Please share with a classmate and compare your answers. Discuss which topic you like the best or would like to learn more about. Indicate which thesis statement you perceive as the most effective.

Writing an Illustration Essay

First, decide on a topic that you feel interested in writing about. Then create an interesting introduction to engage the reader. The main point, or thesis, should be stated at the end of the introduction.

Gather evidence that is appropriate to both your subject and your audience. You can order the evidence in terms of importance, either from least important to most important or from most important to least important. Be sure to fully explain all of your examples using strong, clear supporting details.

Key Takeaways:

- An illustration essay clearly explains a main point using evidence.
- When choosing evidence, always gauge whether the evidence is appropriate for the subject as well as the audience.
- Organize the evidence in terms of importance, either from least important to most important or from most important to least important.
- Use time transitions to order evidence.
- Use phrases of illustration to call out examples.

Chapter 3.3: Description

The Purpose of Description in Writing

Writers use description in writing to make sure that their audience is fully immersed in the words on the page. This requires a concerted effort by the writer to describe his or her world through the use of sensory details.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, sensory details are descriptions that appeal to our sense of sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. Your descriptions should try to focus on the five senses because we all rely on these senses to experience the world. The use of sensory details, then, provides you the greatest possibility of relating to your audience and thus engaging them in your writing, making descriptive writing important not only during your education but also during everyday situations.

Tip: Avoid empty descriptors if possible. Empty descriptors are adjectives that can mean different things to different people. *Good, beautiful, terrific, and nice* are examples. The use of such words in descriptions can lead to misreads and confusion. *A good day*, for instance, can mean far different things depending on one's age, personality, or tastes.

Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, describe the following five items in a short paragraph. Use at least three of the five senses for each description.

Night

Beach

City

Dinner

Stranger

The Structure of a Description Essay

Description essays typically describe a person, a place, or an object using sensory details. The structure of a descriptive essay is more flexible than in some of the other rhetorical modes. The introduction of a description essay should set up the tone and point of the essay. The thesis should convey the writer's overall impression of the person, place, or object described in the body paragraphs.

The organization of the essay may best follow spatial order, an arrangement of ideas according to physical characteristics or appearance. Depending on what the writer describes, the organization could move from top to bottom, left to right, near to far, warm to cold, frightening to inviting, and so on.

For example, if the subject were a client's kitchen in the midst of renovation, you might start at one side of the room and move slowly across to the other end, describing appliances, cabinetry, and so on. Or you might choose to start with older remnants of the kitchen and progress to the new installations. Maybe start with the floor and move up toward the ceiling.

Exercise 2

On a separate sheet of paper, choose an organizing strategy and then execute it in a short paragraph for three of the following six items:

Train station

Your office

Your car

A coffee shop

Lobby of a movie theater

Mystery Option*

*Choose an object to describe but do not indicate it. Describe it, but preserve the mystery.

Writing a Description Essay

Choosing a subject is the first step in writing a description essay. Once you have chosen the person, place, or object you want to describe, your challenge is to write an effective thesis statement to guide your essay.

The remainder of your essay describes your subject in a way that best expresses your thesis. Remember, you should have a strong sense of how you will organize your essay. Choose a strategy and stick to it.

Every part of your essay should use vivid sensory details. The more you can appeal to your readers' senses, the more they will be engaged in your essay.

Key Takeaways

- Description essays should describe something vividly to the reader using strong sensory details.
- Sensory details appeal to the five human senses: sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch.
- A description essay should start with the writer's main impression of a person, a place, or an object.
- Use spatial order to organize your descriptive writing.

Chapter 3.4: Classification

The Purpose of Classification in Writing

The purpose of classification is to break down broad subjects into smaller, more manageable, more specific parts. We classify things in our daily lives all the time, often without even thinking about it. Cell phones, for example, have now become part of a broad category. They can be classified as feature phones, media phones, and smartphones.

Smaller categories, and the way in which these categories are created, help us make sense of the world. Keep both of these elements in mind when writing a classification essay.

Tip: Choose topics that you know well when writing classification essays. The more you know about a topic, the more you can break it into smaller, more interesting parts. Adding interest and insight will enhance your classification essays.

Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, break the following categories into smaller classifications.

The United States

Colleges and universities

Beverages

Fashion

The Structure of a Classification Essay

The classification essay opens with an introductory paragraph that introduces the broader topic. The thesis should then explain how that topic is divided into subgroups and why. Take the following introductory paragraph, for example:

When people think of New York, they often think of only New York City. But New York is actually a diverse state with a full range of activities to do, sights to see, and cultures to explore. In order to better understand the diversity of New York state, it is helpful to break it into these five separate regions: Long Island, New York City, Western New York, Central New York, and Northern New York.

The underlined thesis explains not only the category and subcategory but also the rationale for breaking it into those categories. Through this classification essay, the writer hopes to show his or her readers a different way of considering the state.

Each body paragraph of a classification essay is dedicated to fully illustrating each of the subcategories. In the previous example, then, each region of New York would have its own paragraph.

The conclusion should bring all the categories and subcategories back together again to show the reader the big picture. In the previous example, the conclusion might explain how the various sights and activities of each region of New York add to its diversity and complexity.

Tip: To avoid settling for an overly simplistic classification, make sure you break down any given topic at least three different ways. This will help you think outside the box and perhaps even learn something entirely new about a subject.

Exercise 2

Using your classifications from “Exercise 1”, write a brief paragraph explaining why you chose to organize each main category in the way that you did.

Writing a Classification Essay

Start with an engaging opening that will adequately introduce the general topic that you will be dividing into smaller subcategories. Your thesis should come at the end of your introduction. It should include the topic, your subtopics, and the reason you are choosing to break down the topic in the way that you are. Use the following classification thesis equation:

- topic + subtopics + rationale for the subtopics = thesis.

The organizing strategy of a classification essay is dictated by the initial topic and the subsequent subtopics. Each body paragraph is dedicated to fully illustrating each of the subtopics. In a way, coming up with a strong topic pays double rewards in a classification essay. Not only do you have a good topic, but you also have a solid organizational structure within which to write.

Be sure you use strong details and explanations for each subcategory paragraph that help explain and support your thesis. Also, be sure to give examples to illustrate your points. Finally, write a conclusion that links all the subgroups together again. The conclusion should successfully wrap up your essay by connecting it to your topic initially discussed in the introduction.

Key Takeaways:

- The purpose of classification is to break a subject into smaller, more manageable, more specific parts.
- Smaller subcategories help us make sense of the world, and the way in which these subcategories are created also helps us make sense of the world.
- A classification essay is organized by its subcategories.

Chapter 3.5: Process Analysis

The Purpose of Process Analysis in Writing

The purpose of a process analysis essay is to explain how to do something or how something works. In either case, the formula for a process analysis essay remains the same. The process is articulated into clear, definitive steps.

Almost everything we do involves following a step-by-step process. From riding a bike as children to learning various jobs as adults, we initially needed instructions to effectively execute the task. Likewise, we have likely had to instruct others, so we know how important good directions are—and how frustrating it is when they are poorly put together.

Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, make a bulleted list of all the steps that you feel would be required to clearly illustrate three of the following four processes:

Tying a shoelace

Parallel parking

Planning a successful first date

Being an effective communicator

The Structure of a Process Analysis Essay

The process analysis essay opens with a discussion of the process and a thesis statement that states the goal of the process.

The organization of a process analysis essay typically follows chronological order. The steps of the process are conveyed in the order in which they usually occur. Body paragraphs will be constructed based on these steps. If a particular step is complicated and needs a lot of explaining, then it will likely take up a paragraph on its own. But if a

series of simple steps is easier to understand, then the steps can be grouped into a single paragraph.

The time transition phrases covered in the Narration and Illustration sections are also helpful in organizing process analysis essays. Words such as *first*, *second*, *third*, *next*, and *finally* are helpful cues to orient reader and organize the content of essay.

Tip: Always have someone else read your process analysis to make sure it makes sense. Once we get too close to a subject, it is difficult to determine how clearly an idea is coming across. Having a friend or coworker read it over will serve as a good way to troubleshoot any confusing spots.

Exercise 2

Choose two of the lists you created in “Exercise 1” and start writing out the processes in paragraph form. Try to construct paragraphs based on the complexity of each step. For complicated steps, dedicate an entire paragraph. If less complicated steps fall in succession, group them into a single paragraph.

Writing a Process Analysis Essay

Choose a topic that is interesting, is relatively complex, and can be explained in a series of steps. As with other rhetorical writing modes, choose a process that you know well so that you can more easily describe the finer details about each step in the process. Your thesis statement should come at the end of your introduction, and it should state the final outcome of the process you are describing.

Body paragraphs are composed of the steps in the process. Each step should be expressed using strong details and clear examples. Use time transition phrases to help organize steps in the process and to orient readers. The conclusion should thoroughly describe the result of the process described in the body paragraphs.

Key Takeaways:

- A process analysis essay explains how to do something, how something works, or both.
- The process analysis essay opens with a discussion of the process and a thesis statement that states the outcome of the process.
- The organization of a process analysis essay typically follows a chronological sequence.
- Time transition phrases are particularly helpful in process analysis essays to organize steps and orient reader.

Chapter 3.6: Definition

The Purpose of Definition in Writing

The purpose of a definition essay may seem self-explanatory: the purpose of the definition essay is to simply define something. But defining terms in writing is often more complicated than just consulting a dictionary. In fact, the way we define terms can have far-reaching consequences for individuals as well as collective groups.

Take, for example, a word like *alcoholism*. The way in which one defines alcoholism depends on its legal, moral, and medical contexts. Lawyers may define alcoholism in terms of its legality; parents may define alcoholism in terms of its morality; and doctors will define alcoholism in terms of symptoms and diagnostic criteria. Think also of terms that people tend to debate in our broader culture. How we define words, such as *marriage* and *climate change*, has enormous impact on policy decisions and even on daily decisions. Think about conversations couples may have in which words like *commitment*, *respect*, or *love* need clarification.

Defining terms within a relationship, or any other context, can at first be difficult, but once a definition is established between two people or a group of people, it is easier to have productive dialogues. Definitions, then, establish the way in which people communicate ideas. They set parameters for a given discourse, which is why they are so important.

Tip: When writing definition essays, avoid terms that are too simple, that lack complexity. Think in terms of concepts, such as *hero*, *immigration*, or *loyalty*, rather than physical objects. Definitions of concepts, rather than objects, are often fluid and contentious, making for a more effective definition essay.

Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, write about a time in your own life in which the definition of a word, or the lack of a definition, caused an argument. Your term could be something as simple as the category of an all-star in sports or how to define a good movie. Or it could be something with higher stakes and wider impact, such as a political argument. Explain how the conversation began, how the argument hinged on the definition of the word, and how the incident was finally resolved.

Collaboration: Please share with a classmate and compare your responses.

The Structure of a Definition Essay

The definition essay opens with a general discussion of the term to be defined. You then state as your thesis your definition of the term.

The rest of the essay should explain the rationale for your definition. Remember that a dictionary's definition is limiting, and you should not rely strictly on the dictionary entry. Instead, consider the context in which you are using the word. Context identifies the circumstances, conditions, or setting in which something exists or occurs. Often words take on different meanings depending on the context in which they are used. For

example, the ideal leader in a battlefield setting could likely be very different than a leader in an elementary school setting. If a context is missing from the essay, the essay may be too short or the main points could be confusing or misunderstood.

The remainder of the essay should explain different aspects of the term's definition. For example, if you were defining a good leader in an elementary classroom setting, you might define such a leader according to personality traits: patience, consistency, and flexibility. Each attribute would be explained in its own paragraph.

Tip: For definition essays, try to think of concepts that you have a personal stake in. You are more likely to write a more engaging definition essay if you are writing about an idea that has personal value and importance.

Exercise 2

On a separate sheet of paper, define each of the following items in your own terms. If you can, establish a context for your definition.

Bravery

Adulthood

Consumer culture

Violence

Art

Writing a Definition Essay

Choose a topic that will be complex enough to be discussed at length. Choosing a word or phrase of personal relevance often leads to a more interesting and engaging essay.

After you have chosen your word or phrase, start your essay with an introduction that establishes the relevancy of the term in the chosen specific context. Your thesis comes at the end of the introduction, and it should clearly state your definition of the term in the specific context. Establishing a functional context from the beginning will orient readers and minimize misunderstandings.

The body paragraphs should each be dedicated to explaining a different facet of your definition. Make sure to use clear examples and strong details to illustrate your points. Your concluding paragraph should pull together all the different elements of your definition to ultimately reinforce your thesis.

Key Takeaways:

- Definitions establish the way in which people communicate ideas. They set parameters for a given discourse.
- Context affects the meaning and usage of words.
- The thesis of a definition essay should clearly state the writer's definition of the term in the specific context.
- Body paragraphs should explain the various facets of the definition stated in the thesis.

- The conclusion should pull all the elements of the definition together at the end and reinforce the thesis.

Chapter 3.7: Comparison and Contrast

The Purpose of Comparison and Contrast in Writing

Comparison in writing discusses elements that are similar, while contrast in writing discusses elements that are different. A compare-and-contrast essay, then, analyzes two subjects by comparing them, contrasting them, or both.

The key to a good compare-and-contrast essay is to choose two or more subjects that connect in a meaningful way. The purpose of conducting the comparison or contrast is not to state the obvious but rather to illuminate subtle differences or unexpected similarities. For example, if you wanted to focus on contrasting two subjects you would not pick apples and oranges; rather, you might choose to compare and contrast two types of oranges or two types of apples to highlight subtle differences. For example, Red Delicious apples are sweet, while Granny Smiths are tart and acidic. Drawing distinctions between elements in a similar category will increase the audience's understanding of that category, which is the purpose of the compare-and-contrast essay.

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

Exercise 1

Brainstorm an essay that leans toward contrast. Choose one of the following three categories. Pick two examples from each. Then come up with one similarity and three differences between the examples.

Romantic comedies

Internet search engines

Cell phones

Exercise 2

Brainstorm an essay that leans toward comparison. Choose one of the following three items. Then come up with one difference and three similarities.

Department stores and discount retail stores

Fast food chains and fine dining restaurants

Dogs and cats

The Structure of a Comparison and Contrast Essay

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

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

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

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

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

See Figure 3.1 “Comparison and Contrast Diagram,” which diagrams the ways to organize our organic versus conventional vegetables thesis.

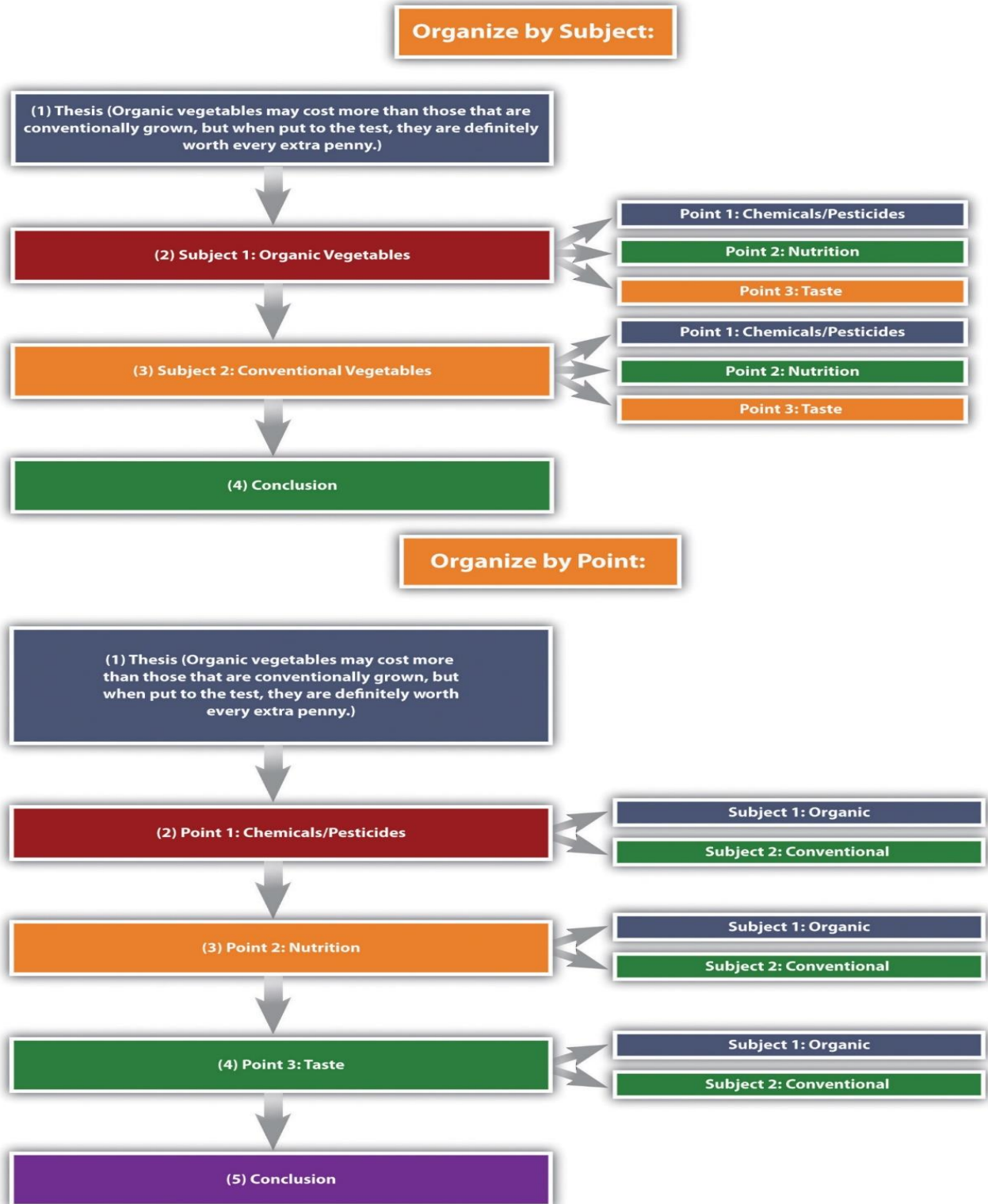


Figure 3.1 Comparison and Contrast Diagram

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

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

Comparison	Contrast
one similarity	one difference
another similarity	another difference
Both	Conversely
Like	in contrast
Likewise	Unlike
Similarly	While
in a similar fashion	Whereas

Table 3.3 Phrases of Comparison and Contrast

Exercise 3

Create an outline for each of the items you chose in “Exercise 1” and “Exercise 2”. Use the point-by-point organizing strategy for one of them, and use the subject organizing strategy for the other.

Writing a Comparison and Contrast Essay

First choose whether you want to compare seemingly disparate subjects, contrast seemingly similar subjects, or compare and contrast subjects. Once you have decided on a topic, introduce it with an engaging opening paragraph. Your thesis should come at the end of the introduction, and it should establish the subjects you will compare, contrast, or both as well as state what can be learned from doing so.

The body of the essay can be organized in one of two ways: by subject or by individual points. The organizing strategy that you choose will depend on, as always, your audience and your purpose. You may also consider your particular approach to the subjects as well as the nature of the subjects themselves; some subjects might better lend themselves to one structure or the other. Make sure to use comparison and contrast phrases to cue the reader to the ways in which you are analyzing the relationship between the subjects.

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

Key Takeaways:

- A compare-and-contrast essay analyzes two subjects by either comparing them, contrasting them, or both.
- The purpose of writing a comparison or contrast essay is not to state the obvious but rather to illuminate subtle differences or unexpected similarities between two subjects.
- The thesis should clearly state the subjects that are to be compared, contrasted, or both, and it should state what is to be learned from doing so.
- There are two main organizing strategies for compare-and-contrast essays.
- Organize by the subjects themselves, one then the other.
- Organize by individual points, in which you discuss each subject in relation to each point.
- Use phrases of comparison or phrases of contrast to signal to readers how exactly the two subjects are being analyzed.

Chapter 3.8: Cause and Effect

The Purpose of Cause and Effect in Writing

It is often considered human nature to ask, “why?” and “how?” We want to know how our child got sick so we can better prevent it from happening in the future, or why our colleague a pay raise because we want one as well. We want to know how much money we will save over the long term if we buy a hybrid car. These examples identify only a few of the relationships we think about in our lives, but each shows the importance of understanding cause and effect.

A cause is something that produces an event or condition; an effect is what results from an event or condition. The purpose of the cause-and-effect essay is to determine how various phenomena relate in terms of origins and results. Sometimes the connection between cause and effect is clear, but often determining the exact relationship between the two is very difficult. For example, the following effects of a cold may be easily identifiable: a sore throat, runny nose, and a cough. But determining the cause of the sickness can be far more difficult. A number of causes are possible, and to complicate matters, these possible causes could have combined to cause the sickness. That is, more than one cause may be responsible for any given effect. Therefore, cause-and-effect discussions are often complicated and frequently lead to debates and arguments.

Tip: Use the complex nature of cause and effect to your advantage. Often it is not necessary, or even possible, to find the exact cause of an event or to name the exact effect. So, when formulating a thesis, you can claim one of a number of causes or effects to be the primary, or main, cause or effect. As soon as you claim that one cause or one effect is more crucial than the others, you have developed a thesis.

Exercise 1

Consider the causes and effects in the following thesis statements. List a cause and effect for each one on your own sheet of paper.

The growing childhood obesity epidemic is a result of technology.

Much of the wildlife is dying because of the oil spill.

The town continued programs that it could no longer afford, so it went bankrupt.

More young people became politically active as use of the Internet spread throughout society.

While many experts believed the rise in violence was due to the poor economy, it was really due to the summer-long heat wave.

Exercise 2

Write three cause-and-effect thesis statements of your own for each of the following five broad topics.

Health and nutrition

Sports

Media

Politics

History

The Structure of a Cause-and-Effect Essay

The cause-and-effect essay opens with a general introduction to the topic, which then leads to a thesis that states the main cause, main effect, or various causes and effects of a condition or event.

The cause-and-effect essay can be organized in one of the following two primary ways:

1. Start with the cause and then talk about the effects.
2. Start with the effect and then talk about the causes.

For example, if your essay were on childhood obesity, you could start by talking about the effect of childhood obesity and then discuss the cause or you could start the same essay by talking about the cause of childhood obesity and then move to the effect.

Regardless of which structure you choose, be sure to explain each element of the essay fully and completely. Explaining complex relationships requires the full use of evidence, such as scientific studies, expert testimony, statistics, and anecdotes.

Because cause-and-effect essays determine how phenomena are linked, they make frequent use of certain words and phrases that denote such linkage. See Table 3.4 “Phrases of Causation” for examples of such terms.

as a result	Consequently
because	due to
hence	Since
thus	therefore

Table 3.4 Phrases of Causation

The conclusion should wrap up the discussion and reinforce the thesis, leaving the reader with a clear understanding of the relationship that was analyzed.

Tip: Be careful of resorting to empty speculation. In writing, speculation amounts to unsubstantiated guessing. Writers are particularly prone to such trappings in cause-and-effect arguments due to the complex nature of finding links between phenomena. Be sure to have clear evidence to support the claims that you make.

Exercise 3

Look at some of the cause-and-effect relationships from “Exercise 2.” Outline the links you listed. Outline one using a cause-then-effect structure. Outline the other using the effect-then-cause structure.

Writing a Cause-and-Effect Essay

Choose an event or condition that you think has an interesting cause-and-effect relationship. Introduce your topic in an engaging way. End your introduction with a thesis that states the main cause, the main effect, or both.

Organize your essay by starting with either the cause-then-effect structure or the effect-then-cause structure. Within each section, you should clearly explain and support the causes and effects using a full range of evidence. If you are writing about multiple causes or multiple effects, you may choose to sequence either in terms of order of importance. In other words, order the causes from least to most important (or vice versa), or order the effects from least important to most important (or vice versa).

Use the phrases of causation when trying to forge connections between various events or conditions. This will help organize your ideas and orient the reader. End your essay with a conclusion that summarizes your main points and reinforces your thesis.

Key Takeaways:

- The purpose of the cause-and-effect essay is to determine how various phenomena are related.
- The thesis states what the writer sees as the main cause, main effect, or various causes and effects of a condition or event.
- The cause-and-effect essay can be organized in one of these two primary ways:
 - Start with the cause and then talk about the effect.
 - Start with the effect and then talk about the cause.

- Strong evidence is particularly important in the cause-and-effect essay due to the complexity of determining connections between phenomena.
- Phrases of causation are helpful in signaling links between various elements in the essay.

Chapter 3.9: Persuasion

The Purpose of Persuasive Writing

The purpose of persuasion in writing is to convince, motivate, or move readers toward a certain point of view, or opinion. The act of trying to persuade automatically implies more than one opinion on the subject can be argued.

The idea of an argument often conjures up images of two people yelling and screaming in anger. In writing, however, an argument is very different. An argument is a reasoned opinion supported and explained by evidence. To argue in writing is to advance knowledge and ideas in a positive way. Written arguments often fail when they employ ranting rather than reasoning.

Tip: Most of us feel inclined to try to win the arguments we engage in. On some level, we all want to be right, and we want others to see the error of their ways. More times than not, however, arguments in which both sides try to win end up producing losers all around. The more productive approach is to persuade your audience to consider your opinion as a valid one, not simply the right one.

The Structure of a Persuasive Essay

The following five features make up the structure of a persuasive essay:

- Introduction and thesis
- Opposing and qualifying ideas
- Strong evidence in support of claim
- Style and tone of language
- A compelling conclusion

Creating an Introduction and Thesis

The persuasive essay begins with an engaging introduction that presents the general topic. The thesis typically appears somewhere in the introduction and states the writer's point of view.

Tip: Avoid forming a thesis based on a negative claim. For example, "The hourly minimum wage is not high enough for the average worker to live on." This is probably a true statement, but persuasive arguments should make a positive case. That is, the thesis statement should focus on how the hourly minimum wage is low or insufficient.

Acknowledging Opposing Ideas and Limits to Your Argument

acknowledge those opposing ideas. Avoiding ideas that conflict with your own gives the reader the impression that you may be uncertain, fearful, or unaware of opposing ideas. Thus it is essential that you not only address counterarguments but also do so respectfully.

Try to address opposing arguments earlier rather than later in your essay. Rhetorically speaking, ordering your positive arguments last allows you to better address ideas that conflict with your own, so you can spend the rest of the essay countering those arguments. This way, you leave your reader thinking about your argument rather than someone else's. You have the last word.

Acknowledging points of view different from your own also has the effect of fostering more credibility between you and the audience. They know from the outset that you are aware of opposing ideas and that you are not afraid to give them space.

It is also helpful to establish the limits of your argument and what you are trying to accomplish. In effect, you are conceding early on that your argument is not the ultimate authority on a given topic. Such humility can go a long way toward earning credibility and trust with an audience. Audience members will know from the beginning that you are a reasonable writer, and audience members will trust your argument as a result. For example, in the following concessionary statement, the writer advocates for stricter gun control laws, but she admits it will not solve all of our problems with crime:

Although tougher gun control laws are a powerful first step in decreasing violence in our streets, such legislation alone cannot end these problems since guns are not the only problem we face.

Such a concession will be welcome by those who might disagree with this writer's argument in the first place. To effectively persuade their readers, writers need to be modest in their goals and humble in their approach to get readers to listen to the ideas. See Table 3.5 "Phrases of Concession" for some useful phrases of concession.

although	granted that
of course	still
though	yet

Table 3.5 Phrases of Concession

Exercise 1

Try to form a thesis for each of the following topics. Remember the more specific your thesis, the better.

Foreign policy

Television and advertising

Stereotypes and prejudice

Gender roles and the workplace

Driving and cell phones

Collaboration: Please share with a classmate and compare your answers. Choose the thesis statement that most interests you and discuss why.

Bias in Writing

Everyone has various biases on any number of topics. For example, you might have a bias toward wearing black instead of brightly colored clothes or wearing jeans rather than formal wear. You might have a bias toward working at night rather than in the morning, or working by deadlines rather than getting tasks done in advance. These examples identify minor biases, of course, but they still indicate preferences and opinions.

Handling bias in writing and in daily life can be a useful skill. It will allow you to articulate your own points of view while also defending yourself against unreasonable points of view. The ideal in persuasive writing is to let your reader know your bias, but do not let that bias blind you to the primary components of good argumentation: sound, thoughtful evidence and a respectful and reasonable address of opposing sides.

The strength of a personal bias is that it can motivate you to construct a strong argument. If you are invested in the topic, you are more likely to care about the piece of writing. Similarly, the more you care, the more time and effort you are apt to put forth and the better the final product will be.

The weakness of bias is when the bias begins to take over the essay—when, for example, you neglect opposing ideas, exaggerate your points, or repeatedly insert yourself ahead of the subject by using *I* too often. Being aware of all three of these pitfalls will help you avoid them.

The Use of *I* in Writing

The use of *I* in writing is often a topic of debate, and the acceptance of its usage varies from instructor to instructor. It is difficult to predict the preferences for all your present and future instructors, but consider the effects it can potentially have on your writing.

Be mindful of the use of *I* in your writing because it can make your argument sound overly biased. There are two primary reasons:

- Excessive repetition of any word will eventually catch the reader's attention—and usually not in a good way. The use of *I* is no different.
- The insertion of *I* into a sentence alters not only the way a sentence might sound but also the composition of the sentence itself. *I* is often the subject of a sentence. If the subject of the essay is supposed to be, say, smoking, then by inserting yourself into the sentence, you are effectively displacing the subject of the essay into a secondary position. In the following example, the subject of the sentence is underlined:

- Smoking is bad.
- I think smoking is bad.

In the first sentence, the rightful subject, *smoking*, is in the subject position in the sentence. In the second sentence, the insertion of *I* and *think* replaces *smoking* as the subject, which draws attention to *I* and away from the topic that is supposed to be discussed. Remember to keep the message (the subject) and the messenger (the writer) separate.

Checklist: Developing Sound Arguments

- Does my essay contain the following elements?
- An engaging introduction
- A reasonable, specific thesis that is able to be supported by evidence
- A varied range of evidence from credible sources
- Respectful acknowledgement and explanation of opposing ideas
- A style and tone of language that is appropriate for the subject and audience
- Acknowledgement of the argument's limits
- A conclusion that will adequately summarize the essay and reinforce the thesis

Fact and Opinion

Facts are statements that can be definitely proven using objective data. The statement that is a fact is absolutely valid. In other words, the statement can be pronounced as true or false. For example, $2 + 2 = 4$. This expression identifies a true statement, or a fact, because it can be proved with objective data.

Opinions are personal views, or judgments. An opinion is what an individual believes about a particular subject. However, an opinion in argumentation must have legitimate backing; adequate evidence and credibility should support the opinion. Consider the credibility of expert opinions. Experts in a given field have the knowledge and credentials to make their opinion meaningful to a larger audience.

For example, you seek the opinion of your dentist when it comes to the health of your gums, and you seek the opinion of your mechanic when it comes to the maintenance of your car. Both have knowledge and credentials in those respective fields, which is why their opinions matter to you. But the authority of your dentist may be greatly diminished should he or she offer an opinion about your car, and vice versa.

In writing, you want to strike a balance between credible facts and authoritative opinions. Relying on one or the other will likely lose more of your audience than it gains.

Tip: The word *prove* is frequently used in the discussion of persuasive writing. Writers may claim that one piece of evidence or another proves the argument, but proving an argument is often not possible. No evidence proves a debatable topic one way or the other; that is why the topic is debatable. Facts can be proved, but opinions can only be supported, explained, and persuaded.

Exercise 2

On a separate sheet of paper, take three of the theses you formed in “Exercise 1,” and list the types of evidence you might use in support of that thesis.

Exercise 3

Using the evidence you provided in support of the three theses in “Exercise 2,” come up with at least one counterargument to each. Then write a concession statement, expressing the limits to each of your three arguments.

Using Visual Elements to Strengthen Arguments

Adding visual elements to a persuasive argument can often strengthen its persuasive effect. There are two main types of visual elements: quantitative visuals and qualitative visuals.

Quantitative visuals present data graphically. They allow the audience to see statistics spatially. The purpose of using quantitative visuals is to make logical appeals to the audience. For example, sometimes it is easier to understand the disparity in certain statistics if you can see how the disparity looks graphically. Bar graphs, pie charts, Venn diagrams, histograms, and line graphs are all ways of presenting quantitative data in spatial dimensions.

Qualitative visuals present images that appeal to the audience’s emotions. Photographs and pictorial images are examples of qualitative visuals. Such images often try to convey a story, and seeing an actual example can carry more power than hearing or reading about the example. For example, one image of a child suffering from malnutrition will likely have more of an emotional impact than pages dedicated to describing that same condition in writing.

Writing a Persuasive Essay

Choose a topic that you feel passionate about. If your instructor requires you to write about a specific topic, approach the subject from an angle that interests you. Begin your essay with an engaging introduction. Your thesis should typically appear somewhere in your introduction.

Start by acknowledging and explaining points of view that may conflict with your own to build credibility and trust with your audience. Also state the limits of your argument. This too helps you sound more reasonable and honest to those who may naturally be inclined to disagree with your view. By respectfully acknowledging opposing arguments and conceding limitations to your own view, you set a measured and responsible tone for the essay.

Make your appeals in support of your thesis by using sound, credible evidence. Use a balance of facts and opinions from a wide range of sources, such as scientific studies, expert testimony, statistics, and personal anecdotes. Each piece of evidence should be fully explained and clearly stated.

Make sure that your style and tone are appropriate for your subject and audience. Tailor your language and word choice to these two factors, while still being true to your own voice.

Finally, write a conclusion that effectively summarizes the main argument and reinforces your thesis.

Key Takeaways:

- The purpose of persuasion in writing is to convince or move readers toward a certain point of view, or opinion.
- An argument is a reasoned opinion supported and explained by evidence. To argue, in writing, is to advance knowledge and ideas in a positive way.
- A thesis that expresses the opinion of the writer in more specific terms is better than one that is vague.
- It is essential that you not only address counterarguments but also do so respectfully.
- It is also helpful to establish the limits of your argument and what you are trying to accomplish through a concession statement.
- To persuade a skeptical audience, you will need to use a wide range of evidence. Scientific studies, opinions from experts, historical precedent, statistics, personal anecdotes, and current events are all types of evidence that you might use in explaining your point.
- Make sure that your word choice and writing style is appropriate for both your subject and your audience.
- You should let your reader know your bias, but do not let that bias blind you to the primary components of good argumentation: sound, thoughtful evidence and respectfully and reasonably addressing opposing ideas.
- You should be mindful of the use of / in your writing because it can make your argument sound more biased than it needs to.
- Facts are statements that can be proven using objective data.
- Opinions are personal views, or judgments, that cannot be proven.
- In writing, you want to strike a balance between credible facts and authoritative opinions.
- Quantitative visuals present data graphically. The purpose of using quantitative visuals is to make logical appeals to the audience.
- Qualitative visuals present images that appeal to the audience's emotions.

Chapter 3.10: Chapter Exercises

Exercises

The thesis statement is a fundamental element of writing regardless of what rhetorical mode you are writing in. Formulate one more thesis for each of the modes discussed in this chapter.

Which rhetorical mode seems most aligned with who you are as a person? That is, which mode seems most useful to you? Explain why in a paragraph.

Over the next week, look closely at the texts and articles you read. Document in a journal exactly what type of rhetorical mode is being used. Sometimes it might be for an entire article, but sometimes you might see different modes within one article. The more you can detect various ways of communicating ideas, the easier it will be to do yourself.

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Chapter 4: What Makes a Good Sentence

Sentence writing

Imagine you are reading a book for school. You need to find important details that you can use for an assignment. However, when you begin to read, you notice that the book has very little punctuation. Sentences fail to form complete paragraphs and instead form one block of text without clear organization. Most likely, this book would frustrate and confuse you. Without clear and concise sentences, it is difficult to find the information you need.

For both students and professionals, clear communication is important. Whether you are typing an e-mail or writing a report, it is your responsibility to present your thoughts and ideas clearly and precisely. Writing in complete sentences is one way to ensure that you communicate well. This section covers how to recognize and write basic sentence structures and how to avoid some common writing errors.

Components of a Sentence

Clearly written, complete sentences require key information: a **subject**, a **verb**, and a complete idea. A sentence needs to make sense on its own. Sometimes, complete sentences are also called **independent clauses**. A clause is a group of words that may make up a sentence. An independent clause is a group of words that may stand alone as a complete, grammatically correct thought. The following sentences show independent clauses.

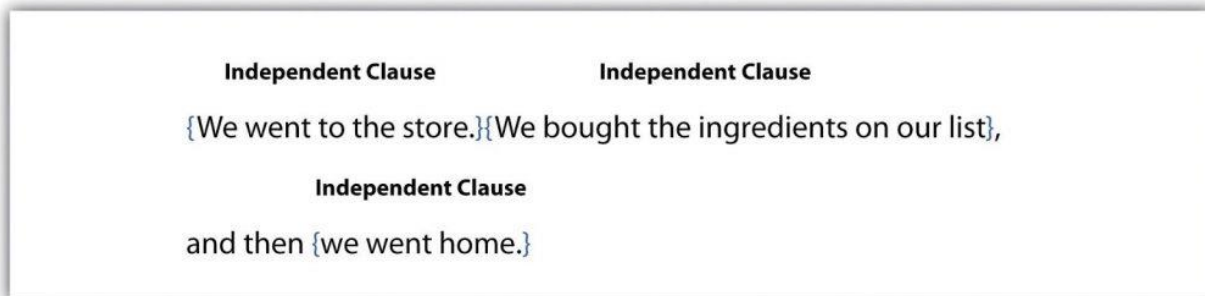


Figure 4.1 "Sentence Components"

All complete sentences have at least one independent clause. You can identify an independent clause by reading it on its own and looking for the subject and the verb.

Subjects

When you read a sentence, you may first look for the subject, or what the sentence is about. The subject usually appears at the beginning of a sentence as a **noun** or a **pronoun**. A noun is a word that identifies a person, place, thing, or idea. A pronoun is a word that replaces a noun. Common pronouns are *I, he, she, it, you, they, and we*. In the following sentences, the subject is underlined once.

Malik is the project manager for this project. He will give us our assignments.

In these sentences, the subject is a person: *Malik*. The pronoun *He* replaces and refers back to *Malik*.

The computer lab is where we will work. It will be open twenty-four hours a day.

In the first sentence, the subject is a place: *computer lab*. In the second sentence, the pronoun *It* substitutes for *computer lab* as the subject.

The project will run for three weeks. It will have a quick turnaround.

In the first sentence, the subject is a thing: *project*. In the second sentence, the pronoun *It* stands in for the *project*.

Tip: In this chapter, please refer to the following grammar key:

Subjects are underlined once.

Verbs are italicized.

LV means linking verb, HV means helping verb, and V means action verb.

Compound Subjects

A sentence may have more than one person, place, or thing as the subject. These subjects are called compound subjects. Compound subjects are useful when you want to discuss several subjects at once.

Desmond and Maria have been working on that design for almost a year. Books, magazines, and online articles are all good resources.

Prepositional Phrases

You will often read a sentence that has more than one noun or pronoun in it. You may encounter a group of words that includes a preposition with a noun or a pronoun. Prepositions connect a noun, pronoun, or verb to another word that describes or modifies that noun, pronoun, or verb. Common prepositions include *in*, *on*, *under*, *near*, *by*, *with*, and *about*. A group of words that begin with a **preposition** is called a **prepositional phrase**. A prepositional phrase begins with a preposition and modifies or describes a word. It cannot act as the subject of a sentence. The following circled phrases are examples of prepositional phrases.



Figure 4.2 "Prepositional Phrases"

Exercise 1

Read the following sentences. Underline the subjects, and circle the prepositional phrases.

1. The gym is open until nine o'clock tonight.
2. We went to the store to get some ice.
3. The student with the most extra credit will win a homework pass.
4. Maya and Tia found an abandoned cat by the side of the road.
5. The driver of that pickup truck skidded on the ice.
6. Anita won the race with time to spare.
7. The people who work for that company were surprised about the merger.
8. Working in haste means that you are more likely to make mistakes.
9. The soundtrack has over sixty songs in languages from around the world.
10. His latest invention does not work, but it has inspired the rest of us.

Verbs

Once you locate the subject of a sentence, you can move on to the next part of a complete sentence: the verb. A verb is often an action word that shows what the subject is doing. A verb can also link the subject to a describing word. There are three types of verbs that you can use in a sentence: **action verbs**, **linking verbs**, or **helping verbs**.

Action Verbs

A verb that connects the subject to an action is called an action verb. An action verb answers the question *what is the subject doing?* In the following sentences, the action verbs are in italics.

The dog *barked* at the jogger.

He *gave* a short speech before we ate.

Linking Verbs

A verb can often connect the subject of the sentence to a describing word. This type of verb is called a linking verb because it links the subject to a describing word. In the following sentences, the linking verbs are in italics.

The coat *was* old and dirty.

The clock *seemed* broken.

If you have trouble telling the difference between action verbs and linking verbs, remember that an action verb shows that the subject is doing something, whereas a linking verb simply connects the subject to another word that describes or modifies the subject.

A few verbs can be used as either action verbs or linking verbs.

Action Verb: The boy *looked* for his glove.

Linking Verb: The boy *looked* tired.

Although both sentences use the same verb, the two sentences have completely different meanings. In the first sentence, the verb describes the boy's action. In the second sentence, the verb describes the boy's appearance.

Helping Verbs

A third type of verb you may use as you write is a helping verb. Helping verbs are verbs that are used with the main verb to describe a mood or tense. Helping verbs are usually a form of *be*, *do*, or *have*. The word *can* is also used as a helping verb.

The restaurant *is known* for its variety of dishes.

She *does speak up* when prompted in class.

We *have seen* that movie three times.

She *can tell* when someone walks on her lawn.

(is, does, have, and can are helping verbs and known, speak up, seen, and tell are verbs)

Tip: Whenever you write or edit sentences, keep the subject and verb in mind. As you write, ask yourself these questions to keep yourself on track:

Subject: Who or what is the sentence about?

Verb: Which word shows an action or links the subject to a description?

Exercise 2

Copy each sentence onto your own sheet of paper and underline the verb(s) twice. Name the type of verb(s) used in the sentence in the space provided (LV, HV, or V).

1. The cat sounds ready to come back inside. _____
2. We have not eaten dinner yet. _____
3. It took four people to move the broken-down car. _____
4. The book was filled with notes from class. _____
5. We walked from room to room, inspecting for damages. _____
6. Harold was expecting a package in the mail. _____
7. The clothes still felt damp even though they had been through the dryer twice.

8. The teacher who runs the studio is often praised for his restoration work on old masterpieces. _____

Sentence Structure, Including Fragments and Run-ons

Now that you know what makes a complete sentence—a subject and a verb—you can use other parts of speech to build on this basic structure. Good writers use a variety of

sentence structures to make their work more interesting. This section covers different sentence structures that you can use to make longer, more complex sentences.

Sentence Patterns

Six basic subject-verb patterns can enhance your writing. A sample sentence is provided for each pattern. As you read each sentence, take note of where each part of the sentence falls. Notice that some sentence patterns use action verbs and others use linking verbs.

Subject–Verb

Computers (subject) *hum* (verb)

Subject–Linking Verb–Noun

Computers (subject) *are* (linking verb) tool (noun)

Subject–Linking Verb–Adjective

Computers (subject) *are* (linking verb) expensive (adjective)

Subject–Verb–Adverb

Computers (subject) *calculate* (verb) quickly (adverb)

Subject–Verb–Direct Object

When you write a sentence with a direct object (DO), make sure that the DO receives the action of the verb.

Sally (subject) *rides* (verb) a motorcycle (direct object)

Subject–Verb–Indirect Object–Direct Object

In this sentence structure, an indirect object explains *to whom* or *to what* the action is being done. The indirect object is a noun or pronoun, and it comes before the direct object in a sentence.

My coworker (subject) *gave* (verb) me (indirect object) the reports (direct object)

Exercise 3

Use what you have learned so far to bring variety in your writing. Use the following lines or your own sheet of paper to write six sentences that practice each basic sentence pattern. When you have finished, label each part of the sentence (S, V, LV, N, Adj, Adv, DO, IO).

1. S
2. V
3. LV
4. N
5. Adj
6. Adv
7. Do
8. IO

Fragments

The sentences you have encountered so far have been independent clauses. As you look more closely at your past writing assignments, you may notice that some of your sentences are not complete. A sentence that is missing a subject or a verb is called a fragment. A fragment may include a description or may express part of an idea, but it does not express a complete thought.

Fragment: Children helping in the kitchen.

Complete sentence: Children helping in the kitchen **often make a mess.**

You can easily fix a fragment by adding the missing subject or verb. In the example, the sentence was missing a verb. Adding *often make a mess* creates an S-V-N sentence structure.

EDITING FRAGMENTS THAT ARE MISSING A SUBJECT OR A VERB

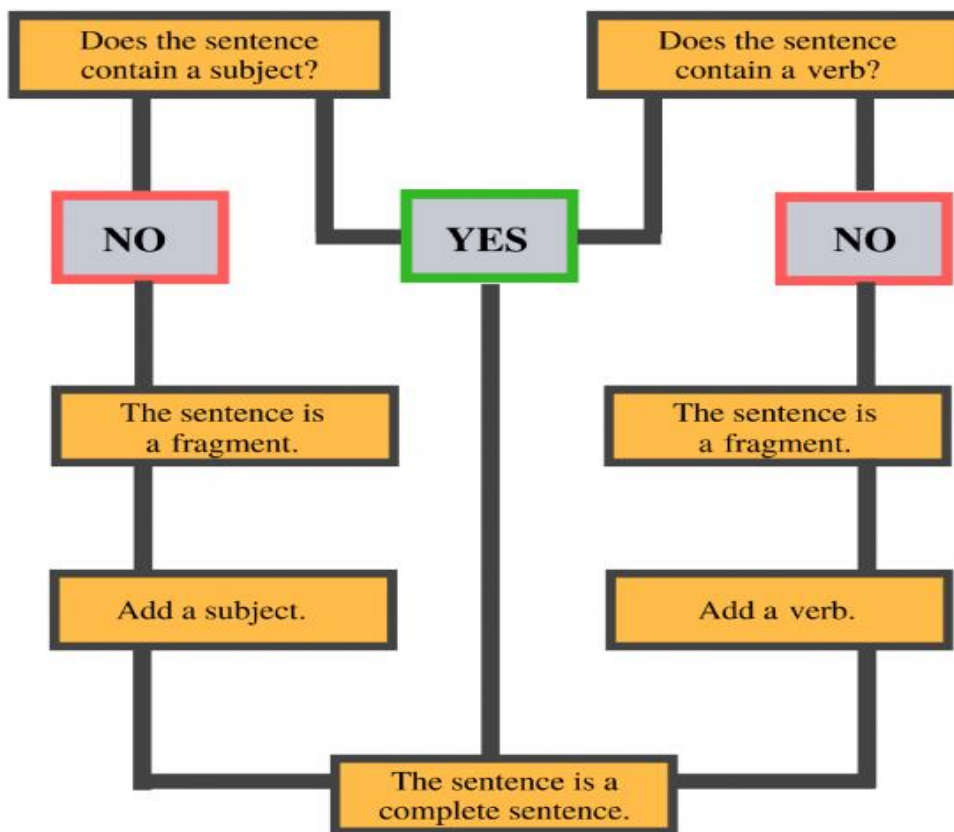


Figure 4.3 "Editing Fragments That Are Missing a Subject or a Verb"

See whether you can identify what is missing in the following fragments:

Fragment: Told her about the broken vase.

Complete sentence: I told her about the broken vase.

Fragment: The store down on Main Street.

Complete sentence: The store down on Main Street **sells music**.

Common Sentence Errors

Fragments often occur because of some common error, such as starting a sentence with a preposition, a dependent word, an infinitive, or a gerund. If you use the six basic sentence patterns when you write, you should be able to avoid these errors and thus avoid writing fragments.

When you see a preposition, check to see that it is part of a sentence containing a subject and a verb. If it is not connected to a complete sentence, it is a fragment, and you will need to fix this type of fragment by combining it with another sentence. You can add the prepositional phrase to the end of the sentence. If you add it to the beginning of the other sentence, insert a comma after the prepositional phrase.

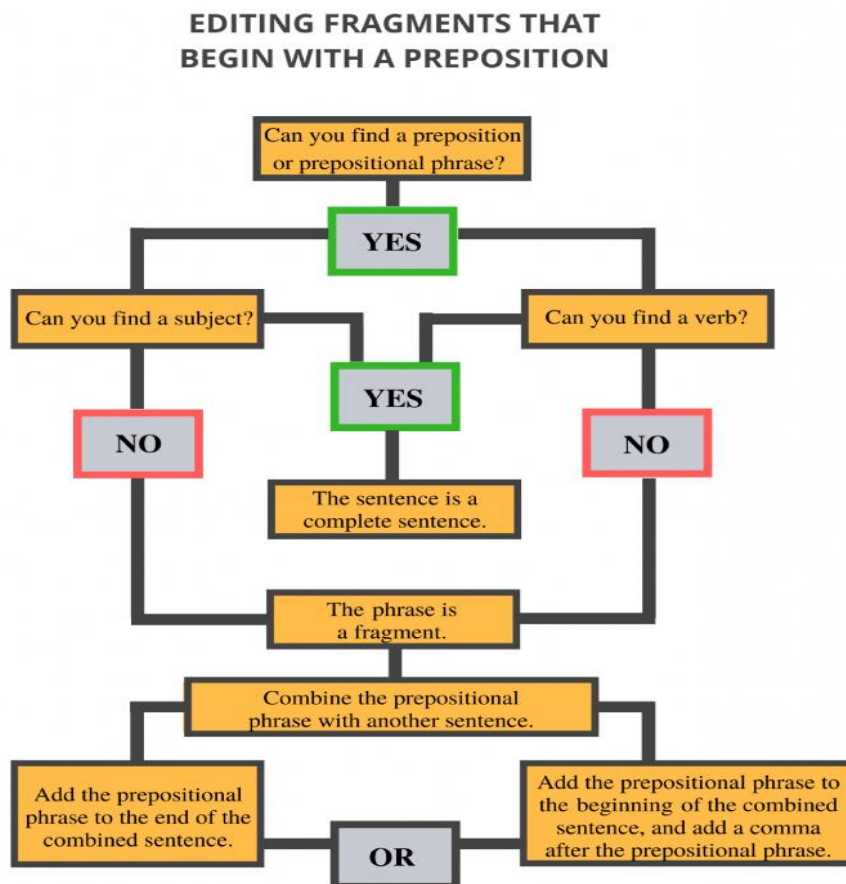


Figure 4.4 “Editing Fragments That Begin with a Preposition”

Example A

Incorrect: After walking over two miles. John remembered his wallet.

Correct: After walking over two miles, John remembered his wallet.

Correct: John remembered his wallet after walking over two miles.

Example B

Incorrect: The dog growled at the vacuum cleaner. When it was switched on.

Correct: When the vacuum cleaner was switched on, the dog growled.

Correct: The dog growled at the vacuum cleaner when it was switched on.

Clauses that start with a dependent word—such as *since*, *because*, *without*, or *unless*—are similar to prepositional phrases. Like prepositional phrases, these clauses can be fragments if they are not connected to an independent clause containing a subject and a verb. To fix the problem, you can add such a fragment to the beginning or end of a sentence. If the fragment is added at the beginning of a sentence, add a comma.

Incorrect: Because we lost power. The entire family overslept.

Correct: Because we lost power, the entire family overslept.

Correct: The entire family overslept because we lost power.

Incorrect: He has been seeing a physical therapist. Since his accident.

Correct: Since his accident, he has been seeing a physical therapist.

Correct: He has been seeing a physical therapist since the accident.

When you encounter a word ending in *-ing* in a sentence, identify whether or not this word is used as a verb in the sentence. You may also look for a helping verb. If the word is not used as a verb or if no helping verb is used with the *-ing* verb form, the verb is being used as a noun. An *-ing* verb form used as a noun is called a gerund.

Verb: I was (helping verb) *working* (verb) on homework until midnight.

Noun: Working until midnight makes me tired the next morning.

Once you know whether the *-ing* word is acting as a noun or a verb, look at the rest of the sentence. Does the entire sentence make sense on its own? If not, what you are looking at is a fragment. You will need to either add the parts of speech that are missing or combine the fragment with a nearby sentence.

EDITING FRAGMENTS THAT BEGIN WITH A GERUND

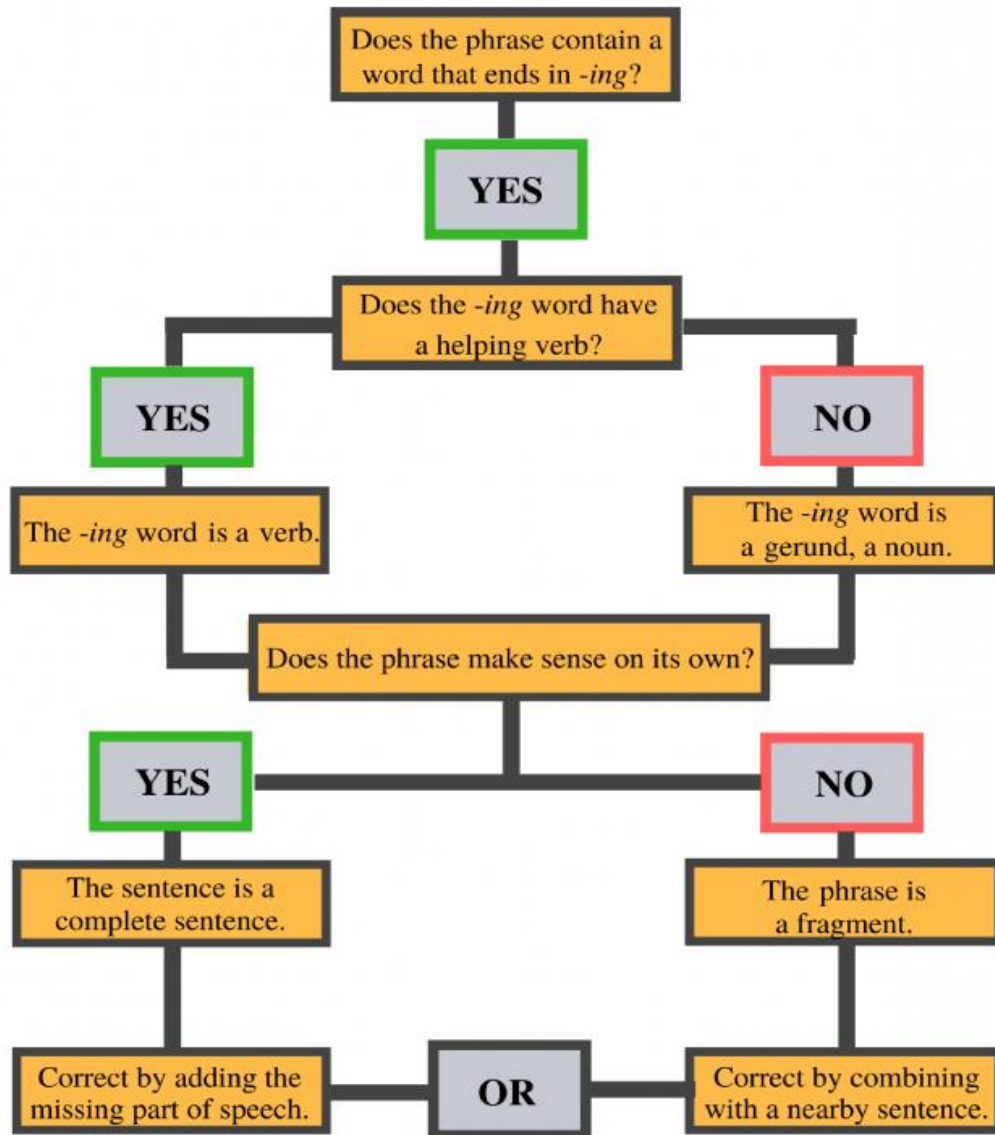


Figure 4.5 "Editing Fragments That Begin with a Gerund"

Incorrect: Taking deep breaths. Saul prepared for his presentation.

Correct: Taking deep breaths, Saul prepared for his presentation.

Correct: Saul prepared for his presentation. He was taking deep breaths.

Incorrect: Congratulating the entire team. Sarah raised her glass to toast their success.

Correct: She was congratulating the entire team. Sarah raised her glass to toast their success.

Correct: Congratulating the entire team, Sarah raised her glass to toast their success.

Another error in sentence construction is a fragment that begins with an infinitive. An infinitive is a verb paired with the word *to*; for example, *to run*, *to write*, or *to reach*. Although infinitives are verbs, they can be used as nouns, adjectives, or adverbs. You can correct a fragment that begins with an infinitive by either combining it with another sentence or adding the parts of speech that are missing.

Incorrect: We needed to make three hundred more paper cranes. To reach the one thousand mark.

Correct: We needed to make three hundred more paper cranes to reach the one thousand mark.

Correct: We needed to make three hundred more paper cranes. We wanted to reach the one thousand mark.

Exercise 4

Copy the following sentences onto your own sheet of paper and circle the fragments. Then combine the fragment with the independent clause to create a complete sentence:

1. Working without taking a break. We try to get as much work done as we can in an hour.
2. I needed to bring work home. In order to meet the deadline.
3. Unless the ground thaws before spring break. We won't be planting any tulips this year.
4. Turning the lights off after he was done in the kitchen. Robert tries to conserve energy whenever possible.
5. You'll find what you need if you look. On the shelf next to the potted plant.
6. To find the perfect apartment. Deidre scoured the classifieds each day.

Run-on Sentences

Just as short, incomplete sentences can be problematic, lengthy sentences can be problematic too. Sentences with two or more independent clauses that have been incorrectly combined are known as run-on sentences. A run-on sentence may be either a fused sentence or a comma splice.

Fused sentence: A family of foxes lived under our shed young foxes played all over the yard.

Comma splice: We looked outside, the kids were hopping on the trampoline.

When two complete sentences are combined into one without any punctuation, the result is a fused sentence. When two complete sentences are joined by a comma, the result is a comma splice. Both errors can easily be fixed.

Punctuation

One way to correct run-on sentences is to correct the punctuation. For example, adding a period will correct the run-on by creating two separate sentences.

Run-on: There were no seats left, we had to stand in the back.

Correct: There were no seats left. We had to stand in the back.

Using a semicolon between the two complete sentences will also correct the error. A semicolon allows you to keep the two closely related ideas together in one sentence. When you punctuate with a semicolon, make sure that both parts of the sentence are independent clauses.

Run-on: The accident closed both lanes of traffic we waited an hour for the wreckage to be cleared.

Complete sentence: The accident closed both lanes of traffic; we waited an hour for the wreckage to be cleared.

When you use a semicolon to separate two independent clauses, you may wish to add a transition word to show the connection between the two thoughts. After the semicolon, add the transition word and follow it with a comma.

Run-on: The project was put on hold we didn't have time to slow down, so we kept working.

Complete sentence: The project was put on hold; however, we didn't have time to slow down, so we kept working.

Coordinating Conjunctions

You can also fix run-on sentences by adding a comma and a coordinating conjunction. A coordinating conjunction acts as a link between two independent clauses.

Tip: These are the seven coordinating conjunctions that you can use: *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, and so*. Use these words appropriately when you want to link the two independent clauses. The acronym *FANBOYS* will help you remember this group of coordinating conjunctions.

Run-on: The new printer was installed, no one knew how to use it.

Complete sentence: The new printer was installed, but no one knew how to use it.

Dependent Words

Adding dependent words is another way to link independent clauses. Like the coordinating conjunctions, dependent words show a relationship between two independent clauses.

Run-on: We took the elevator, the others still got there before us.

Complete sentence: Although we took the elevator, the others got there before us.

Run-on: Cobwebs covered the furniture, the room hadn't been used in years.

Complete sentence: Cobwebs covered the furniture **because** the room hadn't been used in years.

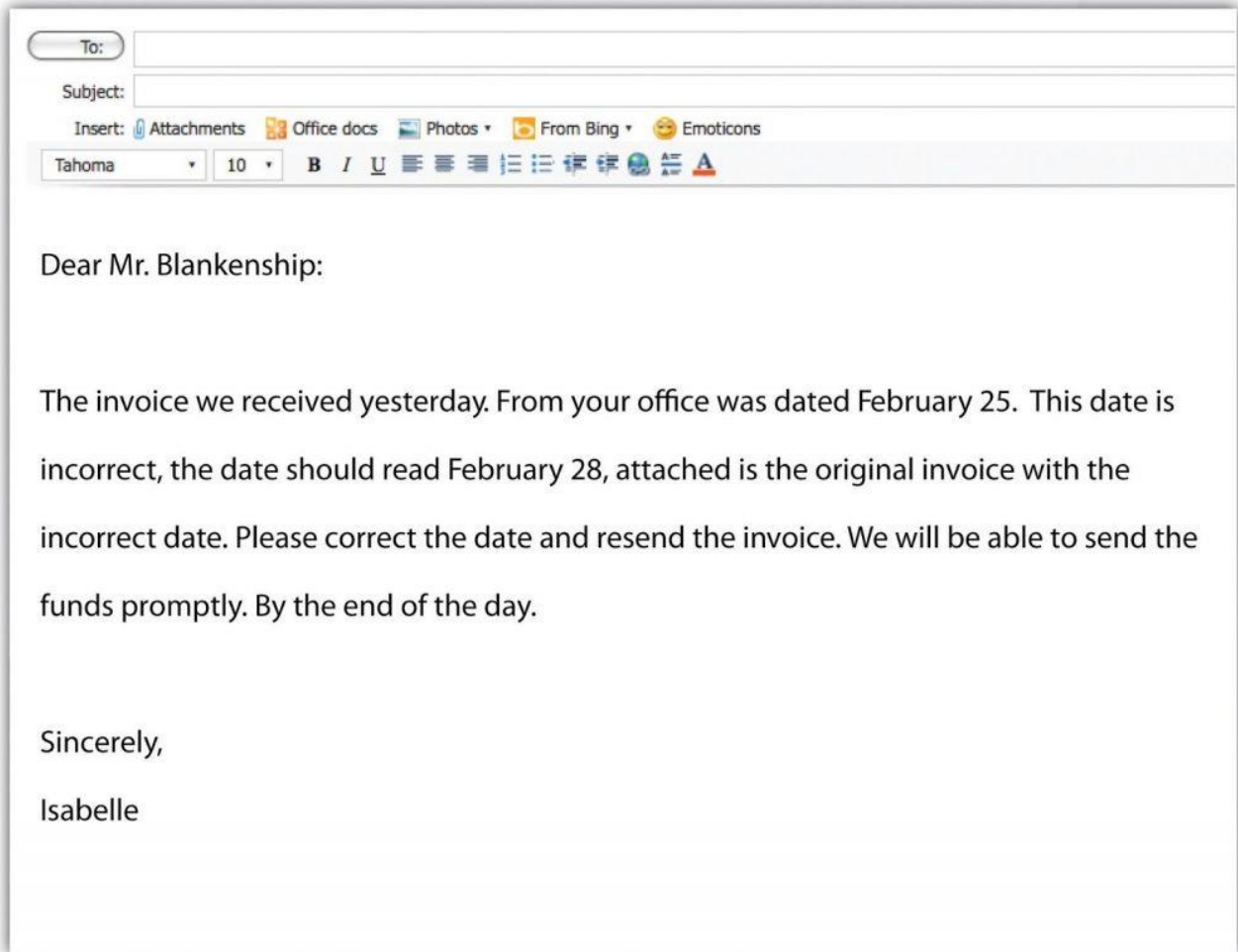


Figure 4.6 “Sample e-mail”

Isabelle’s e-mail opens with two fragments and two run-on sentences containing comma splices. The e-mail ends with another fragment. What effect would this e-mail have on Mr. Blankenship or other readers? Mr. Blankenship or other readers may not think highly of Isabelle’s communication skills or—worse—may not understand the message at all!

Communications written in precise, complete sentences are not only more professional but also easier to understand. Before you hit the “send” button, read your e-mail carefully to make sure that the sentences are complete, are not run together, and are correctly punctuated.

Exercise 5

A reader can get lost or lose interest in material that is too dense and rambling. Use what you have learned about run-on sentences to correct the following passages:

1. The report is due on Wednesday but we're flying back from Miami that morning. I told the project manager that we would be able to get the report to her later that day she suggested that we come back a day early to get the report done and I told her we had meetings until our flight took off. We e-mailed our contact who said that they would check with his boss, she said that the project could afford a delay as long as they wouldn't have to make any edits or changes to the file our new deadline is next Friday.

2. Anna tried getting a reservation at the restaurant, but when she called they said that there was a waiting list so she put our names down on the list when the day of our reservation arrived we only had to wait thirty minutes because a table opened up unexpectedly which was good because we were able to catch a movie after dinner in the time we'd expected to wait to be seated.

3. Without a doubt, my favorite artist is Leonardo da Vinci, not because of his paintings but because of his fascinating designs, models, and sketches, including plans for scuba gear, a flying machine, and a life-size mechanical lion that actually walked and moved its head. His paintings are beautiful too, especially when you see the computer enhanced versions researchers use a variety of methods to discover and enhance the paintings' original colors, the result of which are stunningly vibrant and yet delicate displays of the man's genius.

Key Takeaways:

- A sentence is complete when it contains both a subject and verb. A complete sentence makes sense on its own.
- Every sentence must have a subject, which usually appears at the beginning of the sentence. A subject may be a noun (a person, place, or thing) or a pronoun.
- A prepositional phrase describes, or modifies, another word in the sentence but cannot be the subject of a sentence.
- Variety in sentence structure and length improves writing by making it more interesting and more complex.
- Fragments and run-on sentences are two common errors in sentence construction.
- Fragments can be corrected by adding a missing subject or verb. Fragments that begin with a preposition or a dependent word can be corrected by combining the fragment with another sentence.
- Run-on sentences can be corrected by adding appropriate punctuation or adding a coordinating conjunction.

Subject-verb agreement

In the workplace, you want to present a professional image. Your outfit or suit says something about you when meeting face-to-face, and your writing represents you in

your absence. Grammatical mistakes in your writing or even in speaking make a negative impression on coworkers, clients, and potential employers. Subject-verb agreement is one of the most common errors that people make. Having a solid understanding of this concept is critical when making a good impression, and it will help ensure that your ideas are communicated clearly.

Agreement

Agreement in speech and in writing refers to the proper grammatical match between words and phrases. Parts of sentences must agree, or correspond with other parts, in number, person, case, and gender.

Number. All parts must match in singular or plural forms.

Person. All parts must match in first person (*I*), second person (*you*), or third person (*he, she, it, they*) forms.

Case. All parts must match in subjective (*I, you, he, she, it, they, we*), objective (*me, her, him, them, us*), or possessive (*my, mine, your, yours, his, her, hers, their, theirs, our, ours*) forms.

Gender. All parts must match in male or female forms.

Subject-verb agreement describes the proper match between subjects and verbs.

Because subjects and verbs are either singular or plural, the subject of a sentence and the verb of a sentence must agree with each other in number. That is, a singular subject belongs with a singular verb form, and a plural subject belongs with a plural verb form.

Singular: The cat *jumps* over the fence.

Plural: The cats *jump* over the fence.

Regular Verbs

Regular verbs follow a predictable pattern. For example, in the third person singular, regular verbs always end in -s. Other forms of regular verbs do not end in -s. Study the following regular verb forms in the present tense.

	SINGULAR FORM	PLURAL FORM
FIRST PERSON	I live	We live
SECOND PERSON	You live	You live
THIRD PERSON	He/She/It lives	They live

Figure 4.7 “Regular Verb Forms in the Present Tense”

Tip: Add an *-es* to the third person singular form of regular verbs that end in *-sh*, *-x*, *-ch*, and *-s*. (I wish/He wishes, I fix/She fixes, I watch/It watches, I kiss/He kisses.)

Singular: I *read* every day.

Plural: We *read* every day.

In these sentences, the verb form stays the same for the first person singular and the first person plural.

Singular: You *stretch* before you go to bed.

Plural: You *stretch* before every game.

In these sentences, the verb form stays the same for the second person singular and the second person plural. In the singular form, the pronoun *you* refers to one person. In the plural form, the pronoun *you* refer to a group of people, such as a team.

Singular: My mother *walks* to work every morning.

In this sentence, the subject is *mother*. Because the sentence only refers to one mother, the subject is singular. The verb in this sentence must be in the third person singular form.

Plural: My friends *like* the same music as I do.

In this sentence, the subject is *friends*. Because this subject refers to more than one person, the subject is plural. The verb in this sentence must be in the third person plural form.

Tip: Many singular subjects can be made plural by adding an *-s*. Most regular verbs in the present tense end with an *-s* in the third person singular. This does not make the verbs plural.

Singular subject, singular verb: The cat *rac*es across the yard.

Plural subject, plural verb: The cats *rac*e across the yard.

Exercise 6

On your own sheet of paper, write the correct verb form for each of the following sentences:

1. I (brush/brushes) my teeth twice a day.
2. You (wear/wears) the same shoes every time we go out.
3. He (kick/kicks) the soccer ball into the goal.
4. She (watch/watches) foreign films.
5. Catherine (hide/hides) behind the door.
6. We (want/wants) to have dinner with you.

7. You (work/works) together to finish the project.
8. They (need/needs) to score another point to win the game.
9. It (eat/eats) four times a day.
10. David (fix/fixes) his own motorcycle.

Irregular Verbs

Not all verbs follow a predictable pattern. These verbs are called irregular verbs. Some of the most common irregular verbs are *be*, *have*, and *do*. Learn the forms of these verbs in the present tense to avoid errors in subject-verb agreement.

Be

Study the different forms of the verb *to be* in the present tense.

	SINGULAR FORM	PLURAL FORM
FIRST PERSON	I am	We are
SECOND PERSON	You are	You are
THIRD PERSON	He/She/It is	They are

Figure 4.8 “Forms of To Be Present Tense”

Have

Study the different forms of the verb *to have* in the present tense.

	SINGULAR FORM	PLURAL FORM
FIRST PERSON	I have	We have
SECOND PERSON	You have	You have
THIRD PERSON	He/She/It has	They have

Figure 4.9 “Forms of To Have Present Tense”

Do

Study the different forms of the verb *to do* in the present tense.

	SINGULAR FORM	PLURAL FORM
FIRST PERSON	I do	We do
SECOND PERSON	You do	You do
THIRD PERSON	He/She/It does	They do

Figure 4.10 “Forms of To Do Present Tense”

Exercise 7

Complete the following sentences by writing the correct present tense form of *be*, *have*, or *do*. Use your own sheet of paper to complete this exercise.

1. I _____ sure that you will succeed.
2. They _____ front-row tickets to the show.
3. He _____ a great Elvis impersonation.
4. We _____ so excited to meet you in person!
5. She _____ a fever and a sore throat.
6. You _____ not know what you are talking about.
7. You _____ all going to pass this class.
8. She _____ not going to like that.
9. It _____ appear to be the right size.
10. They _____ ready to take this job seriously.

Errors in Subject-Verb Agreement

Errors in subject-verb agreement may occur when:

- a sentence contains a compound subject;
- the subject of the sentence is separate from the verb;
- the subject of the sentence is an indefinite pronoun, such as *anyone* or *everyone*;
- the subject of the sentence is a collective noun, such as *team* or *organization*;
- the subject appears after the verb.

Recognizing the sources of common errors in subject-verb agreement will help you avoid these errors in your writing. This section covers the subject-verb agreement errors in more detail.

Compound Subjects

A compound subject is formed by two or more nouns and the coordinating conjunctions *and*, *or*, or *nor*. A compound subject can be made of singular subjects, plural subjects, or a combination of singular and plural subjects.

Compound subjects combined with *and* take a plural verb form.

Two singular subjects: Alicia and Miguel *ride* their bikes to the beach.

Two plural subjects: The girls and the boys *ride* their bikes to the beach.

Singular and plural subjects: Alicia and the boys *ride* their bikes to the beach.

Compound subjects combined with *or* and *nor* are treated separately. The verb must agree with the subject that is nearest to the verb.

Two singular subjects: Neither Elizabeth nor Rianna *wants* to eat at that restaurant.

Two plural subjects: Neither the kids nor the adults *want* to eat at that restaurant.

Singular and plural subjects: Neither Elizabeth nor the kids *want* to eat at that restaurant.

Plural and singular subjects: Neither the kids nor Elizabeth *wants* to eat at that restaurant.

Two singular subjects: Either you or Jason *takes* the furniture out of the garage.

Two plural subjects: Either you or the twins *take* the furniture out of the garage.

Singular and plural subjects: Either Jason or the twins *take* the furniture out of the garage.

Plural and singular subjects: Either the twins or Jason *takes* the furniture out of the garage.

Tip: If you can substitute the word *they* for the compound subject, then the sentence takes the third person plural verb form.

Separation of Subjects and Verbs

As you read or write, you may come across a sentence that contains a phrase or clause that separates the subject from the verb. Often, prepositional phrases or dependent clauses add more information to the sentence and appear between the subject and the verb. However, the subject and the verb must still agree.

If you have trouble finding the subject and verb, cross out or ignore the phrases and clauses that begin with prepositions or dependent words. The subject of a sentence will never be in a prepositional phrase or dependent clause.

The following is an example of a subject and verb separated by a prepositional phrase:

- The students with the best grades *win* the academic awards.

- The puppy under the table *is* my favorite.
- The following is an example of a subject and verb separated by a dependent clause:
 - The car that I bought *has* power steering and a sunroof.
 - The representatives who are courteous *sell* the most tickets.

Indefinite Pronouns

Indefinite pronouns refer to an unspecified person, thing, or number. When an indefinite pronoun serves as the subject of a sentence, you will often use a singular verb form. However, keep in mind that exceptions arise. Some indefinite pronouns may require a plural verb form. To determine whether to use a singular or plural verb with an indefinite pronoun, consider the noun that the pronoun would refer to. If the noun is plural, then use a plural verb with the indefinite pronoun. View the chart to see a list of common indefinite pronouns and the verb forms they agree with.

Indefinite Pronouns That Always Take a Singular Verb	Indefinite Pronouns That Can Take a Singular or Plural Verb
anybody, anyone, anything	All
each	Any
everybody, everyone, everything	None
much	Some
many	
nobody, no one, nothing	
somebody, someone, something	

Figure 4.11 “Common Indefinite Pronouns”

Singular: Everybody in the kitchen *sings* along when that song comes on the radio.

The indefinite pronoun *everybody* takes a singular verb form because *everybody* refers to a group performing the same action as a single unit.

Plural: All the people in the kitchen *sing* along when that song comes on the radio.

The indefinite pronoun *all* takes a plural verb form because *all* refers to the plural noun *people*. Because *people* is plural, *all* is plural.

Singular: All the cake *is* on the floor.

In this sentence, the indefinite pronoun *all* takes a singular verb form because *all* refers to the singular noun *cake*. Because *cake* is singular, *all* is singular.

Collective Nouns

A collective noun is a noun that identifies more than one person, place, or thing and considers those people, places, or things one singular unit. Because collective nouns are counted as one, they are singular and require a singular verb. Some commonly used collective nouns are *group*, *team*, *army*, *flock*, *family*, and *class*.

Singular: The class *is* going on a field trip.

In this sentence, *class* is a collective noun. Although the class consists of many students, the class is treated as a singular unit and requires a singular verb form.

The Subject Follows the Verb

You may encounter sentences in which the subject comes after the verb instead of before the verb. In other words, the subject of the sentence may not appear where you expect it to appear. To ensure proper subject-verb agreement, you must correctly identify the subject and the verb.

Here or There

In sentences that begin with *here* or *there*, the subject follows the verb.

Here *is* my wallet!

There *are* thirty dolphins in the water.

If you have trouble identifying the subject and the verb in sentences that start with *here* or *there*; it may help to reverse the order of the sentence so the subject comes first.

My wallet *is* here!

Thirty dolphins *are* in the water.

Questions

When you ask questions, a question word (*who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why*, or *how*) appears first. The verb and then the subject follow.

Who *are* the people you are related to?

When *am* I going to go to the grocery store?

Tip: If you have trouble finding the subject and the verb in questions, try answering the question being asked.

When *am* I going to the grocery store? I *am* going to the grocery store tonight!

Exercise 8

Correct the errors in subject-verb agreement in the following sentences. If there are no errors in subject-verb agreement, write *OK*. Copy the corrected sentence or the word *OK* on your own sheet of notebook paper.

1. My dog and cats chases each other all the time.
2. The books that are in my library is the best I have ever read.
3. Everyone are going to the concert except me.
4. My family are moving to California.
5. Here is the lake I told you about.
6. There is the newspapers I was supposed to deliver.
7. Which room is bigger?
8. When are the movie going to start?
9. My sister and brother cleans up after themselves.
10. Some of the clothes is packed away in the attic.

Exercise 9

Correct the errors in subject-verb agreement in the following paragraph. Copy the paragraph on a piece of notebook paper and make corrections.

Dear Hiring Manager,

I feels that I am the ideal candidate for the receptionist position at your company. I has three years of experience as a receptionist in a company that is similar to yours. My phone skills and written communication is excellent. These skills, and others that I have learned on the job, helps me understand that every person in a company helps make the business a success. At my current job, the team always say that I am very helpful. Everyone appreciate when I go the extra mile to get the job done right. My current employer and coworkers feels that I am an asset to the team. I is efficient and organized. Is there any other details about me that you would like to know? If so, please contact me. Here are my résumé. You can reach me by e-mail or phone. I looks forward to speaking with you in person.

Thanks,

Felicia Fellini

Key Takeaways:

- Parts of sentences must agree in number, person, case, and gender.
- A verb must always agree with its subject in number. A singular subject requires a singular verb; a plural subject requires a plural verb.
- Irregular verbs do not follow a predictable pattern in their singular and plural forms. Common irregular verbs are *be*, *have*, and *do*.
- A compound subject is formed when two or more nouns are joined by the words *and*, *or*, or *nor*.
- In some sentences, the subject and verb may be separated by a phrase or clause, but the verb must still agree with the subject.

- Indefinite pronouns, such as *anyone*, *each*, *everyone*, *many*, *no one*, and *something*, refer to unspecified people or objects. Most indefinite pronouns are singular.
- A collective noun is a noun that identifies more than one person, place, or thing and treats those people, places, or things one singular unit. Collective nouns require singular verbs.
- In sentences that begin with *here* and *there*, the subject follows the verb.
- In questions, the subject follows the verb.

Verb tense

Suppose you must give an oral presentation about what you did last summer. How do you make it clear that you are talking about the past and not about the present or the future? Using the correct verb tense can help you do this.

It is important to use the proper verb tense. Otherwise, your listener might judge you harshly. Mistakes in tense often leave a listener or reader with a negative impression.

Regular Verbs

Verbs indicate actions or states of being in the past, present, or future using tenses. Regular verbs follow regular patterns when shifting from the present to past tense. For example, to form a past-tense or past-participle verb form, add *-ed* or *-d* to the end of a verb. You can avoid mistakes by understanding this basic pattern.

Verb tense identifies the time of action described in a sentence. Verbs take different forms to indicate different tenses. Verb tenses indicate:

- an action or state of being in the present,
- an action or state of being in the past,
- an action or state of being in the future.

Helping verbs, such as *be* and *have*, also work to create verb tenses, such as the future tense.

Present Tense: Tim walks to the store. (Singular subject)

Present Tense: Sue and Kimmy walk to the store. (Plural subject)

Past Tense: Yesterday, they *walked* to the store to buy some bread. (Singular subject)

Exercise 10

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct form of the verb in simple present, simple past, or simple future tenses. Write the corrected sentence on your own sheet of paper.

1. The Dust Bowl (is, was, will be) a name given to a period of very destructive dust storms that occurred in the United States during the 1930s.

2. Historians today (consider, considered, will consider) The Dust Bowl to be one of the worst weather of events in American history.
3. The Dust Bowl mostly (affects, affected, will affect) the states of Kansas, Colorado, Oklahoma, Texas, and New Mexico.
4. Dust storms (continue, continued, will continue) to occur in these dry regions, but not to the devastating degree of the 1930s.
5. The dust storms during The Dust Bowl (cause, caused, will cause) irreparable damage to farms and the environment for a period of several years.
6. When early settlers (move, moved, will move) into this area, they (remove, removed, will remove) the natural prairie grasses in order to plant crops and graze their cattle.
7. They did not (realize, realized, will realize) that the grasses kept the soil in place.
8. There (is, was, will be) also a severe drought that (affects, affected, will affect) the region.
9. The worst dust storm (happens, happened, will happen) on April 14, 1935, a day called Black Sunday.
10. The Dust Bowl era finally came to end in 1939 when the rains (arrive, arrived, will arrive).
11. Dust storms (continue, continued, will continue) to affect the region, but hopefully they will not be as destructive as the storms of the 1930s.

Irregular Verbs

The past tense of irregular verbs is not formed using the patterns that regular verbs follow. Here we consider using irregular verbs:

- Present Tense: Lauren keeps all her letters.
- Past Tense: Lauren kept all her letters.
- Future Tense: Lauren will keep all her letters.

Exercise 11

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct form of the irregular verb in simple present, simple past, or simple future tense. Copy the corrected sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. Marina finally (forgived, forgave, will forgive) her sister for snooping around her room.
2. The house (shook, shaked, shakes) as the airplane rumbled overhead.
3. I (buyed, bought, buy) several items of clothing at the thrift store on Wednesday.
4. She (put, putted, puts) the lotion in her shopping basket and proceeded to the checkout line.
5. The prized goose (layed, laid, lay) several golden eggs last night.

6. Mr. Batista (tached, taught, taughted) the class how to use correct punctuation.
7. I (drink, drank, will drink) several glasses of sparkling cider instead of champagne on New Year's Eve next year.
8. Although Hector (growed, grew, grows) three inches in one year, we still called him "Little Hector."
9. Yesterday our tour guide (lead, led, will lead) us through the maze of people in Times Square.
10. The rock band (burst, bursted, bursts) onto the music scene with its catchy songs.

Exercise 12

On your own sheet of paper, write a sentence using the correct form of the verb tense shown below.

1. Throw (past)
2. Paint (simple present)
3. Smile (future)
4. Tell (past)
5. Share (simple present)

Maintaining Consistent Verb Tense

Consistent verb tense means the same verb tense is used throughout a sentence or a paragraph. As you write and revise, it is important to use the same verb tense consistently and to avoid shifting from one tense to another unless there is a good reason for the tense shift. In the following box, see whether you notice the difference between a sentence with consistent tense and one with inconsistent tense.

Inconsistent tense:

The crowd starts cheering as Melina approached the finish line.

Consistent tense:

The crowd started cheering as Melina approached the finish line.

Consistent tense:

The crowd starts cheering as Melina approaches the finish line.

Tip: In some cases, clear communication will call for different tenses. Look at the following example:

When I was a teenager, I wanted to be a firefighter, but now I am studying computer science.

If the time frame for each action or state is different, a tense shift is appropriate.

Exercise 13

Edit the following paragraph by correcting the inconsistent verb tense. Copy the corrected paragraph onto your own sheet of paper.

In the Middle Ages, most people lived in villages and work as agricultural laborers, or peasants. Every village has a “lord,” and the peasants worked on his land. Much of what they produce go to the lord and his family. What little food was leftover goes to support the peasants’ families. In return for their labor, the lord offers them protection. A peasant’s day usually began before sunrise and involves long hours of backbreaking work, which includes plowing the land, planting seeds, and cutting crops for harvesting. The working life of a peasant in the Middle Ages is usually demanding and exhausting.

Key Takeaways:

- Verb tense helps you express when an event takes place.
- Regular verbs follow regular patterns when shifting from present to past tense.
- Irregular verbs do not follow regular, predictable patterns when shifting from present to past tense.
- Using consistent verb tense is a key element to effective writing.

Capitalization

Text messages, casual e-mails, and instant messages often ignore the rules of capitalization. In fact, it can seem unnecessary to capitalize in these contexts. In other, more formal forms of communication, however, knowing the basic rules of capitalization and using capitalization correctly gives the reader the impression that you choose your words carefully and care about the ideas you are conveying.

Capitalize the First Word of a Sentence

Incorrect: the museum has a new butterfly exhibit.

Correct: The museum has a new butterfly exhibit.

Incorrect: cooking can be therapeutic.

Correct: Cooking can be therapeutic.

Capitalize Proper Nouns

Proper nouns—the names of specific people, places, objects, streets, buildings, events, or titles of individuals—are always capitalized.

Incorrect: He grew up in harlem, new york.

Correct: He grew up in Harlem, New York.

Incorrect: The sears tower in chicago has a new name.

Correct: The Sears Tower in Chicago has a new name.

Tip: Always capitalize nationalities, races, languages, and religions. For example, American, African American, Hispanic, Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and so on.

Do not capitalize nouns for people, places, things, streets, buildings, events, and titles when the noun is used in general or common way. See the following chart for the difference between proper nouns and common nouns.

Common Noun	Proper Noun
museum	The Art Institute of Chicago
theater	Apollo Theater
country	Malaysia
uncle	Uncle Javier
doctor	Dr. Jackson
book	<i>Pride and Prejudice</i>
college	Smith College
war	the Spanish-American War
historical event	The Renaissance

Figure 4.12 “Common and Proper Nouns”

Exercise 14

On your own sheet of paper, write five proper nouns for each common noun that is listed. The first one has been done for you.

Common noun: river

1. Nile River
- 2.
- 3.

Common noun: musician

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

5.

Common noun: magazine

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Capitalize Days of the Week, Months of the Year, and Holidays

Incorrect: On wednesday, I will be traveling to Austin for a music festival.

Correct: On Wednesday, I will be traveling to Austin for a music festival.

Incorrect: The fourth of july is my favorite holiday.

Correct: The Fourth of July is my favorite holiday.

Capitalize Titles

Incorrect: The play, fences, by August Wilson is one of my favorites.

Correct: The play, *Fences*, by August Wilson is one of my favorites.

Incorrect: The president of the united states will be speaking at my university.

Correct: The President of the United States will be speaking at my university.

Tip: Computer-related words such as “Internet” and “World Wide Web” are usually capitalized; however, “e-mail” and “online” are never capitalized.

Exercise 15

Edit the following sentences by correcting the capitalization of the titles or names:

1. The prince of england enjoys playing polo.

2. “Ode to a nightingale” is a sad poem.

3. My sister loves to read magazines such as the new yorker.
4. The house on Mango street is an excellent novel written by Sandra Cisneros.
5. My physician, dr. alvarez, always makes me feel comfortable in her office.

Exercise 16

Edit the following paragraphs by correcting the capitalization:

david grann's the lost City of Z mimics the snake-like winding of the amazon River. The three distinct Stories that are introduced are like twists in the River. First, the Author describes his own journey to the amazon in the present day, which is contrasted by an account of percy fawcett's voyage in 1925 and a depiction of James Lynch's expedition in 1996. Where does the river lead these explorers? the answer is one that both the Author and the reader are hungry to discover.

The first lines of the preface pull the reader in immediately because we know the author, david grann, is lost in the amazon. It is a compelling beginning not only because its thrilling but also because this is a true account of grann's experience. grann has dropped the reader smack in the middle of his conflict by admitting the recklessness of his decision to come to this place. the suspense is further perpetuated by his unnerving observation that he always considered himself a Neutral Witness, never getting personally involved in his stories, a notion that is swiftly contradicted in the opening pages, as the reader can clearly perceive that he is in a dire predicament—and frighteningly involved.

Key Takeaways:

- Learning and applying the basic rules of capitalization is a fundamental aspect of good writing.
- Identifying and correcting errors in capitalization is an important writing skill.

Pronouns

If there were no pronouns, all types of writing would be quite tedious to read. We would soon be frustrated by reading sentences like *Bob said that Bob was tired* or *Christina told the class that Christina received an A*. Pronouns help a writer avoid constant repetition. Knowing just how pronouns work is an important aspect of clear and concise writing.

Pronoun Agreement

A pronoun is a word that takes the place of (or refers back to) a noun or another pronoun. The word or words a pronoun refers to is called the antecedent of the pronoun.

1. *Lani* complained that *she* was exhausted.

She refers to *Lani*.

Lani is the antecedent of *she*.

2. *Jeremy* left the party early, so I did not see *him* until Monday at work.

Him refers to *Jeremy*.

Jeremy is the antecedent of *him*.

3. *Crina and Rosalie* have been best friends ever since *they* were freshman in high school.

They refers to *Crina and Rosalie*.

Crina and Rosalie is the antecedent of *they*.

Pronoun agreement errors occur when the pronoun and the antecedent do not match or agree with each other. There are several types of pronoun agreement.

Agreement in Number

If the pronoun takes the place of or refers to a singular noun, the pronoun must also be singular.

Incorrect: If a *student* (sing.) wants to return a book to the bookstore, *they* (plur.) must have a receipt.

Correct: If a *student* (sing.) wants to return a book to the bookstore, *he or she* (sing.) must have a receipt.

*If it seems too wordy to use *he or she*, change the antecedent to a plural noun.

Correct: If *students* (plur.) want to return a book to the bookstore, *they* (plur.) must have a receipt.

Agreement in Person

	SINGULAR PRONOUNS			PLURAL PRONOUNS		
FIRST PERSON	I	me	my (mine)	we	us	our (ours)
SECOND PERSON	you	you	your (yours)	you	you	your (your)
THIRD PERSON	he, she, it	him, her, it	his, her, its	they	them	their (theirs)

Figure 4.13 “Singular and Plural Pronouns”

If you use a consistent person, your reader is less likely to be confused.

Incorrect: When a person (3rd) goes to a restaurant, you (2nd) should leave a tip.

Correct: When a person (3rd) goes to a restaurant, he or she (3rd) should leave a tip.

Correct: When we (1st) go to a restaurant, I should (1st) should leave a tip.

Exercise 17

Edit the following paragraph by correcting pronoun agreement errors in number and person:

Over spring break I visited my older cousin, Diana, and they took me to a butterfly exhibit at a museum. Diana and I have been close ever since she was young. Our mothers are twin sisters, and she is inseparable! Diana knows how much I love butterflies, so it was their special present to me. I have a soft spot for caterpillars too. I love them because something about the way it transforms is so interesting to me. One summer my grandmother gave me a butterfly growing kit, and you got to see the entire life cycle of five Painted Lady butterflies. I even got to set it free. So when my cousin said they wanted to take me to the butterfly exhibit, I was really excited!

Indefinite Pronouns and Agreement

Indefinite pronouns do not refer to a specific person or thing and are usually singular. Note that a pronoun that refers to an indefinite singular pronoun should also be singular. The following are some common indefinite pronouns.

COMMON INDEFINITE PRONOUNS

ALL	each one	few	nothing	several
ANY	each other	many	one	some
ANYBODY	either	neither	one another	somebody
ANYTHING	everybody	nobody	oneself	someone
BOTH	everyone	none	other	something
EACH	everything	no one	others	anyone

Figure 4.14 “Common Indefinite Pronouns”

Indefinite pronoun agreement

Incorrect: Everyone (sing.) should do what they (plur.) can to help.

Correct: Everyone (sing.) should do what he or she (sing.) can to help.

Incorrect: Someone (sing.) left their (plur.) backpack in the library.

Correct: Someone (sing.) left his or her (sing.) backpack in the library.

Collective Nouns

Collective nouns suggest more than one person but are usually considered singular. Look over the following examples of collective nouns.

Common Collective Nouns		
audience	faculty	public
band	family	school
class	government	society
committee	group	team
company	jury	tribe

Figure 4.15 “Common Collective Nouns”

Collective noun agreement

Incorrect: Lara’s company (sing.) will have their (plur.) annual picnic next week.

Correct: Lara’s company (sing.) will have its (sing.) annual picnic next week.

Exercise 18

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct pronoun. Copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper. Then circle the noun the pronoun replaces.

1. In the current economy, nobody wants to waste _____ money on frivolous things.
2. If anybody chooses to go to medical school, _____ must be prepared to work long hours.
3. The plumbing crew did _____ best to repair the broken pipes before the next ice storm.
4. If someone is rude to you, try giving _____ a smile in return.
5. My family has _____ faults, but I still love them no matter what.
6. The school of education plans to train _____ students to be literacy tutors.

7. The commencement speaker said that each student has a responsibility toward _____.
8. My mother's singing group has _____ rehearsals on Thursday evenings.
9. No one should suffer _____ pains alone.
10. I thought the flock of birds lost _____ way in the storm.

Subject and Object Pronouns

Subject pronouns function as subjects in a sentence. Object pronouns function as the object of a verb or of a preposition.

Singular Pronouns		Plural Pronouns	
Subject	Object	Subject	Object
I	me	we	us
you	you	you	you
he, she, it	him, her, it	they	them

Figure 4.16 "Singular and Plural Pronouns"

The following sentences show pronouns as subjects:

She loves the Blue Ridge Mountains in the fall.

Every summer, *they* picked up litter from national parks.

The following sentences show pronouns as objects:

Marie leaned over and kissed *him*.

Jane moved *it* to the corner.

Tip: Note that a pronoun can also be the object of a preposition.

Near *them*, the children played.

My mother stood between *us*.

The pronouns *us* and *them* are objects of the prepositions *near* and *between*. They answer the questions *near whom?* And *between whom?*

Compound subject pronouns are two or more pronouns joined by a conjunction or a preposition that function as the subject of the sentence.

The following sentences show pronouns with compound subjects:

Incorrect: Me and Harriet visited the Grand Canyon last summer.

Correct: Harriet and I visited the Grand Canyon last summer.

Correct: Jenna accompanied Harriet and me on our trip.

Tip: Note that object pronouns are never used in the subject position. One way to remember this rule is to remove the other subject in a compound subject, leave only the pronoun, and see whether the sentence makes sense.

For example, Me visited the Grand Canyon last summer sounds immediately incorrect.

Compound object pronouns are two or more pronouns joined by a conjunction or a preposition that function as the object of the sentence.

Incorrect: I have a good feeling about Janice and I.

Correct: I have a good feeling about Janice and me.

Tip: It is correct to write Janice and me, as opposed to me and Janice. Just remember it is more polite to refer to yourself last.

Exercise 19

Revise the following sentences in which the subject and object pronouns are used incorrectly. Copy the revised sentence onto your own sheet of paper. Write a C for each sentence that is correct.

1. Meera and me enjoy doing yoga together on Sundays.
2. She and him have decided to sell their house.
3. Between you and I, I do not think Jeffrey will win the election.
4. Us and our friends have game night the first Thursday of every month.
5. They and I met while on vacation in Mexico.
6. Napping on the beach never gets boring for Alice and I.
7. New Year's Eve is not a good time for she and I to have a serious talk.
8. You exercise much more often than me.
9. I am going to the comedy club with Yolanda and she.
10. The cooking instructor taught her and me a lot.

Who versus Whom

Who or whoever is always the subject of a verb. Use who or whoever when the pronoun performs the action indicated by the verb.

Who won the marathon last Tuesday?

I wonder who came up with that terrible idea!

On the other hand, whom and whomever serve as objects. They are used when the pronoun does not perform an action. Use whom or whomever when the pronoun is the direct object of a verb or the object of a preposition.

Whom did Frank marry the third time? (direct object of verb)

From whom did you buy that old record player? (object of preposition)

Tip: If you are having trouble deciding when to use who and whom, try this trick. Take the following sentence:

Who/Whom do I consider my best friend?

Reorder the sentence in your head, using either he or him in place of who or whom.

I consider him my best friend.

I consider he my best friend.

Which sentence sounds better? The first one, of course. So the trick is, if you can use *him*, you should use *whom*.

Exercise 20

Complete the following sentences by adding who or whom. Copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. _____ hit the home run?
2. I remember _____ won the Academy Award for Best Actor last year.
3. To _____ is the letter addressed?
4. I have no idea _____ left the iron on, but I am going to find out.
5. _____ are you going to recommend for the internship?
6. With _____ are you going to Hawaii?
7. No one knew _____ the famous actor was.
8. _____ in the office knows how to fix the copy machine?
9. From _____ did you get the concert tickets?
10. No one knew _____ ate the cake mom was saving.

Key Takeaways:

- Pronouns and their antecedents need to agree in number and person.
- Most indefinite pronouns are singular.

- Collective nouns are usually singular.
- Pronouns can function as subjects or objects.
- Subject pronouns are never used as objects, and object pronouns are never used as subjects.
- Who serves as a subject of a verb.
- Whom serves as an object of a sentence or the object of a preposition.

Commonly confused words

Some words in English cause trouble for speakers and writers because these words share a similar pronunciation, meaning, or spelling with another word. These words are called commonly confused words.

For example, read aloud the following sentences containing the commonly confused words new and knew:

I liked her new sweater.

I knew she would wear that sweater today.

These words may sound alike when spoken, but they carry entirely different usages and meanings. New is an adjective that describes the sweater, and knew is the past tense of the verb to know.

Recognizing Commonly Confused Words

New and knew are just two of the words that can be confusing because of their similarities. Familiarize yourself with the following list of commonly confused words. Recognizing these words in your own writing and in other pieces of writing can help you choose the correct word.

Commonly Confused Words

A, An, And

A (article). Used before a word that begins with a consonant.

a key, a mouse, a screen

An (article). Used before a word that begins with a vowel.

an airplane, an ocean, an igloo

And (conjunction). Connects two or more words together.

peanut butter and jelly, pen and pencil, jump and shout

Accept, Except

Accept (verb). Means to take or agree to something offered.

They accepted our proposal for the conference.

Except (conjunction). Means only or but.

We could fly there except the tickets cost too much.

Affect, Effect

Affect (verb). Means to create a change.

Hurricane winds affect the amount of rainfall.

Effect (noun). Means an outcome or result.

The heavy rains will have an effect on the crop growth.

Are, Our

Are (verb). A conjugated form of the verb be.

My cousins are all tall and blonde.

Our (pronoun). Indicates possession, usually follows the pronoun we.

We will bring our cameras to take pictures.

By, Buy

By (preposition). Means next to.

My glasses are by the bed.

Buy (verb). Means to purchase.

I will buy new glasses after the doctor's appointment.

Its, It's

Its (pronoun). A form of it that shows possession.

The butterfly flapped its wings.

It's (contraction). Joins the words it and is.

It's the most beautiful butterfly I have ever seen.

Know, No

Know (verb). Means to understand or possess knowledge.

I know the male peacock sports the brilliant feathers.

No. Used to make a negative.

I have no time to visit the zoo this weekend.

Loose, Lose

Loose (adjective). Describes something that is not tight or is detached.

Without a belt, her pants are loose on her waist.

Lose (verb). Means to forget, to give up, or to fail to earn something.

She will lose even more weight after finishing the marathon training.

Of, Have

Of (preposition). Means from or about.

I studied maps of the city to know where to rent a new apartment.

Have (verb). Means to possess something.

I have many friends to help me move.

Have (linking verb). Used to connect verbs.

I should have helped her with that heavy box.

Quite, Quiet, Quit

Quite (adverb). Means really or truly.

My work will require quite a lot of concentration.

Quiet (adjective). Means not loud.

I need a quiet room to complete the assignments.

Quit (verb). Means to stop or to end.

I will quit when I am hungry for dinner.

Right, Write

Right (adjective). Means proper or correct.

When bowling, she practices the right form.

Right (adjective). Also means the opposite of left.

Begin the dance with your right foot.

Write (verb). Means to communicate on paper.

After the team members bowl, I will write down their scores.

Set, Sit

Set (verb). Means to put an item down.

She set the mug on the saucer.

Set (noun). Means a group of similar objects.

All the mugs and saucers belonged in a set.

Sit (verb). Means to lower oneself down on a chair or another place

I'll sit on the sofa while she brews the tea.

Suppose, Supposed

Suppose (verb). Means to think or to consider

I suppose I will bake the bread because no one else has the recipe.

Suppose (verb). Means to suggest.

Suppose we all split the cost of the dinner.

Supposed (verb). The past tense form of the verb suppose meaning required or allowed.

She was supposed to create the menu.

Than, Then

Than (conjunction). Used to connect two or more items when comparing

Registered nurses require less schooling than doctors.

Then (adverb). Means next or at a specific time.

Doctors first complete medical school and then obtain a residency.

Their, They're, There

Their (pronoun). A form of they that shows possession.

The dog walkers feeds their dogs every day at two o'clock.

They're (contraction). Joins the words they and are.

They're the sweetest dogs in the neighborhood.

There (adverb). Indicates a particular place.

The dogs' bowls are over there, next to the pantry.

There (expletive used to delay the subject). Indicates the presence of something

There are more treats if the dogs behave.

To, Two, Too

To (preposition). Indicates movement.

Let's go to the circus.

To. A word that completes an infinitive verb.

to play, to ride, to watch.

Two. The number after one. It describes how many.

Two clowns squirted the elephants with water.

Too (adverb). Means also or very.

The tents were too loud, and we left.

Use, Used

Use (verb). Means to apply for some purpose.

We use a weed whacker to trim the hedges.

Used. The past tense form of the verb to use

He used the lawnmower last night before it rained.

Used to. Indicates something done in the past but not in the present

He used to hire a team to landscape, but now he landscapes alone.

Who's, Whose

Who's (contraction). Joins the words who and either is or has.

Who's the new student? Who's met him?

Whose (pronoun). A form of who that shows possession.

Whose schedule allows them to take the new student on a campus tour?

Your, You're

Your (pronoun). A form of you that shows possession.

Your book bag is unzipped.

You're (contraction). Joins the words you and are.

You're the girl with the unzipped book bag.



Figure 4.17 "Camera Sign"

The English language contains so many words; no one can say for certain how many words exist. In fact, many words in English are borrowed from other languages. Many words have multiple meanings and forms, further expanding the immeasurable number of English words. Although the list of commonly confused words serves as a helpful guide, even these words may have more meanings than shown here. When in doubt, consult an expert: the dictionary!

Exercise 21

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct word.

1. My little cousin turns _____(to, too, two) years old tomorrow.
2. The next-door neighbor's dog is _____(quite, quiet, quit) loud. He barks constantly throughout the night.
3. _____(Your, You're) mother called this morning to talk about the party.
4. I would rather eat a slice of chocolate cake _____(than, then) eat a chocolate muffin.
5. Before the meeting, he drank a cup of coffee and _____(than, then) brushed his teeth.
6. Do you have any _____(loose, lose) change to pay the parking meter?

7. Father must _____(have, of) left his briefcase at the office.
8. Before playing ice hockey, I was _____(suppose, supposed) to read the contract, but I only skimmed it and signed my name quickly, which may _____(affect, effect) my understanding of the rules.
9. Tonight she will _____(set, sit) down and _____(right, write) a cover letter to accompany her résumé and job application.
10. It must be fall, because the leaves _____(are, our) changing, and _____(it's, its) getting darker earlier.

Strategies to Avoid Commonly Confused Words

When writing, you need to choose the correct word according to its spelling and meaning in the context. Not only does selecting the correct word improve your vocabulary and your writing, but it also makes a good impression on your readers. It also helps reduce confusion and improve clarity. The following strategies can help you avoid misusing confusing words.

1. Use a dictionary. Keep a dictionary at your desk while you write. Look up words when you are uncertain of their meanings or spellings. Many dictionaries are also available online, and the Internet's easy access will not slow you down. Check out your cell phone or smartphone to see if a dictionary app is available.
2. Keep a list of words you commonly confuse. Be aware of the words that often confuse you. When you notice a pattern of confusing words, keep a list nearby, and consult the list as you write. Check the list again before you submit an assignment to your instructor.
3. Study the list of commonly confused words. You may not yet know which words confuse you, but before you sit down to write, study the words on the list. Prepare your mind for working with words by reviewing the commonly confused words identified in this chapter.



Figure 4.18 “A Commonly Misused Word on a Public Sign”

Tip: Commonly confused words appear in many locations, not just at work or at school. Be on the lookout for misused words wherever you find yourself throughout the day. Make a mental note of the error and remember its correction for your own pieces of writing.

Exercise 22

The following paragraph contains eleven errors. Find each misused word and correct it by adding the proper word.

The original United States Declaration of Independence sets in a case at the Rotunda for the Charters of Freedom as part of the National Archives in Washington, DC. Since 1952, over one million visitors each year of passed through the Rotunda too snap a photograph to capture they're experience. Although signs state, "No Flash Photography," forgetful tourists leave the flash on, an a bright light flickers for just a millisecond. This millisecond of light may not seem like enough to effect the precious document, but supposed how much light could be generated when all those milliseconds are added up. According to the National Archives administrators, its enough to significantly damage the historic document. So, now, the signs display quit a different message: "No Photography." Visitors continue to travel to see the Declaration that began are country, but know longer can personal pictures serve as mementos. The administrators' compromise, they say, is a visit to the gift shop for a preprinted photograph.

Key Takeaways:

- In order to write accurately, it is important for writers to be aware of commonly confused words.
- Although commonly confused words may look alike or sound alike, their meanings are very different.
- Consulting the dictionary is one way to make sure you are using the correct word in your writing. You may also keep a list of commonly confused words nearby when you write or study the chart in this book.
- Choosing the proper words leaves a positive impression on your readers.

Word choice

Effective writing involves making conscious choices with words. When you prepare to sit down to write your first draft, you likely have already completed some freewriting exercises, chosen your topic, developed your thesis statement, written an outline, and even selected your sources. When it is time to write your first draft, start to consider which words to use to best convey your ideas to the reader.

Some writers are picky about word choice as they start drafting. They may practice some specific strategies, such as using a dictionary and thesaurus, using words and phrases with proper connotations, and avoiding slang, clichés, and overly general words.

Once you understand these tricks of the trade, you can move ahead confidently in writing your assignment. Remember, the skill and accuracy of your word choice is a major factor in developing your writing style. Precise selection of your words will help you be more clearly understood—in both writing and speaking.

Using a Dictionary and Thesaurus

Even professional writers need help with the meanings, spellings, pronunciations, and uses of particular words. In fact, they rely on dictionaries to help them write better. No one knows every word in the English language and its multiple uses and meanings, so all writers, from novices to professionals, can benefit from the use of dictionaries.

Most dictionaries provide the following information:

- Spelling. How the word and its different forms are spelled.
- Pronunciation. How to say the word.
- Part of speech. The function of the word.
- Definition. The meaning of the word.
- Synonyms. Words that have similar meanings.
- Etymology. The history of the word.

Look at the following sample dictionary entry to see which of the preceding information you can identify:

myth, mith, n. [Gr. mythos, a word, a fable, a legend.] A fable or legend embodying the convictions of a people as to their gods or other divine beings, their own beginnings and early history and the heroes connected with it, or the origin of the world; any invented story; something or someone having no existence in fact.—**myth • ic, myth • i • cal**

Like a dictionary, a thesaurus is another indispensable writing tool. A thesaurus gives you a list of synonyms, words that have the same (or very close to the same) meaning as another word. It also lists antonyms, words with the opposite meaning of the word. A thesaurus will help you when you are looking for the perfect word with just the right meaning to convey your ideas. It will also help you learn more words and use the ones you already know more correctly. However, be careful to avoid choosing words from the thesaurus that don't fit the tone of your writing or whose meaning might not be a perfect fit for what you are trying to say.

precocious adj, She's such a precocious little girl!: uncommonly smart, mature, advanced, smart, bright, brilliant, gifted, quick, clever, apt.

Ant. slow, backward, stupid.

Using Proper Connotations

A denotation is the dictionary definition of a word. A connotation, on the other hand, is the emotional or cultural meaning attached to a word. The connotation of a word can be positive, negative, or neutral. Keep in mind the connotative meaning when choosing a word.

Scrawny

- **Denotation:** Exceptionally thin and slight or meager in body or size.
- **Word used in a sentence:** Although he was a premature baby and a scrawny child, Martin has developed into a strong man.
- **Connotation:** (Negative) In this sentence the word scrawny may have a negative connotation in the readers' minds. They might find it to mean a weakness or a personal flaw; however, the word fits into the sentence appropriately.

Skinny

- **Denotation:** Lacking sufficient flesh, very thin.
- **Word used in a sentence:** Skinny jeans have become very fashionable in the past couple of years.
- **Connotation:** (Positive) Based on cultural and personal impressions of what it means to be skinny, the reader may have positive connotations of the word skinny.

Lean

- **Denotation:** Lacking or deficient in flesh; containing little or no fat.
- **Word used in a sentence:** My brother has a lean figure, whereas I have a more muscular build.
- **Connotation:** (Neutral) In this sentence, lean has a neutral connotation. It does not call to mind an overly skinny person like the word scrawny, nor does it imply the positive cultural impressions of the word skinny. It is merely a neutral descriptive word.

Notice that all the words have a very similar denotation; however, the connotations of each word differ.

Exercises 23

In each of the following items, you will find words with similar denotations. Identify the words' connotations as positive, negative, or neutral by writing the word in the appropriate box. Copy the chart onto your own piece of paper.

curious, nosy, interested

lazy, relaxed, slow

courageous, foolhardy, assured

new, newfangled, modern
mansion, shack, residence
spinster, unmarried woman, career woman
giggle, laugh, cackle
boring, routine, prosaic
noted, notorious, famous
assertive, confident, pushy

Positive	Negative	Neutral

Avoiding Slang

Slang describes informal words that are considered nonstandard English. Slang often changes with passing fads and may be used by or be familiar to only a specific group of people. Most people use slang when they speak and in personal correspondences, such as e-mails, text messages, and instant messages. Slang is appropriate between friends in an informal context but should be avoided in formal academic writing.

Exercise 24

Edit the following paragraph by replacing the slang words and phrases with more formal language. Rewrite the paragraph on your own sheet of paper.

I felt like such an airhead when I got up to give my speech. As I walked toward the podium, I banged my knee on a chair. Man, I felt like such a klutz. On top of that, I kept saying “like” and “um,” and I could not stop fidgeting. I was so stressed out about being up there. I feel like I’ve been practicing this speech 24/7, and I still bombed. It was ten minutes of me going off about how we sometimes have to do things we don’t enjoy doing. Wow, did I ever prove my point. My speech was so bad I’m surprised that people didn’t boo. My teacher said not to sweat it, though. Everyone gets nervous his or her first time speaking in public, and she said, with time, I would become a whiz at this speech giving stuff. I wonder if I have the guts to do it again.

Avoiding Clichés

Clichés are descriptive expressions that have lost their effectiveness because they are overused. Writing that uses clichés often suffers from a lack of originality and insight. Avoiding clichés in formal writing will help you write in original and fresh ways.

- Clichéd: Whenever my brother and I get into an argument, he always says something that makes my blood boil.
- Plain: Whenever my brother and I get into an argument, he always says something that makes me really angry.
- Original: Whenever my brother and I get into an argument, he always says something that makes me want to go to the gym and punch the bag for a few hours.

Tip: Think about all the cliché phrases that you hear in popular music or in everyday conversation. What would happen if these clichés were transformed into something unique?

Exercise 25

On your own sheet of paper, revise the following sentences by replacing the clichés with fresh, original descriptions.

1. She is writing a memoir in which she will air her family's dirty laundry.
2. Fran had an ax to grind with Benny, and she planned to confront him that night at the party.
3. Mr. Muller was at his wit's end with the rowdy class of seventh graders.
4. The bottom line is that Greg was fired because he missed too many days of work.
5. Sometimes it is hard to make ends meet with just one paycheck.
6. My brain is fried from pulling an all-nighter.
7. Maria left the dishes in the sink all week to give Jeff a taste of his own medicine.
8. While they were at the carnival Janice exclaimed, "Time sure does fly when you are having fun!"
9. Jeremy became tongue-tied after the interviewer asked him where he saw himself in five years.
10. Jordan was dressed to the nines that night.

Avoiding Overly General Words

Specific words and images make your writing more interesting to read. Whenever possible, avoid overly general words in your writing; instead, try to replace general language with particular nouns, verbs, and modifiers that convey details and that bring

yours words to life. Add words that provide color, texture, sound, and even smell to your writing.

General: My new puppy is cute.

Specific: My new puppy is a ball of white fuzz with the biggest black eyes I have ever seen.

General: My teacher told us that plagiarism is bad.

Specific: My teacher, Ms. Atwater, created a presentation detailing exactly how plagiarism is illegal and unethical.

Exercise 26

Revise the following sentences by replacing the overly general words with more precise and attractive language. Write the new sentences on your own sheet of paper.

1. Reilly got into her car and drove off.
2. I would like to travel to outer space because it would be amazing.
3. Jane came home after a bad day at the office.
4. I thought Milo's essay was fascinating.
5. The dog walked up the street.
6. The coal miners were tired after a long day.
7. The tropical fish are pretty.
8. I sweat a lot after running.
9. The goalie blocked the shot.
10. I enjoyed my Mexican meal.

Key Takeaways:

- Using a dictionary and thesaurus as you write will improve your writing by improving your word choice.
- Connotations of words may be positive, neutral, or negative.
- Slang, clichés, and overly general words should be avoided in academic writing.

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Chapter 5: Topic, Main Idea, and Supporting Details

Main Ideas in Reading and Writing

The main idea is the author's point about the topic. The main idea can go by a variety of terms, such as point, stance/argument (for a persuasive paper), thesis (the main idea for the entire essay/piece), and central idea. A topic sentence, which appears at the start of each body paragraph in an essay, is also a main idea. This is when the topic of the essay meets the main idea about that paragraph's key point.

In an essay, there will be one overarching main idea, called a thesis statement. This is the author's point for the ENTIRE essay. Then, each paragraph will have "mini" main ideas, called topic sentences. This is where the topic and main idea for THAT paragraph come together.

There are two TYPES of main ideas:

Stated main idea – This is literally written word-for-word for the reader. The writer makes his or her point clear in a statement that includes the topic of the paper and the point the author is making in that paper.

Implied main idea – This is a main idea that is NOT written out word-for-word in the essay, article, or written piece. With this type of main idea, the reader must "connect the dots" using the details the writer provides. This type of main idea is often used in narration essays.

Here are some writer's tips for finding the main idea. As a reader, be on the lookout for the main idea, and as a writer, you need to remember these tips to keep things clear and simple for your reader:

1. Look for a simple list/process list.

A simple or process list occurs when the author presents a numbered list (steps, stages, tips) using keywords as follows: first, second, third, also, in addition, for one thing, another, the first step, the next step, finally (these are not all of the signal words, but these are the common ones to look for).

When you see these signal words, circle them.

The main idea will almost always come before the first item in the list. Let's look at an example:

There are a few tips to consider when studying for an exam. **First**, be sure to put away (or turn off) anything that could cause a distraction, such as a cell phone, earbuds, or even a TV. **Next**, take out all your notes from the class. **Third**, make sure you have a highlighter and pens in different colors to make annotations in the margins. **Finally**, create a set of flashcards to test yourself on the critical vocabulary.

Notice the placement of this main idea. In an informational essay, this would be the topic sentence of that body paragraph.

2. Look for a reverse transition.

Look for the signal words *however, but, yet, although, nevertheless, on the other hand, on the contrary* in the second, third, or fourth sentence of the paragraph. ****Placement is CRUCIAL here for this to be a reverse transition.**** The sentence that starts with that reverse transition signal word (sometimes considered the contrast, or difference, signal word) is the main idea.

Many people were not happy about wearing masks when the pandemic first hit the United States. However, many lessons were learned from the wearing of masks. First, masks helped prevent person A from spreading COVID to another person. Second, masks help limit the spread of other illnesses as well, such as the common cold and the flu.

3. Be on the lookout for pronouns.

These are almost never the main idea! Pronouns take the place of nouns (e.g., girl = she, college = it, students = they). The main idea can “stand on its own,” meaning that it must tell the reader exactly what they need to know IN that sentence. If you are wondering who “he” or “she” or “they” is, and you have to go back to another sentence to understand who the writer is discussing, then that is probably not the main idea. Michael is starting school in two weeks and will need some supplies. First, he will need a backpack. Next, he must make sure to get all his textbooks for his classes. Finally, he will need to make sure he has a working laptop or tablet for notetaking. He is excited to start college!

4. Look for concluding sentences.

While these will generally not be used as main ideas in essays, you may find the main idea appear in a research article or textbook reading at the end of a paragraph or section. This will usually be signaled with words like *therefore, in conclusion, or the conclusion of the study was...*

The researchers examined data from 420 college student participants and found that an overwhelming percentage of students were happiest when they could use free textbooks. Therefore, the conclusion of the study is the free textbook movement is gaining momentum.

Writing a Thesis Statement and a Topic Sentence

Remember that the main idea is the author's - YOUR point - about the topic. Here is a simple formula to write your thesis!

Your POINT or OPINION + Topic + Reason = THESIS

Let's look at this "formula" more closely!

EXAMPLE #1:

Topic = texting while driving

Opinion = should be illegal in all 50 states

Reason = because it distracts drivers

Thesis: Texting while driving should be illegal in all 50 states because it distracts drivers and causes numerous accidents and deaths across the country. {thesis for a persuasive or argumentative essay}

EXAMPLE #2:

Topic = building a personal computer

Opinion = can be done in three steps

Reason = find parts, put computer together, add software

Thesis: Building a personal computer can be completed in three core steps: purchasing parts, assembling the computer, and adding software. {thesis for a process essay}

Thesis Statements

Being able to identify the purpose and thesis of a text, as you're reading it, takes practice. This section will offer you that practice.

One fun strategy for developing a deeper understanding the material you're reading is to make a visual "map" of the ideas. Mind maps, whether hand-drawn or done through computer programs, can be fun to make, and help put all the ideas of an essay you're reading in one easy-to-read format.

Your understanding of what the "central" element of the mind map is might change as you read and re-read. Developing the central idea of your mind map is a great way to help you determine the reading's thesis.

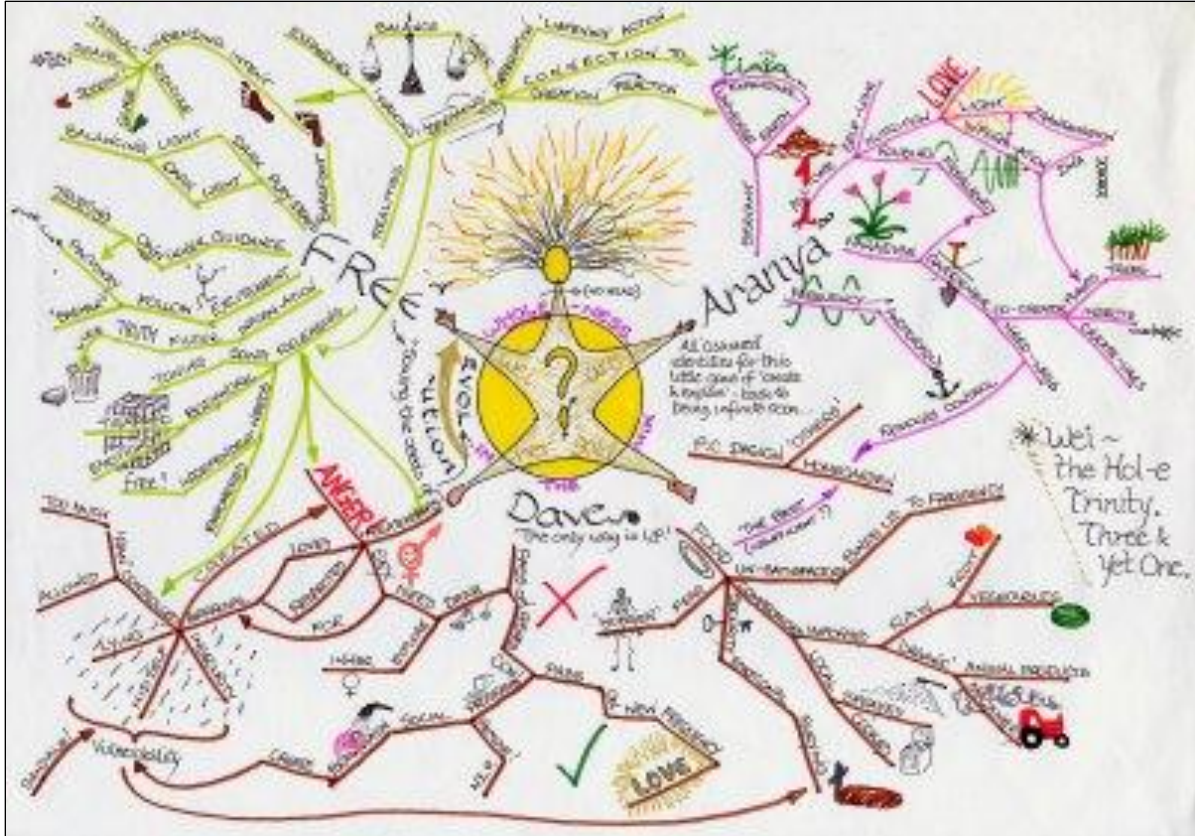


Figure 5. 1 “Hand-drawn Mind Map”

Locating Explicit and Implicit Thesis Statements

In academic writing, the thesis is often explicit: it is included as a sentence as part of the text. It might be near the beginning of the work, but not always—some types of academic writing leave the thesis until the conclusion.

Journalism and reporting also rely on explicit thesis statements that appear very early in the piece—the first paragraph or even the first sentence.

Works of literature, on the other hand, usually do not contain a specific sentence that sums up the core concept of the writing. However, readers should finish the piece with a good understanding of what the work was trying to convey. This is what’s called an implicit thesis statement: the primary point of the reading is conveyed indirectly, in multiple locations throughout the work. (In literature, this is also referred to as the theme of the work.)

Academic writing sometimes relies on implicit thesis statements, as well.

This [video](#) offers excellent guidance in identifying the thesis statement of a work, no matter if it’s explicit or implicit.

Topic Sentences

We've learned that a thesis statement conveys the primary message of an entire piece of text. Now, let's look at the next level of important sentences in a piece of text: topic sentences in each paragraph.

A useful metaphor would be to think of the thesis statement of a text as a general: it controls all the major decisions of the writing. There is only one thesis statement in a text. Topic sentences, in this relationship, serve as captains: they organize and subdivide the overall goals of a writing into individual components. Each paragraph will have a topic sentence.

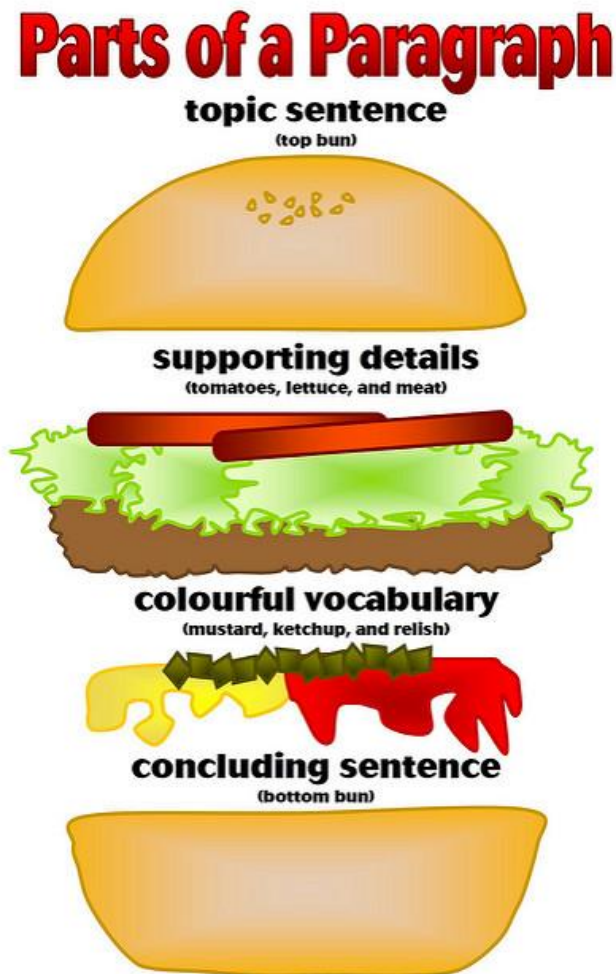


Figure 5.2 Parts of a Paragraph

It might be helpful to think of a topic sentence as working in two directions simultaneously. It relates the paragraph to the essay's thesis, and thereby acts as a signpost for the argument of the paper as a whole, but it also defines the scope of the paragraph itself. For example, consider the following topic sentence:

Many characters in Lorraine Hansberry's play *A Raisin in the Sun* have one particular dream in which they are following, though the character Walter pursues his most aggressively.

If this sentence controls the paragraph that follows, then all sentences in the paragraph must relate in some way to Walter and the pursuit of his dream.

Topic sentences often act like tiny thesis statements. Like a thesis statement, a topic sentence makes a claim of some sort. As the thesis statement is the unifying force in the essay, so the topic sentence must be the unifying force in the paragraph. Further, as is the case with the thesis statement, when the topic sentence makes a claim, the paragraph which follows must expand, describe, or prove it in some way. Topic sentences make a point and give reasons or examples to support it.

The topic sentence is often, though not always, the first sentence of a paragraph.

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Chapter 6: Source Integration



Figure 6.1 “Old library of Trinity College, Dublin” by Francesc González is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

Now that you’ve just summarized or paraphrased or directly quoted a source, is there anything else you need to do with that source? Well, it turns out there is. There are some standard ways of using sources that let your readers know this material is from other texts rather than original ideas from your own brain. Following these guidelines also allows us, your readers, to locate those sources if we are interested in the topic and would like to know more about what they say.

Giving credit to the sources you used creating a text is important (and useful!) for several reasons.

It adds to your own credibility as an author by showing you have done appropriate research on your topic and approached your work ethically.

It gives credit to the original author and their work for the ideas you found to be useful, and in giving them credit it helps you avoid unintentionally plagiarizing their work.

It gives your readers additional resources (already curated by you in your research process!) that they can go to if they want to read further your topic.

What Does It Mean to Credit or Cite Your Sources?

For college-level work, this generally means two things: in-text or parenthetical citation and a “Works Cited” or “References” page. What these two things look like will be a little different for different types of classes (for example, it’s likely your writing class will use MLA—Modern Language Association—format, while a psychology class is more likely to use APA—American Psychological Association—format). The specific details required and the order in which they appear changes a little between different formats,

but practicing one of them will give you a general idea of what most of them are looking for. All of the information we are looking at here is specific to MLA, which is the format you will use for your writing classes (and some other humanities classes).

Citing: Identifying In-Text Sources

Once you have brought source material into your writing (via quotation, summary, or paraphrase), your next task is to cite or identify it. This is essential because giving credit to the creator of the source material helps you avoid plagiarism. Identifying your sources also helps your reader understand which written content is from a source and which represents your ideas.

When you cite or identify source materials, you make it absolutely clear that the material was taken from a source. Note that if you don't do that, your reader is left to assume the words are yours—and since that isn't true, you will have committed plagiarism.

In-Text Citation

Every time you use an idea or language from a source in your text (so every time you summarize, paraphrase, or directly quote material from a source), you will want to add an in-text citation. Sometimes you can accomplish this simply by mentioning the author or title of a source in the body of your writing, but other times you'll handle in-text citation differently, with a parenthetical citation. Parenthetical means that the citation appears in parentheses in the text of your essay.

A starting point for parenthetical citations is that they include the author's last name and the page number where the borrowed information came from. For example, let's say I'm using material from an article written by Lisa Smith. It's in a physical magazine and spans pages 38-42. If, on page 41, she says something like, "While most studies have shown that Expo dry erase markers have superior lasting power, erasability, and color saturation than other brands on the market, their higher cost is a concern for some consumers," I might incorporate that into a paper like this:

By most measurable standards, Expo markers are clearly the favored option (Smith 41).

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

In this section, we'll discuss **three ways to cite or identify written source materials** in your own writing.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The first time that you mention a source in your writing, you should always introduce the speaker and, if possible, the title of the source as well. Note that the speaker is the person responsible for stating the information that you’re citing and that this is not always the author of the text. For example, an author of an article might quote someone else, and you might quote or paraphrase that person.

Use the speaker’s full name (e.g. “According to Jonas Fogbottom . . .”) the first time you introduce them; if you mention them again in the paper, use their last name only (e.g. “Fogbottom goes on to discuss . . .”).

2. Use Linking or Attributive Language

Using linking language (sometimes called attributive language or signal phrases) simply means using words that show the reader you are still talking about a source that you just mentioned.

For example, you might use linking language that looks something like this:

The author also explains . . .

Fogbottom continues . . .

The article goes on to say . . .

The data set also demonstrates . . .

By using this kind of language, you make it clear to the reader that you’re still talking about a source. And while you’ll use this type of language throughout any researched essay whether you’re also using parenthetical citations or not, as we mentioned above, sometimes this linking language will be all you need for in-text citation.

Let’s look back at the last Fogbottom example from above, and imagine you wanted to add two more sentences from the same source. **The linking language is highlighted:**

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

the art of dog and poodle grooming. **The article also gives** a set of resources for people who want to know more about a dog grooming career.

Using the linking language makes it absolutely clear to your reader that you are still talking about a source.

3. Use a Parenthetical Citation

A parenthetical citation is a citation enclosed within parentheses.



Whatever comes first in the Works Cited citation is what will go into the parentheses in a parenthetical citation. Most often that item is an author's last name, but sometimes it's a title or abbreviated title of an article or other type of text. This is another good reason for starting by creating a Works Cited entry the moment you begin working with a source.

The classic parenthetical citation includes the author's name and, if there is one, a page number. To learn more about parenthetical citation and see some examples, see the Purdue OWL article on "[MLA In-Text Citations: The Basics](http://owl.english.purdue.edu)" (available from owl.english.purdue.edu).

Here's an **example**:

(Fogbottom 16)

If there are **two authors**, list both (with a page number, if available):

(Smith and Jones 24)

If there are **three or more authors**, list the first author only and add "et al.,"* (with a page number, if available):

(Smith et al. 62)

**et al.* means "and others." If a text or source has three or more authors, MLA style has us just list the first one with *et al.*

But my source doesn't have page numbers!

If you are using an electronic source or another kind of source with no page numbers, just leave the page number out:

(Fogbottom)

If you're **quoting or paraphrasing someone who was cited by the author of one of your sources**, then that's handled a bit differently. For example, what if you quote Smith, but you found that quote in the article by Fogbottom. In this case, you should introduce the speaker (Smith) as described above, and then cite the source for the quote, like this:

(qtd. in Fogbottom)

But my source doesn't have an author!

This happens sometimes. Many useful documents, like government publications, organizational reports, and surveys, don't list their authors. On the other hand, sometimes no clearly listed author can be a red flag that a source is not entirely trustworthy or is not researched well enough to be a reliable source for you.

If you encounter a source with no author, do look for other indicators that it is a good (or poor) source—who published it, does it have an appropriate list of references, is it current information, is it unbiased?

If you determine that this source is an appropriate source to use, then, when you create your in-text citation for it, you will simply use the title of the source (article, chapter, graph, film, etc.) in the place where you would have used the author's name. If the title is long, you should abbreviate by listing the first one or two words of it (with a page number, if available).

Let's imagine you're working with a newspaper article entitled, "What's New in Technology," enclosed in quotation marks to indicate that this is an article title, and with **no known author**. Here's what that would look in a parenthetical citation:

("What's New" B6)

If there is no author and you're working with an electronic article, use the first one or two words in your parenthetical citation, again, enclosed in quotation marks. Let's imagine you're working with a web article entitled, "Pie Baking for Fun and Profit" and with no author. Here's what that would look in a parenthetical citation:

("Pie Baking")

The parenthetical citation should be added at the end of the sentence that contains the source material. Let's go back to the Fogbottom example and see how a parenthetical citation would work:

"Poodle grooming is a labor of love. It takes years of practice to be good at it, but once learned, it's a fun and worthwhile career" (Fogbottom).

Here's what it would look like if we used it with a paraphrase instead of a quotation:

Although it takes a long time to become a skilled poodle groomer, it's well worth the effort and leads to a good career (Fogbottom).

Note that the citation is placed at the end of the sentence; the period comes after the parentheses. Misplacing the period is one of the most common formatting errors made by students.

Using parenthetical citation makes it crystal clear that a sentence comes from source material. This is, by far, the easiest way to cite or identify your source materials, too.

If using parenthetical citations is easy, why would we bother with using introduction or linking language to identify sources?

Good question! There would be nothing wrong with only using parenthetical citations all the way through your writing—it would absolutely do the job of citing the material. But, it wouldn't read smoothly and would feel somewhat rough because every time a

parenthetical citation popped up, the reader would be “stopped” in place for a moment. Using a combination of introduction, linking language, and parenthetical citation, as needed, makes the writing smoother and easier to read. It also integrates the source material with the writer’s ideas. We call this synthesis, and it’s part of the craft of writing.

Works Cited Entries

At the end of texts that have drawn from existing sources, you will often find a Works Cited page. This page gives more information than the parenthetical citations do about what kinds of sources were referenced in this work and where they can be found if the reader would like to know more about them. These entries all follow a specific and consistent format so that it is easy for readers to find the information they are looking for and so the shape and type of that information is consistent no matter who is writing the entries.

To learn more about Works Cited and see some examples, see the Purdue OWL article on “[MLA Works Cited Page Basic Format](https://owl.purdue.edu/academic-integrity/works-cited/)” (available from owl.english.purdue.edu).

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Chapter 7: Argumentative and Persuasive Essays

Writers:	Readers:
form an argument and a claim, use research and sources to back up that claim, and present that claim to persuade readers.	need to take information they read “with a grain of salt.” This means that it is important to question the data, sources, and statistics a writer uses for a persuasive or argumentative essay.
Writers use certain words in their persuasive and argumentative essays.	Readers can look for these certain words and phrases (i.e., the word such as should) to zero in on this type of writing.

Argumentative and Persuasive Essays

In college, you will at some point be asked to write either a persuasive essay or an argumentative essay. Both stem from a claim you, the writer, will make. However, there is a difference between the argumentative essay and the persuasive essay. *The purpose of an argumentative essay is to present one side of a topic using evidence to support the writer’s position.* This should not be confused with persuasion, *used in the persuasive essay, which is often opinion-based* and involves the writer using the three appeals: ethos, pathos, and logos, to influence the reader.

Claim, Evidence, Opposition

Claim

When creating an argument, you must decide two things: first, what do you think? Answering this question will help you determine what side of the argument you support. Second, what do you know? If you do not have a lot of evidence to support the side you have chosen you will need to do more research. As you research the topic to gather evidence, make sure to keep an open mind because it is important to know what the opposing side thinks in order to prepare to defend your position, but also to confirm that you truly believe the side you have chosen.

The thesis statement for an argument essay must have an opposing opinion. If there is not an alternate side, then there is not a reason to argue the topic. One way to determine if there is an opposing side to your thesis is to write the opposite of your thesis.

Evidence

Selecting evidence to support your thesis depends on your audience and the combination of appeals (ethos, pathos, logos) you have chosen. When determining your audience consider the following questions:

- What are their beliefs or opinions?

- Do they generally have the same opinion as you?
- Are they on the fence meaning they do not care either way?
- Or are they the opposite of you?
- Is the audience open to new ideas and opinions?
- Is the audience hostile and wants to fight?
- Are you trying to educate a group that is skeptical about the subject?

When using logic, it is important to use facts that have been supported by science and experts in the subject. The evidence should also be directly related to the topic of the essay and represent the majority of the population affected by the subject. Keep in mind, any evidence from an outside source must be cited using one of the approved citations styles (e.g. MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.).

Opposition

Every argument should have at least two sides and you as the writer must choose the side you would like to argue, but then you must decide what to do with the opposing side's point of view. You can choose to not acknowledge or address the opposing side, but this suggests to the reader that you may not have fully researched or truly understand the subject. Another option is to directly confront the opposition and point out why you are right, and they are wrong. This is direct and there is no option for discussion. The last option is to use a collaborative approach and try to establish a relationship with the opposition that acknowledges their point of view and suggests to the reader that there is room for common ground and mutual understanding.

Example Argument/Persuasive Outline

Main Idea/Thesis:

Reason One (Key Point 1):

Evidence (details):

Reason Two (Key Point 2):

Evidence (details):

Reason Three (Key point 3):

Evidence (details):

You could argue that:

However,

Strong finish/call to action:

Reading Argumentative and Persuasive Essays

As a reader, it is very important that you do not take everything at “face value;” you cannot believe everything that you read, especially with the proliferation (large amount) of fake news that has appeared on websites today. So, how do you begin to form opinions as a reader of a persuasive and argumentative paper.

1. Look at the sources carefully. If you are reading a persuasive essay on the health benefits of being a vegetarian, and the claims come from medical doctors, then you might consider these claims as authoritative, meaning dependable or reliable. If, on the other hand, all the sources are from websites that are

2. Inspect WHERE the sources come from. If a source is from an academic journal, then again, this has a level of credibility and reliability; if a source comes from Wikipedia, then this could be questioned, as anyone can go online and add information on wiki-based sites.

3. Inspect WEB sources carefully as well. Look at the end of a website on an essay or article’s references list. If it ends in .edu, this indicates an education-based organization, such as a school or college. If the ending of the web address is .org, this indicates an organization. The organization could be neutral, or it could be very specific to one side, opinion, or group. Anything that ends in .com is a company, so this may be a profit-driven website.

4. Pay attention to numbers. If, while reading a persuasive or argumentative piece, you come across a statistic such as, “75% of doctors surveyed said they believe eating more steak can cure diseases,” look up the source yourself to see how many people are in that “75%” number. This number sounds HUGE, and the reader may be tempted to assume every doctor in the country participated in this study! This could only be three out of four people - a tiny percentage.

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Chapter 8: Editing and Revising Essays

Writers:	Readers:
understand that writing happens in a “series of threes.” They prewrite (organize) their writing, write their draft, and then edit and revise.	instinctively begin to pick up on errors in their own writing.
do BOTH editing and revisions to their essays.	review the drafts of peers to further develop their reading and writing skills.

Editing and Revising Essays

When you are done writing your draft, it is time to revise and edit your essay. Often, you will revise and edit while writing, especially the stronger you become at writing. As the reader of your own writing, you will notice little mistakes, and you will start to correct in the moment. You might also begin live revising while drafting; again, you will read something in your head or out loud, and fix the phrasing, more sentences around, or delete sections that do not seem to convey the message you writing to your audience.

How to Revise Your Paper

Read your essay out loud. Reading your essay aloud is perhaps one of the best ways to begin the revision process because you can often hear mistakes you might not normally hear in your head. You will also hear whether a phrase sounds correct or is missing vital information.

Strive for clear, colorful, specific details. If, when you read your essay, you feel as though you are going in circles (i.e., you are repeating yourself, or you feel a shallowness to your body paragraphs), this usually means your details are not specific, clear, and colorful enough.

Details in writing should include specific examples throughout to paint the picture for the reader.

TIP: Be sure to vary your examples. You might use one example to explain your first detail, but you might also provide two examples for the next detail. Also, be sure to vary your signal words, as this can also make the paragraph sounds repetitive.

EXAMPLE: Courage is important to be successful in football. First, in the game of football, players need to have courage and be mentally strong. Second, mental strength is important in football, especially when working out. Third, courage is important for facing difficult choices preparing for the game.

CORRECTED: For players to be successful in football, whether on a pro or college team, they need to be courageous. For example, when a 300-pound linebacker is charging towards a player, the player cannot run; instead, the football player must embrace this challenge head-on. Courage also forms the basis of preparing for the game itself by remaining mentally strong during weak moments, such as hours in the gym, restricting calories to stay healthy, or practicing on the field.

Form a peer review group. Whether required in your class or not, you should get in the habit of reading others' essays, and vice versa. This will help you begin to spot errors in your own paper as well. When you review someone's paper (or even your own!), consider the questions on the checklist at the end of this chapter!

Challenge your vocabulary throughout your paper. The more you read, the more words you will learn, and these words should begin to make their way into your essays! We tend to use some words in our everyday language that may be too casual or basic for academic essays, especially for academic essays written by college students. Words such as like, stuff, and things could be changed to enjoy, material, and objects. Get in the habit of consulting a thesaurus, or right-click a word you would like to change and select thesaurus from the menu in Word.

Vary your sentences in length and kind. Go through your essays, sentence by sentence, and look closely at the length of each sentence. Are they all short? Are they all long? One is not necessarily better than the other, but if you have all the same length throughout the essay, then the essay might sound clipped and botchy if the sentences are all short, or long and drawn out if the sentences are all long.

Also, do you start some of your sentences with dependent clauses? A dependent clause is a phrase that has a subject and a verb, but on its own, it does not make sense (EXAMPLE: Although I know what a dependent clause is...). For example, see how this sentence is begging for "the rest of the thought?" Place a comma after the dependent clause, and then finish the thought (Although I know what a dependent clause is, I noticed I was not using enough of them in my writing).

Vary your signal/transition words. When reading through your paper, do you find you are always using the same words (e.g., First,... Next, ...Finally, ...First,..., Next,)? This can become extremely repetitive for the reader. Be sure to vary those signal words throughout!

How to Edit Your Paper

Read your essay "backwards," from the bottom up. Because you have been living with your essay for several weeks, if not several months, you already know the order in which your sentences and paragraphs flow. Even if you do not have the essay memorized, you know which detail comes first and which key point forms the last body paragraph. Because your mind already knows this, you could overlook some missing connections, details, or examples. Read the last sentence first. Then move back to the second-to-last sentence, and so on. You will be more apt to catch errors in sentence structure using this method.

Create your own checklist. Sitting with the instructions for your paper, create a checklist of what you should have. Alternatively, you might sit with the rubric that will be used to

grade the essay. Check off each item you have in your paper. If you are missing an item, this means that you need to go back.

Use the Search Tool in Word (or CTRL + F). You can actually search your document for common errors or to check to make sure you do not have certain mistakes in your paper, such as comma splices or the first-person point-of-view throughout. Please see the attached document which presents a table of suggested items to search for in your essay.

Use a color-editing code. According to Sherri Bova (2007), in her lesson for teaching editing, she suggests using a color-coding system to identify common errors in drafts. An example of this, according to Bova, would be "blue - highlight the first word in each sentence; yellow - highlight every use of the 'to be' verb; green - highlight all the details in paragraphs; purple - highlight all transition words" (p. 161). With these highlights, you can now look for the following and fix these in your papers: "develop a variety in opening sentences (blue); practice the use of vivid verbs (yellow); use specific details for each idea (green); include transition words to show connections (purple)" (p. 161).

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Chapter 9: Critical Reading—Inferencing and Context Clues

Making Inferences

Making inferences is a comprehension strategy used by proficient readers to “read between the lines,” make connections, and draw conclusions about the text’s meaning and purpose.

You already make inferences all of the time. For example, imagine you go over to a friend’s house and they point at the sofa and say, “Don’t sit there, Cindy came over with her baby again.” What could you logically conclude?

First, you know there must be a reason not to sit where your friend is pointing. Next, the reason not to sit there is related to the fact that Cindy just visited with her baby. You don’t know what exactly happened, but you can make an inference and don’t need to ask any more questions to know that you do not want to sit there.

Practice Making Inferences

Imagine you witness the following unrelated situations—what can you infer about each one?

1. You see a woman pushing a baby stroller down the street.
2. You are at a corner and see two parked cars at an intersection, and the driver in back starts honking his horn.
3. You are walking down the street, and suddenly a dog comes running out of an opened door with its tail between its legs.

For the first, you probably came up with something simple, such as there was a baby in the stroller.

For the second, you might have inferred that the first car should have started moving, or was waiting too long at the corner and holding up the second car.

For the third, you could reasonably guess that the dog had done something wrong and was afraid to get punished.

You do not know for 100% certainty that these inferences are true. If you checked 100 strollers, 99 times you would find a baby, but maybe one time you would find something else, like groceries.

Making Inferences as You Read

To make inferences from reading, take two or more details from the reading and see if you can draw a conclusion. Remember, making an inference is not just making a wild

guess. You need to make a judgment that can be supported, just as you could reasonably infer there is a baby in a stroller, but not reasonably infer that there are groceries, even though both would technically be a “guess.”

When you are asked an inference question, go back over the reading and look for hints within the text, such as words that are directly related to the question you may be asked (such as for a multiple choice test) or words that indicate opinion.

Here is an example:

Hybrid cars are good for the environment, but they may not perform as well as cars that run only on gasoline. The Toyota Prius gets great gas mileage and has low emissions making it a good “green” option. However, many people think that it is unattractive. The Prius also cannot accelerate as quickly as other models, and cannot hold as many passengers as larger gas-fueled SUVs and vans. Compared to similar gas-fueled options, hybrid cars also cost more money up front. A new hybrid car costs almost \$3,500 more than the same car configured to run just on gasoline.

Which of the following can you infer from the passage?

1. hybrid cars are more dangerous than other options
2. Toyota is making a lot of money from the Prius
3. cars that use gasoline are going to destroy the environment
4. hybrid cars may not be the best choice for everyone

All four answers are about hybrid cars in some way, but none of the answers can be found directly from the text. Read through and see what hints you can find from the text.

You will notice right away that there is nothing about car safety in the passage at all, so you can eliminate choice 1.

Choice 2 is implied: if the car cost \$3,500 more than other cars, then Toyota would be making a lot of money by selling the car. But is it the most reasonable conclusion? To be sure, you need to go through all of the answers—don’t just stop when you find one that looks okay.

You may think that choice 3 is true. After all, people want to make hybrid cars because they believe that emissions are contributing to environmental damage, but this is not mentioned in the paragraph. Even if you think it is true, the answer has to be supported by the text to be the correct answer to the problem.

Choice 4 could be inferred from the text. If a person had a large family, was short on money, or needed a car that could accelerate quickly, then a hybrid might not be the best choice for them.

Now compare choice 4 with the other possible answer, choice 2. Now you are thinking choice 2 might not be as good an answer because you don’t know how much it costs Toyota to make the cars, and you don’t know how many they sell, so you can’t

reasonably infer that they are making a lot of money! Choice 4 has to be the correct answer.

Words, Word Choices, and Context Clues

Writers:	Readers:
recognize that the more they read, the more sophisticated terminology they will learn and know for their own writings.	recognize that the more they read what others write, they are actively building their vocabulary.
choose appropriate words and phrases that help their supporting details come to life.	must be able to determine words within the context of the reading; sometimes readers cannot stop to look a word up.
understand that vivid verbs and crystal clear words, as well as collegiate-level synonyms for everyday terminology, help make their writing more sophisticated, academic, and professional.	Use vivid verbs and clear words to imagine, picture, and even embrace the images that come through what they are reading.

Context Clues

Context clues are clues or hints, the reader picks up on from the context, or the background/environment of the reading. Sometimes, when we are reading, we just cannot stop and take out a dictionary or our phones to look up words. So, we must rely on the context of the source to determine the unknown words.

There are four basic types of context clues. Understanding the types can help you figure out a word faster.

Synonym Clue: synonym means the same, so a synonym clue means that the unknown word will be the same meaning as another word in that sentence:

EXAMPLE: Marsha is prompt and quick when submitting her homework.

Hmm... Notice the word “and” is joining the words prompt and quick. This tells the reader that prompt and quick must be similar, so prompt must mean the same as quick!

Antonym Clue: in this type of hint, the writer uses signal words that indicate the opposite (but, however, although, nevertheless, whereas) to indicate the opposite meaning of the unknown word:

EXAMPLE: Jasmine’s desk is neat and tidy, whereas Poppy’s desk is unkempt.

Hmm... “Whereas” indicates a change in direction...so if Jasmine’s desk is neat and tidy, and we’re switching direction to the opposite of neat and tidy, then unkempt must mean not neat and messy!

Definition Clue: In a definition context clue, the writer will literally define the meaning of the unknown word. Look for hints like or, means, which is, that is, which means, is the same as, is defined as, or the use of dashes or commas to separate the unknown term from the meaning:

EXAMPLE: Jaden was elated, or thrilled, at the outcome of his team’s score.

Hmm... Notice the word “thrilled” surrounded by commas; this sets off the definition of elated. So, elated means thrilled.

General Knowledge Clue: Sometimes, readers must use what they know about something – their background knowledge – to figure out the actual clue. In addition, readers have to pull in other clues in the sentence(s) to determine the unknown word.

EXAMPLE: Melanie was getting madder and madder with blind dates and dating apps. Every time she went on a date, it turned out to be one bad evening after another. She was infuriated with the time and money she spent on buying clothes and doing her hair. She was fed up!

Hmm... Notice the word “infuriated” comes after words like madder and madder and fed up. This tells us that infuriated probably means angry.

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Chapter 10: Research-Based Argument

Why was the Great Wall of China built? What have scientists learned about the possibility of life on Mars? What roles did women play in the American Revolution? How does the human brain create, store, and retrieve memories? Who invented the game of football, and how has it changed over the years?

You may know the answers to these questions off the top of your head. If you are like most people, however, you find answers to tough questions like these by searching the Internet, visiting the library, or asking others for information. To put it simply, you perform research.

Whether you are a scientist, an artist, a paralegal, or a parent, you probably perform research in your everyday life. When your boss, your instructor, or a family member asks you a question that you do not know the answer to, you locate relevant information, analyze your findings, and share your results. Locating, analyzing, and sharing information are key steps in the research process, and in this chapter, you will learn more about each step. By developing your research writing skills, you will prepare yourself to answer any question no matter how challenging.

Reasons for Research

When you perform research, you are essentially trying to solve a mystery—you want to know how something works or why something happened. In other words, you want to answer a question that you (and other people) have about the world. This is one of the most basic reasons for performing research.

But the research process does not end when you have solved your mystery. Imagine what would happen if a detective collected enough evidence to solve a criminal case, but she never shared her solution with the authorities. Presenting what you have learned from research can be just as important as performing the research. Research results can be presented in a variety of ways, but one of the most popular—and effective—presentation forms is the research paper. A research paper presents an original thesis, or purpose statement, about a topic and develops that thesis with information gathered from a variety of sources.

If you are curious about the possibility of life on Mars, for example, you might choose to research the topic. What will you do, though, when your research is complete? You will need a way to put your thoughts together in a logical, coherent manner. You may want to use the facts you have learned to create a narrative or to support an argument. And you may want to show the results of your research to your friends, your teachers, or even the editors of magazines and journals. Writing a research paper is an ideal way to organize thoughts, craft narratives or make arguments based on research, and share your newfound knowledge with the world.

Exercise 1

Write a paragraph about a time when you used research in your everyday life. Did you look for the cheapest way to travel from Houston to Denver? Did you search for a way

to remove gum from the bottom of your shoe? In your paragraph, explain what you wanted to research, how you performed the research, and what you learned as a result.

Research Writing and the Academic Paper

No matter what field of study you are interested in, you will most likely be asked to write a research paper during your academic career. For example, a student in an art history course might write a research paper about an artist's work. Similarly, a student in a psychology course might write a research paper about current findings in childhood development.

Having to write a research paper may feel intimidating at first. After all, researching and writing a long paper requires a lot of time, effort, and organization. However, writing a research paper can also be a great opportunity to explore a topic that is particularly interesting to you. The research process allows you to gain expertise on a topic of your choice, and the writing process helps you remember what you have learned and understand it on a deeper level.

Research Writing at Work

Knowing how to write a good research paper is a valuable skill that will serve you well throughout your career. Whether you are developing a new product, studying the best way to perform a procedure, or learning about challenges and opportunities in your field of employment, you will use research techniques to guide your exploration. You may even need to create a written report of your findings. And because effective communication is essential to any company, employers seek to hire people who can write clearly and professionally.

Exercise 2

Think about the job of your dreams. How might you use research writing skills to perform that job? Create a list of ways in which strong researching, organizing, writing, and critical thinking skills could help you succeed at your dream job. How might these skills help you obtain that job?

Steps of the Research Writing Process

How does a research paper grow from a folder of brainstormed notes to a polished final draft? No two projects are identical, but most projects follow a series of six basic steps.

These are the steps in the research writing process:

1. Choose a topic.
2. Plan and schedule time to research and write.
3. Conduct research.
4. Organize research and ideas.
5. Draft your paper.
6. Revise and edit your paper.

Each of these steps will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. For now, though, we will take a brief look at what each step involves.

Step 1: Choosing a Topic

As you may recall from earlier chapters, to narrow the focus of your topic, you may try freewriting exercises, such as brainstorming. You may also need to ask a specific research question—a broad, open-ended question that will guide your research—as well as propose a possible answer, or a working thesis. You may use your research question and your working thesis to create a research proposal. In a research proposal, you present your main research question, any related subquestions you plan to explore, and your working thesis.

Step 2: Planning and Scheduling

Before you start researching your topic, take time to plan your researching and writing schedule. Research projects can take days, weeks, or even months to complete. Creating a schedule is a good way to ensure that you do not end up being overwhelmed by all the work you have to do as the deadline approaches.

During this step of the process, it is also a good idea to plan the resources and organizational tools you will use to keep yourself on track throughout the project. Flowcharts, calendars, and checklists can all help you stick to your schedule.

Step 3: Conducting Research

When going about your research, you will likely use a variety of sources—anything from books and periodicals to video presentations and in-person interviews.

Your sources will include both primary sources and secondary sources. Primary sources provide firsthand information or raw data. For example, surveys, in-person interviews, and historical documents are primary sources. Secondary sources, such as biographies, literary reviews, or magazine articles, include some analysis or interpretation of the information presented. As you conduct research, you will take detailed, careful notes about your discoveries. You will also evaluate the reliability of each source you find.

Step 4: Organizing Research and the Writer's Ideas

When your research is complete, you will organize your findings and decide which sources to cite in your paper. You will also have an opportunity to evaluate the evidence you have collected and determine whether it supports your thesis, or the focus of your paper. You may decide to adjust your thesis or conduct additional research to ensure that your thesis is well supported.

Tip: Remember, your working thesis is not set in stone. You can and should change your working thesis throughout the research writing process if the evidence you find does not support your original thesis. Never try to force evidence to fit your argument. For example, your working thesis is “Mars cannot support life-forms.” Yet, a week into researching your topic, you find an article in the New York Times detailing new findings of bacteria under the Martian surface. Instead of trying to argue that bacteria are not life forms, you might instead alter your thesis to “Mars cannot support complex life-forms.”

Step 5: Drafting Your Paper

Now you are ready to combine your research findings with your critical analysis of the results in a rough draft. You will incorporate source materials into your paper and discuss each source thoughtfully in relation to your thesis or purpose statement.

When you cite your reference sources, it is important to pay close attention to standard conventions for citing sources in order to avoid plagiarism, or the practice of using someone else's words without acknowledging the source. Later in this chapter, you will learn how to incorporate sources in your paper and avoid some of the most common pitfalls of attributing information.

Step 6: Revising and Editing Your Paper

In the final step of the research writing process, you will revise and polish your paper. You might reorganize your paper's structure or revise for unity and cohesion, ensuring that each element in your paper flows into the next logically and naturally. You will also make sure that your paper uses an appropriate and consistent tone.

Once you feel confident in the strength of your writing, you will edit your paper for proper spelling, grammar, punctuation, mechanics, and formatting. When you complete this final step, you will have transformed a simple idea or question into a thoroughly researched and well-written paper you can be proud of!

Exercise 3:

Review the steps of the research writing process. Then answer the questions on your own sheet of paper.

In which steps of the research writing process are you allowed to change your thesis?

In step 2, which types of information should you include in your project schedule?

What might happen if you eliminated step 4 from the research writing process?

Key Takeaways:

- People undertake research projects throughout their academic and professional careers in order to answer specific questions, share their findings with others, increase their understanding of challenging topics, and strengthen their researching, writing, and analytical skills.
- The research writing process generally comprises six steps: choosing a topic, scheduling and planning time for research and writing, conducting research, organizing research and ideas, drafting a paper, and revising and editing the paper.

Steps in Developing a Research Proposal

Writing a good research paper takes time, thought, and effort. Although this assignment is challenging, it is manageable. Focusing on one step at a time will help you develop a thoughtful, informative, well-supported research paper.

Your first step is to choose a topic and then to develop research questions, a working thesis, and a written research proposal. Set aside adequate time for this part of the process. Fully exploring ideas will help you build a solid foundation for your paper.

Choosing a Topic

When you choose a topic for a research paper, you are making a major commitment. Your choice will help determine whether you enjoy the lengthy process of research and writing—and whether your final paper fulfills the assignment requirements. If you choose your topic hastily, you may later find it difficult to work with your topic. By taking your time and choosing carefully, you can ensure that this assignment is not only challenging but also rewarding.

Writers understand the importance of choosing a topic that fulfills the assignment requirements and fits the assignment's purpose and audience. Choosing a topic that interests you is also crucial. Your instructor may provide a list of suggested topics or ask that you develop a topic on your own. In either case, try to identify topics that genuinely interest you.

After identifying potential topic ideas, you will need to evaluate your ideas and choose one topic to pursue. Will you be able to find enough information about the topic? Can you develop a paper about this topic that presents and supports your original ideas? Is the topic too broad or too narrow for the scope of the assignment? If so, can you modify it so it is more manageable? You will ask these questions during this preliminary phase of the research process.

Identifying Potential Topics

Sometimes, your instructor may provide a list of suggested topics. If so, you may benefit from identifying several possibilities before committing to one idea. It is important to know how to narrow down your ideas into a concise, manageable thesis. You may also use the list as a starting point to help you identify additional, related topics. Discussing your ideas with your instructor will help ensure that you choose a manageable topic that fits the requirements of the assignment.

In this chapter, you will follow a writer named Jorge, who is studying health care administration, as he prepares a research paper. You will also plan, research, and draft your own research paper.

Jorge was assigned to write a research paper on health and the media for an introductory course in health care. Although a general topic was selected for the students, Jorge had to decide which specific issues interested him. He brainstormed a list of possibilities.

Tip: If you are writing a research paper for a specialized course, look back through your notes and course activities. Identify reading assignments and class discussions that especially engaged you. Doing so can help you identify topics to pursue.

Possible Topics:

1. Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs) in the news
2. Sexual education programs

3. Hollywood and eating disorders
4. Americans' access to public health information
5. Media portrayal of health care reform bill
6. Depictions of drugs on television
7. The effect of the Internet on mental health
8. Popularized diets (such as low-carbohydrate diets)
9. Fear of pandemics (bird flu, HINI, SARS)
10. Electronic entertainment and obesity
11. Advertisements for prescription drugs
12. Public education and disease prevention

Exercise 4

Set a timer for five minutes. Use brainstorming or idea mapping to create a list of topics you would be interested in researching for a paper about the influence of the Internet on social networking. Do you closely follow the media coverage of a particular website, such as Twitter? Would you like to learn more about a certain industry, such as online dating? Which social networking sites do you and your friends use? List as many ideas related to this topic as you can.

Narrowing Your Topic

Once you have a list of potential topics, you will need to choose one as the focus of your essay. You will also need to narrow your topic. Most writers find that the topics they listed during brainstorming or idea mapping are broad—too broad for the scope of the assignment. Working with an overly broad topic, such as sexual education programs or popularized diets, can be frustrating and overwhelming. Each topic has so many facets that it would be impossible to cover them all in a college research paper.

However, more specific choices, such as the pros and cons of sexual education in kids' television programs or the physical effects of the South Beach diet, are specific enough to write about without being too narrow to sustain an entire research paper.

A good research paper provides focused, in-depth information and analysis. If your topic is too broad, you will find it difficult to do more than skim the surface when you research it and write about it. Narrowing your focus is essential to making your topic manageable. To narrow your focus, explore your topic in writing, conduct preliminary research, and discuss both the topic and the research with others.

Exploring Your Topic in Writing

“How am I supposed to narrow my topic when I haven't even begun researching yet?” In fact, you may already know more than you realize. Review your list and identify your top two or three topics. Set aside some time to explore each one through freewriting. Simply taking the time to focus on your topic may yield fresh angles.

Jorge knew that he was especially interested in the topic of diet fads, but he also knew that it was much too broad for his assignment. He used freewriting to explore his thoughts so he could narrow his topic. Read Jorge's ideas.

Our instructors are always saying that accurate, up-to-date information is crucial in encouraging people to make better choices about their health. I don't think the media

does a very good job of providing that, though. Every time I go on the Internet, I see tons of ads for the latest “miracle food.” One week it’s acai berries, the next week it’s green tea, and then six months later I see a news story saying all the fabulous claims about acai berries and green tea are overblown! Advice about weight loss is even worse. Think about all the diet books that are out there! Some say that a low-fat diet is best; some say you should cut down on carbs; and some make bizarre recommendations like eating half a grapefruit with every meal. I don’t know how anyone is supposed to make an informed decision about what to eat when there’s so much confusing, contradictory information. I bet even doctors, nurses, and dietitians have trouble figuring out what information is reliable and what is just the latest hype.

Conducting Preliminary Research

Another way writers may focus a topic is to conduct preliminary research. Like freewriting, exploratory reading can help you identify interesting angles. Surfing the web and browsing through newspaper and magazine articles are good ways to start. Find out what people are saying about your topic on blogs and online discussion groups. Discussing your topic with others can also inspire you. Talk about your ideas with your classmates, your friends, or your instructor.

Jorge’s freewriting exercise helped him realize that the assigned topic of health and the media intersected with a few of his interests—diet, nutrition, and obesity. Preliminary online research and discussions with his classmates strengthened his impression that many people are confused or misled by media coverage of these subjects.

Jorge decided to focus his paper on a topic that had garnered a great deal of media attention—low-carbohydrate diets. He wanted to find out whether low-carbohydrate diets were as effective as their proponents claimed.

Tip: The reliability of online sources varies greatly. In this exploratory phase of your research, you do not need to evaluate sources as closely as you will later. However, use common sense as you refine your paper topic. If you read a fascinating blog comment that gives you a new idea for your paper, be sure to check out other, more reliable sources as well to make sure the idea is worth pursuing.

Exercise 5

Review the list of topics you created in Exercise 4 and identify two or three topics you would like to explore further. For each of these topics, spend five to ten minutes writing about the topic without stopping. Then review your writing to identify possible areas of focus.

Set aside time to conduct preliminary research about your potential topics. Then choose a topic to pursue for your research paper.

A Plan for Research

Your freewriting and preliminary research have helped you choose a focused, manageable topic for your research paper. To work with your topic successfully, you will need to determine what exactly you want to learn about it—and later, what you want to say about it. Before you begin conducting in-depth research, you will further define your focus by developing a research question, a working thesis, and a research proposal.

Formulating a Research Question

In forming a research question, you are setting a goal for your research. Your main research question should be substantial enough to form the guiding principle of your paper—but focused enough to guide your research. A strong research question requires you not only to find information but also to put together different pieces of information, interpret and analyze them, and figure out what you think. As you consider potential research questions, ask yourself whether they would be too hard or too easy to answer.

To determine your research question, review the freewriting you completed earlier. Skim through books, articles, and websites and list the questions you have. Include simple, factual questions and more complex questions that would require analysis and interpretation. Determine your main question—the primary focus of your paper—and several subquestions that you will need to research to answer your main question.

Here are the research questions Jorge will use to focus his research. Notice that his main research question has no obvious, straightforward answer. Jorge will need to research his subquestions, which address narrower topics, to answer his main question.

Topic: Main question: Are low-carbohydrate diets as effective as they have been portrayed to be by media sources?

Subquestions:

1. Who can benefit from following a low-carbohydrate diet?
2. What are the supposed advantages to following a low-carbohydrate diet?
3. When did low-carb diets become a “hot” topic in the media?
4. Where do average consumers get information about diet and nutrition? Why has the low-carb approach received so much media attention?
5. How do low-carb diets work?

Exercise 6

Using the topic you selected, write your main research question and at least four to five subquestions. Check that your main research question is appropriately complex for your assignment.

Constructing a Working Thesis

A working thesis concisely states a writer’s initial answer to the main research question. It does not merely state a fact or present a subjective opinion. Instead, it expresses a

debatable idea or claim that you hope to prove through additional research. Your working thesis is called a working thesis for a reason—it is subject to change. As you learn more about your topic, you may change your thinking in light of your research findings. Let your working thesis serve as a guide to your research, but do not be afraid to modify it based on what you learn.

Jorge began his research with a strong point of view based on his preliminary writing and research. Read his working thesis statement, which presents the point he will argue. Notice how it states Jorge’s tentative answer to his research question.

Main research question: Are low-carb diets as effective as they have sometimes been portrayed to be by the mass media?

Working thesis statement: Low-carb diets do not live up to the media hype surrounding them.

Tip: One way to determine your working thesis is to consider how you would complete sentences such as I believe or My opinion is. However, keep in mind that academic writing generally does not use first-person pronouns. These statements are useful starting points, but formal research papers use an objective voice.

Exercise 7

Write a working thesis statement that presents your preliminary answer to the research question you wrote in Exercise 6. Check that your working thesis statement presents an idea or claim that could be supported or refuted by evidence from research.

Creating a Research Proposal

A research proposal is a brief document—no more than one typed page—that summarizes the preliminary work you have completed. Your purpose in writing it is to formalize your plan for research and present it to your instructor for feedback. In your research proposal, you will present your main research question, related subquestions, and working thesis. You will also briefly discuss the value of researching this topic and indicate how you plan to gather information.

When Jorge began drafting his research proposal, he realized that he had already created most of the pieces he needed. However, he knew he also had to explain how his research would be relevant to other future health care professionals. In addition, he wanted to form a general plan for doing the research and identifying potentially useful sources. Read Jorge’s research proposal.

Writing Your Own Research Proposal

Now you may write your own research proposal, if you have not done so already. Follow the guidelines provided in this lesson.

Key Takeaways:

- Developing a research proposal involves the following preliminary steps: identifying potential ideas, choosing ideas to explore further, choosing and narrowing a topic, formulating a research question, and developing a working thesis.
- A good topic for a research paper interests the writer and fulfills the requirements of the assignment.
- Defining and narrowing a topic helps writers conduct focused, in-depth research.
- Writers conduct preliminary research to identify possible topics and research questions and to develop a working thesis.
- A good research question interests readers, is neither too broad nor too narrow, and has no obvious answer.
- A good working thesis expresses a debatable idea or claim that can be supported with evidence from research.
- Writers create a research proposal to present their topic, main research question, subquestions, and working thesis to an instructor for approval or feedback.

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Chapter 11: Purpose, Audience, and Tone

Purpose, Audience, and Tone

While drafting your essay, it is important to remain focused on your topic and thesis in order to guide your reader through the essay. Imagine reading one long block of text with each idea blurring into the next. Even if you are reading a thrilling novel or an interesting news article, you will likely lose interest in what the author has to say very quickly. During the writing process, it is helpful to position yourself as a reader. Ask yourself whether you can focus easily on each point you make. Keep in mind that three main elements shape the content of each essay (see Figure 11.1).

Purpose: The reason the writer composes the essay.

Audience: The individual or group whom the writer intends to address.

Tone: The attitude the writer conveys about the essay's subject.

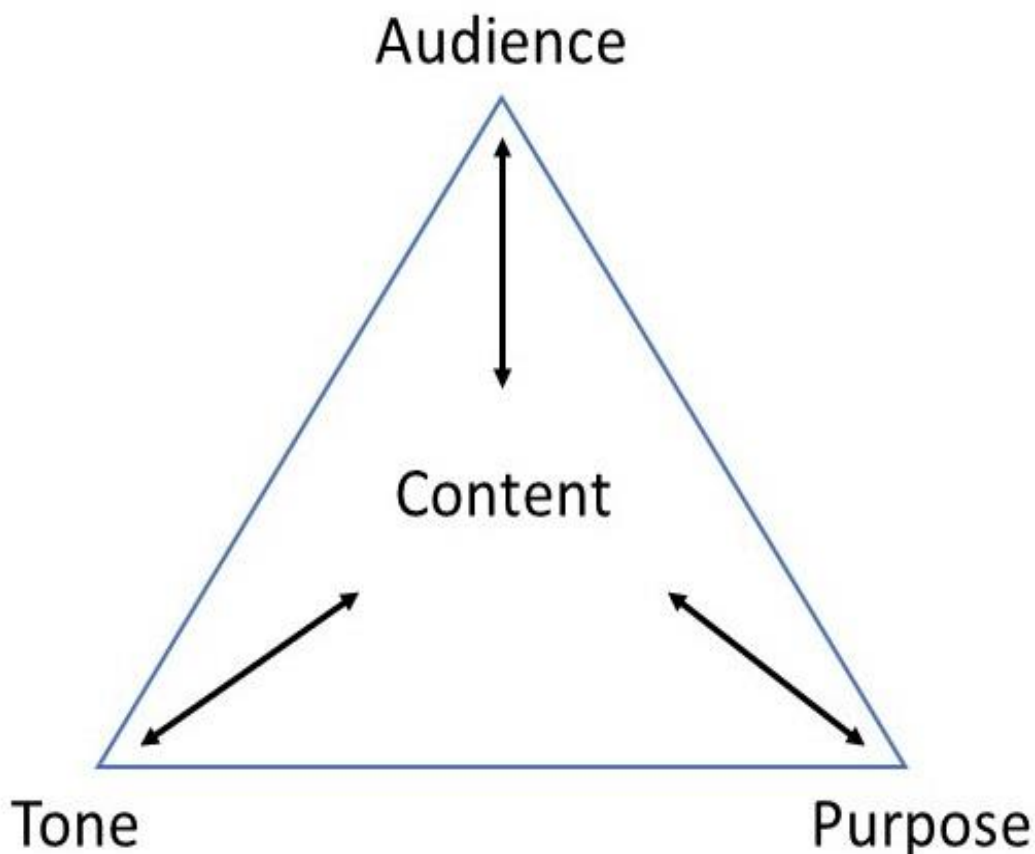


Figure 11.1: The Rhetorical Triangle

The assignment's purpose, audience, and tone dictate what each paragraph of the essay covers and how the paragraph supports the main point or thesis.

Identifying Common Academic Purposes

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

In academic settings, the reasons for writing typically fulfill four main purposes:

- to classify
- to analyze
- to synthesize
- to evaluate

A classification shrinks a large amount of information into only the essentials, using your own words; although shorter than the original piece of writing, a classification should still communicate all the key points and key support of the original document without quoting the original text. Keep in mind that classification moves beyond simple summary to be informative.

An analysis, on the other hand, separates complex materials into their different parts and studies how the parts relate to one another. In the sciences, for example, the analysis of simple table salt would require a deconstruction of its parts—the elements sodium (Na) and chloride (Cl). Then, scientists would study how the two elements interact to create the compound NaCl, or sodium chloride: simple table salt.

In an academic analysis, instead of deconstructing compounds, the essay takes apart a primary source (an essay, a book, an article, etc.) point by point. It communicates the main points of the document by examining individual points and identifying how the points relate to one another.

The third type of writing—synthesis—combines two or more items to create an entirely new item. Take, for example, the electronic musical instrument aptly named the synthesizer. It looks like a simple keyboard but displays a dashboard of switches, buttons, and levers. With the flip of a few switches, a musician may combine the distinct sounds of a piano, a flute, or a guitar—or any other combination of instruments—to create a new sound. The purpose of an academic synthesis is to blend individual documents into a new document by considering the main points from one or more pieces of writing and linking the main points together to create a new point, one not replicated in either document.

Finally, an evaluation judges the value of something and determines its worth. Evaluations in everyday life are often not only dictated by set standards but also influenced by opinion and prior knowledge such as a supervisor’s evaluation of an employee in a particular job. Academic evaluations, likewise, communicate your opinion and its justifications about a particular document or a topic of discussion. They are influenced by your reading of the document as well as your prior knowledge and experience with the topic or issue. Evaluations typically require more critical thinking and a combination of classifying, analysis, and synthesis skills.

You will encounter these four purposes not only as you read for your classes but also as you read for work or pleasure and, because reading and writing work together, your writing skills will improve as you read. Remember that the purpose for writing will guide you through each part of your paper, helping you make decisions about content and style.

When reviewing directions for assignments, look for the verbs that ask you to classify, analyze, synthesize, or evaluate. Instructors often use these words to clearly indicate the assignment's purpose. These words will cue you on how to complete the assignment because you will know its exact purpose.

Identifying the Audience

Imagine you must give a presentation to a group of executives in an office. Weeks before the big day, you spend time creating and rehearsing the presentation. You must make important, careful decisions not only about the content but also about your delivery. Will the presentation require technology to project figures and charts? Should the presentation define important words, or will the executives already know the terms? Should you wear your suit and dress shirt? The answers to these questions will help you develop an appropriate relationship with your audience, making them more receptive to your message.

Now imagine you must explain the same business concepts from your presentation to a group of high school students. Those important questions you previously answered may now require different answers. The figures and charts may be too sophisticated, and the terms will certainly require definitions. You may even reconsider your outfit and sport a more casual look. Because the audience has shifted, your presentation and delivery will shift as well to create a new relationship with the new audience.

In these two situations, the **audience**—the individuals who will watch and listen to the presentation—plays a role in the development of presentation. As you prepare the presentation, you visualize the audience to anticipate their expectations and reactions. What you imagine affects the information you choose to present and how you will present it. Then, during the presentation, you meet the audience in person and discover immediately how well you perform.

Although the audience for writing assignments—your readers—may not appear in person, they play an equally vital role. Even in everyday writing activities, you identify your readers' characteristics, interests, and expectations before making decisions about what you write. In fact, thinking about the audience has become so common that you may not even detect the audience-driven decisions. For example, you update your status on a social networking site with the awareness of who will digitally follow the post. If you want to brag about a good grade, you may write the post to please family members. If you want to describe a funny moment, you may write with your friends' senses of humor in mind. Even at work, you send emails with an awareness of an unintended receiver who could intercept the message.

In other words, being aware of “invisible” readers is a skill you most likely already possess and one you rely on every day. Consider the following paragraphs. Which one would the author send to her parents? Which one would she send to her best friend?

Example A

Last Saturday, I volunteered at a local hospital. The visit was fun and rewarding. I even learned how to do cardiopulmonary resuscitation, or CPR. Unfortunately, I think I caught a cold from one of the patients. This week, I will rest in bed and drink plenty of clear fluids. I hope I am well by next Saturday to volunteer again.

Example B

OMG! You won't believe this! My advisor forced me to do my community service hours at this hospital all weekend! We learned CPR but we did it on dummies, not even real peeps. And some kid sneezed on me and got me sick! I was so bored and sniffing all weekend; I hope I don't have to go back next week. I def do NOT want to miss the basketball tournament!

Most likely, you matched each paragraph to its intended audience with little hesitation. Because each paragraph reveals the author's relationship with the intended readers, you can identify the audience fairly quickly. When writing your own essays, you must engage with your audience to build an appropriate relationship given your subject.

Imagining your readers during each stage of the writing process will help you make decisions about your writing. Ultimately, the people you visualize will affect what and how you write.

While giving a speech, you may articulate an inspiring or critical message, but if you left your hair a mess and laced up mismatched shoes, your audience might not take you seriously. They may be too distracted by your appearance to listen to your words.

Similarly, grammar and sentence structure serve as the appearance of a piece of writing. Polishing your work using correct grammar will impress your readers and allow them to focus on what you have to say.

Selecting an Appropriate Tone

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

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

Exercise 1

Read the following paragraph and consider the writer's tone. How would you describe the writer's attitude toward wildlife conservation?

“Many species of plants and animals are disappearing right before our eyes. If we don’t act fast, it might be too late to save them. Human activities, including pollution, deforestation, hunting, and overpopulation, are devastating the natural environment. Without our help, many species will not survive long enough for our children to see them in the wild. Take the tiger, for example. Today, tigers occupy just seven percent of their historical range, and many local populations are already extinct. Hunted for their beautiful pelts and other body parts, the tiger population has plummeted from one hundred thousand in 1920 to just a few thousand. Contact your local wildlife conservation society today to find out how you can stop this terrible destruction.”

Choosing Appropriate, Interesting Content

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

Content is also shaped by tone. When the tone matches the content, the audience will be more engaged, and you will build a stronger relationship with your readers. When applied to that audience of third graders, you would choose simple content that the audience would easily understand, and you would express that content through an enthusiastic tone.

The same considerations apply to all audiences and purposes.

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